

# SWIMMING FOR FAME

As told by Walter Johnson to Geo. D. Murphy, Jr

(Continued from last week)

"Around about August, there was a postman's excursion going to New York. I grabbed an armful of train, with the intention of merely taking a joy ride. I went to Brooklyn and met some friends. They informed me that a good job was to be had out in Flushing, Long Island, and that I had better go out and look it over.

"When I got through with that job I had mixed feelings about the good will of my friends. The job was fireman in a 100-family apartment house. I made arrangements to accept and returned to Baltimore preparatory to coming back to Flushing in September. When I got into the full swing of the job, I found that it certainly was a muscle-builder. I wasn't exactly crazy about it. A guy can hardly get all het up about carrying cans of ashes up two flights of stairs, and then wheeling them about a block and a half to the truck driver. All this had to be done between the hours of 5 and 7 a.m. for seven days in the week.

"In addition to this, the passenger elevator had to be swept and mopped daily, as did the twelve halls. When I look back on it I don't figure out how I made out during that cold winter, but I did. When spring came and the weather got warmer, my thoughts just naturally turned to swimming. Things were not going so well with me and the boss, so I gave up my job. This was just ten days before the opening of one of Harlem's new recreation centers. I had been trying to make a connection with the manager of the pool for a job as life guard, but as yet had been unable to catch him. In the meantime I was working at the Y.M.C.A. in Brooklyn, assisting in the swimming class.

"When the pool had its formal opening in Harlem on May 29, I was unable to attend as I had to be at the Brooklyn pool; the kiddies were having a special meet for the benefit of their parents and friends. You know how parents are. They were anxious to see Bobby and Johnnie in the water; they wanted to see how much the children had learned.

"On the following morning, bright and early, I took the subway to Har-

lem and was lucky enough to see the manager. When I asked him for a job as guard he said, 'We don't need any more guards.'

"But the guard—' I explained.

"Well, we don't need any more of them, either,' he replied, 'but let me see your credentials.'

"When I had shown him my Red Cross cards and my other test cards, he looked at me.

"Say, why didn't you show me these things at first? Put on your suit and go to work.'

"There were seven life guards in all. Later he cut down on the help and let all go but three. I was among those who remained. You might call it merit or what you will—I call it a break.

"The first part of last year there was some talk of my participating in the Wrigley Marathon. At the pool where I was working, everybody thought there ought to be a chance for me to cop some of the prizes, but it takes more than talk to enter a meet of this kind—it takes some money, and that is what I didn't have. When the time came for me to go there were no funds to be had, so I did not enter the swim. This year things seem to be a little more encouraging.

"At first we had hoped to have this venture financed by a real estate firm here in New York, but we found out that men with money are not sufficiently interested in backing colored aspirants in the sport world to put up some cash. As there is no entrance fee, we decided to motor to Toronto: Ben Brown, a life guard at the pool, Dixie Kid, my trainer, and myself. We also decided to pool our interests to make the trip and to split the money, if any is forthcoming, three ways.

"If I don't succeed in getting a break, then we are to look upon the whole thing as a sporting venture among friends. We plan to leave New York about August 28 in order to have plenty of time before the meet that comes off on September 2. (Miss Jackson's meet comes off a few days earlier.)

"This is Johnson's initial trial in

an international meet and his first trip to Toronto.

### Trained for Meet

"In the early part of June I began training for the 'Round Manhattan Swim,' which was to have come off in August. This meet, which covers a distance of twenty-six miles, has been postponed indefinitely. The training I have had for that meet has proved to be an excellent preparation for the Toronto meet. Dixie Kid—you know what a famous trainer he is—certainly keeps me up on my toes. It is necessary that I follow a strict routine.

"I have to cut out all forms of dissipation and be in bed by 10:30 p.m. I sleep till 11 a.m. and then go to the pool for work till 7 p.m. I then get ready for my daily swim in the pool. This daily grind covers from one to five miles, averaging from thirty minutes to two and one-half hours. We work on a sliding scale, beginning with a mile (twelve laps around the pool is the equivalent of a mile) and gradually picking up to five miles, according to the notion of the 'Kid' as to what I can stand. The gradual rise in distance is probably one-half a mile per day. This is the routine for seven days a week.

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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Next week the writer gives the concluding instalment of Walter Johnson's story.

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In all this little town;  
And my merry laugh and singing  
Takes the place of sigh and frown.  
For JOHN HAS QUIT HIS DRINKING  
And is like himself once more,  
And the world is just a garden  
With each happiness in store!



One day I read some verses—  
"Mary's Miracle," the name,  
And I said, that's John's exactly,  
And I'll send you a bottle of  
So I sent for GOLDEN TREATMENT.  
(As shy as a shy could be)  
And I put it in John's supper  
And I put it in his tea.  
And it didn't taste a little bit  
Had no odor, no, you see.  
It was smoothest kind of sailing  
For little Doctor Me.  
And I washed and prayed and waited,  
(And cried some, too, I guess)  
And I didn't have the greatest faith,  
I'm ashamed now to confess.  
And John never thought a minute  
He was being cured of drink.  
And soon he's as well as any one,  
It makes me cry to think  
Just makes me cry for goodness,  
I'm so proud to be his wife—  
Since he is cured of drinking,  
And leads a nice, new life.  
"How John he quit a drinkin'!"  
I can't say it often enough!  
And tastes and makes a liquor  
As he would a poison stuff,  
And when I see my prayers at night  
As beautiful as can be—  
I pray for John the most of all—  
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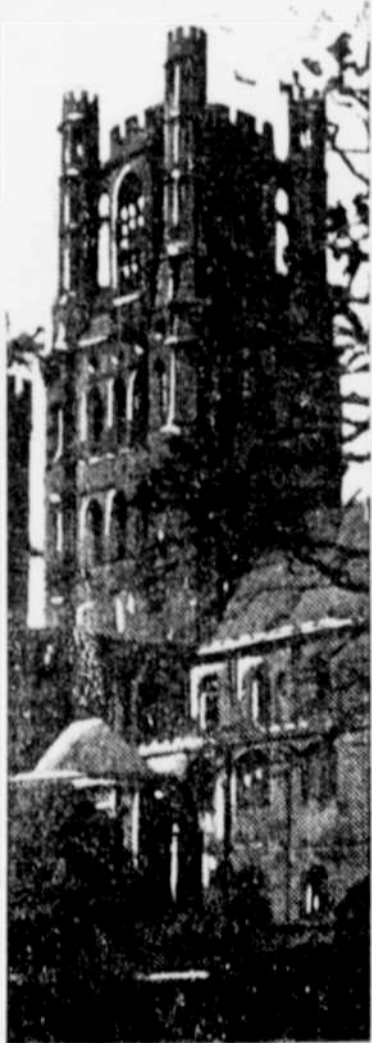
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