

# FIRST BLOWIES

by FELIX RIESENBERG

### Sixth Installment

**SYNOPSIS:** Johnny Breen, 16 years old, who has spent all his life aboard a Hudson river tugboat plying near New York, is tossed into the river by a terrific explosion which sinks the tug, drowns his mother and the man he called father. Ignorant, unschooled, and fear driven, he drags himself ashore, hides in the friendly darkness of a covered truck—only to be kicked out at dawn—and into the midst of a tough gang of boys who beat and chase him. He escapes into a basement doorway where he hides. The next day he is rescued and taken into the home of a Jewish family living in the rear of the second-hand clothing store. He works in a sweatshop store—and is openly courted by Becca—the young daughter. The scene shifts to the home of the wealthy Van Horns on 5th Avenue, where lives the bachelor—Gilbert Van Horn—in whose life there is a hidden chapter. That chapter was an affair with his mother's maid, who left the house when he was accused. The lives of Johnny Breen and Gilbert Van Horn first cross when Van Horn sees Breen win his first important ring battle.

### NOW, GO ON WITH THE STORY

Malone, in the dressing room with the fighters, saw Sol Bernfeld slowly count out three five dollar bills and offer them to John. They were standing in a corner, partly shielded by a locker.

"What's that?" Malone demanded sharply, approaching the boy and his manager.

"What I won. I get fifteen and Sol gets ten; he's my manager," John explained.

"Say—you dirty crook!" The trainer glared at Sol, blanched to a deathly pallor at the discovery of his duplicity. "You give that boy his money. Malone, with a sudden grip, pulled the retreating Bernfeld backward. "Dig, damn you—dig!" and he drove his elbow sharply into the middle of Sol's soft back. Bernfeld, wincing with pain, hesitated. John eyed him with suspicion. "Dig, you rotten crook," and Pug Malone gave him a second and much harder look in the back as a crisp fifty dollar bill came to light. Malone snatched this and handed it to John. "Take that, son, you earned it. An' you," turning to Sol, "fade, an' fade fast, before you get what's comin' to you." Bernfeld took the hint without delay.

"What's your name, son?" Malone asked. "You look white."

"Breen, sir, John Breen," the "sir" slipping from some dormant cell, recorded, perhaps, while overhearing Captain Breen address some wharf or ship officer. Pug Malone, compact, gray haired, and pink, looked like a god to the boy.

"Where do you work?" Malone knew that John was not a professional.

"With Mr. Lipvitch in the Clothing Emporium."

"Pay?" demanded Malone.

"Yes, sir, he pays me." John felt his benefactor was under criticism.

"Of course he does, son. How much? What do you get a week?"

"Three dollars — and board," John added, by way of good measure.

"Board! Board!" Malone ran his hand over the body of the boy. "Board — rats!" And then, seeing the alarmed look on John's face, he went on in a kindly tone. "What you need is feedin'. Better stay here. I'll give you a job, five a week an' real board. Rubbin', that's the work, an' I'll train you, son, an' split right. Are you my boy?"

And so John Breen left the ghetto to enter the Bowery of the Greater City of New York.

A year passed over the head of John Breen, a year of ampler freedom and of physical development, a year charged with the elements of crime, of drunkenness and brawling. John saw, without knowing, the dregs of the city. Blear-eyed victims of the sodden slums of Chinatown drifted into the bar at McManus' for a bowl of beer and a snatch of lunch, then to sink back again to the drug-soaked atmosphere below. He saw these things through the swinging doors between the gym, at one end of the dance hall, and the private parlors and the bar. It was merely another picture of the overpowering city, so tremendous in its contrasts.

