

THE STARS — WILL HAY : STEELE OF STOKE : LEONARD HENRY : BUFFALO BILL : SEXTON BLAKE — ARE HERE!



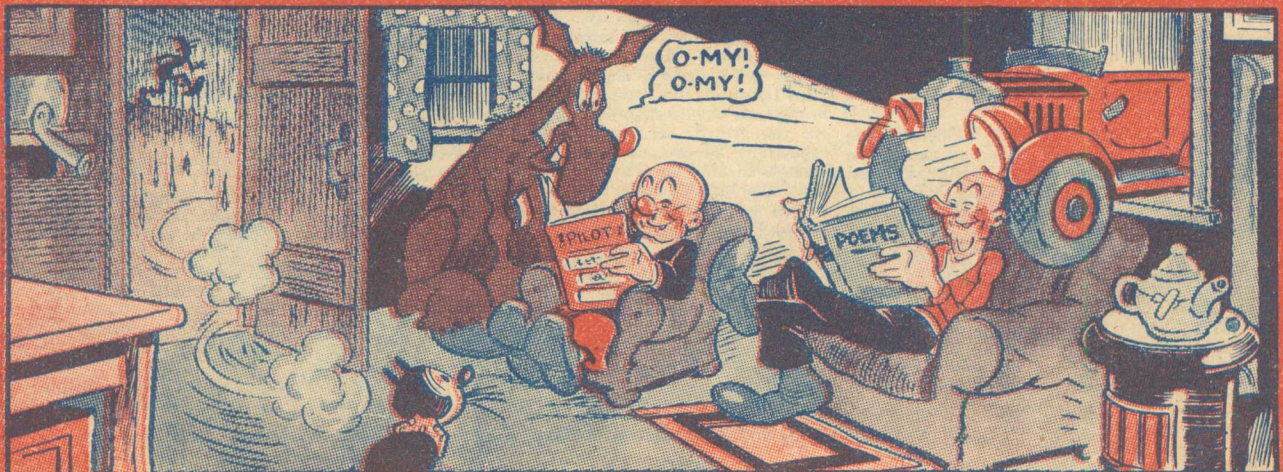
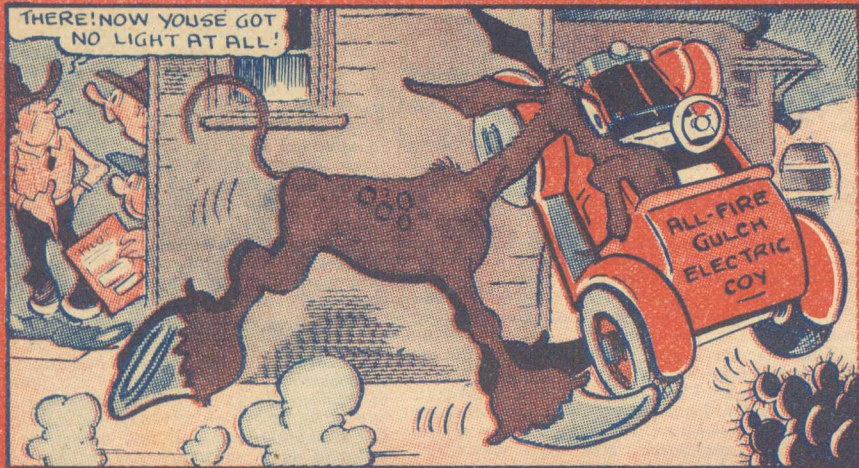
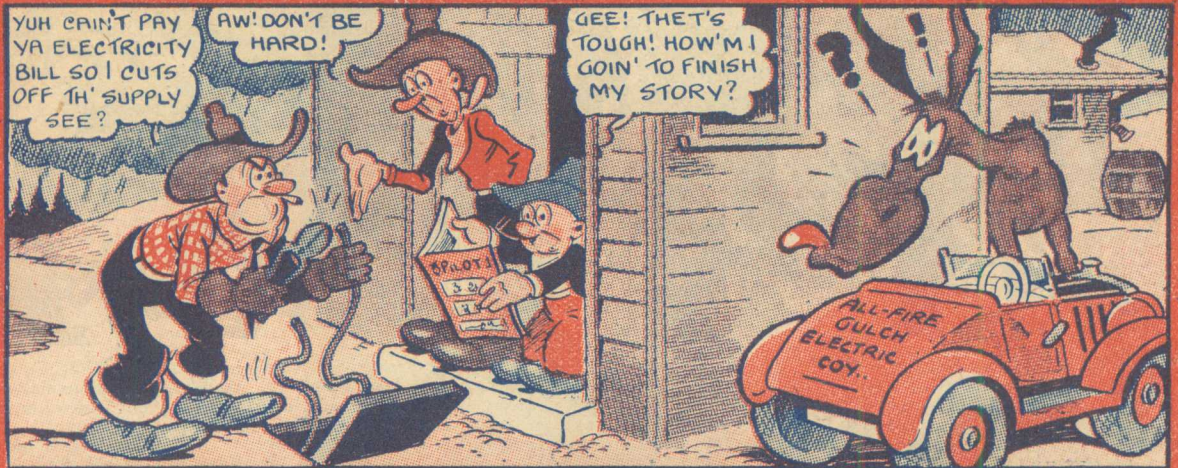
The PILOT

