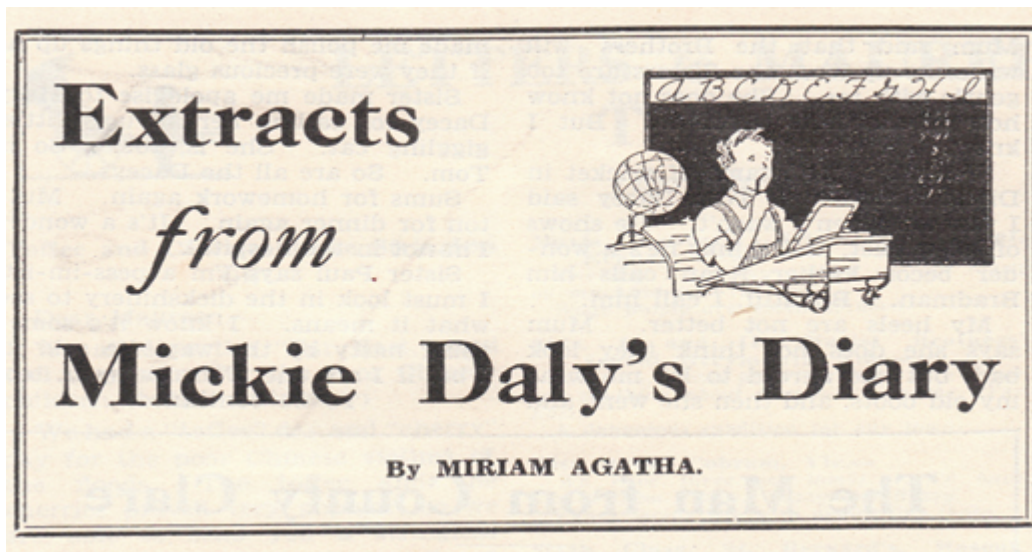


Extract 5 from Mickie Daly's Diary, July 1932



Saturday.

Didn't I know it would happen? We played in the Park, Dickie and me, just like Dad said, and a tragedy happened. We were running all over the place, dodging each other. It's good practice for football. When I go to the Brothers' School, I bet I'll get into a football team easy, that's if they are fair to me. When we were tired and all winded, we sat down and had a good old yarn about everything. I nearly let out my secret about the letter to Father Mullany, but I managed to bite my tongue and keep quiet about it. I mustn't talk about it, even to my mate, Dickie.

So we talked about aeroplanes, and Dickie said how great it would be if people could fly just by moving their legs and arms somehow; like we can swim. We ought to be able to, we tried off the park seats, but we just fell down. Then we had a game standing on our heads, with our feet up against the gum tree, to see who could keep up longest. Dickie won. I would of, only a fit of coughing came on me. Then we rested, and our clothes got a good bit dusty and one of my coat pockets got torn right off, and Dickie's coat got split a little bit. Mothers make a fuss when these things happen, although a few stitches soon fix them up.

Then the worst of all for the day happened.

We saw a little canary up in the gum tree. It was somebody's pet that had got lost. It's cruel to let little canaries wander about because the other birds kill them; they cannot look after themselves on account of being such pets always. Canaries are not like sparrows and bush birds. So Dickie and me determined, to save this poor little pet bird if we could. Perhaps some little girl or some lady would come along, crying, looking for it, and then we thought how nice it would be to say: "Here, Madame, is your little pet." Sister Paul said to put little comments like that in talking parts when you are writing. Dickie and me had a great dispute about who should climb the tree. I said I was older and bigger. Dickie said he was lighter and that the branch was thin. We settled it by picking up a twig and pulling it. When it broke, whoever got the long piece was to do the climbing.

Dickie won.

So up he went.

He's a good climber, young Dickie, good as a monkey. He had his cap in his teeth, he meant to drop it softly over the little bird.

Just as he was near, right out on the branch, a big dog ran under the tree, barking like mad. The canary flew off. But not far. He perched on one of the rose trees just near the band-stand. I crawled over like a snake, and dropped my cap clean over him.

