

"WILL HAY AT BENDOVER!" Exclusive to PILOT!

The PILOT

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No. 73.
Vol. 3.
Week Ending
FEBRUARY 20th, 1937.

EVERY FRIDAY.



WILL HAY

**STAINLESS
STEPHEN**

**ALEX
JAMES**

**LEONARD
HENRY**

-INSIDE!

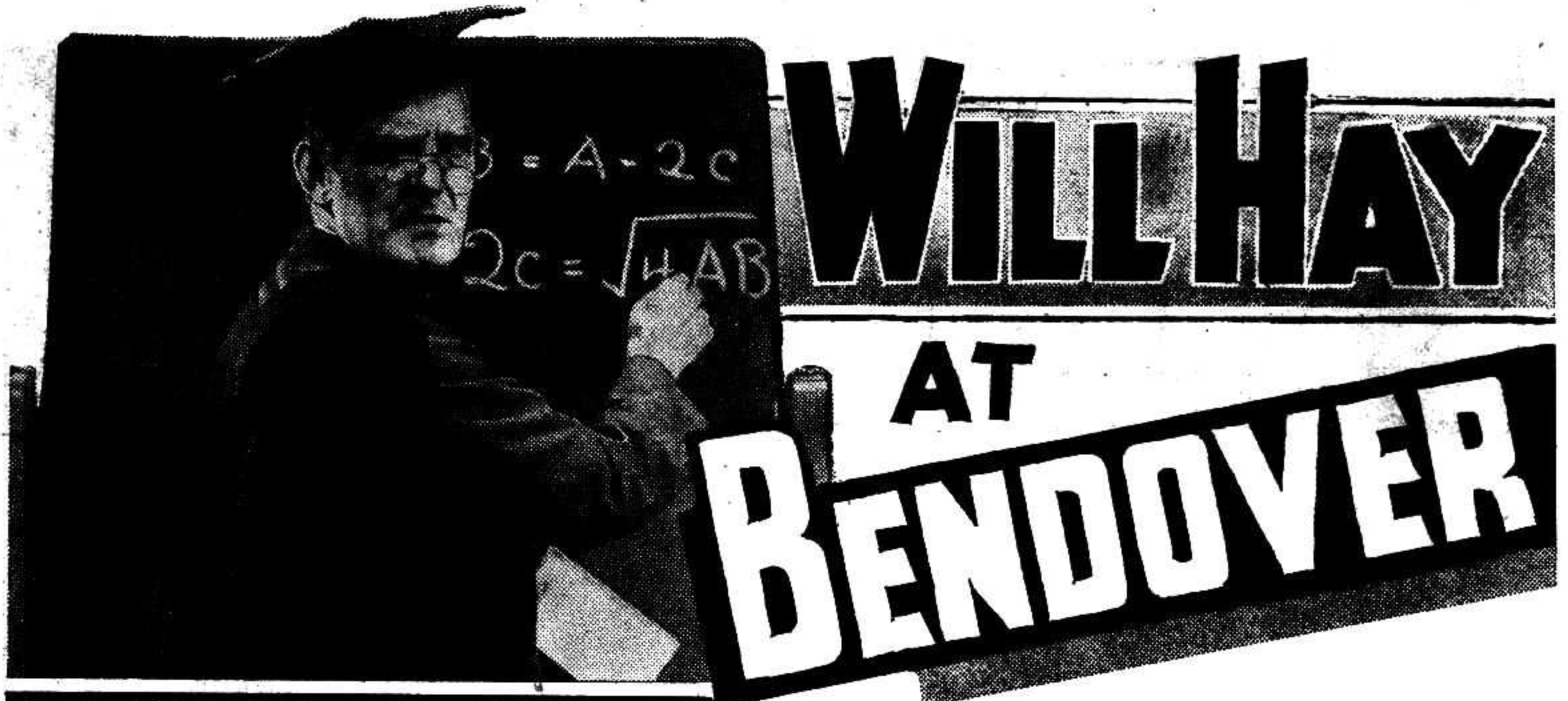


Photo by Courtesy of Gainsborough Pictures, whose latest film starring WILL HAY will shortly be shown at your local cinema. Look out for it.—Ed.

IT was market day in Duddlebury, and Schoolmaster Will Hay, a rusty-black gown hitched about his shoulders, was having a nose round the stalls.

Being a gentleman with an eye for a bargain, he was attracted to a barrow piled high with second-hand books, and one of the first things that caught his attention was a fat volume entitled "A Short History of Bendover College," by Samuel Cogworthy.

"Interesting, very!" he muttered, as he glanced through the musty, yellowish pages. "Samuel certainly pushed a powerful pen!" Will squinted over the top of his nose-nippers at the red-headed boy in charge of the barrow.

"How much for this volume, my little bookworm?" he inquired.

The boy looked up suspiciously from beneath a large bowler hat which would have slipped over his ears had he happened to sneeze.

"Eh?" he asked.

"Yes, that's right. That is the name!" agreed Will, with a bright smile. "Hay! Spelt with an aspirin, however. Pleased to meet you! With regard to this volume, what is the price of same, my little bookworm!"

"Come orf it, old conger-eel!" scowled the boy. "If you're talking about that there book, it'll be an Oxford scholar to you!"

"An Oxford scholar!" echoed Will, rubbing his chin in puzzled fashion. "A slang term, I presume! How much—"

"Oxford scholar—dollar!" interpreted the bookseller, with a pitying sigh. "Lummy, mister, where was you dragged up?"

"Dragged up," cried Will, frowning over his glasses. "There you go again! You've got to break yourself of this slang habit, my lad! You've got to nark it! About this dollar business! There's no such coin in British currency—"

"But you know what a dollar is?" challenged the boy.

"I certainly don't!" answered Will, meaning to teach the other a lesson.

"Then I'll put you wise, mister!" promised the boy, with a cunning look in his little eyes. "A dollar is seven bob!"

"Oh, is it?" scoffed Will, handing over a ten-shilling note. "Take an Oxford out of that half-a-bar and don't try any funny stuff with me! Get me?"

Having received the correct change, he tucked the short history of Bendover College under his arm and mingled with the crowd of countryfolk who had flocked into the

village. Gazing about him at the scene of noise and excitement, he suddenly caught sight of an ice-cream stall, and there beside it spotted three Fourth Formers who were lapping away in championship style. Reggie Pyke appeared to be in the lead, which did not surprise Will at all.

"The greedy little wart!" he muttered, tilting his shabby mortar-board to a rakish angle. "If he met a snake, he'd get in first bite! Good morning, boys!"

Three heads turned sharply; three guilty faces looked up at the Form-master.

"Good-morning, sir," piped the trio, the guilty look fading as the boys recognised Will Hay.

"What's the game?" demanded Will severely. "I mean, the ice-cream banquet! You know it's against the rules of the school to break bounds in search of ice-cream. When the Head hears about it—"

"Oh, sir," cried Reggie Pyke, winking at his pals, "we know you wouldn't split on us! It's a frightfully hot day—"

"Yes, you're about right, there!" agreed Will, removing his ancient mortar-board and buying himself an ice-cream cornet. "P'shew!"

"Let me hold your lid for you, sir!"

"Thanks!" smiled Will, handing over the headgear. "That's very nice of you!" Then he gave a sudden start: "What d'you mean—lid?" he demanded, looking aghast. "How many more times must I tell you I won't have those vulgar expressions? Lid!" he echoed, with biting scorn. "You'll be calling it a tifter next! It's a nice, large day!" he added, gazing up at the blue sky; and at the same time he slanted a sly glance at Reggie Pyke, and was just quick enough to see Reggie dump ice-cream into the mortar-board, which was lying on the counter.

WILL HAY IS HERE!!!

WOULDN'T YOU LIKE WILL HAY AS YOUR SCHOOLMASTER?

WOULDN'T YOU LIKE LAUGHS WITH YOUR LESSONS?

Get your tonic dose of merriment from this riot of a story, starring the popular "schoolmaster" favourite of the radio, screen and stage.

"Oh, by the way, sir!" said Pyke, who considered himself a smartie. "My companions and myself have had an argument which we feel sure you can settle for us! We are not quite sure about the meaning of a Latin quotation—"

"Latin?" Will gave a slight start and squinted over his nose-nippers. "You boys are quite sure you mean Latin?" he inquired hopefully, being well aware that Latin was not his strong point.

"Oh, yes, sir!" chanted the trio. "You know Latin, sir?"

Will gave a short laugh as though amused at the question.

"Try me!" he invited.

"What we want to know, sir," explained Reggie Pyke, "is the meaning of 'Reductio ad absurdum!' Isn't it, chaps?"

"Sure!" nodded Smythe and Havers.

"Bless my soul!" chuckled Will, looking round at the trio with pity in his beaming gaze. "Can you beat that? You actually have nerve enough to stand there and tell me you don't know the meaning of the Greek quo—"

"Latin, sir!"

"Don't argue!" snapped Will, scowling. "It used to be Greek! Things have changed a bit since my time!" He glanced at his watch, and appeared to receive a stunning shock. "I must be off!" he said. "I'm late for my appointment as it is! Tempus fugit, as Onion, the sage, put it! The clock hath wings! Well, so long, boys!"

"But, sir," wailed Reggie Pyke, "you haven't told us the meaning of Reductio ad absurdum!"

"Dear me, neither have I!" said Will, gritting his teeth as he laughed. "Er, let me see," he went on, stroking his chin. "Ah, I've got it! The exact meaning of the quotation is, 'When the sheet is short, the bed seems longer!' Now I must be off! So long, boys!"

"What about your mortar-board, sir?" cried Reggie Pyke.

"Mortar-board!" blinked Will, his manner startled, surprised.

"Yes, sir!" nodded Pyke, who had managed to slip three more ices into the egg-shaped crown.

"That's not my lid, boy!" laughed Will. "I picked it up by mistake! If you'll look at the initials, you'll find that it belongs to the Head! Return it to him when you get back to the school! And," added Will, with a mirthless grin, "do it in person!"

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The Head's got a weakness for ice-cream, and he'll want to thank you for those four goes of vanilla!"

"PYKE!"

The cad of the Fourth, who had just crept past the Head's study, gave a guilty start and swung round.

"Yes, sir?"

"Find Mr. Hay, and tell him that I wish to see him at once!" ordered the Head, an edge to his voice. "Hurry, boy! Don't stand there like a dummy!"

"No, sir! Yes, sir!" stammered Pyke, looking moist and uncomfortable. "If it's about that ice-cream, sir, I assure you that it wasn't my fault! Smythe or Havers must have done it when I wasn't looking—"

"Ice-cream?" muttered the Head, in his vague way. "What is the idiot boy talking about?"

Now Pyke was cunning and a quick thinker. He told himself that Will Hay had not mentioned the ice-cream episode to Dr. Shrubbs; also, he knew that he, on his part, had left the soiled mortar-board on the table in the hall.

"It's my head, sir," he said, as Dr. Shrubbs continued to regard him in puzzled fashion. "I sometimes imagine things. My mind wanders—"

"I've noticed that!" cut in the Head. "Find Mr. Hay for me! And, Pyke—"

"Yes, sir!"

"You obviously have something on your conscience!" said the Head. "You will report to me immediately after tea, when we will thrash the matter out!"

Reggie Pyke knew what that meant, and his fat, unhealthy face was ugly with petty spite as he made his way to Will Hay's private sitting-room on the second floor.

His spite was against the new master, not Dr. Shrubbs.

"It's all his fault, the tricky old ass!" he muttered. "He always seems to get the last laugh; but it'll be my turn one of these days—and then let him look out!"

His expression was meek enough as he rapped on the door of Will's room; but the cunning gleam appeared again in his eyes when he knocked for a second time, and still received no answer. Then, having hesitated for a moment, he broke one of the unwritten rules of the school.

With a furtive glance up and down the corridor, to make sure the coast was clear, he opened the door and slipped into the room. He made straight for the desk, for private letters and confidential papers had a fascination for him.

On this occasion, however, it looked as though he had drawn a blank.

The top of the flat desk was innocent of letters and papers; only a thick, musty-looking volume stood upon the blotting-pad in solitary state.

"The secretive, suspicious old ass!" muttered Pyke, picking up the bulky volume; and he was about to read the title when he saw the sheet of paper upon the blotter. "What's this?"

A swift glance at the document, which was penned in the new master's unmistakable handwriting, brought a flush of evil triumph to the cheeks of the intruder, and, within a matter of seconds, he was taking the stairs three at a time, bound for the Head's study.

"Come in!"

Dr. Shrubbs frowned with displeasure as he looked up and found the smug-faced Fourth Former standing upon the threshold.

"Where is Mr. Hay?" he snapped.

"He's not in his room, sir," answered Pyke. "I knocked three or four times, just to make sure."

"Thank you!" murmured the Head, with a curt nod of dismissal.

Pyke hesitated for a second, and then took the plunge.

"May I speak to you for a moment, sir?"—in his oily voice. There was a sheet of paper in his stumpy fingers. "I think you will be interested, sir!"

"Well, what is it?" demanded Dr. Shrubbs testily. "Do you want me to see that paper?"

"If you please, sir!" answered Pyke,

moving across the carpet and handing the document to the Head. "I found it on the second-floor corridor, just outside Mr. Hay's room."

The Head was annoyed. He didn't like Reggie Pyke. But he snatched at the document, spread it out upon the blotting-pad, and began to read; and as he read, the colour slowly ebbed out of his face, then came back with a rush as his wrath increased.

He spoke no word as he read the paper for the second time, but in the depth of his eyes there glowed the red fire of rage.

"We find the Head, at this period of Bendover's history," ran the paper, in Will Hay's handwriting, "an insanitary person whose dislike of soap and water has earned him the nickname of Sir Soapshy Suds. To the Lower School, he is plain Dirty Dick. He seldom takes a bath, and changes his shirt but once a month; and then he merely shakes the garment, turns it inside-out, and puts it on again."

"To his masters he is a petty tyrant; but they, while treating him with respect to his face, have many a good laugh at his expense when gathered together in their Common-room."

"So much for Sir Soapshy Suds, alias Dirty Dick!"

The eyes of Dr. Erasmus Shrubbs were blazing with fury as he lifted a purple face and glared round for Reggie Pyke, but Reginald had made himself scarce.

A MOMENT later the door opened, and Will Hay breezed into the study, his rusty-black gown billowing about him.

His nose-nippers tilted at a rakish angle, his lean features wreathed in a beaming smile, he appeared to be at peace with the world, and even the grim expression upon the purple countenance of Dr. Erasmus Shrubbs did not warn him that danger lay ahead.

"Beautiful day, sir!" he said chattily. "Sky-blue skies, lambs gambolling, worms doing the twist, birds busting—h'm!—buds bursting—"

"Excuse me, Mr. Hay," put in the Head, his voice sharp as a razor-edge, "but have you gone quite mad? I have long suspected you of possessing a meagre mentality—"

"Who—me?" asked Will Hay, squinting over his glasses. "If you are hinting that I'm nuts—"

"If, by that low expression, you mean—"

"Bughouse!" nodded Will, tapping his fore-

head. "Ants in the attic! By the way," he went on, brightening, "I am here to ask a favour of you!"

"To ask a what?" shouted the Head, his eyes goggling as he leapt to his feet and glared at the new master. "You have the audacity to come here and ask me a favour, you scoundrel? A plague upon you!"

"And mumps to you—with knobs on!" cried Will, with a fine show of spirit. "What's biting you, anyway? I—er—mean, why this excess of emotion? If you're cross with me about something—"

"Cross with you, base scullion!" roared the Head, shaking a bony fist under Will's nose. "How often do I take a bath?" he demanded fiercely.

Plainly at a loss, Will lowered his head, screwed up one eye, and sought first signs of insanity. Then he grinned, as though struck by a bright solution to the riddle. This was old Shrubbs' idea of a joke!

"How often do you take a bath?" he echoed, entering into the spirit of the thing. "Er—let me see!" he reasoned, stroking his chin. "Would I be far out if I said every other Pancake Day?"

"Go on! Make it worse, you scoundrel!" cried the Head. "When do I change my shirt?"

"You've certainly got me there, sir!" declared Will, looking grave, and wondering whether the old man was bats, after all. "You have, really!"

"Don't know, don't you?" cried the Head, with a thin, mocking laugh that ran down Will's spine like an icicle. "I thought I just shook my shirt and put it on again! Isn't that so, you slanderous scamp?"

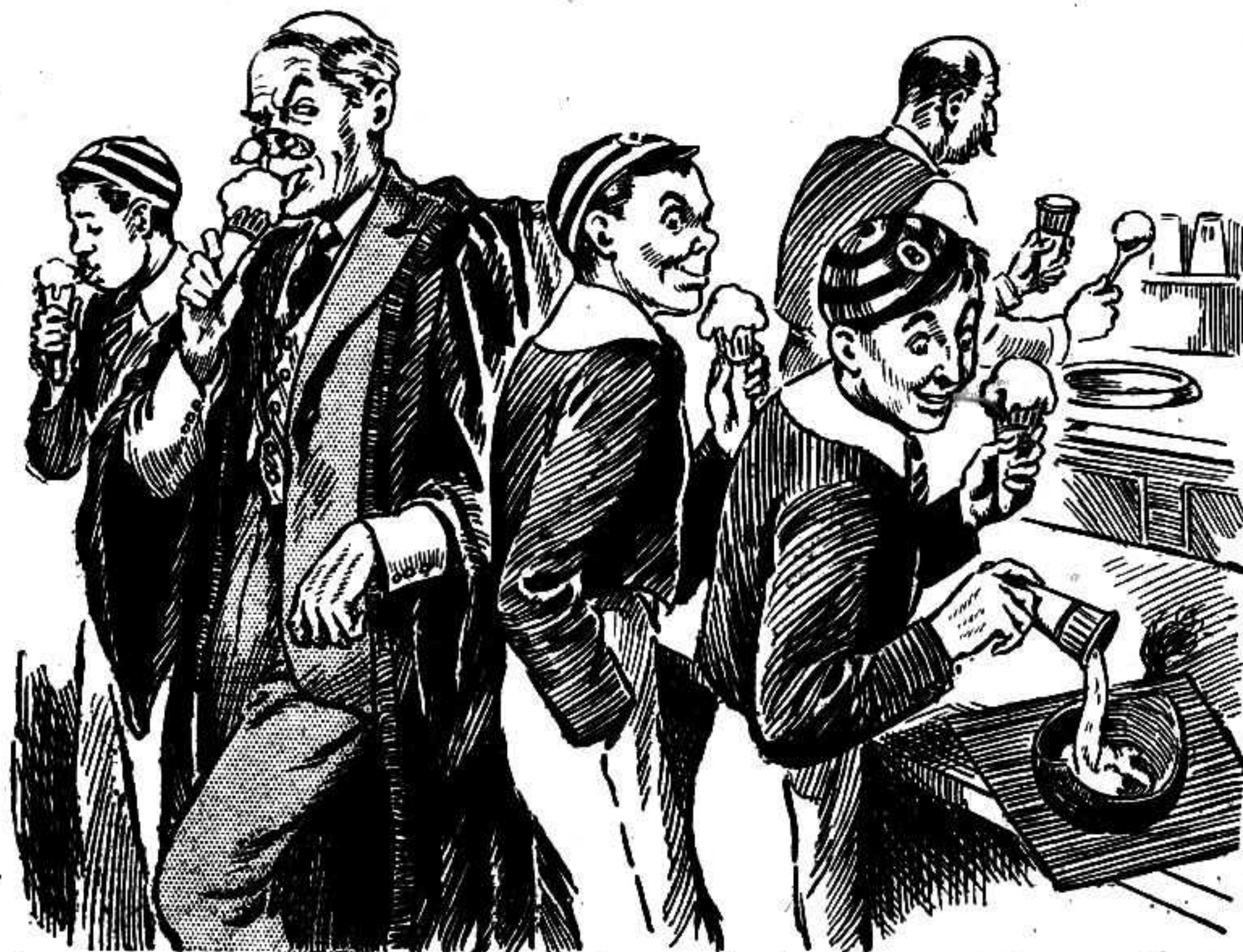
Will threw his arms wide in a gesture of utter helplessness.

"How should I know whether you shake your shirt, sir?" he asked. "Listen, Dr. Shrubbs—"

"You mean Sir Soapshy Suds, don't you?" cried the Head. "Dirty Dick? Listen to me, you brass-faced ruffian!" he raged, as slowly—very slowly—the light of understanding dawned in the wide-open eyes of Will Hay. "A certain libellous document has come into my possession! It was found by a junior whose loyalty to me shines like a bright star in the firmament!"

"That'll be Reggie Pyke!" nodded Will, with a mirthless smile. "He's a star turn at finding things before they're lost!"

"Don't interrupt, sir!" snorted Dr. Shrubbs, snatching a sheet of paper from beneath his blotting-pad and waving it in front of Will's face. "I suppose you'll tell me you didn't



Reggie Pyke thought he was being mighty clever in emptying ice-cream into Will Hay's mortar-board; but Will was destined to get the last laugh, because the mortar-board really belonged to the Headmaster of Bendover!

pen this foul slander? But lying won't help you, Mr. Hay! I know your writing, that scrawl which would disgrace a Third Form boy! What have you got to say for yourself, sir, before I order you to pack your traps and get out of my sight for ever?"

"I can explain everything!" began Will. "It's like this, sir. I was having a nose round in Duddlebury this morning—"

"Silence!" commanded the Head. "I won't listen to you! Nothing can explain or excuse this pack of lies you have written about me!"

"But listen, old cock!" begged Will, throwing out an appealing hand.

"Begone!" cried the Head, pointing a quivering finger at the door. "You will leave Bendover at the end of the month, Mr. Hay! Avaunt, snake in the grass! Avaunt!"

"Very well," said Will, with dignity, "I will leave you. But I'm going to avault because avault to avault! Joke over!"

"GOOD-MORNING, boys!"

"Good-morning, sir!" Will's gown was ballooning about him as he strode across the Fourth Form class-room and sat at his desk, but he did not sit down until he had slanted a sly glance at the seat of his chair.

He knew that joke with the drawing-pin!

"This morning," he announced, gazing round over the top of his nose-nippers, "I am going to tell you something about the history of Bendover, your alma mater. As most of you don't know, the school was founded over two hundred years ago, in the reign of— What have you got there, Pyke?" he broke off, fixing Reggie with a gimlet eye. "What are you fiddling about with?"

Pyke looked round, as though expecting to find another boy of that name; then, failing to find a second Pyke, he turned to Will, his fat face almost pained in its innocence.

"Were you speaking to me, sir?" he asked.

"What makes you think that?" demanded Will, with a sour smile.

"I thought I heard my name mentioned, sir."

Will closed one gimlet orb and squinted hard at Pyke.

"You win!" he said, smiling, with clenched teeth. "Now then, no messing about, you little wart! What were you fiddling with just now?"

"Nothing, sir!"

"Nothing—eh?" snorted Will, reaching for his cane. "Bring it to me! And if that nothing turns out to be something, my lad, I'll dust your pants for you at the end of the lesson!"

A sullen look upon his fat, unhealthy countenance, Pyke took his time in strolling across to Will's desk.

"What are you hiding behind your back?" demanded Will suspiciously. "If it's nothing, I want to see it!"

Slowly, reluctantly, Pyke produced a two-pronged wooden fork, to which was attached a length of stout elastic.

"Ah, ha!" cried Will, with a knowing shake of his head. "A dogapult!"

"Catapult, sir!" chanted the class.

"Of course, of course!" beamed Will, with a chuckle. "How silly of me! Most obtuse! Listen, Pyke! Get an earful—h'm!—pay attention to me! I'm going to confiscate this weapon, and later on you get your pants dusted! Go back! And don't make that face at me!"

"I wasn't making a face!" scowled Pyke.

"Then have it seen to!"

Will beamed round with pride and self-satisfaction, as Reggie Pyke slunk back to his desk.

"To proceed!" he called, rapping with his cane. "I have lately come across a book called 'A Short History of Bendover College,' which, I must confess, is dry as dust in places. But there is one short chapter which pleaseth me well. This chapter deals with the year 1850—and from all accounts, the Head at that time was a bit of a lad! H'm! That is—er—he was something of a character!"

