

Strange But True
By F. H. MacArthur

Chapter II
SCHOOL DAYS

No sooner had he gone when our mischief making broke out again and all went merry as a marriage bell.

Teacher tried to take up where he left off, and once again the school room resounded with the rat-tat-tat of dried beans against the blackboard. Things were becoming natural again in the little red schoolhouse by the side of the road.

My second and last teacher began his duties when I was a boy of ten. I recall now that some of the big boys had quit school for keeps. This didn't mean matters a great deal for the small boys had fallen into the habits of the older pupils, and had picked up quite a lot of new tricks of their own.

"Give 'em plenty of long-tailed cats," was what the trustees told the new master. "Put the fear of the Lord into their hearts right at the beginning and you'll get along fine."

The trustees could have kept their advice to themselves.

Teacher No. 2 didn't need advice from anyone when it came to putting a school in order. He knew how to wield the "cat o' nine tails" and he wielded it with vengeance. But before he was teaching a week he gave me the soundest whipping I ever received, but later discovered that I was not the guilty party.

"Never mind," he soothed. "I will place this to your credit for future misconduct, and I reckon it won't be long before the account will be balanced."

His prophecy came true. The next day I put sneezing powder on the big-bellied stove.

When teacher went to his place of boarding for dinner our gang rolled huge snowballs often weighing a hundred pounds or more. With these we barricaded the door and kept the master outside and the girls inside, while we shrieked with laughter from the shelter of the well-trimmed hedge that stood between the south side of the school grounds and the nearest house.

By working together, the teacher and the girl pupils finally removed the snow mounds and school resumed again as if nothing out of the way had ever occurred. But that wasn't the end of it. No siree! After school was let out for the day our gang was ordered to stay in and give an account of our evil deeds.

Not one of us opened our mouths. We had no comments to make. The next move was up to the master. Slightly he waited for him to open up and crack down on us.

Suddenly his hand went to the drawer of his desk and as suddenly it came out—no, not with the cat o' nine tails—but with the whittled down broomstick which was used to point out places on the maps. We pupils looked at each other in amazement. Then we looked at the teacher. Surely he didn't mean to flail us with such a weapon. That was his idea in a nutshell. Each of us received five whacks on each hand—there were no gentle strokes either, and there being fourteen of us involved in the snowmound episode the total number of strokes added up to 140. Teacher's arm must have ached from all that whacking. I know that 14 boys went home nursing swollen hands and began to believe that after all teacher was the real boss of our school.

Noon hour was always a gala time in the old country school at Cornwall. In summer we fished in the nearby mill dam, or walked south of the thick hedge to the sort of baseball game with rules of our own making.

In the winter we skated, fought fierce snowball battles, and tor-

tered the small boys as we had been tortured by a generation of bullies before.

Once during the height of a snow battle, Big Hugh Walker whamed me smack on the cheek with a snowball into which he'd placed a tiny stone to give it more carrying power. I thought somebody had hit me with an axe. Stars appeared in my crown for the first time, and for the space of seconds I thought I'd lose my cinder. But being British I managed to hold onto it. The side of my face where the missile hit swelled to twice its normal size and my left eye looked like the moon under full eclipse.

That evening a penitent Walker came over to our place and explained to mother how he'd hit me instead of the squirrel he'd aimed at. Of course, mother didn't believe a word of his story, but she smiled, stroked Hugh's head, and said, "Never mind, Hugh, I know just how such things happen. Never mind. Go home and be a good boy."

Our school literally flowed—or should I say it swarmed with mice of all sizes. There were little mice no longer than the first joint of a small boy's little finger. We couldn't see them but we could hear them squealing or whatever kind of a noise they make—in between the walls and guarded by their parents, aunts and uncles, and great-grandparents.

This happy family thrived on cheese, bread crusts, and other odds and ends of discarded dainties. The fore corner of the big room was riddled with holes like the end of a garden sprinkler, and each hole was manned by the captain of the mouse clan. At a given signal from the leader, the mouse tribe came from their places of hiding, seized a mouthful of food and then scurried back to their place of hiding to eat their meal at leisure.

What fun it was to watch the mice! But then there was always something exciting going on in our school. Not a dull moment ever.

The mice didn't have it all their own way either. Purdy Scott was their sworn enemy and it was he who took upon himself the duty of killing and roasting them when his luck ran high.

Every noon hour Scott would stand in the corner, poker in hand, and while the daylight out of every mouse that poked its nose out of a hole. These he'd roast on the top of the big-bellied stove, and threaten to feed them to the screaming girls if they didn't behave themselves and quit interfering with his job of execution of the mice clans.

When not going up and down the aisles on catlike feet, teacher occupied a large chair in front of a large desk. The desk and chair stood on an elevated platform, so that from his place of vantage, the master was able to cast an eye down on every pupil and thus nip in the bud most of the schemes forming in the minds of the scholars. I recall one of the boys who had a mania for putting his large head through the frame of broken slates and another whose chief pastime was racing ants up and down his slate. Then there was the girl who always fainted at the sight of blood. Some of the older boys would prick their finger tips with a pin and squeeze out just enough blood to make the young lady faint.


