

THE **EMPIRE** EVERY WEDNESDAY.  
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Our Readers are informed that the characters in the following Story are purely imaginary; no reference or allusion is made to any living person. Actual names may be unintentionally mentioned, but the Editor wishes it to be distinctly understood that no adverse personal reflection is intended.

A CAPITAL SCHOOL STORY.

By PROSPER HOWARD.

CHAPTER I.

Miss Letitia Lane, from Australia, arrives. "W"hen did Lane say she was coming, Taddy?" said Gordon Gay, the schoolboy actor, interestedly.

"Tadpole, the artistic genius of Rylcombe Grammar School, turned round from his easel in Study 13, in the Fourth Form passage, at that famous seat of learning, and wrinkled his left brow in deep thought.

"Let me see, Gay. I don't think Lane knew exactly when his aunt from Australia would arrive. The letter said on Saturday or Sunday, if I remember right.

"Saturday or Sunday—ah?" mused Gordon Gay aloud. "That's possible."

"Yes, I am sure that was it," said Tadpole, nodding his head. "The letter said that Miss Letitia Lane—that's Lane's Australian aunt's name—had some other visits to pay first, so could not say to a day when she would be here. I wonder what she'll be like?"

"Hasn't Lane ever seen her, Taddy?"

"No. He said he didn't know anything about her except that she's lived in Australia for a long time."

"Good again!" murmured Gordon Gay. "But how did Lane come to tell you all this, Taddy?"

"I was with him and Monk and Carboy in the gym just now, and Lane read the letter out to us. He was quite excited, naturally, at the prospect of his aunt from Australia coming to see him to-day."

"Or to-morrow?" put in Gordon Gay.

"Yes, to-day or to-morrow, to be exact, Gay. I wonder which day she will come?"

"She'll come to-day," said Gordon Gay, with conviction.

Tadpole stared at his leader in a puzzled way.

"Really, Gay! What makes you so sure of that?"

A gleam of fun twinkled in Gordon Gay's eyes for a moment.

"Oh—er—something seems to tell me that Lane's Australian aunt will come this afternoon, Taddy!" he said gravely. "Perhaps it's intuition, or something."

Tadpole's eyes opened wide.

"Really, Gay, that is very interesting," he observed. "I have often thought—"

"Oh, rats—I-I mean, of course, Taddy," said Gordon Gay, with a grin.

"So have I. Ta-ta! I'm going to find Jack and Harry Woodton. I want to speak to them to-day."

And the schoolboy actor ran out of the study to find his two chums who had just been struck with the idea of a life-time.

"Of course, I expect she'll be a fearful old-fashioned old lady—probably with a funny little bonnet and side curls," said Lane, rather solemnly, as he strolled out into the quadrangle, after dinner, with his chums, Monk and Carboy. "She's been out in the backwoods of Australia pretty well all her life, you know."



"Oh, dear me!" Miss Letty charged into the three juniors like a runaway motor-car, and with much the same effect. Monk, Lane and Carboy went flying, knocked clean off their feet by the shock of the charge

"Oh, you never know!" said Frank Monk, with a sage wag of his head. "Some of those Colonials are awfully smart and up-to-date, you know."

"Rather!" said Carboy.

But Lane did not seem to be comforted much.

"I don't know whether she's coming this afternoon or to-morrow, either," he went on, still more gloomily. "It's a half-holiday this afternoon, so I shall have to stick about here all the blessed time in case the old lady turns up."

"Never mind, old chap; we'll stick by you," said Monk cheerily. "Let's go and have a turn on the bar in the gym."

"Right-ho, Monkey! You're a good old sort! Come on!"

The three chums had a brisk ten minutes on the bar, and then, feeling

somehow better, they retraced their steps to the sunlit quad.

"Wish we could go for a walk!" said Lane mournfully. "I don't suppose for a moment Aunt Letty will come this afternoon."

"Oh, bosh!" said Frank Monk. "She's just as likely to as—Hullo!"

"What's up?" asked Lane and Carboy together.

"My hat!"

"What's the matter?"

"Just look there!"

Monk pointed towards the gate of the Grammar School in high excitement, and Lane and Carboy gave simultaneous gasps.

"Great Scott!"

"My—my aunt!"

"Exactly!" grinned Frank Monk. "Your aunt, Lane! Lane—your Australian aunt, for a pension!"