EVERY FRIDAY

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MIKE,
SPIKE
&
GRETA
—OUR KRAZY
GANG—IN
"A
LITTLE
CO-
OPERATION"





By courtesy of Gainsborough Pictures.

WILL HAY stared in astonishment. Will was sitting at the window of Mr. Choot's study at Bendover, talking to the master of the Fifth, when the startling scene at the school gates dawned on his amazed vision.

Will had intended to walk over to Didham, after class, to look in at Stinger's World-Famous Menagerie. He had dropped in to ask Choot to go with him. Now he wished he hadn't.

Mr. Choot, who had spent his far-off younger days in the wilds of South America, was telling him a hunting story. Choot's study was adorned by the skin of a magnificent jaguar, shot by Choot, and Will had heard that story times without number.

But Will Hay forgot that he was late for the visit to Didham, as he stared from the study window at a figure that came suddenly bolting in at the gates of Bendover. It was that of Monsieur le Bon, the French master.

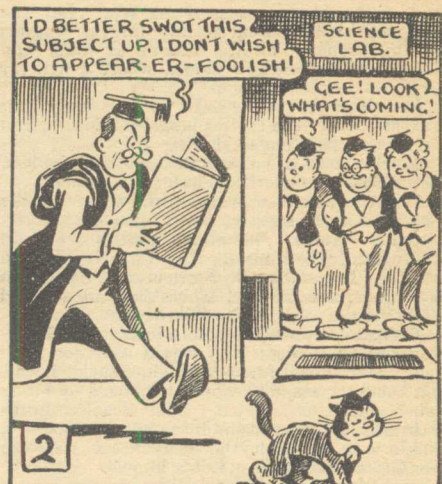
Mossoo Bong was large and fat, and nobody, looking at him, would have expected to see him sprint. Now he came charging in at the gates, as if he fancied that he was doing the school hundred yards.

Kelly, the porter, blinked at him; but he had time for only one blink. Then Mossoo hurtled into him and sent him spinning. Kelly crashed, with a roar, and Mossoo, after reeling a moment from the shock, charged wildly on. He was heading for the House, and, spotting the open window where Will Hay sat, he scudded for that window.

He reached it, grabbed the high stone sill, and started clambering. Will gazed at him, dumbfounded.

"Au secours! Au secours!" spluttered Monsieur le Bon, clambering frantically.

"Suckers!" repeated Will. Will was not fearfully well up in French. He did not realise for the moment that Mossoo was yelling for



help. "My dear old colleague, this isn't the school shop!"

"Ze help!" yelled Mossoo. "Zat fearful beast—au secours!—elp!"

He clambered. But Mossoo had a lot of weight to lift, and the law of gravitation seemed rather too strong for him. He gasped and gurgled and heaved, but he failed to heave his avoirdupois up on the window-sill.

"'Elp me in a window!" shrieked Monsieur le Bon. "Ozzervise I am torn in pieces and devour! 'Elp! Au secours!"

"Oh, all right; any old thing!" said Will, and he grasped the French master by the collar to haul him in. He grasped with both hands and tugged.

There was a sudden rending sound. The collar parted. Mossoo, half-way up, floundered back and bumped into the quad. Will, with a torn collar in his grasp, staggered backwards across the study. He caught his feet in the jaguar skin, and landed backwards on Mr. Choot's ample waistcoat. Mr. Choot sat down again in his armchair with startling suddenness, and Will Hay sat on his knees there.

