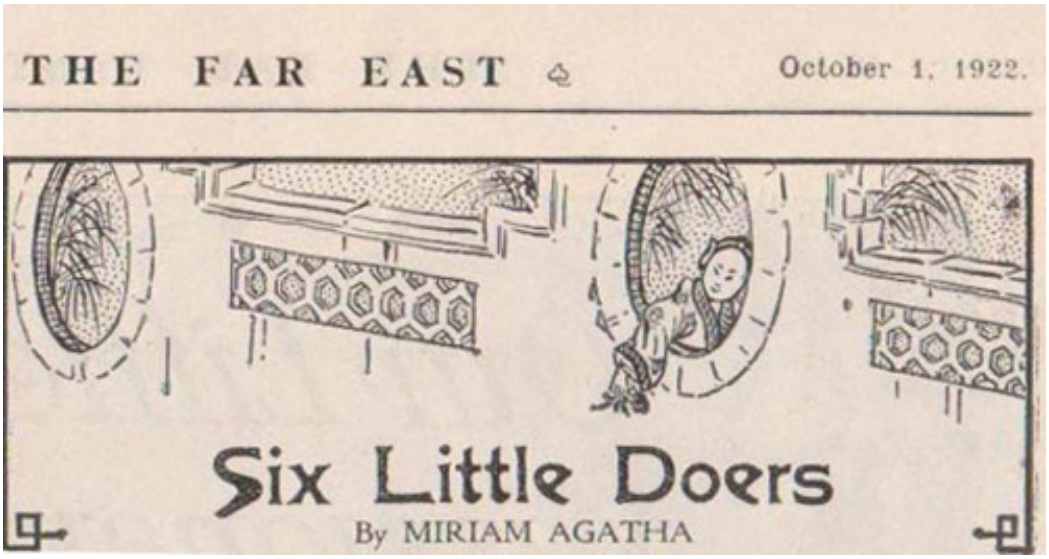
Chapter 1 - Enter Teddy! October 1922



TEDDY was almost always last home in the afternoons. He liked to stay at school having a game with the boys, and then, when he did start for home, some adventure generally net him on the way. Sometimes it was a lost dog or a stray cat looking for sympathy; sometimes a fight he had to watch, or a band or an organ he had to' follow ; sometimes it was an old man looking fora street two or three blocks away, or-a hundred-and-one other things that go out of their way to meet a boy and delay him.

Mary and Angie had been home "ages." They had helped Mother in the kitchen, had minded Baby Bet, and were now deeply interested in a game of "Mothers," in the little cubby house down in the garden.

Mick and Mack had eaten quantities of bread and butter and apple jam; had climbed the pepper tree half-a-dozen times, and slithered down as many. Mick had fallen off the coal shed only twice, Mack rendering first aid. They were now playing a game of chasings with Shamie, the terrier.

Still Teddy did not come.

The garden gate clicked. Someone whistled.

Mary and Angie forgot they were supposed to be grown-ups; the Twins gave up their game with Shamie.

"Father!" cried four happy voices, and, with delighted cries of welcome, the children and the dog ran for the gate. It was a great game, this race to be first to Father. The terrier won, but as he couldn't be kissed, the prize went to the second, and it happened to be Angie. How fragile Angie had beaten her sturdy little brothers and long legged Mary would be hard to say, but there she was, receiving payment of the first kiss. Father picked her up and carried her. He felt a great tenderness and pity for this delicate lamb of his flock-he was so big and strong, and she was so little and frail.

The others followed, all talking together, and Shamie interjecting with a sharp yap now and then.

"Been good?"

A decided "yes" from the girls, and a mumble from the Twins was the answer.

"Anyone worrying Mother?" "Oh, no," the girls said readily.

"I only-only fell off-" Mick commenced.

"The coal shed," finished Mack. "But I wasn't-"

"Hurt." "And Mother did not get a fright, because-"

"She didn't see."

The Twins often supported one another in conversation-as in everything else,

"What the eye does not see-" Father smiled. "The Crown Prince late again?" he then asked. "I think I'll have to give him a time limit, and impose a fine if he does not keep within it."

"Put his fine in the Mite Box," laughed the Twins delightedly.

Father was escorted to the house and Mother and Baby Bet. There was as much rejoicing as if he had just arrived after a prolonged stay in the bush somewhere, but the Dalys always made a great fuss and excitement when Father came home. He was such a kind, companionable father, although he could look stern enough when the occasion demanded.

