

Chapter 2 - Shamie's Treasure, November 1922



THE Twins had been named in honour of the great angels, Michael and Gabriel. Michael, naturally, became Mick, and someone with a rhyming ear then called the other little fellow Mack, and thus they remained - Mick and Mack.

Mack was fond of a quiet life. He loved story books and gardening, and took a lively interest in birds, butterflies, and all kinds of insects. In his portion of the playroom one found a collection of silkworms, emperorgum, privet-hawk, and case-moth caterpillars. In jars and bottles disported tadpoles, water-snails, toe-biters, back-swimmers, wrigglers, and all kinds of watery creatures that I do not know the names of.

Mick loved playing bushrangers, pirates, cowboys, and Indians. He had never read a story through in his life - and he was seven! -although he loved someone to tell him stories; he thought Mack's collections of flowers and insects "rubbish"; he took a family pride in the garden, but playtime was too precious to use on still life. Gentle little Mack patiently took part in all Mick's thrilling games, although he thought insects and flowers and stories more interesting. Mick's wall in the playroom was covered with bows and arrows, daggers and Indian clothes (made by himself). He was the hero of a hundred-and-one fights; he loved a fight, but was the best of friends with his opponents as soon as it was over: he did not hum-and-haw about peace, as statesmen do when they settle up after a fight.

Mack hated to hit anyone, or to hurt anyone in any way; he considered everybody's feelings. But if any boy dared to say a hasty word to Mack, he had to reckon with Mick - Mick did the fighting for both. You must not think that Mack was a "softy"; he was not. But he had a sweet, gentle soul, and was always looking for beautiful things, and so did not notice the ugly ones. He looked for kindness, good temper, gentleness, truth; and so he found them. The boys all liked him, and were generally at their best with him. Of course, Mack could get angry. He did one day, when some boys were teasing poor little Dickie Grey, who was deaf and dumb. How Mack went for them! His gentle tongue lashed their souls, and then his little hands, that were always ready to do a kindness, shot out right and left, to the amazement of the boys. If anyone hurt a dog or cat, or needlessly killed a harmless insect, Mack could be as fierce as Mick.

The Twins had a great admiration for their big brother, Teddy. He was so clever: he could do hard sums, and spell long words (right or wrong-the Twins didn't know the difference). No matter what question they asked, on any subject under the sun, he could give them an answer that satisfied.

Teddy's part of the playroom told its owner was a sport: a cherished bat, a pair of old pads, a cricket ball (rather the worse for wear), a football (looking forlorn these spring days), a set of boxing gloves. His part of the wall held pictures of cricketers, footballers, tennis champions, boxers, and all the stars of the sporting world. Conspicuous amongst these celebrities was a picture cut from the "Far East"; the picture of the Irish Missionaries to China. Many had found fault with its position.

"I wouldn't put it there, Teddo The priests are too good to be amongst those."



Teddy couldn't see it, "It might do the sports good to have their pictures hanging near the Missionaries'. I'm sure the priests wouldn't mind. They are sports, or they wouldn't go to old China." So there the picture hung, as a sun amongst the sporting stars.

Teddy had not decided whether he would be the champion bowler of Australia, or go to China to help the priests at Han Yang, when he was a man.

Mary and Angie and Baby had the other end of the playroom. Mary had books and pictures and fancy - work in her corner, and a little table, at which she wrote stories.

Angie had dolls-all Mary's old ones as well as her own-and lots of parlour games, to help her when the "bad" days made her a prisoner.

As for Baby's little piece of floor space, it contained a Teddy bear (with much hair missing), a battered rag dolly, a tea-set, and a box of odds and ends-beads, chalk, balls, a drawing-slate, and pencils.

In each child's part of the playroom a Mite Box held a central position. What a race it was to get one's box filled first! Even Baby took a delight in dropping pennies into her particular box, and sometimes Father and Mother helped her and Angie to "beat" the others.

