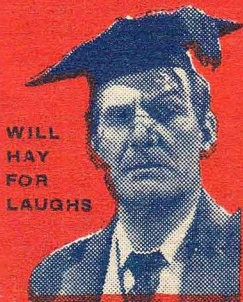


Star Stories of: — "BLUEY" WILKINSON : WILL HAY : TAR-ZAN : SEXTON BLAKE : LEONARD HENRY : STAINLESS STEPHEN, etc.

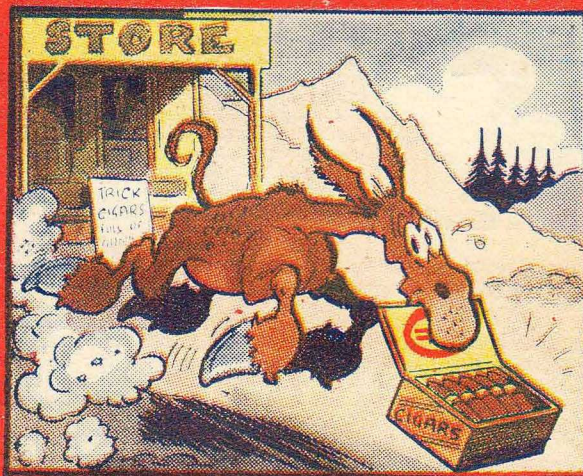
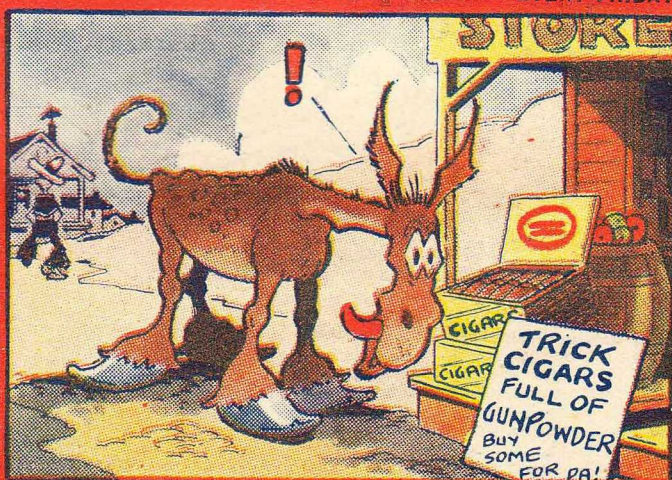
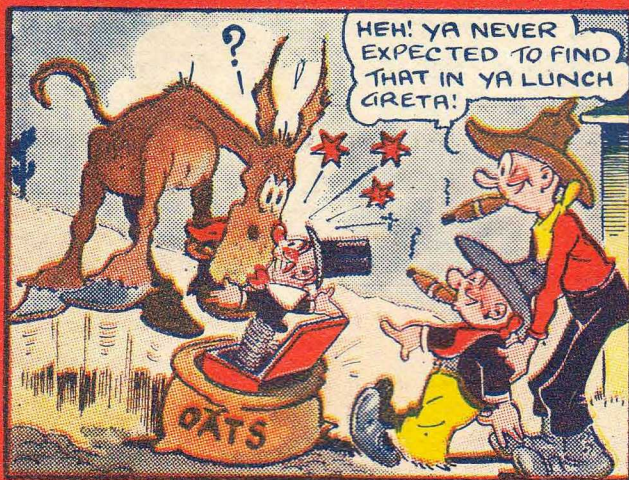


WILL HAY FOR LAUGHS

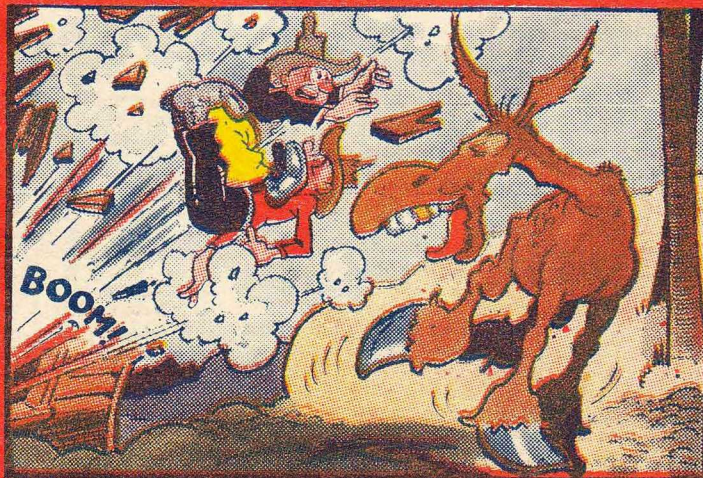
The PILOT 2^D

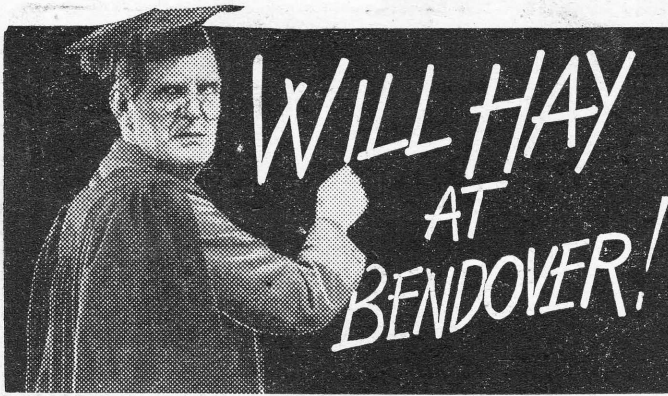
No. 101. Vol. 4. Week ending September 4th, 1937.

