

A Pair of Shoes

Ann Bailey

“YOU MAKE FUN, you make fun,” moaned the pitifully injured little Italian lad, Pete, who stood on one small leg and a crude wooden crutch at a receiving dock of the New York City harbor. Tears rushed down his cheeks as he tried desperately to explain to his new American parents, Mr. and Mrs. Stanley, that he had but one leg. Mrs. Stanley knelt beside her new son and said softly, “Pete, my little son, you shall soon have two legs, and papa and I will buy you a beautiful new pair of shoes.”

“Pete has but one leg,” sobbed little Pete, “so you must go to the Americans for one shoe for my foot, and then they will give the other shoe to another little boy with only the other foot. You make fun, you make fun,” he sobbed and crumpled in an exhausted heap on the dock.

The *Queen Elizabeth*, the ship that had brought little Pete to this country and to the Stanleys, loomed beside the dock, and Mr. Stanley thought, as he knelt to lift the sobbing child into his arms, of the circumstance which had brought them together at this moment.

Three months before, the Stanleys had decided to support an Italian war orphan. The cost under the FOSTER PARENT'S PLAN FOR WAR CHILDREN was fifteen dollars each month. This organization had sent Pete's name to the Stanleys along with a report of his general background and appearance.

Pete was a little boy, only five years of age, with curly brown hair, brown eyes and a beautiful young body except for the leg which had been lost when his home village was bombed. During the bombing Pete's mother, father and brother had been killed. The American Army Medical Unit had taken care of Pete, and the American soldiers had adopted him.

Pete was soon drawn into an orphan relief group and was as happy as was possible among the other orphan children. The war was soon over and the relief agency was overflowing with orphans from all over Italy. The orphanage could not turn away any of the children who came seeking a home; yet the housing conditions were not suitable for the large number of children.

Remembering the donations coming in from thousands of American families, the director of the orphanage approached the authorities with the idea that the American family sending a fifteen dollar check each month might choose to adopt the Italian child whom it

was supporting. Of course, the American homes were checked; then letters containing this all-important question were sent to the United States.

Mr. Stanley smiled as he recalled the day their letter arrived, because Mrs. Stanley had immediately begun to make plans for Pete. She redecorated the room he was to have and made elaborate plans for the child. There was never a question of not taking little Pete once the offer was made.

But now, because of their enthusiasm and little Pete's lack of understanding, they had apparently broken his heart. Pete thought they were making fun of him when they told him that he would soon wear a pair of shoes.

Little Pete did not realize that the Stanleys, for months, had searched for an excellent craftsman who could make their child an artificial leg, a leg that would run when little Pete ran, a leg that would skip or hop when little Pete skipped or hopped, or a leg that would jump when little Pete jumped. Finally they found their craftsman in Fort Wayne, a city not far from their own Hoosier home, and they made an appointment with him. The appointment was, in fact, for the next week. It would not be long before Pete would run and play like the other children.

The trip from New York to their Indiana home did not take long for the Stanleys and little Pete. The boy was overcome with the beauty and vastness of his new home. The incident at the dock was forgotten, but the Stanleys were careful to ignore the subject because they could not bear seeing the pain that filled Pete's eyes when they spoke of two legs or a pair of shoes.

Little Pete was immediately accepted by his new Hoosier friends, and he returned all of the love and affection which he received. The townspeople were wonderful and they taught him American ways, which he learned quickly. Mr. and Mrs. Stanley often sat back and beamed. Each time little Pete burst through the door calling "Mama" or "Papa" the Stanleys thrilled to the fact that they had a son.

The appointed day drew closer and closer. At last Papa Stanley took the day off and drove his little family to Fort Wayne. Pete's large brown eyes began to fill with tears and signs of pain; he was afraid that his adopted parents were making fun of him again. His excited voice did not ring through the car on this trip. Looking down, he sat dejectedly between the Stanleys on the front seat.

Once in Fort Wayne, Mr. Stanley drove directly to the doctor's office. He stopped the car and turned and spoke to little Pete. "My son, we are going to meet a new friend who will soon make us all very happy." Pete did not raise his head, but nodded to show that he had heard him, even though he did not believe him.

The Stanleys and little Pete entered the doctor's office. Just when little Pete began to tremble, a handsome man in a white coat

came to greet them. He shook hands with Mr. and Mrs. Stanley and then knelt beside little Pete and began to speak the beautiful language Pete had been taught in his Italian home. Little Pete threw his arms around the doctor and began in a very excited voice to plead with the doctor to explain to his new parents that he could never have another leg. The doctor silenced the excited child and ask him in his beautiful Italian tongue, "Little Pete, do you remember me?"

Little Pete was stunned, but he shook his head and searched the doctor's face for some feature that he might remember. There did seem to be something familiar about this man, but he could not remember him. The doctor said, "Little Pete, I am the doctor who was with the American Medical Unit in your home in Italy. I am the doctor who took your torn leg from you. Now, do you remember me and will you trust me?"

The whole process of making little Pete a brand new leg took about two months, the time it took little Pete to learn all over again those things like running, skipping, hopping or jumping was just a matter of days. Neighbors were amazed as they watched little Pete skip and run on his wonderful new leg. They are still talking about the afternoon when the little boy from Italy won the annual sack race for five-year olds.

Long, Long Ago

Forrest A. Dunderman

IT SEEMS TO ME that pleasant memories are a great deal like old photographs that have been tucked away in a drawer for safe keeping—too ephemeral to be really useful, yet too cherished to be discarded. They are taken out from time to time for a thorough dusting and airing, then returned to the darkness from which they came. Each dusting and airing, evoking a pleasant nostalgia as it inevitably does, diminishes the chance of the image's becoming cloudy or faded and increases the value of the photograph for having grown a little older. Time mellows and softens the pictures perhaps, but the outlines, the impressions seem to last forever. So it is with the memories which we recall with pleasure at odd moments, those flights back to the experiences of another day, richer by far, it seems, than those at hand. Each recollection of some bygone pleasure sharpens and enhances the image, glorifying it beyond all possible reason. Taking some treasured memory out for its dusting and airing is infinitely more satisfying than a conscious flight into fancy. Day-dreams are transitory and unreal; memories are harbored in the mind for having once been actual experiences.