



*The Story  
of  
Cripple Tom*

or,

**"Knowing is Loving, and Loving is Doing."**



**GOSPEL BOOK DEPOT**

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**I**N one of the miserable East London homes, in a dark room at the top of the house, lay a cripple boy. He had lain there for over two years, greatly neglected and comparatively unknown. When quite young his parents had died, leaving him to the mercy of an aged relative, whom he called “Granny.”

Born a cripple, he had always been a sufferer, but as long as he was able, he had swept a crossing on his crutches, or gone short errands to earn a few pence. But soon after his parents' death the boy had to take to his bed.

Very ungraciously the old woman allowed him to occupy the top room in her house, which room he never left again.

His mother had taught him to read and write, but not knowing the truth herself, she had never told him of "Jesus and His love." Lying alone day after day, he became possessed with a great longing to know more about the things of God, and to have a Bible of his own. So summoning up courage, he one day consulted Granny about it.

His only encouragement in that direction was an ironical laugh. "Bibles weren't in her line! What did a lad like him want with Bibles?" So the matter dropped for a time, but the lad's desire to possess one did not grow less.

One day, however, up the creaking

stairs came noisy, boisterous Jack Lee, the only friend the cripple had in the world. "Hurrah! hurrah! Got a new box! Off north to-morrow! Come to say good-bye, Tom," he cried, all excitement, seating himself on the bed, and wiping the perspiration from his brow; "but I've got a real beauty present for you, my lad," taking from his pocket something wrapped in a bit of brown paper.

Tom raised himself on his elbows, not at all gladdened by the news he had heard. "A bright new shilling for you, Tom, lad. And you're not to spend it till yer wants suffing real particular."

"Oh, Jack! you are good, but I do want something now very, very particular."

"Yer do? what's he?"

"I want a Bible."

“ A Bible ! well I never ! Who ever heard of a poor lad spending all that on a Bible, when I had to scrape months and months to save it up in coppers.”

“ Don’t be angry, dear Jack,” said the cripple boy, “ you’re going away and I shall be lonelier than ever, and oh, I do so want a Bible. Please get it, Jack—now—this very evening at Fisher’s, before the shop closes. I must find out whether them there folks in that mission hall you and I sometimes used to go to, told true about some one they called Jesus. Let it be your parting gift, Jack, and you will make me so glad.”

“ Very well, lad, then I’ll go, but I knows nought about Bible buyin’.”

Jack complied very ungraciously, and descended the stairs less rapidly

than he had mounted them. But he got over his disappointment before he returned with a beautiful shilling Bible.

Tom's joy and gratitude were unbounded. "I know it, Jack. I know it!" hugging the book to his breast. "I'm happy now. Oh, how kind you were to save that shilling!"

The lads never met again; but if the honest errand-boy could only have known what a precious treasure that Holy Book became to his cripple friend, he would have been amply rewarded for the sacrifice he had made to save the shilling.

After a month's hard reading, Tom Reed knew more about his Bible than many who have professed to study it for twenty years. He had learned the way of salvation, his only teacher the Holy Spirit; he had learned also that

obedience to God's will meant helping to save others.

"It won't do to keep all this blessed news to myself," he said; so he thought and thought, until at last a simple but very beautiful work was decided on for the Master.

His bed stood close by the window-sill, which was low, and somehow he got a pencil and paper, and wrote out different texts, which he would fold, pray over, and then drop into the noisy street below, directed—

"To the Passer-by—Please Read."

He hoped that by this means some one might hear of Jesus and His salvation. This service of love, faithfully rendered, went on for some weeks, when one evening he heard a strange footstep, and immediately afterwards a tall, well-dressed gentleman entered

the room and took his seat by the lad's bedside.

"So you are the lad who drops texts from the window, are you?" he asked kindly.

"Yes," said Tom, brightening up. "Have yer heard as some one has got hold of one?"

"Plenty, lad, plenty! Would you believe it, if I told you that I picked up one last evening, and God blessed it to my soul?"

"I can believe in God's Word doing anything, sir," said the lad, humbly.

"And I am come," said the gentleman, "to thank you personally."

"Not me, sir! I only does the writin'; He does the blessin'."

"And you are happy in this work for Christ?" said the visitor.

