



A Full Stocking By Fitch & Bryant

UCH weather, and Christmas but a few days away. The city was properly dressed for the occasion. Snow covered the streets and the steps leading to the beautiful homes on the boulevard where every holiday wish of the people would be gratified.

The bright-eyed, thin-clad boy on the steps of one of these beautiful homes was not wasting any time in envying the rich. He had waited there for some minutes for the big automobile he knew was due to arrive from the hospital about that time each day.

The big car pulled up beside the curb. A big, kindly-faced man stepped from it and started up the steps.

"Say, are you the doc?" The surgeon paused half-way up the steps and glanced at the small bit of humanity balanced on the stone hand-rail.

"Why, yes, my little man, what can I do for you?" he asked tenderly, as he stepped over and put a hand on the lad's knee. He was familiar with the type of boy who had greeted him, and it was a type of boy he liked, a fearless, independent, little waif of the streets. In the great hospital of which he was the head, they were his most uncomplaining and appreciative patients, even if they were not the profitable ones.

"Notin' fer meself; it's for me brudder." The little fellow spoke earnestly and looked straight into the eminent surgeon's kindly gray eyes.

"Your brother? Oh, I see. Well, what's the matter with your brother?" "Cripple." The one word, with the saddened tone, told the whole story to Doctor Harrison. He knew the rest of the tale from long experience, and asked no further questions.

"Come in the house, and let's talk it over."

"Say, doc, I don't believe you want me to come in. I ain't got no money."

"Why, that's just the reason I want you to come in," the doctor replied, with a merry twinkle in his eye, and ran up the steps closely followed by the small urchin. As the door closed behind them he seized the youngster in a playful bear hug, and landed him in a heavily upholstered leather chair. It was such a chair as that boy had seen in the great shop windows, but had never thought of sitting in, and the warmth of its soft cushions gave a pleasant thrill to his shivering little body.

"What is your name?" "Tom McGuire. You know Pat McGuire that tends bar down in East Downey street?"

"No, I don't believe I do."

"Well, he's me uncle, and he says you set his leg, time of the big railroad smash-up at Hanover."

"Yes, I remember going out to Hanover with a lot of other doctors at the time of the accident; but that was ten years ago."

"That don't make any difference to Uncle Pat. He never forgets favors. Guess he ain't had many in his life."

"Did your Uncle Pat send you to see me?" asked the surgeon.

"Naw, but it's because what he told me 'bout you made me think it might be all right to come and see 'bout Pete's leg."

"Where is your brother, Thomas?" "Aw, don't call me that. I ain't Thomas. I'm just Tom. Raggy Tom they call me 'round the square. I sells papes on the southwest corner of the square. Business ain't so bad this time of year, and I'm breakin' in Pete."

"He can walk, then, can he?" The physician had seated himself close to his small caller, and was giving his whole attention to the case in hand. "Tell me more about Pete."

"Pete was born that way. Doctor said one leg wasn't no good and never was goin' to be, so when Pete got big enough, I saved me pennies and bought him a crutch, and after while he got so's he could use it. Then I took him down to the corner and he helped me sell papes in rush hours. He likes to be dotin' 'sontin', but he gets awful tired holdin' the papes and hangin' on to his crutch."

"Does he stay there all day?" "Naw, not all the time. Business ain't rushin' only mornin's and nights, and Pete stays home part of the time. On cold days he gets shivery 'cause he can't get 'round very fast so's to keep himself warm."

"Is there any news stand on that corner?" the doctor asked, becoming still more interested.

"Naw, we dassen't put one up. Billy Hahn, he's the feller what had that corner before me, he tried to get leave to put up a stand alongside of the fountain where there's plenty of room, but the aldermen turned him down. He didn't have no pull, and I ain't got none neither. Me and Pete was up on the northeast corner, and when Billy got wet feet and pneumonia and died, we come down to his corner."