"Oooooogh!" gasped Mr. Choot. "My dear—grooogh!—Hay—ooooh!"

"Suffering sardines!" gasped Will.

He bounded up. Mr. Choot stayed where he was—winded. Will rushed to the window. He stared out blankly. Monsieur le Bon had scrambled to his feet, but he seemed to have given up that window as a bad job. He was sprinting along to the door of the House. Dozen of fellows in the Bendover quad were staring at him. Some of them shouted encouragement.

"What is this? What does this mean?" The imposing figure of Dr. Shrubb appeared in the doorway as Mossoo charged wildly up the steps. "Monsieur le Bon, what—what—"

"Le jaguar—laissez moi passer!" spluttered Mossoo.

But Dr. Shrubb did not let the excited Frenchman pass. He frowned portentously and grasped him by a plump shoulder, as he reached the doorway. Mossoo, thus checked in his onward career, whirled round the headmaster. The impetus of his rush carried him right round Dr. Shrubb, and the headmaster of Bendover revolved completely on his axis.

"Monsieur!" gasped the Head. He got Mossoo Bong to a standstill at last. "What—what does this mean? Are you out of your senses, sir? Why—"

"Le jaguar—échappe!" spluttered Mossoo. "Chez les Stinger, a Didham, on a laisse échappe le jaguar!"

Dr. Shrubb was rather better at French than Will Hay. He jumped.

"They have let the jaguar escape at the menagerie at Didham?" he gasped.

"Mais oui—oui—oui—"

"Bless my soul!"

Mossoo, released by the startled Head, bolted into the House and vanished. He was discovered, later, under a bed; but for the moment he was forgotten in the startling effect of the news he had brought. If a wild and woolly beast had escaped from the menagerie at Didham, it was no wonder that Mossoo had hit the home trail at 40 m.p.h., to hunt cover, and it was time for everybody else to hunt cover also. An escaped jaguar was more than a joke.

"Mr. Hay!" gasped the Head, as Will came billowing along from Mr. Choot's study. "You heard—an escaped wild beast. We must think of the safety of the boys. Go and tell Kelly to shut the gates instantly. Order the boys into the House. Close all doors and windows. I—I—I will see immediately to the window of my study—"

"If you prefer, sir," said Will, "I will attend to the window of your study while you go down to the gates and tell Kelly—"

"Kindly lose no time, Mr. Hay!" thundered





the Head. "You * are wasting precious moments! Go—go at once—this instant!"

Will Hay billowed out into the quad. Kelly was already slamming the gates. A passing cyclist had shouted the alarm. The gates were banged and locked, and Kelly shot into his lodge and banged the door, and locked that also, and piled an armchair and a sofa against it. Will Hay shepherded the Bendover fellows into the House, while the Head, sitting in great agitation at the telephone, learned, without any satisfaction whatever, that it had last been seen scuttling in the direction of Bendover School.

"HOO, hoo, hoo!" chuckled Koo. Will Hay glared at that member of his Form. Koo, the junior from the South Sea Islands, was a merry youth, and Will liked to see merry faces about him; but there was a time for all things. This, Will considered, was no time for merriment; neither did he see anything funny in the fact that he was armed with a poker instead of a cane. A poker was quite a useful article to have at hand in the hour of danger, and Will had sorted out the biggest poker he could find. But Koo seemed to think that there was something funny in the sight of a big, brass-headed poker tucked under his Form-master's arm, and he chortled.

"Oho! That strikes you as funny, does it, Koo?" inquired Will. "Then possibly it will strike you as less funny shortly! Bend over that stool, Koo! Thank you!"

Whop!
"Owwwwwww!" wailed Koo. "Does it still strike you as funny?" queried Will. "It will continue to strike you as long as it seems funny! Say when!"

"Ow! No! Feller pokee no funnee altogether!" yelled Koo.

"Good!" Will tucked his weapon under his arm again, and ambled away to join Mr.

Choot, who was watching from the hall window on the quad. Choot had his old rifle under his arm, and was bewailing the fact that he had no cartridges for the same. Other members of the staff did not bewail that fact! They preferred Choot with an unloaded rifle!

Koo-kalinga-lalulo-ululo-la wriggled away to the junior day-room. There was a buzz of excitement in that apartment. Every fellow was discussing the escaped jaguar, and wondering whether the fearful beast would be seen at Bendover.

