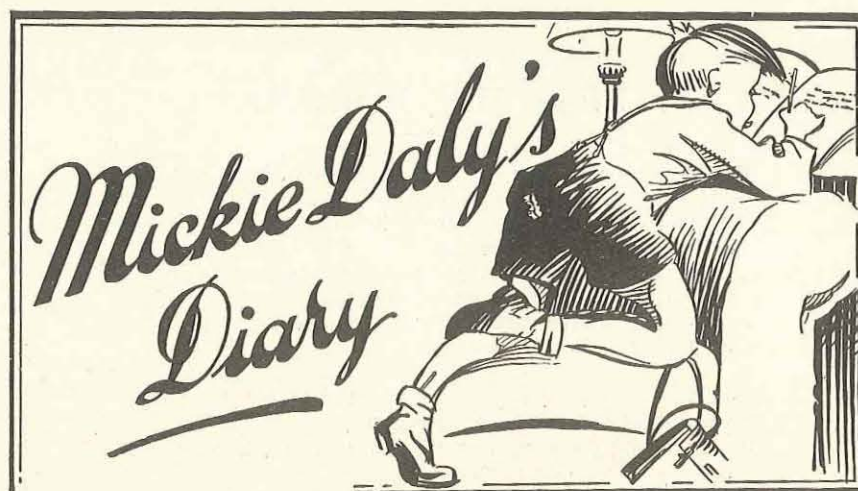




"Open the door, Dacey. He'll murder me!" I yelled, and I tugged at the door. But that mean Freddie Croftie helped Dacey—after all the worry and trouble I've taken over his soul, too, this was his thanks to me. Dickie tried to push them away, but they held on; and they were laughing like two big, silly goats. This all happened in half a minute. I had to get away from the door to dodge the Greek. The three boys outside held their faces flattened against the glass, watching—they looked like Chinese faces. I could hear a crowd of kids swarming on to the verandah.

I did some good foot work, side-stepping the Greek amongst the little tables. I shivered to think of my fate. Would he drag an oister knife from his pocket and stab me? Or would he get me down and strangle me? I suppose he youst be a Greek restler once—he's about 13 stone now.

His langwidge was terrible—I knew by the shape of his mouth when he said it.

"You wicked old man," I said under my breath. But then I knew it was all my forl—all his terrible swears were cored thro me. I would have to account for them. If I had gone home to my lunch like a decent Christian boy, the old Greek would be as quite as an old whale in his shop. Here he was running amuck, all thro me.

Over went one of the tables. Crash! The cruet bottles were in pieces—and oil, vinigar, sauce and pepper and other con-diments spilt on the floor.

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My father says, sometimes: "When Greek meets Greek then there is a tug-of-war." I wasn't a Greek; there was no tug, but there was plenty of war between us. If he

could have got me in his clutches he'd have tugged my head off, I think.

Old George had a work of art on the counter. Greeks are very arty people, I know. It was a little man, all made out of cray-fish shells and whiskers and everything. We often youst stand and admire it when he put it in the window.

I was really sorry when I knocked this off the counter.

So was he.

I heard him groan. He could not even swear. He was very proud of that work of art. I suppose the poor old chap felt like a skullpter would if someone knocked down one of his statyous.

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So at last Dacey opened the door.

All of us ran like mad down the road—like you see people in the pictures running from a earthquake or a war. The girls were crying and getting High Sterickle. Served them right for standing to watch. Why didn't they go home to their dinners? Girls should go along the streets like ladies—and not stop to stare at anything, let alone fights. Old George did not follow us. I think anger, greef for his work of art and his cruet bottles and want of wind prevented him.

I was in a state of cullapse. So was Dacey—with laughing.

"You goat, Dacey!" I said. "How would you look if he had knifed me?"

"How would you? Dead!" said the Big Mug.

Croftie said it was better than anything he had ever seen on the pictures.

This afternoon the Greek came to the school—looking for me. I'm stiff. We've been in the habit of ringing his old gongs for months and months.

He never caught us. Never knew which boy to look for. Now the whole wait must fall on me. I wished an earthquake would come, or the school catch on fire or an aer-o-plane crash on the roof, or someone come to tell the Greek his shop was on fire, or his uncle had left him a forchin over in Grease. But no. Justice could not be put off. It had over takin me. My father says that. Justice over takes you some day or other—if not in this world, in the next. It was over taking me in this. I wished it would wait for the next world. Because Sister Pawl would have nothing to do with it then. She wouldn't be able to interfere.

While Sister Pawl went out to talk to old George, the class all talked at once.

"Daly, he'll pick you out easily by your hair."

"Daly, you'll go to jail for this."

"Your father will get a nice bill for the breakidges."

"What will Father Dale say?"

"Michael Daly, you are always disgracing this school. You should be expeled." Mary Dacey said this, of course.

I made no anser. I was so ashamed, thinking of poor Sister Pawl having to admit to the Greek that a boy from her school was so badly behaved. I was sorry for Sister Pawl. Really. It is hard luck for her to have me in her school. Mum won't send me to the Brothers. I bet they'd knock sense into me in no time. I think Mum wants to think I'm not growing up if I stay at the nuns' school. She wants me to be a little boy always.

