

## FIRESIDE READING.

### LITTLE PAT.

Pat is one of the "characters" of the ragged-school, and a general favorite. He comes striding in, tosses aside his cap, and with his bared feet, dishevelled hair, and tattered garments, stands a perfect picture of the child of the street. Pat's own brief description of the employment of his parents gives us some little insight into the child's sad history. He says, "My father digs in the drain, and my mother drinks." We have no doubt the father often neglected his work to assist his wife, and we can imagine, between them, what kind of a home they furnished for their child. We see that the boy has passed through no gently caressed and sweetly cherished infancy, and his earliest childhood has been a season of hardship. No wonder that his little feet, as soon as they could totter across the threshold, escaped from the dingy room into the bright sunshine, and loved to linger in the streets. At an age when children of gentler parentage are led carefully by a guiding hand, poor little Pat was jostling along in the crowd; and when night drew near, and more blest children were softly sung to sleep by a mother's sweet voice, our little boy often wandered in the dark, chill gloom. Why should he wish to go to the place he called home? No mother's caress awaited his return; no father's kind voice would greet the coming feet of his little son. The neglected child was left in the city thoroughfares, to find his amusement, and to receive his education.

With a shout and a bound, Pat threw his little body, and his soul too, into every street excitement. His voice was the first to echo the alarm of fire down the street; he rolled back his sleeves, and clenched his fists, for *anybody's* fight; he buttoned up his ragged jacket and marched energetically whenever the soldiers appeared; flung up his old cap, and joined in the patriotic hurrah; and his eyes sparkled as he danced on the cellar doors to the reel of the street organ. Naturally, the boy had many noble qualities: and with all his ragamuffin pranks, one might perceive that there were hid away, in his childish breast, seeds which, if properly matured,

would bring forth an abundant harvest of noble fruits. But now, how the weeds were springing up, how fast the adversary was sowing the tares, leaving no room for good seed to grow!

The street is a bad school, full of wicked teachers, and our poor little Pat was an apt scholar. He was making fearfully rapid progress, when a kind hand was put out, and he was led lovingly to a better school.

The school was something quite new to the boy, and, at first, he did not understand what it all meant, and hardly fancied its exercises. But soon he began to love the kind voices that spoke to him there, and to understand the teacher's gentle words about God and heaven. The listening face and quiet manner proved that a good influence was at work; and now little Pat is classed amongst the good scholars, and is a special favorite. More than one person has predicted a noble manhood for the boy, if God shall spare his life, notwithstanding the adverse circumstances of his childhood.

Some time ago, Pat's seat was vacant at the school for several Sabbaths, and the vigilant Superintendent, missing his little *protege*, went to look for him; but finding that his parents had moved from their former residence, he did not know where further to seek him.

But one day, as he was walking along the street, he heard his name called, and Pat's hand was gladly thrust into his.

"Why, my boy, where have you been? I have been looking for you," the teacher exclaimed.

"I've moved, sir," Pat answered, and mentioned the name of the street in which he was living.

"But why don't you come to Sabbath-school? You are nearer now than you were before."

"I can't come, sir, because I live *up stairs*," he said, with a comical expression upon his face.

"What difference does that make, Pat—living *up stairs*?"

"You know sir, I used to live *down stairs* before, and when mother locked me up, to keep me from going to Sabbath-school, I used to jump out the