

The Inglenook.

The Hero of The Tenements.

"Whew, but it is cold!" muttered Mat, the little Hungarian newsboy, as he jumped up and down at the corner of the street. The wide, rickety, boards of the sidewalk, covered white with frost, creaked shrilly with every movement of his feet.

"Morning papers, here!" shouted Mat. It was yet too early for very many people to be astir. Across the street the sidewalk was squeaking under the clumsy shoes of a night messenger boy upon his way home.

"Hello Billy!" Mat accosted.

"Hello, Mat!" How's the family?" returned Billy. "Come over here."

Mat ran across the street and landed with a bound upon the walk beside his friend, the night messenger.

"Ain't it cold though!" chattered Mat, as he thrust his hands down into one of the pockets of Billy's overcoat.

"I asked you how your family was getting along," said the older boy not unkindly.

"They're all right as long as it's summer," answered the newsboy. "But this morning Heddy is worse, 'cause it's cold-d-d."

Mat pressed up closer to Billy and shivered. Two big tears were rolling down his cheeks, but he was too much of a man to notice them or even to wipe them away.

"I've found a chance for you, Mat," continued Billy. "They want an office boy up in a fine place on Fourth avenue I saw the sign in the window this morning. Come along and see it."

The boys walked along the street for a little distance, then turning a corner were soon upon the magnificent Fourth avenue.

"Here's the sign Mat," said the messenger boy, stopping in front of a handsome office building.

"Boy wanted for lawyer's office. Must have good recommendations. Apply in person Tuesday morning," read Mat slowly repeating each word.

"You'd get a pile out of such a place as that. Why don't you try for it? I would if I was out of a job and had your schoolin'," prompted Billy.

Mat shook his head soberly.

"No there's no chance for me. Don't you see it says you've got to have recommendations—and where could I get any?"

"That's so," assented the other. "Didn't think of that. But say, it wouldn't do any hurt to try anyway. So the next morning he presented himself at the office of one of the prominent lawyers of the great city in which he lived, and waited his turn to be examined as an applicant for the position in question.

Mat had not always lived in America. A few years before, when he was but a mere lad, he had come from Hungary, away across the rolling Atlantic, with his parents and his baby sister Hedwig a wee, sweet-faced cripple. This little family was just beginning to get accustomed to the new life when misfortune, hard and sudden came to it. The father became stricken with a mysterious disease and died. The poor mother, now prostrated with grief, longed for the dear old rural home in her native land. Here she was in a strange country with few friends and a family for which she must provide. What could she do? Little Mat,

however, now came manfully to the front and showed that he was born of sturdy stock. He realized that he must now take his place at the head of the house. Leaving his school, which he loved more than he chose to confess, and in which he was fast forging to the head of his class, he went upon the streets as a newsboy.

For several years Mat's family prospered very well. The mother was able to earn a good deal by her needle, and Mat helped out with the pennies which he gained by selling papers. All of the other boys of the streets, whether newsboy or messengers, whenever they became acquainted with Mat liked him. He was "straight goods" as they put it, and never sold papers on the street corners already occupied by other boys. He was good to the little weak newsboys, too.

Indeed, there seemed to be bred in this humble child of the tenements, a Christ-like love for humanity. In his own small way he tried to help others whenever possible. From his parents he had early received careful instruction in the Bible, and in a bright little mission Sunday school within two blocks of his new home in the American city, he was a constant attendant. In the Sunday school class were boys whom he had met upon the streets selling papers and whom he had invited to come to the mission.

But a time came when the mother's eyes, already weakened by too close work with the needle, gave out completely, and she found that she could make no more garments for the big wholesale clothing house that employed her. This had happened but a short time before that morning upon which Mat was shown the sign in the lawyer's office.

With the stern winter staring them in the face, Mat was ready to make almost any attempt to secure some honorable employment that would bring him a bigger income than he made by selling papers. But now as he stood in the lawyer's office awaiting his turn in the line of eager young applicants, he wished that he had not been so ready to take Billy's advice. For what chance had he against all of these better dressed boys, who doubtless had their pockets full of fine recommendations?

"Next!" called out a spry young man; and Mat found himself being ushered into the mysterious back room from which all of the boys ahead of them had come away some of them with disappointment written plainly upon their faces.

Mat walked bravely into the room and met the gaze of the great lawyer who was seated at a desk covered with many papers.

"Well, what is your name?" asked the lawyer briskly.

"Matthias Boeskey, sir. They call me 'Mat' for short," answered the little Hungarian.

"What recommendation have you?" "None, sir; but I thought that maybe you'd take me without any," faltered Mat, his throat choking up with some sort of a lump which he could not swallow.

"Without any!" exclaimed the lawyer as his keen, searching eyes wandered over Mat from head to foot, making the boy painfully conscious of his shabby and ill fitting clothes, his grimy, chapped hands and tattered shoes.

For a moment Mat wavered under the at-

tack of these critical eyes and was just upon the point of fleeing from the room when a picture of his mother as she had vainly tried to see to patch his trousers the night before, appeared to him and made him straighten up and feel once more like a man.

"Well, what have you to say for yourself?" the lawyer asked abruptly. "What made you think that I would take you without recommendations?"

"Well, sir, it's just this way," answered Mat in an honest and open manner, "Billy, my chum, was kind enough to tell me about this place. I know it isn't business to take a fellow without recommends, hope you'll just give me a chance, and I'll make a big try to suit you. There's a lot depending on me, and I couldn't afford to do poor work for anybody. You see since father died I'm the main fellow at our house."

"I sell papers, but as long as I've got to buy better stuff for my little sister Heddy to eat, I can't depend on that sort of work. I've got to hustle now more'n ever, 'cause mother's eyes have given out. I didn't want to let any chance slip by to get work, so I came here."

There was silence in the comfortable office. The lawyer had turned away and was looking out of the window with a far-away expression in his eyes. Perhaps he was thinking of the time, many years before, when he himself was a boy with a future scarcely less discouraging than that of this ragged anxious-looking lad. Perhaps he was thinking also of the kind old gentleman who had given him a start when no one else would notice him. At any rate, he suddenly aroused himself and looking at Mat with eyes altogether softened, "Where did you say you live?" he asked; and as the boy told him he wrote the address in a note book, adding aloud: "Come to-morrow at this time and I'll let you know."

With this Mat was dismissed, and the next waiting boy was shown into the private room, and then the next one, until finally all had been examined and had departed.

"Charles," said the lawyer to his clerk, "did you notice the little fellow who claimed that he had a family to support?"

"Yes, sir," answered Charles.

"I want you to go to his home and find out, if possible, whether he told us the truth. Inquire of his neighbors—any way to find out. Here is his address."

A street-car ride of twenty minutes took Charles to the poor tenement district where Mat, the newsboy, lived with his mother and his sister.

"Will you tell me, please, whether a boy by the name of Matthias lives, with his mother and cripple sister, next door to you?" asked Charles of a pleasant-faced old woman who had answered his knock.

"Yes, he does; and a right good boy, by the way, he is, as everybody will tell you," answered the woman. "He reminds me every day of my own son who got lost at sea. I tell you there never was a better son nor—"

But just at this minute Charles caught sight of Mat carrying home a little basket of coal for his "family," and not wishing to be noticed by the boy, he started up the street, leaving the good old mother still speaking her praises of Mat and her own dead sailor boy. Charles immediately turned back, however, and stood by a street corner near at hand. Presently he saw Mat come out upon the street, drawing, in a shaky little cart, his invalid sister. The wind blew somewhat cold, yet the sun was bright and warm, and no doubt Mat thought that this would be one