

FIRST LOVIES

by FELIX RIESENBERG

SIXTH INSTALLMENT

Johnny Breen, 16 years old, who had spent all of his life aboard a Hudson river tugboat plying near New York, is tossed into the river in a terrific collision which sinks the tug, drowns his mother and the man he called father. Ignorant, un-schooled, and fear driven, he drags himself ashore, hides in the friendly darkness of a huge covered truck—only to be kicked out at dawn—and into the midst of a tough gang of river rat 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 their second-hand clothing store. He works in the sweatshop store—and is openly courted by Becka—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 elbows 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 hook 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" clipping from some dormant cell, recorded, perhaps, while over-hearing Captain Breen address some wharf of 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 feeding. Better stay here. I'll give you a job, five a week an' real board. Rubbin', that's the work, and 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 middleaged 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.

Bridge Play in American Legion Posts



Soon now, American Legion Posts all over the U. S. will sponsor bridge play in an International Tournament, the returns to go to state relief of unemployment and for the American Legion War Memorial in Paris. . . . Here is the model—and the poster—painted by Howard Chandler Christy, left, which will herald the event for Legionnaires.

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 cool 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 sodden 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, remarked 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 winning—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 over night 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 Judge Kelly, was the well-known sporting man, Gilbert Van Horn. He always bet heavily on Fighting Breen.

"No," Malone was positive, "that boy's under my care. Never mind about meeting 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 farmers 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 engulfed 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 barroom loafer sitting at one of the tables thumbing a newspaper, knew that he was looking at a superior being. The bum's clothing 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 Pilsen 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, middle weight champion, etc., etc., his eye roaming over the figure of his friend in fighting pose. Tears welled into his eyes; the picture blurred; the red tinged sheet was not so crimson as he. His blush of shame and his tear-bathed eyes, looking straight at Pug, 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 in spashed the bar, drowning out the Scotch. "Here take some more," and Pug passed the bottle back to the customer who spiked the drink heavily wondering what the excitement was all about.

When Malone recovered the whiskey bottle he turned to the boy. Tears glistened in John's eyes and stained his cheek where he had roughly dashed a sleeve across his face. A great lump arose 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, scorching 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 reading 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.

Continued Next Week

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Continued Next Week

A total of 2,472 hogs with a smoke house value of \$35,000.00 have been vaccinated against hog cholera for farmers in Columbus County during the past month by County Agent J. P. Quinley. There was an average of nine hogs on each of the 273 farms visited.

Rutherford County will be well provisioned for the winter because of the abundance of fruit and vegetables now being canned, reports the farm agent.

President R.F.C. Board



Charles A. Miller, Utica, N. Y., banker, endorsed by Atlee Pomerene, (Dem.) Ohio, a fellow board member, was appointed by President Hoover to the Reconstruction Finance Corporation and will be elected its new president. This appointment completes the Board's roster.

Farm Questions and Answers

Question: Can I use soybean meal in place of animal protein in my laying mash?

Answer: This substitution has been made but is not advisable under most conditions. When soybeans meal is used in place of animal protein the ration must be carefully supplemented with a mineral mixture. Economy in poultry feeding cannot always be measured by price of feeds and it will be just as economical to feed the animal proteins such as fish meal, meat meal, and a milk product as it would to use the soybean meal. These feeds also furnish a wide range of acids which are readily utilized by poultry.

Question: Please let me know if a tomato sucker can be rooted and transplanted and produce tomatoes suitable for market?

Answer: Tomato suckers and branches are often used for producing a late crop but the practice is not as satisfactory as growing plants from seed. Branches that have been in contact with the soil and have developed a few roots may be set directly in the garden if the soil is moist. Usually, however, it is necessary to root the branches in a moist, partially shaded bed and then transplant to the field. With good soil and weather conditions, the well-rooted branches should

produce just as good tomatoes as plants from seed but, due to the extra labor involved in rooting and handling the branches, the use of them is not advised for commercial purposes.

Question: Is the fall crop of native Irish potatoes equal to northern grown potatoes as seed for a spring crop?

Answer: Yes—as far as the yield is concerned as the native seed produce as large and sometimes a larger crop than do the northern grown seed. The crop grown from northern seed, however, matures from two to three weeks earlier than that grown from native seed planted at the same time. The difference in time in getting to market and the resulting price difference is favorable to the northern grown seed.

Question—How can I remove the Bordeaux spray mixture from my grapes after picking?

Answer—A solution made of one part of hydrochloric acid to 500 parts of water is most effective. Dip the grapes in this solution for about one minute and then wash immediately in fresh water. Good strong vinegar with from three to five percent acetic acid may also be used but this is much more expensive than the acid bath as the vinegar

must be used full strength. The acid treatment is both safe and effective if used according to directions and is recommended.

Question—How can I keep my potatoes from turning dark in storage?

Answer—Keep the storage room dark as any exposure to light will cause greening. The best storage is an earth cellar with ample provision for ventilation. Summer storage, however, will be satisfactory if the room or building is kept dark. Any cool, well ventilated building will answer the purpose.

A group of farmers in southern Wake county report they have already threshed out 8,000 bushels of small grain, mostly wheat.

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