"Hallo, what's up, Koo?" asked Dicky Bird, as the Kanaka junior came wriggling in. "Oooh! This feller Koo laugh along pokee stop along arm belong ole Hay!" groaned Koo. "Ole feller Hay makee pokee stop along trowsers belong me! But you listen, you Dickee, ear belong you. Me savvy makee ole feller Hay plenty too much fright along that feller jaguar!"

"Give it a name, old brown bean!" said Dicky Bird cheerfully. Danger in the ofing did not diminish Richard Bird's cheery spirits. "Is it a jape?"

"Plenty too much funnee!" grinned Koo. "You savvy feller skin belong jaguar stop along study belong ole Choot?" Koo wriggled and chuckled at the same time. "Spousee this feller Koo dressue up along inside ole skin—"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Jimmy Carboy.

"Stop along study-belong ole Hay—makee him plenty too much fright!" grinned Koo. "Makee him plenty solly he whackee this feller along trowsers."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You comey along this feller Koo!" grinned the Kanaka; and the three hurried at once out of the day-room. This was a chance of a jape on the master of the Bendover Fourth that was not to be missed.

Will Hay was in hall with Mr. Choot, so the coast was clear in the direction of the beaks' studies. In a couple of minutes, the

three japers were in Mr. Choot's study and gathering up his famous jaguar-skin.

It was really a splendid skin, complete with the head, which was fitted with quite life-like glass eyes. They carried it along to Will Hay's study, rushed it into that apartment, and shut the door.

The slim little Kanaka easily squeezed into the skin. It almost seemed to be made for him. Dicky Bird and Jimmy Carboy, gurgling with merriment, helped him in, and fastened on the skin here and there with the help of twine. When Koo was on all fours in that skin, he looked so terrifyingly lifelike that he almost alarmed his confederates.

"Ole Hay tinkee this feller that feller jaguar!" came in a chuckle from the terrifying head of Choot's relic of wild days in South America.

"You bet!" chortled Dicky Bird. "Blessed if I don't half think you are, myself!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And within five minutes all the Bendover Fourth were gathered at the end of the passage, prepared to enjoy the jape of the term!

WILL HAY started.

It was getting dark now, and Will had given up watching from the hall window. He came along to his study and breezed in, the poker under his arm. As he closed the door, he heard a sound in the study—a low, purring growl—and he spun round from the door with a jump. There was a crash, as the poker slid from under his arm and landed on the floor.

"What the suffering centipedes—" gasped Will.

"Gurrrrrgh!" came that hideous growl on a deeper note.

Will's eyes bulged over his nose-nippers. It was dusky in the study, but in the light from the window he discerned an awful form. His



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nippers slid to the end of his nose—unheeded. His mortar-board almost rose in the air, as his hair stood on end. Transfixed, he gazed at the jaguar—lifting its head, growling horribly, and fixing its eyes on him.

"Oooogh!" gurgled Will. "The—the—jig-jog-jug—jaguar—oooh!"

Will had armed himself with the poker, with the fixed intention of sloshing that jaguar right on the nut if it came his way. That intention now became unfixed. Will did not stoop to pick up the poker. He yanked the door open and made one wild leap into the passage.

"Gurrrrh!" came behind him and speeded him on.

"Anything up, sir?" asked Dicky Bird, as Will came charging down the passage, his mortar-board on the back of his head and his gown streaming behind him.

"Run!" gasped Will. "Run! Hook it! Bunk! Mizzle! Beat it! Rush! Scamper! Whiz! The jig-jig-jig-jig—jaguar's in my study!"

Will set his Form a good example. A streak of greased lightning had nothing on Will at that moment. He did not doubt, of course, that his Form were following at top speed. Naturally, they would, with a wild and savage jaguar loose in the studies. He tore on, and bounded up the stairs.

But the Bendover Fourth were not following. They knew exactly how wild and savage that jaguar was. They roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
The jaguar emerged from Will Hay's study—without his skin. Koo joined the crowd of juniors, grinning, leaving Mr. Choot's relic lying on Will Hay's carpet.

Will Hay, without looking back, was doing the stairs three at a time. He supposed that there was wild alarm on all sides. But there wasn't. Instead of alarm, there was almost hysterical merriment.

"Poor old Hay!" gasped Dicky Bird.

"Where's he gone?"