The figure of a lady could be

plainly seen at the school gates, and, even at that distance, the juniors could see that the lady was elderly and stout, and wore an old-fashioned bonnet and side-curls. The lady who stood hesitating at the gates was, in fact, just the sort of old lady that Lane had expected his aunt from Australia to be.

Lane took one look at the figure, and then started to run towards the gates.

"It's Aunt Letty all right," he said, with something that almost sounded like a groan. "Come on!"

CHAPTER 2.

Miss Letitia on the Rink. LANE sprinted across the quad, and right up to the old lady, who was evidently undecided whether to enter the Grammar School or not.

Lane dragged off his cap as he pulled up, and the old lady immediately addressed him in a somewhat high, cracked voice:

"Little boy, could you tell me whether this is Rylcombe Grammar School?"

Lane turned the colour of a well-boiled beetroot, while Carboy and Monk could not help grinning. The old lady—queer figure as she was with her short, stout figure, old-fashioned bonnet and curls, and large green umbrella—looked so kindly and benevolent that she had evidently no idea that she might be wounding Lane's feelings by calling him a "little boy."

"I—I—" stammered Lane. "I mean, yes, madam, this is Rylcombe Grammar School, and—"

"I'm looking for Master Harry Lane," interrupted the old lady. "Do you know him, little boy?"

Monk and Carboy little boy choked. "I—I am Harry Lane," stammered poor Lane, "and—and you're—"

"Harry!" cried the old lady, clasping him to her in an affectionate embrace, and bestowing kisses freely upon him. "Don't you remember, Aunt Letty from Australia!"

Lane struggled free from his aunt's fond embrace.

"I—I've never seen you before, Aunt Letty, you know!" he gasped.

"Oh, of course! How—how stupid of me to say Aunt Letty, a little hastily. "But this is a joyful meeting, Harry dear! Who are these little fellows?"

It was then the turn of Frank Monk and Carboy to turn red, while Lane grinned.

"They're two friends of mine, auntie," he explained. "Monk and Carboy."

"Ah! How do you do?" said Miss Letitia kindly shaking hands with the two Fourth-Formers. "You look quite nice lads, and I think I shall allow Harry to continue to associate with you."

"My—my hat!" murmured Frank Monk, absolutely flabbergasted. "Did you speak, Master Monk?" inquired Miss Letty pleasantly.

"No, no, Miss Lane!"

"I thought I heard you say something."

"It—it was nothing."

"Ah, then, I was mistaken! Now, Harry, suppose you and your little friends conduct me round the school premises?"

"Sure—certainly, auntie!"

The three boys accompanied Miss Letitia Lane across the quad, at a brisk pace. The old lady seemed to be very active and energetic in spite of her stoutness, and the Grammarians had to walk fast to keep up with her. Miss Lane appeared to notice this horseplay.

"Step out, my little men!" she said, with a smile of kindly consideration. "I'm afraid you have been allowed to get into slack, slummy habits, Harry. We'd soon smarten you up in Australia, I'm sure!"

"Really, auntie—" protested Lane.

"It's quite true, Harry. You never see a little fellow in Australia like your friend Master Monk, for instance. Flat chest, flabby muscles, weak knees, big feet—it's terrible! Then look at Master Carboy! He's worse, if anything!"

Monk and Carboy looked dazed, while Lane gazed helplessly. But Miss Letitia did not seem to notice anything. She bustled along, asking questions and talking all the time, while the three juniors kept pace with her almost automatically.

Many curious looks were cast at

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By PROSPER HOWARD.

the quartette as they bustled along, and the grins on many of the fellows' faces as they watched Miss Letitia and her escort was the one thing needed to complete the unfortunate Monk and Co.'s discomfiture. "What is that building over there, Harry dear?" asked Miss Letty suddenly.

"That's the gymnasium, Aunt Letty," answered Lane. "Would you like to look inside? It's a fine gym."

"Certainly, Harry! I should be very much interested." Lane piloted his relative over to the big gym, looking a little relieved. It was possible of his aunt to be interested in the gym, anyway, he thought. Monk and Carboy's looks showed that they were thinking the same thing.

Lane opened the door of the gym, and ushered his aunt inside. There were very few fellows in the building, the chums were glad to note, but Jack and Harry Wootton were practising roller-skating on the plank floor.

Miss Letty uttered an exclamation. "Oh, Harry, how nice! What are those nice-looking boys doing?" "They're roller-skating, Aunt Letty—or trying to," said Lane.

"Oh, how delightful!" cried Miss Letitia, with a beaming smile. "I should so love to go to roller-skate! I should try it at once, Harry!"

