



Mc Dougall's Good Stories for Children



The Wonderful Tale of an Eavesdropping Small Boy and a Giant

OF ALL the remarkable tales that have been told me the most wonderful is the story of Peter Powell, who was Maud Jackson's beau. Maud has a brother named Silas, who, when a small boy, was of a prying, inquisitive disposition, and who never lost an opportunity to poke his nose into other people's affairs. It has been said that Silas was urged to these actions by the Wizard Munch, with whom he was very intimate, so that the Wizard could know all about his neighbor's life. Silas has denied this. He declares that he was only anxious to learn all he could about everything. But, at any rate, he earned the reputation of the habit of what happened to his sister's beau. Peter Powell was about nineteen years old, and had paid close attention to Maud for many months, and yet every time he called at her house Silas was prying to see and hear all that passed.

One day, in order to listen better, he hid behind the sofa in the parlor before Peter arrived, but was soon discovered and handed out by the ear with loud howls which increased to shrieks when Peter kicked him cordially.

Silas fled, and after nursing his wrath in the woodshed for awhile, went to Wizard Munch and told him how he had been treated. The Wizard said:

"I've long had my eye on you, Peter Powell. To-night I will make you a dose that will settle him. Come back to me in the morning."

Silas repaired to the Wizard's house early next day, and Munch said with a leer:

"Here is the stuff that will fix him."

"What is it made of?" asked the boy as he took the bottle of dark greenish fluid.

"It contains many ingredients," said Munch. "First, slinged chickens' feathers and rabbits' feet, then toads' eyes, milk soured by thunder, bark of the slippery elm and hemlock, hair of a woodchuck, snakes' skins, spiders' eggs, perspiration of a mule, and angle worms, all boiled in water from a cistern in which a black cat was drowned."

"Gee!" cried Silas. "What a terrible mess!"

GREW BIG SUDDENLY

"Yes, it's awful," said Munch. "And it will make Peter turn into a shriveled, dried up, wrinkled little dwarf in a few days, and your sister will despise him."

"Bully!" cried Peter. "How should I give it to him?"

"Put it into his food when he comes to dinner on Sunday," replied the Wizard.

Silas took the terrible prescription, and when Peter came to dinner he succeeded in pouring plenty of it into his soup. Nothing happened immediately, and Silas was quite disappointed. He had looked to see Peter begin to shrivel up; but, in fact, he seemed to be larger in a couple of hours. Next day Silas went to Peter's house, and to his amazement, instead of a dwarf, he saw a giant. Peter was ten feet in height, and stood by the barn door with a troubled face, as he eyed Silas with a frown that he had grown every minute during the night, and had been compelled to sleep on the floor, as the bed was too small.

Silas was frightened, and started to run, but Peter saw him, and immediately suspected him to be the cause of this astonishing change. He ran after the boy, caught him, and soon Silas confessed all. Peter was so angry that he rushed to the Wizard's house, kicked the door in, and dragged Munch out.

The Wizard yelled for mercy. He confessed when Peter had almost choked him, but that did no good to Peter. Munch declared that he meant to make a giant of Peter, and said that he must have made some error—which was probably quite true. He added that his dwarf-potion would have made a minkin of Peter, but it would have lasted only a year; but he could not tell what would happen now. Peter shook him violently in his rage, so that his hair fell out, his teeth rattled out, and many of his ribs and other bones broke. Then he threw him on top of his own house, and went home.

He slept that night in the barn, which was very large, but he saw that he was still shooting upward. His clothes, hat and shoes, fortunately, enlarged his body, as well as everything in his pockets, and he foresaw that there might be no limit to his growth. In the morning he was thirty-six feet high, as measured against the third-story window, and he ate for breakfast everything there was in the house. This caused new alarm, for they saw that it would be very expensive to feed such a giant. His father gave him ten gold eagles, and told him to go to town and buy a hundred dollars' worth of oatmeal, as that was very cheap and filling. So Peter started off along the highway. Horses and dogs and oxen all ran away as he came along, and he soon turned to see him, looking on him with mingled alarm and astonishment.

It took him but an hour to walk forty miles, and he was soon in the town, where he created an immense sensation. He had grown twenty feet taller during the hour, and the people had to raise their voices to speak to him. He bought the oatmeal, but when he took out his gold pieces they were as large as dinner plates, and the grocer declared that they were no good.

"That's not money," he said. "You can't fool me. You can take the meal, but tell your dad to send me bills if he has no genuine gold eagles." Thus he fooled himself, for



THE SEA WAS COVERED WITH WAR VESSELS

the big gold pieces were worth already hundreds of dollars each.