"Tom, are your father and mother living?" "Maw is. I dunno much about paw. He ain't no good. Uncle Pat says he sees him hangin' 'round once in a while. Maw's got two younger'n me and Pete. I'm ten and Pete's goin' on nine. Maw works awful hard takin' care of the kids and sewin' for a department store. She says to me one time: 'Tom, you look after Pete and I'll take care of the young uns.' Maw can't hardly get enough to buy 'em clothes, so I chide in when his is good. Say, doc, I read in my papes 'bout that kid you fixed up last week, and I'll bet ten cents Pete's leg's just like that. Think I, when I read that, I'm goin' to see Doc Harrison and tell him 'bout Pete.' Now, doc, on the level, how much do you charge for a job like that?"

"I received \$2,000 for that operation." There was a merry twinkle in the doctor's eye that was lost on his little visitor.

"Aw, say, doc, wot yer givin' me? You didn't make all that in one day?" "Yes, in two hours, Tom."

The youngster's eyes filled with tears, and he bit his lip to hold back the sobs. A good leg meant so much to Pete, and he would gladly give \$2,000 for one for him if that were possible, but the doctor might have as well asked for the moon in payment for that leg. His vision of Pete without the hated crutch was fast disappearing, but he would not let it get away entirely.

"Don't you never charge no less?" the boy managed to ask, without giving away to the burst of tears ready to flow at his disappointment.

"Oh, yes, indeed; but you asked me how much I received for an operation like last week's, and I never performed one just like that before. It was very difficult and peculiar."

Tom slid out of the chair as if to go. "I guess it's all off, doc. I ain't in your class."

"Tom, sit down there." The doctor's tone of command was filled with more laughter than severity. "Let's talk business."

The youngster obeyed, watching the eminent surgeon with a puzzled look, uncertain whether the great man was really going to make a concession or upbraid him for taking his time. Faint though it was, a new hope sprang up in the small breast. Possibly there might be some terms of payment that he could meet as he grew older and could earn more than the few pennies that meant the day's profits on his paper sales.

"Tom," the doctor continued, "I know Pete."

"You know Pete?" Tom gasped in amazement.

"Yes, I have seen him down by the fountain at the square. You know we specialists always keep our eyes open for anything in our line, so I have noticed him several times as I passed the corner. Of course, I can't say positively, but I think an operation will give Pete two legs instead of one. Now, how much can you afford to pay for such an operation?"

The youngster's eyes shone like two live coals. So the doctor knew Pete, and thought he could cure him! Was it a dream? Tom pinched himself to make sure it was all real. Yes, he was awake all right. How much could he afford? He felt he could afford anything to give Pete a new leg, but how little that was compared with

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ten-year-old man of affairs, and turned to a patient waiting in the outer office.

Tom McGuire had known all too little of happiness in his hard ten years, but this was surely the climax of his earthly bliss. A new leg for Pete! Could anything be finer! He ran most of the way back to the square, and nearly knocked the cripple over in his eagerness to tell the good news.

"Say, Pete, you're goin' to have a new leg!" "What?" the bewildered Pete was too intent on selling papers to bother about new legs.

"A new leg, I say. Doc Harrison, what I told you 'bout, is goin' to make one for you."

"Aw, gwan. Wot yer givin' me?" grunted the skeptical Pete, ignoring the enthusiasm of the head of the house.

"Come on, I'll show you." "Naw, you don't. You don't get me losin' what leg I've got."

"Honest, Pete, I'm on the level. The doc says he kets he can fix you up good as new."

"Nixy for me. I'm fer keepin' me bum prop. I reads how a doc saws off a boy's legs just for fun."

"Aw, Pete, don't be silly. The doc won't hurt you."

"Don't you believe it," Pete replied, and started down the sidewalk to get away from temptation. Tom knew Pete's stolid strength of will, and decided on another tack. He felt in his pocket and found sixteen cents. Counting out five pennies, he ran across the street, and soon had Dr. Harrison on the wire.

"Hello, this you, doc?—Pete won't come—Naw, he's afraid you'll hurt him. He's read how a doc cut off a feller's leg just for fun—Send up a paper! Sure, but you'll have to hide yer sign, or he won't never come in—All right, I'll send him up. Please don't hurt him, will you, doc?—Good-by."

Tom ran back to the corner. "Hey, Pete," he called, as soon as he was within earshot of the cripple, "a guy just told me to bustle a Star up to 345 West Alden avenue. Get on a Prince street car, and hurry up. Here's a dime for carfare."