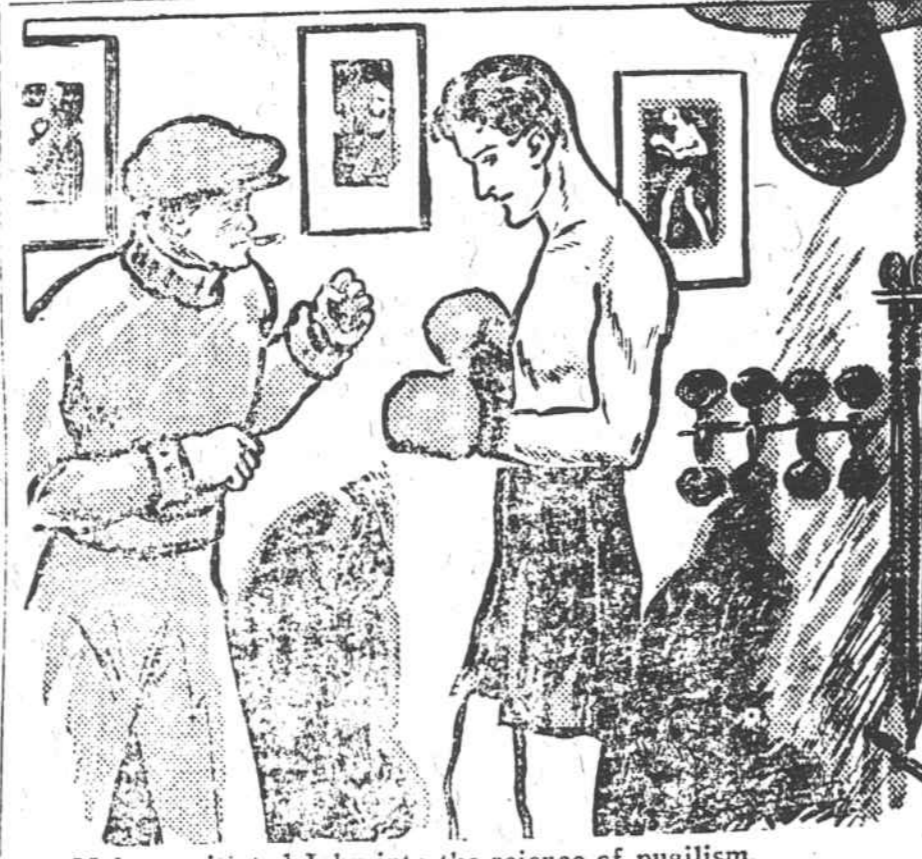
Pug Malone, ex-prize fighter, trainer for the Samson Sporting Club, a hard, honest, medium-sized, middle-aged man, shorn of his illusions, watched over John Breen. John rose at six, with Malone, jumping up in the brisk air when he skipped rope, swung the clubs and shadow boxed under the eye of the trainer who sat on the edge of his cot smoking his morning pipe. After a half hour of this John turned out the blankets to air, and master and pupil met a string of boys at the rear door of the club and ran hard for another half hour before the awakening of the city traffic, coming back to the club for a cold shower and a rub down.

Malone and John then breakfasted alone, in a card room back of the bar, on large bowls of oatmeal, bacon and eggs, rolls and coffee. The day was spent in taking care of a string of fighters, boxing, rubbing and punching the bag, or working at the chest machines. Regular meals, clean air, and early to bed, filled out his frame with an abounding health that glowed and

sparkled through his clear skin in startling contrast to the sudden wrecks of men and women drifting all about.

After two months of training for condition, Malone initiated John into the science of pugilism, coaching him behind closed doors in the art of jabbing, hooking, and blocking blows. He impressed upon him the great value of infighting, and the secret of terrific punches with the crooked elbow, throwing the full force of the body into the blow by applying the fundamental principles of mechanics and dynamic force.

One day, after a long go with Malone himself, the trainer, wiping a bleeding nose, and out of breath, re-



Malone initiated John into the science of pugilism.

marked shortly. "You'll do to take a crack at a few second raters." John flushed. "Sure—you must always win. Don't forget that, John. Get the habit of always winnin'—always. It's the principle of success."

And then John polished off a half dozen "set ups," third and second rate boys disposed of with startling rapidity and with cold calculating precision. Almost overnight the name of Fighting Breen, the welter weight, became known on the Bowery from Chatham Square to Cooper Union. The Grogan Gang claimed him as one of their original members and boasted of his renown. Fighting Breen was on the road to championship honors and rewards.