Dickie was watching me breathlessly; he bent right out on the branch. There was a horrid creaking and a snap and down came the end of the branch, and poor Dickie, too.

"Oh, Dickie," I cried, "are you dead?"

He said he wasn't. He stood up and his face was white as milk. Then he sat down again. "My arm," he said. "It is paining awful. What will we do, Mickie?"

"Come on to the hospital," I said. "Come on, quick. Can you hold it up?"

He held his arm up high.

"It isn't broken, Dickie. But what about your head? You might have konkussyin."

I took him by the arm, I still held on to the little bird in my cap. It did not seem very frightened. Dickie was trying not to cry. We said a "Hail Mary" for him as we went along.

Just near the lily-pond we saw a policeman and a lady coming over the grass. The lady was hurrying, running now and then, and the policeman was just taking big, slow strides. The lady seemed fearfully excited.

"There they are, officer," she called out. "There they are!"

We were doing nothing to break the law, so we took no notice, but the policeman called to us to stop. So we stopped. Even if you are not breaking the law you must stop when a policeman tells you, because he can say In the King's name.

"Ah," panted the lady. "That's the ring-leader - that big one with the ugly face and the red hair," and she pointed at me. "What have you done with my poor, darling Sweetie, you infamous child?"

"I don't know, what you mean, Missis-er, lady-er Madame," I said to her as grand as I could.

"Don't know? Look, officer, what is in his cap? - something alive!" She snatched my cap. "It is - it is - my precious pet, my darling Sweetie."

The little bird knew her all right. She held it up against her face and kissed it, and it made a little chirp.

"Where's Sweetie's cage, Monster?" she said to me.

"Well, my lad, what about it?" said the big John. He was about seven feet, and he had a big pink face and kind blue eyes. He didn't look a bit nasty.

"We caught the bird in the Park."

"Oh, such lies for one so young. You stole the cage with Sweetie in.

Where is the cage, you horrible boy?

"True - we caught the canary just a minute ago."

"Look at his face, officer - red with shame, as it should be; and the little one is as white as a sheet."

Poor Dickie. So he was. I had forgotten his pain. He looked very sick, as if he would faint and fall down any minute.

"He just fell out of a tree," I said to the perliceman, ignoring the angry lady. "He might have konkussyin of the brain, or some brain disease. And his arm is paining. He might drop dead any minute."

Poor Dickie looked worse when I said this. But the perliceman's face changed. There was almost a smile on it before, but now it got all serious and sorry. He picked Dickie up and had a look at his arm.

"Poor little chap. We'll soon have that fixed up."

So we went off like a procession. The great, big perliceman carrying poor old Dickie, me trotting along trying to keep up with his stride and the lady and her bird talking to one another. She wasn't in such a hurry now.

As we went along I told the lady all about it, who we were, how long we'd been playing in the Park - all the morning nearly, and about the little bird coming on to the gum tree.

"Well, I saw two boys running out my gate with Sweetie's cage. One boy had red hair, but now I come to think of it, he was bigger than you, and the other one was bigger than your friend. A man was waiting for them at the corner, and they made oft towards the Park. By the time I got downstairs they were out of sight. I saw a perliceman passing, and I told him to come with me to the Park to get my bird from the robbers." She asked our names, and where we lived, and said she was sorry for calling me such bad names. We said good-bye to her and the perliceman took us in a car to the hospital. Didn't Rosie Moran get a shock when she saw Dickie and me in the P.D. car. She was going a message for her mother, and she saw us. She just stood still on the footpath and stared in constination. I suppose she thought we had been arrested for breaking the lor of the country.

At the hospital the Sisters made a fuss about Dickie for being brave. He didn't cry a bit. He was examined all over. His head was not hurt. His arm was bandaged, and the perliceman drove us' home. Our mothers nearly cullapsed when the P.D. car drew up at the doors. I think that perliceman is the nicest man I know, after Father Dale, and I hope he will be the Chief someday.