Monk & Co. gasped. "Try it at once, Aunt Letty?" stuttered Lane. "But you can't!" "Can't I?" said Miss Lane sharply. "Can't, Harry? We have no such word in Australia. Surely you can get me a pair of these little go-carriages, and—"

"But—but—" Lane's eyes nearly started out of his head. "Would you really like to have a go, ma'am?"

It was Harry Wootton who spoke. He had come to rest just by Miss Lane, and had heard the old lady's curious request.

"Certainly I should, young man!" Then pray take my skates, ma'am," said Harry Wootton politely. "How kind of you!" gushed the old lady. "It is a pleasure to meet such a kind, polite young fellow, I'm sure!"

Harry Wootton grinned, and began to adjust the skates upon Miss Letty's boots, while Monk & Co. looked as if they were about to have fits.

Surely the old lady did not intend to start to learn roller-skating at her age, they thought. But Miss Lane soon showed that that was just what she did intend.

"Haven't you little men got—roller-skates as well?" she said briskly. "Let us all have a little practice."

Monk & Co. looked at one another with sickly smiles. "Oh, y-e-s, we've got skates, Aunt—" began Lane.

"Then on with them!" said the masterful old lady. And Lane and his chums had no choice but to obey.

Jack Wootton obligingly gave up his skates to Carboy, whose own were not on hand, and settled down with his brother and the other juniors who happened to be in the gym, to watch the fun.

CHAPTER 3.

Two Aunts!

THE fun was worth watching, too, before long. Miss Letty did not seem half so much at sea on the skates as might have been expected, and after sweeping round the gym, a few times, supported by the chums, she essayed

And Miss Letitia led the way out of the tuckshop, followed by the two Woottons. Lane looked helplessly at his two chums, and then made frantic signs to them.

"You stay and settle up," he whispered hurriedly. "She's forgotten!" And he ran off after his aunt.

He had just caught her up, with his head in a whirl, when young Dobson, of the Third Form, ran up to him breathlessly.

"I say, Lane," gasped Dobson, "you're come to the Head at once! There's a young lady with him who's come to see you!"

"A—A young lady to see me?" gasped Lane. "But—"

"You'd better go at once, Harry!" exclaimed Miss Lane hurriedly.

"But—but you, Aunt Letty! What—"

"Go at once!" snapped Miss Lane. "These two boys will look after me."

"But—but—" "Quit, now!"

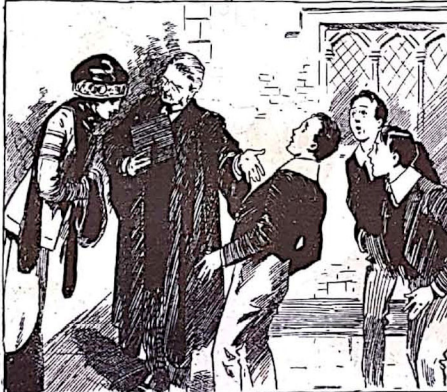
"Very well, aunt!" And Lane, feeling absolutely dazed, ran off with young Dobson, of the Third Form.

"Now," muttered Miss Lane, as her nephew and the fat disapproved round the corner of the school. "I must look—quick!"

"The old lady's voice was no longer cracked and high, but bore a remarkable resemblance to the tones of Gordon Gay, of Study 13.

"Rather!" exclaimed Harry

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Lane's astonishment when Dr. Mont introduced a pretty girl of about five-and-twenty can better be imagined than described.

Wootton, in dismay. "It's Lane's real aunt, for a pension!" "Let's run for the gym. There's no one looking," said Jack Wootton, glancing hurriedly round. "Come on!"

And the three juniors—for, of course, Aunt Letty was none other than the schoolboy actor of the Fourth Form—made a bolt for the gym.

Lane's state of mind when Dr. Mont introduced a pretty girl of about five-and-twenty to him as his Aunt Letty from Australia can better be imagined than described. To do him credit, he was not long in guessing the real state of affairs, nor were Monk and Carboy, who had made the discovery that the things that the famous Aunt Letty had ordered in the tuckshop had been paid for in advance.

"By one of the young gentlemen," as Mrs. Benians, the universal provider of the Grammar School, said. The real Miss Lane laughed very heartily over the story when she learned of it, and insisted on being introduced to her impersonator and his chums, but for some time afterwards she kept Lane and his study-mates blush to the roots of their hair, it was only necessary to utter the two simple monosyllables: "My aunt!"