"Like someone else I could name," proceeded Will, squinting over his glasses at the grubby countenance of Reggie Pyke, "he wasn't what you might call wedded to soap

and water— Silence!" he shouted, as a roar of laughter made Reggie flush to the roots of his reddish hair.

Gradually the din died down, and Will went on:

"I will quote a paragraph or so from this history of the school, just to show you what sort of a Head we had in the year 1850. At the same time, I think we might improve the shining hour by doing a spot of dictation. Pens and papers ready, boys?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Good egg!" nodded Will, bringing a crumpled sheet of foolscap out of his waistcoat pocket. "I am quoting from a history of the school, you understand. The historian says:

"We find the Head, at this period of Bendover's history, an insanitary person, whose dislike of soap and water has earned him the nickname of Sir Soapshy Suds! To the Lower School he is plain 'Dirty Dick!'"

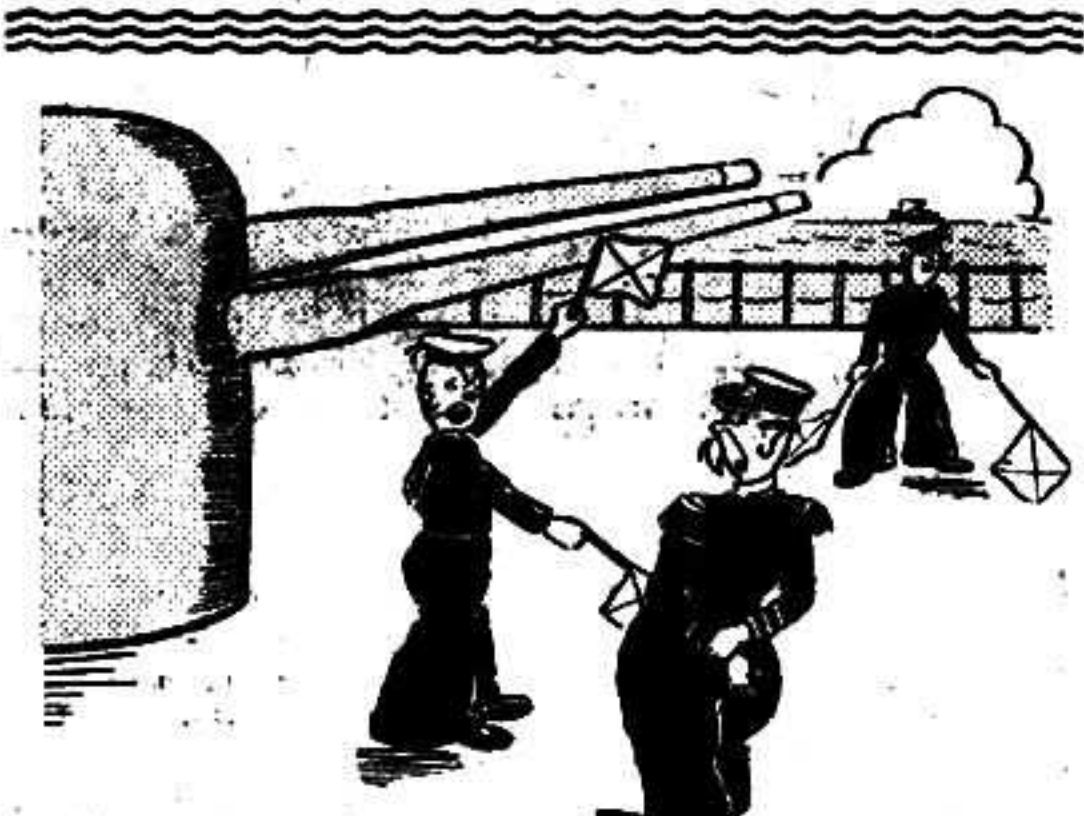
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Thrusting his thumbs into the armholes of his waistcoat, Will swayed back in his chair and beamed round at his boys, all of whom were red in the face and hooting with merriment.

"Mr. Hay!"

Will shot upright, as though he had been stung by a giant hornet, and on looking to his left, he saw the glowering figure of Dr. Shrubb standing in the doorway.

"This has torn it!" he muttered to himself. "Indubitably!"



"We're not on speaking terms, see!"

THE din died down immediately, as by the wave of a magic wand.

"What are you doing this morning, Mr. Hay?" the Head asked, in that cold, reserved manner he kept for his masters.

"A spot of—er—that is, sir," explained Will, "a short period of dictation, so to speak."

Dr. Shrubb nodded, and made as though to retire, and then changed his mind.

"May I see what they are doing?" he asked politely.

"Certainly, sir," nodded Will, with a wintry smile. "Help yourself!"

Picking up a dictation paper from Smythe's desk, Dr. Shrubb read the opening lines.

"Very interesting," was his only comment, as he returned the exercise to Smythe. Pass-along to the next desk, he glanced over Fragon's shoulder, and gave a slow nod of his head. "Most illuminating!" he murmured.

Then, slowly, ominously, he turned round, and fixed hard eyes upon the Fourth Form-master.

"What is the meaning of this outrage, Mr. Hay?" he asked quietly, yet each word was sharp as a knife.

"It's no outrage, sir!" declared Will, smiling brightly and parking his nippers on the end of his nose. "Every word is true, and I can prove it!"

"Every word true, you scoundrel!" cried Dr. Shrubb, his dignity forsaking him. "How dare you suggest that I dislike soap and water? That—that—"

"I've never made such a suggestion, sir!" cut in Will. "Permit me to iron out a misunderstanding. The Dirty Dick referred to has been dead for years. He was headmaster

of Bendover in 1850, as I tried to explain to you the other afternoon."

"Oh, I see!" murmured Dr. Shrubb, almost mildly; but still there was a suspicious gleam in his eye as he looked up at the new master. "How do you come by your knowledge of this Dirty Dick person?" he asked.

"I read about him in a history of Bendover, which I bought in Duddlebury on market-day, second-hand," explained Will. "The volume cost me an Oxford scholar—"

"A—a what?" snapped the Head. "What on earth are you talking about, Mr. Hay?"

"What I should have said, sir," beamed Will, "is that Samuel Cogworthy, who wrote the history, became a scholar at—er—Oxford." He coughed a little and went on: "I found the book most interesting, sir, and so amused was I with that passage about Dirty Dick that I took the trouble to make a copy of it. Unfortunately, some dirty little tea-leaf—er—thief stole the copy off my desk—"

"It isn't true, sir!" shouted Reggie Pyke, jumping up. He glared defiance at Will. "You're telling a lot of lies, and you know it! I found the paper in the passage, just outside your door. And I'll tell you something else. I don't believe about this history of Bendover. You're trying to throw dust in the Head's eyes."

"Have you quite finished, Pyke?" asked the Head frigidly.

"He shouldn't tell lies about me, sir!"

"But I can prove that I've got a history of Bendover, you little wart," said Will. "Just for your cheek, you'll nip upstairs and get the volume out of my room. You'll find it on my desk, as you know. Off you go, and don't take a month about it!"

Reggie Pyke must have taken his words to heart, for he was back in less than three minutes, a cunning gleam in his crafty eyes.

"There's no volume on his desk, sir," he said, addressing himself to Dr. Shrubb. "I looked everywhere, but there's no history of Bendover. I told you he was trying to throw dust into your eyes, telling wicked lies—"

"That is not the way to speak of your Form-master, Pyke!" thundered the Head, his brow black as a thundercloud. "Mr. Hay, will you please take the necessary corrective measures—at once?"

"He's got a basinful to come from me, sir!" beamed Will, reaching for his cane.

"Mr. Hay!" cried the Head, wide-eyed, aghast.

"Basinful is just a colloquialism, sir," explained Will—"meaning that the little wart is going to get full measure. I found him messing about with a catapult during lesson-time, and that always means a dusting of pants."

"It isn't that at all, sir!" shouted Pyke, turning a scared face up to Dr. Shrubb. "He's going to take it out of me, because I bowled him over about the history of Bendover. I knew there wasn't such a book, sir. Go up and see for yourself, sir. He's a big bully—"

"Bend over that desk, sir!" thundered the Head, with a terrible look. "Another word from you, and I'll deal with you myself!"

Whimpering now, Reggie Pyke walked across the room with slow, careful steps, and draped himself over the desk.

"That'll do nicely," said Will, squinting at the taut seat of Pyke's pants. Then, having made a closer scrutiny: "Strange—very," he murmured. "Extraordinary! Wrong shape! Pyke, you little wart!"

"Yes?"

"Stand up!"

Pyke stood up, his fat face flushed, a guilty glint in his cunning little eyes.

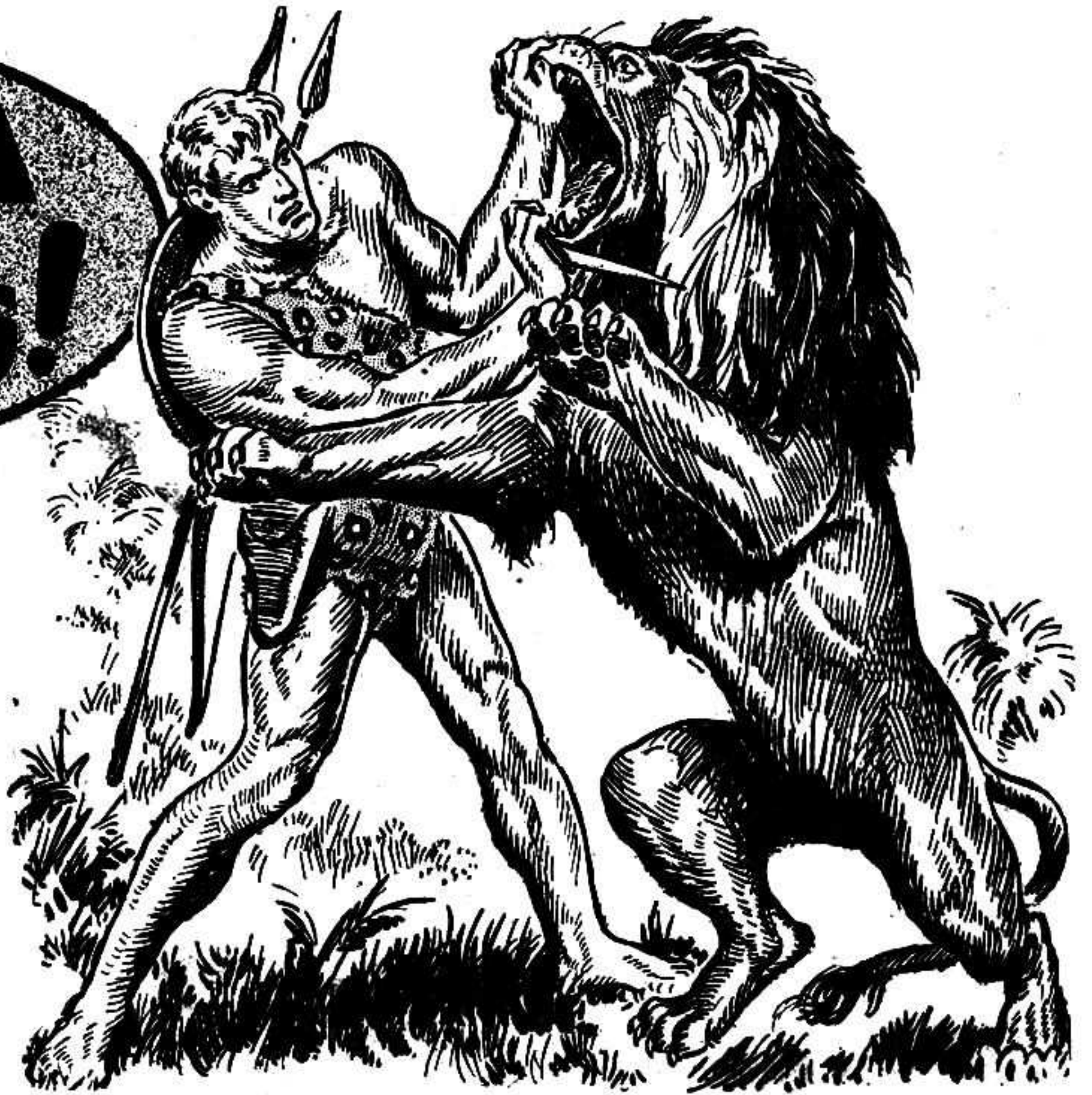
"Have I got to find 'A Short History of Bendover College,'" asked Will, with his mirthless grin, "or would you rather do it yourself?"

"I'll do it myself, sir," whimpered Pyke, diving down the back of his trousers; and a mighty roar went up from the Fourth as he brought Will's second-hand book to light.

There will be another mirthquaking story of the one and only WILL HAY in next week's "PILOT." Order your copy early—there's bound to be a rush to read these amazing stories of Bendover School.

WANDA OF THE WILDS!

Afraid of neither man nor beast, Wanda, the mystery man of the jungle, treads the tropic trail of adventure. Black men fear him, the denizens of the jungle pay him homage. The super story of a super man . . . WANDA!



NIGHT had ended. Another day had come. As a spread of light penetrated the deeper shades of the forest, birds began to sing and chatter, shrill monkey cries mingled with the deep growl and shattering roar of beasts. And to this chorus of living things greeting a new-born day Wanda of the Wilds awoke and stirred.

At that instant a stout bough which formed the crotch of the tree in which Wanda had slept shook under the weight of a great hairy body, and an enormous hand swept the heavy screening foliage aside. Wanda found himself staring into the face of Oura, the giant ape, whose bright brown eyes glinted and whose teeth shone white as he let out a roar of greeting.

"Ou-aah!"
"Ou-aah!" Wanda answered in echo of Oura's tone, and the great ape grinned, chattered, waved a pink palm in salute, and then dropped crashing out of sight.

Oura's going was instantly followed by the arrival of smaller monkeys, who, having made a chain, came tumbling from above, to hang suspended for a moment, paws and tails interlaced, their faces turned to peer at Wanda. Through the night they had slept higher up in the great tree, and greeted Wanda in their own way before embarking upon the business of the day. Wanda laughed at their friendly cries, and, taking a handful of nuts which he drew from the pocket of his robe of leopard-skin, showed them to the monkeys before throwing them downward. The effect was instantaneous. The living chain broke up and the monkeys vanished through the leaves like falling hailstones.

Wanda stretched his limbs, straightened his muscular body, shook back his head of golden, sun-bleached hair, and then, like Oura, swung away through the trees.

From bough to bough he went, using hands and feet as deftly as any ape until he came to a clearing in the forest. Then he climbed downward until, reaching a lower bough, he dropped lightly to the ground.

His hawk-keen eyes had assured him that the glade was empty of both human and animal enemies, and as he met the full blaze of the morning sunshine he stretched to his fullest height, presenting a splendid figure of young manhood. Full six feet high he stood. His body was tanned to a copper bronze colour by exposure to sun and air. His limbs were long and muscular, and his body perfectly proportioned.

From neck and shoulder to loins, and girding these, hung a leopard-skin in which he had

fashioned several pockets to contain fruit and food and other necessities. His waist was encircled by a leather belt fastened by a crude buckle. To this was attached a holster containing a white man's Service revolver .45, which was unloaded. From a hook at the side of the belt hung a coiled rope which he had made out of the twisted strands of the bitter vine. It was strong enough to tether an elephant. On the other side of the belt hung a sheath containing a knife whose blade was razor sharp.

Over his shoulders were slumped a bow and a sheaf of arrows, which he could use with the skill of a master, and a round shield he had fashioned out of hide. To these weapons he had added a sharp-bladed spear of medium length which he was able to use with equal effect in stabbing and throwing.

He carried all these necessities of life and protection against his jungle foes almost as easily as if he had been unladen, because he had done so for as long as he could remember.

Here and there upon his sun-bronzed skin were scars, giving evidence of mighty battles with wild beasts.

Wanda did not eat of the fruits, dried meats, and nuts he carried, because the first business of the new day was a bath. He could tell by the greenness and freshness of the forest growth that water was near, and, plunging again into the forest, he made for it.

He had not gone far when his sensitive ears picked up the soft pad of paw-beats in the forest. Wanda's sense of smell was so acute that he knew that a lion was trailing him.

He loosened his spear and took it in his right hand. Nearer and nearer came the soft tread of the pads. Wanda turned left where a gap among the trees offered a fair battle ground, and made for the centre of it. The lion was close behind, so close as to be almost within reach of a death spring. This Wanda knew, and when at last the vital moment came, and he knew that he must face his forest foe to protect himself, the white man of the wilds suddenly wheeled about, his body poised upon gripping toes and his right arm swung up and back with the sharpened spear in the throwing position.

The lion was crouched low, belly to the ground, its tail flailing the dust.

Suddenly its jaws opened wide, and the jungle reverberated to a shaking roar. But that was not a challenge—it was a roar of welcome, a greeting. As Wanda looked the lion over, his handsome face softened. He knew that tawny coat and tumbling black mane, tubular tail with the black tuft at the end. Then he dropped his spear and let out a laugh of delight as he opened wide his muscular arms.

"Leo!" he shouted. "Leo! It's Leo!"
At the shout the lion rose up and came gamboling to him, and rubbed its head against the gentle hands that fondled it.

"Leo—Leo!"
Wanda's mind went back many moons to when he had carried a sickly baby cub back to the native village, where he had fed it on goat's milk and tended it until it had regained health and strength. Leo, he had named it, and the beast had followed him about like a faithful dog until the day dawned when enemy black men had descended on the peaceful village, slain its warriors, burnt the huts and the corral, and offered up in sacrifice upon the blazing pyre the living women and children until none were left save Wanda. Then Leo had gone to join his kind in the heart of the wilds, and Wanda, escaping, had journeyed countless miles until he had lost count of time.

Wanda had travelled through unknown lands and seen wondrous sights. Now he was making his way back by easy stages to his "sanctuary" whose confines were taboo, or bewitched, to the black men. No native dared to set his foot within the circular boundary line of that sanctuary for fear of death. Wanda was now back in a country he knew, and Leo, scenting him, dimly recalling the "smell" of the one human being who had ever shown him kindness, had come to render homage.

The black-maned lion lifted a heavy paw, scratched at one of the pockets of the leopard-skin as it used to when a cub and hungry for food. Wanda thrust a hand into it, and, taking out a slab of dried meat, thrust it into the jaws of the tawny king of beasts and watched

Leo devour it. Then, with a gay laugh, Wanda picked up his spear and resumed his wanderings, Leo stalking docilely by his side.

As soon as he came to the edge of a sheet of water, that stretched like an enormous dish across the glade, Wanda cast down his things, threw aside his leopard skins, and, looking like a Greek god, plunged into the cooling depths for his morning swim.

While he frolicked in the crystal water, Leo watched over Wanda's property like a great dog. Then Wanda came ashore and ran up and down until the burning sun and the gentle wind had dried him. Resuming his leopard skins and picking up his gear, he walked onward round the edge of the lake until he came to the denser forest, where the trees were massed in thick, black patches, and into this he plunged, Leo keeping close upon his heels.

The footpaths were plainly marked. Wanda kept to the tracks made by beasts as they went down to the water to drink. He needed only the sun by day and the moon and stars by night to guide him, and he unerringly kept upon his way.

He had trodden this path before. Soon he would be safe back in his sanctuary. The anguish he had suffered when his friends the Marbela had been massacred had been dulled and almost forgotten by the passage of time. It was good to be "home" again.

For the time being, he had had enough of wandering. In his travels he had battled with black warriors and mighty wild beasts, many of whom he had slain, and he was even now travelling at speed because he knew the man-hunters of the Bahati tribe were hunting him.

But presently Wanda stiffened in his walk. His dilated nostrils picked up the strong scent of yet another lion, and the beat of its pads as they trod the ground registered on Wanda's ear-drums.

He quickened his pace, and was glad when he saw ahead of them a clearing which offered room for movement, Leo following with dog-like devotion. There, as man and lion turned about, both were prepared to face the prowling enemy. He did not keep them waiting.

A lion, bigger and more powerfully made than Leo, hurtled out of the forest, letting loose a mighty, challenging roar as it dropped through the air.

The momentum of its flying body carried it within a death spring of Leo, and, without pause, it closed in a fight to the death.

Leo met the challenge front to front, but it was outmatched in size, and weight, and age—in all save courage. The bigger tawny body and the smaller one rolled over and over as they bit, and clawed, and savaged with such rapidity that Wanda could scarcely follow their movements. Clouds of dust rose, and fell in showers, almost obscuring the shaggy bodies. As Wanda circled round, watching for an opportunity to slay the killer lion and save Leo, he saw pools of red blood splash the earth. He threw down his spear and bared his hunting knife, waiting to plunge it into the body of the killer.

Suddenly Leo relaxed. The bigger beast had seized him by the throat and was snapping at the gullet with tearing teeth. It stood astride Leo, pinning the smaller lion down. The loss of even a single second now might see the end of Leo, the faithful.

Wanda's face hardened, his lips thinned, his fine, white teeth met in a grating snarl of hate.

Suddenly he flung himself upon the killer, and, flinging his strong left arm across its throat, he took a firm grip of its mane and dragged at it with mighty strength. The lion choked. The dripping fangs which sought the slaying of Leo loosened under the strangling clutch of the white man, and in that moment Leo edged away and leapt clear, shaking its black-maned head distressfully.

Maddened by the clutch of the man, the killer lion heaved its powerful body, to shake him clear. Then it would feast on man's flesh, and not on a lion's—a sweeter meal. In spite of his awareness and his strength, Wanda was almost shaken down. But he managed to retain his grip of the lion's mane, and, standing astride the beast, contrived, for a

second, to steady it. It was all the time he needed.

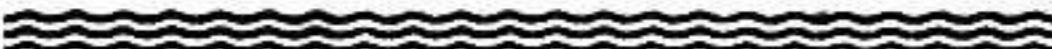
In that second his right hand rose and fell, and with the thrust he drove the sharp knife deep through the pelt of the beast and directed it deep to the heart. With a spasmodic shiver, the killer ceased to fight. Its roar of rage and defiance changed to a death scream, and the great body crumpled under Wanda as it fell on its side, all four paws pushed stiffly outward. Ripping out the knife, Wanda flourished it high above his head, and as the blood drops dripped down, he set back his head and let out the victory cry of the bull ape. The note of triumph seemed to fill the surrounding forest.

"Oo-aye! Oo-aye!"
Wanda set his foot upon the panting body of the dying lion and repeated the cry, whilst Leo, whose tawny coat was rent and bloody, crept near and looked at the vanquished killer unbelievably. Then gratefully, Leo the faithful licked the hand of his protector.

WANDA'S triumph was short lived. His bull-ape cry had scarcely died away in the echoes than the super sense which served him so well told him that the forest was full of black men. He could smell them—hear them, with his jungle-trained, sensitive ears.



"I told you plus fours were the very thing for carrying the swag in."



He turned about, just in time to see a number of Bahati warriors, armed with stabbing spears and shields, who carried bows and arrows on their backs, come leaping from the trees.

He turned back again, to find three Bahati tribesmen facing him, thirty yards away, with spears shortened, ready to throw. Leo let out a roar of defiance.

Leo would fight, but the Bahati would slay him, Wanda knew. And so, pointing to the forest, he ordered the lion away, using the language of the jungle beasts. Obediently Leo turned about and raced for cover, urged on by smarting wounds.

In a moment the Bahati had surrounded Wanda. He faced them fearlessly, grasping his spear. They could have stabbed him from behind, they could have driven holes through him from in front. But they had met Wanda before, and had seen him fight, and their hands had lifted from the ground their brothers who had fought Wanda, and whose skulls had been cracked like eggshells by the magic staff the white warrior held. Not only that, but with their own eyes they had seen Wanda of the Wilds tackle the lion and slay it with one plunge of his knife. He was a white devil. He might kill them all, as he had killed the lion. If they attacked him he

would kill many before they struck him down. It would not be safe to kill Wanda until they came upon him as he lay asleep, and then they could plunge the sharp blades of their assegai deep into his heart through front and back, and so make an end of him. As they hesitated, Wanda spoke.

