

Hooligan Born and Bred.

THE LIFE STORY OF A LEADER OF A FAMOUS GANG, WITH SOME PLAIN MORALS DRAWN THEREFROM.

By One Who Knows Him.

A few months ago a dangerous savage was let loose on the people of London after serving eighteen months' hard labour for an audacious robbery. This individual is a typical Hooligan, and rejoices in being the captain of a formidable gang of race-course thieves and bullies, who when the racing season is off turn their attention to blackmailing publicans and shopkeepers and robbing pedestrians in the localities they infest.

He is only thirty-two, and at his last trial no fewer than fifty-three convictions for felony and assaults were proved against him.

In all he has spent about thirteen years in gaol, and may be said to be a striking example of the failure of our prison system to reform the criminal.

As there is a probability that he may be endeavouring to live honestly, perhaps by some form of hawking, for it is almost hopeless to expect that he will ever do any actual work, I will refer to him as "Darkey" throughout the following sketch of his career, which is a typical one of many thousands of the Hooligans of London.

"Darkey's" father was originally a farm labourer, who, attracted by high wages, left the country and came to London, where he settled in a slum, married a slum girl, and obtained work. As regularly as pay-day came, unconsciously disgusted with his squalid home and his frequently in-

toxicated wife, "Darkey" senior got drunk and violently assaulted his better half, in accordance with the custom of the locality in which he resided.

A MISERABLE CHILDHOOD.

Into such a home little "Darkey" was born, and by the time he was

Miss Nance O'Neil as the Jewess.



three or four years old the drunkenness of his father resulted in his being unable to obtain regular work, and consequently the woman, advised and encouraged by the example of the inmates of a registered lodging-house close by, took him out "gridding" (Anglice, singing in the streets for charity).

Eventually his father ran away, probably went on tramp, and his mother took up her abode in a lodging-house, where she paid 4d a night for her bed and 1d for the child.

In this abode of infamy he was either taught or acquired all sorts of tricks for obtaining money, and was sent out selling matches and papers.

By the time he was a strong lad of fourteen his mother died, and he was cast on the world without friends, save ruffians, ignorant to an extraordinary extent, yet sharp, cunning, and quick-witted, absolutely devoid of any ideas of right and wrong, and brutal and pugnacious to a degree.

As an instance of the brutality of youths of this class it may be mentioned that they will strike a girl at slightest provocation.

There was one hope at this period for "Darkey," and that was that he should be arrested for some offence and sent for a long period to a reformatory, where he would have been subjected to discipline and taught some useful trade.

Unfortunately he did not "fall" until he was sixteen, when he received a month's hard labour for watch "snatching."

A GAOL-BIRD AND A HERO.

This settled his career. On his release he was made a hero of by his "pals," and admitted to the society of race-course thieves, by whom he was taken to race meetings, and he soon became, owing to his strength of arm and brutal boldness, the leader of the "mob."

For years this man and a score of other dangerous criminals have lived, when out of gaol, by violence and robbery. The only things that seem extraordinary is that the law, once it lays hands upon such characters, should ever let them loose on the community unless there is some strong reason to hope they will live honestly and peaceably.

It was the ordinary business of "Darkey" and his gang to blackmail starting-price bookmakers, who knew perfectly well that if they objected or appealed to the police they would be "hit through it," or, in other words, brutally assaulted and robbed. A favourite device of the "boys" was to break a glass in a refreshment-bar and job it into the face or under the chin of offending bookmakers and others who refused to "part up."

One of "Darkey's" proudest achievements was the "rumping" or a non-maker once at Epsom, who thought £5 too much to pay for "protection."

The hookmaker was at once knocked down and kicked, his money, watch, and chain stolen, and his trap (worth nearly £80), smashed to atoms.

BLACKMAIL.

The blackmailing of publicans in certain districts was also a favourite device of "Darkey's." It is no exaggeration to state that there are scores of publicans in London who pay blackmail to the "boys" as regularly as they pay their rent.