Peter put many of the bags in his pockets and carried the rest in his arms, and returned home. When he told his father what had happened, and showed the immense gold eagles, his parent shouted with joy.

"Our fortune is made!" he cried. "Keep them in your clothes, and we will soon be rich if you continue growing. Here's a dozen more, take them also!"

Peter put the others in his pocket.

"But what am I going to do?" There'll be no place for me in the whole country," he said.

"Sit in the pasture," answered his father. "We can't make any plans until you stop growing."

When he spoke the noise overpowered the old man, and Peter's softest whisper took him off his feet. Peter heard him when he lay on the ground, but when he stood up his voice was inaudible. Just then Silas came along and Peter, heeding down, saw him and grabbed him.

"You needn't be alarmed," said the giant, "but you got me into this scrape and must stay with me and share my troubles."

So Silas had to remain up there, for Peter put him in his vest pocket, which was now as large as a room, and Silas was almost deafened by the tick of the gigantic silver watch in the other pocket. Peter asked his father how he could get any breakfast now, for he saw that he would eat nearly half of the oatmeal at once.

"I don't feel very hungry," said he, "and yet four or five roast oxen would just about suit me."

"There'll be no use in our being rich," cried Mr. Powell, "if we have to spend our money for oxen! However, just for once we will try it. But I'll buy them, for I don't want to use the money you have in your pockets. Just let's see one of the oxen, by the way."

Peter showed him several. Each was now as large as cart wheels, and the old man almost fell backward in his amazement.

"Why! They're worth thousands of dollars each, and I suppose the new ones are getting big, too, ain't they?"

Sure enough, even the ones added later were as big as

plates. The old man chuckled and hurried off to buy a grove of cattle as quickly as possible, for he saw that beef would soon be very scarce in the neighborhood of his giant son. He also gathered all the gold coins that he could secure at the banks so that Peter could increase his store, and hastened home again.

It was almost impossible to talk with Peter, however, as his voice shook the very houses and lifted people off their feet. Yet many tried to hold speech with him, especially, as you may imagine, the reporters. All wished to know what his plans were, and many museum managers wished to engage him at once. At last, tired of their importunities, Peter stood up and moved away. Then you should have seen the dismay and terror, for his feet were about ten feet in breadth and it was difficult for him to avoid crushing the people like ants under his soles. They ran with wild yells this way and that, causing a vast panic, for there were thousands there. So many were injured that soon a great outcry arose in the land and laws were passed expelling Peter from the country at once.

He had already foreseen this, as it was in a few days impossible for him to walk anywhere without causing great damage to houses, barns, gardens, fences, crops or animals, and, although he was as careful as possible, he had already destroyed much property. Being by the end of one week more than five hundred feet in height you can imagine how disastrous the least movement was. The State authorities offered to put him on a train of fat cars and take him away out upon the desert plains, but he said that even there he might cause ruin and devastation and instead he proposed to remain in the ocean, wading along near shore, and sleeping in unutilized spots. He took Silas with him, because he wished him to be his spokesman, as well as to punish him. He would hold Silas off on his hand, whisper to him what he wished and lower him to the ground, whereupon Silas would deliver the message. Fortunately he was now only hungry at long intervals, and as time went on he ate but once a month, but when he did eat it left a great scarcity in all the markets, I assure you. He soon found that he

could catch enough whales in the sea to make a meal when he wished one, and at one time he gathered several thousand in a bay, built a rock barrier at its mouth and kept them captive until he needed them. It was a great sight to see those whales splashing about like gold fish in a bowl!

When he had explored the seas near home he wandered up to the North Pole, taking several scientists with him, and they settled all the questions at once regarding the pole by requesting Peter to pull it up and bring it back with him. Which he did, of course, as is proved by the fact that the pole is now in Washington, but when they next went to the South Pole he declined to pull it up for fear it might affect the motion of the earth or something like that. It was while returning from this trip that he saw the sea serpent far off on the Pacific Ocean, and when he had landed his scientific friends at their homes he returned to find the reptile, but it eluded his search, probably by sinking deep into the sea.

Peter then began that wonderful career in which he did such great public good. He had now grown to the height of twenty-six hundred feet, which is almost a mile, and, although his head was literally in the clouds, he never lost sight of the fact that he must keep doing usual things or the world would consider him an immense nuisance. First he laid several cables across the different oceans, doing in a few hours what it usually took weeks to accomplish, thus saving vast sums, for which, of course, he was offered payment, but which he refused. He now was carrying in his pockets millions of gold and needed no more.