And at most of these fights, sitting near the ringside, alone or with Judie Kelly, was the well-known sporting man, Gilbert Van Horn. He always let heavily on Fighting Breen.

"No," Malone was positive, "that boy's under my care. Never mind about meetin' him now. He'll be a champion, then you can all meet him. The kid's too young—don't give him bum ideas. You sports spoil too many good fighters."

Strangely, it was Marvin Kelly who wanted to talk with John Breen. Gilbert merely looked on. He had bought a Panhard, and on days following the fights roared through the countryside in clouds of white dust, tearing up the water-packed macadam. People thought he was crazy in his goggles and mask. He hardly knew whether he was or not. At Dobbs Ferry he upset a farmer's truck cart, the horses were really at fault, and the *Morning Advertiser* carried a long story of his doings. It seemed as if the Van Horns would always be in the public eye.

In the meantime, Malone, guarding John with the care of a father, placed his winnings in the Bowery Savings Bank and John, at the time of the reform wave, engineered from the inside, had saved over four hundred dollars and had also provided himself with an elegant wardrobe. The lapse in the fighting game pleased him for he was beginning to hate the contests. A feeling of hopeless unrest seized him. He became moody, discontented, pettish. Malone studied the boy and wondered what poison was entering into him when they were engaged in the heat of the great municipal campaign of 1901.

Malone sensed something strange in John, just what he attempted in vain to discover. But the boy, noting a bar-room loafer sitting at one of the tables thumbing a newspaper, knew that he was looking at a superior being. The bum's clothes might be foul; he might be filthy inside and out, but he possessed a key, the great key to all; he could read. John had grasped a word or two in casual contact with letters. He knew that R Y E spelled rye whiskey and that B E E R spelled beer, but the label *Pilsener Genossenschafts-Brauerei* was utter mystery. He did know that there were such things as letters and an alphabet. But he knew of no way in which he could go about the task of acquiring the art of reading, or of what he might find out should the

gift come to him like magic in the night. For he did dream such miracles, often, that he could read, and just as he was about to gain some mighty truth his fairy gift faded away. Then, at times, he consoled himself with the thought that it was no great gift after all. None of the readers he saw were particularly wise, except, of course, his idol, Pug Malone.

John's inability to read was brought to light one day. "Here's the story of my scrap with Stiff. I just dug this up in my old trunk. Lookit over, Jack, an' you'll see Stiff topped me by ten pounds," and Pug held out the paper to John. John took the paper, glanced at the full length wood-cut of Malone,

halted the trainer in his recital.

"Pug, I can't read a damn word!" he said.

"Can't read! Can't read the *Gazette*?" Malone almost dropped a bottle of seltzer he was about to squirt into a highball, a customer having appeared before the bar at that agitating moment. "Well, I'll be damned!" and Pug shot the water with such force it splashed the bar, drowning out the Scotch. "Here, take some more," and Pug passed the bottle back to the customer who spiked the drink liberally, wondering what the excitement was all about.

When Malone recovered the whisky bottle he turned to the boy. Tears glistened in John's eyes and stamed his cheek where he had roughly dashed a sleeve across his face. A great lump rose in the throat of the trainer. He went to the end of the bar, poured out a large drink of cold black coffee and tossed it off. When the customer left he returned to John.

"Why in the name of hell didn't you tell me this before?"

"Too busy, Pug," the boy explained haltingly. "I wanted to make good at the scrapping. I ain't had no chance. I figured I was too old. So what's the use?" John's voice held a note of hopeless maturity. Time, the master, had passed him by. On leaving the bar Pug and John walked into the gym and donned gloves for their usual fast round before supper. Malone, scoring a hard left to the nose, drew blood.

"There, son, you see you got to go to school now." He carefully wiped the red smear from his glove with a towel, while John laughingly held his bleeding nose. "It's night school for you. Night school with them kykes an' Polacks. You start tomorrow, kid, at the beginnin'." Pug was positive. "I'll bet you'll be readin' the *Police Gazette* in a month," he added hopefully.

