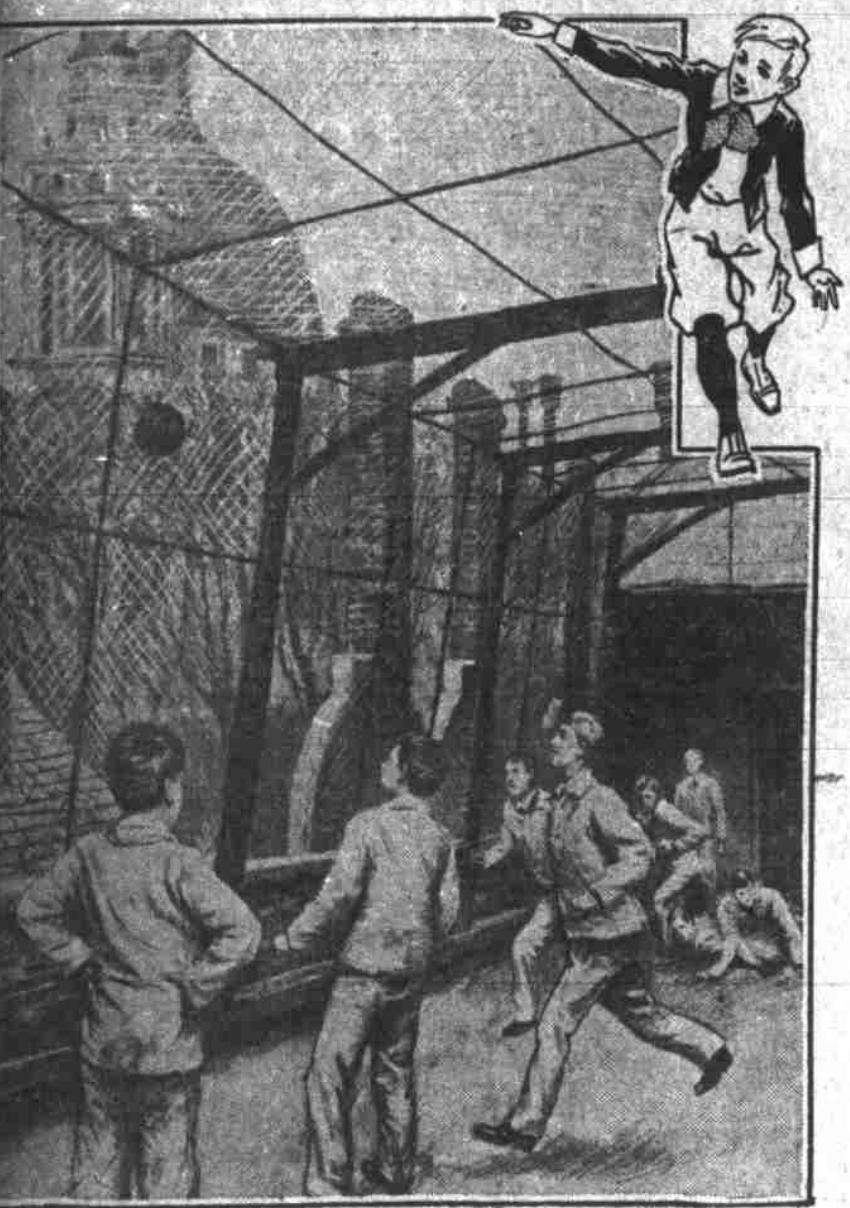


Polly Evans' Story Page for Boys and Girls

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*Jimmy Plythe, Chorister**The TRAINING of PETER BARN-OWL*

"THAT GAME OF FOOTBALL"

IMMY never ceases to talk of the time when his luck changed.

"Yes, sir," said he; "I had bad luck from the time I could toddle. Always on the losing side, it wasn't until I won my first game of football on Chimney-Pot Common that Fortune faced around and came my way."

"Chimney-Pot Common," you must know, is on the roof of the school for choristers attached to St. Paul's Cathedral, London. This school, which is exclusively for the use of the choristers, is situated in Carter lane, not far from Dean's court, and separated from the Cathedral by several mercantile warehouses. It was built by Dean Collett in 1874.

When Jimmy said he never had good luck he forgot that it was a bit of fortune to be admitted to the school. He received board and education free of charge in consideration of his service in the choir; and, as his parents were poor, this was a veritable godsend to them. Jimmy forgot he was fortunate to have a good voice.

But it was true that he was always on the losing side. All sorts of games were engaged in by the choristers, and, try as he would, Jimmy never seemed to be able to do anything for his comrades or for himself. So he was to be reproached at that which side possessed Jimmy was sure to lose.