"Couldn't be happier, sir. I don't think nothin' of the pain in my back,



for shan't I be glad when I sees Him, to tell Him that as soon as I know'd about Him I did all as I could to serve Him ! I suppose you get lots o' chances, don't yer, sir ? ”

“ Ah, lad, but I have neglected them ; but God helping me, I mean to begin afresh.

“ At home in the country I have a sick lad dying. I had to come to town on pressing business. When I kissed him good-bye, he said, ‘ Father, I wish I had done some work for Jesus. I cannot bear to meet Him empty-handed,’ and the words stuck to me all day long, and the next day too, until the evening, when I was passing down this street, your little paper fell on my hat.

“ I opened it and read, ‘ I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day ; the night cometh, when no

man can work' (John ix. 4). It seemed like a command from heaven. It startled me and brought me to my knees that night.

"I have professed to be a Christian for twenty-two years, my lad, and when I made inquiries, and found out who dropped these texts into the street, and why it was done, it so shamed and humbled me that I determined to go home and work for the same Master that you are serving so faithfully.

"But now about yourself. I must begin by making your life brighter. How would you like to end your days in one of those homes for cripple lads, where you would be nursed and cared for, and where you would see the trees and flowers, and hear the birds sing? I could get you into one not far from my home if you liked, Tom."

The weary lad looked wistfully into the man's kindly face, and after a few moments' silence answered : " Thank'e sir ; I've heard & tell of 'em afore, ~~but~~ I ain't anxious to die easy when He died hard. I might get taken up with them things a bit too much, and I'd rather be a-lookin' at Him, and a-carryin' on this 'ere work till He come to fetch me.

" Plenty of joy for a boy like me to have a mansion with Him up there through eternity."

The visitor felt more reprov'd than ever.

" Very well, my lad ; then I will see that you have proper food and all the paper you need while you live. I will settle it all with one of the Bible-women."

Then the gentleman rose and said farewell. Before leaving London he

made every arrangement for the lad to be cared for, and then with a gladder heart he went back to his beautiful country home, and lived for Christ.

As soon as he could he built a mission hall on his own grounds, and preached Jesus to the villagers. When he confessed his sin of negligence towards them, and told them of his second conversion through the cripple boy and his text, many of them were led to "seek Jesus."

News of the dying lad reached them from time to time through the Bible-woman, but it was not till winter had set in, and the snow had fallen and covered the earth with its crystal whiteness, that they heard that the dear lad had "gone to be with Jesus."

The same post brought a parcel which contained Tom's much-prized

and much-used Bible. What a precious relic was that marked Bible in that beautiful home! for when the cripple boy's friend lent it to his youngest son to read—the careful marking, the short simple prayers written by the cripple lad on the margin and his dying wish on the fly-leaf, written about a week before his death, that “this Holy Book may be as great a friend to some one else as it has been to me”—made such a deep impression on the youth that he gave himself to the Lord, and later on to mission work in foreign fields.

Out in Central Africa he has shown that worn Bible to many a native Christian, when telling them about Cripple Tom and his texts.

Does the reader not see what one fully consecrated, lowly, self-sacrificing life can do? And are we not con-

vinced that there is something terribly wrong that there are not more of such lives? Thousands of sad weary hearts are wanting the little ministry of love that we might render.

Shall we then take our ease, enjoy our pleasure, or indulge in our luxuries? Millions of dark, benighted souls are crying out for the light; they have to continue groping in darkness, while many of us, professing to love Christ, live self-centred and self-indulgent lives. To-day—without the help of the world—Christians could easily send out enough missionaries to evangelise the world; but the dark blot of "*it won't*" stains their fair name with a stain that nothing but the blood of Jesus Christ can ever wipe out.

Oh, that the Spirit of God would, by His mighty power, cleanse away all

the slothfulness, unreality, and self-complacency from our lives, for following Christ means self-sacrifice, self-denial, and there is no such thing as holiness without it.

If a dying lad in suffering and destitution could joyfully deny himself the little sip of milk which cooled his parched lips and partly fed his weary body, surely it is possible for us to do more !

“ There are lonely hearts to cherish,  
While the days are going by ;  
There are weary souls who perish,  
While the days are going by ;  
If a smile we can renew,  
As our journey we pursue,  
Oh, the good we all may do,  
While the days are going by.”

Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord ?