

SUMMER HAS GONE—but WILL HAY is still here to keep you sunny and bright. You won't mind the weather when you read this, the latest rollicking rib-tickler of WILL HAY, the funniest Form-master in the world.

(By Courtesy of Gainsborough Pictures.)



WILL HAY was somewhat absent-minded as he walked up Duddlebury Lane to Bendover. The evening was dark, and the lane was neither wide nor straight.

Also, there was a ditch, a very muddy ditch, running parallel with the lane and so Will Hay walked in the middle of the road.

It was a silly thing to do, but Will Hay's wits were wandering. At least, his mind was. He was trying to solve the Riddle of the Disappearing Tack—upon which he had sat during afternoon classes. He was wondering which of the little warts—in other words, the Fourth—was responsible. Thus, he did not see or hear the careering motor-car until it was practically upon him.

Local motorists were apt to pass up and down Duddlebury Lane with caution, for it was a tricky bit of road. The man at the wheel of the car which now come hurtling round a bend was apparently a stranger to the district—and not merely a stranger, but a species of escaped lunatic.

The unlucky Will saw nothing but a glare, a flash, and a blur. The car came up behind him, and it was really the screech of its electric horn that made him give a wild leap to the side. In his haste he chose the wrong side, but real disaster did not come to him at the moment. He landed with his feet on the very edge of the ditch, entirely unaware of this significant fact.

The car, which Will roughly estimated was doing about five hundred miles an hour, had swerved madly to the other side of the road—where, instead of a ditch, there was a bank. Will Hay heard confused yells, he had a hazy impression that there were three men in the open car, and then the car hit the bank.

By a sheer miracle it did not crash; but the way it bucked and heaved was nobody's business. As the rear of the car rocked upwards and then fell again, something was

catapulted out as though released by springs. It whizzed through the darkness, its loss unknown to the men in the car, and descended with a loud thwack on Will Hay's head.

And the night-sky became filled with stars. At least, that portion of it immediately in front of Will Hay's vision, did. His knees sagged, he staggered, and—

Plop—squeeeeeesh!

Will had often regarded the ditch with a kindly eye during the daytime. A nice ditch, with clear, running water and lots of water-plants growing along the edges. A charming ditch, in fact. It required personal contact to reveal that the ditch's beauties were only skin deep. Just beneath that clear, running water there was about sixteen fathoms of soft, black, glutinous mud. Will Hay floundered about in this ghastly mixture until he was coated from head to foot.

"Gug-gug-grooooooh!" said Will incoherently. "Glub!"

He looked and sounded like the Loch Ness monster. He sank for the second time, rose to the surface, making disgusting squelching sounds, and clutched wildly at a tuft of grass. It was this presence of mind, he was convinced, that saved his life. When people told him afterwards that the mud was only two feet deep, he steadfastly refused to believe such nonsense. The only fortunate feature of the mishap was that there were no witnesses.

The moon came out from behind a cloud bank just then, and when Will opened his eyes the first thing he saw was a small leather attache-case on the grassy bank beside him. It was an unusual-looking attache-case, for it was nearly square, and very deep. This, then, was the object which had catapulted out of the car and struck Will on his softest spot. He was still somewhat dizzy from the blow, in fact, and he opened the attache-case without quite knowing what he was doing. He didn't

really want to see inside the thing. He hated the sight of it.

He raised the lid, and the moonlight showed him a large, luscious, richly browned pork pie.

Will Hay was all for pork pie at the right time, but he was not in the mood just now. Moreover, pork pies which hurtled through the air disguised as attache-cases, and hit him over the head, were not popular at all. With a grunt of disgust, he closed the lid, and reeled into the road, leaving the attache-case where it was.

After moving a few steps towards Bendover, however, he paused. His brain was clearing a bit. A pork pie, after all, was a pork pie; and this one, by the moonlight glimpse Will had obtained of it, was a beauty. At a more appropriate time he might very conceivably find a good home for it.

