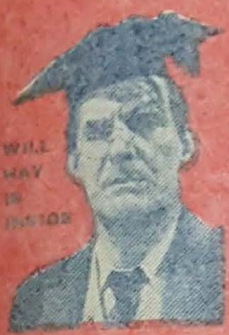


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WILL
HAY
IS
EDITOR

The PILOT

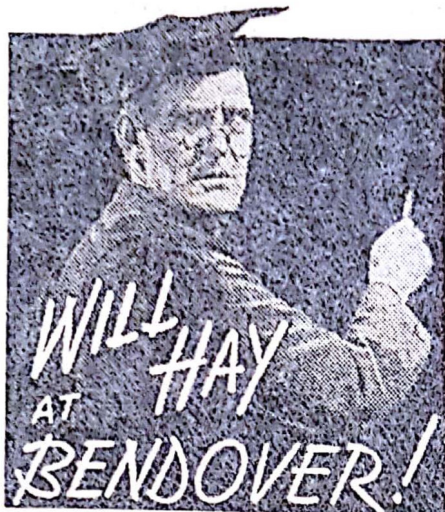
EVERY
FRIDAY

2^d

No. 125. Vol. 5. Week ending February 19th, 1938.

NIKE,
SPIKE
& GRETA
OUR KRAZY
DANCE
in:
"THE
VILLAGE
BLACK-
SMITH"





By courtesy of Gainsborough pictures.

"OF with that coat and all your duds!"
 "My—my clothes?"
 "And that 'at!"
 "Suffering snails!" murmured Will Hay. "Do I sleep, do I dream, do I wonder and doubt? Are things what they seem, or are visions about?"

The shades of night were falling fast! Will Hay, master of the Bendover Fourth, was walking back to the school from Duddlebury, taking the short cut through Diddleham Wood. He was hurrying! He had heard a rumour, at Duddlebury, that an escaped convict from Dartwood had been seen in the neighbourhood. Will did not want to meet that convict, especially at dusk. From what he had heard, Convict No. 88 was not a nice man to meet in lonely spots.

So Will was putting his best foot foremost, as he came along the shadowy footpath. But he stopped, in sheer astonishment, as he heard that surprising conversation under the trees.

He knew one of the voices—that of Mr. Choot, Fifth Form master at Bendover. The other was strange to his ears—rough, unpleasant, lacking in H's; altogether, far from pleasant or cultivated. Will gave his nose-nippers a shove, to set them straight, and blinked into the shadows.

He made out two dim and shadowy forms. One was the portly figure of Mr. Choot. The other was small, wiry, and clad in a garb that leaped to the eye, even in the deep dusk of the wood. It was adorned by broad arrows. Will felt his heart wobble, as he blinked at it. He knew that he was looking at Convict No. 88 of Dartwood. He was, as yet, unobserved, and he felt a strong inclination to back into the wood, and perform the vanishing trick. But he stood where he was—he was not going to leave old Choot to this!

"My coat—my hat—yes—but my trousers—never!" gasped Mr. Choot.



Mr. Choot's voice went into a gurgle, as the convict grasped him. The Fifth Form master of Bendover went over with a bump, crumpling in those desperate hands. A broad-arrowed knee was planted on his portly waistcoat, a face like that of a bulldog glared down at him, and a fist like a leg-of-mutton was lifted for a smite. Another moment, and Mr. Choot would have been stunned, and his personal belongings would have been at the mercy of the ruffian who was badly in need of a change of clothes. But at that moment Will Hay woke to action.

"This way!" shouted Will at the top of his voice. "Here he is! Surround him! Come on, all together! Don't let him get away! Your handcuffs, officer, quick! Surround him before he can dodge! Quick, all of you."

Will, as he shouted, rushed on, and brandished his umbrella. That umbrella cracked on a broad-arrowed cap, and Convict No. 88, with a yell, bounded up.

"Quick!" yelled Will. "Come on! He's running! After him! Quick!"

Convict No. 88 made one frantic bound into the thickets and disappeared. A rustle floated back as he tore away through the wood, running like a deer.

"Oh, what luck!" gasped Will Hay. Never had Will been so glad to hear the sound of running feet!

Mr. Choot sat up, gurgling for breath. He blinked dizzily at Will, who grasped him by the arm, to help him to his feet.

"Quick!" breathed Will. "This is where we seek the open spaces."

