

## Horace Greeley's First day in N. York.

At sunrise on Friday, the 18th of August, 1831, Horace Greeley landed at Whitehall, close to the Battery, in the city of New York.

New York was and is a city of adventurers.— Few of our eminent citizens were born here. It is a common boast among New Yorkers that this great merchant and that great millionaire came to the city a ragged boy, with only three and sixpence in his pocket; and now look at him!

In the list of one hundred men who are esteemed to be the most "successful" among the citizens of New York, it is probable that seventy-five of the names would be those of men who began their career here in circumstances that gave no promise of future eminence. But among them all it is questionable whether there was one who on his arrival had so little to help, so much to hinder, as Horace Greeley.

Of solid cash his stock was ten dollars. His other property consisted of the clothes he wore; the clothes he carried in his small bundle, and the stick with which he carried it. The clothes he wore need not be described; they were those which had already astonished the people of Erie. The clothes he carried were very few, and precisely similar in cut and quality to the garments which he exhibited to the public. On the violent supposition that his wardrobe could in any case have become a saleable commodity, we may compute that he was worth on the Friday morning at sunrise, ten dollars and seventy-five cents. He had no friend, no acquaintance here. There was not a human being upon whom he had any claim for help or advice. His appearance was all against him. He looked in his round jacket like an overgrown boy. No one was likely to observe the engaging beauty of his face, or the noble round of his brow under that overhanging hat, over that long and stooping body. He was somewhat timorous in his intercourse with strangers. He would not intrude upon their attention; he had not the faculty of pushing his way, and proclaiming his merits and desires. To the arts by which men are conciliated, by which unwilling ears are forced to attend to an unwelcome tale, he was utterly a stranger. Moreover he had neglected to bring with him any letters of recommendation, or any certificate of his skill as a printer. It had not occurred to him that anything of the kind is necessary—so unacquainted was he with the life of cities.

His first employment was to find a boarding-house where he could live a long time on a small sum. Leaving the green Battery on his left, he strolled off into Broad street, and at the corner of that street and Wall discovered a house that in his eyes had the aspect of a cheap tavern.— He entered the bar-room, and asked the price of board.

"I guess we are too high for you," said the bar keeper, after bestowing one glance upon the enquirer.

"Well, how much a week do you charge?"

"Six dollars."

"Yes, that's more than I can afford," said Horace, with a laugh at the enormous mistake he had made in enquiring at a house of such pretensions.

He turned up Wall street, and sauntered into Broadway. Seeing no house of entertainment that seemed at all suited to his circumstances, he sought the water once more, and wandered along the wharves of the North river as far as Washington Market. Boarding houses of the cheapest kind, and drinking-houses of the lowest grade, the former frequented chiefly by emigrants, the latter by sailors, were numerous enough in that neighborhood. A house which combined the low groggery and cheap boarding house, in one small establishment, kept by an Irishman named M'Gorlick, chanced to be the one that first attracted the rover's attention. It looked so mean and squalid, that he was tempted to enter, and again inquire for what sum a man could buy a week's shelter and sustenance.

"Twenty shillings," was the landlord's reply.

"Ah," said Horace, "that sounds more like it."

He engaged to board with Mr. M'Gorlick on the instant, and proceeded soon to test the quality of his fare by taking breakfast in the bosom of his family. The cheapness of the entertainment was its best recommendation.

After breakfast, Horace performed an act which I believed he had never spontaneously performed before. He bought some clothes with a view to render himself more presentable. They were of the commonest kind, and the garments were few, but the purchase absorbed nearly half his capital! Satisfied with his appearance he now began the round of the printing offices, going into every one he could find, and asking for employment—merely asking and going away, without a word, as soon as he was refused.

In the course of the morning he found himself in the office of the Journal of Commerce, and he chanced to direct his inquiry, if they wanted a hand, to the late David Hale, one of the proprietors of the paper. Mr. Hale took a survey of the person who had presumed to address him, and replied in substance as follows:

"My opinion is, young man, that you are a runaway apprentice, and you'd better go home to your master."

Horace endeavored to explain his position and circumstances, but the impetuous Hale could be brought to no more gracious response than, "Be off about your business, and don't bother us."

Horace, more amused than indignant, retired, and pursued his way to the next office. All that day he walked the streets, climbed into upper stories, came down again, ascended other heights, descended, dived into basements, traversed passages, groped through labyrinths, ever asking the same question, "Do you want a hand?" and ever receiving the same reply, in various degrees of civility, "No." He walked ten times as many miles as he needed, for he was not aware that nearly all the printing offices in New York are in the same square mile. He went the entire length of

many streets which anybody could have told him did not contain one.

He went home on Friday evening very tired and a little discouraged.

Early on Saturday morning he resumed the search and continued it with energy till the evening. But no one wanted a hand. Business seemed to be at a stand still, or every office had its full complement of men. On Saturday evening he was still more fatigued. He resolved to remain in the city a day or two longer, and then, if still unsuccessful, to turn his face home-ward, and inquire for work at the towns through which he passed. Though discouraged, he was not disheartened, and still less alarmed.