You may be sure that always he was the last chosen, and then only when he was needed to make up the required number.

As Jimmy says, that memorable game of football marked

turning point in his career. Jimmy at that time was a senior in the school, but hard luck still pursued him. When he was chosen to play his comrades groaned. They knew they would lose, they were sure of it!

But they didn't—and, what is more, it was the skill of Jimmy that won the game! Never was there a greater surprise for the choristers—or, indeed, for Jimmy himself.

And he soon found that his luck had come to stay. For the very next day after the game he was informed that his singing showed such promise that a scholarship to complete his education elsewhere had been granted him.

But Jimmy still insists it was that game of football that "did it."

Parting From Maria

A QUEEN of Italy was visiting one

of the children's hospitals. While there she met a little girl who wished very much to have a doll. When the queen mother reached home, she tried to persuade her little girl to send the sick child one of her own dolls. The little princess at first could not decide which one she could part, for each one needed her care so much. One was just learning to walk; one was too sick to be away from home, and another was cut up in tears. Finally the girl was picked up, with all its pretty dresses, and sent away to the hospital to gladden the heart of the little invalid who wanted it so much. But the little princess, though she had so many other dolls, shed bitter tears, because, as she said, she would never see poor Maria again.

M

RS. BARN-OWL rested in an almost erect position, her drooping eyelids indicating that she was asleep. Little Peter, too, sat stiffly upright, endeavoring in every way to imitate the manners of his mother. Peter was trying very, very hard to be dignified, and to set a good example for his two younger brothers, who were several weeks younger. But the tiny brothers were not thinking of manners just then. Wee balls of down were they, nesting easily beside their mother. Daylight had come upon Mr. Barn-Owl during his adventures begun the preceding evening, so he had been forced to take refuge in another hiding place some distance from his own nest. Mrs. Barn-Owl's concern did not prevent her from taking a nap, however, and, as it was broad daylight, she and her little ones were very sleepy indeed.

Meanwhile, a Boy was still clambering up the sides of the old tower, almost hidden by vines and creepers of refreshing green. It would seem that he must surely fall and break his neck, but he appeared not to mind the danger. Working his way steadily upward; gaining a foothold in crevices of the moulderings ruins; grasping a sturdy vine—on he climbed until, with a mighty effort, he drew himself up to a level with the tower where was the home of Mr. and Mrs. Barn-Owl and the little Barn-Owls.

The Boy's eyes gleamed wickedly as they fell upon Peter Barn-Owl. Truly, the little fellow was as cunning as an owl could be—and that, you must know, is very cunning indeed. Perfectly marked—a bright yellow on the upper parts of his head and back, with gray and brown zigzag lines, and a plentiful sprinkling of small whitish dots; face and throat; a beautiful white; and underneath, white with brownish points.

What a lovely pet he would make! But the Boy reckoned without his host—or, rather, his hostess. Mrs. Owl had no intention of permitting Peter to be carried away. She flew in the face of the intruder and, although half blinded by the daylight, succeeded in making him draw back from the nest. Little Peter, too, hissed and snapped and flapped in the most approved style. At last the Boy gave up his evil purpose and withdrew.

The baby Barn-Owls slept through the fight. Peter and his mother were too excited for further slumber. Said Mrs. Barn-Owl in great indignation:

"Now, my son, you have made the acquaintance of Man—a big sort of brute who repays with evil all the good we do for him."

"Isn't he a horribly big animal, mother?" remarked Peter.

"Some men are much bigger," Mrs. Barn-Owl continued; "the one you saw is only Manlet, or a Boy. As I was saying, they are very, very ungrateful beasts. We catch them mice, moles, insects, many of which are exceedingly harmful to Man. Yet they reward us by accusing us of all kinds of witchery; they say bad things about us, and sometimes they kill us. In only one part of the world Men treat us justly. That is in Tartary, Our Man, speaking of the Owl who lives there, says—

"The Moguls and natives almost pay it divine honors, because they attribute

to it the preservation of the founder of their empire, Genghis Khan. The prince, with his small army, happened to be surprised and put to flight by his enemies, and forced to conceal himself in a little coppice; an owl settled on the bush under which he was hid, and induced his pursuers not to search there, as they thought it impossible that any man could be concealed in a place where that bird would perch. Thenceforth they held it to be sacred, and every one wore a plume of the feathers of this species upon his head."

To this day the Kalmyks continue the custom on all great festivals, and some tribes have an idol in the form of an owl, to which they fasten the real legs of one."