"Gurrrgh! I am—am—short of—bib-bib-breath—gurrrgh! Wurrerrgh!" gurgled Mr. Choot. "Yurrrrrgh!"

"I hate to interrupt your saxophone effects, Choot, but really, we must hop it!" urged Will. "If that convict comes back—"

"But—all those men with you—have they not seized him?—is he not captured?—pursued?" gasped Mr. Choot.

Will Hay chuckled.

"A ruse, Choot—there's nobody with me! Pulling his leg, Choot! Nobody but me—little me—and if he tumbles to it, and comes back, he will have those togs of yours, Choot, so—"

"Oh! Ah! Let us go!" gasped Mr. Choot. "We—we had better hurry, I—I think! The scoundrel! He requires a change of clothes to escape the police, Hay, and—and he dared—Which way did he go, Hay? We had better take another direction. I prefer to take a quite different direction."

"HEARD?" grinned Dicky Bird, of the Fourth.

They had all heard, in the junior day-room. There was quite a spot of excitement at Bendover School. It was rather thrilling to hear that an escaped convict was lurking within a mile of Bendover. Dozens of fellows had seen the masters of the Fourth and Fifth come in, breathless.

"I say, suppose that convict came after them!" gasped Tubby Green.

"Just what he's going to do!" said Dicky.

"Rot!" said Jimmy Carboy. "As if he would come here!"

"Well, he was after a change of clothes, it seems!" said Dicky Bird. "Old Hay's would be a better fit than Choot's! There's room for three or four convicts in Choot's waistcoat! So—"

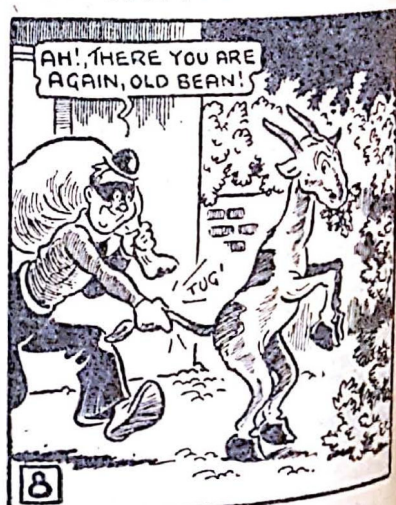
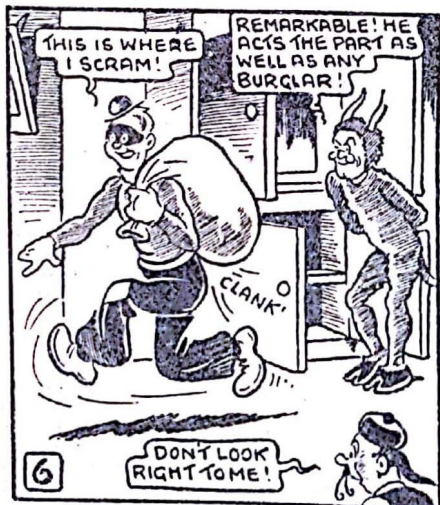
"What the dickens do you mean?" asked Jerry Smart.

"I mean that Hay's gone over to the Head's house to tell Dr. Shirubb all about it, and that he's going to find the convict in his study when he comes back here!" answered Dicky Bird. "In fact, he's going to find two—you and me, Jimmy—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"And with a pistol to his head—"

"A pip-pip-pistol!" gasped Tubby. "Have you got a pip-pip-pistol?"





There was a shuddering gasp from the prisoner, and silence! Jimmy Carboy swiftly shut the door, and got busy with the cord. The jape was working like a charm!

"Look here, Parky, I've got an idea!" said Gunter. "I've been thinking it over ever since those two old goats blew in, spluttering about that escaped convict, and I've got an idea."

jolly well going to make old Choot sit up for giving me all these lines—see? He was scared out of his wits by that convict he saw—or fancied he saw—in Didham Wood this evening. Suppose he saw him here—ran into him, taking his trot in the quad! What? Broad arrows and all, you know."

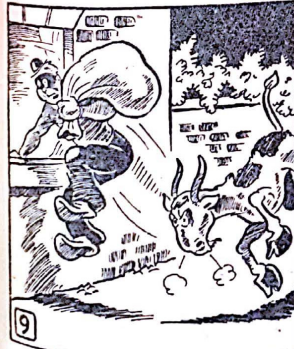
"You've heard about that old ass Hay having been on the stage and on the screen, and all that," said Gunter. "Everybody knows he's got a big box of stage props in his rooms. One of them was a convict outfit."

