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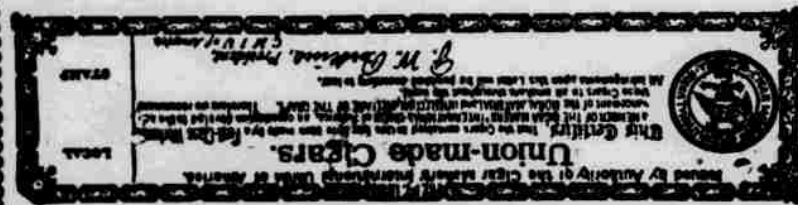
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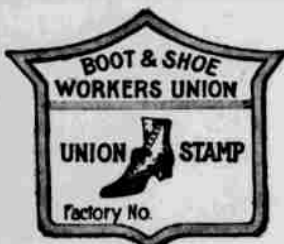
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Boot and Shoe Workers Union 246 Summer Street, Boston, Mass.

Jimmie's Christmas Stocking

By OWEN OLIVER.

HERE is honor among the denizens of Paxton alley, and Mr. Smith's toy-shop stood at the very entrance, and they reckoned him out of bounds.

From time to time evil-looking men muttered to one another about the long stocking that Mr. Smith was supposed to have filled; but he had figured in the prize ring in his younger days, and he was said to sleep with a big knob stick beside him. So the matter ended at mutterings. A big, powerful man was Mr. Smith; and he had a powerful edge to his tongue. Every one in the alley feared him except Jimmy.

Mr. Smith knew him as the extraordinary paper-boy who brought back a dime given him in mistake for a penny, an event which was historical in the alley. At the time it gave rise to doubts as to Jimmy's sanity, but afterward it was held that he was "playing up to the old man."

Anyhow, Mr. Smith took two papers regularly afterward, and the day after his funeral—which was the day before Christmas eve—a sleek man in a shiny top hat invaded Paxton alley, escorted by a policeman, and took evidence as to the identity of "the boy called Jimmy who sold papers" to the public generally, and in particular to the late Mr. Smith. When the sleek man was satisfied upon this point he proclaimed Jimmy the sole legatee of the estate, which comprised the little shop and house and all their contents.

"You'll find a long stocking somewhere, I expect," the lawyer said, "and you'd better bring it to me to take care of; and if I were you I should take the name of Smith."

Under ordinary circumstances Jimmy would have been elated by his good fortune, but somehow the world had not interested him lately. He had had a terrible cough for weeks—his business exposing him to the climate—and just now he felt tired.



Jimmie's Xmas Stocking — Jimmie Opened His Eyes.

and had nasty pains in his side, and seemed to be burning all over.

He moved in on the morning of Christmas eve, and explored the house with a kind of numb curiosity. He spent most of the morning in the shop parlor in the arm-chair in front of the fire. He did not even go out to the quick-lunch room for the beautiful dinner that he had promised himself. He had taken a lot of milk from the milkman, and he kept drinking that. He did not seem to care about anything but milk, and everything felt strange and uncanny. The figure on the mantelpiece—a white-bearded old gentleman which he believed was called Santa Claus—was the strangest and uncanniest of all. The fire was almost out, so he put on some more coal. He saw that it was nearly four o'clock. "Lumme!" he muttered. "I've let the day go, an' 'aven't done no business. This won't do. I'll take down the shutters, an' open the shop."

It had been a hard autumn, and the people on whom Paxton alley preyed were short of money. So Paxton alley was short of money, too. If ever entered the shop, there were enough outside. A dozen cold, red-blue noses flattened themselves against the glass; a dozen shrill voices clamored; a dozen little hands pointed with grimy, chilblainy fingers here and there.

Jimmy remembered when he was a "kid" how he used to spend hours at the toy-shop window, and how the woman he lived with then had thrashed him for spending on marbles a penny of the money he had taken for papers. It was his own money, he held, or he wouldn't have done it. For, by some freak of nature, Jimmy was honest. But now he could hardly sit up in a chair, and he didn't believe he could walk; but when a woman came in for a ten-cent doll, he managed to crawl to the window to serve her.



Christmas Eve Good Night

There was a wild chorus of recognition when he appeared between the dingy green curtains that slid along a rail. "Jimmy!" "Jimmy!" "Want any one to run your errands, Jimmy?" "Yer might give us somethink, Jimmy?" He heard all these greetings and a dozen more.

