



THE BAIRNS' BAND—A London clerk formed it during the war. Now it's offering serious competition to grown-ups in the band contests. Mr Kirkland, the founder, is the conductor. (See article on page 5.)

SOMETHING TO BLOW ABOUT

IN 1944, when doodlebugs were falling all around, the kids of the big blocks of flats in Brecknock Road, Tufnell Park, London, were running wild. Mr W. T. Kirkland, who lives there, decided to give them something to do in their spare time and stop them getting up to any mischief.

So there came into existence one of the youngest brass bands in the country—the Brecknock Estate Prize Band. Oldest member is Johnny Green, 17, who's hot stuff on the bass drum. The youngest is little 10-year-old Mabel Smith, who plays the tenor horn.

There are 25 boys and girls in the band—all keen as mustard. They practise twice a week at the house of their president, Mr J. P. Mitchell. He gave them a good start when he provided £50 for instruments. And he's just bought them a spanking new bass for £18. He used to be a theatre proprietor and is fond of children.

There are eight girls in the band, and Mr Kirkland thinks they're even keener than the boys.

One of the best young musicians is a schoolgirl called Mary Blaxill. She's only 13, but she can handle a trombone like nobody's business. Her ambition is to have a band like Ivy Benson and tour the country. Among the boys, Stanley Braddock takes a lot of beating on the euphonium, and he's only 14.

Already the band has taken part in several contests. They competed against 15 senior bands in 1945 and came in ninth. And they won third prize in a 1944 contest. Now

they're out to win first this year, and they're hard at it, practising their piece—a tone poem, "Homage to Pharaoh."

In the early days band practices weren't much fun. They took place underground in the air-raid shelter. Very often they didn't know there was a raid on above until they heard the "all clear."

Parents were not too keen to allow their children to take up this "noisy" pastime—they weren't sure what the neighbours would say. But they have all been converted now and most are keen supporters. Mr Kirkland got them all to subscribe for instruments. Now the band has over £400 worth of cornets, trombones, baritones, bass and side drums and cymbals.

Mr Kirkland has good reason to be proud. He has taught every one of the kids to play. He should know something about the business, for he has been playing the trombone since he was 12, and was a band-sergeant in the North Staffordshire Regiment during the war. But music's just his hobby nowadays. He spends his days working as a clerk in Islington.

It was a great day for the kids when they headed a May Day festival procession to Hyde Park. This was their first big parade. Since then they have played at the Military Tattoo at Dagenham and at a big sports meeting at Romford.