The youthful reader should observe here what a sense of independence and what fearlessness dwell in the spirit of a man who had learned the art of living on the mere necessities of life. If Horace Greeley had, after another day or two of trial, chosen to leave the city, he would have carried with him about four dollars, and with that sum he could have walked leisurely and with an unanxious heart all the way back to his father's house, six hundred miles, inquiring for work at every town, and feeling himself to be a free and independent American citizen, traveling on his own honestly earned means, undegraded by an obligation, the equal in social rank of the best man in the best house he passed. Blessed is the young man that can walk thirty miles a day, and dine contentedly on half a pound of crackers! Give him four dollars and summer weather, and he can travel and revel like a prince *incognito* for forty days.

On Sunday morning, our hero arose refreshed and cheerful. He went to church twice, and spent a happy day. In the morning he induced a man who lived in the house to accompany him to a small Universalist church on Pitt street, near the dry dock, not less than three miles distant from M'Gorlick's boarding house. In the evening he found his way to a Unitarian church. Except on one occasion, he had never before this Sunday heard a sermon which accorded with his own religious opinion; and the pleasure with which he heard the benignity of the Deity asserted and proved by able men was one of the highest he had enjoyed.

In the afternoon, as if in reward of the pious way in which he spent the Sunday, he heard news which gave him a faint hope of being able to remain in the city. An Irishman, a friend of the landlord, came in the course of the afternoon, to pay his usual Sunday visit, and became acquainted with Horace and his fruitless search for work. He was a shoemaker, I believe, but he lived in a house which was much frequented by journeymen printers. From them he had heard that hands were wanted at West's No. 85 Chatham street, and recommended his new acquaintance to make immediate application at that office.

Accustomed to country hours, and eager to seize the chance, Horace was in Chatham st., and on the steps of the designated house, by half past five on Monday morning. West's printing office was in the second story, the ground floor being occupied by McElrath and Bangs as a bookstore. They were publishers and West was their printer. Neither store nor office was yet opened, and Horace set down on the steps to wait.

Had Thomas McElrath, Esquire, happened to pass on an early walk to the battery that morning, and seen our hero sitting on those steps, with his rod bundle on his knees, his pale face supported on his hands, his attitude expressive of dejection and anxiety, his attire extremely unornamental, it would not occur to Thomas McElrath, Esquire, as a *probable* event, that one day he would be the PARTNER of that sorry figure, and proud of the connection! Nor did Miss Reed, of Philadelphia, when she saw Benjamin Franklin pass her father's house, eating a large roll and carrying two others under his arms, see in that poor wanderer any likeness of her future husband, the husband that made her a proud and an immortal wife. The princes of the mind always remain *incognito* till they come to the throne, and doubtless the Coming Man, when he comes will appear in a strange disguise, and no man will know him.

It seemed very long before any one came to work that morning at No. 85. The steps on which our friend was seated, were in the narrow part of Chatham street, the gorge through which at morning and evening the swarthy tide of mechanics pours. By six o'clock the stream has set strongly down townward, and it gradually swells to a torrent bright with tin kettles. Thousands passed by, but no one stopped until near seven o'clock, when one of Mr. West's journeymen arrived, and finding the door still locked, he sat down on the steps by the side of Horace Greeley. They fell into conversation and Horace stated his circumstances, something of his history, and his need of employment. Luckily this journeyman was a Vermonter, and a kind-hearted, intelligent man. He looked upon Horace as a countryman, and was struck with the singular candor and artlessness with which he told his tale. "I saw," says he, "that he was an honest, good young man, and being a Vermonter myself, I determined to help him if I could."

He did help him. The doors were opened, the men began to arrive; Horace and his newly-found friend ascended to the office, and soon after seven the work of the day began. It is hardly necessary to say that the appearance of Horace as he sat in the office, waiting for the coming of the foreman, excited astonishment, and brought upon his friend a variety of satirical observations. Nothing daunted, however, on the arrival of the foreman he stated his case, and endeavored to interest him enough in Horace to give him a trial. It happened that the work for which a man was wanted in the office was the composition of a Polyglot Testament, a kind of work which is extremely difficult and tedious. Several men had tried their hand at it, and in a few days or a few hours given it up. The foreman looked at Hor-

ace and Horace looked at the foreman. Horace saw a handsome man, (now known to the sporting public as Col. Porter of the 'Spirit of the Times.') The foreman beheld a youth who could have gone on the stage that minute as Ezekiel Homespun, without the alteration of a thread of hair, and brought down the house by his "getting up" alone. He no more believed that Ezekiel could set up a page of a Polyglot Testament than he could construct a chronometer. However, partly to oblige Horace's friend, partly because he was unwilling to wound the feelings of the applicant by sending him abruptly away, he consented to let him try.

"Fix up a case for him," said he, "and we'll see if he can do anything." In a few minutes Horace was at work.

The gentleman to whose intercession Horace Greeley owed his first employment in New York is now known to all the dentists in the Union as the leading member of a firm which manufacture annually twelve hundred thousand artificial teeth. He has made a fortune the reader will be glad to learn, and lives in a mansion up town.

After Horace had been at work an hour or two Mr. West, the "boss," came into the office. What his feelings were when he saw his new man may be inferred from a little conversation upon the subject which took place between him and the foreman.

"Did you hire that d--d fool?" asked West with no small irritation.

"Yes; we must have hands, and he's the best I could get," said the foreman, justifying his conduct, though he was really ashamed of it.

"Well," said the master, "for God's sake pay him off to-night, and let him go about his business."