

# THE RELIGIOUS INTELLIGENCER



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### LIFE AT THE FIVE POINTS.

#### THE TWO-PENNY MARRIAGE.

All of our readers may not be aware that "Five Points," is the "sink hole," of New York. There is to be found drunkenness and debauchery—poverty and disease—ignorance and crime, and every species of evil which render men and women wretched and miserable. Reformation among the inhabitants of this part of the City, was thought by many impossible. Attempts were at length made by persons who were assured that nothing was too hard for God. At the head of this labour of true christian benevolence was Mr. Pease, whose name is found in the following article. The work was commenced—not in the usual way—but by first supplying the physical wants of the inmates of those dens of vice in that location. They were so accustomed to crime and to punishment for it, that friendship and kindness were unknown by them. Mr. Pease, however, and others entering in among them—by ascertaining their wants and supplying them, succeeding in convincing them, that there were those who still loved them and sought their welfare. The result is the establishment of Sunday and ragged Schools—the erection of places of worship among them, and the social—and no doubt eternal—salvation of a multitude. The following is a picture of some of the incidents in Mr. Pease's labour, and illustrates some of the work in which he is engaged. We copy it from the *New York Tribune*:

"Mr. Pease, we want to be married."

"Want to be married—what for?"

"Why you see, we don't think it is right for us to be living together this way any longer, and we have been talking over the matter to-day and you see—"

"Yes yes, I see you have been talking over the matter over the bottle and have come to a sort of drunken conclusion to get married. When you get sober you will both repent of it, probably."

"No, Sir, we are not very drunk now, not so drunk but what we can think, and we don't think we are doing right—we are not doing as we were brought up to do by pious parents. We have been reading about the good things you have done for just such poor outcasts as we are and we want you to try and do something for us."

"Read! Can you read? Do you read the Bible?"

"Well not much lately but we read the newspapers and sometimes we read something good in them. How can we read the Bible when we are drunk?"

"Do you think getting married will keep you from getting drunk?"

"Yes, for we are going to take the pledge too and we shall keep it depend upon that."

"Suppose you take the pledge and try that first, and if you can keep it till you can wash some of the dirt away, and get some clothes on, then I will marry you."

"No; that won't do. I shall get to thinking what a poor dirty, miserable wretch I am, and how I am living with this woman, who is not a bad woman by nature, and then I will drink, and then she will drink—oh, cursed rum!—and what is to prevent us? But if we are married, my wife, yes, Mr. Pease, my wife would say 'Thomas'—she would not say 'Tom'—you dirty brute, don't be tempted; and who knows, but we might be somebody yet—somebody that our own mothers would not be ashamed of."

Here the woman, who had been silent and rather moody, burst into a violent flood of tears, crying "Mother, mother, I know not whether she is alive or not, and dare not inquire; but if we were married and reformed, I would make her happy once more."

"I could no longer stand the appeal," said Mr. P., "and determined to give them a trial. I have married a good many poor, wretched looking couples, but none that looked quite so much so as this. The man was hatless and shoeless, without coat or vest, with long hair and beard grimed with dirt. He was by trade a bricklayer, one of the best in the city. She wore the last remains of a silk bonnet, and something that might pass for shoes, and an old, very old dress,

once a rich merino, apparently without any under garments."

"And your name is Thomas—Thomas what?"

"Elting, sir. Thomas Elting, a good true name and true man, that is, shall be if you marry us."

"Well, well. I am going to marry you."

"Are you? There, Mag, I told you so."

"Don't call me Mag. If I am going to be married, I will be by my right name, the one my mother gave me."

"Not Mag. Well, I never knew that."

"Now, Thomas, hold your tongue, you talk too much."

"What is your name?"

"Matilda. Must I tell the other? Yes, I will, and I never will disgrace it. I don't think I should ever have been as bad if I had kept it. That bad woman who first tempted me to ruin, made me take a false name. It is a bad thing for a girl to give up her name, unless for that of a good husband. Matilda Fraley. Nobody knows me by that name in this bad city."

"Very well, Matilda and Thomas, take each other by the right hand, and look at me, for I am now going to unite you in the holy bonds of marriage by God's ordinances. Do you think you are sufficiently sober to comprehend its solemnity?"

"Yes, sir."

"Marriage being one of God's holy ordinances, cannot be kept in sin, misery, filth and drunkenness. Thomas, will you take Matilda to be your lawful, true, only, wedded wife?"

"Yes, sir."

"You promise that you will live with her, in sickness as well as health, and nourish, protect and comfort her as your true and faithful wife; that you will be to her a true and faithful husband; that you will not get drunk, and will clothe yourself and keep clean."

"So I will."

"Never mind answering until I get through. You promise to abstain totally from every kind of drink that intoxicates, and treat this woman kindly, affectionately, and love her as a husband should love his wedded wife. Now all of this, will you, here before me as the servant of the Most High—here in the sight of God in Heaven, most faithfully promise, if I give you this woman to be your wedded wife?"

"Yes, I will."

"And you, Matilda, on your part, will you promise the same, and be a true wife to this man?"

"I will try, sir."

"But do you promise all this faithfully?"

"Yes, sir, I will."

"Then I pronounce you man and wife."

"Now, Thomas," says the new wife, after I had made out the certificate and given it to her, with an injunction to keep it safely—"now pay Mr. Pease, and let us go home and break the bottle." Thomas felt first in the right hand pocket, then the left, then back to the right, then he examined the watch-fob.

"Why, where is it?" says she, "you had two dollars this morning."

"Yes, I know it, but I have only got two cents this evening. There, Mr. Pease, take them, it is all I have got in the world; what more can I give?"

