

Young People

A Young Hero

By Edith A. Findlay

"What's your name, young 'un," asked Jim Jagger in a patronizing manner of the new boy, as he leaned against the gymnasium door on the first day of the term. "Speak up—I sha'n't bite your head off!"

"I no talk much of Englessh—I am from France."

"Oh, a Frenchy, are you?" said the other, as he scanned the dark-eyed stranger rather contemptuously. "Well, I'm not much good at talking your language. Here, one of you chaps," he shouted, "fetch up that weekly boarder, young Edwards; I want him to do some parleyvousing."

"Yes, and find out if this new fellow has any cake in his trunks," put in another boy suggestively. "My trunks haven't come from the station yet."

"Here, Edwards," cried the domineering Jagger, as a pale, delicate-looking little lad was thrust forward through the crowd which had collected, "air your favorite French a bit, and find out from this Mossos chap if he will join the ball team."

Very shyly at first Bertie Edwards began his questioning, as the others stood laughing and giggling behind him; but soon recovering his composure, had the new-comer's history; how his name was Emile Le Grand, and his home in Paris till his father died, when his grandfather, who lived in the country, had brought him here.

"He knows nothing about baseball," Bertie explained to his audience; "has never seen it played, and—"

"Well, that settles it!" Jagger burst in. "I guessed he was a softy, for his neck-tie is made like a girl's bow, and his hair sticks up all over like a blacking brush. He'll do for your chum, Edwards; you don't play games either. A pair of softies together. Ha—ha!" And off walked Jagger in scorn.

As Jagger's words carried a good deal of weight in Dale House School, it was pretty generally thought that Emile was not "up to much," as the saying goes; and for the first few days, at any rate, he was left a good deal to his own company or to that of Bertie Edwards, a studious, sensitive little lad, whose health did not permit of his joining in any of the rough games.

"I say, you fellows, Higgins cried out one afternoon, as he came running toward the ball ground, where practicing

was going on, "you should go into the 'gym' and see that little Mossos chap figuring about on the ropes and bars. Edwards and I have been watching him. He's a perfect acrobat. He'll take it out of you, Jagger, at the high jump," Higgins added, mischievously.

"Will he? We shall see," the other exclaimed, not over-pleased at the suggestion. "It takes pluck as well as activity for that. I doubt if the little Mossos has much of that commodity."

"Yes, he has!" a small voice exclaimed, rather hotly; and turning, the boys found, to their astonishment, a little champion for Emile in the shape of Bertie, whose usually pale face was now flushed crimson. "Why, his father was an awfully brave soldier."

"A fine lot you know about such things, young bookworm," the bigger boy exclaimed, patronizingly. "Well, get out of the way; and, Higgins, you take a turn at batting now."

But it was soon generally recognized that Emile shone in the gymnasium; even the old drill-sergeant complimented him; and day by day the forlorn little French boy began to make friends amongst his class-mates, till an event happened which at once placed him in the position of the most popular boy in the school.

It occurred in this way:

One Saturday night, just as the supper-bell had rung, a report went through the school that a large haystack or a house was on fire about two miles distant, and the blaze from it could be distinctly seen from the playground. A rush out of doors followed, and, sure enough, away across the fields a thin column of smoke, on which a lurid light was thrown every now and again, was plainly visible.

"It is in the direction of Mr. Edwards's house, I am afraid!" Dr. Crammer exclaimed. "Dear, dear! and the nearest fire-engine is at Blackton, fourteen miles away. Boys, we may be of help," the kind doctor added. "Each of you get a pail or a can, and come with me over to the fire."

Nothing could have pleased the whole school better. I doubt if ever the good principal had been such a popular man as he was at that minute, when each boy, armed with anything capable of holding water that he could lay hands on, was following him to the scene of the disaster.

As the party drew near they quickly discovered that it was, indeed, Mr. Edwards's house which was ablaze, and the idea that their school-fellow Bertie might be in it—for, being a Saturday night, he was at home—added to their alarm.

"How kind of you to bring help!" Mr. Edwards exclaimed, as he hurried forward and wrung the doctor's hand. "You see, the west wing is getting almost beyond us. Form in line here, boys," he called, "and pass your buckets along as quickly as possible. We have plenty of water, I am thankful to say, and it cannot surely be long now before the engines are here."

Everyone worked with a will, and it gave heart to all when they saw that at last the fire was diminishing. Then a terrible thing got whispered from one to another in the crowd. One of the children was missing, and must be somewhere in the burning building.

"I ain't seen Master Bertie nowhere," a stableman remarked. "He sleeps in one of them top rooms, too," he added, pointing to a floor just below the blazing part.

"Bertie!"—the name caught Emile's ear.

"Jagger, take you, please, my bucket," he said, in his broken English.

"Played out, are you, Mossos? Well, hand it over, then. Mossos's in a regular fright; he's as white as a ghost." Jagger said to the boy standing next him, as Emile disappeared from his place in crowd of helpers.

The fire once more seemed to be gaining ground, creeping and licking its way along, filling the place with the ghastly flickering glare, and crackling and throwing out showers of sparks, which went floating and twinkling away amidst the curling brown smoke into the night. And how hard everybody worked, passing

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