

The Making of a Champion

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He had not long to wait. Even as he was proceeding to add some lumps of coal to his store of missiles, Scrubby Willifer's head was cautiously thrust around the corner. A stone from the vigilant Philip whistled by.

"You better look out," came a voice from Scrubby's direction. "Bruiser Young's here, and he's going to lick you."

The redoubtable Bruiser verified this intelligence by showing himself at the entrance to the alley. He immediately retired in recognition of a volley from Philip, but the latter perceived that the Bruiser's coming meant serious trouble. The title of champion fighter of the sixth-year grade would not be lightly given up by William Young. He had won it in arduous battle, and Philip knew that the other boys would follow in the daring footsteps of the Bruiser for the mere honor of being on his side, if for nothing else.

"Philip and Que-e-e-nie!" called a tantalizing voice from the opposite direction.

A stone smote Philip in the back. He turned, and saw Petey Martin, Louie Born and three or four other boys dancing about and preparing to launch a fusillade upon him.

There was clearly a heavy force in movement. A shower of stones came over the low cowshed that opposed the barn, and rattled harmlessly above Philip's head. He delivered a missile at the group where Petey stood, and struck Louie Born beneath the eye. Philip was loudly jeering when a cinder struck him, knocking off his cap, a heavy stone flew past his ear and his left leg sharply contracted from the effect of a smart impact on his calf. He turned, and saw a con-

gathering the largest of the stones under his feet, he filled his pockets and built a heap of ammunition inside the door.

corner. Here he was safe from the stones, but in peril of invasion.

He gasped when Scrubby Willifer displayed an auburn poll at the top of the ladder.

"Get out!" cried Philip. "You get out!" Fate, at this moment, made Scrubby a victim of his friends. A stone sailing through the open window from without hit him on the head and he dropped, howling.

"Philip, he's back there with more'n a million rocks," he wept, "and he hit me with one of 'em!"

This version of the injury impressed the crowd and Philip, huddled in his corner, heard the murmur of a council of war. Then the voice of the Bruiser arose.

"Hey, you!" called the Bruiser. "If you don't come down we'll come up and half kill you."

The beleaguered made no response.

"We'll give you three minutes to come down," resumed the voice from below.

"If you don't come, we'll come up and bang your head off."

Plainly the situation was desperate. Philip did not know that the injuries of Petey, of Louie and of Scrubby, and the inglorious tumble of the Bruiser had filled the others with respect for his prowess. He did know that he was alone in the loft, with every boy's hand against him.

"You comin' down?" demanded the Bruiser.

"Ya, ya, 'fraid to come down," sang two or three voices.

Louie Born joined in the taunts.

"Philip and Queenie," he sang, "Philip and Queenie! Philip'd like to go with a sheeny!"

A flow of wrath crimsoned the cheeks of the boy upstairs.

"I'll fix you," he cried. "I—I'll show you!"

He clattered about, gathering the stones deposited there by the foe.

"I'll bust somebody's head," he shrieked.



He had time only to leap inside the door and bang it shut before they arrived.

tingent of the foe rushing upon him, led by Bruiser Young.

He had time only to leap inside the door and bang it shut before they arrived. He thrust a splinter of wood through the staple, to secure the door, and climbed into the loft to reconnoiter. Up there a big window looked out upon the alley. Bundles of hay had once been tossed into the snow through this aperture, and it was large enough to afford room for battery practice on the enemy. Selecting a heavy lump of coal from his pocket, Philip leaned far out, poised to hurl the projectile at the besiegers.

But the alley was vacant! the barn door, loosening traitorously, had come open, and even now a clamor from the boys below announced their possession of his citadel.

Bruiser Young came clambering up the ladder.

"You get away from here!" screamed Philip. "You get away!"

He made a wild sweep at the champion's head. The Bruiser, dodging, lost his hold and tumbled to the floor below. And now, swiftly following after, came a new assault. The boys had discovered the open window, and going into the alley, commenced a bombardment through the portal. The stones thumped and rattled about the now thoroughly alarmed garrison of the loft, who promptly retreated into a sheltered

His eye fell upon the "punching bag," which he had once mistakenly constructed out of canvas and sawdust. It weighed nearly one hundred pounds. He seized upon this and dragged it toward the opening in the floor.

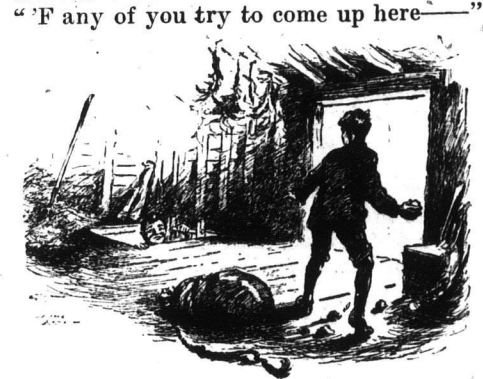
That fighter moved toward the door.

The boys downstairs shifted uneasily.

"What's he doin'?" asked the Bruiser.

"I'll fix you," puffed Philip, as he arrived with his burden at the ladder.

"F any of you try to come up here—"



"You get away from here," screamed Philip.

He leaned over to get a view of the besiegers.

"I'll bust—Oof!"

He had lost his balance. Wildly scratching for a hold upon the flooring, the

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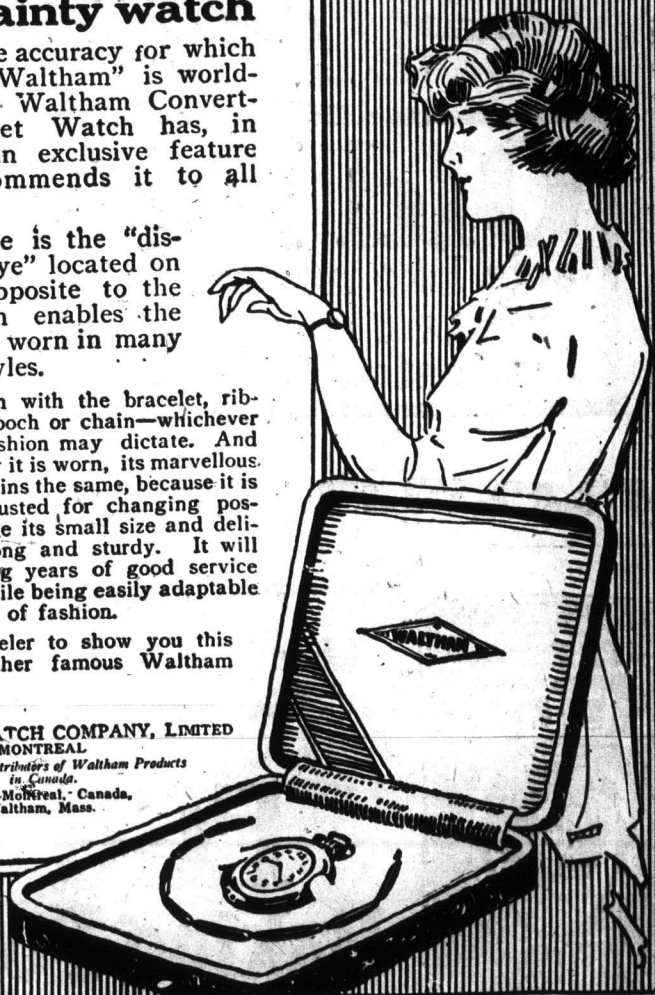
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