

THE GREATEST COMPETITION OF THE CENTURY!  
THOUSANDS OF POUNDS IN PRIZES! (See Inside.)

No. 819. Vol. XXIV. Week Ending October 20th, 1923

# The Magnet 2d

Library of School & Detective Stories.

**Grand Competition**

**Starts Today!**

**OUR GREAT "FOOTBALLERS' NAMES" COMPETITION!**  
Hundreds of Magnificent Prizes to the Value of **THOUSANDS OF POUNDS** **MUST BE WON!**  
Turn to pages 14 and 15, and **START TO-DAY!**

Two prize certificates are shown: one for £100 and another for £50, both payable to the prize winner.

**MICK THE OUTCAST!**

(A gripping story of Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, from this week's bumper issue of "good things.")



### THE CHANGE OF A LIFETIME!

**T**HIS week's *Bumper Number* of the *MAGNET* contains more than the usual dash of good things. For the last three weeks I have been tempting your appetites with particulars of our Grand Football Competitions. Well, my chums, it's here at last!

Many of you, perhaps, regard competitions as not worth while entering for. This is where, I feel perfectly confident, you will alter your opinion. For the benefit of those of my readers who have missed the previous announcements concerning this contest, let me hasten to assure you that there is nothing difficult to overcome. Far from it. For sheer simplicity our picture-puzzle contest, which has for its subject,

### "FOOTBALLERS' NAMES,"

will require a lot of beating. And now the prizes! A handsome cheque for the sum of

**\$100.**

tops the list, closely followed by another appreciable amount of cash to the tune of

**\$50.**

Think of those two magnificent awards, chums! You can't ask for them? Quite right! But there are heaps more Wonderful Prizes to follow. For instance,

### 30 SPLENDID "JAMES" MOTOR-CYCLES (Ready for the Road)

for those who long for a speedy and comfortable run in the country. The Wireless enthusiasts among you can take solace in the

### 12 TWO-VALVE WIRELESS SETS.

Followers of Billiards can try their luck to win the

### 6 RELEY BILLIARDS TABLES (6 ft. 4 ins. x 2 ft. 6 ins.)

In addition to this remarkable list of Prizes there are

### 10 GRAMPHONES

to cheer up the wintry evenings,

### 100 GONNET BICYCLES,

each reckoned to last a lifetime,

### 25 MODEL STEAM LOCOMOTIVES (Complete with rails, etc.),

### 50 PAIRS OF BOXING-GLOVES

for lovers of the noble art,

### 60 FOOTBALL SUITS,

comprising Boots, Stockings, Shorts, and Shirts,

100 Model Footballs, 100 Pairs of Rubber Shoes, 100 Fishing Rods,

and last, but by no means to be despised on that account,

250 Pipping Books and other Concoctions

### ALL THESE MUST BE WON!

I'll say no more. If I have aroused your interest you will turn to pages 14 and 15, and

start **RIGHT NOW** with the first set of pictures to be solved. Good luck, chums!

Dealing with a totally different subject, which, however, is of paramount importance, I would draw your attention to



which is selling like hot cakes. Those of you who have made up your minds to possess a copy of this world-famous Annual would do well to place your order with the newsagent **WITHOUT DELAY.**

And now for a few words concerning next Monday's ripping programme. Mr. Frank Richards again obliges us with a splendid story of Greyfriars, entitled:

### "THE GIPSY SCHOOLBOY!"

and I have no hesitation in saying that it will be well received.

### "THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE WHITE HEADBAND"

appears again in full strength. Fervers Locke is nearing the end of his gigantic tussle with Red Mask, and at this important stage of our grand serial, not a line should be missed.

### COMPETITION NUMBER.

With their usual grip on things topical, Harry Wharton & Co. have been burning the midnight oil to produce a Competition Supplement. The result? Well, I'll leave you to discover that for yourselves. I'll tell you this much, however; there are plenty of "laughs" in it.

The following list contains the *actual* names of the footballers represented in the pictures in our grand "Footballers' Names" Contest. Turn to pages 14 and 15.

Ashurst, Anderson, Armstrong, Aitken, Adams, Amos, Alderson, Allen, Armitage, Archibald, Ashmore.

Brett, Broadhead, Blyth, Boreham, Blackburn, Bradford, Bassett, Brittan, Blair, Ball, Barkas, Birrell, Bradley, Barnes, Bulling, Burton, Branton, Buchan, Blake, Bowser, Bishop, Barnes, Bartas, Braithwaite, Bullock, Blisa, Bateman, Best, Bagge, Barson, Broadhurst, Broad, Bolam, Brelsford, Blenkinsopp, Beedle, Birch, Bellamy,

Bainbridge, Bowen, Burnham, Boyle, Blackwell, Bennie, Ballantyre, Buchanan, Bamber, Byers, Banks, Brooks, Blood, Baker, Bird, Brinklow.

