



HOLIDAY EDITION—PART TWO

The St. Tammany Farmer.

D. H. MASON, Editor

COVINGTON, ST. TAMMANY PARISH, LA., SATURDAY, DECEMBER 19, 1914

VOL. XLI No. 4

"See What Santa Brought Me!"



MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL



A Full Stocking
By
Fitch C. 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 passed 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 uncompromising and appreciative patients, even if they were not the profitable ones.

"Nothin' fer meself; it's fer 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 papers on the southwest corner of the square. Business ain't so bad this time o' 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 papers in rush hours. He likes to be doin' somethin', but he

gets awful tired holdin' the papers 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 fellow 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 awhile. Maw's got two younger's me and Pete. I'm ten and Pete's goin' on nine. Maw works awful hard takin' care of the kids and sewin' fer 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 chip in when his is good. Say, doc, I read in my paper 'bout that kid you fixed up last week, and I'll bet ten cents Pete's leg's just like that. Thinka 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 what the doctor would expect! Both sat in silence for over a minute. The surgeon knew what was going on in the youngster's mind, but thought best to let him come to his own conclusion. The boy fumbled his cap nervously while he considered the great question, and at length looked up suddenly into the surgeon's face. There was no doubt or uncertainty in his face or tone as he announced his decision.

"Doc, the only thing I've got in the world is me corner down by the fountain, where me and Pete sells papers. I can't give you all that, for I wouldn't have nuthin' for me and Pete to live on and to help maw with the kids. I'll tell you what I'll do, doc, I'll let you have half o' that corner. You can hire a kid to sell papers for you and have some dough left, but you won't make no \$3,000 in kingdom come."

The doctor knit his brows and Tom imagined he could see a quick refusal of his proposition, but the kindly gleam came back into the doctor's eye and Tom began to hope again as the doctor pondered over the proposition for a moment. Then the doctor said:

"All right, Tom; I'll accept that proposition, and we'll draw up the agreement right now. Let's see, this is December eighteenth. We'll start the new arrangement beginning with January first."

In the course of a quarter of an hour the paper was duly prepared and signed and witnessed, and Tom saw the doctor file it carefully in the strong box in his safe. With a hearty handshake, the surgeon bade adieu to his ten-year-old man of affairs, and hurried to a patient waiting in the outer office.

Tom McGuire had known all too little of happiness in his brief 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 cribbs 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, gwain. 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 lovin' what leg I've got."

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

"Nixy fer me. I'm fer keepin' me bum prop. I reads how a doc saws off a boy's legs just fer 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 fer 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 hustle a Star up to 245 West Aldea avenue. Get on a Prince street car, and hurry up. Here's a dime fer cartare."

"There ain't no profit in that," Pete granted, "so yourself an' save the dime."

"Do as yer told. I'm boss of this corner," the young financier retorted, showing 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 paper," he said in a matter-of-fact tone, holding out the first edition, when the maid opened the door.

"Paper?" asked the girl, protesting. (Continued on page 3.)