"There ain't no profit in that," Pete grunted, "go yerself an' save the dime."

"Do as yer told. I'm boss o' this corner," the young financier retorted, shoving Pete toward a car as fast as the cripple could hobble. "Get off at Walnut street and walk west half a block," he shouted as he helped Pete on the car platform.

For the first time in twenty-two years Dr. Harrison's sign was hidden as the cripple struggled up the steps and rang the bell.

"Here's yer pape," he said in a matter-of-fact tone, holding out the first edition, when the maid opened the door.

"Paper?" asked the girl, pretending ignorance. "Step in a moment and I'll see if it belongs here."

Pete stepped inside and took off his cap. The girl disappeared, but returned presently, and pointed to an open door down the hall. Pete hobbled in the direction pointed, and entered the doctor's outer office.

"Sit down a minute," came a pleasant voice from somewhere, and Pete

I never make an examination without the owner's consent."

"Tell the doc you want to have yer leg looked at," Tom commanded in a tone that bore authority.

Before Pete could answer, the doctor had interposed a good natured objection.

"You keep out of this, Tom. This is Pete's leg, and he shall have the whole say about what is done to that leg."

This announcement was a revelation to Pete, who had had visions of being bound and gagged while the doctor attacked his leg with a common hand-saw.

"Is that straight?" he asked, looking up dubiously into the surgeon's face.

"Absolutely!" the doctor exclaimed. "I won't touch a finger to that leg till you give me your consent."

"There, Pete, what'd I tell you, Tom broke in, but the doctor frowned at him to keep quiet. The eyes of both Tom and the surgeon were now on Pete.

"What'll it cost?" the cripple seemed about to yield but wanted one more obstacle cleared away.

"Never mind the cost, Tom and I have arranged that between us."

The look of appreciation and gratitude that the cripple brother gave Tom at that moment would have repaid any sacrifice—yes, even the whole of the corner paper privilege. Pete's eyes glistened with teardrops as he turned to the doctor.

"Go ahead, doc. Do anything you want, only don't hurt me too much. Say, ain't Tom right?"

"You bet he is," the doctor replied, and motioned the cripple to the inner office.

Tom was busy as he could be on Christmas eve and it was well after midnight when he crawled into his little bed, tired and lonely, for Pete had gone to the hospital three days before. He knew away down deep in his heart that it would do no good to hang up his stocking, but hope dies hard in the young and the stocking was pinned to the side of the chair.

The sun had shone for an hour or more when Tom awoke, and realized that it was Christmas day. He hardly dared to glance at the stocking but summoned up courage and looked at the chair where it hung. The stocking was empty. Tom reached over and felt it to make sure and then crawled back under the bedclothes. For the first time in his life the roughness of the world had overcome him and, in spite of all the strength he could muster, the great hot tears crowded into his eyes and flowed down his cheeks. He buried his face in the pillow and cried a great big soulful cry.

"Tom! Tom!" It was his mother calling, but he only pulled the bedclothes over his head and pretended not to hear. He would not for the world let maw know that he would cry, he who was supposed to bear the burden of the family on his shoulders.

"Tom! Tom! Tom!" came the call again, "here's a letter for you."

A letter for Tom? Such an event had come into his life only twice, once when the fresh air society offered him a week in the country which he could not afford to take, and a letter from the license bureau with his newsboy badge. The dry side of the pillow served as handkerchief and towel, and, holding his head low to hide his red eyes, he ran into the next room.

"John J. Sweeney," he read on the corner of the envelope, "why, he's the alderman from this district." Fingers

were all thumbs trying to get that letter open and part of it was torn before the envelope would give up its secret. The note was short and type-written but it took Tom nearly five minutes to read it aloud. Each word seemed to have taken a new meaning to the astonished boy.

"Mr. Thomas McGuire, 148 Willow St., City. Dear Sir: I have the honor to inform you that the application of McGuire and Harrison for a news stand adjoining the fountain on the southwest corner of the square has been granted and possession may be taken at once. Believe me, Yours very truly, JOHN J. SWEENEY, Alderman 17th District."

