POLLY EVANS' STORY PAGE for Boys and Girls

THAT TRIPLE PLAY

THE broad lane leading to the ball ground was packed on that memorable Thursday afternoon, for the High School and the Prep were to wage the battle that was to decide the championship of the schools.

The high ground on which stood the town made a splendid natural ball ground. From center field to home plate the turf stretched as smooth as a carpet.

Hours before the time set for the game the shady benches were packed with spectators, for the two schools ranked high in favor with all the townspeople. Excitement ran high, for always the deciding game was a feature of the town life in which every resident was deeply interested.

By 1.15 most of the Prep fellows were on the field and practicing madly. There was agitated fluttering among the rooters and much waving of the Preps' color, blue.

The "Preps" were slender lads, utterly unequal in weight to the High School fellows, who were unusually brawny. Perhaps that was one reason why the crowd thought it incumbent to yell itself hoarse in encouragement.

They were well trained by their indefatigable captain, Bunny Morris, and were strong when it was a case of running or jumping. Their weakness at the bat was therefore partly made up, for stealing bases was their long suit.

The High fellows were well aware of this, and their "box" and catcher were determined to catch a runner, as they expressed it. But generally the first ball pitched saw them making for second, and nearly always the umpire's "Safe" gladdened the hearts of the cheering mob.

Shortly before the opening of the game the High fellows ran to the diamond, looking like young giants in their gray and red. A short preliminary practice, and Bunny and the High pitcher tossed.

Prep went to the bat, losing the first point. The game was rapid; few runs and few errors made decisions close. Bigelow, playing second base on the Prep nine, showed a great deal of nervousness.

With the progress of the game, however, his pulses hammered down to normal and he played a cool game.

The Prep catcher's nervousness caused four bases to be stolen with impunity. His throws were always a little slow or a little wild, and though Bigelow let not a ball pass him, not a man was out at his base. Two flies, six assists to first and one to the home plate finished his fielding. More fortunate at the bat, he made two singles, and in the Prep half of the ninth inning he drove the ball clear over the left fielder's head, scoring two runs and making third himself. The two runs tied the score.

A desperate dash for home. The catcher fumbled. Bigelow slid.

"Safe!" sang out the umpire, and Prep was one ahead.

The next man "fanned" out, and Prep took the field amidst the "Yep, yep, yep!" of the excited crowd. The strain told on the Prep pitcher.

High, at the bat, made first base on a grounder past third; a moment later and he took second on a base on balls.

The hearts of the Prep supporters fell with a thump. The chances for the team looked small.

"Look out for home, boys!" rang out Bunny's cry, and Prep played close. Bigelow got inside the baseline, while the shortstop glued his eyes to the runner.

A ball or two was pitched, when "Bang!" The crack against the ball as the batter swung with his muscle behind it echoed over the grounds. Bigelow instinctively leaped high, both hands outstretched, and as the ball hissed over his head his fingers closed like a vise and clung to it. First, thinking the hit safe, had taken a long lead and was near second when Bigelow caught the ball, while second was making his leisurely way toward third.

Bigelow touched the nearest as he passed him and started to second. The High fellow turned, but too late. Bigelow reached the bag.

"Out! out! out!" Even the umpire was excited.

High was out. Prep had the game. Bigelow's eyes shone with happiness as the big umpire took his hand and said: "You're all to the good, sonny. I've never seen anything neater on the professional field!"

ELSIE and FROGGIE the FIDDLER

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SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING INSTALLMENTS

ELSIE LEE spent four weeks with her parents at the seaside.

One day she took her parrot, the present of her aunt, and ran away to the beach. Here the parrot escaped. She was crying, when a voice sounded near, and looking up, she saw a fairy, who invited her for a boatride.

Suddenly there appeared a huge sea monster. To escape, the boat sailed up a sunbeam until it struck the shores of an island, where Elsie espied her parrot. Leaning out to catch him, she lost her balance and fell over. Down she fell—to awake with a start in her father's arms.