Someone found his slippers and his old gardening coat, and soon they were out in the garden for a busy, happy half-hour among the beds. All the Dalys loved flowers even Teddy and Mick.

Still Teddy did not come.

Mother looked a little anxious, and Father a little displeased. "I'll certainly have to insist on his coming home earlier, It's nearly six."

"Perhaps he went a message for Brother Paul," Mother suggested.

"Oh, he'll have an excuse, and a thrilling tale to tell-lie always has. But don't worry, Mother, he'll turn up all right-nothing ever hap-"

Crash! Bang!! Clang!!

The garden gate burst open, and Teddy dashed in madly, panting, white faced.

"What?-"

Another figure hurled itself through the gate. It was a Chinese-a very angry one-and clinging tenaciously to his wide, blue dungaree trousers was Shamie.

"Me killee you!" screamed Sing Lee. The quiet, happy scene in the beautiful garden was rudely broken-it looked more like a comic opera. Teddy flew to Mother ; Mick instantly raised his spade, resolved to fell the Chinese invader to the earth. Mack stood beside him, and laid a restraining hand on his arm. Angie and Baby Bet cried.

"Here!" Father called sternly to Shamie, and the terrier let go his fierce hold, and slunk behind a may bush, with a self-satisfied glint in his eye.

Sing Lee talked a lot (Heaven knows what he said), and darted terrible looks at Teddy as he peeped from behind Mother's skirt. But Father managed to calm him, and asked what Teddy had been doing.

"I did nothing. He chased me."

Sing Lee ruefully examined the rent in his trousers. "Wha' for?" lie asked. It seems it was all Shantie's fault. He had a great aversion to Chinese. Now, Teddy liked them. Ever since becoming an L.M. he had taken a great interest in everything Chinese. The patient toilers, bending under their heavy burdens, seemed to fascinate him. He always greeted them with a cheery "Hullo, John!" Some would grin and answer; others ignore his salutation.

The words he had gleaned in the pages of the "Far East" lie tried them with-"Ting hao," "Sho-tang" and "Boo yow jin." But, evidently, lie did not pronounce them correctly, or perhaps they belonged to a dialect unknown to the particular "Johns" lie asked, for none of them seemed to understand the words, and lie got no "forrader" in his study of the Chinese language. Mother advised him not to speak to them, as they might resent it and think lie was teasing them, but Fattier said: "Oh I they are all quiet, inoffensive fellows, they won't hurt him."

On this particular afternoon Teddy stayed at school, playing cricket with some pals of his, until the deepening shadows warned him it was time to start for home. He hurried along, to make up for lost time. "If I had a watch, I'd always be early. I've coaxed Dad to get me one-

just a plain one- and he won't. He'll scold a bit, I suppose, But I didn't mean to stay so long. Oh, jiminy! there's the 'An-gelus!' "

He snatched off his cap and said the prayer, hurrying up Waratah-street. As Ile turned into Old Ferry-road lie broke into a run, and Shamie came flying to meet him.

"Hullo, Sham., I'm late, Are they having dinner?"

Shamrock barked a negative, and then it happened. A Chinese, carrying the usual two baskets, came out of Mrs. Ryan's gate, and Teddy had time to call: "Hullo, John. Bosker evening."

John grunted, and then something dashed between Teddy's legs, flinging him against the baskets. The first thing Teddy knew was that Shamie was chasing "the John" from his own basket; the next thing, that "the John" was chasing him.

Apples and oranges played marbles on the footpath. Teddy ran as he never had-as he never could-at the school sports, and all the tales he had heard of angry Chinamen chasing mischievous boys rushed through his mind. "They always carry knives," thought poor Teddy. He felt sure a knife would presently strike between his shoulders and sink right through-Ugh!

A few more yards, and there was the friendly gate, Would the door be open? Would "the John" catch him on the very door-step?

That's how it was.

Father put his hand in his pocket. Sing Lee counted up his loss in wares and dignity, not forgetting the tear in his new blue dungarees.

"Teti shillin'," he said, would cover the lot. Father paid it without a murmur.

"There! That's waste," sighed poor Teddy, when he had recovered a little. "That's waste-ten shillings gone into an old pagan's pocket. It should be in a Mite Box."

"You can repay it- by saving it- and putting it in the Mite Box," said Father. "If you had come home in a proper time, this would not have occurred."

"Yes, Dad," replied Teddy, with true Australian nonchalance; "you'd better get me that watch."