Monday.

The canary lady called to see our mothers, and apologised for abusing Dickie and me. The men who had been stealing pet birds all round the district were caught. They had two boys helping them. Sweetie's cage was found in their possession. I suppose it had opened, and Sweetie flew out. The canary lady sent me and Dickie a big cake each, with sugar birds all round the edge, and she told us to come in and see her sometimes. She said she was grateful to us. Poor Sweetie might have been killed by a dog or a cat if we had not been there.

Tuesday.

Gee! A disappointment to-day. Mother said: "There's a letter for you, Michael," My heart jumped.

I thought it will be from Father Mullany. But it was not. Inside the envelope there was a silly old postcard from the Boy Proof Trousers Company. Mum bought me some clothes there last year, and every few months they send me a card to know if I am considering buying any new clothes for the autumn or the winter or the spring or the summer or whatever time it is. Doesn't say much for the truth of their trade mark. Mum bought me three pairs of pants for school, and if they are boy proof they should not be worn out yet. They are not boy proof all the same. Mum had to patch them all twice since then.

I was wild getting their old card, I can tell you.

Wednesday.

The girls at school wrote a community letter to Maureen - each girl wrote a short parragraf. So we wrote one to The Twin. Tom Dacey is the best writer. So Sister says. I don't like his writing much, it's too slanty. Dickie's looked nice, and so did Maurie's. I tried hard to do my bit nice, too. But, stiff again! Just as I finished I got a blot. The other boys groaned at me, I can tell you, just as if I had meant to spoil the page, and got the jolly old blot on purpose.

"Of course, Muggins must spoil it," said Tom Dacey.

"Oh yes - Mickie the Mug," Jim Brennan said, and groaned as if he was dying.

Sister Allerwishes said it was because I was so anxious to do it well. And she kindly dried the blot with tiny pieces of blotting paper, and then she scraped it off with the dabster little penknife the girls gave her on her feast day. Sister Allerwishes is very kind - just like that big perliceman. You can feel they want to help you, to be kind to you, just if they look at you and say nothing at all.



Friday.

Father Dale brought a strange priest to see us. He's a mission priest, and has been in China. He told us stories about China. It must be a funny place. We were all very interested on account of having just taken to the "Far East." But tragedy came. The priest said the "Our Father" in Chinese for us, and it sounded so funny, we laughed. Sister Pawl's face looked terrible, so we tried to stifle our laughter.

The priest did not seem shocked at our bad manners, and neither did Father Dale. But Sister Pawl! After he was gone she told us she had never felt so humiliated and disappointed and disgusted and shocked and a whole lot more things. She said we should have known better than to laugh at a prayer. We were ashamed, I can tell you. Some of the girls cried, and wanted to know if they would have to tell it in Confession, was it a sin?

Anyhow, we couldn't help it. It didn't sound a bit like a prayer. But we'll know better when another Foren Mission priest comes. If he says a prayer in Japanese, or Fiji, or New Guinea, or Solomon Islands language, we'll take preshous care not to laugh, no matter how funny it sounds. Sister Pawl kept it up on us all day. And we haven't heard the last of it yet, I bet.

When the Forren Mission priest was going, I was near the door, and he put his hand on my head and smiled at me. He was a thin, palelooking priest, and his hair was getting a bit grey. Perhaps he'd been in the Bandits' Camp over in China. It made me feel as happy as anything when his hand touched me.

Tom Dacey said afterwards that the priest's hands were cold, and he wanted to warm them on my hair. I ignored the insult. I wasn't going to start quarrelling and fighting. I suppose that Mission priest is a saint, and that is why I felt so happy. If I had commenced a argument and a fight with Dacey over my hair, I know the happiness would of vanished.

Monday.

New sums to-day.

I don't like them much.

Sister Allerwishes told us a story about the Mission priests amongst the Indians up in the ice and snow of Canada. It was great, But I think I'll stick to the poor old Chows.

Dickie has been away from school. He had to have his arm X-rayed. But it is doing fine.

To be continued