Cockle, Crosbie, Cross, Clennell, Cameron, Chedzoy, Cock, Chadwick, Clough, Curry, Coakson, Cope, Cook, Crilly, Chaplin, Collier, Crookford, Campbell, Crown, Chance, Shipperfield, Crompton, Charlton, Cosser, Craig, Cosgrove, Cherrett, Crossley, Carter, Clarke, Cotton, Cunningham, Cairns, Quinn, Camolly, Cassidy, Carr, Cowan, Chapman, Chambers, Clay, Cresswell.

Dunn, Dickson, Dorrell, Dawson, Davies, Donaldson, Dinwiddie, Dimmock, Duckett, Bennett, Bomin, Dawson, Duckworth, Bannan, Banakin, Dreyer, Denoon, Denyer, Darrin, Dunlop, Dixon, Doyle, Doran, Dale.

Ererson, Evans, Ellerington, England, Ellis, Kibbston, Edgley, Eggo, Elliott, Edge, Edwards, Emmett, Ewart.

French, Ferguson, Ford, Forshaw, Fletcher, Flack, Flint, Beebury, Fleming, Fleetwood, Flynn, Fox, Foxall, Fort, Forbes, Fowler, Fookerley, Hadley, Featherstone, Forsythe, Frame, Eyle, Finney, Forster, Fitter, Fairclough, Fern.

Grimshaw, Gill, Gilchrist, Gough, Gillespie, Gainsdell, Gittins, Gibson, Graham, Gold-George, Grundy, Gallogley, Gibbon, Gomm, Gregory, George, Getwood, Groves, Greig, Gardner, Gallagher, Glancy, Greenshields, Gauday, Goodshild.

Howarth, Haworth, Hampton, Harrow, Hurford, Hopkin, Hudepeth, Harris, Humill, Hall, Hardy, Hamilton, Hawes, Handley, Hutton, Hine, Hughes, Heap, Higginbotham, Hoddinott, Hedden, Hilditch, Howson, Hunter, Hayes, Hutchins, Hannaford, Harrold, Howie, Henshall, Hodges, Halstead, Huggell, Hogg, Henderson, Harper, Hulton, Hillhouse, Hair, Hart, Haines, Hole.

Irvine, Islip, Iremonger, Irwin, Jennings, Jack, Jackson, Johnson, Kirton, Kelly, Kneeshaw, Keenor, Kay, Knowles, Kane, Keenlyside, Kidd, Kilpatrick, Keau.

Linfoot, Longworth, Low, Lindsay, Little, Lonsdale, Lockhead, Longmuir, Lea, Lievesley, Lane, Lockett, Legge, Lofthouse, Lenny, Lyner, Lawson, Lambie, Lacey.

Moss, Mort, Mossacrop, Machan, Maitland, Mitchell, Murphy, Morgan, Milton, Mercer, Marshall, Magee, Moore, Martin, Mills, Mason, Mew, Matthews, Moule, Myers, Marsden, Middleton, Maidment, Mahaffy, Mee, Mooley, Muegrove, Malcolm, Morton, Manderson, Meiklejohn, Muirhead, Moffat, Mateh, Meredith, Marriott, Mackie, Menlove, Mitton, Marks, Marsh, McIntyre, McNeil, McKimlay, McNabb, McIntosh, McDonald, McCall, McGorry, McCluggage, McLean, McCandless, McColl, McLacklan, McStey, McAlpine, McKenna, McNally, McNair, McMin, McBain, McCracken.

Nuttall, Neesam, Neil, Needham, Nash, Nisbet, Nelson.

Osborne, Ormston, Orr, O'Hare.

Pym, Pringle, Price, Parker, Poole, Pater-son, Pearson, Penn, Plum, Page, Preston, Probert, Pagnam, Peel, Potts, Palmer, Prouse, Puddefoot, Pender, Pape, Peacock, Pantling, Partridge, Peers.

Quattrill, Quinn.

Robson, Rollo, Raitt, Richardson, Rawlings, Ruffell, Robbie, Rigg, Radford, Ridley, Reay, Ramsay, Robb, Ritchie, Ranskin, Reed, Rooke, Roe.