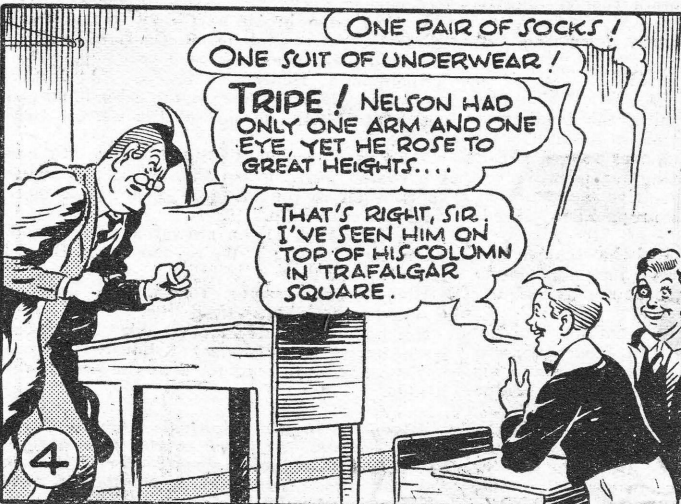
It was not until he had reached the school, and was stopping across the quad—leaving a trail behind him, not unlike a snail—that he fully realised his shocking condition. The moon was still shining, for the clouds had cleared right off, and its pale light was supplemented by the lights from many of the school windows. Will saw himself as he really was.

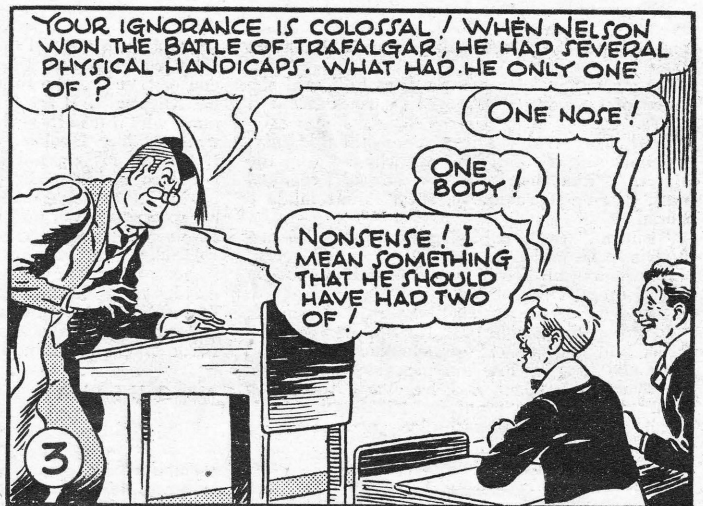
"My only Sunday mortar-board!" he gurgled, aghast.

If he went indoors in this condition he would make the world's record mess. Gangs of plumbers would be needed in the bath-room after he had used the bath.

And then Will Hay's eyes fell upon the imposing granite fountain which adorned the centre of the quad. He made up his mind quickly. The quad, at the moment, was completely empty.

He stepped into the fountain-pool, and a moment later he was wallowing about like a small-sized hippo, getting off the worst of the mud. It would only take him a couple of





minutes to get himself comparatively clean, and there was not a soul about—
 "Gug-gug-good gracious!" yapped Will feebly.

How he could have got the impression that nobody was about was a mystery. For when he dashed the water out of his eyes, after wiping off layers of mud, he found that the quad was not only crowded with boys, but positively congested.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 It was an appreciative audience. Jerry Smart & Co., of the Fourth, were there in force. Gunter and Wilkins, of the Fifth, were laughing like a couple of hyenas; and even the Shell and the Third and the Second were well represented. Will Hay sat up in the fountain-pool, and vainly attempted to adjust the glasses which were not on his nose.

"Go away!" he said severely.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "You forgot the soap, sir!" yelled Dicky Bird.

"What about the towels?" chirruped Sammy Straw.

Fruity Snell and Tubby Green and Carboy clearly stated, in loud voices, and in various ways, that "poor old Will Hay" had gone off his rocker. The roars of laughter increased to such an extent that Stuckey of the Sixth came charging up to find out what all the noise was about. And then Stuckey added his own Bray to the rest.

"What's all this commotion?" demanded an angry voice, and Dr. Erasmus Shrub, the Head of Bendover strode through the noisy throng.

"Disgraceful!" he said angrily. "Who is responsible for this outrageous scene? Stuckey!"

"Sir!" gasped the prefect.
 "How is it that I find you doubled up with preposterous laughter, instead of doing your

best to quell this unmannerly disturbance?" demanded the Head. "Who is that—that wretched boy in the pool? How dare he play such tricks—"

"Ahem!" Will Hay coughed behind his hand, and then rubbed his nose and arched an eyebrow. "The fact is, sir—"

"Mr. Hay!" ejaculated Dr. Shrub, with a jump.