He knew their tongue, and their ways. Always they had been afraid of him. He had left many of their number dead upon the trails. With body poised on toes like springs and swinging the spear about his head, Wanda taunted them.

"I am as one grain of dust in a wilderness of sand in the count against you, but assuredly that one grain will be left after the tempest has blown all the rest away. What do you want of me?"

None answered. But at that moment Ooma, the witch-doctor, came out of the forest. Four stalwart black men bore him on a litter and set him down near the body of the dead lion. His neck and fat, podgy body was decked with strings of beads and garlands of coloured grass and monkey fur. His comical headdress was studded with figures of carved ivory and little, tinkling bells. He carried in his hand an ebony staff, topped by the skull of a human being, shrunken to midget size, and his face was daubed hideously with patches of coloured paint.

As he stepped close, Wanda swung up his spear as if to pierce him. Ooma did not flinch.

"What do you want?" asked Wanda. The witch-doctor grinned devilishly.

"Nothing—nothing, save that I crave for the body of the lion you have slain," he said craftily. "For a moon the killer lion has followed my warriors, and time and again at night he has picked off one and carried the body into the forest, where we have found the mangled remains. Wanda, you have killed him. Good! The Bahati like. To-night they eat off roast lion flesh at the camp-fire if you give. Good! I, Ooma, say it." He lifted up his magic staff and smirked evilly.

Wanda answered scornfully. His eyes, wandering round the ring of stalwart black-skinned Bahati, scanned savage, malignant, hideous faces. He knew that there was not one among them who would not have killed him had they not been afraid. He knew how the natives feared his white man's magic, and went in terror of his sanctuary.

"Then hear me, Ooma," he said. "You and your warriors may eat of lion's flesh, for I never taste it."

"Good!" Ooma, the witch-doctor, waved the warriors back with his magic staff. "We accept the lion. Wanda, the white man of the wilds, is free to go."

Wanda answered with the roar of the bull ape; then, as they cringed from him, he picked up the body of the dead lion as if it were stuffed with feathers and flung it to them with one throw of his mighty arms. The carcass struck them with such force that three of the Bahati warriors fell from the impact, and others scuttled like rabbits for the safe cover of the wood. Then Wanda of the Wilds picked up his spear, and, using it as a leaping staff, swung up into the trees and vanished from sight.

Ooma, his body bent, and his magic staff shaking in a trembling hand, watched him depart with flaming eyes.

"Let him go," he snarled. "We will take him alive—by surprise. We will trail him and come upon him as he sleeps at night, and after shall we eat of white man's flesh, and not of the fibrous body of a lion. It is well!"

WANDA was not deceived. He knew that the Bahati, who had hunted him through many countries, would follow him as soon as they deemed it safe to do so. That day he ate of his store of food, and that night he slept in a crotch of a great tree with one ear awake, so to speak, to guard against surprise.

The next day he resumed his journey. He saw no more of Leo. The faithful lion had sought a hiding-place, wherein it was licking its wounds, Wanda supposed. But Leo knew the way to the sanctuary, and would surely

turn up there if it survived the fight with the killer lion.

Wanda travelled many miles at speed that day. Time and again he sighted wild beasts, who eyed him inquiringly and then turned aside. On and on he went, drawing ever nearer to his home. And that afternoon, whilst traversing a forest, he became aware once more of stealthy footsteps following him.

He did not believe that these could come from the blacks whom he had outstripped, but that other Bahati, lurking on the way, must have espied him and come in pursuit. Had they been friendly natives, they would have shown themselves.

Knowing that there was danger in staying upon the ground, where he might be struck down at any moment by a poisoned arrow or a throwing-spear hurled by a concealed enemy, Wanda took to the trees and travelled onward at speed.

It was astonishing to see the way in which he clung and swung and hung from bough and branch, moving from tree to tree without scratch or hurt, and making light of the gear he carried.

His coming was not exactly to the liking of the birds, who forsook their nests when he appeared, or the monkeys or big apes whom he disturbed from their sleep. One great tree ape nearly as big as himself turned to fight him, reaching out with giant hairy arms.

Wanda disposed of him by a playful poke of the end of his spear, getting him smack in the middle of his hairy chest and toppling him, like a dislodged ripe apple, head-over-heels to the earth below.

The howl of the frightened ape sounded almost human as he limped off into the gloom of the forest. Laughing, Wanda went upon his way.

As the day began to deepen, Wanda paused. From afar came the sound of native chanting and the beat of drums. Somewhere near was a native camp. Wanda moved towards the sounds.

Presently, he saw through the forest the gleam of fires in the blue of the departing day. The beating of the tom-toms was now loud, and the chanting of the natives swelled deafeningly. Halting in the fork of a big tree, Wanda crouched there looking and listening.

The singing was the Bahati death dirge. The camp belonged to Wanda's enemies. It would be simple for Wanda to turn back and go through the trees to a place of safety, and break through the cordon the blacks had no doubt drawn between him and his sanctuary. But Wanda did not intend to do that. The Bahati would not chant the death song over the dead body of an enemy. They were singing their dirge because, obviously, there was a prisoner in their hands—and he would be doomed to torture and a horrible death.

Wanda felt as sorry for the intended victim as he had been for Leo when the stalking killer lion had attacked. He hated the Bahati because of their treachery and inhuman practices. For that reason, he told himself, it was to be presumed that their prisoner and intended victim belonged to another tribe. Wanda decided to take a look at the prisoner, and as the shadows deepened, he went on through the trees cautiously, making no sound that could be heard above the singing and the drumming.

In the middle of a clearing a huge fire had been heaped up. This was being fed by younger men of the Bahati tribe. Seated in a row at a safe distance from the scorch of the flame, the tom-tom men were beating their drums and wailing horribly. Circling about the fire, the Bahati warriors were dancing the dance of death. In one hand they held a stabbing spear, in the other a bared knife. They had painted their ugly faces, and their big mouths were stretched to enormous size as they let out their hideous yells.

"Oh-ah—oo-oo-oo-la! Um-be-on goo-la! Boo-la! Boo-la!"

On they went round and round. And within the circle a black man was tied up to a stout post set firmly in the earth, beads of perspiration—a sweat of stark fear—trickling from his forehead.

Wanda recognised him as belonging to the Kula tribe. Indeed, he felt sure that he knew



Just as the devil doctor was about to plunge his knife into the tortured victim at the stake, Wanda took careful aim and loosed a deadly arrow.

him. But Wanda did not give the prisoner more than one searching glance, for his attention was riveted by the grotesque figure of a witch-doctor, who was prancing like a drunken marionette before the helpless prisoner. To Wanda's astonishment, the witch-doctor was none other than Ooma, whom he had imagined had been left far behind in the forest. Wanda could not account for his being there, other than that he and the Bahati must have known a shorter way than he. But here he was, and the sight of him settled the doubt in Wanda's mind.

At all costs, he determined to rescue the prisoner from Ooma and the bloodthirsty Bahati.

He had not to search his mind far to know why the unlucky Kula tribesman was to be offered up in sacrifice. Ooma wanted to make sure of his success in the hunt after Wanda of the Wilds. Without a doubt the Bahati must have come upon the hapless Kula warrior on the way, and brought him here for the kill. Wanda arrived not a moment too soon.

A minute later Ooma, stopping in his dance, turned to take a wooden cup filled with native spirit which he drained at a greedy gulp. Wanda knew that devilish spirit; it sets the blood on fire; it inflames the brain; it strengthens the desire to kill to the point of madness, and its effect upon Ooma was electrical.

Waving his arms he let out a fiendish yell. Then, taking another cup of the potent spirit from a young tribesman and draining it, he whipped a knife from his belt and brandished it. His staff with the shrunken skull was set in the belt about his middle. The beat of the drums quickened. The warriors began to quicken their dance. The witch-doctor, spinning like a maniac, began to draw nearer and nearer to the helpless prisoner, stopping for a second at every so many turns to point the naked blade of the knife at the heart of the Kula man.

Higher and higher soared the pitch of the singing, and then suddenly at a signal it stopped, and the witch-doctor ceased to twirl. His frothing lips moved as he uttered an imprecation, and then he swung the knife up to strike.

But the knife did not drive home. Instead, it paused half-way down, and the witch-doctor, uttering a gurgling cry, spun round once and fell.

Aided by the bright light of the fire, Wanda had taken an arrow from its sheaf and fitted

it to the string of his bow. Now, as Ooma lifted the sacrificial knife, he sent the arrow upon its way, and as the body of the witch-doctor fell face downward on the ground, its feathered butt could be seen protruding from his back into which it was buried deep.

For a moment a death-like silence reigned; then with a frenzied shout the Bahati scrambled away in a hunt for the mysterious killer.

THIS was the opportunity Wanda wanted. He knew that the barbed point of the arrow had found the heart of Ooma. He was aware of the terror the death of the witch-doctor would strike in the hearts of the Bahati. Now was his time.

Wanda sprang down from his tree, set bow and arrows in place, and with nimble touch made all secure. Then, carrying his spear, he ran boldly into the glade. Before the Bahati were aware of his coming he had reached the stake to which the Kula man was tied, and with a few swift yet careful strokes had severed the cords that held the prisoner. The Kula man flopped forward, for he had fainted, unable to withstand further pain and torture.

Wanda had not bargained on that. He had expected the man to be able to run and help himself, instead of which he was a useless burden.

By this time the Bahati had seen him, and, turning, came rushing at him from all sides with sharp-bladed weapons pointed to kill.

They were swarming everywhere. Wanda could see no clear way by which to reach the friendly forest. Only seconds might decide his fate and cost the life of the prisoner. Yet Wanda did not panic. Always he had had to protect himself against wild men and wild beasts, and only cool, clear thinking had saved him. Thousands of times he had been obliged to pit his brains against the intelligence and superstition of wild men and the killer cunning of savage beasts. Again and again he had been as near to death as this, and he had come through alive.

Swiftly he thrust his knife back into its holster, then, resting the spear against his right shoulder, he picked up the Kula man and slung him across his shoulder. He balanced the man so beautifully that for a moment he could afford to leave him there unheld. This done, Wanda let out a loud bull-ape shout, and, pointing the spear at his onrushing enemies, ran to meet them.

As he came, they halted, scared, and with

one accord drew back their throwing spears and launched them at his heart. In the fraction of a second the steel could have transfixed Wanda and have pinned his prostrate body to the ground. Yet Wanda had time enough. In that same instant he dug the end of the butt end of his spear into the ground, and, gripping it like a pole vaulter, soared upwards.

The Bahati who were rushing on him from behind did not check their speed, and as the throwing spears flew through the air where a moment before the body of Wanda had been, the oncoming rushing warriors met them. The noise made by the blades of the assegai as they dug deep through black flesh was like a scythe cutting grass. Man after man plunged down to the ground, the shafts of the spears snapping under the weight of the impaled bodies.

The Bahati who had thrown them stood transfixed with horror. They did not look at the flying body of Wanda of the Wilds as the white man soared high above their heads and landed safely upon his feet in the fork of a tree.

They had killed their own kind. The howls they made would have shamed the hyena. Too late they whirled about, and, knife in hand, sought for Wanda. He had turned to face them. The brown body of the Kula man hung as before across his broad shoulder, and he held the spear with both hands.

"Kill, kill, kill!" they shouted frenziedly, as they sprang at him.

Wanda's feet were firmly planted. He swung the hard wood shaft of the spear like a quarterstaff, and drove it repeatedly at the black heads of his enemies.

Every blow told. Skull cracked and jaw broke where the iron wood hit, or shoulder was crushed by a downstroke that disabled the recipient. Black bodies writhed upon the ground, and as they saw the fearful havoc Wanda made of their brothers, the rest of the Bahati stopped in their rush.

"Let the white devil go!" one shouted. "The evil spirit protects him."

Then, looking down, he saw the body of the witch-doctor lying as it had fallen. Ooma was the man who had persuaded them to take the Kula man and offer him up as a sacrifice. And this had come of it. Ooma had promised them Kula flesh to eat. Through him many of their brothers had died—and Ooma was dead.

THE Bahati were scared, but they did not abandon their pursuit of Wanda. Taking fresh heart from the dawn, they left their night camp and hastened on the trail of the white man as before.

Time and time again they believed that they had cornered him, and once they actually saw him. But always he eluded them by taking to the trees. This they could not do, for they could not climb like him, and swing through the tree-tops like an ape.

They knew the near ways, but Wanda approached the sanctuary he sought by a long detour. Time was no object. To him one day resembled another, saving for the rain. The question of food supply never troubled him; he was content to live on fruit and nuts and vegetable roots, and only when necessary did he kill and eat roasted flesh.

In the days and nights that followed his rescue of the Kula man, his only trouble was the state of the victim. The first twenty-four hours the man hung lifeless in Wanda's arms. The Man of the Wilds would have thought the Kula dead but for the faint throb of the heart. He had to bear the body through the trees, and progress was of necessity slow.

But at last the man awoke. Then Wanda was scared because the eyes were dull and without expression. The Kula was out of his mind. Still, it comforted Wanda to see the Kula eat and drink, and follow him now, on foot, wherever he went, relieving him of the responsibility of carrying him.

At last they came to within a mile of the sanctuary. The Kula was growing stronger and eating plenty. His eyes began to light up, and he would stare for minutes on end in devotion at Wanda.

On this day, when they came within rifle-shot of the sanctuary, Wanda drew the Kula man into the heart of a big tree.

"Listen!" he said, in the Kula language. "Here you stay. Me—Wanda—go on through the trees to seek for enemy between here and home. Understand? Good! Can you speak? What is your name?"

The Kula shook his head. Not once had he spoken. Wanda frowned at him, thinking, for the hundredth time, how closely he resembled a Kula boy he had known years ago.

"It is a pity," said Wanda, "because you remind me so much of one I used to know—his name was Gobo!"

The effect was almost magical. As Wanda spoke the name the face of the Kula man cleared, the eyes lit up, the lips curled in a bright smile, and the man, thumping his muscular chest, answered:

"Me," he said, "Gobo, you Wanda—you Wanda of the Wilds—me—Gobo!"

And then tears welled from his eyes and rolled down his brown cheeks.

In a moment Wanda's arms were around him.

"Gobo!" he said. "We were boys together. I had not seen you for years until I saw you tied to that stake before the fire when the Bahati were about to slay you. Ever since I have thought you Gobo; but you looked at me so vacantly I was almost persuaded I was mistaken."

Then, kneeling, he turned and pointed. "Stay here," he whispered. "I am going to scout. The hated Bahati lie between us and the sanctuary—you know, the holy place. We are going there. Once there, the Bahati dare not touch us!"

Gobo, the Kula man, blinked and looked suddenly afraid. Before he could speak, Wanda was gone, passing onward through the trees.

When he came within sight of the sanctuary, Wanda found his worst fears realised. He found Bahati warriors seated on the ground in hundreds. From a distance rang the echo of drums. He found the warriors encamped just outside the boundary of the sanctuary they feared, and dared not pass on pain of instant death, because the home of Wanda, the white man, was taboo.

They had camped there to kill Wanda as he came in. Having made sure that they had left no gap for him to pass through, Wanda hurried back to Gobo.

"We will wait for night," he said, "and, under cover of it, steal down upon the Bahati. You need not fear. I will take you into the sanctuary and protect you from the evil spirits."

That night, whilst Gobo crept on to the ring of watching Bahati guards, Wanda swung on in the middle terrace of the trees above.

At last Wanda saw Gobo below the tree in which he crouched. Wanda dropped silently down and joined him.

"When I give you the signal, put your arms about my neck. Cling on," he whispered. "When I say 'Now!' lift up your feet."

Wanda approached the guard between two watch-fires, where the shadows were black. He was within ten paces of the double line of resting blacks before they saw him.

"Now!" he shouted.

Obediently Gobo put his arms round Wanda's neck and lifted his feet clear of the ground. As he did so, Wanda, using the long spear as a vaulting-pole, went flying above the heads of the startled Bahati, and the next second was safely down within the precincts of his sanctuary. He took Gobo by the hand and pulled him on.

At that moment, as the Bahati gave out a shout of rage and disappointment, the moon burst from the clouds. Its silvery beams flooded the sanctuary in which the terrified Bahati dared not tread.

In the middle of it, to which Wanda made his way, lay the wreckage of an aeroplane—the plane that had brought Wanda to that land years ago, when a mere child. It was the air devil of the white man, the evil spirit that made the place accursed to the black and a sanctuary to the white man.

Gobo stared in fright. One wing of the old plane was broken, but in the main it had withstood the onslaught of time and weather remarkably well.

They were close upon it when a strange form arose from the wreck of the machine and stood out in bold silhouette against the moon.

At the sight Gobo sank down upon his knees. "Gobo—afraid!" he gurgled.

Then the roar of a forest lion split the echoes. But it was a roar of welcome and of greeting. Leo the faithful had come home first!

"Gobo, it's Leo," said Wanda. "You are safe here!"

At that, Gobo lifted up Wanda's right foot and set it upon the nape of his neck, bowing his forehead to the ground.

"Wanda—white man—master!" he said devotedly. "Gobo—him your slave!"

Now that you've made the acquaintance of Wanda, you'll be agog to read of his further adventures. Mind you order next week's copy of the "PILOT" in good time—there will be a rush for it.

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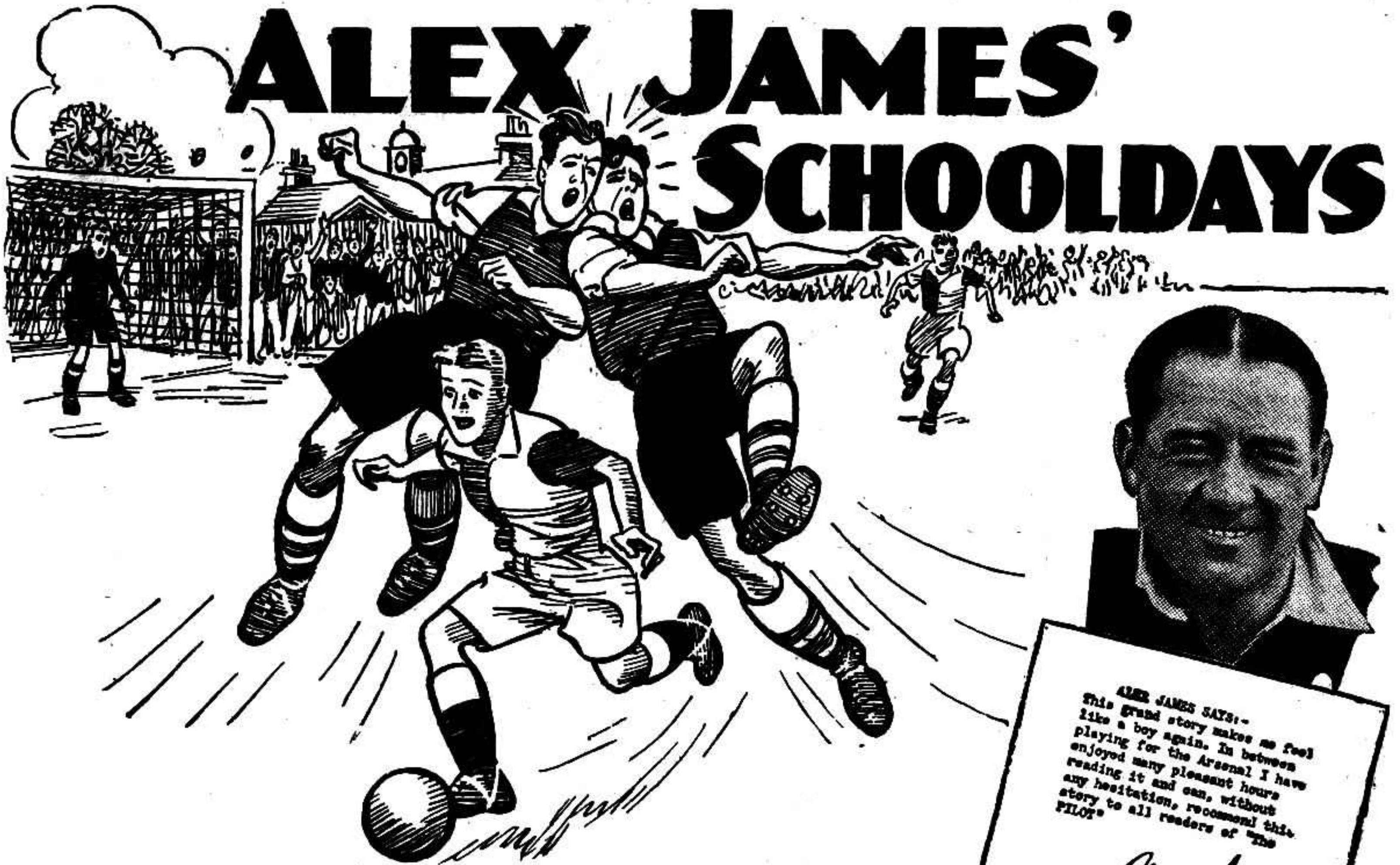
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ALEX JAMES' SCHOOL DAYS



SENTENCED BY THE FORM FOR A "CRIME" HE HADN'T COMMITTED . . .

A FIGHT—"Eh? Where? Who—" "James and Fatty Hunter!" piped up Dowley of the Fourth. "They're going it like wild cats!" He rushed off to spread the astonishing news. Soon the entire Fourth Form at Cragston Academy was thrilling to the tidings that Alex James and Fatty Hunter—inseparable pals—were fighting. In a wild rush the excited youngsters tore along the passage until they came to the end study.

Dowley's information was correct in every way. As the door of the study was flung open, a dozen pairs of curious eyes beheld James and Fatty Hunter smashing at one another for all they were worth. Alex James' rugged face was bruised and angry. Fatty Hunter's plump countenance was already showing signs of the battle; his left eye was partially closed and a stream of crimson was oozing from his nose. He staggered back from a terrific right-hander, bringing up short against the wall of the study, with a bump on the back of his head that made him feel dizzy.

Alex stood back, chest heaving, eyes glinting. Remorse softened his anger next moment as he saw how much Fatty had been bettered, and he dropped his hands.

"That's enough," he muttered thickly. "Chuck it, Fatty—"

Fatty Hunter pulled himself together and tottered away from the wall.

"Come on, you cad!" he gasped. "I'm not finished yet. Come on—"

Still James did not raise his fists. It was folly for Fatty to continue; only his indomitable pluck was keeping him on his feet.

"Chuck it, you fool!" snapped Alex, backing away from Fatty's snarling fists. "You've had enough—we've both had enough!"

"You're not letting me off, you cad!" threw back Hunter, aiming a podgy, clenched fist at Alex's stern face. "Take that—"

The blow landed with a thud, Alex making

no attempt to avoid it—but it stung him and all his angry passions rose up again.

"All right, you fool, if you will have it—" He drew back a pace, measured his distance, and then loosed a straight left which crashed against Fatty's jaw with such force that it jerked his head back until it seemed that the neck muscles would snap. Fatty let out a gasp of anguish, teetered unsteadily for a second or so, and then collapsed in his tracks, virtually knocked out.

"What's it all about?" Vic Ellis and Martin, two of the leading spirits of the Form, pushed their way through the throng, the latter hastening to Fatty Hunter and helping him to his feet, whilst Ellis roughly seized Alex by the shoulder.

"Ask Hunter," replied Alex shortly.

In wonderment, Vic Ellis turned to Hunter. That plump youth was making gallant attempts to recover. With Martin's arm about him he staggered towards Alex James, the light of accusation in his eyes.

"Did he say 'ask me'?" he hooted. "Then I tell you—tell the lot of you! That cad"—the utter scorn and contempt in Fatty's voice stung Alex like a whip-lash—"that cad is the fellow who pinched old Crunting's stamp album—"

There was a buzz of excitement interrupting Fatty's astonishing statement. For some time now the Fourth had been under a cloud with Mr. Crunting, their Form-master. He had complained that one of them had taken his precious stamp album, the collection of a lifetime, out of a spirit of revenge for some real or fancied wrong. Mr. Crunting, to whom the loss of the stamp album was almost as bad as would be the loss of a mouthful of perfectly good teeth to some people, had implored the culprit to restore the album. The Fourth were unanimous in condemning the unknown miscreant who had taken it, but with perhaps one exception, they were amazed now to hear that Alex James was the guilty party.