Spiers, Smart, Stephenson, Seddon, Sewell, Smelt, Smith, Scott, Slade, Spencer, Seymour, Spaven, Sampy, Seed, Storer, Stage, Shea, Steele, Simms, Smalles, Symes, Sturges, Sayles, Spottiswood, Scattergood, Sinclair, Stuart, Sayer, Sutcliffe, Salt, Summerfield, Shaw, Sillito, Sueddon, Sommerville, Sione, Streets, Sampey, Stannard, Skinner, Sage.

Townrow, Turnbull, Tremelling, Thain, Troup, Tunstall, Tresadern, Tonner, Thoms, Torrance, Tompkin, Titmuss, Tempest, Timmins, Thorpe, Templeton, Townsley, Toner.

Urwin.

Voysey, Vizard, Vallie, Voisey, Vigrass.

Womack, Walsh, Weaver, Wilding, Whittin, Wadsworth, Woosnam, Woodhouse, Walters, Walden, Watson, Wainscoat, Wood, Williams, Winship, Wolfe, Whitehouse, Whalley, Whipp, Wolstenholme, Waterall, Worrall, Williamson, Weston, Wigglesworth, Ward, Webster, Whitehouse, Waddell, Wright, Wilson, Wren, Widdowson, Wylie, White, Welsh, Walker.

York.

**Don't miss this wonderful chance, boys!**

The idea that the life of a gipsy is a "bed of roses" is quite an erroneous one. Remember, where there are roses there are thorns. This new character, created by your popular author, will bring home the hardships of an outdoor and so-called "care-free" existence. Make the acquaintance of Mick right away.



By  
**Frank  
Richards.**

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### The Tribulations of Bunter!

"OW!"  
"Hallo, hallö, hallo!"  
"Wow!"  
"What's the trouble?"

"Yow!"  
Billy Bunter's remarks were expressive, but not very intelligible. But it seemed clear that he was damaged.

Harry Wharton & Co., sauntering along from Greyfriars in the sunny autumn afternoon, came on Bunter suddenly. The fat junior was sitting in the grass by the edge of Friardale Wood—or, rather, he was squirming there. For some reason—possibly connected with a boot—he was unable to sit comfortably.

He was mumbling dolorously; and his mumbles changed into deep and anguished groans as the Famous Five appeared in the offing. Bunter was in need of sympathy.

Harry Wharton & Co. halted, and stood surveying the Owl of the Remove with grinning faces.

Bunter had evidently been looking for trouble, and finding it. Often and often Billy Bunter hunted for trouble; but he never seemed satisfied when he found it.

He blinked at the chums of the Remove through his big spectacles, and groaned again.

"I say, you fellows—ow!"

"Well, what's happened?" asked Bob Cherry. "Some of the Highcliff cads been ragging you, Bunter?"

"Ow! No!"

"Run up against Loder of the Sixth and his ashplant?" asked Frank Nugent sympathetically.

"Blow Loder! No!"

"Scoffed too many jam-tarts at Uncle Clegg's?" inquired Johnny Bull.

"Ow! No! I've been assaulted and battered!" groaned Bunter. "Yow! Ow! I'm fearfully hurt! Wow!"

"The hurtfulness seems to be great," remarked Hurrec Jamset Ram Singh. "At least, the groanfulness is terrific."

"Well, who did it?" asked Harry Wharton. "And why?"

"Tell us his name and we'll strew the hungry churchyard with his bones," said Bob Cherry humorously.

"I've been kicked——"

"Not for the first time," remarked Bob Cherry, "and not for the last, I dare say."

"Beast! I've been set on by a gang of gipsies," said Bunter, with a deep groan. "I—I fought like a lion. But they were too many for me!"

"How many?"

"Six or seven. Five or six I could have handled——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm fearfully injured! I've been assaulted and battered and kicked! Some fellows would stand by another Greyfriars chap who had been attacked by a gang of gipsies!" exclaimed Bunter indignantly.

"Well, so we will," said Harry Wharton. "That is, if there's any truth in it. You see——"

"Ow!"

"You're such a giddy Ananias," said Bob. "Your gang of gipsies may turn out to be the smallest boy in the village."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Anybody seen any gipsies in this giddy locality?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Well, there's gipsies about," said Bob. "Squiff mentioned that he'd seen a camp of gipsies, with caravans and things, on Courtfield Common. But I don't see why they should worry Bunter."

"I've been assaulted——"

"But——"

"And battered——"

"But why——"

"And kicked——"

"Well, where are the giddy criminals?" asked Bob. "Gipsies are not going to be allowed to kick Greyfriars chaps—even you, Bunter! Put us on their trail and we'll give them their kicking back, with interest."