If a man refused to pay this blackmail "Darkey" inaugurated the following practice to punish the offender. He, accompanied by several friends, would, at a quiet time of day, go into the bar, call for some beer, and create a disturbance by using foul language and getting up a sham fight.

Naturally the landlord would come into the compartment to quell the disturbance, and he would be at once knocked down and kicked, and, if they thought themselves safe from disturbance, some members of the gang would leap over the counter and empty the tills of their contents.

Shopkeepers and pedestrians have also been this man's victims, and it would take too long to even tabulate the offences for which he has served fifty-four periods of imprisonment.

The question is, what can be done with such a ruffian?—and there are thousands in London every bit as bad.

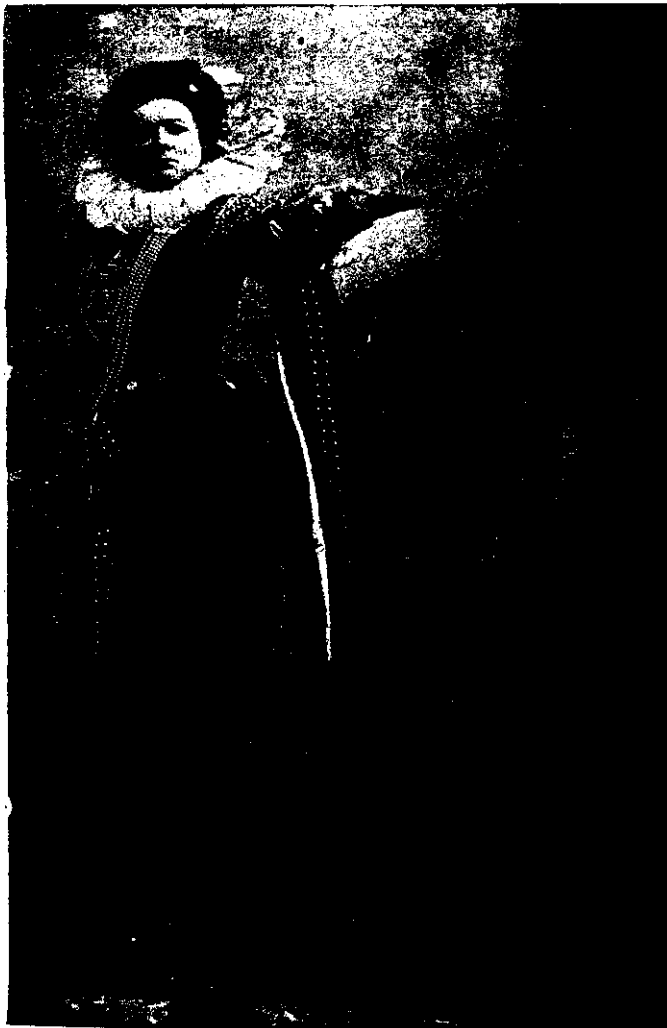
Imprisonment has been tried and found wanting. It has probably only hardened him in savagery, and picking oakum, grinding cranks, and the now almost extinct "mill" have without doubt made him more resolute in his aversion from work.

No one would dream of capturing a wolf and sending it to the Zoological Gardens, for, say, twelve months, with the intention of turning it loose again in the belief that confinement would cure it of its savage nature.

Yet this is what has been done with this human wolf, and, in addition, during his periods of confinement he has been more or less starved and irritated.

To hang him as being both useless and dangerous, as our ancestors—quite logically—would have done, is opposed to the spirit of the age, so we will let him continue his career, checked now and then by imprisonment, until he dies or commits murder!

It would be much better if society treated such men as "Darkey" as we are now only commencing to treat habitual inebriates; that is, to regard them as beings lacking proper moral perception and instinct, and confine them, not in a prison where they are merely punished, but in a prison where they would be educated and trained to become fit members of society, and not, except for breaches of discipline, starved and punished.



Miss Nance O'Neil as Queen Elizabeth.

He: "This ennu is terrible."
She: "But think how aristocratic it is."