"He's the rotter!" went on Fatty Hunter, pointing an accusing finger at Alex James. "And not only has the rotter pinched the album—he's burnt it!"

"What?" It was a combined roar of wrath and amazement from the crowd of Fourth Formers.

"It's true!" snarled Fatty Hunter. "The cad has deceived us all—he's deceived me! But he's the rotter who's pinched the album! I know! That's why we were fighting!"

A terrible pause followed Fatty's accusing words. All eyes, grim, condemning eyes at that, focused on Alex James. He felt the colour mounting to his cheeks under that combined, sustained stare, and some of the juniors read in that embarrassment an admission of guilt. Scorn, anger and utter contempt flickered across the crowd of faces. Crunting was not exactly a popular Form-master, but burning his lifetime's collection of stamps was a cad's trick.

"I can't believe it," said Vic Ellis at length. "Why don't you say something, Alex?" he added, shaking James roughly by the arm.

Alex tore himself away. "There is nothing to say," he replied harshly. "If Hunter thinks me capable of that—what can I say that will be believed?"

He gave Fatty one long remorseful look, and was preparing to push his way out of the crowd, when an uproar arose. James wanted time to think—he wanted the opportunity to "cool off," for both he and Fatty had lost their tempers. But the enraged Fourth were not letting the matter drop so easily.

"Shove him on trial!" suggested Matthews. "If he's guilty, he ought to be kicked out of Cragston!"

The idea caught on like wildfire. A dozen pair of hands flew out and fastened on Alex. He turned and gave Matthews a deadly stare.

ALEX JAMES SAYS:—
This grand story makes me feel like a boy again. In between playing for the Arsenal I have enjoyed many pleasant hours reading it and can, without any hesitation, recommend this story to all readers of "THE PILOT"

Alex James

"I haven't said I'm guilty yet, you fool!" he snapped. "Are you all going to jump to conclusions, like that podgy fool Hunter?"

"You'll have to stand your trial!" exclaimed Vic Ellis, taking charge of the proceedings. "This is a matter which will have to be thrashed out—properly." The look of horror on his face made Alex wince, for next to Fatty Hunter he regarded Vic Ellis as his best pal.

"Right-ho, Vic!" he said softly. "Any old time will suit me. Now will you let me go?"

He looked a wee, yet defiant figure standing there in the midst of his angry Form-fellows—and his seeming indifference to the trial began to sway the opinions of half the Form.

"Let him go. We'll put him on trial after lights out to-night!"

"In the dorm to-night—after lights out, then," said Vic Ellis, his good-looking face clouded with worry and a disliking of the job which would fall on his shoulders.

"Suits me," drawled Alex, and, with head erect, he strode out of the study and made his way to the bath-room to clean and tidy himself.

Dod Jarvie, the crafty schemer of the Fourth, looked after him with a triumphant expression on his mean, spiteful face. He had reason to congratulate himself, had Dod Jarvie, for he knew more about the stealing and burning of Mr. Crunting's precious stamp album than anyone else present; for the very good reason that he, in actual fact, was the guilty party!

Ever since Alex James had arrived at Cragston on a scholarship founded by old Bailie Jarvie—Dod's grandfather—the schemer of the Fourth had pitted his wits against James in a diabolical effort to get him disgraced and expelled. From the outset, however, wee Alex had speedily proved himself a match for Dod Jarvie in ordinary matters. In fact, he had wrested the football captaincy from him, and, far from being despised by the snobbishly inclined members of the Fourth Form, Alex had surrounded himself with a popularity and a reputation for being a "good fellow" second to none.

But Dod Jarvie had never despaired. Quietly, stealthily, he had gone about his task; somehow or other Alex James was going to be kicked out of Cragston. It seemed that the schemer's wishes were going to be fulfilled. Alex's fight with his best pal proved conclusively that Dod Jarvie's cunning was meeting with reward. It was only a matter of time now, Jarvie told himself, before Cragston said good-bye to the boy whom he hated and envied with a bitter, implacable, unreasoning hatred.

As for Alex James, he suddenly felt that his little world was rocking beneath his feet. Even now, as he left the bath-room, feeling better for a wash, he could hardly believe that he and Fatty Hunter, the best pal he had ever known, had actually come to blows. Even now he could scarcely appreciate that he was accused of having burnt old Crunting's stamp album, for, in common with the rest of the Fourth, Alex had been loud in his condemnation of the wretch who had been guilty of that shabby trick.

"It'll all come out all right," he told himself as he mooched away in the quietness of the quad. "It's just a ghastly mistake, and old Fatty will be sorry for it."

But Fatty Hunter did not appear to be sorry for it. When he met Alex again an hour or so later, he treated him to a contemptuous look, turned abruptly on his heel, and walked off in the opposite direction.

Alex crimsoned and bit his lip in vexation. He was imprisoned now for the Form trial to take place. The matter would be speedily cleared up then. But would it?

"GOOD-NIGHT, you young scamps—and no foolin' about when I'm gone!" Jamie Montgomery, the popular captain of the academy, was seeing "lights out" that night, and he passed at the doorway of the dormitory, suspicion in the final glance he gave the juniors before he turned out the lights.

Montgomery was a shrewd fellow. He could sense, somehow, that something was "doing" in the Fourth that night.



Again and again the Fourth Formers lowered their helpless victim into the icy water of the swimming bath. They little dreamed that they were punishing an innocent man; but Alex James bore his punishment without a cry of complaint.

"No larks, mind," he concluded, "or I'll be up here with a cane. Good-night!"

"Good-night, Montgomery!" James' voice was as loud and as sincere as any, despite the ordeal which lay before him. He deeply respected and admired the stalwart, good-looking skipper of the academy, and it was to the strength and volume of that final "good-night" which always told the master or prefect on duty just where he stood in the opinion of the Fourth.

The Fourth allowed twenty minutes to elapse after Montgomery's departure, before Vic Ellis gave the signal to turn out. Following the usual custom, a number of youngsters began to pin blankets over the windows so that the one solitary light which would illumine the coming proceedings would not be observed by a prowling master.

"Form the court," said Vic Ellis, in a whisper, "and don't make a row, you men, or the beaks'll be on our track!"

Obediently, a bed was lifted and settled horizontally across the dormitory. This would serve as the judges' table. Three boxes were to serve as seats for the judges. The big fire-guard was taken away from the hearth and placed in a favourable position. This would do duty as the dock. Four water jugs outlined the space which was to serve as the witness box; then the youngsters scrambled for places within sight of the prisoner and his judges.

"Get in the box, Fatty," urged Martin, who had some small knowledge of court procedure; "you will make the charge."

Somewhat reluctantly, Fatty Hunter shuffled forward and took his place within the limits of the four water jugs.

"In the dock, Alex—I mean Alexander James!" added Martin sternly. "Now I'll read out the charge."

He glanced to either side of him, to satisfy himself that Vic Ellis and Lumsden, his fellow judges, were in position, before he cleared his throat.

"Alexander James," he began, "you are charged with wilfully abstracting Mr. Crunting's stamp album from his bureau and maliciously burning the blessed thing. I mean burning it. Do you plead guilty or not guilty?"

A faint, scornful smile twisted Alex's rugged features, but he decided to let Martin have his head.

"Not guilty, my lord!"

"Proceed with the charge, Fatty," continued Martin, "and don't be all night."

Fatty shrugged his shoulders and took the plunge. He disliked his task, firmly as he believed in Alex's guilt.

"All you fellows know that since the occasion old Crunting walloped Alex—I mean James—for nothing, he swore he'd get his own back—" began Fatty.

"The court is aware of that circumstance," snapped Martin. "Get on with the washing—I mean get on with the charge."

A titter ran round the assembly. Martin's sense of legal procedure and his schoolboy impatience somehow did not mingle with dignity.

"Silence!" commanded Martin. "Any idiot interrupting will be charged with contempt of court and be chucked in a blanket. Kindly proceed, Mr. Hunter."

"All the court is aware that James left the dorm the night old Crunting's album was pinched," resumed Fatty Hunter. "When he came back to bed I asked him what he had been doing, but he refused to tell me. Well, in the morning, Crunting discovered that his album was gone. That same morning," added Fatty, and his voice trembled slightly, "I saw a pile of ashes in the firegrate in our study. I knew at once that they were the remains of the album, because a portion of the album still remained untouched."

"Where are the ashes?" demanded Martin solemnly.

"I kept them in an old saucepan," said Fatty. "I didn't know what to do at the time, I could hardly believe that Alex—I mean James—could do such a dirty trick."

"Produce the evidence!"

Bruce McBain, the court usher, fished under a locker and brought to light a battered saucepan. In it were the unmistakable remains of a stamp album. A stamp, which Mr. Crunting prized above all others was only half burnt, providing the necessary evidence that this was the missing album.

"I challenged James with the rotten business," said Fatty Hunter, when the three judges had satisfied themselves that they were gazing at the remains of Crunting's album, "and he denied it. I couldn't stand it any longer and we started to fight. That's all I've got to say."

"And quite enough, too," muttered Martin unprofessionally. "It's as clear as daylight. Alexander James, take the witness box."

A contemptuous smile on his face, which worried and irritated his judges, Alex wandered into the witness box.

"You are on oath," said Martin ponderously. "What have you to say in defence of these charges?"

"It's a cock-and-bull story, that's all," said Alex boldly. "I'll admit I went out of the dorm to rag Crunting, and I did. I shoved half a dozen glasses of water in the foot of his bed. I'll bet the old idiot got a wetting when he turned in—"

"We are not concerned with that," said Martin harshly. "Did you or did you not pinch and burn Crunting's album?"

"Of course I didn't, you idiot!" exclaimed Alex scornfully. "D'you think I'd do a rotten trick like that?"

"Ahem! It isn't what I think," Martin reminded him. "Please tell the court, then, how the remains of the album came to be found in your firegrate."

James shrugged his shoulders.

"That's a mystery," he replied. "I never touched the album, certainly I never burnt it. Some cad must have dumped the ashes there, or else burnt the album there—" he broke off, and his questing eyes suddenly settled on Dod Jarvie, accusingly. But the cad of the Fourth had himself well under control. He met that accusing stare with level gaze, coolly, defiantly. "Someone, obviously, wanted me to get the blame for it. That's how I see it."

The three judges were worried. Alex's statement rang true. Yet the facts, and they were indisputable, pointed to James' guilt.

"Is that all you have to say?" asked Martin. "That's all," replied Alex coolly, "except to add that I think you're a lot of silly owls wasting your time trying me when the real culprit is obviously laughing up his sleeve."

There followed a hurried whispering among the three judges, much shaking of heads and more whisperings. James, unperturbed, found himself yawning when Martin rose to his feet. Martin's face was somewhat pale and unhappy in its expression.

"The court has considered the evidence," he began, and a pin could have been heard to drop, "and it is of the opinion, Alexander James, that you are guilty."

"What?" shouted Alex, starting. "I tell you I'm innocent, you fatheads—"

"You are found guilty," went on Martin, "and as much as I dislike my task I have to pronounce sentence on you."

A look of withering scorn crossed Alex James' face as he listened, but he blinked when the sentence was announced.

"You are found guilty, Alexander James, and accordingly you are sentenced to a dozen duckings in the bath to-morrow, after last lesson!" announced Martin, whereat a murmur of awe went up from the assembly, which James did not appreciate or understand just then. "The Fourth is disgusted with you, ashamed of you, and also sentences you to Coventry. The court is dismissed."

"You old idiot—" began Alex. "Martin, you ohump—"

Martin gave him an uncompromising stare and started to drag the bed back to its proper place.

"Vic—Vic Ellis," exclaimed Alex, only to receive a stony stare from that junior. "Lumsden— Are you all crazy? I tell you I didn't do it! Honest, I didn't. Won't you believe a fellow?"

He turned and found himself staring at Fatty Hunter.

"Fatty—Fatty, you old barrel, you don't really believe I'm guilty, do you?"

No answer. Alex James might not have been in the land of the living for all the notice the Fourth took of him.

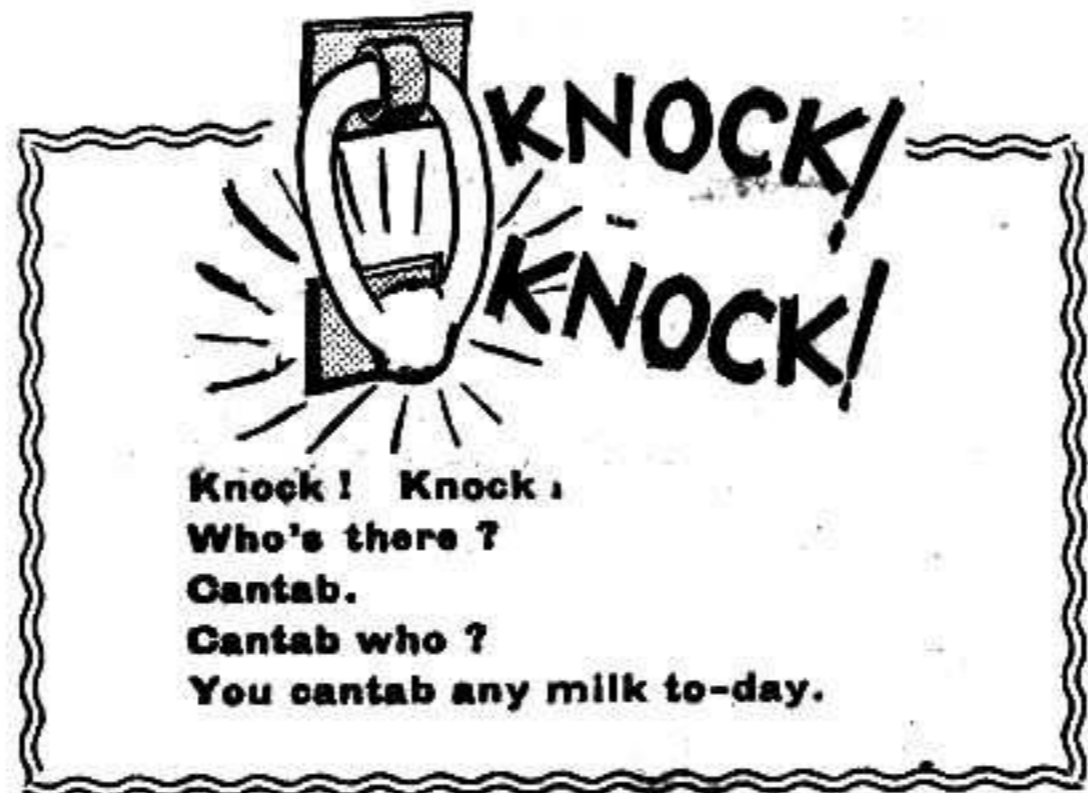
Stark misery began to show in Alex's blue eyes. He was sent to Coventry, probably the worst sentence that could be given any average schoolboy. Nobody wanted to talk to him, nobody would be allowed to talk to him; severe punishment would befall the fellow who broke that stringent rule.

A sob welled up in Alex's throat. Right from the first he had felt that his innocence would be speedily established; he had never bargained for this. And the injustice of it all stung him to the quick. Alone, friendless, he stood on the cold boards of the dorm, whilst his schoolfellows scrambled back to bed. The single light was turned out, the blankets were taken down from the windows: the trial was over.

"All right, you rotters!" exclaimed Alex James passionately, his hands clenched. "All right! But you'll be sorry for this one day, you see!"

There was no answer.

Slowly, Alex turned and made his way back to bed. Yet it was a long time before he slept that night. When finally utter exhaustion closed his eyes, a teardrop glistened



on his eyelashes. In the dark, even a tough youngster like Alex felt that he could give way to an emotion that threatened to choke him.

"GRAB the rotter!"

It was the following afternoon and lessons for the day were over at the academy.

Forgetful of the sentence of ducking which had been passed upon him the previous night, Alex James, moody and unhappy, had decided to take a walk out into the country to blow the cobwebs away.

He was making his exit at the gates when a band of Fourth Formers, with Dod Jarvie at their head, tore towards him.

Alex wheeled, and his fists clenched automatically. It dawned on him then that he was wanted for the second part of his punishment. He wasn't afraid of a ducking—not yet knowing the peculiar form of ducking which was the custom at Cragston. All the same, as it was thoroughly undeserved, he was determined to put up a fight. He stood little chance, however, against a yelling horde of youngsters two-score strong. Hands grabbed out at him, his flailing arms were pinioned, and, lifted up bodily, Alex was swiftly taken across the road into the academy woods. Some little distance in the thickest part of the woods was the academy swimming bath. James was rushed there at top speed by the whooping juniors, helpless to defend himself.

"You cowardly rotters—" he began, but a savage swipe across the face—which, incidentally, came from Dod Jarvie—effectively silenced him. Next moment his wrists were bound behind his back with a length of cord. His ankles were similarly treated. Then a long coil of rope was brought into view. One end of it was looped round Alex's body, the other was drawn over one of the diving boards. Several youngsters took a hold of the loose end of the rope.

"Sling him in!" yelled a voice. Splash! Alex met the icy water of the swimming bath with a gasping howl and disappeared from sight, having swallowed a pint or more of the water on that downward plunge.

"Heave him up, fellows!" The Fourth Formers, grim of face, began to haul on the rope until Alex's dripping form was clear of the surface of the water. Then—

"Lower the cad again—" Once again, helpless to save himself from this torture, Alex James found himself plunging beneath the icy water. When he was drawn up again he was choking for breath.

"And again! Don't forget the sentence was a dozen times!"

Again and again the juniors lowered their helpless victim, little dreaming—with the exception of the gloating Jarvie—that he was an innocent man. Through it all, James carried himself with a stoical pluck which drew involuntary murmurs of admiration from some of the lesser lights of the Fourth. But when, finally, after the twelfth immersion, he was drawn clear, he was near to being unconscious. He had swallowed pinta of water, and his eyes were glazed.

They dragged him into the side of the bath, unfastened his bonds, and left him there, shivering and squirming, and drawing in great gulps of air.

When, two or three minutes later, Alex stood shakily on his feet, he saw no sign of his late tormentors; they had made themselves scarce.

A bleak, stubborn smile overspread Alex's white face as he started off for the academy. He prided himself on not having cried out during that terrifying ordeal; all the same, his heart was bitter towards his schoolfellows.

"They'll be sorry for it some day!" he muttered between chattering teeth, as he ran back to the gates. "The fools—"

"James!" The shocked voice of Jamie Montgomery pulled Alex up short just as he entered the academy. "How have you got into that state—fallen in the river?"

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James shook his head. Jamie Montgomery, gazing across the road, saw the watery trail the youngster had left behind him, and put two and two together.

"You've been ducked, eh?" he asked, mindful of his own days as a junior, and of that terrifying punishment. "What have you been doing to deserve that?"

"Nothing," said James simply; and added: "Do you mind, Montgomery, if I go in? I shall catch my death of cold if I hang about."

"Of course! Go and have a good rub down, you young idiot," advised Montgomery, his brows knitted, "and come and tell me all about it when you're through—if you'd like to."

But Alex James had no intention of telling the skipper of the academy what it was all about. He kept out of Jamie Montgomery's way, and, save for an inclination to sneeze, he appeared little the worse for the punishment the Fourth had meted out to him.

Alone, friendless, he sat in his study and brooded over his wrongs. Then his characteristic doggedness and independence of spirit came to his rescue. He began to smile—and with it, half his worries began to depart.

"I'm not letting this get me down," he muttered. "Alex James, no man who is worth his salt ever goes through life without a kick or two in the pants. You're getting your kicks now, but you'll pull through. Later on, maybe, you'll be able to do a spot of kicking yourself—then woe betide the sneezly rotter who burnt old Crunting's stamp album!"

He went up to the dorm that night feeling better than he had done for the past twenty-four hours, and was actually whistling to himself as he undressed. Without paying any particular attention to the juniors about him, he was aware that they stared at him in wonderment. For a fellow who was sent to Coventry—for a fellow who had been through the ordeal of a "ducking," he seemed remarkably cheerful.

It was in that moment of Alex James' self-control and independence that many of his long-sighted Form-fellows saw the Alexander James of the morrow. That same self-control against formidable opposition, that independence of spirit, and the will to win through were to stand him well.

"Good-night, you silly owls!" remarked Alex, surprisingly gay, as he slipped between the sheets. "I don't bear you any grudge. You think you're doing the right thing, but you're wrong. Good-night, and sleep tight!"

There was no answer, for the law of Coventry barred any deviation from the strict rule of silence, yet more than one fellow felt in his heart of hearts that James was not the guilty party; more than one fellow hopped fervently, before his eyes closed in sleep, that the sentence of Coventry would speedily be lifted and the real truth discovered.

ON the afternoon following the "ducking" incident the Fourth Form footer eleven were due to play the Third, and, in company with the rest of the team, James presented himself at the changing-room and started to undress. Not for a moment did he suspect that he would not be required to play football, for he was still the captain of the eleven.

Yet he noticed vaguely that eleven other players were changing as fast as they could and all seemed eager to get out of the dressing-room before he was ready. The reason became plain when, having laced up his boots, James went to the door and turned the handle. But the door did not budge. He had been locked in!

His spirits began to sink. This was the Fourth's way of showing him that, not even in the footer eleven, was he wanted. Anger took the place of depression, and he began to thump on the door and yell.

"Open this door, you fatheads!"
Bang, bang, bang!
"What's all this hullabaloo about?" It was the voice of Jamie Montgomery which stopped Alex making a further noisy demonstration. "What idiot has locked this door? Wait a moment!"

Came the click of a key being turned, and the door swung open.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" said Jamie Montgomery. "I was wondering why you weren't playing. What's the idea?"

Alex shook his head. Montgomery's glance went to the footer pitch, where the Fourth and Third teams were now lining up. Swiftly he saw that the Fourth team was complete, so far as numbers went. He took James by the shoulder and urged him forward. Then, just as the game was about to start, Montgomery gave a yell, and Vic Ellis, the vice-captain, came over to him with a sheepish expression on his face.

"What's the idea, Ellis?" demanded Montgomery. "Why isn't young James playing?"

Vic Ellis glanced at James with contempt in his crimson face.

"Has the cad been sneaking, Montgomery?" he asked. "Well, the truth is, we don't want him—see? Neither on the footer field nor anywhere else. He's in Coventry!"

And, with that, Vic Ellis trotted back to the centre of the field and nodded to the ref to start the game.

genuine interest in him. "The fatheads, as I said just now, are making a stupid mistake. On my word of honour I've done nothing—"

"On your word of honour, young 'un?"
"On my word of honour," reiterated Alex, and he gazed at the skipper of Cragston levelly and unflinchingly.

The captain of Cragston pursed his lips and thought swiftly. Finally he smiled.

"Come on, young 'un, I believe you, and I'm not going to nose into matters that don't concern me," he said; "but, as skipper of games here, I'm going to see that you play footer this afternoon."

James hung back, his face flushed with embarrassment.

"I'd sooner not, Montgomery," he said wildly. "The fellows will think I've been sneaking and telling you a yarn. I don't want to play for the Fourth now—really I don't!"

"Who said anything about playing for the Fourth, you young rascal?" twitted the Cragston skipper, giving James' ear a playful pinch. "You're going to play footer for the Sixth—for the first eleven! Now, how does that appeal to you?"

"For the Sixth?" gasped Alex, and his eyes shone with excitement and gratitude. "Oh, Montgomery! Oh—"

"And mind you play your best, young 'un!" smiled Montgomery. "We're only playing the Foundry's second eleven, but they're pretty hot stuff—and pretty boisterous in their tackling. Like the idea?"

"Do I?" exclaimed Alex, his eyes glistening. And, spurred on by Montgomery's kindness and sportsmanship, Alex James played that afternoon as he had never played in his life before.