"He's in the wood——"

"He—who?"

"The gipsy!" snapped Bunter.

"He!" ejaculated Wharton. "Does 'he' apply to the whole gang?"

There was a chortle among the Famous Five. Bunter had used the singular number inadvertently; but it was evident that the plural number did not apply.

The "gang" consisted of only one gipsy.

"Weren't there six or seven of him?" asked Nugent with a chuckle.

"If there was only one, why couldn't you handle him?" demanded Bob Cherry indignantly.

"A hulking ruffian——"

"Well, a gipsy might be too big for Bunter to handle, even if he had any pluck," said Wharton. "I saw a jolly hefty-looking gipsy on the Courtfield road yesterday; and if it was that chap he would be too big an order for any of us, I think. What was he like, Bunter?"

"A hulking, muscular ruffian——"

"And he walloped you?" said Bob. "What for?"

"Cheek!" said Bunter. "Just rotten ruffianism, you know! A frightful hooligan! He's in the wood now."

"All the six or seven of him?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Beast!"

"Well, we'll look for him, and give him his kicking for himself," said Bob.

"What's he like? How old?"

"About fifteen, I suppose."

"Fifteen!" roared Bob. "A hulking ruffian—at fifteen!"

"Well, he was jolly hefty," said Bunter. "I couldn't handle him, and you fellows know what a fighting-man I am——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. I've been kicked!" howled Bunter. "Some fellows would stand up for their own school. It's a pretty disgrace for a Greyfriars chap to be kicked by a common, low gipsy!"

"So it is," said Bob. "You oughtn't to have let him kick you; but we're not going to have him bragging in his camp that he's kicked a Greyfriars fellow. Let's look for him, you chaps."

"He's in the wood," said Bunter eagerly. "He hasn't been long gone. That's the way he went. Set on him all at once——"

"What?"

"Collar him, you know, the lot of you, and he won't have a chance——"

"You fat rotter!" roared Bob. "Do you think we're a gang of hooligans?"

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Go and eat coke! Come on, you fellows!"

"I say——"

"Rats!"

And Harry Wharton & Co. plunged into the shades of Friardale Wood, to look for the offending gipsy, and Billy Bunter was left alone to groan over his injuries.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### The Fight in the Wood!

"THAT'S the chap!"

"I fancy so!"

"We'll ask him!" grinned Nugent.

It was not more than a hundred yards from the spot where they had left Billy Bunter, that the chums of the Remove came on their quarry. A gipsy lad was standing in the old wood, leaning back against the trunk of a big beech tree, his hands in the pockets of his ragged jacket.

He seemed to be buried in thought; he did not observe the approach of the Greyfriars juniors, as they came through the trees.

He was a rather handsome lad, with a dark, sunburnt face and well-cut features. His clothes were deplorable. He wore a man's coat cut down into a sort of jacket, and a man's trousers cut short into a peculiar resemblance of a pair of knickerbockers. Below the knee his brown legs were bare, but the feet were partly covered by a pair of ancient shoes, almost dropping to pieces. He wore no collar or hat; thick brown hair, almost black, curled in a tangled mass on his head. And it was unmistakable that he was seriously in need of washing.

He did not look up. The expression on his brown, handsome face was pensive and gloomy, and he seemed too deep in reflection to observe his surroundings. It was not till the Removites were quite close at hand that he made a sudden movement, as he became aware of their presence, and a pair of flashing dark eyes were raised to look at them.

Harry Wharton & Co. halted in front of the gipsy boy. They regarded him quite good-humouredly.

The gipsy's face was somewhat sullen as he stared at them. The contrast between their well-cut clothes and his own ragged attire may have struck him painfully.

Bob Cherry raised his cap with exaggerated politeness.

"Good-afternoon!" he said.

The gipsy did not reply.

"Looking for you," went on Bob.

The gipsy stared at him grimly, but did not speak. The sullen and hostile expression intensified on his face, which did not look so handsome with that look on it.

"But we want to make sure that you're the right merchant," Bob proceeded to explain. "Did you kick a Greyfriars chap a short time ago?"

The gipsy spoke at last.

"I kicked a fat fool!" he answered.

"That's Bunter," said Bob. "The description would find him anywhere."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So you kicked Bunter," said Bob, eyeing the gipsy. "Well, we have to kick Bunter sometimes. He's a chap who can do with a lot of kicking. Why did you kick him?"

"Find out!"

"What?"

"Leave me alone!"