EVERY FRIDAY



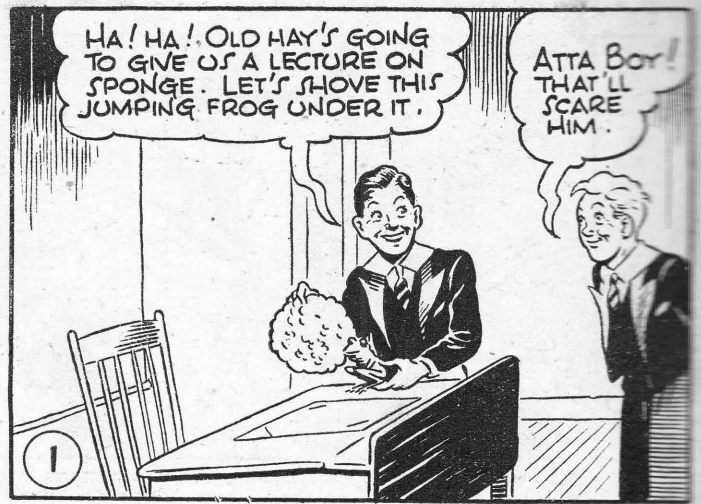
MIKE,
SPIKE &
GRETA
Our Crazy Gang
IN
"A JOKE'S
A JOKE"





WHAT'S THE JOKE?—It's WILL HAY, Master of the Bendover Fourth and master of mirth, at it again. There's a laugh in every line of this, the latest exploit of the Bendover rebels.

(By Courtesy of Gainsborough Pictures.)



“WHERE’S that ‘Ay?” That powerful voice awoke every echo of the old quad at Bendover School. It echoed in the Form-rooms, startling the Bendover fellows in class. It echoed in the Head’s house—startling Will Hay and the Fourth Form, who were barricaded in that building. Will, as he heard it, jumped to a window, and stared out, his eyes popping over his nose-rippers. And as he beheld the man who roared with that powerful voice, Will was deeply glad that he was no longer carrying on his former duties as master of the Fourth, as in Dr. Shrubbs’s time. He was extremely thankful that he was, on the other hand, leading the barring-out at Bendover. For the defences that had been piled up against Mr. Dunkley Pyke, the new headmaster, were more useful than ever now—now that Will blinked at the bull-necked man who shouted in the quad.

“My only hat and sunshade!” gasped Will. “Mr. Finch has called to see me again! Why did they give him only three months? Why didn’t they give him three years? Or three hundred years?”

“It’s Fisty Finch!” exclaimed Dicky Bird. “The Duddlebury Chicken!” said Jimmy Carboy.

The windows of the Head’s house were crammed with faces, staring out at Mr. Finch! But Mr. Finch was not looking in that direction. Fisty Finch, the bruiser of Duddlebury, was tramping towards the schoolhouse, and as he tramped, his voice woke the echoes, calling for “that ‘Ay.”

“Where’s that ‘Ay?” bellowed Mr. Finch, in a voice that Stentor of old might have envied. “I’ve come for ‘im! I’m arter ‘im! Three months he got me, that ‘Ay did, and now I’ve come out, and I’m arter ‘im! Where’s that ‘Ay?”

In the big doorway of the schoolhouse appeared a bony figure in gown and mortarboard. Mr. Dunkley Pyke, the new headmaster of Bendover, stared in angry surprise at the broad-shouldered, muscular, bull-necked bruiser in the quad. The three months that Fisty Finch had spent in retirement, at the expense of his Majesty King George the Sixth, had not tamed his spirit, that was clear. Fisty was full of beans.

“Who—what—who are you, and what do you want?” snapped Mr. Pyke. “How dare you make a disturbance here? Why has not the porter kept you out? Kelly! Where are you, Kelly? Turn this hooligan out of the school at once.”

“I’m turn me out!” grinned Fisty Finch. “Not ‘im, old ugly mug! You can’t come in ‘ere, he says to me, says he! Can’t I, I says, and I let ‘im ‘ave my left—same which I knocked out the Bermondsey Pet. Your blooming porter’s a-settin’ in his lodge, trying to find out what ‘it him! And I’m ‘ere, arter that there ‘Ay!”

“Hay!” ejaculated Mr. Pyke. “‘Ay!” said Mr. Finch. “I dunno who you are, ole bag of bones, but if you want my left, you only got to stick in my way, and I’ll make a ‘orspital case of you. I’m arter ‘Ay! Bloke what got me three months in Duddlebury Gaol! Mebbe I’ll get another three, arter I’m through with ‘im—but it’ll be worth it! I fancy he’ll be longer in ‘orspital than I shall be in chokey, and chance it! Where’s that ‘Ay?”

“Oh!” exclaimed Mr. Pyke, and his eyes gleamed.

Few people were ever glad to see Fisty Finch, especially when he was on the war-path! But the new headmaster of Bendover, at that moment, was glad to see him. Will Hay & Co. were holding the fort against all comers, and Dunkley Pyke was at his wits’ end

how to deal with the Bendover rebellion. Fisty Finch came like a windfall.

“My dear fellow!” exclaimed Mr. Pyke. “Eh?” Fisty Finch glared at him suspiciously. “I don’t want no gammon, fact! I want that there ‘Ay!”

“Mr. Hay, the master of the Fourth Form here has been dismissed from his post, by me—”

“Gorn!” ejaculated Fisty. “Don’t say he’s gorn, and me jest out of quod, and coming ‘ere to knock all his features through the back of his ‘ead!”

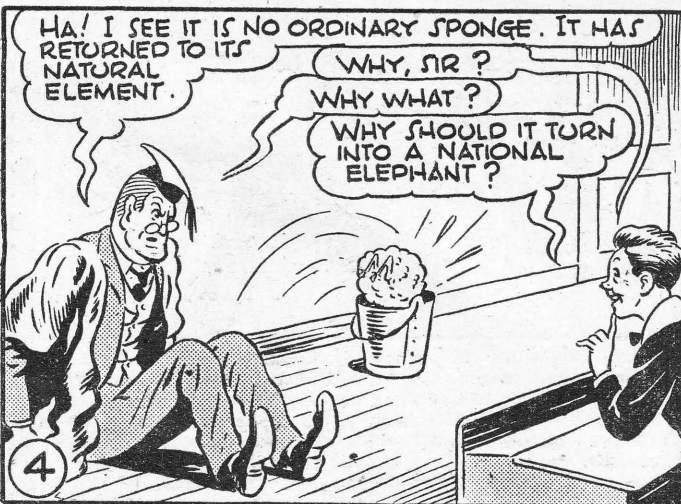
“No! No! He is not gone! He refuses to go, although he is discharged—and I am prepared to reward any man who will remove him from the premises.”

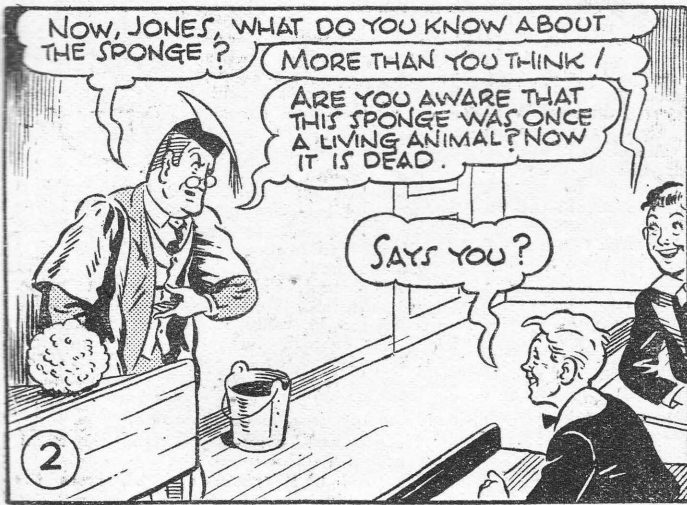
“Straight?” exclaimed Fisty. Mr. Dunkley Pyke came out of the schoolhouse. There was a crusty grin on his face, which was his nearest approach to a smile. He pointed across the quad.

“He is there!” he said. “I think I have heard of you before, now I come to think of it—you had some trouble with Hay—Mr. Finch, I think! I am glad to meet you, Mr. Finch! I will gladly pay you the sum of one pound if you will remove Hay from Bendover School. You may use any amount of force that may be needed. I shall support you with my authority in every way.”

“Strike me pink!” said the Duddlebury Chicken, in surprise and satisfaction. It was quite a happy surprise to him, to find that he could carry on with the knocking-out process on the right side of the law, supported by the authority of the Bendover headmaster, with a pound-note in addition! Nothing could have suited the hefty Chicken better.

“This way!” chortled Dunkley Pyke. He led the ex-pugilist across the quad. “Hay has barricaded himself in that building, Mr. Finch





—my own house—with the support of a number of boys—rebellious young rascals, of the Fourth Form! If you can force an entrance—

“Wash out the blooming ‘ifs,’” said Fisty. “There ain’t no ‘if’ about it, old covey! I’m arter that there ‘Ay! You want ‘im shifted? I’ll shift ‘im for you, and leave what’s left of ‘im strowed along the road! They can bring along the ambulance, arter, to pick up the bits and pieces. You wait till you see me give ‘im my left, same which I knocked out the Pet. Why, there’s his mug at the winder!”

Fisty Finch tramped up the garden in front of the Head’s house and glared at the french windows of the dining-room. Only a few jagged fragments of glass remained in those windows. But inside, a dining-table was screwed across, and other articles of furniture stacked—leaving openings, through which a dozen faces were looking out. Among them was Will Hay’s—at which Mr. Finch brandished a brawny fist.

Will gave him a genial smile.

“Good-morning, Mr. Finch!” Will said pleasantly. “And how are we this nice morning? Had a good time in your late residence under the paternal care of the Government? The skilly was good, I hope! The treadmill a healthy exercise, what? You’re looking cleaner than the last time I saw you. Did they wash you? I notice that they gave you a hair-out.”

Fisty Finch did not answer in words. He made a bull-like rush at the window, and shoved at the barricade, to barge a way in. Fisty was a muscular man, a hefty man, but he could not shift a mahogany table that was fixed in place with an assortment of the longest screws from Dicky Bird’s tool-box. He heaved and he wrenched, he panted and he snorted; but the barrier remained firm—and over it, Richard Bird shoved out a mop.

He shoved it hard! It landed in the middle of Mr. Finch’s features, and knocked him spinning backwards. Fisty landed on his back, spluttering and gurgling. There was a yell from the Bendover rebels within.

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Try again, Fisty!”

“Strike me pink and blue!” gasped Mr. Finch. He bounded up, and rushed at the window again. From another loophole, lower down, a broom-handle shot out—catching Fisty on his second waistcoat button. It caught him hard, and Fisty, with the wind knocked out of him, gurgled horribly, and clung on to the barricade, gasping for breath.

An arm reached out above, with a cane in the hand.

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

Will Hay got in four before Mr. Finch was able to totter away. A fifth barely missed him as he went. Fisty Finch tottered back to the garden gate, and leaned on it, gurgling. Dunkley Pyke eyed him anxiously.

“You will deal with Hay?” he exclaimed. “You will—”

“Urrrrgh! ‘Old your row! Guuurrgrgh!”

Fisty Fish, for the moment, was hors de combat. He was still hanging on the gate and gurgling, when a bell rang, and Bendover School came out of class.

CRASH! Bang! Crash!

“Oh, my hat!” murmured Dicky Bird.

“If that prize-fighter gets in—” breathed Jimmy Carboy.

Bang! Crash! The door shook and groaned—the whole building almost shook. It was a strong oak door, and it was bolted, locked, and chained. But it was never built to resist an attack like this! Fisty Finch, in the porch outside, was wielding a sledgehammer with

both powerful hands. Mr. Dunkley Pyke, from the gate, watched his eagerly. Fisty was doing terrific damage to Bendover property. But Mr. Pyke was past caring about damage now. He had to get that rebellion under, somehow. The door could not stand it long. Once the door was down, it was plain sailing. One punch from the Chicken’s leg-of-mutton fist would be enough for Will Hay. If the school-boy rebels tried to back him up, that leg-of-mutton fist would bowl them over like skittles.

In the quad, a crowd of Bendover fellows, of all Forms, watched with breathless interest. It seemed to all of them that Will’s game was up this time. It looked like “finis” to the Bendover barring-out.

Even Dicky Bird of the Fourth was dubious. Scrapping with the prefects was one thing—this was quite another! The rebels were gathered in the hall, listening to the thundering crashes on the door, and wondering how long it would hold out. They were going to back up old Hay! But the boldest spirit in the Fourth felt a tremor at the idea of standing up to those leg-of-mutton fists.

Standing in the stone porch as he wielded the sledgehammer, Fisty was safe from missiles from the windows. They could not get at him—till he got at them! And then—

“Where’s that old ass Hay?” grunted Jimmy Carboy. “Can’t he hear this row?”

“He’s at the larder,” said Tubby Green. “It’s nearly dinner-time, you know—”

“Is that old chump thinking about dinner now?” gasped Dicky Bird. “Is he off his rocker?”

Three or four of the rebels rushed down the passage to the kitchen, off which the larder opened. The larder door was open now, and Will Hay was standing there, sorting over the shelves.

“I say, sir—” exclaimed Dicky.

Will Hay glanced round, with a large tin



of mustard in either hand, and beamed at his pupils.

"Beef has run out," he remarked, "but luckily there is plenty of mustard. Beef without mustard is not to everybody's taste; but mustard without beef may be excellent, in certain circumstances. What do you think?"

"Blow the mustard!" hooted Dicky. "Can't you hear that blighter Finch busting in the door?"

"It won't hold another five minutes!" yelled Jimmy Carboy.

"My dear Carboy, there is a time for everything!" said Will chidingly. "Let us take things in their proper order. At the present moment I am examining our stock of mustard. I have no doubt that it is in good condition, but one cannot be too sure! Let us see!"

He whipped off the lid of a tin and shook out a shower of the contents. There was a startled howl from Dicky Bird & Co., followed by a wild outburst of sneezing.

"Atchooooh! Groogh! You old ass—ooogh!"

Will beamed on them.

"The mustard seems all right!" he remarked. "But wait a moment while I shake out a little more—"

The juniors did not wait a moment! They did not wait a hundredth part of a moment! They flew.

"That old ass Hay has gone cracked!" gasped Dicky Bird, as they rejoined the crowd in the hall. "Playing about with mustard—and Fisty Finch will be jumping on us in two ticks! Atchooooh!"

Bang! Crash! Bang! Crash! The door shook and groaned, and a glimmer of sunshine came through a crack! The sledgehammer in Fisty's hefty hands was putting paid to that door. The staring Fourth Formers had a glimpse of Fisty outside, smashing away. It was only a matter of minutes now—and a very few minutes!

"Here comes old Hay!" groaned Jerry Smart. "What is the old ass grinning at? Fisty will be giving him something to grin for, soon."

Will Hay billowed into the hall, smiling from ear to ear. Under his arm he had a large garden squirt. His anxious pupils stared

at it. That squirt had been used, during the Benderov barring-out, to drench the enemy with ink. The prefects had disliked it extremely.

"Do you think you're going to stop that hooligan with that?" shrieked Dicky.

"I trust so, Bird—I trust so!" bleated Will. He set his nose-nippers straight, and blinked at the crack in the door. A shaft of summer sunlight fell across the hall, and the crowd of anxious faces. "Couldn't really be better, what? Mr. Finch is not what I should call an obliging gentleman—far from it; but at the present moment, he is kind enough to play our game—that crack will soon be wide enough for me to get him—"

"A lot he will care for a squirt of ink!" hooted Dicky. "May as well let him in and call it a day."

Crash! Bang! Crash! came the sledgehammer. With a last crash, it came nearly through an upper panel; and as Fisty swung it back again, there was a gap nearly a foot wide.

Up went the sledgehammer again, in Fisty's hefty hands. Will Hay stepped swiftly to the door, squirt in hand. The nozzle was pushed out through the gap, aimed at the Duddlebury Chicken's rugged, stubbly face. The Fourth Formers simply stared at their Form-master as he discharged the big squirt. If the old ass fancied that would bother Fisty—

It did!

It was not ink that flew from the squirt. It was a powdery, yellow cloud! And it seemed to bother Fisty a lot as it landed full in his features. The sledgehammer was up for another smite—but that smite was never smitten. The sledgehammer dropped from Fisty's grasp and crashed down the steps behind him. Fisty, with both hands grabbing at his face, rocked, and spluttered, and coughed, and sneezed, rather like the eruption of a particularly fierce volcano.

"Ooooooh! Atchooooh! Aytishoo! Woooch! Gurrgrgh!" spluttered and sneezed Fisty. "Wurrgh! Atchooop! Gurrgrgh!"

He staggered back. Half a pound of mustard occupied his attention to such an extent that he omitted to remember that he was standing on a step. The next moment he was following the sledgehammer, backwards.

Bump, bump, bump!

There were three steps. Fisty hit them in turn, and landed on the garden path, the back of his head landing on the head of the sledgehammer. Fisty's head was hard—but not so hard as the hammerhead! Fisty's frantic roar could be heard all through Benderov.

"Oh crumbs!" yelled Dicky Bird.

"Mustard—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think," murmured Will Hay, "that it has stopped him, my good Bird! But if he is greedy and asks for more, I have another tin of mustard here—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Greedy or not, Fisty did not ask for more. He sat with both hands clapping his anguished nose and mouth, which felt as if they were on fire. He gasped, he gurgled, he guggled, and he sneezed, and sneezed, and sneezed! His sneezes fairly roared, like a succession of fog-signals. They rang like trumpet-blasts over the quadrangle of Benderov.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a yell, from the Benderov crowd in the quad.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a howl, from the rebels' stronghold.

Dunkley Pyke gasped with rage. Fisty Finch gasped with mustard. All the rest of Benderov roared with laughter. Will Hay, grinning cheerily, nailed boards over the split in the door. He did not think it likely that Fisty would put in any more work with the sledgehammer. Not, at all events, unless he was sure that the supply of mustard had run out.

"MR. HAY!"

Dunkley Pyke jumped. He was sitting in the old Head's study, while the shades of evening fell upon Benderov School. Fisty Finch sprawled in an armchair, smoking a short, black pipe, his eyes still rather watery, and his nose very red from the mustard. Mr. Pyke was not very particular about the company he kept—but he certainly would have drawn a line at Fisty—in other circumstances. Now he was glad to keep the Duddlebury Chicken in the school, in the hope of getting him, somehow, to close quarters with Will Hay. The mere thought of Fisty's brawny fists hammering the happy countenance of Will Hay was delightful to Mr. Pyke—if only it could be brought to pass. The telephone bell buzzed, and Mr. Pyke irritably grabbed off the receiver. Then he jumped as a voice inquired for Mr. Hay.

"Didham Stores!" went on the voice. "That Mr. Hay?"

Then Dunkley Pyke understood. Somehow—he did not know how—Will Hay & Co. were getting in supplies of provender. He guessed that he was on the track now. There was a telephone in the Head's house. That, no doubt, was how the orders were given. But how were the goods delivered? Mr. Pyke was going to learn—if he could. Benderov School had several telephone numbers; and Didham Stores had evidently been given that of the schoolhouse phone, instead of that of the Head's house. It was not an uncommon error at the exchange. Such an error usually made Mr. Pyke very cross. Now it made him grin with glee.

"Yes," he said—"what is it?"

"We find that we're rather short of the corned beef, Mr. Hay. Will it be all right if we make up the number with tins of something else? We can recommend MacMouldy's salmon steaks—"

"Oh, quite right!" said Mr. Pyke. "But about the delivery—"

"That's all right, sir; rely on that. We have your instructions."

"You are sure you quite understand? Perhaps you had better repeat my instructions," breathed Mr. Pyke.

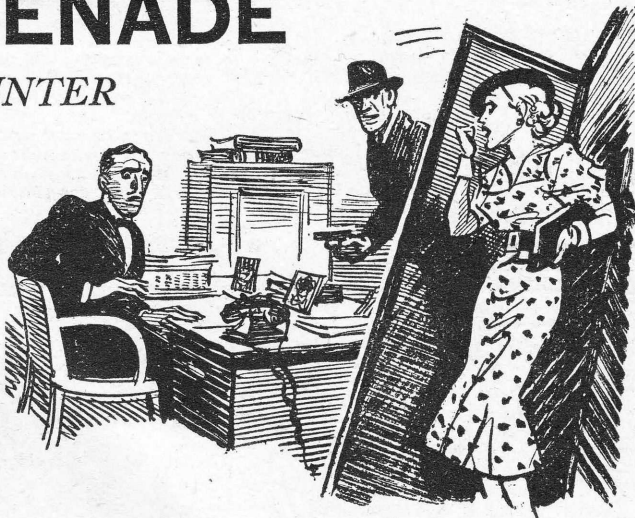
"The bag of goods, sir, to be left outside the tradesmen's gate at half-past nine precisely," said the voice from Didham Stores. "Placed in the bush by the gate, as usual, for you to fetch away."

Dunkley Pyke's eyes gleamed. "Exactly!" he gasped. "Thank you!" He hung up the receiver. His eyes turned

THE CRIME ON THE PROMENADE

by JOHN HUNTER

James Warren engaged someone to take his place and spend a seaside holiday with all expenses paid. But his purpose was not entirely philanthropic and the holiday was but a move in a treacherous scheme. One night a stranger is murdered on the deserted promenade, and from then on Warren's dupe becomes involved in this thrilling book-length tale of plotting and crime.



Ask today for No. 585 of the

SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY

Now on sale at all Newsagents and Bookstalls - 4^d

on the stubby face and red nose of Fisty Finch. He grinned; he gloated. He knew the commissariat arrangements of the rebels now. But he knew more than that. He knew exactly how to get Will Hay where he wanted him—on toast!

"Finch!" he breathed.

Fisty blinked at him through a cloud of smoke.

"At half-past nine this evening," said Mr. Pyke, in measured tones, "a bag of food will be left at the tradesmen's gate here. It will be quite dark at half-past nine. Soon afterwards, that iniquitous villain Hay will go down to the gate to fetch it in—unseen, as he fancies, in the dark. There is a beech-tree close inside that gate. You will be waiting behind that tree, Finch."

"I get you!" breathed Fisty.

"You will take care that you are not seen going there. I will take care that no one approaches the spot. There must be no possibility of the villain taking the alarm. He will walk into your hands, Finch. You will wait till he comes, and then—"

Fisty Finch lifted a huge fist, with knuckles like oak knobs. He grinned over it at Mr. Pyke.

"Exactly!" said Dunkley Pyke. "You will remove this man, whom I have dismissed, from the premises, Finch. If he leaves in such a state that he will be unwilling, perhaps unable, to return, so much the better. If he is thrashed within an inch of his life, if he is beaten black and blue, if he is hammered to a jelly, so much the better! You understand me?"

"I get you, guv'nor," grinned Fisty. "Leave 'im to me—that covey what landed me with three months' ard! He won't give you no more trouble arter I'm done with 'im!"

"Only take care that you give him no chance to escape!"

"I'll give him my left to begin with—same which I knocked out the Bermondsey Pet," grinned Fisty. "Arter that, he won't be able to do anything but 'owl while I'm ammering 'im."

Mr. Pyke smiled. The Bendover barraging had beaten him up till now. Now, like a shipwrecked mariner, Mr. Pyke thought that he saw land at last.

"**T**HINK it's safe, sir?" murmured Dicky Bird, peering from the back window rather anxiously into the dark shadows. "If that hooligan from Duddlebury is still hanging about Bendover—"

"No," said Will Hay cheerfully; "I don't, Bird. But I am going, all the same. What does the poet say? 'When duty calls, to brazen walls, how base the man who stands and squalls!' If that isn't exactly what the poet said, it's near enough. But I am going to take precautions, Bird. I should hate to run into a man like Mr. Finch in the dark. He is very anxious to meet me; but the anxiety is wholly on his side. You have heard of Jack, I presume?"

"Jack!" repeated Dicky blankly.

"A stout lad of ancient times, Bird, who slew giants," said Will. "When Jack was in danger of meeting a giant, he put on his cloak of darkness, and so escaped observation. I am taking a tip from Jack the Giant Killer. I shall fare forth, to bag the fare for the Fourth, in my cloak of darkness."

Will Hay breezed away, leaving his pupils staring. When he came back, a quarter of an hour later, they stared still harder.

He had left them in gown and mortar-board, with his nose-nippers nipped on his nose. He came back without any of those adornments. In a suit of clothes, borrowed from the butler's room, and a bowler hat, Will's aspect was very different. His face was more different still. A short beard, a curly moustache, a pair of thick eyebrows, and a spot of make-up, made him look like anybody but the master of the Bendover Fourth.

"What—what—what's that?" gasped Jimmy Carboy.

"That," smiled the unrecognisable master

of the Fourth, "is my cloak of darkness, my good Carboy."

"Is—is—is it really you, sir?" stammered Tubby Green.

"I think so," assented Will. "One can never, of course, be quite sure of anything in this uncertain world; but I believe so, Green. I do not think, however, that the enemy will think so, if they happen to be spotted about—what?"

"Hardly!" chortled Dicky Bird.

Will dropped from the window, and it closed after him. His Form were left grinning; but Will was not grinning, as he trod the dark path to the tradesmen's gate. His arrangements with the Didham Stores were, he believed, utterly unknown to the enemy; but there was always the danger of falling in with the foe, and when the foe happened to be a hefty bruiser like Fisty Finch, the

possibility of a meeting made Will disinclined to grin.

Darkness and silence enwrapped him as he trod softly by the big beech that shadowed the tradesmen's gate. But the stillness was deceptive—as Will realised when a burly shadow detached itself from the tree.

"Oo's that?" came a husky growl, as Fisty Finch peered at him. Fisty was watching for a man in cap and gown, with a clean-shaven face; and the summer dusk revealed a man in manservant's garb with a bowler hat, a board, and a moustache. "Git out of it—you! That old mug said he was going to keep the place clear! Git out of it!"

He did not know how eager Will was to oblige him.

"My only hat and broolly!" murmured Will,

(Continued on page 552.)



Leonard Henry at the "Mike"

TUNE-IN FOR ANOTHER RIB-TICKLING BROADCAST
FROM ONE OF RADIO'S BRIGHTEST FUN-MERCHANTS.

HALLO, chums! I've been committing a norful crime. I drove a mechanically propelled vehicle, along a public highway in a restricted area, at a speed exceeding the maximum laid down by the statutes. Don't that sound beautifully horrible?

I was tooling my old Lizzie along Regent Street, when a speed cop signalled the "Heave-to!" and came aboard. We had a slight argument about the speed. I called it 10 m.p.h., the cop called it 40 m.p.h., and the magistrate called it fifty shillings and a guinea costs.

You see, I thought I'd be polite, so, as I breezed into the dock, I beamed at him, and asked him how he was.

"Fine—fifty bob!" he snarled, giving me a dirty look.

"Tut, tut!" I tutted. "It's not so bad as all that. My old bus can only do twelve miles an hour going downhill on top."

"On top of what?" he snapped.

"A motor-lorry. Why, just before I saw the speed cop, a steamroller cut in and passed me. Smatter of fact, the engine wasn't going at the time. We were being wafted along by the breeze."