"The fact is, sir—"
 "Good gracious me! Are you out of your mind, Mr. Hay? gasped the Head. "Or is this—this extraordinary performance your idea of a joke?"

Will rose to his feet with dignity—or, at least, with as much dignity as a man in his condition could muster, which wasn't worth mentioning. He explained very clearly that he had been nearly killed by hit-and-run road-hogs, and that he and the Duddlebury Lane ditch from now onwards were sworn enemies. He even explained why he had got into the fountain, but the Head failed to appreciate this thoughtful act.

"Really, Mr. Hay, I think you had better go in and lie down," he said, with some agitation. "I will—er—ring up the doctor and—"

Will interrupted in a firm voice, insisting that he required no doctor. And it was while he was getting out of the fountain-pool, very wet but comparatively clean, that Jimmy Carboy and Jerry Smart had a quick look into the attache-case. What they saw caused their eyes to pop and their mouths to water. It was very seldom, indeed, that they saw a pork pie of such magnificence.

"The greedy old blighter!" hissed Jerry. "Buying pork pies so that he can stuff himself on the q.t.!"

"It's ours now!" grinned Carboy.
 But it wasn't. Will Hay, finding that Dr. Shrub was still regarding him askance, seized

the attache-case and marched indoors. The Head had the appearance of a man who is humouring the victim and causing necessary delay while the keepers are speeding to the scene. And Will wasn't having any of it—but he had the pork pie!

WILL HAY took the attache-case into the bath-room with him, and this simple action reduced the Fourth Form plotters to a state of sheer impotence. Bagging a pork pie seemed a simple enough matter, but when the said pork pie was locked in the bath-room, with the owner of the pie in the bath, the difficulties were insuperable.

A little later on, when Will Hay came downstairs, he was once again his old clean and dry self. A hot bath had worked wonders, and he hadn't even caught a chill.

"The greedy old glutton!" came the indignant voice of Dicky Bird. "Takes the giddy pie into the bath-room, if you please! I'll bet he's wolfed most of it by this time!"

Will Hay paused on the stairs. He had made no sound, and the juniors in the Hall were unaware of his close proximity. The subject of their talk had the natural effect of bringing Will up all standing. That pie, as a matter of fact, was in his bed-room, and he had not given it another thought.

"Not likely!" said Jerry Smart, with scorn. "I'll bet that pie's still all in one piece. The old fathead is going to scoff it in his bed-room after everybody's asleep!"

"But that's just where he's wrong!" continued Jerry Smart. "Ten to one he's left the pie in his bed-room cupboard, and we'll nip in there as soon as the coast's clear and bag it."

"And have a feed of our own in the dorm!" grinned Sammy Straw. "We'll smuggle it in, hide it under one of our beds, and divide it up after lights out. How's that?"



"Topping!" agreed Jerry. "Just the six of us—see? Mum's the word, you chaps! That pie, cut into six pieces, will give us a nice hunk each."

"No sense in letting the others in," said the voice of Carboy. "Everybody would want a share."

Will Hay rubbed his nose thoughtfully, grinned, and carefully retraced his way up the stairs. It was surprising how the stairs creaked now, whereas, previously, they hadn't made a sound!

"Shush!" came a hissing warning. "Somebody's coming!"

There was no help for it. Will Hay, coughing discreetly, descended the stairs again.

"Ah, my little squirts!" he said, beaming. "Nothing like a cold bath for making you feel brisk and energetic!" He looked upon them over the tops of his nose-nippers and arched an eyebrow. "But if I hear any little tick mention the word 'fountain' I'll dust his pants until he'll use the mantelpiece as a table for weeks!"

"Fountain, sir?" said Jerry Smart innocently. "What fountain?"

"Whack, whack!"

"Yow!" hooted Jerry, as Will's cane descended well and truly. "Yaroooooooh!"

"Just a sample, my lad!" laughed Will Hay, and strolled on. But five minutes later he was up in his bed-room again, regarding the pork pie with a loving eye.

"If the little blisters want a feed they shall have a feed," he murmured. "Who am I to deny their simple pleasures?"

Meanwhile, at a spot some miles away, a police cordon had stopped the car which had caught Will to embrace the ditch. It was a surprise ambush; a barricade across the road that had not been seen until too late. The driver and the man next to him, unable to get out before the car stopped, were promptly arrested. But a third man made a wild leap over the hedge and succeeded in getting away. He was off in the darkness before any of the police officers could break through the hedge.