Next week she returned home, and was in the woods one day when she fell asleep. When she awakened her eyes were riveted on an army of grasshoppers, the leader of which gave Elsie a daisy. When she had smelled it she became as small as they.

(CONTINUED FROM LAST WEEK)

By Anthony J. Drexel Biddle

NOW a gay and laughable spectacle was presented! What fun it was to watch them! Elsie turned to call Uncle Tom, that he and she might view the grasshopper parade together. But Uncle Tom was nowhere to be seen. Elsie set about looking for him. She went back to the place where they had been sitting, but could not find him. Elsie caught her breath to call him, and then—words were held back by her amazement.

The leaves of the tree beneath which she stood began to wave and flutter. Then they all opened out into brilliant-hued butterfly wings. A dense swarm of insects arose from the tree. The branches were left destitute of foliage, but the air was filled with life and bright colors. A bird sang out from the topmost branch that it was the tree's birthday.

A noise of drum-beating recalled Elsie's attention to the edge of the forest. Here the grasshopper regiments were forming into line of march. At their front was a drum corps of crickets, led by a huge beetle as drum major.

"Cracky, cracky, what nonsense!" sounded a voice near Elsie. She turned. A pretty green frog stood at hand. He wore a dress suit and carried a violin.

"Don't you know Froggy the Fiddler?" said he.

"Oh, my! why, I should say—" began Elsie, when she was interrupted. The butterflies gathered thickly about her, so that for some moments she could see nothing save a bewildering mass of fluttering, gauzy wings. As Elsie groped about, she heard the frog's voice. It sounded far away.

"This is quite a fog," it said, "quite a fog!"

Elsie found difficulty in holding her footing; the wing flapping became so violent that it created a regular whirlwind about her. She seemed to be growing lighter, and at length she rose from the ground.

The butterflies kept closely round her, and continued to beat the air with their wings. Higher, higher and ever higher Elsie went into the air, and still she could see nothing; not until she ventured to look below her. Then the little girl discovered that she was floating, like a kite, above the treetops of the woods. This was the last Elsie knew for some little time; she became so dazed that she could neither see nor think.

III

Christmas in Grasshopper Kingdom

A MUSICAL chirping of crickets awoke Elsie to a sense of apparent unreality. She seemed to be in a cavern, deep down under the ground. How she had gotten there she could not guess. The cavern shone with light as bright as day. Myriads of grasshoppers, in gay attire, covered the floor and walls. The grasshopper soldiers were stationed about at intervals, and each soldier held his mica shield in such a way as to reflect the sunlight from the mouth of the cave into the interior.

Elsie heard a shrill voice near her scream out:

"A merry Christmas to you all!
Now let's begin the Christmas ball."

Christmas, merry Christmas, what could it mean? It surely was not Christmastime! If it was, where was the tree?

As if in answer to Elsie's unspoken question, the voice again called:

"Put out the lights; light up the tree,
Till it and only it we see."

Thereupon the soldiers covered their mica shields, and a deep gloom extended through the cavern. In the midst of the gloom there appeared a small but wide-spreading firtree, the branches of which were almost covered with glowworms and fireflies; the uncertain light emitted by them revealed the tree to sight and now gave the sole illumination.

The learned-looking grasshopper was master of the ceremonies. He told Elsie that he had a poetical license to lead affairs of state in Grasshopper Kingdom.

"Is this really Christmas?" Elsie asked, looking down at him.

The versifying insect tilted back his head and glanced at her; he sighed, and spoke with evident feeling:

"We hop o'er earth from morn till night;
We are creatures of Mother Earth.
We know the seasons quite aright;
We are nature's own from our birth.

"When damp wind blows among the trees,
We know the clouds will soon bring rain;
So crawl beneath the fallen leaves
And there hide till it's clear again.

"We love the sunshine, gay and bright;
It warms us, and we hop with life.
The insect world loves summer's night,
Which is with our enjoyment rife.

"But now the wind blows keen and chill,
The ground is frozen cold and white;
So here below, secure from ill,
We celebrate this Christmas night."

"Is it night yet?" Elsie asked.