The Foundry eleven were heavy-charging, straight-down-the-centre-of-the-field players, relying principally on their weight and strength to carry them through, and very soon the Cragston seniors were showing signs of wear and tear. "Yet 'wee Alex," nippy as a hare and twice as artful when he was in possession of the ball, escaped innumerable burly tackles without damage. Again and again he showed a glimpse of that skill which was to serve him well in the years that lay ahead—when he was destined to be a marked man in every match in which he played.

But perhaps his crowning achievement of the afternoon was when, slipping over the plunging feet of a burly centre-half who literally flung himself at the wee youngster, he dribbled on with the ball, slipped it between the widely spread feet of a stalwart back, and touched it with the right amount of strength to the feet of Jamie Montgomery.

The skipper of the academy took that delightful pass in his stride, and let loose a smashing pile-driver at goal. The goalie made a despairing leap, half got his fingers to the twisting leather, and pushed it clear. Next second, something that appeared to be a large human indiarubber ball shot through the air, straightened up, and kicked mightily at the spinning leather.

Booomph! Alex—for he it was—anticipating the goalie's save and direction, brought his left foot smashing against the ball with cannon-ball force. No goalie in the world could have stopped that raking shot.

"Oh, well played, young 'un!" yelled Montgomery. "Oh, good shot!"

The spectators, and they numbered half the school, were yelling the praises of Alex James long after the teams had lined up again, and among them was a fair sprinkling of Fourth Formers.

From that staggering "opportunist" goal the Foundry eleven never recovered, and when the final whistle blew, the Cragston first eleven were the victors by the only goal scored—Alex James' goal!

Young Alex was feeling in the best of good spirits when, having changed, he made his way back to the study for tea. These days he had the place to himself, for Fatty Hunter kept clear of the study; but the cheery good nature died out of Alex's face when he opened the door.

The place was like a shambles. The table had been overturned, and coal and cinders had been freely scattered over the floor. The pictures had been torn from their hooks and



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This week's prize of 2s. 6d. goes to: M. Egge, 18, Queen Street, Chesterfield.

Jamie Montgomery looked at James severely, his brows knitted.

"What have you been up to, James?" he asked. "You've been ducked, and you've been sent to Coventry. They don't do that at Cragston for any trivial nonsense. What have you done?"

"Nothing!" retorted Alex bravely. "Just nothing! The silly asses have made a mistake, that's all."

Jamie Montgomery stood regarding him for some moments in silence. Then—

"Look here, James! I don't believe in butting into Lower School affairs, but it's a burning shame that a youngster who can play football like you should go without a game. Tell me what's happened?"

"I've done nothing, Montgomery," answered Alex, rather moved at Montgomery's

wantonly damaged, the chair had been overturned and swamped with ink, and all James' books and football cuttings had been strewn amidst the wreckage. But what hurt Alex most was the inscription which had been daubed in whitewash on the mirror overhanging the mantelpiece:

"GET OUT OF CRAGSTON, YOU CAD!
NOBODY WANTS YOU!"

"What awful cad has done this?" Alex's anger was rising as he asked himself the question aloud. "Look at the damage—"

Then his shoulders drooped, and a suspicion of moisture began to well into his eyes. It seemed useless to carry on at Cragston, after all. Even playing for the first eleven and covering himself with glory was of scant comfort in the face of this. Nobody wanted him—nobody in the Fourth, anyway—that was perfectly clear.

"I'm getting out of this place!" Alex told himself savagely. "I'm beginning to hate it—and everyone in it! They don't give a chap a chance!" Aloud he exclaimed: "No, I won't—no, I won't! I'll stay on and beat 'em yet! I'll show 'em! I'll show 'em! And—"

"Well done, youngster! That's the spirit!" Alex wheeled sharply as he heard that voice from the open doorway. Framed there was old Bailie Jarvie, and he was gripping Dod Jarvie, his grandson, by the ear. Terror was written large in Dod Jarvie's face.

"Oh!" gasped Alex. "I didn't know you were there, sir!"

"I caught this young scamp turning this place upside-down ten minutes ago," explained Dod's grandfather. "I actually stood and watched him whitewash that miserable message on the mirror. Then I took him away and lammed him!"

James could not repress a smile as he gazed at Dod Jarvie's squirming figure, thence to the stout Malacca cane his grandfather carried. He could guess that that lamming had been a severe one.

"Lucky, in a way, I decided to pop in at the academy this afternoon, my boy," went on old Bailie Jarvie. "I'm beginning to see what sort of a wastrel and young rogue my grandson is. Caught him red-handed, by Jove!" He shook Dod Jarvie like a dog would shake a rat. "But I'm not through with him yet! I've lammed him, and I'm going to stop his pocket-money for a month. That'll help to pay for some replacements in your study furniture. And now both of us will watch the young scamp tidy up."

He threw Dod Jarvie forward, so that he sprawled on his hands and knees, then he closed the door and stood with his back to it.

"Get busy, Dod!" he commanded sternly. "Tidy this place up, and no slacking, or—"

He flourished the Malacca significantly. Almost tearful, the schemer of the Fourth began to tidy up, absurdly conscious that his enemy—the boy he hated—had a front-row seat, so to speak, of his humiliation.

"Wipe that caddish nonsense from the mirror!" ordered old Bailie Jarvie. "Get out of Cragston—eh? It's a pity you're not half as good as this young fellow. Nobody wants him—eh? Well, I want him! Sometimes I wish he were my grandson instead of you, you young rogue! Get on!"

Dod Jarvie got on, grinding his teeth in shame and rage. Once again the Fates had beaten him in his malicious scheme to bring disgrace upon Alex James in the eyes of Cragston in general and old Bailie Jarvie in particular. But Dod Jarvie wasn't "through" yet!

Fortified in the knowledge that there are still some people who believe in him, Alex James fights back to regain his old standing and popularity in the Cragston Fourth. But it's an uphill fight, with Dod Jarvie constantly planning to defeat him. You'll be enthralled with next week's chapters of this stirring story, so be sure to order your copy of PILOT in good time.

The COMIC CAPERS of STAINLESS STEPHEN

FAMOUS RADIO STAR



1. The other evening when I was hiking home for a spot of shut-eye, I bumped into my old pal P.-c. Buzzletop. We swopped a couple of lies apiece (comma) and I learned that the local branch of the Burglars' Union was working overtime.



2. I laughed and I laughed and I laughed, as I strolled along all by myself in the moonlight. But when I reached the happy Stephen homestead, mortgage and all, I found I wasn't alone. In fact, I was beside myself (comma) with rage.



3. I did a quick think, for the special benefit of that burglar bloke. Yes, sir. The S.S. idea factory was soon going full blast, telling me that the way to blast that blighter's hopes was to take him by surprise.



4. From the inside of the house I saw that the outsider had left his birds-perch, I mean crowbar, in the window, and that was enough for me. I knew that the bad lad would want some light on the subject and I waited until he bent over.



5. It was then that I caught him bending (exclamation mark) I pushed the crowbar out until the end was under the bad lad's jacket, and when it was in the proper posish, I pulled down the window.



6. "Hang it!" he roared, but it was he who was left hanging (full stop) Then round to the front flashed your hero Stainless S., and the coal-hole gave me the wrinkle to make that bad lad's outlook even blacker.



7. I whipped off the lid and whipped back into the house again. Then I took my stand by the window, while the burglar dangled there like Monday's washing and wishing that he'd washed his hands of the matter.



8. I was waiting for P.-c. Buzzletop to buzz along on his beat, and soon I heard his number nines. Then I opened the window, and the burglar dropped into the coal-hole and things became a whole lot better for yours truly.

The LAUGHING BUCCANEER!



"HAW! HAW!"



"NAH THEN!"



LUMMY!



OH YEAH!"



"DEAR, DEAR!"



VAT A BUSINESS!

THE revolving doors of the Café Dure were ceaselessly on the move to admit a continuous stream of well-dressed diners, for the Café Dure was one of those places which had taken the fancy of the wealthy. It was a little after half-past eight when a tall young man, immaculately clad in evening dress, strolled towards the brilliantly lit entrance. There was a serene expression of contentment on the young man's lean, brown face, and a look of carefree gaiety in his audacious blue eyes as he approached the restaurant.

He paused as he saw the shadowy figure of a man standing in a darkened doorway some little distance from the restaurant's main entrance. The reflection of light from the café gleamed for an instant on a pale, tense face.

"Well, well! What-ho!" said the young man cheerfully. "Dashed if it isn't Smiler Fane himself!" And he warmly gripped the arm of the man who had been standing back in the shadows.

"Streuth—Mr. Buchan!" ejaculated the other.

"Here, here!" said the young man severely. "A little less of the high hat, please, Smiler. In the old days it used to be the Buccaneer!"

"Ah, the Buccaneer!" Smiler nodded. "A gentleman, if ever there was one."

"A gent, maybe," the Buccaneer agreed modestly, "but a pal just the same, Smiler. How's it going?"

Even as he asked the question, the eyes of Crispin Buchan, better known as the famous Buccaneer, looked shrewdly into those of Smiler Fane, and what they saw there was not good to see. In Smiler Fane's eyes there lurked the expression of a man driven to desperation—a taut, resolved look.

"Well enough, Mr. Buchan," said Smiler evasively. "Ever since you set me up— He paused a moment, then went on: "Seems funny we should meet like this, doesn't it? Me, one time considered the ace safe-breaker of the profession, and you the king pin of us all. But you never were a regular criminal, Mr. Buchan. Always on the side of the under-dog. You got me out of a jam, set me up—and an honest life was better than a crooked one, every time. Ever see anything of Inspector Bugle these days?"

The Buccaneer grinned. The very mention of the name of Inspector Bugle, of Scotland Yard, made him smile; for it was Bugle's fondest wish to see the Buccaneer behind prison bars, and for that purpose he was constantly on the trail of the elusive Buccaneer.

Despite the fact that a grateful Government had granted the Buccaneer a free pardon for all his past misdemeanours, Inspector Bugle was convinced that the Buccaneer was still the lawless, swashbuckling modern pirate he always had been. And in that Bugle was right enough; only it was his hard luck to be unable to prove it.

"Bugle?" The Buccaneer sighed now.

THE MAN WITH A HUNDRED FACES!

"I'm always seeing him. I wouldn't do that if I were you, Smiler."

His last words were suddenly hard. The right hand holding Smiler Fane's arm suddenly tightened to a grip of steel, and Smiler Fane's right hand was drawn from the pocket of his jacket, where it had been hidden, disclosing a gun tightly gripped in it.

"Tut, and tut, tut!" the Buccaneer rebuked the ex-cracksman gently. "Not going back to the old business, Smiler? I made pretty sure you were treading the straight and narrow path."

"Let me go, Mr. Buchan," Smiler Fane gasped hoarsely. "I wouldn't have you mixed up in this. Let me go, I tell you! O-oh!"

He gasped as the Buccaneer dexterously twisted his wrist and took the gun from his hand. Then, holding Smiler Fane's arm, the Buccaneer said gently: "What's the racket, Smiler? Something's got you down, and—"

He paused, for Smiler Fane's face had suddenly gone as white as paper, the beads of perspiration glistened on his forehead. His eyes were blazing in the pallor of his face, and following the direction of his gaze, the Buccaneer saw that a big, shiny black limousine had drawn up outside the entrance of the Café Dure, and a man was stepping from it.

In the brilliant light from the doorway of the restaurant, the Buccaneer saw clearly the man's face. He was short and thick-set, with heavy, pendulous jowls, and tufted, shaggy eyebrows, from which bright eyes gleamed with an aggressive, penetrating stare. The man had all the appearance of a highly successful business man, and it was

INSPECTOR BUGLE, THE BUCCANEER'S GREATEST ENEMY, HELPS HIM CRACK A VALUABLE CRIB . . . BUT BUGLE DOESN'T KNOW IT!

obvious from the reception which the uniformed porters gave him that he was a known and valued customer at the café.

"That's him," Smiler Fane muttered, staring in a kind of dazed fascination as the man entered the restaurant. "Courtney Wright, well-known art-collector and connoisseur. Huh!" There was a sound of savage contempt in Smiler Fane's voice, and bitter hatred tautened it. "If you hadn't happened along just now, Mr. Buchan, Courtney Wright would have been a dead man, and a darn good riddance to him, too! I was going to kill him!"

"Sonny," said the Buccaneer mildly, "shooting's a lot too good and rapid for some men, and, judging from the way you hate this bird Courtney Wright, it seems to me there's something to be told. Give me the dirt—in other words, what's on your mind?"

"He's the biggest fence in the city, he is," Smiler Fane muttered slowly. "At one time, when I was a crook, I used to fence my stuff with him. Always liked me, he did, because I never got into any trouble—too good a safe-breaker for that. The police never copped me, as you know. Wright lost sight of me when you helped me go straight, Mr. Buchan."

He shook his head, his lips tightening; and, grasping him by the arm, the Buccaneer walked him along the pavement away from the Café Dure.

"A couple of months ago, Courtney Wright found me!" Smiler Fane went on bitterly. "I was happy enough. I'd set up a window-cleaning business with the money you'd given me, Buccaneer. And he started me off in crime again—against my will, I swear that! He's got records of every safe I ever cracked, and evidence of the proceeds of the robberies. He told me that unless I did exactly as he said, he'd put the information in the hands of the police."

"Why didn't you tell him to go ahead?" the Buccaneer said bluntly. "The police are on the side of a reformed crook—if they really do believe he has reformed."

"Because I got married. I got a small boy. I couldn't take the risk, Mr. Buchan. Suppose I was sent to prison for what happened in the past? What'd happen to the wife and young Tommy. Anyway, to-night finished it. Courtney Wright told me that Lady Churley is giving a reception. She's going to wear the famous Tagona rubies—and I've got to pinch them off her after the reception, and hand 'em over to Courtney Wright—or else he's going to spill everything to the police. I couldn't go through with it. It's a big reception—there'll be police there, guarding the jewels—and especially the Tagona rubies. I got sick of it all, suddenly. A rat like that wants poisoning!"

"So it seems," the Buccaneer agreed thoughtfully. "But not with lead, Smiler. A bullet's a messy business—and goes bang-bang! Makes a nasty noise. Lady Churley—"

"Lady Churley!" he murmured, turning the name over in his mind; and then suddenly a broad and delighted grin illuminated his features.

"Lady Churley!" he exclaimed, with vast satisfaction. "Oh, that old dame! Oh, she needs a lesson, Smiler, old boy, old boy! You know she made a fortune out of grinding the poor. She's the biggest snob in Society. Anyway, Smiler—don't give it another thought. Not another worry, Smiler!"

"But—but, it's Courtney Wright!"

"Courtney Wright shall be disposed of in just the way that a rat like that should be disposed of," the Buccaneer agreed solemnly. "And also Lady Churley shall be disposed of. And, likewise, Lady Churley's beeyutiful rubies shall be disposed of. Smiler!"

"Sir?"

"Turn on the old smile again," the Buccaneer exhorted him cheerfully. "Let's have a look at that beaming grin which brought you your name—for all is well."

Smiler looked at the Buccaneer, and as he looked into those fearless, audacious blue eyes, a load of worry and responsibility seemed to roll from his shoulders. His head went back, the taut, resolved look went from his face—and slowly he smiled.

LADY CHURLEY'S butler blinked at the tall, distinguished-looking man who stood in the large hall of Lady Churley's town house, then hurried forward. The broad red ribbon across the distinguished gentleman's shirt-front, and the glittering row of orders across his breast seemed to indicate that he was a person of considerable importance. His face was lean and aquiline, and very dark, and a black, waxed moustache and short, black, pointed beard added to his foreign appearance. Yet, in actual fact, he was the Buccaneer.

"I am for Ladee Churley's reception," the Buccaneer said, in a strong foreign accent.

The butler looked at the card, and saw the name engraved beneath an elaborate coronet: "Prince Rubitoff."

"Your—your Highness," the butler stammered, "I—I have not seen the name in the list of those invited—"

"What is this—what is that?" thundered the Buccaneer. "You say that I—I—a Rubitoff—am not on the list of those invited? Then why have I wasted my time coming here? Why did my first, second, and third secretaries tell me that I was supposed to come to this reception? I do not wish to come. I come here merely from courtesy—and when I come, I am insult!"

The Buccaneer spread his hands out wide, and glared ferociously at the butler. The butler gulped, looked helplessly towards a footman. The footman discreetly vanished through glass swing doors, beyond which the Buccaneer could see some rather pompous-looking people dancing in a lavishly decorated ball-room.

"It is insult!" said the Buccaneer furiously. "Rather would I haf spent the efening with my beeyutiful Russian wolfhounds, who are so grrraceful, so lofty. I do not weesh to come here—I vant to be alone! I am insult—" He broke off as a stout lady waddled through the swing doors, and the Buccaneer's eyes gleamed as he recognised Lady Churley.

Around her plump throat glowed redly the famous Tagona rubies.

"Oh, prince! Prince Rubitoff!" Twittering like an overfed pigeon, Lady Churley flapped and fluttered about in front of the disguised Buccaneer. "Some mistake must have been made, Prince Rubitoff—do, please, accept my apologies. Had I known so distinguished a person as yourself—"

"Ah, madame!" The Buccaneer clicked his heels together, and bowed over the lady's plump hand; and Lady Churley simpered and rolled her eyes up at him. "It is forgotten!" the Buccaneer said largely. "It is mistake, I am sure! Allow me."

With Lady Churley hanging on to his arm, the Buccaneer strode into the ball-room. He had scarcely entered the ball-room when he

appeared to be attacked by a violent fit of coughing, for he suddenly spluttered and choked until he was scarlet in the face. But it was not a cough which bothered the Buccaneer—it was the fact that he had to suppress a wild desire to burst into a howl of laughter.

For almost the first person whom he saw as he entered the ball-room was none other than Detective-Inspector Bugle, of Scotland Yard, his old arch-enemy.

Looking redder in the face and moister than ever in evening dress, Bugle was standing unhappily by a palm, gazing gloomily at the stiff-looking dancers who solemnly revolved around the floor.

"Who is that distinguished-looking person?" the Buccaneer demanded, in a thunderous voice. Bugle started as if he had been shot; and Lady Churley flapped at "Prince Rubitoff."

"Only a common detective," she whispered. "There are six of them here. To guard my jewels, you know—the famous Tagona rubies."

"Ah, so beautiful!" the Buccaneer nodded. "I must meet this man, this brr-rave detectif—so!"

Twittering, Lady Churley introduced Bugle to the "prince," and it was all that the Buccaneer could do to conceal his mirth at poor old Bugle's acute embarrassment. He bobbed ponderously towards the prince, looking rather uncertain as to whether he should bow, curtsey, or salute—and he nearly fell through the floor when the Buccaneer kissed him heartily on both cheeks in true Continental fashion.

"My fran!" the Buccaneer roared jovially. "A man like you I haf always wanted to meet. Come, let us make merry—let us make this reception go off wit' a bang, yes? No?"

"Yes—I mean no," muttered Bugle unhappily.

The orchestra began to warm to its work; the guests began to enjoy themselves, for the arrival of Prince Rubitoff had given glamour to the reception. Even old Bugle lost the moistly unhappy expression that had rested gloomily on his face and began to dance with a rather solemn air of enjoyment.

And it was when the dancing was at its height that the Buccaneer quietly and discreetly slid unobtrusively through the doorway and crossed the hall, then sped quickly down a dimly lit corridor, his keen eyes following the electric-light wiring, almost concealed between the angle of the ceiling and the wall.

Then he came to an abrupt stop outside a cupboard door as he saw that the wiring ran downward and into the cupboard.

"Good-dée!" he murmured approvingly. "Nice and near." With one brief look around to see that he was unobserved, he opened the cupboard door and slid inside. Within the cupboard were the main electric-light switches of the house. Swiftly the Buccaneer reached up with both hands and pushed up every switch in sight; then, without further delay, he sped away from the cupboard and back to the ball-room.

In the ball-room it was pitch dark. The guests were a little uncertain whether to treat the sudden doubling of the lights as a joke or an accident; and Lady Churley's high-pitched voice guided the Buccaneer towards her. As he came within a foot or two of her, his long arms reached out—and delicately he unhooked the famous Tagona rubies from around the lady's plump throat.

"I'll tell the servants to see to the lights at once," Lady Churley was saying. "I can't understand why—" She paused for a moment, then gave voice to a high-pitched yell: "My rubies! They've gone!"

"What's that? What's that?" The Buccaneer grinned as he heard Bugle's voice sound excitedly, and moved towards the inspector in the darkness.

"The rubies gone? Stand still, everyone. Don't let anyone move. Hanson! Rogers! Like a sergeant on parade, Bugle bawled out the names of the detectives who were with him. "Take your places up by the doors. Nobody passes! Horton, get outside and see if the main switches have been tampered with."

Electric torches gleamed in the hands of the detectives, and, puffing importantly, Inspector Bugle stood in the middle of the floor. A few seconds later the ball-room was flooded with light again as Horton found the switches that the Buccaneer had switched off, and snapped them back again.

People blinked at one another. Lady Churley, now as red and as angry as a turkey-cock, faced Inspector Bugle furiously.

"Well, do something!" she screeched. "Stand there like a tailor's dummy! My luvverly rubies—worth twenty-five thousand pounds they are!"

Furiously she faced her guests, her angry eyes roving over them all suspiciously, finally resting on the Buccaneer as he leaned against the wall.



Inspector Bugle got the shock of his life when he entered Courtney Wright's apartment, for there was the "fence" bound to a chair, and festooned about him were the proceeds of a dozen robberies!

"One of you must have them!" Lady Churley snorted again; and then Inspector Bugle took a hand.

"All right, all right, your ladyship!" he said heavily. "We'll find 'em all right. Nobody has left this room. All the guests are here. We'll search 'em. I'm here, your ladyship, so we'll find them rubies all right, don't you worry."

But as the guests were searched one by one and still no sign of the rubies was forthcoming, a more and more worried expression came over Bugle's moist, red face. At last it came to the Buccaneer's turn to be searched.

"I am insolent!" boomed the Buccaneer, in his guise of Prince Rubitoff. "Again I am insolent! First I come here, I am not recognised. The lights go out—and then you wish to search me. No, no; I will not be searched!"

His hands were driven firmly in his pockets, and he glowered furiously into the face of Inspector Bugle. And a somewhat happier light came into Bugle's face, while suspicion gleamed in his eyes.

"Oh!" he grunted. "So you don't want to be searched, your highness?"

"You weesh me to be searched, madame?" the Buccaneer demanded of Lady Churley.

For an instant the lady hesitated. She was a snob, and it was the first time in her life that a prince—as she firmly believed the Buccaneer to be—had ever visited her house. But, even so, the visit of a prince was scarcely worth a twenty-five-thousand-pound ruby necklace.

"Certainly!" she snapped. "Otherwise, Prince Rubitoff, I shall ask the inspector to take you to Scotland Yard."

"Very well!" breathed the outraged prince indignantly. "I will submit to this shameful indignity. But I would rather have been with my beeyutiful Russian wolfhounds this evening!"

He stepped forward from where he had been leaning against the wall and extended his arms. Briskly, with a look of keen anticipation on his red face, Bugle began to search him, and where searching was concerned, Bugle was a pastmaster. Every pocket, every stitch of the Buccaneer's evening clothes was gone through meticulously, and as the search proceeded, Inspector Bugle's face grew gloomier and gloomier.

"No," he grunted at last. "He hasn't got them—"

"Then where are they?" screeched Lady Churley. "Nobody has been out of this room since the rubies were taken from my neck—"

"You 'ave feenished?" the Buccaneer interrupted coldly, glaring at Bugle; and with a heavy sigh Bugle admitted that he had.

The Buccaneer drifted towards the door, with Lady Churley walking beside him, still heatedly arguing with Bugle. As if not caring to be too close to the lady whom he considered had insulted him, the Buccaneer moved around until he was walking beside Bugle. And deftly, his right hand flashed out and dipped lightly into Bugle's pocket.

With an ease which the most expert of pick-

pockets would have envied, the Buccaneer swiftly pulled out the famous Tagona ruby necklace, which, under cover of the darkness, he had dropped into Bugle's pocket a second after he had unfastened it from Lady Churley's throat. Now, he dropped it into his own pocket, and as he reached the door, turned to Lady Churley.