Poor Silas, who, of course, had also increased in size like everything upon Peter, and was a lesser giant now, being fifty feet in height, was the one who received all directions, and when Peter was asked to deepen a harbor or overturn a great mass of rock for a railroad he took all the orders. He managed, by industrious application, to keep well fed, although it cost a deal, I tell you, even to feed him. One time, when Peter in two days had dug the Panama Canal with his bare hands, and made a channel a mile wide from ocean to ocean, it was an almost im-

Wizard Made a Man a Mile High and Also Very Rich

possible task to find bananas and other fruit for his breakfast, but Silas, by diligent hustling, managed it, yet it was months before other people had a banana, for they ate almost all there were in Central America.

Then came the war between America and Europe, which was caused by the very Panama Canal. Peter had been resting in the pampas of South America, and knew nothing about it until he went north along the shores and beheld the host of warships sailing along a few miles out. There were so many of them that it surprised him. "We must learn the meaning of this!" he said to Silas. "Do you know where they are bound and what they are after?"

Silas, held over the biggest of the nearer cruisers, was soon informed that Europe was warring with America, and these were the combined fleets of England, France, Russia, Germany, and Italy, with a sprinkling of other unimportant nations.

"This must be stopped!" thundered the giant. "I'll have no war at all on the earth. Go back at once to Europe and disarm."

Some of the ships turned to go back, but others hesitated. Pretty soon Silas saw that some of them were trying to point their big guns upward, but as they were never constructed to shoot almost directly aloft he was not so alarmed as he might have been. He felt pretty sure up there anyway, for none of the projectiles, of which the greatest were some forty inches in diameter, could possibly have penetrated Peter's vest cloth.

However, they soon began to fire at his legs, and while the balls did not wound him they made his slippers itch, and annoyed him greatly, but he was loath to injure them, so he began to dance about, which action created a terrific sea, scattering the fleets and disturbing their aim. Then he picked the ships up one by one and laid them high on the shore among the hills, where they lie to this day, and none of the nations have ever been able to raise money enough from their people to start another navy, so that the whole world has been at peace ever since. The crews were unable to get home, so they settled right there, and started a new country, which they called Peteria, after the giant who had stopped the war. Then Peter went north and informed the government that he had finished the Panama Canal.