"No, but it soon will be," replied the poetical grasshopper. "I had to say 'night' to make the rhyme."

A great din and buzzing now arose.

"The king, the king!" or something which sounded very much like "the king!" was chirruped by thousands of insects, in unison. Such countless sharp, scraping noises sounded about Elsie that she began to feel very creepy and uncomfortable.

She scarcely dared move for fear of trampling upon the little creatures which covered the ground. On the top of the tree Elsie discovered an enormous grasshopper; whether he had just come there she did not know. She guessed, and rightly, that he was the king.

He seemed to be motionless, but there was a great commotion round about him.

Insects were dodging and ducking on every side, as if trying to escape something momentarily falling among them.

"The king's spitting tobacco-juice* at his subjects," remarked a crackly voice, near by.

A cry arose that caused a great excitement.

"The king's pitcher is broken!"

The great grasshopper spread his wings, and, rising from the tree, flew blindly through the cavern; he banged against the walls and roof, fell among his fellows, and again flew up, whirring, in midair past Elsie. She became frightened.

"Who broke the pitcher? Who broke the pitcher" arose the inquiring call, louder and louder, until at last there was heard the reply:

"Katy-did!"

A great contention followed; some said Katy-did, and some said Katy-didn't:

"Katy-did; Katy-didn't;
Katy broke the pitcher."

Meanwhile the air became alive with insects. Elsie dodged about, fearful of being covered with the buzzing creatures. A voice sounded from the direction of the tree:

"Cracky, cracky! Where can she be? Dear me!"

A frog, standing upright, was hurriedly stripping the branches of their fireflies and stuffing them into a little lantern. At last all the light in the cave was held therein.

A strange noise arose above the many other noises.

Whir-r-r!

It sounded like the spinning of a watchman's rattle. The grasshoppers were hopping and flying past Elsie, toward the mouth of the cave.

*When a grasshopper is caught and held in the hand, it emits from its mouth a dark-brown fluid. Many children say that the grasshopper is then "spitting tobacco."

(CONTINUED NEXT WEEK)

TWO SQUIRRELS

ONCE, on a time there were two perky little gray squirrels who dwelt together in the shadow of a great forest, and they cared for each other so much that they never had a cross word. One day two men penetrated the thick brush and began to quarrel. When they had gone the first squirrel turned to the second and said very politely:

"Let us quarrel!"

"Very well," said the other, always anxious to please. "How shall we begin?"

"Oh, it will not be very hard," said the first squirrel. "Those strange animals who have just gone away did not find it difficult. So why should we?"

In all sorts of ways they tried to pick a quarrel with one another, but they were so polite that the plans never worked. At last the first squirrel found two fine nuts, and bringing them to the second squirrel, said: "Now, here are two nuts. You say they're yours and I'll say they're mine, and we'll be sure to have a fine quarrel. Now! Those nuts are mine!"

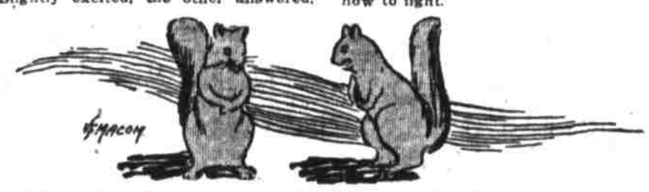
Slightly excited, the other answered, "Very well, you are more than welcome to them."

"But at this rate," said the first, "we will never quarrel. Be saucy, talk back, you old idiot! One person can't fight by himself. It takes two!

"Now let's begin all over again. I own all the trees in the woods!"

"Is that so?" said the second. "How nice of you to let me live here!"

The first squirrel's whiskers twitched a good bit and finally he broke into a roar of laughter. They gave up the game as a bad job and never learned how to fight.



The Rebellion of Jack and Jill

THREE o'clock struck loudly in the long school corridor, from the opposite ends of which advanced two girls.