"Madame," he said simply, "I t'ank I go 'ome."

He bowed briefly to Lady Churley; then turned to Inspector Bugle.

"You 'ave your duty to do, I suppose," he said severely, "so with you I am not so angry. I bid you au revoir, Inspector Bugle-blast."

He bowed stiffly, turned, and walked swiftly away. Lady Churley looked after him regretfully, and sighed. Inspector Bugle stood and stared gloomily at nothing. Then, suddenly, he started:

"You—you heard?" he squawked. "Joo hear what he just called me when he said good-bye? 'Au revoir,' he says, 'Inspector Bugle-blast! Bugle-blast! Bugle-blast! That's what the Buccaneer always calls me—the Buccaneer!'"

For a moment it looked as if old Bugle were going to have a dozen different fits; and then suddenly he charged into action. With a bellow like an enraged bull he lumbered forward and galloped to the main hall of the house, then rushed frantically down the steps to the street.

(Continued on page 503.)

THE EDITOR OORDIALLY INVITES YOU TO . . .



Address your letters to: The Editor, The PILOT, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

YOUR EDITOR.

Harvey Keen, Sub-Editor.

Prof. Barnacle, Joke Merchant.

Tilly Tappett, The Typist.

Lightning, the office boy, and his dog.

HALLO, chums! Do you like cake—rich, juicy cake, with tons of marzipan and icing on it? I used to when I was a boy—three slices of cake and a tin of sardines! That was something like a meal!

Stanny, though! When I left school I didn't care for cake at all, and I don't care for it now. So when a kind reader sent me a whopping cake with all the extras mentioned above, I felt very grateful; but I didn't want to eat any of it.

If I myself don't like cake, there are plenty who do. I saw Lightning's goggle eyes fixed on it like a couple of rivets; I noticed Tilly casting furtive looks at it, and as for the Barnacle—he didn't seem to notice it at all, which was the most suspicious item of the lot. I kept a close watch on the Barnacle while I was making up my mind what to do with the cake.

Not close enough, though! When I walked into my sanctum on Tuesday, the cake had left without saying "Good-bye!" So I grabbed the B.'s whiskers forthwith.

"Where is it?" I demanded. "My good sir, I haven't the slightest idea! I saw the lad Lightning hanging round your office this morning—"

"I haven't seed the cake anywhere!" cut in Lightning.

"Nor Ay! Ay didn't notice who took it," added Tilly.

"Well, someone's snooped it, and I'm going to get it back," I declared. "Here, Lightning,

look inside your dog's mouth for stray crumbs!"

The hound proved to be innocent, and naturally I could not suspect Keen, my sub. I hit on another idea. I told the door-porter to stop any member of my staff who tried to get out with a parcel. Because the cake was still in the building somewhere, and whoever had snaffled it would either have to smuggle it out, or eat it bit by bit in secret.

At knocking-off time, I stood by the door downstairs and watched them each go home. None of them had a parcel! When they had all gone, I proceeded to root over the office from stem to stern, and pushed away in the wastepaper-basket I found the original wrappings of the cake. But the cake itself was gone!

Next morning, the Barnacle surprised us by remarking that it was his birthday.

"Many happy returns!" sniffed Keen. "I don't think!"

Barnacle merely smiled. During the morning a large parcel arrived by post addressed to him! Inside was a huge cake, rich and juicy, with marzipan and icing on it. And a card—

"A birthday present to Professor Barnacle, with best wishes from an anonymous member of the staff!"

"Anonymous be hanged!" yelled Keen, when he saw this. "The name of the sender is Barnabus Barnacle, or I'll eat my hat!"

"My good Keen, you're surely dreaming!"

answered the old villain. "That isn't my writing."

"The wraitin's disgaysed, of course!" cried Tilly. "Ay do think it's too bad to let him get away with it!"

"Yes! Make him whack it out!" yelled Lightning.

When I heard of this, I knew at once how the cunning old fox had smuggled that parcel out. He had addressed it to himself in a disguised hand, and given it to the postage department to post. Naturally the door-porter hadn't stopped a postal clerk with a trolley-load of parcels.

But I couldn't prove it. The cake might have been sent by anyone at Fleetway House—and there are a few hundred of us all told! I knew jolly well that it was my cake, but it had been altered a bit from what it was at first, and I simply couldn't prove it.

However, I determined to get my own back.

"You shall have it, professor!" I snorted. "And at tea-time we'll watch you eat it. I'll give you a little present to keep it company!"

"Thank you very much, I'm sure!" smiled the old pest.

I called Lightning into my room and told him to go and buy about two hundred cake candles. Then I sent Barnacle out on a visit just before tea, and the staff and I enjoyed ourselves by plastering that cake with candles.

When we had finished, there simply wasn't a speck of room for another candle anywhere. We'd crowded more than 180 on it, and we set them all alight, and watched the wax running over the cake and soaking into it.

When Barnacle returned, the cake was like a jolly old bonfire—blazing merrily with light.

"Wha-at's this?" he gurgled, dropping his jaw deep into his whiskers.

"We've put the candles on your cake in the proper way," I replied. "A hundred and eighty-four of 'em! You're a hundred and eighty-four to-day, aren't you?"

He tried to find words to answer, but he simply couldn't think of 'em. We crowded out, laughing, leaving him really waxy. But however waxy he was, the cake was waxier! Good!

See you next week, chums!

Yours merrily,

The Editor

The EARLY ADVENTURES of LEONARD HENRY



Leonard Henry, Radio's Famous Comedian, who thinks that Lightning deserves a row of medals for his "literary" efforts.



These merry little yarns are written by LIGHTNING, our tame office boy, whose original ideas of spelling and story telling are unique, to say the least. I hadn't the "hart" to alter Lightning's spelling.—Ed.

"FA-A-AG!"

The cry floated down the Fourth passidge. And Leonard Henry's hart sank.

"Bust it! Someone else will have to go!" he muttered.

The jeeenius of St. Nick's was bizzy. He had just put on a wonderful boolit-proof suit, and he had arranged to meet Gideon Gay & Co. down at the skool rifle-range, to try it out with an air-gun. He was already ten minnits late. He simply couldn't be bothered to answer a seenior's call for a fag.

"Fa-a-a-ag!"

"I'll go while the going's good!" mermered Leonard Henry. "I'm jolly anxious to know whether this boolit-proof suit works or not."

There was not much fear of it not working, really. Leonard Henry's inventions always worked, and he hadn't the slitest doubt that this would be as good as its four-runners.

It really was a spiffing invention. Looking at it, you would have said it was just like any other suit. But a close eggsamination would have shown you that it was made of an intrikate mesh of shock-absorbing steel. A rain of boolits directed at it would have merely tickled in the wearer feeling plezantly tickled. Nothing like it had ever been seen before—at St. Nick's or anywhere.

"Fa-a-ag!"

Leonard Henry slipped cawtiously out of his study and bunked along the passidge, hooping to get away before this annoying seenior turned up with a cane.

But our hero was out of luck. Just as he reached the end of the passidge, there was a clatter of footsteps up the stairs, and Blagard and Sinnick, the two worst fellows in the Sixth, came dashing along, waving canes and breathing fire and slawter all over the place.

A bludthirsty howl went up from the preshus pair, as they spotted Leonard Henry.

"Here's one!"

"Let him have it!"

Another instant, and the boolying rotters were lashing out fewriously with their canes.

Thwack! Wistle! Thwack! Wistle! Thwack!

No wack being could have stood up to that deluge of blows. Any other St. Nick's man would have collapsed under it, shrieking for mersy.

But not Leonard Henry! The fewrious blows that were rained on him were absorbed by his steel-mesh suit without the slitest trubble. So at first he smiled and then he grinned, and, in the end, just when the boolies were becoming eggshasted, he started roaring with larfter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blagard and Sinnick staggered back, their eyes almost popping out of their sockits with amazement.

"My hat! We've given him histerricks!" breathed Sinnick.

"Run for it!" hist Blagard.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shreeked the jeeenius of the Fourth.

Blagard and Sinnick hezzitated no longer. The turned tail and fled. Leonard Henry's larfter followed them hawntingly down the stairs.

Wiping the tears of merriment from his eyes, Leonard Henry went downstairs and himself and made his way out of the Skool House and across to the rifle range.

But he was destined not to reach his destination that afternoon, for, on his way there, he overheard something that made him change his plans completely. It was Doctor Wackingham and Mr. Lashwell who were strolling across the quad, having a hart-to-hart talk, and the jeeenius of the Fourth couldn't help hearing them.

"If Blagard and Sinnick are going to the Pig and Wistle this afternoon," Doctor Wackingham was saying, "then, Lashwell, I shall go there myself to catch them napping!"

"But they won't be playing nap, sir," burbled Mr. Lashwell, who was a little dense at times. "The game they've arranged to play is billiards."

"Then they'll 'click' for a still more severe punishment!" said the Head, with a grim chuckle. "You are sure of your information, Lashwell?"

"Oh, rather, sir! I saw them go out of gates myself just now, and a few minnits ago I know for a fakt they were trying to find a fag to keep watch for them."

The masters' voices died away.

Leonard Henry pawsed. His eyes were gleening. It would serve those boolies right, he reflekted, if he did nothing and just let them fall into the Head's klutches. But his code of skoolboy honner was too high for that. The Head had declared his intention of butting-in on the seeniors' billiards. That was Leonard Henry's cue to give Blagard and Sinnick a break.

"I'll go to the Pig and Wistle myself and tip 'em the wink!" he mermered.

A moment later, he was sprinting down to the gates for all he was worth.

THE Pig and Wistle at Slocombe was one of the shadiest hawnts it was possibul to imagine. The worst carrickers in the county could be found inside its grimy walls—vishus, unscrew-

pulous raskals whose lives were one giddy round of snooker and ha'penny nap.

Nothing would have induced a helthy yung fellow like Leonard Henry to enter such a dingy den in the ordinary way. He would have scorned to do it. But, to save Blagard and Sinnick from the viles of the Head's wrath, he sank his principuls on this occasion. He found Blagard and Sinnick playing billiards in an atmosphere you could have cut with a knife.

"Spare a minnit, you chaps?" called out the jeeenius of the Fourth.

The cads of the Sixth dropped their cues and turned round in alarm. They stared at Leonard Henry as though he had been a ghost.

"You?" yelled Blagard.

"Why not?" grinned Leonard Henry. "I've come to give you chaps a tip. Here it is: Buzz off—quick! The Head's going to visit the Pig and Wistle this afternoon. Someone told him you were down here playing the giddy goat!"

The two seeniors looked frightfully sheepish.

"You can't pull the wool over our eyes," said Sinnick, with a nervuss glance out of the winder. "You're kidding!"

"Am I? Well, you stay here and see what happens!" grinned Leonard Henry. "I'm off!"

"Half-a-minnit! I want to here more about this first!" growled Blagard. "Tell us all you know!"

He grabbed Leonard Henry by the scruff of the neck and started shaking him till his teeth rattled.

The Fourth Former struggled feercely—broke away—made a dash for the door.

The next moment the worst thing that could have happened did happen.

The door opened and someone rushed in, just as Henry rushed out—and that "someone" happened to be the Head himself!

Biff! Thud! Wallop! Bump!

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Doctor Wackingham hit the lino with a bump that made the billiard-balls bownce. He gave vent to his feelings in a feendish howl of pane.

Leonard Henry crashed, too; but his boolit-proof suit was so good at absorbing shocks that he hardly notissed it.

He picked himself up and started helping the Head to rise.

Meanwhile, the two seeniors at the rear had recovered from their first shock, and Blagard had a sudden brain-wave.

"We won't let on that the young welp came to warn us," he wispered to Sinnick. "Let's say he was the one who came here to play billiards and we only came to nab him."

"Ha, ha! Jolly good wheeze!"

Then he jumped forward with his preshus pal to help the Head up again.

Doctor Wackingham was in one of his worst moods. His cheeks and chins were wobbling with rage, and his face was the culler of a ripe tomato. A grate noddid vane stood out from his forehead.

"So I have run you to earth, eh?" he roared, when he had recovered his breath. "How dare you drag the name of St. Nick's into the mire by playing billiards in the Pig and Wissle?"

"It's all right, sir," answered Blagard, with a wink at Sinnick. "I can eggsplain everything!"

"Impossibil!" hooted the Head. "Don't be such an awful lyre, Blagard, or I'll have you drummed out of the skool. You deliberately came and visited this viol inn."

"And I'm quite ready to face the mewsick, sir," said Blagard, smoothly. "The fakt is, we came here to get yung Henry. We knew he was going on the ran-dan and we came here to snatch him like a brand from the burning."

Leonard Henry fired up at that.

"He's fibbing, sir! Don't beleeve him! I wouldn't droom of coming into this low-down tavern. I'd skorn to do such a thing!"

"I suppose you came here to-day because you mistook the Pig and Wissle for the villidge tuckshop, eh?" cried Doctor Wackingham, with crushing sarkasm. "That's not good enuff for me, Henry! I want to know your real reason for entering this sink of iniquity. Answer—or take the conseqwences!"

Leonard Henry's lips closed tight. His simple code of skoolboy honner prevented him giving the two seniors away. Blagard and Sinnick could see that and they winked at each other.

"He duzzent say a word, sir!" grinned Sinnick. "I don't wonder at it, either. I'd keep mum myself, if I had such a weight as he has on his conshance!"

"So you won't talk, huh?" growled Doctor Wackingham, glaring fiercely at the plucky yung Fourth Former. "But if you won't talk, you inslernt yung raskal, I fancy I can make you howl when we get back to St. Nick's! Blagard and Sinnick, I accept your eggsplanation. You leave this inn without a stain on your carrickters!"

"Oh, thank you, sir!" leered the cads of the Sixth.

"As for you, Henry, I am serprized, as well as disgusted, with you. I always thought you had a hart of gold. But I am now konvinced of your gilt. I am equally konvinced that Blagard and Sinnick are as true as steel."

Leonard Henry had to exercise an iron control to prevent himself blurting out the truth. But he mannidged to do it somehow, for he felt he was on his metal now.

"All sreen, sir!" he said, with a hawty toss of his head. "I'm ready when you are."

"Back to St. Nick's, then, for the wacking

of your life!" cried the Head, pointing to the door. "Blagard and Sinnick! I make you responsibel for bringing this yung rascal safely to the skool. Take the short cut across the fields. I am returning by road on my skooter!"

"Yes, sir! Certainly, sir!" grinned the cads of the Sixth.

"HA, ha, ha!"

Leonard Henry and his captors had left the Pig and Wissle far behind and were half-way across the fields leading back to St. Nick's. And still Blagard and Sinnick hadn't stopped larfing!

You mite think the cads of the Sixth would have felt some slite compashun for the inner-sent viktin of their own evil-doing. They felt nothing of the kind. On the contrary, they seemed highly amewsed over the whole bizziness.

"It's the funniest thing that's happened this term!" gergled Blagard. "To think of this yung welp trying to save us from the Head—and he's the one who gets nobbled. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Leonard Henry's lip curled.

"You beestly rotters!" he cried. "Anyway, whatever punishment the Head inflikts, I can tell you he won't cow me!"

A bull-like roar put a stop to any further talk.

Leonard Henry and the two seniors turned round in startled serprize.

The next thing that happened was a howl of sheer terror from Blagard and Sinnick.

"Help! Mad bull! Yaroooo!"

"Reskew! He's charging us! Yooooop!"

The cads of the Sixth were terror-struck, and you couldn't wonder at it, either. Charging down on them at a fewrious gallop was the biggest and feercest-looking bull they had ever seen in their lives!

The beest's horns were lowered, and it was farly puffing out fire and slawter from its nostrils. Blagard and Sinnick almost feinted with fear, as it came thundering along towards them.

Pulling themselves together with a mitey effort, they turned and started racing madly away. Leonard Henry wisely stuck his ground, and then dodged on one side just before the bull reached him, and the grate brute ignored him and galloped on after the terrified Sixth Formers.

Fast as Blagard and Sinnick ran, the bull was running faster.

It seemed only a matter of seconds before they would be caught up and gored to deth.

But in those few seconds, Leonard Henry acted.

Whipping out his red handkerchief, he raced after the bull and started waving it about to draw it off. The beest caught a glimpse of

the culler it hated out of the corner of its bludshot eye. It slackened speed—and then, to the ineggspressible releef of Blagard and Sinnick, it suddenly turned away from them and bore down on Leonard Henry!

"Saved!" gasped Blagard. "Let's get on the other side of the hedge, Sinnick!"

The two seniors scrambled through the hedge. The thought of Leonard Henry, left to face the mad bull alone, made not a scrap of difference to the cads of the Sixth! They got through the hedge in record time, and only when they were safely on the other side did they trubble to look back to see how the yungster was faring.

They were just in time to see a most eggs-traordinary site. The bull, with horns lowered nearly to the ground, crashed into Leonard Henry and lifted him high into the air. But the jeenius of the Fourth, instead of yelling with pane and fear, meerly larfed cheerfully!

"Ha, ha, ha! Stop your tickling, Jock!" he chortled.

Blagard and Sinnick rubber their eyes. They could hardly beleeve what they saw! Time after time, the grate beest tossed the Fourth Former. But the only effect was to make Leonard Henry larf more and more. Natcherally, Blagard and Sinnick didn't droom that the yungster was wearing a boolit-proof suit, and it seemed a mirracle to them.

At last even the bull seemed to be getting eggshasted.

Leonard Henry spotted an opening and made a dash across the field.

Half a minnit later, he was through the hedge and brethlessly receiving the congratulations of Blagard and Sinnick.

Even Blagard and Sinnick had their limit, and they semed to have reached it now. They gazed at Leonard Henry with amazement and admiration.

"Henry," muttered Blagard, "you're a hero."

"Tutt-tutt! It was a meer nothing!" grinned the jeenius of the Fourth.

"You saved our lives," mermered Sinnick. "We're going to even things up again now. We'll konfess everything to the Head. Won't we, Blagard?"

"We will!" said Blagard fervently.

And they kept their promiss. Leonard Henry could hardly believe they were serious, but they were! When they got back to St. Nick's, they marched straight up to the Head's study and pored out the whole story.

Doctor Wackingham lissened with grate serprize. When they had finished, his face was very stern.

"Henry," he said, "I fear that I have done you a grate injustiss, my boy."

"Oh, that's all right, sir!" said Leonard Henry cheerfully. "We all know what a silly old chump you are."

"Ahem! As to you, Blagard and Sinnick," said the Head, "no words can eggspress what I feel about you. You are a cupple of black-harted villans."

"Oh, sir!"

"But I am going to do my best to reform you," went on the Head sternly. "I am going to punish you in such a way that you will remember this day for the rest of your lives!"

"I am not going to eggspel you. I am not going to flog you. I am not going to put you on a bread-and-water diet. I am going to do something far worse than this—"

"Take fifty lines!"

Blagard and Sinnick staggered out of the Head's study, shamed and yewmiliated.

But when they thought it over, they couldn't help feeling that, taking it all round, they had got off pretty lightly!

THE END.

(In next week's "PILOT," Lightning tells you how Leonard Henry set the venerable Head of St. Nick's laughing so much, that the poor old chap couldn't stop. You'll have a job to stop laughing, too, when you read this latest "masterpeece" from the pen of our tame office boy. It gets "full marks" from me, whilst Leonard Henry votes it the funniest yarn of the series. Don't forget . . . next Friday.)



Having ordered the two seniors to take young Leonard Henry back to school, the Head made ready to depart on his skooter.

Ten-Goal Trent's Bodyguard!

THE ONLY THING THAT TRUNKY BLATZ WAS AFRAID OF WAS HIS REFLECTION IN A MIRROR. IF YOU HAD A SCHNOZZLE LIKE TRUNKY'S, YOU WOULDN'T WONDER WHY!



Little did either Trunky or Terry dream that they were walking into a trap. Yet the moment they stooped over that still figure in the road, armed gangsters appeared from behind cover of the hedge. "Stick 'em up!" came Bugs Ciretti's grating voice.

"GET an earful of this, Big Shot! I'm giving you twenty-four hours in which to bump off Ten-Goal Trent and Trunky Blatz! Twenty-four hours! This is your last chance, Ciretti! Fall down on this job and you're fired; you and your bunch of lead-slinging plug-uglies!"

The speaker was a tall, lean young man with hatchet features and tiny black eyes, sharp as gimlets. Dressed in clothing of a very decided American cut, he spoke with a New York accent and chewed gum.

"Aw, give a guy a break, Jakey!" drawled Bugs Ciretti in reply. "Ten-Goal Trent would ha' been rubbed out months ago if it hadn't been for Trunky Blatz, his No. 1 Bodyguard! The big ape sticks to the kid night and day, like he was a boil on the neck, or somethin'! It takes a smart guy to get past Trunky!"

"I should have thought of that when I hired you!" said Jake Flange, with a sour smile. "I've paid you and your hoodlums a hatful of dollars to put tombstones over Blatz and Trent, but you don't get another cent unless those two lugs are bumped off within twenty-four hours! The killing means over five million dollars to me—"

"To us, Jakey, to us!" put in Bugs Ciretti, his face creased into an oily grin. "You ain't the sort to forget an old pal when you come into all that dough!"

There was a reddish glint in the gimlet eyes of Jake Flange as he sat forward in his chair and stabbed a long, bony finger at the boss gangster. At that moment he looked like a striking snake.

"Listen, you rat!" he grated. "I know enough to send you to the hot squat, so don't kid yourself you'll put on a blackmail act when I come into Mortimer Q.'s millions. I'll see you fry in Sing Sing before I'll part with a dollar!"

"No hard feelings, Jakey, no hard feelings," drawled Bugs, with a crawling side glance at the Maggot, the third member of the trio, a rat-faced little man with a newspaper parcel cradled in the crook of his arm. The wrapper concealed a miniature stutter-gun, a deadly little weapon capable of firing a hundred and fifty slugs a minute. "Talking about the hot squat, Jakey," the boss gangster went on, grinning evilly, "it's going to look kinda screwy when Mortimer Q. and his heir get themselves rubbed out within a day or so of each other!"

"I should worry about that!" said the younger man, with an easy laugh. "I'm in Leedspool, England, ain't I? Can the American cops pin anything on me just because my brother gets bumped off in Chicago? Be your age, Ciretti! As to Ten-Goal Trent and Trunky Blatz, I shall be in London when you and your gunmen take care of them!"

"You're a smart guy, Jakey," drawled the boss gangster, with another side glance at the Maggot. "I'll say you think of everything!"

"I'll say I do," agreed the other, "I'm sitting pretty, I guess!"

Bugs Ciretti nodded, a sinister expression in his dark, beady eyes.

"You'd be surprised!" he drawled. "I'll see that Terry Trent and Trunky 'get theirs' inside twenty-four hours!"

Ten-Goal Trent, Leedspool Rovers' famous young centre-forward, was heir to the Flange millions. The news that the Chicago Canning King had willed his fortune to the footballer caused something of a sensation throughout the States, the most surprised person in all America being Jake Flange, the millionaire's crooked young brother.

Feeling that he had a grudge against Terry, Jake had hired the notorious Bugs Ciretti mob to take care of the Britisher, and from that moment Terry was on the spot.

Mortimer Q. Flange, on his part, had engaged Trunky Blatz to act as bodyguard to his heir, for what Trunky didn't know about the business wasn't knowledge. Trunky's assistants were Snakebite Smith and Chi Valetti, a brace of Chicago toughs.

Many were the attempts which had been made upon Terry's life since the beginning of the football season, and it was wholly due to Trunky's lynx-eyed vigilance that the youngster was still alive and kicking.

At the time when Jake Flange was giving his orders to Bugs Ciretti, Terry and his No. 1 Bodyguard were baking chestnuts in their private sitting-room at the Regal Hotel.

"Y'know, kid," the big fellow was saying, "I gotta hunch that something's liable to bust loose any moment now! For one thing, my ears are burning—"

"Don't let that worry you, old man!" laughed Terry, his twinkling eyes upon Trunky's enormous nose. "If your nose was burning, it would set the hotel on fire!"

