

ARMY BOY IS BEATEN IN NIGHT RAID — 5 CHARGED

By MURRAY HUBBARD

NINE junior Army apprentices were beaten up during a wild night last Monday at Balcombe Army School, a senior apprentice at the school claimed last night.

He said four or five senior apprentices at the school had beaten up juniors, some as they lay asleep.

Col. J. M. Bennett, of the Army Public Relations Department, said last night an apprentice had been admitted to Heidelberg Repatriation General Hospital.

Col. Bennett said five apprentices had been charged over "pranks" at the school on Monday.

They would face a military hearing.

Other Army sources said five apprentices went on a spree through the camp about midnight.

It is believed they rushed into huts picking on the nearest boy.

'Sickened'

The apprentice in hospital is Stephen Gower, 18, of W.A. He is in a satisfactory condition.

A hospital official said last night Gower had a broken nose and cuts to the face. He will be released in a few days.

Col. Bennett said the boy's next-of-kin had been told of his injuries.

The senior apprentice who rang The Sun last night said: "I have been sickened by what has been going on. It's got to stop — the public must be told about it."

The apprentice refused to be named, but said he was with Charlie Company at the camp.

"Ever since the start of the year these beatings have been going on, seniors on to juniors," he said.

'Burns'

A few weeks ago another boy was treated for cigarette burns."

The apprentice said there were 139 apprentices in his company, about 60 per cent of them in their first year.

"I have lost count of how many of them have been beaten up since the start of the year. Just for the simple reason they are juniors," he said.

About 530 apprentices attend the school, 35 miles south-east of Melbourne. It is the largest boys' boarding school in Australia.

Col. Bennett said last night that he hoped to "be able to bring out all the facts and make them public," as soon as possible.