I felt my face getting as red as a crayfish.

Freddie said, in a kind voice (I suppose he was sorry he held the door. So he should be): "Duck under the desk, Mickie, and then when old Staka-the-oist comes in to pick you out, you'll be missing. No other boy has red hair. He'll know you easy, if you stay."

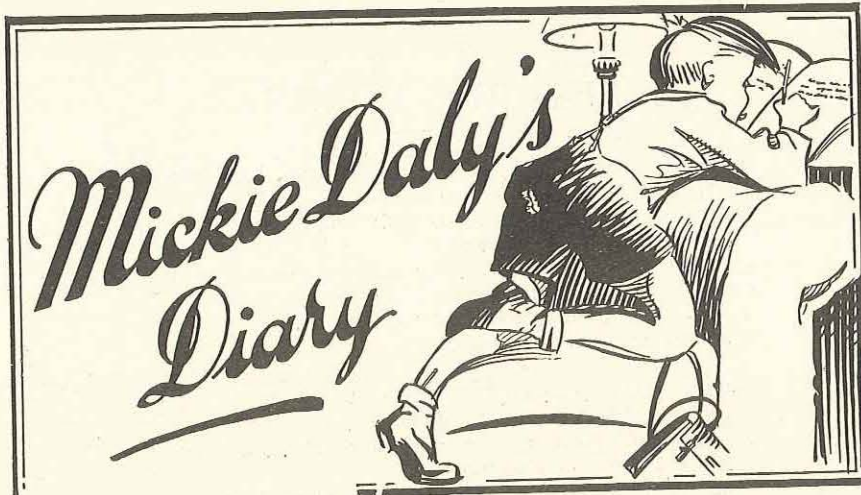
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"No—but you are afraid of Sister Pawl."

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"What about your father?"

"What about Father Dale?"

I could see the Greek in the corridor. He was pulling at his hair and talking rapidly in broken English. I thort he was tearing his hair out in dispare over the loss of his work of art, the little man made so cleverly out of crayfish shells; but on second thoughts I beleived he was trying to describe my hair. I suppose he could not think of the English word for that colour, altho by the look of him he was seeing red all round him—like a sunset.

I'm a poor stiff, all right.

Who should come up the steps but Father Dale! Now, why could he not have paid his visit earlier or later? Why? He must just come at this moment. I forget what you call it, the siker-something moment.

Sister Pawl spoke to Father Dale, and his face fell into lines that I don't like—all down. I like him when the lines go up—when he's smiling.

The three of them came into the class-room. The kids had all been chattering like magpies, but now they were as still as the grave and as dum as dummies.

The Greek looked all round the room and then pointed his finger at me—a fat, brown finger. It looked like a big Fee Gee banarner—a tupenny one.

"Ginger Mick! Of course!" I heard Father Dale say in a very low voice—I think you call it Sotoe Vocko.

I had been fassinated by the Greek's fat finger, but now I dragged my eyes away from it and I gave Father Dale a sad look—like the dog next door gives you when he's put on the chain. I tried to look at Sister Pawl, too, but I had to look away quickly, like you do from lightning.

I was called out and all the children who had been eye witnesses of the crime were called out, too. They fell out of their seats as if they were in a hurry to help to try and convict and execute me. True friends are hard to find, all right. It's in the Bible.

They all looked a bit skared of the Greek. Father Dale looked at them, and the lines on his face went up a tiny bit. He said to the witnesses: "The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." The kids all looked stupid.

He asked them questions. They all testified they had seen me go in and had seen me come out. They had heard the crashes.

"Prisiner at the bar, can you prove an alerby?" Father Dale said.

I didn't know what he meant. I suppose I looked as stupid as all the other kids. I asked my father after. It means proving you were somewhere else when the crime was comitted. Then, of course, you get let off.

I don't think the old Greek could follow what Father Dale was saying. I think he thort it was waste of time.



JOSEPH MASON, VIC., EFFICIENT ALTAR BOY AND L.M.



LEADING IN THE WINNER? CARMEL HARGREAVES, VIC.

I suppose in Grease they don't have witnesses or joories or anything. Just pitch you into jail.

"Well," Father Dale said, "I think it's the Black Cap, Mick Daly. There is proof you were in the oister serloon at the time mentioned. The plantive could swear to your hair. (I know he could; I know he did, I said to myself.) These witnesses are unanims in their evidense. Having known you from your infansy, I quite beleive you were in the oister serloon and that you did strike the gong. But I cannot understand

how it came about that you stayed there long enough to be seen by this gentleman. You remained for some time on his premises playing chasings about the serloon to the detriment of the appointments and the artistic decorashins."

I was going to tell on Dacey, but by a souper-humin effort remaned silent. Rosie Moran spoke.

"Tom Dacey held the door, Father, and would not let Mickie out."

"Ah!" said Father Dale, and he turned and looked over his glasses at Dacey. Dacey went the culler of doe.

"They told Mickie to go in and ring the bell, Father. They said it was his turn!" Rosie went on.