"Great Jewhilkens," Tom shouted, and his mother, too, made some sort of an exclamation that was drowned in the racket of the two smaller McGuires, who felt called upon to add to the general din.

"Me and the doc's goin' to have a real news stand right where I wanted it. Don't I wish Pete was home to hear the good news! What do you think o' that, maw? A great big news stand right at the fountain where we can

sell ten times more papes! Ain't that a bully Christmas present? Say, maw, the doc's a brick and don't you forget it."

"Well, hurry up and get dressed or you won't have much Christmas Day left."

Tom vaulted chair and cradle on his way back to the bedroom and slammed his tear soaked pillow into a corner of the room as an expression of his feelings toward tears.

"A real news stand. A great big stand all to ourselves. I can see just how it's goin' to look. Gee! ain't that grand!"

But greater news was on the way and before he had pulled on the empty stocking he heard a noise in the other room and peeped out. There was a big man in a fur overcoat at the door with another letter and he was not the postman either.

"Tom, here's another one for you." The summons was needless for Tom was already at his mother's side and had seized the white envelope.

"James B. Harrison, M. D.," he read. "That's about Pete, Jimmy Christmas! Say, maw, you open it. My hands is all shaky."

Mrs. McGuire could not make much better headway opening the envelope than Tom, but she managed to pull out the letter and Tom began to read laboriously.

"Mr. Thomas McGuire, 148 Willow St., Dear Tom? Merry Christmas from Pete and the doc. Hurrah for Pete! The operation was a great success. Pete will be running around without a crutch long before next Christmas. Come around to the hospital at four o'clock. Sincerely your friend, JAMES R. HARRISON."

"P. S.—By the way, Tom, I don't believe I shall have time to take care of my half of that newspaper privilege at the corner, so I return herewith the agreement cancelled. Leave a paper at my house every night while Pete is in the hospital and we will call it square."

"Three cheers for Pete," Tom yelled, and gave the table such a kick with his bare toe that it almost made him howl. A little thing like that was not allowed to break up the celebration so he grasped his mother's hands, and swung her around and around in a "ring around a rosy" until the poor woman hardly knew whether it was Christmas or Fourth of July.

"Ain't this a grand Christmas?" he shouted. "Ain't the doc bully? Ain't Peter the luckiest feller in the whole world?"

"Yes, yes, yes," groaned Mrs. McGuire, trying her best to regain her breath and balance. "O, it's—too good—to be true!"

"Well, it is true, fer I knew the doc wouldn't fool me. Ain't he the grandest ever?"

"Tom you'll never be ready to go to the hospital by four o'clock if you don't get dressed."

Tom rushed into the bedroom and came back with the empty stocking that had hung on the chair.

"Say maw, I'll shut my eyes, and you stick them two letters in me stocking and I'll pretend I found 'em there. Ain't this a bee-outful Christmas?" (Copyright, by W. G. Chapman.)

Friendly Advice. "Yes," said the Fairy Prince, "you may have whatever you want for a Christmas present."

"I will choose," said the Fortunate Person, "either a wife or an automobile."

"How foolish!" exclaimed the Fairy Prince. "Why do you not select something that you can manage?"

To Maintain Good Roads. Asheville.—The policy of the new board of Buncombe county commissioners, as announced at the meeting held recently will be to maintain the present roads which traverse the county rather than to build new ones. Reaching this decision, the commissioners went over many of the highways in the western section of the county to familiarize themselves with prevailing conditions.

\$40,000 Fire at Asheville. Asheville.—Damage to the amount of \$40,000 was done by fire a few nights ago to the plant of the Asheville Milling Company, on Haywood street, the loss being covered by insurance to the amount of \$25,000. The fire had its origin in the motor room at the southeast corner of the building and spread with such rapidity that all sections of the structure that laborers on duty at the mill were unable to use the fire extinguishers which had been placed to every floor.

Kinston Pushes Improvements. Kinston.—The purchasers of \$100,000 of municipal bonds voted here last June, are expected to make payment for the issue before January 1, and actual construction of extensive street, lighting and sewerage extensions will be given first consideration, and will be of proportions to connect up every house within the corporate limits with the system. The administration expects to decrease the surprisingly low death rate of last summer considerably, if the work can be completed by the hot months.