"But you must wait awhile until I have satisfied the hunger of these clamorous little babies," said he, as the two little owlets began to make queer little noises just like the snores of a man. Don't imagine, however, that Owis really snore. Oh, dear no—they're too well bred for that!"

Father Barn-Owl then gracefully swooped down into a barnyard nearby. Soon he returned with a mouse. Back and forth he flitted, bringing a mouse at least once in ten minutes, until the hunger of all was satisfied. Then he beckoned Peter to follow him, and the two made their way together to the barn. Mr. Barn-Owl explained how their soft feathers permitted them to fly so noiselessly, and how, without a

with his son's aptitude for hunting. "Tomorrow," said he, "you shall try it alone."

Of course, Peter was full of excitement. At last he was going to become a mighty hunter like father. Just as he was about to set out he happened to remember the conversation between the two rats on the night before.

"I'll go straight to the granary," said Peter to himself. And with great speed and suddenness the courageous little Owl swooped down upon a great army of gnawing rats. One after another he killed with remarkable swiftness. Then he turned to the nest he carried a rat. His mother nodded approvingly. Again Peter started for the granary, and brought another of the slain rats to the nest; and so he returned with one after another, until Mother Barn-Owl was almost overcome with amazement.

And you should have seen Father Barn-Owl when he came home from his night's hunting, and saw that Peter had provided twice the amount of his spoil. He would have turned his eyes round and round, only for the fact that the Owl's eyes can't turn. As it was, he gave one long, astonished hoot, and then gasped:

"You'll do, Peter; I can't say that you need much more training."

The "Porcupine"

AT THE beginning of his reign, Louis XII of France directed that the crown of gold then in use be replaced by another coin. This piece of money was promptly styled a "porcupine," and such was the name by which it was recognized.

In 1561 Lord Puisard de Glacis was appointed governor of Macon. He arrived at this city with his wife, who was very haughty and dignified. The bailiff was there to greet him, together with the chief men of the city.

After mutual salutations were over, three farmers appeared before the Governor, saying they wished to purchase tracts of royal land.

"Very well," replied the Governor: "each of you bring me a porcupine tomorrow. I shall give the three of you an audience tomorrow morning."

Once outside the castle, the three farmers scratched their heads in perplexity. "A porcupine apiece!" What a strange request! And porcupines were animals not readily found. (You see, the worthy farmers had never heard of a coin by that name.) So they hunted zealously in the woods for their porcupines.

The next morning the three farmers punctually arrived at the Governor's audience chamber. Each carefully bore a porcupine in his arms. Seeking to rid themselves of their charges until the Governor appeared, they deposited the little animals on chairs.

Soon the lord entered with his lady, the bailiff bringing up the rear. As he seated himself in the chair of state, the noble party seated itself—but, alas, upon the chairs already possessed by the porcupines. My lady fainted, and was supported by the bailiff, who was himself suffering from numerous wounds inflicted by the porcupines. As for the Governor—he was too angry to think of anything but the stupidity of the farmers. Needless to say, they were not granted the land they sought.

CROOKED TOWN

EDITH, dear, don't you think you'd best put away your embroidery so the cat won't spoil it, as she did your last work?"

A frown appeared on the girl's face as she heard her mother's voice from the adjoining room.

"Oh, pahaw!" she murmured.

"At your service, my dear," said some one behind her.

The girl turned to see a funny little man, all gnarled and crooked and wobbly, like a tree that had been twisted and bent by stormy winds.

"I beg your pardon, sir," she stammered, "but I don't think I have had



THE CROOKED TURNSTILE

the pleasure of meeting you before." "Oh, you know me very well!" My name is Pahaw, a name that is constantly on your lips, although perhaps you have never seen me. But come; I will introduce you to others of your old friends."

So great was her curiosity that Edith followed the funny old man toward the side of the room where a door opened inwardly, permitting them to pass through into a land she had never before.

Along a crooked, winding lane they proceeded.

"It's just like a figure 8," commented Edith.

The crooked man replied: "Yes; it is made carelessly; no one took the trouble to have it straight."

Then they passed through a crooked tunnel.

"The one who constructed this," explained her guide, "took the first timber that came to hand—and it happened to be crooked."

On coming out, they walked until they came into the strangest sort of a town. The houses were built crookedly; the streets zigzagged this way and that; even the people were twisted out of proportion.

"They all grew up carelessly," was the remark of Edith's companion.

"But," continued he, "they are nice people just the same; and I'm sure you'd be pleased to see Put-it-off, Don't-care, Old-Master and I'll-Do-it-Tomorrow. They are all so careless and happy-go-lucky. And they are extremely fond of you, my dear. They say you are just like one of them in your disposition, although they can't imagine why you didn't grow up carelessly in a crooked sort of way."