THE END.

(Author of these amusing, complete tales seen in the "Empire" is the Black Chancellor of the Fourth, by Prosper Howard. Order your EMPIRE Library in advance. Price One Halfpenny.)

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THE SCAPEGRACE OF THE REGIMENT. A Grand New Tale of Army Life.

GLANCE OVER THIS FIRST.

Jack Lyon, an officer in the Royal West Lancashires, a crack Yeomanry regiment, is accused by his cousin Monty of cheating at cards in the mess-tent. Jack knows that Monty is the real cheat, but is unable to prove it to the satisfaction of all his comrades. Rather than press the point, for Monty's father has been very good to him, Jack leaves the training-camp of the Royal Wests, and journeys to London, determined to enlist in the ranks of the Regulars. He falls in with Percival Pott, a young duffer, who is of the same mind, and together they join the Woldshire Regiment.

The "Fighting Fists," as the Woldshires are commonly called, have a rough lot, but Jack and Percival get on well with them on the whole, though they made several enemies. One of these, Private "Pasty" Green, gets hold of one of Jack's letters containing the startling news that his cousin Montague has been gazetted to the Woldshires. Pasty Green guesses how things stand, and sends profit and revenge for himself in the matter.

(read on from here.)

His appetite at dinner that day had not been up to its usual mark, but thick slices of meat and ten potatoes was not a sufficient model for an invalid of his physique, he decided. So he had set out all his valuable collection of patent medicines before him, and was regarding them hungrily.

He was just wondering what revisiting effect the following tonic would have, if mixed and taken internally, when his old pal Stumpy, looking in for his means.

"Wet roos?" he demanded sulkily. "Why, the fight between your rook and Sluggor."

"No! young Jack? You don't mean to say 'e's at it again?" exclaimed Stuffy aghast.

"Sticks; but not fasts this time, Stumpy." They're going to fight it out, stripped to the waist, and the first one as shows a hundred stripes on his back is the winner.

"Great seeing-way!" gasped Stuffy, feeling his backbone crinkle at the thought of such barbarous chastisement.

"But Sluggor will mop him to a jelly, Young Lyon don't stand an earthly against him." What made 'im accept the challenge?

"'E didn't," explained Stumpy. "It was 'im challenged Sluggor. Sluggor was leathering young Crackpot in the gym, pretending he was fencing 'im, and Lyon dropped an 'im. But can't stop any longer, old son, I'm on fatigue. Ta-ta!" he added.

"But here—" roared Stuffy after him. His pal, however, had hurried on his way.

Stuffy was going to ask him whether Jack Lyon realised what a particularly hot customer he had taken out of this cheerfully.

"The young 'un he splintered to himself. 'Why Sluggor cut 'im to ribbons. He's about the best secondman in the blessed drink. He'll fit you, young 'un."

In picturing the condition of his protégé after Sluggor had done with 'im, Stuffy quite forgot his own imaginary situation.

It occurred to him that he would be better equipped, perhaps, in inventing a little more of his own work to harden Jack's hide for him as to rob Sluggor's cuts of half their sting.

The same medicines, no doubt, would be mixed a little differently, he decided.

He might add a double quantity of the hair tonic, perhaps, and there was a little beef of 'em corn cobs in his kit-bag somewhere, which he had never been able to use up hitherto. That should be a distinct improvement.

Then there was some alum also, and a lump of pipeclay.

With all the care of an expert dispenser, Stuffy solemnly concocted a trial half-pint. Then, as solemnly, he rolled up one shirt-sleeve, and rubbed it well into his own arm.

Five minutes after the first treatment he was confident that there was a distinct difference. When he pinched the anointed part, it did not hurt half so much as the skin higher up.

He got a stick, then, of the thickness of a singletick. He showed his eyes and tried to signum up courage to hit himself on the place as hard as he could. But on second thoughts he decided to try the experiment on his pal Stumpy instead.

Stumpy, a few days before had been bitten on the back of the neck by a snake, and he had heard about this catastrophe, and promptly rushed off to his old man's cupboard with a soothing ointment of his own compounding.

Strange to say, Stumpy let him pin the mixture on the sting, and, to his surprise, still it actually did him relief, though the chaffing of his shirt still worried him.

The next day, however, Stuffy came to him with a lotion which he said would put him as "right as a new penny" in an hour. Stuffy, who had faith in the lotion, rubbed it on his

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