"Hunting cover!" gurgled Jerry Smart.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Bendover Fourth yelled. They howled. They almost wept. A stern voice broke in on their hilarity, as Dr. Shrubb swept on the scene with a frowning brow.

"Boys! What is this uproar? What—"
From an upper landing came a shouting voice.

"Follow me at once! Boys, do you hear? Danger—the jaguar! You blithering little ticks, do you want to be lent rim from rim—I mean rent limb from limb? Quick! This way! Hustle!"

"What can this mean?" gasped Dr. Shrubb.

"Bird, explain this at once!"

"I—I—I think Mr. Hay thinks the jaguar has got into the House, sir!" stuttered Dicky.

"What? Absurd! Mr. Hay!" The Head glared up the stairs. "Come down at once! What does this mean? Come down!"

"You'd better come up, sir!" gasped Will.

"Bring the boys! We can barricade ourselves in the dormitory. The jaguar—"

"Nonsense!"

"In my study, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Boys, stand back! Mr. Choot, Mr. Shandy, kindly proceed to Mr. Hay's study at once, and ascertain whether there is any cause for this alarm—"

"After you, Choot!" said Mr. Shandy.

"I was about to say, after you, Shandy!" said Mr. Choot.

"Will you kindly do as I request, without loss of time?" exclaimed Dr. Shrubb. "As for you, Mr. Hay—"

Will came billowing down the stairs again. Will was not going to stand back while his colleagues went in dire danger! He stared along the passage over his nose-nippers. There was no sign of the jaguar there! Still, Will had seen him in his study; he knew that!

"He—he—he is there!" gasped Will. "I saw him, sir, with my own eyes—"

"I do not suppose for one moment, Mr. Hay, that you saw him with anyone else's," snapped Dr. Shrubb. "But I do not believe that you saw him at all! An absurd panic—"

"Me goey, sar, sposee you likee!" said Koo meekly. "This feller no flaid along feller jaguar, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Is this some jest of the juniors?" exclaimed Dr. Shrub. "Mr. Choot, if you do not share Hay's ridiculous terrors—"

"I will go, sir!" said Mr. Choot; and he marched resolutely down the passage.

"You shall not go alone, Choot!" exclaimed Will Hay valiantly. And he breezed after the Fifth Form master. Mr. Shandy followed more slowly. Dr. Shrub remained where he was—staring sternly after them.

"OH!" gasped Mr. Choot.

One glimpse in at the study doorway seemed to suffice for Choot. He glimpsed a spotted skin! He bounded back into the passage.

"Yaroooh!" roared Will Hay. He was close behind Mr. Choot, and the Fifth Form master landed on his toe!

Choot was no light-weight! Will Hay roared with anguish. He gave Choot a shove in the middle of his portly back, sending him spinning forward again. Then he hopped on one foot, roaring—forgetful even of jaguars.

Mr. Choot stumbled forward, and fell on his portly knees in the study doorway. He gave one gasp of awful apprehension, expecting the spring of the jaguar. But the jaguar did not spring. And in a moment more Mr. Choot's awful apprehension disappeared as he discerned the interesting fact that it was an unoccupied skin that lay on Will Hay's carpet. Still on his portly knees in the doorway, Mr. Choot gazed at that skin—and recognised his own trophy of far-off South American days!

"There is no jaguar here!" Mr. Choot heaved himself to his feet. "There is the old jaguar-skin from my study—"

"Wha-a-a-t!"

"Absurd!" exclaimed Mr. Shandy. Quite satisfied by that information, the master of the Third looked in. He laughed. "Ridiculous!"

"What?" boomed Dr. Shrub. He arrived in his turn, and glared into the study. "A jaguar-skin—a relic—a trophy—some jest of the juniors, as I suspected."

Will Hay gazed at the jaguar-skin. He blinked at it! He goggled at it!

"My only silk socks!" gasped Will, in bewilderment. "That—that—that's your dashed old skin, Choot!"

"Undoubtedly!" grunted Mr. Choot. He picked it up and draped it over his arm. "Someone has brought it here for an absurd jest, I presume. Is it possible, Hay, that you were scared by an empty skin?"

Dr. Shrub stalked away, followed by the other masters, Choot with the jaguar-skin draped over his arm. Will Hay shut the door, and rubbed his nose in perplexity.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a yell floating along the passage. The Bendover Fourth still seemed to be in a state of considerable hilarity.