Passes 15,000,000 Pounds. Greenville.—November was a great month on the Greenville tobacco market. Contrary to the general impression that all the tobacco is out of the country, it poured into this market and farmers went home with money in their pockets. There were really only two sales days last week, but those two days meant the passing of over 1,000,000 pounds from the farmers to the buyers at satisfactory prices. About the highest prices ruling were up to about 40 cents, but averages of from 20 to 30 cents.

Foreign Mission Report is Very Gratifying.—One Session is Held at Wake Forest.

Raleigh.—There were present for the organization of the North Carolina Baptist State Convention 435 delegates with every indication that the attendance will reach 1,000. Rev. C. H. Durham of Winston-Salem was re-elected president for a third term.

Other officers elected were: Vice presidents, J. E. Vann, Winston-Salem; O. A. Tate, High Point and H. P. King, Mount Airy; secretaries, Dr. Chase Brewer, Wake Forest College, and Rev. W. M. Gilmore, Louisburg; corresponding secretary, Rev. Livingstone Johnson, Raleigh; auditor, F. H. Briggs, Raleigh; treasurer, Walters Durham, Raleigh; member of board of trustees to succeed Rev. W. C. Tyree, who has left the state, L. R. Pruett, Charlotte.

The convention selected Charlotte as the next meeting place and named Doctor O'Kelly, pastor of the First Baptist Church, Raleigh, to deliver the annual sermon. The report recommending Charlotte as next convention city was read by G. P. Harrell of Franklinton and was adopted unanimously in view of a pressing invitation that came from Charlotte.

Foreign missions were up for special consideration in the Baptist State convention with an interesting report presented by Rev. Bruce Benton and stirring talks on mission and several mission fields by Rev. J. F. Lowe of the Foreign Mission Board, Rev. D. W. Herring and Rev. W. E. Crocker, missionaries to China, and C. J. Thompson, district secretary of the Mission Board.

The report presented by Mr. Benton showed Southern Baptist mission work in the papal countries of Argentina, Brazil, Italy and Mexico and the pagan countries of Africa, China and Japan; that there are 278 missionaries with 635 native helpers; 380 churches, 339 schools, 9,376 students, 12 medical missionaries and eight hospitals and 13 dispensaries that treated the past year 74,899 patients. North Carolina paid to foreign missions \$54,318 and is asked this coming year to raise \$60,000. The foreign missionaries reported the past year 5,252 baptisms, a gain of 1,831 over any previous year, the biggest gains being reported from China.

The convention considered Baptist educational matters at the sessions in Wake Forest, especially gratifying reports on Wake Forest College, Meredith College, Chowan College, Oxford Seminary and the various secondary schools. The report as to Wake Forest College showed annual expenses of \$62,850 of which 40 per cent is taken care of by the student fees and the remainder covered by endowment. The eightieth year of the college finds it with an enrollment of 445, a gain of 11 over last year.

The report on Meredith College showed 355 students enrolled and the endowment grown to \$90,000. Chowan College reported 95 students, and Oxford Seminary 100. The report in secondary schools showed \$60,000 raised during the last five years to pay off indebtedness and the property valuation of the three colleges and 15 country schools controlled in North Carolina by the Baptists of \$1,394,210, 124 teachers and 4,000 students.

Presumptive Ignorance. III. The Present Place of Jesus, vv. 9-11. Even yet the disciples failed to grasp the idea of a spiritual kingdom as evidenced by verse six. In a most emphatic way he tells them that it is not for them to know the "times and seasons which the Father hath set within his own power" (authority, v. 7, R. V.). Their power is not to be earthly, but spiritual (v. 8). It is the height of presumptive ignorance for any one to set the date of our Lord's return (Deut. 29:29). Jesus has given us explicit information on this question (Matt. 24:36), and his parables all warn us to "watch." While Jesus talked with his disciples concerning the reception of this new power and the place where they were to begin to exercise it, his feet were parted from the earth and a cloud received him from their sight as he ascended "into heaven" (Luke 24:51;