"A pity!" said the inspector in charge, after a brief look at the prisoners. "The fellow who escaped was Hooky Hooker himself. Search the car."

The car was searched, but nothing was found.

"So Hooky got away with the Culper diamonds, did he?" grunted the inspector. "Just our luck—"

"What about our luck?" growled one of the prisoners. "If we hadn't lost the blinkin'

swag you wouldn't have got us in this trap! We'd only just discovered that the pie had gone, an' we was all flustered."

"Pie!" repeated the inspector sharply. "If you're trying to be funny—"

"All right, I'm funny!" interrupted the man, who did not see the fun of going to prison while Hooky Hooker, who had distracted him from his driving, got away. "Hooky put the necklace inside a big pork pie, and when we hit a bump some miles back on the road—because some fool was in the way—the attache-case must have jolted out of the car."

Hooky Hooker had arrived at exactly the same conclusion. He remembered that the incident had happened near Doddlebury, and he had caught a glimpse of a schoolmaster in a billowing gown and a mortar-board. So Hooky made tracks for Bendover.

WILL HAY stood in his bed-room, regarding the pork pie with a regretful eye. It was a truly magnificent pie—a king among pies—and it seemed a pity to tamper with it. The crust was rich and flaky—and probably very indigestible. "Decidedly indigestible!" murmured Will, brightening. "I don't suppose it would do me any good to eat the stuff, anyway. After all, the meat is the star turn of any pie."

With great care, he removed the top crust. It was a "raised" pie, and, therefore, the sides and the bottom were all in one piece, and the lid, so to speak, had been put on last. It was a comparatively easy matter for Will to cut through the surrounding jelly and remove the meat intact. It came out in a solid lump, and this he placed on a plate.

His next proceeding was quaint. In a basin he had a curious and interesting mixture. The ingredients consisted mainly of sawdust, ink, cayenne pepper, and liquid glue. He proceeded to pack the empty pie-shell with this appalling concoction. Having filled it to the top, he replaced the lid of crust, and grinned.

"And I hope they enjoy it!" he murmured. That special mixture had been thought out with care. At the moment it was soft; but when Jerry Smart & Co. sampled it after lights out, it would have had time for the glue to set a bit, and it would then cut exactly like the original pie.

Will concealed the block of meat in his bed-room cupboard, and he left the pie standing invitingly on the dressing-table. It was nearly bed-time for the Fourth, so if the pie was lifted immediately, the juniors would have no time to sample it until the school was quiet.

Having emerged from his bed-room, Will Hay found Sammy Straw loitering about in the

offing. A little farther on Carboy was leaning against a wall for no apparent purpose.

Will had a kindly word for them both, and then he walked on, with billowing gown, to his study. He shut himself in, sat down in his favourite chair, and ignored the faint scufflings outside the door. A scout—perhaps a couple of scouts—hanging about his study while the main force was at work.

Soon after that it was bed-time. Will emerged, looking very innocent, and when he took a peep into his bed-room, the pork pie had gone. Will's grin grew wider and wider until his nose-nippers zoomed off.

Everything went on as usual. From the Fourth Form dormitory came the usual din; the usual prefect went round at the usual time and saw lights out. After that there was the usual second din, gradually dying away as the juniors went off to sleep. Finally, complete peace reigned.

When it seemed that everybody in the dormitory was sound asleep, a figure sat up in bed, and it belonged to Jerry Smart.

"Hist!" he whispered cautiously.

Five other figures sat up like five jack-in-the-boxes.

"Think it's safe?" breathed Dicky Bird.

"Safe as houses," whispered Jerry. "All the chaps are sleeping like logs. Gather round, my sons!"

Carboy licked his lips.

"This is going to be good!" he said dreamily.

"Who's got the knife?" asked Sammy Smart.

Jerry Smart had the knife. He also had the pie. He had just fished it from under his bed. It was wrapped in a big newspaper, and, as he uncovered it, a beam of moonlight shone in the window and revealed it in all its beauty.

"Buck up!" breathed Dicky impatiently. "I hardly had a bite of supper, as I didn't want to spoil my appetite! I say, a sixth of a pie like this is a nice tidy hunk!"

A forbidden feed in the dormitory was always a big occasion; but there was something very special about this particular feed. The wherewithal for the tuck-in had not been boned from another fellow's cupboard or tuck-box, but from Will Hay—which made it all the more enjoyable!