John Breen knew no more where he was heading than did the first voyagers who sailed their crazy caravels across the waters of a virgin world. He plowed ahead with an energy sustained by his magnificent vitality. In six months' time he had burst his prison bars. In his feverish research he ran beyond the limits of the school. In a year he carried on his quest to science and philosophy. The day John Breen first stumbled into a second-hand book store he became aware of a vast mine of incalculable wealth.

John trembled as he walked off with his treasures, and then spent the night searching the pages, wringing from them the ecstasy that went into their making.

described in said deed of trust; Sunset Park as shown by map and survey made by H. R. Queen, dated May, 1926, recorded in Book 1 page 116 records of Jackson County, accepting from said map lots nos. 19, 20-21-22.

2nd Tract: Beginning at a stake in N. bank of Highway No. 106 the S. E. corner of G. A. Geisler's tract in Sylva, N. C., the following described lands, to wit:

1st Tract: one hundred fifteen N. E. corner thence eastwardly with Dillard's lines to S. C. Cogdill's line

### NOTICE OF SALE

NORTH CAROLINA JACKSON COUNTY.

I will on the 29th day of October, 1932, sell to the highest bidder at the Court House door in Sylva, at 2 o'clock noon the old jail lot at Webster, more particularly described as follows:

Beginning at a stake on the South side of Main Street of Webster, the Northwest corner of the Thomas lot and runs with said Thomas line S. 16 1/2 E. 57 feet to a stake; thence N. 43 1/2 E. 45 feet to a stake; thence S. 46 1/2 E. 207 feet to a stake in the J. W. Davis line; then with said Davis line N. 43 1/2 E. 90 feet more or less to J. W. Rhinehart's Southwest corner; thence with said Rhinehart's line N. 45 W. 264 feet to a stake at Main Street, said Rhinehart's corner; thence with the line of Main Street S. 43 1/2 W. 125 1/2 feet to the beginning, as surveyed by Rogers Coward, County Surveyor, September 27, 1932.

The Board reserves the right to accept or reject any and all bids.

This the 28th day of September, 1932.

Signed: N. D. Davis, Chairman, Jackson County Board of Education

### NOTICE OF SALE OF LAND

Default having been made in the payment of the indebtedness therein secured, the undersigned trustee, will, under and by virtue of the power of sale contained in a certain deed of trust, executed by J. T. Dean and wife, E. M. Dean, dated Sept. 4, 1926, and duly recorded in Book 100 at page 288, of the records of deeds of trust, in the office of the register of deeds of Jackson County, offer for sale, and will sell, to the highest bidder for cash, to satisfy said indebtedness, interest, and cost of sale, at the court house door in the town of Sylva, North Carolina, at 12 o'clock, noon, on Monday November 7, 1932, the following real estate:

Being lots 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, and 28

### WEBSTER HIGH TO PRESENT PLAY TOMORROW NIGHT

The play "That's One on Bill," will be given at Webster High school tomorrow evening at 8 o'clock. The admission will be fifteen and twenty-five cents, the proceeds of which will go to the benefit of the school. The public is cordially invited.

### FOR SALE

One pure blooded Pole China bear, two years old. A fine fellow to put out on range with four sows. Can be seen at Fairfield, Inn, Sapphire.

W. F. Lewis, Sapphire, N. C.

### Block A, Oaklyn Hills subdivision

as described in a map recorded in Map Book No. 1, at page 109, in the public registry of Jackson County, North Carolina.

This September 5, 1932.

D. G. Bryson, Trustee.

10 6 4ts

### Work Weary "NERVES"

Do they make you Restless, Cranky, Tired, Sleepless, Dyspeptic, Head-achy? Do they spoil your pleasure and interfere with your work?

Tens of thousands have found a way to get relief from over-worked nerves—a way so simple, so pleasant, so low in cost, that we are constantly receiving letters that say, "If I had only found Effervescent Nerve Tablets sooner."

"I was very nervous from over-work. I couldn't sleep, my appetite was poor, and I felt weak for a long time.