Very near a collision, two gasps. "Jack!" exclaimed one; "Jill!" cried the other. The two faces went scarlet. Each had been absolutely certain that at this time she could find Miss King alone in her office. Of all things! Had not spoken to each other for four days, and now to run into each other's very arms! The office door swung open and out stepped Miss King dressed for a walk. A glance at the two faces and she invited the girls into her office.

"What can I do for you, Betty, and you, Kate?"

Jack and Jill looked at each other. Both were about 17 years of age, and both felt as though they were 7. Each wore a black sailor suit, the uniform of the school, and the hair of both was tied with red ribbons in precisely the same fashion. Jack was tall and very dark and plain, with the exception of her eyes, which were soft and beautiful. Jill was short and slim of figure, creamy and pinky of complexion, very blue of eye.

Miss King sat down. "What is it, dears?" she asked again. "A visit to the dentist or the doctor or the opera or the concert or the play? Parents want you?"

Her cheeriness and good humor smote the girls' hearts.

"Oh, Miss King, can't—that is, mayn't I see you by yourself?" stammered Jill. Miss King's brows went up in a little crescendo of surprise.

"Secrets from Jack, Jill dear!"

"It's about Jack."

"It's about Jill," blurted Jack.

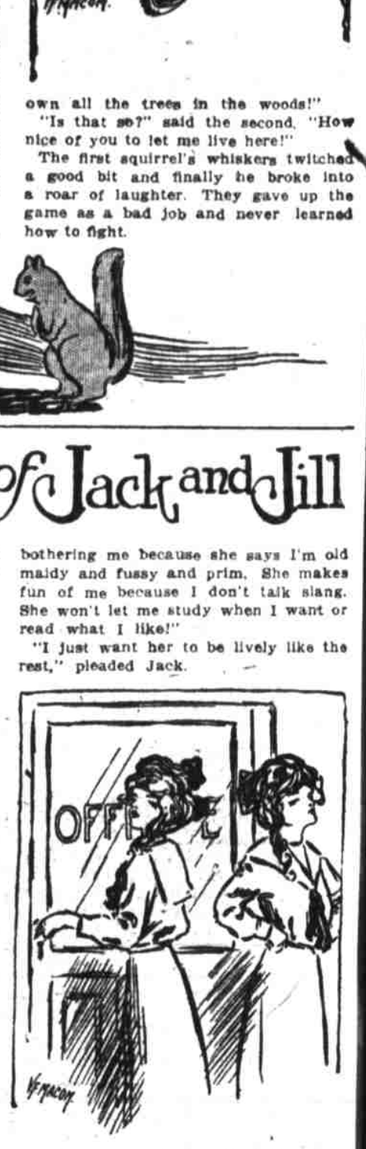
"She won't give me a moment's peace; she's always tagging round watching me and trying to make me do things like she does. She won't let me whistle. She says I am the tomboy of the school. She won't let me use slang, not even darn. She won't let me throw my ribbons in the drawer. She says I walk upstairs like a colt and down like a mule. She says my visitors never give her time to study, and she wants me to keep our books in a line on a silly old shelf, and whenever I throw anything on the floor she gets up and puts it away so politely it sickens me. I can't stand it."

"I want Jack to be a lady," said Jill.

"What right has she to want me to be anything?" exploded Jack. "I want her to let me alone and give me some peace."

Jill's eyes flashed fire. "Jack's always bothering me because she says I'm old maidy and fussy and prim. She makes fun of me because I don't talk slang. She won't let me study when I want or read what I like!"

"I just want her to be lively like the rest," pleaded Jack.



"I don't want to be lively!" complained Jill. "I want to be myself."

Miss King rose. "The solution of this is to give you other roommates," she said quietly. "Are you willing to be parted?"

Jack glanced at Jill, got a glimpse of a red ear and said "Yes," firmly.

"Jill?" questioned Miss King.

"Yes."

Miss King reflected.

"Jack," she said, "you will go with Peggy Callahan. Jill, you will live with Hope Carter."

An involuntary gasp escaped the pair.

"Peggy Callahan?" gasped Jack. "Why, she's—"

"Very jolly," said Miss King, "and Hope is very prim. Pack this evening, girls."