"Look here——"

"Oh, get out!"

Bob Cherry's good-humoured smile vanished, and a gleam came into his blue eyes.

Knowing Bunter as he did, Bob would have preferred to hear the gipsy's version of the incident before going on the war-path. But the rude and hostile replies, and the savage and scornful stare that accompanied them, cut off Bob's desire for inquiry. Wrath gathered on his brow.

"Is that how you answer a civil question?" he demanded.

"Let me alone, hang you!"

"I'm not touching you at present!" said Bob grimly. "I fancy I shall soon be touching you, though—hard! I want to know——"

"Oh, shut up!"

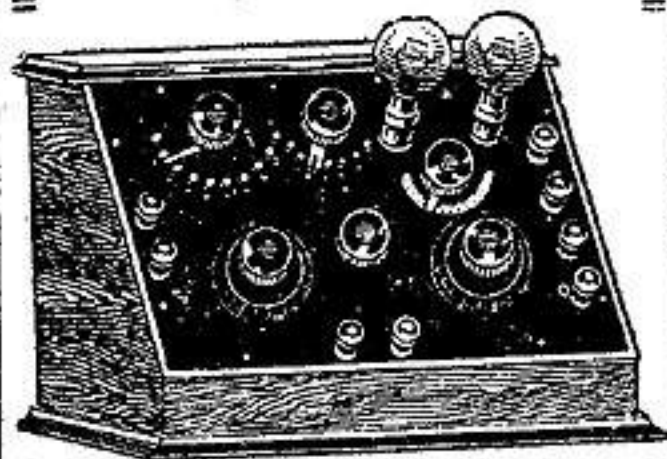
"That's enough!" said Bob Cherry, quite angry now, as was not to be wondered at. He peeled off his Eton jacket, and threw it to Nugent to hold.

"Are you ready?"

The gipsy's lips curled.

"I'm not afraid of you—the whole lot

## LISTEN IN, YOU FELLOWS!



A few moments' careful thought and you can win one of these splendid 2-valve Wireless Sets!

Turn to pages 14 & 15 now!

of you!" he said savagely. "Come on, if you like!"

"That's not our style," said Harry Wharton. "Man to man is fair play, and you can choose your man."

"He's chosen me," said Bob, putting up his hands. "Will you step away from that tree, and come on, you ill-mannered rotter?"

"I'll come on fast enough!" snapped the gipsy, and, with a sudden spring, a good deal like a tiger, he was on Bob Cherry.

Bob was a fighting-man of renown in the Lower School at Greyfriars, and it was but seldom that he was taken off his guard. But certainly he was taken off his guard by that sudden fierce attack. Almost before he knew what was coming, the gipsy's brown fists were dashing in his surprised face, and Bob Cherry went into the grass with a heavy crash.

"Ow!" gasped Bob, as he rolled over. "Foul play!" exclaimed Johnny Bull indignantly.

"He told me to come on!" said the gipsy sullenly.

Bob Cherry sat up rather dazedly.

"It's all right!" he gasped. "I told him I was ready. You're jolly quick with your paws, young fellow-me-lad. But we're not finished yet."

The Greyfriars junior scrambled up, the gipsy standing back and watching him sullenly.

"Come on!" said Bob.

The gipsy came on willingly enough. But his spring, which was as rapid as before, did not take Bob by surprise this time. His hands were knocked up, and Bob's knuckles came home on his nose. It was the gipsy who went down now, and he went down hard.

"Well hit!" grinned Nugent.

"Look out!"

The gipsy was up again like a cat, and springing at his enemy.

Bob Cherry was ready for him.

The fight was hammer and tongs now, and Bob, hefty fighting-man as he was, found his hands full.

The gipsy was rather smaller, much less weighty, and not so strong as the Greyfriars junior. But he was litherness itself, and he had plenty of vigour. And certainly he had plenty of pluck. His nose was streaming red, and one of his eyes was closing, and a crimson stream oozed from a corner of his mouth. But he came on with undiminished pluck, his teeth set.

Bob Cherry's ruddy face showed signs of punishment, and he was breathing hard. But there was no doubt that he was getting the better of the combat.

The gipsy reeled back from a heavy drive, and staggered against a tree. Bob stepped back, and dropped his hands.

"That's enough," he said.

The gipsy panted.

"You've not beaten me!"

"I don't want to," said Bob good-naturedly. "But I'm bigger than you are, old top——"

"You're not!"

"Well, just a trifle, anyhow," said Bob, with a grin. "And I'm heavier. I'm over your weight, young 'un, and so let's call it off."