Not all the pranks were played during school hours, however. Some we played on the way to and from school. One of these I shall tell you about happened at Hyde's dam. The boys didn't like the old miller and the miller didn't like the boys hanging around his pond, fishing and skating. Every day he'd chase us away from his property but we'd come back just as often to plague him. But the big day—it was after school hours in the late Fall and the ice was none too good—was when Hyde came roaring after us and plummeted right into the water up to his chin. It took him some time to get out of his predicament and he had to manage it under his own power. Not one of us as much moved a muscle to help him.

He acted worse than ever towards us after that and to get even some of our gang went to his stable one night and gave his milk white mare a generous coating of sand and molasses. Next morning when the owner of the horse went to hitch her up to haul his toll-flower to market, he found Nellie stall as usual. She had scratched herself through a couple of partitions. That same day Nellie got her first haircut and you wouldn't recognize her as the miller's old white mare.

To conclude the chapter on School Days, I must tell you about the time one of my schoolmates and I turned loose a swarm of hornets on a couple of drunks on their way home from the city. The huge nest hung on a limb right beside the road, so chum and I got a couple of long poles and lay flat on our tummies in the long grass.

Just when the inebriated pair drove by in their horse and wagon we let the hornets have it, and the hornets let the men have

"And Swing That Gal Behind You!"



Youthful members of the Junior Y. M. C. A. Square Dance team are pictured at the Maritime Winter Fair. Left to right (back row) Betsy Houston, Barbara Stewart, Connie Davies, Mayne MacDonald; (front row) Freddie Hyndman, Hughie MacLean, Jimmy White, Kennie MacKenzie.—(Bart's Film Lab).

IGOR GOUZENKO HAS NO SPY DATA FOR U. S. SENATE

OTTAWA, (CP) — Canada has rejected the request of a United States Senate investigating committee for permission to interview Igor Gouzenko, the Russian embassy clerk who exposed his country's wartime espionage in Canada.

An External Affairs Department spokesman said Thursday Gouzenko has told Canadian authorities he gave all his spy information to them years ago and the U. S. has been informed there is no reason for the government-guarded Russian to talk to American investigators.

The Canadian turn-down came on a request through the U. S. State Department, for an interview with Gouzenko in Canada by a representative of the Senate internal security sub-committee, investigating subversive activities.

McCarthy Complains

Senator Joseph McCarthy, who heads another Senate investigating committee, complained of the action in New York.

"It is inconceivable that any friendly government would turn down a request for a U. S. congressional committee to hear testimony of men who might give information that would help crack Communist conspiracy in the United States," he said.

U. S. Air Carriers Challenged By Transport Bd.

OTTAWA, (CP) — Operating practices of two United States air carriers in Canada have been challenged by the air transport board as a sequel to an American snag that has held up a proposed Canada-Mexico service.

The board has ordered Pan American World Airways and Colonial Airlines to show cause by Dec. 15 why they should be allowed to continue procedures banned by U. S. authorities for Trans-Canada Air Lines on its Mexico run.

John R. Baldwin, board chairman, said there is no likelihood that suspension of service by the U. S. firms will be ordered, but the board "might or might not" make them discontinue the kind of operation frowned on by the U. S. civil aeronautics board in the case of TCA.

Asked Separate Planes

The board's action arose from a C.A.B. decision not to allow TCA to use just one aircraft on its proposed service between Toronto and Mexico City by way of Tampa, Fla. In a strict interpretation of the U.S.-Canada air agreement, C.A.B. ruled Trans-Canada must use separate planes on the Toronto-Tampa and Tampa-Mexico City legs.

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Alleged Scalp Of Strange Snowman Shown In Temple

BOMBAY, (Reuters) — Buddhist priests in a Himalayan temple have shown Indian mountaineers a scalp claimed to be that of an "abominable snowman," the mysterious creature said to inhabit the region.

An expedition, now returned to Bombay after an unsuccessful assault on 23,190-foot Mt. Pumori, described the scalp as "very thick" and covered all over with "reddish-brown hair."

The "snowman" has been variously described as a giant monster, hairy between man and ape, a mountain bear—and purely legend. But the Sherpas, who inhabit the region, regard the "snow-

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Contract Bridge

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West! The latter could then do no better than lead another heart. South would win with the king, draw trumps, and discard a spade on dummy's heart ace. Now he could cash the king and ace of spades and ruff a third round—and if he found the fortunate 3-3 break, as he would have, he could discard a club. At worst, if the spade break failed to materialize, he would still be able to try for the club trick.

How we laughed to see the drunks swinging their arms and hate in the air, and making desperate, futile passes at the angry stinging insects.

But the laugh went right out of our faces when we saw the men pull up to a telephone post, tie the horse, cut a couple of stout switches, and take after us. But youth and four good working legs soon put a safe distance between us and our pursuers. We never found out who they were and luckily for us they never learned our names.

(To be Continued)

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