"Nix on the wisecracks, kid!" drawled the big fellow. "All the smart guys in history have been gents with plenty schnozzle! Take that Russian musician Ivan Orstulkorff! Had that baby got a swell smell? Oh, boy! And could he do his stuff? Say, get a spoonful o' this!"

Drawing himself up to his full height, the bodyguard slapped his bulging chest and lifted a hamlike hand for silence.

"Poem!" he announced gravely.

"Could that guy play? I'll say he could! Sweet melodies—never harsh! The piano, monseer, he played by ear; And fiddled with his moustache!"

"Yeah, Ivan was a smart guy all right," Trunky went on, as Terry sat back in his armchair and roared with laughter. "As I was saying when you made that crack about my nose, I gotta hunch something sticky's liable to bust loose any time now, which means that Bugs Ciretti and his hoodlums aim to do us dirt!"

"Don't look so scared, old man!" "Me scared!" shouted Trunky, with a short, scoffing laugh. "It takes more than a dago mud-turtle to throw a scare into the Tough Guy! And I'm feeling plenty tough right now! All the same, I guess we'll go to Roughton by road, taking the loop route! We'll be in plenty of time for the match. It's just a precautionary measure—"

"What, another?" groaned Terry, with a bitter laugh. "My life's just one darned precautionary measure after another! You have my food tasted; I've got steel-mesh underwear; I'm not allowed to stir out without an armed guard; and now I can't travel by motor-coach with the other fellows! I'm getting fed-up with having a nursemaid fussing about me all the time!"

"Say," growled Trunky, pushing his chin out, "am I Bodyguard No. 1, or ain't I Bodyguard No. 1? Mortimer Q. Flange pays me good dollars to keep you in circulation, so you're going to do as I say?"

"But—"

"Go climb your thumb!" ordered Trunky, scowling. "We're going to Roughton in the armoured-car, so that's all there is to it, I guess! Another squeak, you lug, and I'll lambast the daylight's outa you! We gotta pull a fast one, and Bugs'll be chewing his chin when he finds we ain't travelling with the team! Stand on the Tough Guy, kid!"

The new arterial road that runs north from Leedspool takes the bulk of traffic from the seaport town to Roughton, Wantley and Coggersfield. The old loop route is seldom used, except by picnic parties in summer; in winter it has no attraction for the motorist who wants to get from town to town in the shortest possible time.

Five miles outside Leedspool, Terry and Trunky Blatz seemed to have the bleak countryside to themselves; a limitless stretch of desolate moorland, with the snow-capped heights of Penton Range in the misty distance.

Their armour-plated, bullet-proof car was doing a comfortable seventy, a speed which would land them at Roughton in something under the hour—bar accidents. The speed was safe enough as the road, for most part, was

straight. There was one sharp bend at Granite Copse, an oasis of withered scrub and gaunt-looking trees that tops the rise, a landmark for miles round.

Rushing the incline, the heavy car topped the crest and turned sharp right; and in that moment a startled cry came from Trunky Blatz.

"Looks like we're just in time, kid!" he shouted, pointing down the hill. "Maybe we can do something for the guy; maybe not!"

The "guy" in question was lying in a lifeless heap in the middle of the road. Topped on its nose in a deep ditch was a saloon car which seemed to have gone into a skid and smashed its windscreen. A door of the car was wide open; two wheels badly buckled.

"Looks like a stiff to me!" said Trunky, his gaze upon an ominous red stain in the roadway. Bringing his car to a standstill, he was about to leap out when he turned his shrewd little eyes to Terry Trent, sudden suspicion in their depths. "Mind it ain't a trap, kid!" he rapped out, streaking for the gun in his shoulder-holster. "Maybe Bugs Ciretti—"

"Don't talk through your hat!" scoffed Terry, staring fixedly at the red stain. "The car's empty, and this poor chap looks in a bad way! Come on!"

"O.K., kid!" muttered the big fellow; but he was still gripping his .45 as he slipped from the driving seat and made for the huddled figure beside the wrecked car.

Dropping to his knees, he took the lifeless form by the shoulder and gently turned it on to its back; and then he yanked the figure upright in wide-eyed amazement, for looking back at him was the waxen face of a life-size dummy!

"Stick 'em up, Tough Guy!" The familiar voice of Bugs Ciretti brought Trunky whirling round. Then his jaw dropped, for rising into view from behind cover of the hedge was the boss gangster and three of his killers, all heavily armed.

"Can you beat that!" gasped Trunky. "Looks like we walked into a trap!"

"DROPP that gat, Tough Guy!" snarled Bugs Ciretti. "Up with 'em, Trent! Try anything—"

"Aw, lemme burn 'em down, boss!" begged the thin whine of the Maggot. "I sure crave to blow 'em apart!"

Trunky Blatz was as tough as they make 'em, but he was taking no chances with the boss gangster and his No. 1 Killer. To make one suspicious move meant getting a blast of hot lead from the Maggot's stutter-gun. Not only that, Trunky and Terry had their backs to the enemy, Bugs and his killers being entrenched behind a hedge on the far side of the road.

"Elevate y'r fins, kid!" drawled Trunky, dropping his .45 to the roadway. "I guess these dirty mud-turtles have got the bulge on us all right!"

"I'll say we have, y' big ape!" grinned Bugs Ciretti, climbing out of the ditch. "You think you're a smart egg, Tough Guy, but you're just a dumb-cluck!" The Big Shot chuckled wheezily and dug the muzzle of his gun into the bodyguard's ribs. "I guessed you'd try to pull a fast one, but Bugs Ciretti's a heap faster than you! Planting the dummy was a swell idea, but I'll bet it was the red paint that did the trick! Ten-Goal Trent fell for that, bless his kind heart!"

"And what if I did, you great hog?" cried Terry, colouring. "Only a greaseball like you would play such a trick—"

"Aw, lemme burn 'em down, boss!" begged the Maggot. "That stale fish can't hand you that line o' dope! Lemme blow 'em apart—"

"Pipe down!" snarled Bugs, with a fierce oath. "I'm dealing with this in my own way! I feel kinda sorry for you two mugs," he went on, showing gold teeth in a wolfish grin. "It sure breaks my heart to have to rub you out! You've asked for it, y'r big ape, and you're going to get it! And that goes for Ten-Goal Trent an' all! Jakey Flange will clean up that five millions, and everything'll be swell! Jakey's throwing a grand celebration party to-night—"

"So Jakey's in this country?" drawled Trunky, his eyes narrowing to slits.

"Sure thing," grinned Bugs Ciretti. "He craved action, and gave me twenty-four hours to erase you and the kid! To-night we sail

for the States, and we'll drink to you and the kid in champagne!"

"That's real nice of you, lug!" drawled Trunky. "Maybe we'll step along and lap up a drink with you! You're sailing from Leeds-pool, I guess!"

"Sure," grinned the boss gangster; "but you won't be there, you big ape!"

"You don't say!" taunted Trunky, with a reassuring side glance at Terry Trent.

"I do say, you rat!" snarled Bugs in a sudden white-hot fury. "You and Trent'll be cold meat inside three minutes, and that ain't maybe! Hand over the keys of your car, and make it snappy! Try anything, and you get the works!"

There is something very persuasive about a gun when it is jabbed hard against one's stomach, and it was with a slight shrug of his mighty shoulders that Trunky Blatz surrendered two keys to the boss gangster.

"That's swell!" grinned the latter. "Now I'll give you the lay-out, Tough Guy! There's a good twenty feet of water in the old quarry yonder, and that's where you and the kid are going to pass out! I could bump you off and toss you into a ditch, but that ain't my idea of squaring accounts with you! Get into the car! Pronto!"

Prof. Barnacle Offers Prizes!



Would you like a 576-page book of adventure stories? I am giving one away every week to "The PILOT" reader who sends me the best joke of the week. All you have to do is write your joke on a postcard addressed to: Professor Barnacle, "The PILOT," Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

Here is this week's prizewinner:

THE BEST JOKE OF THE WEEK!

Hotel Boy: "What time shall I wake you, sir?"
Dignified Guest: "Er—I will ring when I wish to be awakened."

(This week's prize goes to D. Took, 33, Blagdon Street, Park, Sheffield.)

"O.K., lug!" drawled the big fellow. "Suits me! On our way, kid!"

The gangster's pale, pouchy face was a mask of gloating triumph as he locked the captives into the car and threw the keys into the ditch. The sides of the vehicle were armour-plated, the windows bullet-proof and tough as steel. Trunky and Terry Trent were trapped and helpless, at the mercy of the boss gangster.

Bugs Ciretti was still grinning as he climbed into the driving seat and set off down the slope, the Maggot and his two companions by his side.

"Looks like we're in a swell jam, kid!" drawled Trunky, giving a fierce tug at his outsize nasal organ. "Maybe this Ciretti guy don't like us, or something! But he can't throw a scare into me! No, sir! Stand on the Tough Guy, kid!"

"Betcha life!" drawled Terry, with a twisted kind of grin.

Bugs Ciretti had swung the heavy vehicle off the road by this time, and a glance through the window showed Trunky that they were making for the Devil's Cauldron, a disused quarry with a sinister reputation.

No one ever went over the edge of the Cauldron and lived to tell the tale.

The car was within six yards of the chasm when Bugs slowed down to a crawl and ordered

his killers to jump out; then, having flung a gloating grin over his shoulder, he accelerated and took a flying leap out of the driving seat.

Terry and his bodyguard saw him blow a farewell kiss as the runaway raced towards the edge of the quarry, and a moment later the world seemed to give way beneath them, and they were plunging through space; down, down, down with an ever-increasing speed which reminded Trunky Blatz of a New York elevator.

Next, with startling suddenness, everything was blotted out, and there came a harsh swishing noise as rushing water beat against the windows. After what seemed like an age of nightmare suspense there was a bumping sensation and a gradual slowing down of pace, to be followed by a slow rocking movement as the car came to rest upon the chalky bed of the Cauldron.

"How's tricks, kid?" asked Trunky Blatz, switching on the light. "Jest like a blamed submarine, ain't it?"

"DIDN'T I tell you to stand on the Tough Guy, kid?" demanded Trunky, as Terry still marvelled at their miraculous escape. "This car is bullet-proof, burglar-proof, fireproof, and water-proof, and here we are, lug, sitting snug and pretty!"

"It wouldn't have been so snug and pretty if the bus had landed upside-down!" smiled Terry. "If—"

"Aw, keep those 'ifs' on ice, kid!" growled the burly bodyguard. "Say, get a spoonful o' this!" Clearing his throat with a noise like a foghorn, he thumped his mighty chest and announced: "Poem!"

"If dogs were cats, and cats were bats;
If the heights of bliss was a blister;
If your mamma had wed my pa,
You might have been my sister!"

"Always lay off that if-stuff, kid," Trunky went on, with a solemn shake of his close-cropped head. "If-stuff never got a guy any place!" Frowning thoughtfully, he looked at his wristwatch. "If—" he began.

"Put that one on ice, old man!" grinned Terry.

"Betcha life, kid!" chuckled the bodyguard. "The game against Roughton Villa starts in less'n half an hour, so I guess we'll be on our way! There's a sliding roof to this speed-can, so we go out through the attic! Got me? You stand on the seat, I slide the roof, and you shoot up through the hole; and don't stop going till you get to the top! Then you grab a lungful of air, and climb up the side of the quarry, like you was a mountain goat, or something! Ready?"

"Sure!"

"On your way, kid!"

A moment later a cascade of water poured into the car and sent Terry and Trunky on their way to the surface. It was a trying experience, that upward journey to air and light, and Trunky was grunting like a grampus when, finally, his enormous nose shot clear of the water like a submarine's periscope. Terry appeared a moment later.

Striking out for the side of the quarry, they scrambled up the rough, sloping surface, and swung themselves over the edge to safety. But they did not waste time on a breather. Breathless, soaked to the skin, they struggled to their feet and set off for the roadway, leaving a watery trail.

"Our luck's in, kid!" panted Trunky, pointing to a saloon car that was speeding down the hill from Granite Copse. "This guy either gives us a lift, or gets the daylights lambasted outa him!"

Setting off at a gallop, the big fellow leapt a wide ditch, and stood in the middle of the road, his long arms waving like the sails of a windmill.

The driver of the car, a sporty-looking young man, with a red-and-white rosette in his buttonhole, was obviously a Rovers' supporter on his way to the Roughton Villa ground.

He yelled his delight at meeting the Rovers' two star players, and placed his car at their disposal.

"Waal, can you beat that?" drawled

Trunky, swinging open the door and climbing into the saloon. "Step on it, lug, or we'll be late for the kick-off! An', listen! We look like making a mess of your cushions, so send the bill to me! On your way!"

"O.K., Trunky!" grinned the motorist. "Kick ten goals this afternoon, Terry, and we'll call it square!"

"I'll have a shot, old man!" promised Ten-Goal Trent.

It was an anxious-eyed lot of players who awaited them in the dressing-room at Roughton, but Trunky just grinned.

"It's like this, lugs," he drawled, at length, "believe it or not! Me and the kid thought we'd like a dip, so we dropped into the Devil's Cauldron on the way over!"

The statement was greeted with roars of laughter, and the dressing-room was still echoing with merriment when the ref poked his head round the door and announced that it was time for the players to take the field.

The ground was packed as Terry kicked off to a sudden hush, for the fame of Ten-Goal Trent could fill any enclosure in the country to bursting-point.

Touching the leather to McNalty, Terry snapped up the return pass and went on his way, making good headway before slamming the ball out to Tich Wallen, on the right-wing. And Tich made no mistake, taking the pass on the run and streaking off down the line with a speed of a sprint champion. Tackled by a big-limbed full-back as he neared the corner-flag, the tiny winger made rings round the big fellow before putting in a perfect centre—an effort which sent the enclosure into a state of hoarse-voiced excitement as the leather dipped down into the goal-mouth in a graceful arc.

"Heads, Rovers!"

"Get rid of it, Villa!"

"Shoot!"

"In with it, Ten-Goal!"

Terry, just for once, was waiting on the fringe of the scrum in the goalmouth, and he made no mistake when a mis-timed punch by the Villa custodian dropped the ball almost at his feet. Taking a running kick, he sent the leather teeing into the corner of the net, giving Leedspool Rovers the lead in the first three minutes of the game.

As Terry started, so he went on; it seemed that he could do nothing wrong. Bang on the top of his form, even his most daring experiments "came off," and by half-time he had four goals to his credit.

This was a remarkable performance, even against a mediocre side like Roughton Villa; but something even more remarkable was to follow. In the second half he established a football record by finding the net on ten occasions!

The Leedspool fans were wild-eyed with excitement as they swarmed over the pitch at the end of the match, and Terry himself was excited when at last he staggered back to the dressing-room, breathless, bruised, but happy.

He hadn't been christened Ten-Goal Trent for nothing!

"WAAAL," drawled Bugs Ciretti, talking round a fat cigar, "I guess it's about time we drank to departed pals! I'm going to give a toast to Trunky Blatz, the big ape! And after that we'll drink to Ten-Goal Trent, the brass-faced kid who nearly swiped the Flange millions! That O.K. by you, Jakey?"

"O.K., Bugs!" nodded the lean, hatchet-faced young man, chewing gum.

There were three people in the sumptuous state cabin of the Linmouth Castle, outward bound for New York. The expensive apartment was filled with flowers, the stuffy atmosphere swirling with cigar-smoke. Seated round the table were Bugs Ciretti, Jake Flange, and the Maggot. Ciretti's No. 1 Killer looked somehow strange without a neat newspaper parcel cradled in the crook of his arm.

It was eight o'clock on Saturday evening; the Linmouth Castle was to sail on the nine o'clock tide.

"Fill 'em up, gents!" cried Bugs, his beady eyes crawling with sinister glee. "Let's drink to the two stiffs at the bottom of Devil's Cauldron!"

"And to-morrow night we'll drink to Mortimer Q., the Chicago Canning King!" grinned Jake Flange, still chewing. "I've cabled instructions to a gunman in Chi, so the big brother will be bumped off by morning, stiff as this Ten-Goal palooka who aimed to do me out of my dough! In twelve hours I'll be sole heir to five million bucks! Yeah, I guess we'll drink to Trunky Blatz and Trent!"

Taking a bottle from the ice-bucket beside his chair, he leaned across the table and poured golden, creaming liquid into three cut-glass goblets.

"Here's to the dear departed!" he cried, standing up and giving the cold-blooded toast.

"May their bones rot in Devil's Cauldron—and how!"

"And how!" echoed Bugs Ciretti and the Maggot.

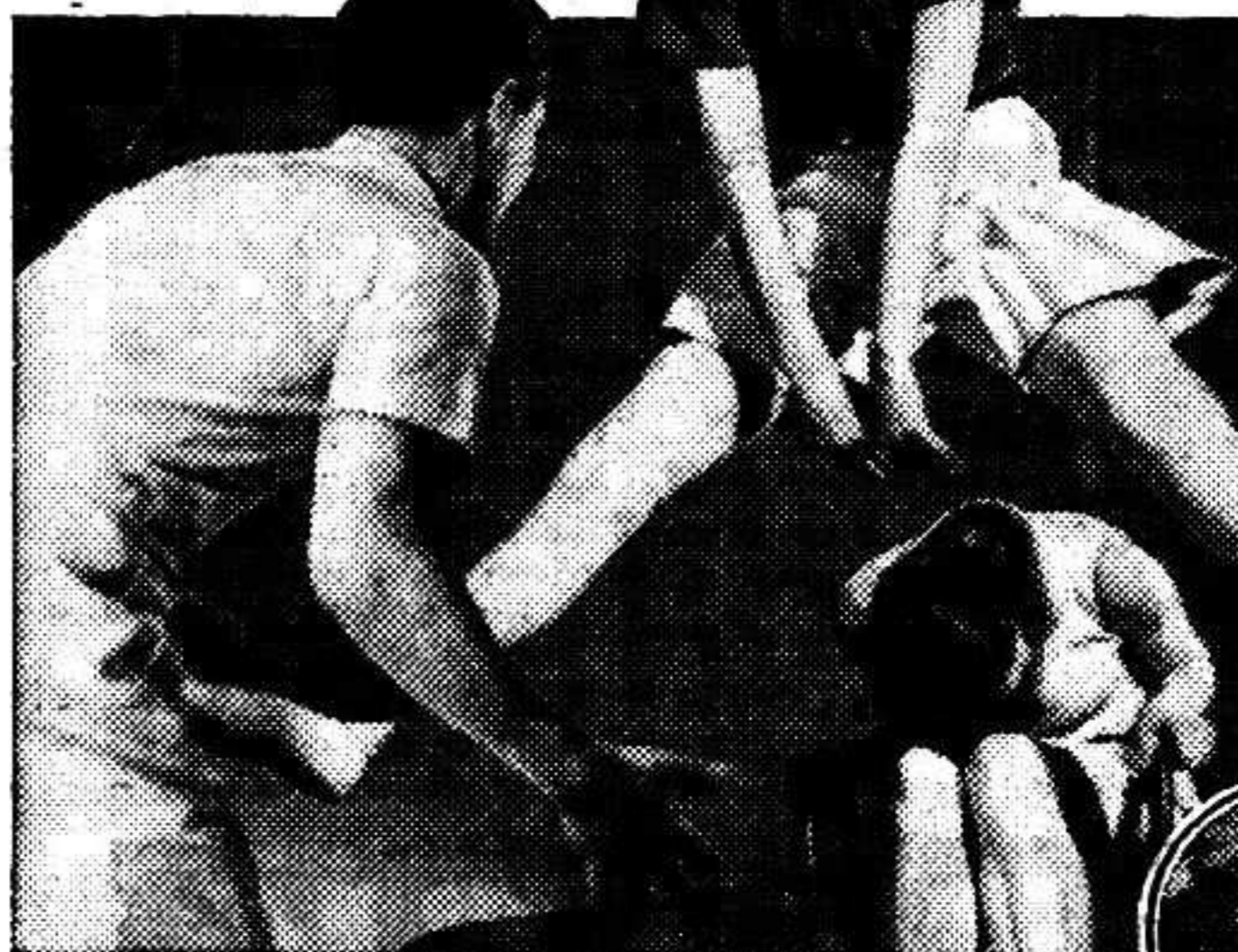
Lifting their arms, the three grinned evilly and clinked brimming glasses, and in that moment there came three sharp reports, and the goblets shattered to splinters.

"What the heck!" snarled Bugs Ciretti, swinging about and glaring towards the far end of the long cabin. "I'll—I'll—"

His throaty voice cracked and trailed off into an awed whisper, and into his black, beady eyes leapt a look of stark terror, for, framed in the doorway, was the giant figure of Trunky Blatz, his queer collection of features set and hard, a smoking gun clamped in bony fingers.

Neither Bugs nor Jake Flange seemed capable of uttering a sound at that moment,

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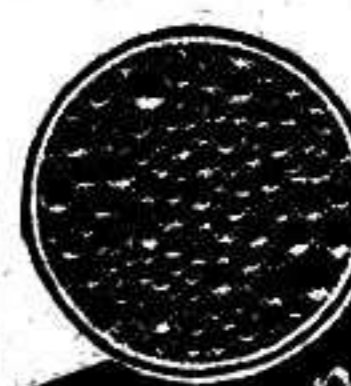
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but a thin squeal, like the squeak of a rat, broke from the Maggot as his knees gave way beneath him, and he fell back into his arm-chair.

"Come right in, gents!" drawled Trunky Blatz, standing aside. "Get an eyeful o' these mud-turtles!"

Into the sumptuous cabin marched a hard-boiled sailorman in captain's uniform, a coal-grimed husky in dirty slacks and a greasy singlet, and, last of all, Ten-Goal Trent.

Bugs Ciretti appeared to be upon the verge of collapse as he stared, goggle-eyed, from Trunky to Terry Trent, from Terry back to the Tough Guy.

"Grab an earful o' this, Ciretti!" grated the burly bodyguard, his fierce gaze boring into the gangster. "You're plenty smart, but you ain't smart enough to put a fast one over on the Tough Guy! Mortimer Q. Flange paid me good dough to keep the kid in circulation, 'cause I'm the world's champion Bodyguard No. 1! That's me, you rat!" he shouted, swinging round upon Jake Flange, gun ready for action. "I'm Trunky Blatz, the Tough Guy, the No. 1 Bodyguard, with cast-iron teeth, and wire on his chest! Get a good eyeful, you skunk 'cause you're liable to get rubbed out any time, now! Maybe I'll blow you apart, same as you aimed to erase the kid! And that goes for you, too, Ciretti, and the yellow-livered polecat in the chair! I'll—"

"Go easy, old sea-horse!" growled the hard-boiled captain of the Linmouth Castle, placing a restraining hand upon Trunky's arm. "I'm taking charge of this scum, and I'll have the lot of 'em wishing they were dead by the time we dock in New York!"