"You couldn't beat me!"

"Oh, couldn't I?" said Bob nettled.

"Never!"

"Call it off," said Harry Wharton hastily. "You've as good as got him beat, Bob. Never mind what he says. Chuck it!"

"I'm going to," said Bob.

The gipsy's eyes blazed.

"You're not going to!" he exclaimed.

"You started this, and you're going on to the finish, you snob!"

He came at Bob again, though less actively than before. His punishment had told on him. Bob backed away a step, his cheeks crimson.

"I don't see why you should call me a snob," he said quietly. "Keep off, kid. I tell you you've had enough, and I don't want to hurt you."

"Take that!"

"Well, if you will have it——" said Bob resignedly.

Bob Cherry had no choice about it, for the gipsy, with flaming eyes, was at him like a wild-cat. The fight went on furiously.

But the slim, though sturdy, gipsy was over-matched. There was no fellow in the Greyfriars Remove, excepting perhaps Wharton, who could stand up to a slogging attack from Bob Cherry; even Bolsover major had long ago given it up as hopeless. But there were several in the Remove who could have made rings round the gipsy, plucky as he was. The end of the fight was a foregone conclusion, though the gipsy refused to see it.

Another splendid story of Harry Wharton & Co. next week—

But he had to see it, when he went down with a crash into the grass and found himself unable to rise.

He lay and panted, his eyes glittering at Bob.

"That's enough!" said Wharton anxiously.

"I'm not beaten!" said the gipsy hoarsely.

"I don't want to say you are," said Bob Cherry. "You're a plucky kid, and I'm sorry we had any trouble. But you can't go around kicking Greyfriars fellows, you know."

"I will do as I choose."

"Then you'll find yourself up against more trouble, I fancy," said Bob, as he put his jacket on with Nugent's assistance. "Let's get off, you fellows."

Wharton lingered for a moment as his comrades moved off through the wood. He looked down on the gipsy, who gave him a black and bitter glance in response.

"Anything I can do for you, kid?" asked Harry. "You went on too long, you know, and you're done in."

Bob had bathed his face in Friardale, and done all he could to remove the traces of the fray; but there were still a good many traces to be seen.

"Licked that gipsy cad?" asked Bunter eagerly.

"Yes," grunted Bob.

"Oh, good! I hope you gave him a jolly good hiding!" said Bunter. "Did you kick him?"

"No!" roared Bob.

"Well, you must be an ass!" said Bunter. "If you licked him, I suppose you could have kicked him easily enough—he couldn't have helped himself."

"You fat rotter!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

Bob Cherry brushed roughly past the Owl of the Remove, and the five chums went up the staircase. Bunter snorted and followed them. Harry Wharton & Co. were ready for tea, after their ramble; and the five were "teasing" together in Study No. 1 that afternoon.

Billy Bunter's big spectacles gleamed in at the doorway of Study No. 1 after them.

Groan!

"You fat duffer—"

"I'm injured!" groaned Bunter. "I—I'm quite knocked out by that gang of gipsies—"

"That gang of one gipsy?" asked Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast! When a fellow's fearfully injured, after putting up a terrific fight for the honour of the school, the least you can do is to stand him some tea, I think."

"Bow-wow!"

But William George Bunter was still in the armchair—too injured to move, perhaps—when tea was ready. And when it was ready, he insinuated himself into a seat at the table. A hearty welcome was not essential to Bunter's enjoyment of a meal. A hearty meal was all that he troubled about.

"I like poached eggs," he remarked as he helped himself. "You've only cooked seven, Nugent. What are you fellows going to have?"

The Famous Five looked at Bunter as



"Will you step away from that tree and come on, you ill-mannered rotter?" roared Bob Cherry. "I'll come on fast enough," snapped the gipsy. Almost before Bob Cherry knew what was coming the gipsy's brown fists were dashing in his surprised face, and the Greyfriars junior went into the grass with a heavy crash. (See Chapter 2.)

"Mind your own business."

Wharton flushed.

"There's a stream in the wood, yonder, where you can bathe your face, if you want to," he said. "If you want any help—"

"I don't!"

"Very well."

The captain of the Remove turned away and followed his chums, the dark, flashing eyes of the gipsy following him with a glance that was a good deal like that of a wild-cat.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### A Surprise!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

Billy Bunter greeted the Famous Five, as they came into the School House at Greyfriars. He blinked at them inquiringly, and grinned as he noted the signs of damage in Bob Cherry's face.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, roll off, Bunter!" said Harry Wharton impatiently.