"I don't want to meet them," said Edith, most ungraciously, "and I don't care to be like them. Indeed, hereafter I shall not be careless and happy-go-lucky."

Pahaw stopped suddenly and looked at her in amazement. "Dear me," said he, rubbing his chin, reflectively, "I surely can't introduce them to you if you're going to be careful. They don't like persons with tidy habits. By the way, I think you went on the crooked little road and that more hopefully: 'But perhaps you'll grow carefree again and then you'll be able to meet these good people.'"

By this time they had retraced their steps back to the room from whence the walk had begun, and as Edith bade good-bye to Pahaw, she said, emphatically:

"While I appreciate your intentions, Mr. Pahaw, I must say that such a position will never take place if I can help it."

And looking at him steadily, she added, "I think it is more probable we two will never see each other again."

From that time Edith avoided a meeting with the careless inhabitants of Crooked Town, and so earnest were her attempts at self-improvement that all danger of it was averted.



MR. BARN-OWL DESCENDED ON HIS PREY

"I would rather that we were venerated everywhere, my son—as of right we should be. But here comes your father."

As she spoke Mr. Barn-Owl came flitting through the heavy dusk, and greeted his loved ones affectionately. Mrs. Barn-Owl related the incidents of the day, warmly praising Peter's part in putting their enemy, the Boy, to flight.

"Well, well, my son," announced Mr. Barn-Owl with a proud smile, "since you're growing up so rapidly with your education, I think I shall take you mouse-hunting tonight."

Mr. Barn-Owl was greatly pleased

sound, they could drop down upon their prey.

Peter was crouching in a little hollow watching his father fall upon a mouse that scuttled from his hole, when he heard two rats squeaking behind him.

One said to the other:

"The Farmer Man has just stocked his granary with delicious grain; and our leader has planned for us to attack it in a body tomorrow night."

Peter Barn-Owl heard no more, for the rats disappeared, and he afterward forgot to mention the matter to his father.

Mr. Barn-Owl was greatly pleased

tached engine of the "special," which stood near the station. To his astonishment he found no one in the cab. Doubtless the engineer and fireman were as indiscreet as to both slip away for something to eat.

"There's not a moment to lose," muttered Jeff.

Without an instant's delay he backed the engine off the siding, past the station and toward the private car on the siding below.

The whistle of the local train was sounding beyond the curve close to the siding when Jeff coupled the car, threw open the throttle and dashed ahead.

Hardly did he place the car out of danger, at the extreme end of the siding, than the local swept around the curve and on to the siding directly behind the private car, while a moment later the express thundered by on the main track.

The president and his party were much surprised at their sudden removal. When the great man learned of the danger just escaped, however, he was warm in his praise of the lad, who had shown such pluck and ambition and made a promise that set the lad's cheeks aglow. Jeff's future as a railroad man now seems assured.



"THREW WIDE THE THROTTLE, AND DASHED AHEAD"

One afternoon Jeff sauntered up to the little railroad station. While in conversation with the telegrapher, he remarked:

"I see there's a private car on the siding just below."

"I owned it by the president of the road," said the telegrapher, when he turned suddenly and grabbed Jeff by the shoulder and exclaimed:

"You don't mean the nearest siding, do you?"

Jeff nodded.

The operator stared wildly. "Jer-

usalem!" he gasped; "there's something wrong with the engineer's instructions. The local train is due on that siding in five minutes in order to give the right of way to the express, which follows close behind."

Jeff understood the situation in a moment. With a bound he was out of the door and dashing toward the de-

scriptive engine of the "special," which stood near the station. To his astonishment he found no one in the cab. Doubtless the engineer and fireman were as indiscreet as to both slip away for something to eat.

"There's not a moment to lose," muttered Jeff.

Without an instant's delay he backed

the engine off the siding, past the station and toward the private car on the siding below.

The whistle of the local train was

sounding beyond the curve close to the siding when Jeff coupled the car,

threw open the throttle and dashed ahead.

Laughing to himself at the success of his disguise, the Joker followed the path pointed out by him. He wondered at the dim light as he approached the door. All at once the ground appeared to sink from under him.

When the Joker recovered from his fall, it was to find himself in a cage,

with ground all about him and the air

above him. He had come to the wrong house!

His shouts quickly woke the cautious old lady. She screamed when first she discovered a man in her trap. When she telephoned it to the police, who were despoiled to learn that the captive was none other than "Black Rufus" himself.