He shook his head and returned to his seat. He certainly did feel ill, and he seemed to lose things for a few minutes, until Bill Black came in for three little toys. Bill was looked up to in the alley as a man who did "big jobs," and the Blacks were generally reckoned well-to-do; but Bill's transactions hadn't been very profitable lately, and he had to be careful, because he knew that the police had their eye on him. So they were hard up, like the rest.

"Found the long stockin', Jimmy?" he asked, casually, when he had taken the toys.

"No," said Jimmy. "And if I had it 'ud be at the lawyer's, Bill, an' don't yer make no mistake."

Bill growled under his breath. "If yer didn't look half dead I'd knock yer head off, yer young hound," he said, "insin'waitin' ag'inst an honest man. Go'in' to offer to do anything fer yer, the missus was, wot I'll soon put a stop to now."

He gave Jimmy a ferocious scowl as he went out, and Jimmy resolved that if he found the stocking he would take it to the lawyer at once. He went to the door and faced a crowd of excited faces that ranged in rows from the front of the shop right across the alley. "Jimmy!" they cried. "Give us somethink! Yer might, Jimmy!" Jimmy always said afterward that he only did it because he thought he was dying, and the toys would be no use to him, and the pains in his heart "drawed him out of himself."

He tried to speak, but his voice was only a whisper. So he beckoned to a big boy and whispered to him; and the boy stood up on the doorstep, and shouted to the crowd: "Jimmy's goin' to give yer a toy each. Jimmy—"

The big boy went sprawling before the crowd that swayed and struggled in, and Jimmy was driven back to the counter.

Women came in to plead for their babies at home. Boys and girls came in to remind him of their brothers and sisters. By nine o'clock he had given to every small inhabitant of the alley. Then Jimmy tried to go to bed, but was so weak and giddy that he could not climb the stairs. So he sat in the arm-chair instead. He felt strange as well as poorly. The chairs, the fire-irons, the coal-scuttle, the table-cover, everything, seemed to turn into fantastic figures, and long-tailed demons were running up the blinds. Santa Claus on the mantelpiece was scowling and sneering at him.

Jimmy got into a sudden rage with Santa Claus and struck him with his fist.

Santa Claus tottered on the mantelpiece, but righted himself. He was more solid and weighty than Jimmy had imagined, and there was a clinking sound as he swayed—a sound of clinking money. The truth flashed upon Jimmy as he sank back exhausted in the arm-chair. The "long stocking" was in Santa Claus, and he could not get to it, and he never would, because he was going to die. He saw Santa Claus leering at him when he woke, and in his dreams, and when he dozed. Then he suddenly looked frightened. Some one was knocking loudly at the door. That was what frightened him. Jimmy woke completely just as the knocking ceased. He must have been asleep a long time, he thought, because the fire was low; and he supposed he had been what they called light-

headed. There was a grating noise outside the window—the noise of some one slipping a knife through the frame to press back the catch. Jimmy struggled to move, but his limbs only wriggled a little. He tried to shout, but no sound came. The shutters came open with a crash, and Bill Black stepped within. The short, jagged knife that he had opened the window with was still in his hand; and Santa Claus seemed taunting Jimmy. "You've given them my toys," he said. "I'll give him your money."

Jimmy closed his eyes to escape the sight of the knife, but he felt Black looking at him. Then, to his surprise, he went away into the shop. Jimmy heard a noise of unbaring and unlocking. Then he felt a cool hand on his pulse. "Collapse," a pleasant voice said. "It's lucky we weren't an hour later."

Jimmy opened his eyes, and saw the doctor and Black bending over him. "I've been playin' at Santa Claus, matey," Black said. "We judged yer was pretty bad not to answer the knockin', so I got in. Rare nice toys them was yer gave my young 'uns. Judged yer was pretty bad, so I fetched 'em."

Bill Black looked at the fire thoughtfully, and repeated to himself: "Rare nice toys." Then he carried Jimmy upstairs and helped the doctor put him to bed. He was wonderfully gentle in handling Jimmy.

Mrs. Black was gentler still with Jimmy while she nursed him and he grew very fond of her. Bill and young Bill were looking after the shop, she said, and doing "very fair," and she hoped he'd take young Bill in the business.