"Peter Todd's gone out," said Bunter. "He's actually gone out and left nothing in the study for tea. And my postal-order hasn't come, after all. I mentioned to you fellows that I was expecting a postal-order, didn't I?"

"I think you did—about a million times!"

"Well, it hasn't come," said Bunter, blinking at the chums of the Remove.

"What's a fellow to do?"

"Tea in Hall?" suggested Nugent.

"I've had tea in Hall," said Bunter discontentedly. "That doesn't make any difference to me. I'm hungry. Are you fellows going to ask me to tea?"

"Go and eat coke!"

Billy Bunter gave a sudden deep groan, and staggered into the study, collapsing into the armchair.

"Well, what's that game?" demanded Wharton.

he shifted seven poached eggs to his plate in a heap.

"We're going to have poached eggs!" said Johnny Bull, in a deep voice.

"The poached eggfulness is terrific!"

"Good!" said Bunter. "Get on with them, Nugent, and while you're about it, you may as well do a few more for me."

Frank Nugent, by way of reply, annexed Bunter's plate, and shot the poached eggs back into the dish.

Bunter watched that proceeding in indignant surprise.

"Oh, really, Franky—"

Frank helped Bunter to one egg. The Owl of the Remove eyed it morosely.

"Is that a joke?" he asked.

"No—it's an egg."

"One egg's no good to me!"

"Sure?" asked Frank.

"Yes, quite sure!" snapped Bunter.

"Very good!"

Nugent shot the egg from Bunter's plate to Bob Cherry's.

—entitled "The Gipsy Schoolboy!" Don't miss it!

"I—I say—" howled Bunter.

"You said it wasn't any good, old fat top!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Now, I find it quite good."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter sat speechless for a moment. The poached eggs were disappearing at a great rate; and evidently that item of the menu was "off," so far as William George was concerned.

"Call this hospitality?" he asked, with withering scorn. "If that's the way you behave when you ask a fellow to tea—"

"Not at all," said Wharton, laughing. "Only when a fellow asks himself to tea and wants to scoff the whole giddy outfit!"

"What am I going to have?" roared Bunter.

"A boot, if you don't shut up!"

Billy Bunter decided to shut up. Besides, he was losing time. There were ample supplies of bread, butter, and jam; and William George proceeded to fill an aching void with those comestibles. But he was not looking pleased.

"Pretty rotten spread!" he remarked, apparently by way of grace afterwards. "I do fellows better than this in my study."

"You do everybody as thoroughly as you can," remarked Bob Cherry—with a different meaning for the verb "to do."

"Yah! I say, you're going to have a blue eye!" said Bunter, grinning at Bob's damaged countenance. "Did you really lick the gipsy, or did he lick you? I've my doubts."

"You won't have any doubts about my licking you, if you don't shut up!" growled Bob.

"He, he, he! Your nose is a bit comic," said Bunter. "Seems to have rather a list to port—what? He, he, he! That gipsy ruffian is pretty hefty. No wonder you couldn't lick him, when I couldn't! Of course, I should have licked him if I'd put my beef into it."

That remark seemed to restore Bob's good humour. He chuckled.

"You can cackle!" snorted Bunter. "I wish now I'd taken the trouble to thrash him. These low rotters want teaching their place. Cheeky cad, you know, refusing to clear off when I ordered him. Blessed if I know what the lower classes are coming to!"

"What?" ejaculated Bob.

Harry Wharton gave the Owl of the Remove a steady look.

"How did you land into trouble with the gipsy, Bunter?" he demanded. "You told us that he attacked you and kicked you."

"So he did."

"Well, he looked a rough sort of chap, in some ways, but he didn't look like a fellow to pitch into a helpless fat fool for nothing," said the captain of the Remove. "What's that about ordering him to clear off? What do you mean?"

"I mean what I say!" grunted Bunter. "The cheeky cad was sitting in the grass, when I wanted to sit down and rest. So I ordered him off, of course."

"You ordered him off?" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Of course I did! Think I'm going to have a low rotter squatting about near me?" demanded Bunter. "He ought to have gone at once when I told him. I expected him to. And the cheeky brute didn't even move or look at me, so I gave him a shove. And then—would you believe it—he set on me."

"Why, you—you—"

"Collared me!" said Bunter indignantly. "Took me by the neck, you know, and slewed me round and kicked me—hard!"

"Serve you jolly well right!" roared Bob Cherry. "You fat villain, you cheeked him, like a cad as you are, and told us lies and made me go for him for nothing—" Bob Cherry jumped up in great wrath and excitement, and whipped round the table towards Bunter.