"Oh!" said Parker.

"Well, I know where to find the box, and I'm going to get hold of that convict outfit of his, dress up in it, and scare old Choot out

"Oh, my hat!" said Parker. "Better not let old Hay catch you rooting after his

"That's all right. He's gone over to the Head's house. I saw him go. I can nip into his rooms, and nip out again." Gunter rose from the table. "You wait here, Parky; you



like a Bendover boy, than a convict!" exclaimed Mr. Choot. "Much more!" grinned Will Hay. "I fancy I know the voice!"

Two juniors wriggled out from under the bed rooted out of their last refuge. Mr. Choot stared at them blankly. Will Hay grinned, with all his teeth.

"Bird! Carboy!" he exclaimed. "Are you the two hulking, desperate ruffians who colored Gunter in my study?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" gasped Dicky Bird. "Only a-a-a lark, sir," agreed Will. "Follow me in—"

"Oh, quite!" said Will. "Gunter, I am much obliged to you for dropping in and getting what I fear, these two dutiful members of my form intended for me. Where is my cane?"

"Oh, here we are!" Bird, will you have the kindness to bend over that chair?"

Six whacks rang through the study like six pistol-shots!

"Carboy, will you be good enough to follow Bird's example?"

Six more whacks!

"Now you may go!" chirruped Will. "When I passed the junior day-room a few minutes ago, I heard sounds of revelry by night! Some sort of a joke on, I fancy! You may go and join in the merriment, my boys! Go and add your merry trill to the happy sound of laughter!"

"Ow!" gasped Dicky Bird. "Wow!"

"Ooooooooooh!" moaned Jimmy Carboy.

"MY dear Choot, if you would care to borrow my cane—"

Mr. Choot had released Gunter. Gunter, on his feet, was edging towards the door. But Choot's plump hand waved him back.

"Thank you, Hay!" said Mr. Choot, taking the cane. "Now, Gunter, explain at once what you were doing in Mr. Hay's study!"

"I—I—I—" stammered Gunter. "I—I was only going to borrow some of Mr. Hay's theatrical props, sir, for—for—for a—a—a joke, sir—"

"Nonsense!"

"I—I was really, sir! I—I—"

"If you do not tell me the truth this instant, Gunter—"

"Come, my boy, cough it up!" said Will Hay, encouragingly. "What was the big idea? Gum in the inkpot? Ink in the slippers? Drawing-pins in the armchair! What?"

"Oh! No, sir! Really—I—I—I was going to borrow your convict outfit, sir, just for a—a—a joke!" gasped Gunter. He did not add that that joke had been intended to be at the expense of Mr. Choot! That part, Gunter realised, it was judicious to keep dark!

"Oh!" said Will. "I see! You young s—"

"An absurd prank!" hooted Mr. Choot. "You might have caused alarm—indeed consternation—by such a ridiculous prank, Gunter—"

"D-d-do you think so, sir?" gasped Gunter. "You will take five hundred lines, Gunter."

Mr. Choot laid down the cane. "Go to your study and write them out at once. If you are satisfied, my dear Hay—"

"Oh, quite!" said Will. "But chew on this,

Gunter—if ever I catch you got up in my convict outfit, look out for squalls, hurricanes, tornadoes, and earthquakes! And then some! You get me? Good! Now hook it—I mean, you may leave my study, Gunter!"

WILL HAY started. For a moment, Will had been alarmed! But the next, he was amused!

Will was taking a stroll under the Bendover beeches before supper in the Common-room with the other beaks. The sight of a slinking figure in the broad-arrow costume of a convict was startling, at first sight! But Will remembered, at once, that stunt of Gunter's. He came to a halt, peering over his nose-nippers at the slinking figure under the dusky beeches, and grinned with every tooth in his head.