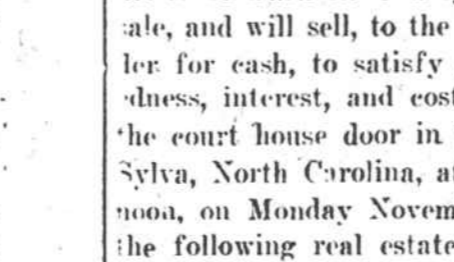
"Used Dr. Miles' Nervine and now feel fifteen years younger and I am working the same as I did before—fourteen to fifteen hours daily.

"Sorry I did not learn about this wonderful medicine sooner as I had tried everything I could hear of, without results, and Dr. Miles' Nervine put me back on my feet."

When you are nervous, try this—put a Dr. Miles' Effervescent Nerve Tablet into a glass of water. Watch it bubble up like sparkling spring water—taste it—enjoy the feeling of calm and relaxation that follows.

In Dr. Miles' Effervescent Nerve Tablets a splendid formula for soothing over-worked nerves is combined with bicarbonate of soda and cane acid which tend to correct hyper-acidity—a frequent cause of nervousness.

**DR. MILES' EFFERVESCENT NERVINE TABLETS**



### Place Your Order Early for Christmas Cards

Engraved or Printed

Our New Beautiful Sample Line Is Ready for Your Inspection . . . and at Greatly Reduced Prices. See them and Make Your Selection Early.

### NOTICE OF SALE UNDER DEED OF TRUST

By virtue of the authority contained in a deed of trust executed by M. Buchanan and wife Belle Buchanan to A. M. Frye, Trustee, said deed of trust being made to secure the payment of certain indebtedness and default having been made in the payment of said indebtedness and the said Trustee having been requested to sell the lands

Continued Next Week

### Rheumatics THRILLED

When Torturing Pains Are Stopped!

A doctor met with great phenomenal success in treating rheumatism. His office was crowded with patients from far and near. He was finally induced to make an outstanding prescription available through drug stores so all could benefit. Thousands who were freed from the torturing pains of rheumatism, neuritis, numbness and stiffness with this amazing prescription. Make a difference now, intense the pain or long you've suffered it very long. These doses don't bring disease, counteracting drugs, all relief your money are do opiates or narcotics in Rheumatics. Swift and powerful relief. Rheumatics doesn't stop your pain. It stops the only cause suffering. The only prescription that has ever been packed suffering on their own work or play.

SYLVA PHARMACY

### Work Weary "NERVES"

Do they make you Restless, Cranky, Tired, Sleepless, Dyspeptic, Head-achy? Do they spoil your pleasure and interfere with your work?

Tens of thousands have found a way to get relief from over-worked nerves—a way so simple, so pleasant, so low in cost, that we are constantly receiving letters that say, "If I had only found Effervescent Nerve Tablets sooner."

"I was very nervous from over-work. I couldn't sleep, my appetite was poor, and I felt weak for a long time.

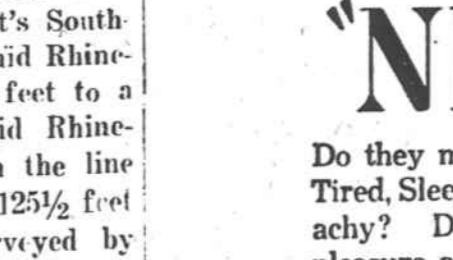
"Used Dr. Miles' Nervine and now feel fifteen years younger and I am working the same as I did before—fourteen to fifteen hours daily.

"Sorry I did not learn about this wonderful medicine sooner as I had tried everything I could hear of, without results, and Dr. Miles' Nervine put me back on my feet."

When you are nervous, try this—put a Dr. Miles' Effervescent Nerve Tablet into a glass of water. Watch it bubble up like sparkling spring water—taste it—enjoy the feeling of calm and relaxation that follows.

In Dr. Miles' Effervescent Nerve Tablets a splendid formula for soothing over-worked nerves is combined with bicarbonate of soda and cane acid which tend to correct hyper-acidity—a frequent cause of nervousness.

**DR. MILES' EFFERVESCENT NERVINE TABLETS**



### Place Your Order Early for Christmas Cards

Engraved or Printed

Our New Beautiful Sample Line Is Ready for Your Inspection . . . and at Greatly Reduced Prices. See them and Make Your Selection Early.

### Jackson County Journal