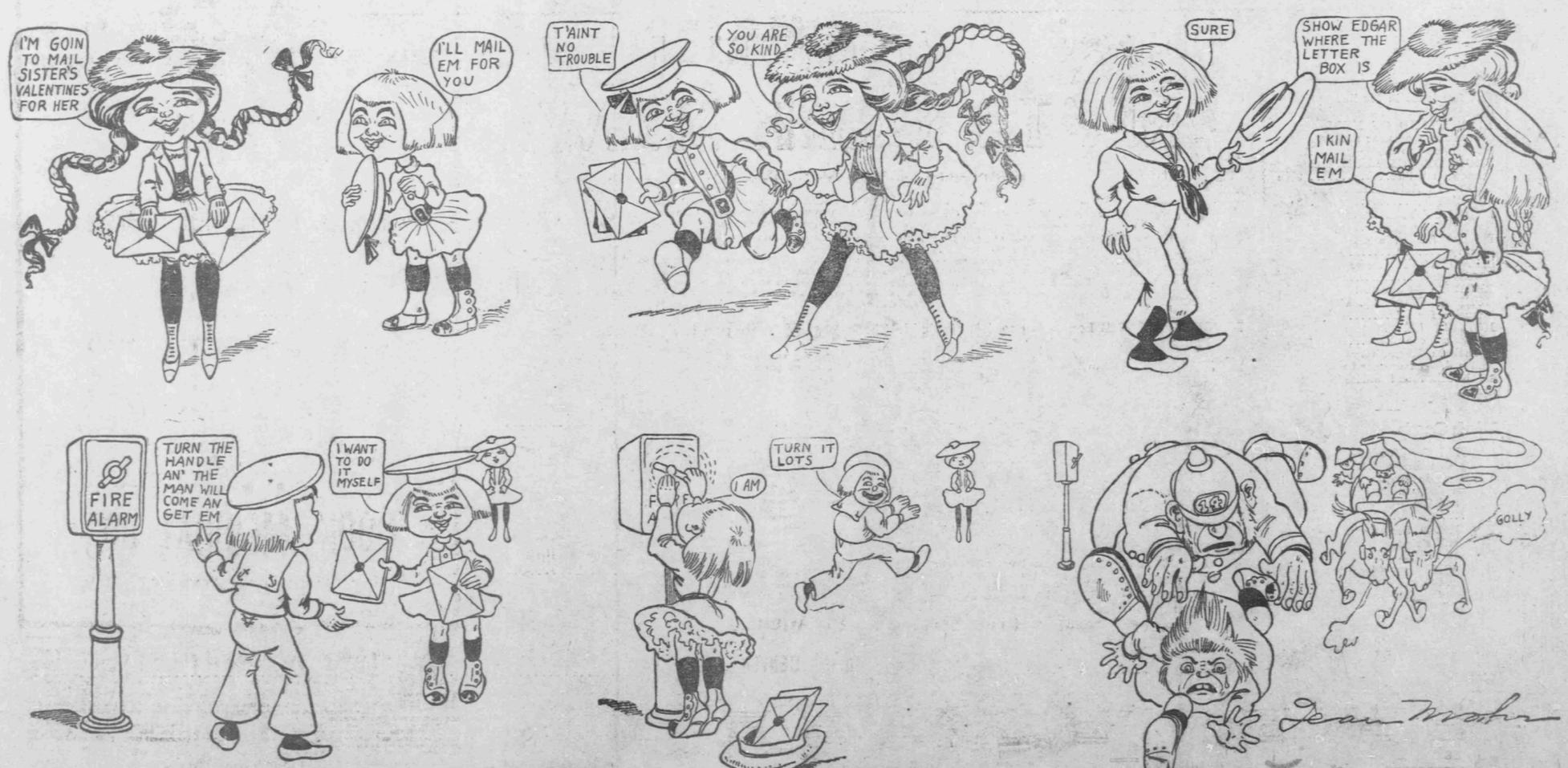
CAPTURED A SEA SERPENT

Then Peter, just for sport, began to hunt the sea-serpent, for nobody would believe that he had really seen such a monster. It was weeks before the creature was even sighted, and then he dived and escaped the giant's fingers. But Peter so nearly saw him that the water splashed all over Silas as he peered down into the sea. The next time they saw the creature it was far out in the Southern Pacific, and Peter, after removing his clothes and placing them in a pile upon a desert island, with Silas sitting on top of them, plunged into the sea so that only the top of his head showed. The sea serpent, thinking perhaps that his head was another island, came swimming merrily along, and before he knew how dangerous was the neighborhood Peter sprang up and ate at him. The serpent was very large, so large that it made even huge Peter tremble, for he was 300 feet in length, but he was no more in the hands of Peter. Before he knew what had occurred Peter had seized him, and in the twinkling of an eye had gripped his mouth so that he could not bite. Then he put his head between his knees and tied the serpent in a beautiful bow-knot that he could not untie nor could any man at all. The sea serpent, thinking he knew it. Then Peter dressed himself and started for home, very much pleased at being able to show all the unbelievers that he had really seen the sea serpent.

I think his capture of this sea monster created more of a stir than anything Peter ever did while he was a giant, for, somehow, it was a thing that people could really measure and understand. They came from all over the world to see his prize, which he had placed in a great glass tank, roofed with iron bars, so it could not escape or seize any of the audience, and if he had been poor this alone would have made him wealthy, had he charged admission to the show. But it was free, and, besides that, every child was presented with a splendid photograph to take home to show to his old or feeble parents or relations who could not come themselves.

Almost the first thing Peter did after getting home was to store away in the barn all the enormous gold coins, which were now worth millions. You can amuse yourself by estimating the value of a dollar piece that is enlarged to the size of a railroad turn table, if you wish, but I am too busy to do it. Peter was very lucky in thinking of doing this, as the very next week he began to diminish. It took but two days to assure him that he was getting smaller, and the same thing happened, of course, to Silas, so that in about a week they both were once more their former stature. Silas, however, having been obliged to be a lookout for Peter, was thoroughly tired of that occupation, and was quite cured of his prying propensities, and when Peter married his sister that winter, he was quite happy, being the brother-in-law of such a rich man. Now nothing remains to prove that Peter was a giant, except the money, and, I had almost forgotten, the sea serpent, which soon died, but the stuffed skin of which remains in Peter's house, where you can see it yourself at any time, if you know Peter Powell. WALT McDUGALL.

EASY EDGAR HELPS HIS BEST GIRL TO MAIL A LETTER



John Maher