It was a week since Teddy's fight from Sing Lee. Teddy was worried. "It's your fault, really, Mr. Shamrock. If you hadn't chased the old John - And, there, I've got to save ten shillings for Dad's Mite Box. If it were for my own, even! Well, I've cut out pictures and comics and lollies, 'cos it's November. That will make up a bit. Now, if it were my birthday, I'd get a pound from Grandfather - I wish something would turn up. I want to pay up. I don't like owing Dad ten shillings.' "

One Saturday, Teddy, the Twins, and Shamie went out for a "tramp." Billy O'Brien tried to coax them to put it off until another day, and to go in the afternoon with him to the Marvel

Picture Show Palace. Billy showed them the advertisements-wonderful dogs, and monkeys, and elephants.

"No; we promised to cut them right out this month, and we will," said Teddy.

"Course!" chimed in Mick and Mack.

Father had given them permission to go as far as Doughboy Creek. Mother did not like these "tramps," particularly such a far-off tramp as this one; but Father said it did them good, made them sturdy and independent, and that Mack would take care the other two did not get into mischief. Father would have trusted Mack anywhere.

They started after breakfast, carrying lunch in their schoolbags; they were to be home before dusk

The tram carried them as far as Fairton, and then they boarded the old bus bound for Cootha. Mack loved the old bus; it reminded him of the stories in his Christmas book, in which all the heroes went long journeys by coach-Mack liked a romantic way of travelling. Give Mick aeroplanes.

From the terminus they struck off, across a paddock, to the little bit of bushland that clings round Doughboy Creek. It was a beautiful day. Mack gathered wild flowers. There were such a lot of different kinds-pink boronia, springelia, spiderflower, eggs-and-bacon, granny's bonnets, puddin's, padlock flower, fuchsia, saraparilla, and many others. Mack went "mooning" along (Teddy's word), turning over stones, poking about for insects, dipping his hands into the water and making a "cup" to see what little swimmers he could find.

Mick imagined there were Indians or bushrangers behind the trunks of the larger trees, and he took cover every few yards, to prance out suddenly, with a "bang, bang," of his imaginary revolver, or a "swish, whiz" of an imaginary arrow, at the Red Skins.

As for Teddy, he swung ahead with a light, quick step, a stout stick in his hand (for snakes, you know), and an old song of Father's on his lips: "Like a feather, when I'm floating in my gumtree canoe."

The three boys drew in deep breaths of the bush-scented air-such a fresh, life-giving scent, an unforgettable scent, that makes city-dwellers long for a whiff of it. There is no perfume like it-warm grass and ferns, crushed leaves and flowers, all distilled in the wine of Australian sunshine, Strangers say our flowers have no scent. Well, I wish they could go for a tramp with Teddy and the Twins in the little bit of bush land that still lies unspoiled around Doughboy Creek. No scent! Why, the bush is one big sea of scent!



The wild clematis clambered over bushes, and ran, laughing, higher and higher, up the big trees, and it looked down, and poured waves of delicate perfume over everything. Every leaf

crushed underfoot gave forth a clean scent, that could clear the cobwebs out of any brain, and bring new life to any lungs.

"Gee!" Teddy cried enthusiastically, "There's no place in the whole jolly world like Doughboy Creek."

The Twins' hearts gave a jump of love, too, ana, I suppose, Shamie's also.

Off came boots and socks, and the four were soon paddling in the clear, shallow water. Shamie darted out now and then, and, having an imagination like Mick's, he peopled the bush with his natural enemies, rabbits and hares and rats, and perhaps a stray Chinese, with his detestable jog-trot and his provoking pair of baskets. Round and round he chased his imaginary quarry, pausing to sniff under logs, or scratch under stones and bark with pretended fury.

"Ah! I've got yer; out yer come."

But nothing came, and Shamie barked with delight and rolled over and over in an ecstasy of joy.

Then Teddy and Mick joined in Shamie's game, leaving Mack to his quiet occupation of collecting. When all were tired they flung themselves down in the shade of a gumtree and listened to the laughing of a pair of kookaburras. The three boys mimicked their little feathered brothers, and Shamie put in a yap occasionally.

Teddy, the clever one, said it was twelve o'clock, but whether he knew by the position of the sun or by a certain craving for lunch I do not know. He said it was the sun.

Schoolbags - no (use not such a plain, everyday word when out tramping!), swags and "tucker-bags" were opened and lunch spread temptingly.

Mack, the thoughtful one, said, just as a delicious sandwich was near Teddy's lips: "What about the Angelus? We promised to say it every day. "

"Come on then," Teddy answered, as he dropped the tempting morsel; "you give it out, Mack."