Evidently, five hundred lines had not deterred Gunter of the Fifth from carrying on with his jape! The dim figure in broad arrows, close to an ancient trunk, was peering towards the lighted windows of the House in the distance. Will had a back view of him. But for his knowledge of Gunter's stunt, Will might have supposed that this really was Convict 88, penetrating within the walls of Bendover School, in the hope of snooping the change of clothes he so sorely needed to make his getaway. But, as it was, Will had no doubt that it was Albert Edward Gunter, and no doubt he was watching for Mr. Choot to appear, to take his evening walk! Had Will had his cane with him, he would have walked up behind that skulking figure and landed a good one from the south. But his cane was in his study. So he stood peering, and debating in his mind the best way to deal with a fellow who was fathead enough to dress up as a convict, when there was an escaped convict in the neighbourhood!

He suppressed a chuckle, and stole away on tiptoe to Kelly's shed. In that shed, as Will was aware, was a large sack. There was also a coil of rope! With the big sack over one arm, and the coil looped over the other, Will Hay stole back stealthily under the beeches.

The slinking figure was still there, watching the House. Will trod as lightly as a grasshopper as he crept up behind it. Gunter—if it was Gunter—did not look round. Closer and closer crept Will, the sack in his hands, the open end ready! Hardly three feet behind the broad-arrowed figure, Will made a sudden spring!

In a split second the open end of the sack was over the broad-arrowed cap, and Will dragged it down, enveloping the figure as far as the knees!

There was a wild, startled gurgle from inside the sack, and the figure began to struggle violently, frantically.

But he had simply no chance! The sack was all round him, and Will tipped him over with a push! As he sprawled, Will whipped the end of the sack tight round his knees, whipped the rope round, and knotted it.

He chuckled. Only a pair of feet emerged from the sack, and the unfortunate prisoner within was quite helpless. The sack rolled, and wriggled, and heaved, and from the interior came a muffled gasping, and gurgling, and spluttering.

"Go it, my boy!" said Will cheerily. "I warned you to look out for squalls and things

if I caught you made up as a convict. This is where you get the squalls and things!"

And Will Hay resumed his stroll under the beeches, leaving the prisoner in the sack to wriggle and gurgle, which he continued to do in an absolutely frantic manner. By the time he got out of that sack, Will thought, Gunter of the Fifth would be tired of playing convict!

It was about a quarter of an hour later that Will heard a loud ring at the gate. Then he glimpsed a figure in uniform striding to the House, and recognised Inspector Plummy, of Didham. Another uniformed figure followed—a Didham police-constable. Quite forgetting Gunter, Will billowed away to the House.

Dr. Shrub stood in the big, open doorway, looking quite agitated. A crowd of Bendover fellows had gathered round.

"Here?" Dr. Shrub was saying. "Are you sure, inspector?"

"We are certain that he came in this direction, sir!" answered Inspector Plummy. "He was seen close by the school wall. That was half an hour ago. He may have eluded us by entering the school—"

"Search must be made at once!" exclaimed Dr. Shrub. "An escaped convict, within the precincts of Bendover! Good gracious! Is that you, Hay? You have been in the quadrangle. Have you seen anything—"

Will Hay did not answer. His eyes were fixed, as if mesmerised, on a face among the crowd of Bendover fellows! It was the face of Gunter of the Fifth!

"Howling haddocks!" gasped Will. "Then who—"

Inspector Plummy glanced round at him. "Mr. Hay! You have been walking in the quadrangle. Have you seen anything of the escaped convict? We are practically certain that he dodged us over the school wall—that he is in the grounds—"

"Oh! Ah! Yes. Quite!" gasped Will. He recovered himself. "Kindly come with me, inspector, and I will hand the man over!"

"You—you have seen him?"

"And caught him!" said Will calmly. "A desperate character, inspector—a very desperate man; but I fancy I have got him quite safe."

The inspector, the constable, Dr. Shrub, Mr. Choot, and a whole army of Bendover fellows followed Will Hay as he breezed away. A dozen flashlamps revealed the well-filled sack that wriggled and squirmed under beeches with two feet wildly kicking from the end of it. Will waved an airy hand.

"Your prisoner, Mr. Plummy!" he said.

Many hands grasped the prisoner as the sack was peeled off and the handcuffs clicked on. Dr. Shrub stared blankly at the convict as he was led away between the inspector and the constable.

"My dear Hay!" he gasped. "You—you—captured that desperate man—alone—single-handed—"

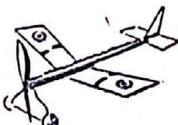
"Alone I did it!" beamed Will. "A trifle, sir! I can do these things on the back of my neck!"

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