"But—but—I went of my own ackord, Father. It's my own forlt," I said.

"It is," he said, and frowned at me. "So you take turns, do you? Nice conduct for boys from a Catholic school. I must look into this. How long has it been going on? You have disgraced the Church." He asked more questions of the kids who had been giving evidense, and then he said to them: "Ladies and gentlemen, you are dismissed with the thanks of the country."

The kids stared at him, but at a sine from Sister Pawl they went back to their places.

Father Dale took the Greek outside to talk to him. I don't know what he said. Perhaps he can talk Greek. He might have said: "Boys will be boys" in Greek. Anyhow, old George smiled and salooted and went away. The old nark—what harm does it do him to ring a little bell?

Father Dale gave us a terrible leckture. Every boy who ever went in to the serloon and rang the old gongs was in it. The girls were sent outside. So was Sister Pawl. I was glad. I am glad she didn't hear what Father Dale said to us. She'd keep it up for ages.

But when Father Dale was gone she had a go at us on her own. Think his would have been enuff. But no. It starts all over again. Didn't she rub it in? We felt that all the Catholics in the world from the Pope down were disgraced. She said the whole town would talk of our behavure and blame Catholic schools for it.

Anyhow, I don't think the Pope would care so much. Why should he? The Greeks won't obey him. So why should we have to think of our Catholic school and respect old George—the old whale with his Fee Gee banarner finger pointing at me!

The three of us—Dickie was let off—were kept in. And we have to stay in every arvo for two weeks. Do sums, I suppose.

So there you are.

There's Michael Joseph Daly for you!—insighting a Greek to swear, to be angry, to desire to murder. Making the whole town talk about Catholic schools and the bad conduct of boys at Catholic schools.

I think I had better write and tell Father Mullany to take my name off. I bet when he was a boy he youst not go round disgracing the Catholic schools and making people talk about them. I bet the Right Rev. Dr. Patrick Cleary, Perfect Apostolic, didn't, either. They'll never have me at St. Columban's. I don't seem to be able to change my wicked nachure.

The old Greek sent a bill up by a boy this arvo. I was there when it arrived.

My father looked at it in surprise. "Dr to George Tahmindjis" was printed on it.

"Some mistake. There must be another Daly about," my poor, innocent father said.

"It's for you all right, Dad," I groaned.

My father read the eyetims.

"It looks like the aftermarth of a party. Surely you and Dickie are commencing early. Oister serloons! Breaking up the place? What does it mean?"

So I told him.

I described it as vividly as I could—the good footwork I got in side-stepping the Greek. I told on Dacey, too. I would not tell Father Dale; but it's different telling your own father.

"Dacey, the mean cow, held the



PUPILS OF VILLA MARIA SCHOOL, WANGANUI, N.Z.

door—Croftie, too. They watched thro the glass: Croftie said it was better than any pictures he ever saw."

"Wish he'd pay for the entertainment," said my poor father.

"What's this eyetim?"

"Oh, that's the curio—the work of art—a little man made of crayfish. I am really sorry I broke that."

"So am I," said my father.

"It was a work of art."

"Works of art are highly valued by the Greeks," he said sarkastickly.

"Well, my boy, you deserve a good thrashing for disgracing your mother and me — and disgracing your school."

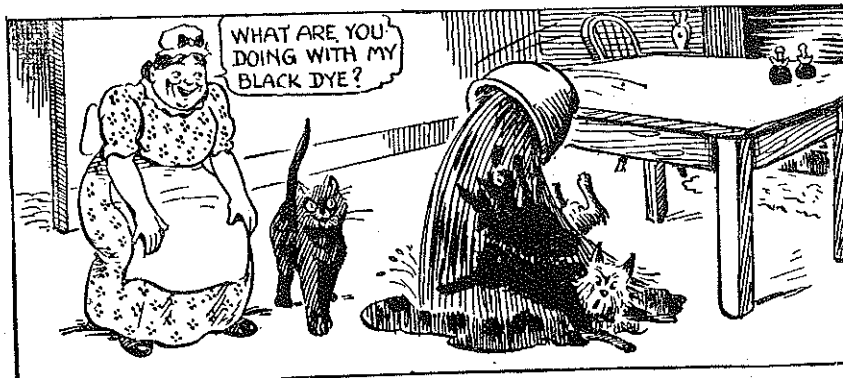
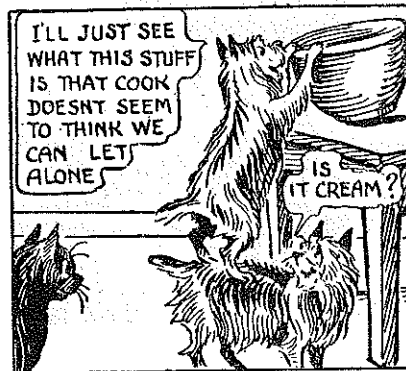
"I know I do, Dad."

"I'll settle this bill and keep the reseat. When you are able to earn money you will pay it back."

"Yes, Dad—and the interest, too."

"Meantime I must set you some work to do after school hours—you have too much lezure, going about the town like a young rough."

(To be continued.)



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