Sure enough, what could he do more? I took them and prayed over them, that in parting with the last penny, this couple might have parted with a vice, a wicked, foolish practice which had reduced them to such a degree of poverty and wretchedness, that the monster power of rum could hardly send its victims lower.

So Tom and Mag were transformed into Mr. and Mrs. Elting, and having grown somewhat more sober while in the house, seemed to fully understand their new position, and all the obligations they had taken upon themselves.

For a few days I thought occasionally of this two-penny marriage, and then it became absorbed with a thousand other scenes of wretchedness which I have witnessed since I have lived in this center of city misery. Time wore on and I married many other couples—often those who came in their carriage and left a golden marriage fee—a delicate way of giving to the needy—but among all I had never performed the rite for a couple quite so low as that of this two-penny fee, and I resolved I never would again. At length, however, I had a call for a full match to them, which I refused.

"Why do you come to me to be married, my friend," said I to the man? You are both too poor to live separate, and besides you are both terrible drunkards, I know you are."

"That is just what we want to get married for, and take the pledge."

"Take that first."

"No, we must take all together, nothing else will save us."

"Will that?"

"It did one of my friends."

"Well, then, go and bring that friend here; let me see and hear how much it saved him, and then I will make up my mind what to do; if I can do you any good I want to do it."

"My friend is at work—he has got a good job and several hands working for him and is making money, and won't quit till night. Shall I come this evening?"

"Yes, I will stay at home and wait for you."

I little expected to see him again, but about 8 o'clock the servant said that man and his girl, with a gentleman and lady, were waiting in the reception room. I told him to ask the lady and gentleman to walk up to the parlor and sit a moment, while I sent the maid and the maid away, being determined never to unite another drunken couple, not dreaming that there was any sympathy between the parties. But they would not come up; they wanted to see that couple married. So I went down and found the squalidly wretched pair in company with a well-dressed laboring man, for he wore a fine black coat, silk vest, gold watch chain, clean white shirt and cravat, polished calf-skin boots; and his wife was just as neat and tidily dressed as anybody's wife, and her face beamed with intelligence, and the way in which she

clung to the arm of her husband, as she seemed to shrink from my sight, told that she was a loving as well as pretty wife.

"This couple," says the gentleman, "have come to be married."

"Yes, I know it, but I have refused. Look at them; do they look like fit subjects for such a holy ordinance? God never intended those whom he created in his own image should live in matrimony like this man and woman. I can not marry them."

"Cannot! Why not? You married us when we were worse off—more dirty—worse clothed, and more intoxicated."

The woman shrunk back a little more out of sight. I saw she trembled violently, and put her clean cambric handkerchief up to her eyes.

"What could it mean? Married them when worse off? Who were they?"

"Have you forgotten us?" said the woman, taking my hands in hers, and dropping on her knees; "have you forgotten drunken Tom and Mag? We have never forgotten you, but pray for you every day?"

"If you have forgotten them, you have not forgotten the two-penny marriage. No wonder you did not know us. I told Matilda she need not be afraid, or ashamed, if you did know her. But I knew you would not. How could you? We were in rags and dirt then. Look at us now. All your work, Sir. All the blessing of that pledge and that marriage, and that good advice you gave us. Look at this suit of clothes, and her dress—all Matilda's work, every stitch of it. Come and look at our house, as neat as she is. Everything in it to make a comfortable home; and oh, Sir, there is a cradle in our bed-room. Five hundred dollars already in the bank, and I shall add as much more next week when I finish my job. So much for one year of a sober life, and a faithful, honest, wife. Now, this man is as good a workman as I am, only he is bound down with the galling fetters of drunkenness, and living with this woman just as I did. Now, he thinks that he can reform, just as well as me; but he thinks he must take the pledge of the same man, and have his first effort sanctified with the same blessing, and then, with a good resolution, and Matilda and me to watch over them, I do believe they will succeed."

So they did. So may others by the same means. I married them, and as I shook hands with Mr. Elting, at parting he left two coins in my hand, with the simple remark that there was another two-penny marriage fee. I was in hopes that it might have been a couple of dollars this time, but I said nothing, and we parted with a mutual God bless you. When I went up stairs I tossed the coins into my wife's lap, with the remark, "two pennies again, my dear."

"Two pennies! Why, husband, they are eagles—real golden eagles. What a deal of good they will do. What blessings have followed that act?"

"And will follow the present, if the pledge is faithfully kept. Truly, this is a good result of a Two-Penny Marriage."

At one of the late religious anniversaries, in New York, the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher said,—"You can find no heathen in India worse than in New York. The sediments of our Christian cities are worse than any you can find in any part of the world. I went one night with Mr. Pease around the miserable haunts of this city, and I saw enough. I thought, what would it be, robbed of all its novelty and romance, if I should go with my family as Mr. Pease has done, down among these people. In this work we find our model in the New Testament. When Christ went where there was sick he healed them; where there was actual want, he created bread, and came down to their physical condition. Take the Gospel to the miserable outcast of our city, and no man can do more. It is as though he made a mark in the sand, and the first tide washes it away. Preach the Gospel, and the hunger of the man makes him forget it. Their is a great deal more Gospel in a loaf of bread sometimes, than in an old dry sermon. If I go to a man and bring to him in his want ever so much philosophy, he will not hear it; but, if I come down to him and give him bread, and clothes and medicines, this will give him a correct idea of the Gospel—one which he can appreciate and understand. This work requires liberal contributions. Among these people there is a new generation every week by importation. A meal does not last for a week, and these children are fed daily. I commend this cause to your liberality and contributions."

They that will not hear Christ say, "Come to me" in a day of grace, shall hear him say, "Depart from me" in a day of judgment.

The reason why so many fall into hell, is because so few think of it.