She rose very decidedly. They passed from the room.

Oh, the desolate packing! One thought only upheld the girls. Each thought the other would have it so.

All anger was gone from them. Tenderly Jill stooped over the untidy heap of shoes and straightened them, separating her own from Jack's dear, big, clumsy footwear. Once their eyes met, but were lowered immediately; both were too near tears.

Jill spoke quietly at length:

"Jack, your silver chains are under the bureau, and your best waists under my underwear." Not the shadow of annoyance found vent in her voice. Listlessly Jack reclaimed her property. The trunks were packed at last and forlornly they sat on their tops.

"Peggy Callahan!" burst forth Jack. "Slangy—darn!"

"Hope!" from Jill; "little prig!" With a single swift movement she was on her knees beside tall Jack, her arms clasping the knees of her friend forlornly.

Jack leaned forward. "Jill," she cried, "you mean you don't want—another girl? You're willing to stay and put up with me, honey?"

"Oh, Jill, I'll never, never, never throw things around again."

"If you dare be neat!" flashed Jill. "I've been a horrid, insane, priggy little beast."

"And I've been a slangy, noisy colt," mourned Jack, "but was that really all you minded; you still—love me, Jill?"

"Oh! Jack, darling."

"Let's find Miss King," said Jack. Falling over a chair and upsetting it, she opened the door, but Jill said never a word. Joining hands, they walked down the passage together.

"Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary How Does Your Garden Grow?"

"NOW," remarked Mary, meditatively, to her aunt, "did you ever see finer privet cuttings?"

Aunt Edith cast a glance at the thriving young shoots.

"They are very fine," she agreed. She picked up a sturdy little shoot and began to untangle the little fine maze of root at the bottom. Then she laid them in the flat, one on top of another, with their heads against the one end and the roots in the middle, so that nothing could hit them.

"You see, Mary," she explained, "Plants do not object to having their heads mussed up a little; it's the feet or roots one has to be careful of. You know your mother is always reminding you to keep your feet dry and warm, else you will become ill. The feet of a plant are quite as sensitive as the feet of a little girl.

"Come along; let's look at your garden."

Mary led the way, stopping proudly in the garden path.

"Aren't they beautiful?" she exclaimed.

"See how big the poppies are getting and how high the sweet peas are growing! The cornflowers are coming up. Yes, and the mignonettes and the phlox. How fast they are growing!"

"Have you noticed the peas in your father's vegetable garden, Mary?"

"Yes, I have. How very like they are to my sweet peas!"

"Yes, there is a strong family likeness," said Aunt Edith. "Yours, however, are the ladies of leisure, while your father's belong to the great mass who must work for their living."

"Soon it will be time to set out seedlings," said Mary. "I've been carrying out the roses to the sunlight for ever so long every nice day."

"Remember to put the boxes in the arbor for two or three nights when you put them out. This protection, though it is slight, will help the little hollyhocks and asters to become used to their new surroundings, and so they will grow better. Now I'll run and get my barrow full of cuttings."

Soon she came carefully down the garden path, wheeling the barrow full of baby privets. She went very slowly, for the freight was precious and the flat piled very high. Arrived at the proper place, she set it down and dug a hole large enough to contain the privet branches held in her small brown hands. This finished, she put the roots of the bunch in and threw the soil loosely over them. Then in the wedge-shaped little trenches already dug she began to plant the shoots. When this was finished she went for the watering pot and began to soak the plants.

"They're different from little girls in one way, Aunt Edith," she said. "It's all right if they wet their feet and don't change their shoes and stockings!"

The Little Egoist

I'M AWFUL good in school,
But Emma Jane, she ain't.
Sometimes I think when I grow up
I'll be a saint!
I never push or step on toes
When up the stairs we go;
An' teacher never has to say,
"Please, Mary Jones, go slow."
But Emma Jane,
She pushes me
An' whispers in my ear;
But I am just so good,
I don't pretend to hear.
Mean Emma Jane!
She calls me names,
But I don't care,
For I'll tell teacher later on
She pulled my hair.
An' teacher'll say
At close of day,
"I don't see why
You can't be nice
An' quiet as mice,
Like Mary J.!"