"What breeze?"

"Breeze there a man with soul so dead who never to himself hath said as he knocked his toe against the bed—"

"That'll do!" he yapped. "What's your name?"

"Henry. What's yours?"

"A double whisky—I mean," he snarled, "that has nothing to do with it."

"What has nothing to do with what?"

"What? What what?"

"What's what what?"

The magistrate glared at me, and then sent out for some aspirins.

"I don't want your Christian name!" he roared. "What's your surname?"

"No, it isn't. It's Henry."

"Henry what?"

"No; just Henry. Leonard Henry for short."

"Go on! Leonard Henry what?"

"Can't go on. It stopped there soon after I was born, and hasn't started again yet."

The magistrate glared, then wrote it down in his book.

"What's the date?" he asked.

"How do I know?"

"You've got a newspaper in your hand, haven't you?"

"Yes; but this is yesterday's."

"What made you buy a yesterday's paper?" he scowled.

"It was to-day's when I bought it," I answered meekly.

"Then why isn't it to-day's now?"

"Because it's yesterday's to-day—the same as to-day's will be yesterday's to-morrow."

THE magistrate sent out for some more aspirins and a wet towel.

"What's your profession?" he snapped.

"I'm a radio comedian."

"Six months," he answered promptly.

"Oh, come, you can't do that! As for traffic laws, I bet you know less than I do about 'em!"

"I bet you a pound I don't!" he replied warmly.

"Right-ho! Then tell me this. The other night a bus-driver ignored the red traffic light, passed on along the wrong side of the road, and turned a corner without making a signal. How many crimes did he commit?"

"Three, of course."

"No, he didn't; because he was off duty, and hadn't got his bus with him, which makes you owing me a pound."

"Time is money. I'll give you six months instead."

"Oh, I say! How man evenings out? I suppose I should have to sleep in, with full board and lodging?"

"Is there any reason why I shouldn't give you six months?"

"Most assuredly. I categorically asseverate that the computation of my velocity at the period under consideration is a malicious fabrication unprecedented in the recorded accomplishments of perjurious attesters."

"I see. You prefer long sentences. Ten years!"

"Mercy!" I gasped. "I've got a cast-iron defence on three points. First, I didn't do it; second, I didn't mean it; third, I won't do it again. What price that for a defence?"

"Call it fifty bob?" he suggested.

"Oh, all right!" I sighed. "I'll give you the car, and owe you forty-five bob till next Saturday. Toodle-pip!"

Well, walking is a healthy exercise—what?

LEONARD HENRY.

STIRRING, TRUE-LIFE TALES TOLD BY A PRISON WARDER.

TALES OF WARDER STRONG!



"HERE you are, folks; take a look at this!"

The street vendor was offering his wares in a raucous voice, and the crowd soon became engrossed. A young man, a cap pulled well down over his face, lounged on the outskirts; and he smiled when his roving eye took in the prosperous-looking men and women, and he rubbed his hands together in anticipation.

If there had been nothing else about the ill-dressed figure to arouse attention, the man's hands certainly would have done so. They were the long, sensitive fingers of an artist.

The youth looked quickly over his shoulder, then pushed his way into the crowd. He didn't notice the large man, who had been standing in the shop doorway, move over in his direction. The first intimation that he had been seen was the light touch on his shoulder which came a few minutes later, and Tim Connors acted like lightning. He didn't look round to see the reason for the tap on his shoulder. Like others of his kind, he had come to dread being touched that way, and he bolted through the crowd, working his way like an eel. He broke the fringe of the crowd, and was off down the street like a flash, only pulling up when he knew he was safe.

"Lummy," he panted, "that was a near shave!"

He took off his cap and pushed it into his pocket, then turned his coat inside out. The dark jacket was now a fashionable sports coat, and he sauntered down the street, hatless, and smoking a cigarette, to all intents and purposes a young office clerk out for a stroll. He turned into a street of dingy buildings, and entered a shop with a low frontage. A small, wizened man shuffled into the shop from a back parlour, and as he recognised his visitor he waved him into the back room.

"Well, what have you got for me?" he demanded.

"Nothing, Mansoni," he said briefly. "I was seen."

"Foot!" snapped Mansoni. "Were you followed?"

Connors nodded negatively, and, satisfied, Mansoni ushered him into a farther room.

Two others were already there—men with lean faces and furtive eyes. They nodded briefly, and Connors seated himself on the arm of a chair.

"I've got a job for you all," began Mansoni, and, dropping his voice, spoke rapidly but concisely.

Ben-Mansoni was a crook who made a good living without taking much risk. He had drawn into his net pilfering thieves and pick-pockets, whom he paid a percentage far below the value of their takings.

But in Tim, Mansoni had come up against something different from the usual run of down-and-outs he took under his wing. Tim had quickly learned all that Mansoni could show him, and was soon more proficient than Mansoni himself in removing other people's belongings; but he seemed to get little pleasure out of his work.

This was puzzling to Mansoni, and also a little worrying, for Connors, to him, seemed to be tempting Fate in the way he went about the tasks he assigned him. The more daring the task, the more Connors enjoyed it. Tim would rather exploit his cleverness with an audience, and because of this Mansoni was worried—not about Connors, but about his own greasy skin. He didn't want too much publicity focused on him, and he looked anxiously across at Tim Connors.

"You'll have to be careful, Connors," he said. "Perhaps you'd better lie low for a bit. You're getting too well known."

Tim rose to his feet. "O.K.," he said. "In that case, I think I'll be taking a holiday. The atmosphere around here is a little oppressive."