"Oh!" gasped Will. The truth dawned on

him. He tore open the study door and glared along the passage. "You iniquitous little ticks—you unspeakable little warts—which of you was parked in that jaguar-skin?"

But answer there came none. The Bendover Fourth melted away from his view, yelling as they went!

WILL HAY frowned.

It was later in the evening, and the Bendover fellows were in their studies at prep; but Will was only too keenly aware that in every study there was chuckling and chortling over that jape with the jaguar-skin. It was the same in the masters' studies. Even Dr. Shrub seemed amused. Will had seen the Head going into Choot's study with Choot, both of them smiling, and from that study he had heard sounds of laughter. It was fearfully peevish. The Head and Choot were amused; but they wouldn't have been so amused had they been taken in like Will!

Will went to the Head's study at last. It was true that he could not name the japer, but he could, at least, explain to the Head that there had been a japer parked in that old skin, and that he really had heard an alarming growl!

He tapped at the Head's door, and opened it.

"Dr. Shrub—" he began.

Then he stopped! The Head was not in the study. Apparently he was still with Mr. Choot.

Will was about to close the door again, when he heard a sudden, startling sound! It was a low, deep growl—twin to the terrifying growl he had heard in his own study! He gave a start—and then he grinned. He was not terrified this time. He was not to be caught twice with the same game.

"Oh! There you are!" chuckled Will, as he glanced at a sinuous, spotted form near the study window.

"Gurrrrrghh!"

"Ha, ha!" trilled Will. "Keep it up, my boy! The Head will catch on that it was a japer in that skin when he comes along and spots you! Ha, ha!"

Will reached round the door, and grabbed the key from inside. He slammed the door, put the key in the outside of the lock, and turned it! Grinning, he slipped the key into his pocket. A sound of horrible growling and snarling came from within the study, and the bump of a heavy body on the door! Will chuckled and breezed away to Mr. Choot's study.

The japer was at it again—Will saw that! This time he had selected the Head's study! And this time he was fairly caught!

"My dear Hay"—Mr. Shandy met him in the passage—"I have found that a door was left open at the back of the House. I have closed it now, but do you think it possible that—"

But Will billowed on, and knocked at Mr. Choot's study door. He opened that door, and smiled into the study. Dr. Shrub, who was still there with the Fifth Form master, looked round at him.

"No more jaguars in the House, Hay, I hope?" said Dr. Shrub. He actually closed one majestic eye at Mr. Choot as he spoke.

"Or jaguar-skins in unexpected places?" smiled Mr. Choot.

Will Hay did not answer.

He stared at a jaguar-skin, in its old place on Mr. Choot's carpet! He stared at it blankly.

He had come there to tell Choot where to find his jaguar-skin, and the Head where to find a japer parked in it! And here was the skin!

Will almost tottered.

Choot's was the only jaguar-skin at Bendover. There was no other! No other, except that worn by Stinger's live jaguar! Will felt quite faint! Evidently that escaped jaguar had crept in at Bendover—evidently he had taken advantage of the open door mentioned by Mr. Shandy! Will felt an inward wobble as he realised that it was a live jaguar—the real jaguar—the escaped jaguar—that he had locked in the Head's study!

"Well, Mr. Hay?" said the Head.

Will recovered himself.

"Here, sir, is the key of your study!" he said. "I considered it best, in the circumstances, to lock the door on the jaguar—"

"What!"

"If you telephone to Mr. Stinger, at Didham, sir, I have no doubt he will be glad to hear where his jaguar is to be found—"

"Mr. Hay!"

"In the meantime, sir, he is safe—quite safe! You will excuse me, I am sure, for locking him in your study—so very dangerous an animal, sir—there is the safety of the boys to be considered."

"Bless my soul! Do you mean to say—"

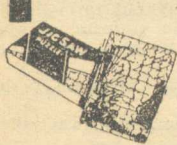
"Listen, sir!"

From the direction of the Head's study came a sound of screeching, howling, and growling. The jaguar seemed to be annoyed by being shut in—and was still safely shut in when Mr. Stinger and his men arrived from Didham to snaffle him!

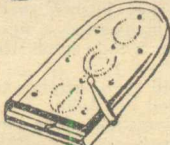
They cheered Will Hay in Hall that evening. They cheered him till the old oak rafters of Bendover rang again. Not for the first time, Will Hay had won golden opinions from all Bendover; and Will, grinning with all his teeth as he acknowledged the ovation, reflected happily that no man deserved it more!

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