NELLIE POYNTZ FERRY.

The Week Days

AT ONE time the days of the week were numbered one, two, three, four, five and six, beginning with Sunday or the Sabbath. The custom still holds good among modern Greeks, Slavs and Huns. Many orthodox Quakers also still hold to this custom, which obtained in the days of the apostles and even down to the fourth century. The Quakers used this system because of the immorality of the heathen gods from which the days of the week take their names.

The week was originally a quarter of the moon month. It began on Moonday—or Monday. The Italians still call Monday the first day of the week. Tuesday is from the Norse Tiw, who was the god of war. Thursday was Thor's day, Thor being a warrior god. Wednesday was Woden's day. Woden was the god of battle. Friday was after the Norse Frija, the goddess of love. It was supposed to be the luckiest day in the week for women. The pagan Romans celebrated Friday as the day of Venus. Saturday was named for Saturn, and Sunday is so called because this day was anciently dedicated to the sun or to its worship.

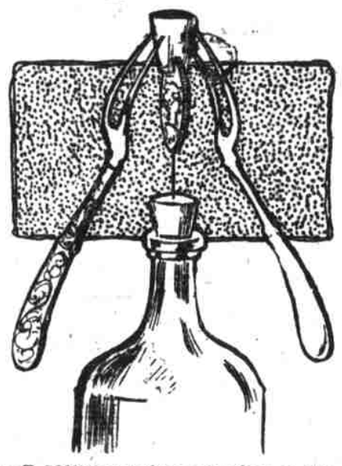
Whistle for It

IF A person wants something which we are not particularly anxious to give him, we tell him that he may whistle for it.

We may not care whether he whistles or not. It would make no difference to us whether he did or not, but we tell him to whistle all the same. This is the origin of the expression.

In early English days ale or beer was served in what were known as whistling tankards. These had four handles, all of which contained whistles. When the tankard became empty the holder blew the whistle for more drink. In other words, he had to whistle for it.

The Balanced Quarter



IT SOUNDS rather astounding to say that a quarter can be made to spin on the point of a needle, but nevertheless it may be accomplished with very little trouble.

First procure a bottle, cork it tightly and insert a needle into the cork. Now take another cork and slit in such a manner that the edge of the coin fits into the slit. Next stick two forks into the cork and place the edge of the coin on the needle. It will not fall off, but on the contrary can be made to spin round quite rapidly.

The reason for this is that the weight of the forks projecting such a distance below the coin brings the center of gravity much below the point of the needle, causing the coin to remain perfectly upright.

The Lightning Rod

THE lightning rod was originated by Benjamin Franklin, and the first one ever put up was erected by him on his own home in the year 1752.

It was on the Fourth of July of the same year that he sailed his famous kite with which he drew electricity from the clouds and which proved his contention that lightning and electricity were the same thing.

Knowing that metal rods will carry off electric currents, he concluded that an iron rod attached to a building would draw off a flash that might otherwise hit a house. Acting upon this supposition, he equipped his own home with a rod and endeavored to induce his neighbors to do likewise.

This was rather a fruitless labor. A few more progressive people availed themselves of the protection of a lightning conductor, but many looked upon it not only as useless but as positively dangerous. Some who admitted its power of warding off lightning considered it unholy, assuming that where lightning struck, there providence had intended it to strike.

It was many years before prejudice was overcome and people realized how efficacious were the rods in protecting houses from lightning. In foreign countries the lightning rod met with still greater opposition. One Frenchman having had a lightning rod attached to his dwelling had to stand by next day and watch it torn down amid the howls of an excited mob.

The Italians exhibited the same slowness to adopt the conductor. Now no building is considered complete minus a lightning rod. No one can estimate the amount of property saved by Franklin's invention.

Afford

Afford is composed of two Latin words, meaning to go to the market place. If a man had money to spend, he was able to go to market. If he did not have the money, he could not go, and so, of course, could not afford it.