Jimmy nodded and smiled feebly—he did everything feebly just then—and promised to take young Bill, and said he made no doubt they'd do very well; but in his heart he was worried about the business.

Three weeks later Jimmy came downstairs to the shop parlor, and the first thing he noticed was that Santa Claus was gone from the mantelpiece. He was very weak, and he could not help a few tears coming to his eyes; but he had brushed them away before Bill came in.

"Feel all right, boy?" Bill asked. "Yes, Bill," Jimmy said. "Pretty fair."

"Seems strange down here, don't it?" "A little strange," Jimmy agreed. Bill cut some hard tobacco in the palm of his hand, and whistled softly and filled his pipe. "Notice anything pertickler strange?" he suggested. His eyes were on the mantelpiece, where Santa Claus wasn't, and so were Jimmy's.

"No," said Jimmy, bravely. "No, Bill."

"Not on the mantelshelf?" Jimmy pressed his finger-nails against his palms. "There was a sort of figure there," he said, "wasn't there's Bill? I—I s'pose it got broke. It doesn't matter, Bill. It—it wasn't worth nothink."

Bill laughed and slapped his leg with his hand. "Yer ain't no judge of figures, matey, I can see. That 'ere was a curious old piece of stuff, an' valerble, or I ain't no judge. I took the notion o' lockin' 'im away upstairs, Jimmy—" Bill put his great hand on the boy's shoulder. "The long stockin' were inside him! Over a thousand dollars. I took the liberty of usin' the odd money in the bus'ness for yer, but the thousand is there. An' it's lucky fer yer, matey, as yer was dealin' with an honest man—wot might have been diffrint if you hadn't given the kids them toys!"

For there is honor among—Paxton alley; and Paxton alley extends to the toy-shop now Jimmy and young Bill are there!

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Notice to Creditors. Estate No. 2328 of Jennie E. Miller, deceased, county court of Lancaster County, Nebraska.

The State of Nebraska, ss.: Creditors of said estate will take notice that the time limited for presentation and filing of claims against said estate is July 15, 1908, and for payment of debts is February 16, 1909; that I will sit at the County Court room in said county, on April 15, 1908, at 2 p. m., and on July 15, 1908, at 2 p. m., to receive, examine, hear, allow or adjust all claims and objections duly filed.

Dated, December 5, 1907. P. JAS. COSGRAVE, County Judge. By WALTER A. LEESE, Clerk. 37-4

Notice to Creditors. Estate No. 2320 of Mary Crawford, deceased, in County Court of Lancaster County, Nebraska.

The State of Nebraska, ss.: Creditors of said estate will take notice that the time limited for presentation and filing of claims against said estate is July 15, 1908, and for payment of debts is February 16th, 1909; that I will sit at the County Court room in said county, on April 15th, 1908, at 2 p. m., and on July 15th, 1908, at 2 p. m., to receive, examine, hear, allow or adjust all claims and objections duly filed. Dated December 6th, 1907.

P. JAS. COSGRAVE, County Judge. By WALTER A. LEESE, Clerk. 37-4

Notice of Adoption. In re adoption No. 242 of "Lauren" in County Court of Lancaster County, Nebraska.

The State of Nebraska, to all persons interested, take notice that Walter B. Schermerhorn and Louise C. husband and wife, have filed their petition for the adoption of "Lauren" a male minor child with bestowal of property rights and change of name, which has been set for hearing before this Court on January 20, 1908, at 9 o'clock a. m., when you may appear, object to and contest the same.

Dated December 3, 1907. P. JAS. COSGRAVE, County Judge. By WALTER A. LEESE, Clerk. 37-4

Notice of Petition. Estate No. 2335 of John E. Little, Deceased, in County Court of Lancaster County, Nebraska.

The State of Nebraska, To all persons interested in said estate, take notice that a petition has been filed for hearing before this Court on January 20, 1908, at 9 o'clock a. m., when you may appear, object to and contest the same.

Dated November 25, 1907. P. JAS. COSGRAVE, County Judge. By WALTER A. LEESE, Clerk. 35-3t

COMING CONVENTIONS. December 2—Chicago; Bill Posters and Billers. December 2—Chicago; Seamen's Union.