"Say, what's the big idea?" shouted Bugs Ciretti, regaining his nerve, and trying to pull a bluff. "If you're the skipper of this mud-dredger—"

"I'm Captain Rodd," barked the seaman, bunning a leg-o'-mutton fist, and shaking it under the boss gangster's flat nose; "Captain 'Rough-House' Rodd, you swab, known and feared from Leedspool to Labrador as a two-fisted tornado, who hammers the life out of



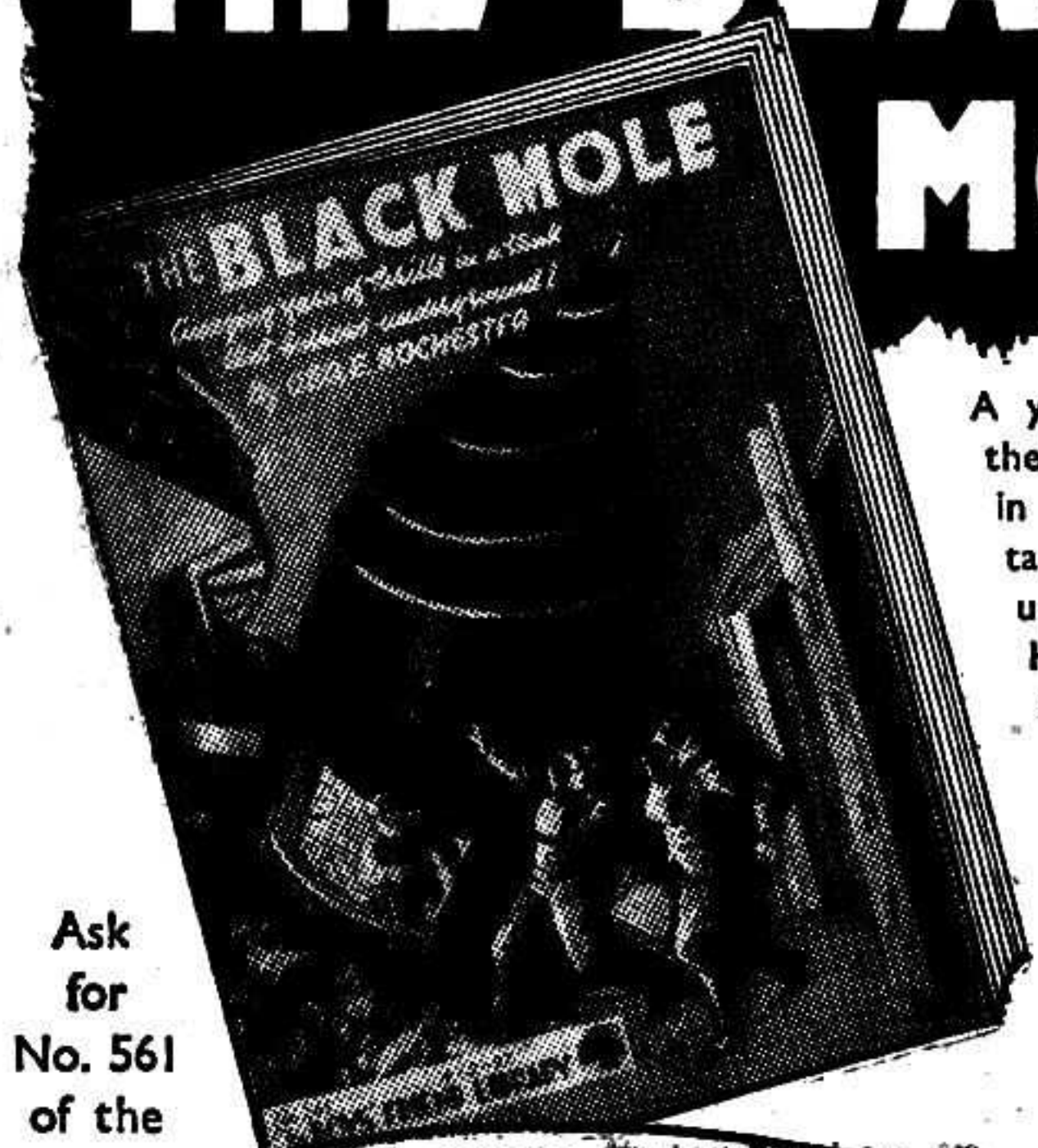
The circus Strong Man helps himself to a light.

filthy scum like you! Give me any more of that talk, and I'll string you up by the toes, and cut lumps out of you with a rope's end! I'm taking you killers back to the States, and when I get there, I'm handing you over to the police!"

"You're—you're what?" almost screamed Bugs Ciretti, his puffy face going a greenish colour. "You can't do that! I tell you it can't be done! I'm getting off this tub right now, and you can't stop me!"

"You're right, Bugs!" shouted Jake Flange. "I'm going with you!"

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"Sure, you're going with him, you dirty mud-turtle!" grinned Trunky Blatz, looking ugly and threatening. "But you ain't leaving this boat! Try to get past me, lug, and you'll think someone's wiped you across the pan with the funnel!"

"I've paid for this state cabin!" shouted Jake Flange, glaring round like a trapped animal. "I'm a first-class passenger! I shall report you to the company, Captain Rodd!"

"So will I!" cried Bugs Ciretti, a fleck of foam upon his thick lips. "I've booked a state cabin—"

"But you won't occupy it, you swab!" barked the old seadog, with a tight-lipped smile that chilled the marrow in the boss gangster's bones. "You'll do the trip in the fo'c'sle, with your brother-stokers, and I can promise you a pretty warm time! You're going to work your passage to the States—"

"You're crazy!" shouted Bugs, almost gibbering with rage and terror. "You're nuts! You can't make me work in the stokehold—"

"Cast-iron' Mulligan will see to that!" grinned Captain Rodd, jerking a thumb at the coal-grimed giant in the greasy singlet. "Mulligan's boss of the stokers, and I'm told he's got a nice gentle way with shirkers! Have you ever been patted on the pants with a hot shovel, you swab?"

"Looks like you're in for a swell time, lug!" drawled Trunky Blatz. But there's plenty worse to come, you rat! You and the Maggot are 'wanted' by the cops in Chicago, and 'wanted' real bad! Yes, sir! A reward of five thousand bucks is offered for the Big Shot in person, and Captain Rodd aims to get acquainted with that nice wad of dough as soon as you hit New York!"

"He can't do it!" shouted Bugs, wild-eyed. "I'm an American citizen—"

"And this ship's American territory, right now!" barked the old seadog. "Not that I'd give a red cent if it wasn't! The three of you are going to get what's coming to you, and that will be a powerful electric shock, I guess! Take 'em below, Mulligan, and set 'em to work! Give him a hand, Tough Guy!"

"Betcha life!" drawled Trunky Blatz. "I sure crave to see these hoodlums do a bit of honest graft!"

"Are you comin' quietly?" growled Cast-Iron Mulligan, bearing down upon Bugs Ciretti with swinging fists.

"I'll see you to blazes first!" shouted the gangster, making for the door. "Outa my way, you ape!"

At the same time he went for the gun in his shoulder holster, but he was not slick enough for Cast-Iron Mulligan. A smash between the eyes knocked his clean over the table.

"On your feet, you fat swab!" ordered Mulligan. "Get down to the stokehold, and grab yourself a shovel!"

Scowling fiercely, he jerked Bugs to his feet, twisted him about, and landed a terrific kick to the pants, which sent the gangster shooting head-first across the cabin.

"You next!" he growled, taking Jake Flange by the scruff of the neck, and throwing him towards the doorway. "Take care of 'em, Tough Guy!"

"O.K., lug!" grinned Trunky. Ten minutes later, clad only in greasy singlets and coal-grimed slacks, Bugs, Flange, and the Maggot were hard at work feeding coal into the gaping jaws of red-hot furnaces, one eye upon the job in hand, the other upon the glowing shovel of Cast-Iron Mulligan.

"Waal, so-long, lugs!" drawled Trunky Blatz. "A wise guy once said that coming events cast their shadows before, so you'll know what's coming to you if Mister Mulligan gives you a hot seat!"

THE END.

It's au revoir to Trunky and Terry, but don't be disappointed, lads, for there's something extra special coming along next week. ALL the world has heard of SEXTON BLAKE, the famous detective; now, secured exclusively for "PILOT" readers, comes the amazing story of his boyhood days. In "SEXTON BLAKE AT SCHOOL" all of you will find the ideal story. STARTS NEXT WEEK! PLEASE TELL YOUR PALS!

THE LAUGHING BUCCANEER!

(Continued from page 496.)

There it was dark and deserted, except for a taxi which, as Inspector Bugle glared, winked its tail-light at him derisively, and disappeared around a distant corner.

"IT'S amazing, sir. If I didn't know I was me, and you were the Buccaneer, I'd say you was me to the life."

The Buccaneer looked at Smiler Fane a little dizzily, then grinned.

"You're getting yourself so tied up, Smiler, you'll be shaking hands with yourself next."

He was standing in Smiler Fane's room, and the ex-cracksmen was looking at him with awe and astonishment, for he had been, for the last twenty minutes, watching the Buccaneer transforming himself into an identical likeness to himself—Smiler Fane.

This was the morning following the Buccaneer's successful robbery of the Tagona rubies. Those rubies now reposed casually in the Buccaneer's jacket pocket.

"What time does Courtney Wright expect you, Smiler?" he asked.

"Nine o'clock this morning, at his house," Smiler answered. "He never lets me see him the same night as he made me crack a crib, so there's no chance of any attention being attracted."

The Buccaneer grinned happily.

"Now there," he said softly, "the lad is entirely wrong, because this morning he's going to attract more attention than he's ever made in his life before."

A little while later, the Buccaneer was standing outside the front door of a flat which stood high in a block, having pushed the bell three times according to the instructions he had received from Smiler Fane.

Five seconds after the third push of the bell, the door swung open, and the Buccaneer found himself looking into the well-fed face of the man whom Smiler Fane had been going to shoot down outside the Café Dure the previous evening.

"Ah, Fane, come in," Wright said. He led the way into a luxuriously furnished study; and with the obedience of a cowed dog, the Buccaneer followed him, then stood uncertainly in the middle of the room.

"You did the job?" Wright asked crisply.

"Yes, Mr. Wright," the Buccaneer answered. Then his voice began to tremble. "But I—but I can't do any more—"

"Where're the rubies?" Wright grated. Obediently, the Buccaneer pulled out the rubies and dropped them into Wright's outstretched hand.

"I can't do any more of these jobs for you—"

"You'll do as you're told!" Wright snarled. He turned contemptuously from the man he thought to be Fane, and walked across to a big safe which stood in a corner of the room. As he swung the door of the safe open, the Buccaneer caught a glimpse of flashing jewels within, and packets of banknotes.

"A nice little lot here, isn't there?" Wright jeered, as he pulled open a drawer of the safe.

"Can't you let me have—give me the evidence that you've got against me—"

"Shut your trap!" Wright snapped viciously. "And don't try any funny tricks with me. There's a list and evidence of all the past robberies you've committed, Fane, safely locked away in a safety deposit vault at my bank. Nobody can get to it but me—and one word from me sends that evidence to the police. So you do as you're told, and like it." Contemptuously he turned his bulky

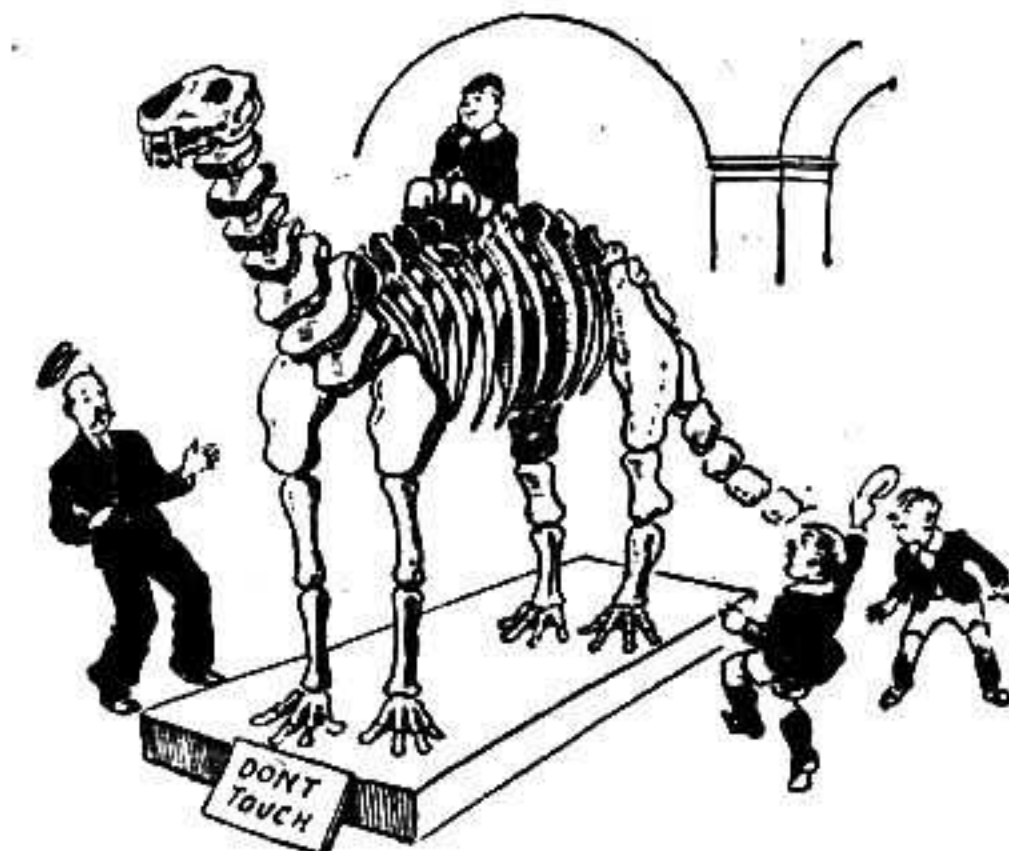
shoulders to the Buccaneer, and dropped the ruby necklace into the drawer. Then, just before he closed the door of the safe, the Buccaneer drawled softly, "You're very sure of yourself, sweetheart, aren't you?"

With a startled oath, Wright swung around from the safe and glared at the Buccaneer suspiciously.

"Who spoke then? It wasn't you, Fane—"
"No, ducky," the Buccaneer answered sweetly, "it was me. And I give you two guesses who it is—ah, ah! Naughty Courtney."

Courtney Wright at that moment had made a dive for his hip-pocket. His heavy face was twisted with fear and fury—but before the gun had been drawn more than half-way from his hip-pocket, the Buccaneer had leapt across the room like a panther. A grip of steel descended on Courtney Wright's gun hand, and with a squeal he dropped the weapon. Next instant a blow that would have felled an ox put Wright into a state of unconsciousness.

Leisurely, the Buccaneer took a coil of thin, tough whipcord from his pocket, and then thoroughly trussed Wright up. Gently he propped the unconscious man in another chair,



"Ride him, cowboy!"

and spent some time studying his features closely. Thereafter he began to work. From the safe he took the Tagona rubies and slung them around Wright's neck. Also he took sundry articles of jewellery which he recognised as being the loot of certain robberies which had taken place within recent months. By the time he had finished, Courtney Wright looked rather like a jewellery store. Earrings glittered in his ears; the Tagona rubies glowed around his neck; a tiara gleamed in his hair. Rings flashed on his fingers, and, finally, as a last artistic touch, the Buccaneer clipped a well-known diamond bracelet which had been stolen from an actress on to the end of Wright's somewhat prominent nose.

Thereafter, the Buccaneer took no further interest in Wright, except to glance occasionally at the unconscious man's features, as he worked at the make-up box which he had taken from his pocket. Swiftly, the features of Smiler Fane disappeared. For a brief time the Buccaneer's own lean, handsome face looked back from the mirror; and then gradually, as he worked deftly with shade and a little grease-paint, he began to assume the heavy features of Courtney Wright.

"What an unpleasant-looking gent I do appear to be," the Buccaneer murmured at last, as he looked at himself in the mirror. Then he turned, frowning with displeasure as a squawk came from the trussed figure in the chair.

"Who—who are you—"

"Tut-tut, I forgot to gag the boy," the Buccaneer murmured, and swiftly tied a handkerchief around Wright's mouth.

Some ten minutes later he was heading for Monroe's Bank. He was dressed in one of Wright's suits, and he carried a brief-case in his hand. In the brief-case were certain bundles of notes which the Buccaneer had taken from Wright's safe.

"Nice day, Mr. Wright," said the bank porter.

"Nice is indeed the word," the Buccaneer answered genially, and drifted into the bank. To the guard at the bank's vaults he showed the pass which he had taken from Wright; and as he stood in front of Wright's safety deposit-box he produced the key—which he had also taken from Wright.

If Courtney Wright had been there to see what the Buccaneer was doing, he would doubtless have died on the spot. The Buccaneer found papers there that dealt with more than Smiler Fane. It was obvious that Wright was a blackmailer of the worst kind—and the Buccaneer spent a very pleasant half-hour, destroying papers which Wright had held for years over the heads of his unfortunate victims.

At length, with a happy sigh, the Buccaneer drifted out of the bank again—having first stuffed another large bundle of banknotes into his brief-case—nodded affably to all and sundry, and climbed back into his taxi.

"The nearest telephone," he said dreamily

Inspector Bugle picked up the telephone receiver and jammed it against his ear.

"Who's there?" he demanded gruffly. "What are we playing? Knock, knock?" a genial voice said cheerfully. "I'll play—Courtney."

"Courtney? Courtney who?" Bugle growled. "Courtney crooks lately—"

"Who the heck is that?" hooted Bugle. "Talking of Courtney—if you go to No. 3 Flat, Haversake Gardens, you'll find the Tagona rubies—"

"What!" Bugle bawled, and leapt to his feet.

Twenty minutes later a police car was outside Courtney Wright's flat, and Bugle was bursting into Wright's study. He saw Wright sitting trussed up in his chair, and decorating him were the Tagona rubies and the proceeds of a dozen other robberies as well.

"You've got some heavy explaining to do, son," was Inspector Bugle's comment, as Courtney was taken down to the police car.

Then he stopped dead, just before they crossed the pavement to the car. Sauntering along the pavement towards them was a tall, immaculately dressed young man.

"What-ho!" said the Buccaneer. "What's going on? A party?"

For a moment Bugle made no answer, but stared with dim suspicion at the tall, elegant figure. Then he spoke, heavily and sadly.

"I know!" he said. "I know! You was at Lady Churley's reception last night. It was you talkin' to me over the telephone just now. Oh, I know, I know! But I can't blinkin' well prove it."

The Buccaneer smiled at him sweetly, and then drifted on. Bugle heard him mutter softly to himself, "Knock, knock. Who's there? Courtney? Courtney who? Courtney crooks lately."

And poor old Bugle blushed to the roots of his hair.

Meet old Bugle and the daredevil Buccaneer again in next week's tip-top issue of The "PILOT." Their adventures with a gang of bullion raiders will thrill you.

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"That reminds me," said the warden, during a lull in the conversation. "Do you remember me telling you a story of Simon Rowe—Simon the Jester as we nicknamed him at my old school—some weeks ago? He was the cleverest japer I've ever known, and I've just recalled the story of one of his best efforts. I'll tell it to you."

Simon's japes were always getting him into trouble with the masters, as you can well imagine (began Warden Strong), and the day when the Head caught him "scrumping" apples in the Head's garden, Simon knew he was "for it"—hot and strong!

"Rowe," the Head told him, when they were together in the 'beak's' study, "for breaking through the hedge into my garden, which you know is out of bounds, I am going to cane you. But there is also the matter of the damage you have done to my fruit-trees. I intend to make you pay for that—not in money, but in work! Come here to the window!

"There—you see where the garden is all wild and overgrown?" the Head went on, pointing to the uncleared ground in question. "I intended hiring a gardener to dig it over for me. Instead, you shall dig it; it will pay for the damage you have done. You are 'gated' for every half-holiday from now on, and you shall spend your time digging up that ground. Now—bend over!"

Poor old Simon left the Head's study sore in mind and body. He had received six "stingers," but the prospect ahead troubled him even more than the caning. It would take him at least six half-holidays, he guessed, to dig over the big patch of rough ground in the Head's garden, and it would be back-breaking, monotonous work the whole time.

When he started on the job, it was even worse than he had anticipated. And the fellows who regularly turned up to line the hedge and crack jokes at Simon's expense added still further to his troubles.

"I'll show 'em!" Simon told himself, as he worked away savagely at his task. "They won't get away with this with me!"

The one bright spot in his third afternoon's work was the finding of a sixpence in a spadeful of earth he turned over. Simon looked at it for a long time—then he looked at the grinning heads over the hedge, and an even broader grin came over his own face.

"Got it!" he chuckled. And from then on he worked with a lighter heart.

That evening, when Simon went back to the school, he made straight for his locker, and fished about inside till he brought to light an old wooden box. Its contents jingled as he slipped them into his pocket.

That was on a Wednesday. The following Sunday—the next half-holiday—the usual crowd trooped off to have a laugh at Simon's expense as he marched off to the Head's

garden. Simon took no notice of them, but got straight to work.

After a few moments, he stooped and picked something from the ground. The watchers by the hedge were too far away to see what it was, but they noticed that it flashed in the sun when Simon rubbed it clean on his handkerchief, and then hurriedly slipped it into his pocket.

A few more minutes' digging, and Simon did the same thing again.

"I say!" muttered one of the watchers. "I believe it was a silver coin."

"Don't talk rot, Fisher!" said one of his companions. "What d'you think he's going to find in the Head's garden—a treasure cave?"

But even the doubter began to wonder when Simon stopped work almost every minute to pick up more and more objects from the ground, and the wondering onlookers saw him grinning with delight. Then, as Simon moved nearer to them, they saw that he was actually picking up coins from the ground, and, from the rate he was finding them, it seemed as if he must be finding a small fortune every few minutes.

After that, everyone forgot to poke fun at the unfortunate Simon, and presently Fisher, the fellow who had first spotted what Simon was finding, called to him.

"I say, Rowe, aren't you getting tired, old chap?"

"It's all right, Fish," Simon called back, in the act of bending to retrieve another coin. "I'm beginning to like this job. There's money in it."

After that, there was silence again for a period. Then Fisher, unable to contain himself any longer, spoke up again.



"Have you been under an operation?"
"No; I've been under a car!"

"Be a sport, Si," he pleaded. "We can all see you're picking up money all over the place. You've got enough money now, surely—let us have a go."

"Can't," Simon told him curtly. "If I let you fellows help me, I'd be bound to get another walloping from the Head, and would probably be told to dig the whole lot all over again."

"It's all right—the Head's out for the afternoon," Fisher called back. "And think how quickly we'll get this ground dug over if several of us work on it."

Simon straightened up, leaning on his spade. "What about the money?" he demanded shrilly. "Will you agree to give me a quarter of what you find? Also to finish the job?"

"That's a bet!" came in excited chorus.

The fellows were so eager to start work looking for money that they never thought of refusing. Within a minute, they were all digging away furiously, and the rough ground was fast being turned over by their eager spades. When they looked like slacking off, Simon, leaning against the gate, jingled the coins in his pockets, and the sound spurred the others on. But, as the diggers worked on, and no one found any coins, some of them became suspicious.

"Funny we haven't found any money," one of them panted, leaning on his spade and mopping his sweating forehead.

"That's because you don't look properly," said Simon, bending down and picking up something from the ground right at the speaker's feet. "Here you are, see—here's a tanner lying right under your nose." And he opened his palm to show a grimy sixpenny-bit.

After that, there were no more grumblers. Everyone was eager to get on to the untouched ground before the next fellow, and they all dug away like beavers. But there were blank faces when the last of the ground was cleared.

"Can't make it out," hooted Fisher indignantly. "I've looked till my eyes ache, but I haven't found anything."

"There's something funny about this!"

All eyes turned as a creak came from the gate in the hedge. The fellows were just in time to see Simon the Jester slipping through.

"Next time you chaps want to rag someone who's going through it from the Head, choose a fellow who's as big a boob as you are!" Simon called out to them. "Here's your money—catch!"

There was a wild scramble as Simon flung a shower of coins in the direction of the group. Eager hands picked up the coins where they had fallen, and then there was a howl of indignation and fury.

"Foreign coins! The awful swindle—"
It was Fisher who hit on the solution to the trick.

"They're a lot of old coins from Rowe's collection of foreign money," he hooted. "The blighter's tricked us—he must have planted them here, or else just pretended to pick them up when he really had them in his hand all the time. After him, chaps—scrag him!"

But they were too late. Search high and low through the school as they might, Simon the Jester was not to be found. He was making his report to the Head.

It would have added to the wrath of Simon's victims if they could have been present at that interview.

"You've done the job already?" the Head said in tones of surprise. "Well done, my boy, well done! I had expected it to take you so many half-holidays that I was already considering letting you off the rest of your task. But since you have worked so hard, Rowe, you deserve some sort of reward. I have been feeling for some time that I was perhaps too harsh in my punishment of you—after all, you only did a few shillings' damage to my trees, and I should have had to pay a gardener a pound for the work you have done. H'rmp! I wonder if you would take this ten-shilling note to make up the difference, and—no, don't thank me, Rowe, don't thank me—join me in a little tea?"

Another Warden Strong story next Friday.