They jumped to their feet, and there, with the bush breathing a sweet incense about them, the three little boys recited the Angelic Salutation.

Lunch came next. What a lunch it was! And the three travellers sent a grateful thought to Mother and Mary and Angie, who had all helped to prepare and pack it. Shamie sat in front of the boys, his red tongue trembling with anticipation, his bright eyes fixed expectantly on all three, as if to say: "After you with the sandwiches, boys."

The boys did not forget him.

When lunch-bags were quite empty, and the crumbs scattered for the benefit of any Doughboy Creek birds that may have cultivated a taste for humans' food, our travellers followed the creek farther.

Now what followed was all due to Shamie.



I told you that he had a very vivid imagination, and it suddenly occurred to him that perhaps in prehistoric days there were dogs, quite large ones, in Australia. Now what more likely than that they might have buried a treasure, the bone of a prehistoric sheep or goat, in some cunning spot. Very well then; why should not Shamie find it? It would look well in the Museum: "Found by Shamrock Daly, terrier, during his excavations at Doughboy Creek."

Shamie looked about for The Spot.

In the bank of the creek, just below a dead gumtree, near a peculiarly-shaped rock, Shamie saw a likely place.

He began to dig, dig, dig with his fore-paws, scattering showers of earth behind him. The boys stopped to watch him, laughing at his antics.

"He thinks he's on Treasure Island," Teddy said.

"Go on, Sham. Fetch him out, boy," Mick cried. "Go it; go it."

Shamie paused a moment to look up and grin and yap a reply.

At last he tired, and, telling himself that the prehistoric dog was a cheat, flung himself down on the mound of fresh, damp soil he had raised, and lay there panting.

"I'll help you, Sham," Teddy said, and he dropped to his knees, to carry on where Shamie had left off.

Suddenly the Twins, who had turned to watch a timid silver-eye, heard a shout.

"Look! look! Mick, Mack!" Teddy was holding up something: the sun shone on it, and little specks of it sparkled.

"It's gold!"

The Twins drew nearer, fascinated.

"It's just like the little nuggets Uncle Michael showed us," Teddy continued.

The Twins were dumb. Gold! Was it worth thousands, or hundreds, or what? The gold-fever at once seized them: all three began to dig, dig, dig.

They dug with their hands, and with sticks, until their fingers were numb. But they found nothing: disappointment cooled their enthusiasm. "Perhaps," said Mack-the wise one - "perhaps it's only a shiny stone; it may not be gold at all."

"Course it is," Teddy said sharply. "It's just like the nuggets we saw at Uncle Michael's. It is gold. And good old Shamie found it. Didn't you, boy?"

Shamie barked "yes," and looked distinctly proud of himself, although he had wanted to find a prehistoric bone.

They were all weary, and felt a sudden desire for home. What a lovely thing to tell Father and Mother and the girls. They had been warned to leave for home before dusk. Mack took up his bunches of flowers, that, had been carefully set in a little pool of water to keep them fresh for Mother. He tied them (one on each end) to a strong stick, to carry on his shoulder; he packed his specimens neatly in his bag.

Mick selected some suitable switches for bows and arrows: Teddy carried the nugget.

"Well, Shamie found it," Teddy said to Father. "And, you know, it was Shamie tore Sing Lee's dungarees. He'll have to pay-out of his nugget."

Father sold the nugget, and the six little Dalys laughed with glee when Shamie was offered a ten shilling note and told to pay his debts and put it in Father's Mite Box.

Shamie grinned, and made snatches at the note, so Teddy was allowed to take it for him and put it in.

"There you are, Sham; we're out of debt now. Shake hands."

Shamie solemnly offered a paw.

Father banked twenty-four pounds for the boys. All that! Nuggets are precious things, you know, even little ones.

Teddy wanted to spend his share. He wanted to buy new boxing gloves and a new cricket set, and (I should have put it first) a watch, and a new hat for Mother (a red one, if she'd have it), and some pretty things for the girls, and - You know all the things you'd want to buy if you had a nugget.

Then he wanted to have a big party, and ask all the boys in his class.

But Father simply shook his head.

"Never mind," sighed Teddy, hopefully, "I'll have the party and buy the things when I'm twenty-one.

Only ten years to wait!