Jerry's knife sank deeply into the pie. He wasted no time over the operation. He made six swift divisions. The whole essence of a dormitory feed is to get it over quickly. An interruption at the end of the feed is far better than an interruption at the beginning.

"Here we are—a piece each!" murmured Jerry.

They helped themselves like half a dozen hungry wolves. Six sets of teeth sank simultaneously into six sections of pie. Six jaws began to champ with joyous delight. In spite of that moonbeam, it was very dark in the dormitory, and none of the juniors had caught a fair glimpse of the pie's interior. And who would suspect a pork pie, anyway?

Except for the sound of champing, there was silence for about six seconds. After that even the champing ceased, and the silence which followed, lasting about three seconds, was the lull before the storm.

"Grooooooh!" gurgled Jerry Smart wildly.

"Yow! Eeeeeee!" shrieked Carboy.

"Blub-glub-blooooooh!" howled Dicky Bird.

The other three were even noisier, and six mouths, at the same second, spat out their contents. The juniors were not particular about direction, and startled boys, awakened from their sleep, found the dormitory a flying mass of moist fragments.

"I'm poisoned!" hooted Jerry Smart, leaping up and down and fanning his mouth.

"Help! Water!"

"Fah! It's glue or something!" howled Carboy. "Glue and sawdust!"

"My mouth's like a volcano!" bellowed Sammy Straw.

The uproar was terrific.

"Have you chaps all gone dotty?" yelled Fruity Snell, leaping out of bed.

"They're off their rockers!" said Sansom, staring.

It was an excusable thought. Jerry Smart & Co. were dashing about the dormitory like maniacs. The flavour in their mouths was not

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only too awful for words, but their tongues and gums and throats were practically on the point of bursting into flame.

"Ahem!"

The door had opened before anybody noticed, and Will Hay walked in. In his hand he carried a cane, and the cane was swishing suggestively. On Will Hay's face, however, there was a benevolent smile.

Everybody had frozen in his tracks after the first wild dash to get back into bed. There was a silence that could have been cut with a knife.

"What's all the noise about?" asked Will, looking round. "And all this litter? Who's been playing funny tricks?"

Silence.

"Take your time," invited Will agreeably. "I only want to know where the body is; also, who has been murdered."

Silence.

"My first impression," continued Will, "was that a band of roving Red Indians had got into the school and had murdered the whole bunch of you in your beds—in itself, a thundering good idea, if messy. Well, isn't anybody going to start talking? Do I have to carpet-beat your pyjamas?"

On many an occasion Jerry Smart & Co. had scored off Form-master Will Hay; but Will was turning the tables this time with a vengeance! The juniors were tongue-tied. To tell the truth was impossible. All they could do was to stand helpless and hope for the best. The cream of the whole joke was that they knew perfectly well that Will Hay himself had faked that pie, but to accuse him of it was impossible—unless they confessed that they had bagged it.

"Water!" shrieked Jerry Smart, unable to stand the burning heat of the cayenne pepper any longer. "I've got to have water!"

"Water!" yelled the other five.

Jerry made a dash for the door, reckless of the fact that Will Hay was in the way. Swish! The cane whistled round about Jerry's legs and helped him on.

Swish, swish, swish!

The others ran the gauntlet unflinchingly. A couple of swishes with a stinging cane was better than the torture which was affecting their mouths and throats.

"Peculiar!" said Will Hay, cocking one eye after the departing six. "Those little ticks seem unusually thirsty, don't they?"

He pointed with the end of his cane.

"I can't imagine what all this litter is, but I'm coming back in ten minutes," he added darkly. "If it isn't cleared up by then, there's going to be fireworks, d'you understand?"

He strode out of the dormitory, thoroughly satisfied with himself. Even the ordeal of falling into the muddy ditch was fully compensated for. He felt, in fact, that he could sleep soundly and happily. He had no intention of going back to the Fourth Form dormitory in ten minutes, but that was just where he had the young blighters on toast. He knew it, but they didn't.

Having removed his dressing-gown, in the privacy of his bed-room, he rubbed his hands together, took out the chunk of pie meat, and placed it on the dressing-table. But when he licked his lips he did so, somehow, in a mechanical way. He had promised himself a liberal slice of this meat before going to bed, but now that the moment had arrived, he wasn't so sure.

"Tempting," he murmured wistfully, "but, on the whole, inadvisable."

"To-morrow!" he murmured hastily.