He waved a casual farewell, left the room, and then, as far as Mansoni was concerned, Tim Connors was among the missing.

TWELVE months later, an impressive figure pushed open the door of Mansoni's dingy shop. The large fur coat was a little out of season, but in keeping with the long hair and flowing tie. Mansoni came hurrying out, all smiles.

"Yes, sir—" he began ingratiatingly, then stopped and gasped. "Tim Connors!"

He hurried Tim into the back parlour, somewhat dazed by his magnificent appearance. His feeling was shared by Tim's late cronies, who were in the parlour. They gaped.

"What's happened, mate? Won the Irish Sweep?" one of them gasped.

Tim smiled and shook his head. "No; just picking pockets."

They crowded round Tim at that, and pressed for an explanation; but all Tim would say was:

"You must come and see me at work. I'm performing in the High Street to-night."

It certainly sounded like a cheap joke, but that night Tim led them down the High Street and into the foyer of the local theatre. A few words at the box-office and they were in good seats, Ben and his companions wondering what was happening. After a short time, Tim rose and whispered:

"Now for a spot of work!"

Ben and his companions exchanged wondering glances. Then, later in the programme, as the curtain went up on a new act, they leaned forward, gazing in astonishment. There was Tim, on the stage, inviting members of the audience on to the stage, where, in full view of everyone, and with a deftness that drew rounds of applause, he relieved his volunteer assistants of their valuables. His manner was so easy, and his skill so apparent, that the showmanship of the act was supreme. It was a triumph of art, and when he was finished, Tim returned all the things he took from his assistants, who departed from the stage in great glee.

Mansoni and his two underlings had gone when Tim went round to the front of the house; but he wasn't surprised. He had shown them how he was making an honest and good living, and the fact that he never saw them again didn't worry Tim.

It was a grand example of how good can come from bad. Tim was never cut out for a criminal, but it seemed a pity that such talent as his should go unrewarded. When he left Mansoni's shop on that fateful afternoon he had fallen in with a band of actors, and it was from these that the idea originated. Tim soon found that he was making a lot of money in the vaudeville profession, and realised that at last he had found his right sphere as Tim Connors, Conjuror and Magician.

Next week, Warder Strong tells you a thrilling story of a daring knight of the abounding Great War.

WILL HAY AT BENDOVER!

(Continued from page 545.)

as he sorted the bag out of the bush outside the gate. "The enemy knows more than I supposed! That hefty exponent of the manly art was waiting for me! Well, let him wait!"

Fisty had warned him not to come that way again. That warning, really, was superfluous. Wild horses would not have dragged Will Hay that way again. His heart was still wobbling as he trod away along the wall, with the bag of provisions in his hand, and clambered in again at a very distant spot. By a roundabout route—far from the tradesmen's gate—Will circled back to the Head's house and tapped on the kitchen window.

"Dicky Bird opened it, and Will bundled in. "Anything up, sir?" asked Dicky.

"Yes!" gurgled Will. "Mr. Finch is up! I could wish that he went earlier to bed! Finches, I believe, generally go to roost at dark. I rather think that he is going to make a night of it! Let us hope, for Mr. Finch's sake, that it will not rain!"

MR. DUNKLEY PYKE stared—or, rather, glared—into the night from the doorway of the schoolhouse. The hour was growing late—all Bendover had gone to bed—but Mr. Pyke was waiting, listening, for sounds of woe and anguish from the direction of the tradesmen's gate. It was nearly eleven, and nothing had happened so far.

Blacker and blacker grew Mr. Pyke's brow; angrier and angrier his glare into the dusky summer night. He strode out of the House at last to see what had happened, and whether anything had. If that ruffian Finch had got tired of it, and failed to keep watch, Mr. Pyke was ready to give him the length of his tongue, and a little over.

He peered about him angrily as he rustled down the path to the tradesmen's gate. That brute, that ruffian, had got tired of it and gone—

He hadn't! Fisty was a sticker. He was impatient, he was angry, he was savage; but he was still parked behind that beach.

Now he spotted one! It was too dark for recognition, but not too dark to spot mortar-board and glittering gown. Fisty's eyes glittered in the gloom.

"Ay!" he breathed. "That there 'Ay Gottin'!"

And he rushed. The left which had knocked out the Bermondsey Pet in Mr. Finch's days in the ring, lifted Dunkley Pyke off his feet and landed him on his back—with a bump and a yell that awoke half the sleepers in Bendover School.

"Three months' ard!" trilled Fisty, as he hammered. "That's wot you got me—'Ay! That's for your eye! That's a one for your beezler! That's a wiper for your kisser! Three months' ard, Mr. 'Ay—wot! This 'ere is worth six months!"

The frantic yells of Dunkley Pyke woke all the echoes. "He hardly knew how he got away. But he got away at last, and flew. After him flew Mr. Finch, bent on earning his quid to the last halfpenny. Not till they reached the lighted doorway of the schoolhouse did Fisty Finch discover whom he had been punching. Then he gazed at the tottering wreck of Dunkley Pyke, dumbfounded.

Three policemen from Duddlebury were required to deal with Fisty Finch—on a charge of assault and battery, made by a bruised, battered, exasperated, and enraged Mr. Pyke. Fisty retired from the scene, booked for six months this time. Whatever measures Mr. Pyke might take to deal with the Bendover barraging-out, he did not want any more assistance from the Duddlebury Chicken!

The barraging-out at Bendover goes on, and Dunkley Pyke thinks that he has found a way to beat the rebels at last. But that's what HE thinks. . . . and you'll think that next Friday's yarn is the funniest yarn you've ever read. You must not miss the latest side-splitting exploits of the out-and-only WILL HAY.