And he put out the light and went to bed.

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EXACTLY how long Will Hay had been sleeping he did not know, but he awoke with a start to find a torchlight flashing into his face. This was the least of his discoveries, as it turned out. When he sat bolt upright, he saw a masked figure beside his bed, and in the masked figure's other hand there was a gun!

"Stick 'em up!" said the masked figure.

Will stuck 'em up. As he did so he saw that it was nearly half-past eleven, and Will, as a matter of fact, had been asleep for a very short time.

"Listen, my good man!" said Will earnestly. "That gun! If it's all the same to you, I'd rather you pointed it at the ceiling—or the floor—or even at the window."

"One yap out of you, and you're for it!" hissed the intruder. "Where's that pork pie? Come on—cough up!"

"Cough up!" repeated Will, with a start. "Do you think I swallowed it whole?"

"Don't give me no back answers!" snarled the other. "Where's that pie?"

He had seen the attache-case on the floor, so he knew very well that he was talking to the right man! But Will Hay had been doing a spot of fast thinking. He remembered that Gunter and one or two other Fifth Formers had been standing about the fountain earlier in the evening.

Would a burglar enter a man's bed-room, point a gun at him, and demand a pork pie? Ridiculous! But would a hungry Fifth Former dress up as a burglar and demand a pork pie?

"What do you take me for, you young blister?" roared Will suddenly.

Down came his right hand, and the action was so unexpected that the gun was knocked out of the intruder's hand in a twinkling. Will's other hand shot out and grasped the mask, revealing the foxy features of Hooky Hooker!

"Crumbs!" gurgled Will Hay faintly.

The shock of that discovery was tremendous. The knowledge that the cracksman might have shot him dead made him go goosey all over. But it was too late to withdraw now. He made a wild grab, seized Mr. Hooker round the middle, and they both rolled to the floor. Struggling wildly, they shot across the room in a tangled heap, and brought up with a jerk against the dressing-table. Here they managed to get to their feet, still fighting.

"Gimme that pie!" snarled Hooky savagely.

And at that moment Will's right hand, clutching round over the dressing-table, came in contact with the chunk of pie meat!

"Here it is!" he roared.

Squish! Plop!

He hurled the meat with all his strength, and it burst like a bomb over Mr. Hooker's features. And then Will Hay jumped a clear foot into the air with surprise. Festeoned over Hooky's face, in addition to the fragments of meat, was—a diamond necklace!

"Hi! Help!" hooted Will, realising—at last—that he was dealing with a desperate character. In that flash, he knew why the car had been going so fast, and the mystery of the pork pie was explained. He had wondered, all along, why a pork pie should be carried in an attache-case, rather like important official documents.

He grabbed at the necklace, but Hooky, with one swipe, sent Will reeling back. And Will, fetching up against the wireless set, brushed his hand against a knob, turning it as far as it would go. It was the knob for switching the set on and was also the volume control.

During the few seconds that elapsed while the valves were heating up, Hooky Hooker reached the door and tore it open. He ran full-tilt into Jerry Smart & Co. Waiting in trepidation for Will to return to the dormitory—as he had threatened—they had not been able to sleep. And the noise had attracted them.

"Help! Burglars! Thieves!" hooted Will. "Stop that man! Grab him!"

There was a wild scuffle, a series of thuds and bangs, and Hooky was firmly grabbed.

"Police message before the last news," came the thunderous voice of the fully-turned-on radio. "The famous Culper diamond necklace was stolen from Culper Manor this evening by armed bandits, who succeeded in

getting away in a car. The police have reason to believe, however, that the thieves lost the diamonds in a peculiar way. They had been concealed within a large pork pie, and if any person should find this pork pie, particularly in the region of Doddlebury—"

"Ancient history" scoffed Will Hay, turning off the wireless with a flourish.

"My only sainted aunt!" yelled Jerry Smart. "Do you mean to say, sir, that you knew about the necklace all the time? You set a trap for the burglar, and— Well, I'm dashed! Give him a cheer, you chaps! Three cheers for Will Hay!"

"Hurrah!"

Will Hay got the cheers, he got all the credit, and he also got a nice fat reward. All Mr. Hooker got was five years!

Where's that tiger? . . . You all know that famous tune 'Tiger Rag,' but next week you will be able to read about the tiger that made Will Hay lose his rag. You simply must not miss this rollicking laugh-a-line exploit of the world's funniest Form-master.

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