Bunter whipped round in the opposite direction promptly enough.

"Here, I say!" he roared. "Wharrer marrer? Wharrer you getting your rag out for, you ass?"

"I—I'll—"

Bunter dodged again.

"Sticking up for a dashed gipsy?" he gasped. "I suppose I can order a low cad about if I like, can't I? And shove him if he won't obey orders? What's the world coming to, I'd like to know? Yaroooooh!"

Bob's grasp closed on Bunter's collar.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Whoooooop!"

Billy Bunter tore himself away, and fled from Study No. 1 at a frantic speed. He did not even gasp till he was safe in Study No. 7, with the key turned in the lock. Then he collapsed into a chair, and gasped and gasped as if he would never finish gasping.

## THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

### Bob Cherry is Sorry!

**B**OB CHERRY stood in Study No. 1 with a contracted brow. He was greatly inclined to follow William George Bunter along the Remove passage and administer to the fat junior the licking of his life.

"The fat rotter!" he breathed.

"The rotterfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "It is to be terrifically regretted that we went on the warpath after the esteemed and ludicrous gipsy."

Bob breathed hard.

"I wondered why the gipsy called me a snob," he said. "I suppose he set us all down as being swanky cads like Bunter, because we were dressed the same and belonged to the same school. The poor beggar must have thought that we chivvied him because he's poor and ragged and down on his luck."

Wharton looked very uncomfortable.

"It's rotten," he said. "We—we thought that he had been pitching into Bunter, of course. And Bunter can't stand up for himself, so we were bound to—"

"I know that, if he had pitched into Bunter. But the fat cad's owned up that he was swanking and trying to bully the poor beggar!"

"Just like Bunter," grunted Johnny Bull.

"And I—I licked him!" said Bob savagely. "Licked the poor beggar for nothing—for doing just what any fellow would have done if Bunter had cheeked him."

Bob Cherry drove his hands deep into his pockets, his brow gloomy and worried. Every blow he had struck at the sullen face of the gipsy seemed to recoil upon himself now. No wonder the unfortunate lad had been sullen and hostile, when he was suddenly tackled in the wood by a crowd of well-dressed schoolboys—the schoolfellows of the one who had tried to bully him. Doubtless he had set down all the Greyfriars fellows as birds of a feather—judging

Harry Wharton & Co. by his experience of Bunter.

That was a very uncomfortable reflection for all the Famous Five. They had their faults, but snobbishness certainly was not to be numbered in the list.

"It's rotten," said Wharton again. "If we come across the chap we'll try to set it right somehow. We—we owe him an apology for Bunter and ourselves."

"We've got to come across him," said Bob.

"Well, the gipsies are camped near Courtfield," said Harry. "I dare say the kid will be in the neighbourhood for some time."

"They might break camp any time," said Bob. "I've got to see that chap again and explain to him. I'm going to tell him I'm sorry I rowed with him. I'm bound to."

He moved to the door.

"It's close on lock-up," said Nugent.

"I'll chance that. I dare say the chap is still hanging about the wood somewhere," said Bob. "If not, I'm going to the gipsy camp to ask for him. I never felt so jolly ashamed of myself in my life."

"But—"

"Well, I'm going."

"We'll come, too, then," said Harry. "If you're going to be lined for cutting call-over, we'll all be lined!"

"Sink or swim together," said Nugent. "Come on!"

And the Famous Five left the School House together, Bob Cherry's face still very glum. There were a good many Greyfriars fellows coming in at the gates. The Famous Five were the only ones who were outward bound. Peter Todd called to them.

"You fellows will be late."

"The lateness will probably be terrific, my esteemed Toddy," answered Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, and the chums of the Remove walked on, leaving Peter staring.

They went down the lane to Friardale Wood at a trot. Skinner passed them, coming towards the school at a run.

"You fellows had better turn back," called out Skinner.

"What's up?"

"I've just passed a gipsy ruffian in the lane," said Skinner. "Looked to me like a footpad!"

"A kid about fifteen?" asked Bob eagerly.

"Rats! A hulking lout about forty or fifty, with a big stick under his arm, and a scowl like a Hun on his face," said Skinner. "Looked to me as if he was waiting for dusk, to rob somebody. I know I'm giving him a wide berth."

And Skinner trotted on.

"Another of the gipsy party, I suppose," said Wharton. "Well, we're not afraid of him, if Skinner is."

The chums of the Remove proceeded on their way. Near the entrance to the footpath through the wood they came on the gipsy Skinner had described, and whom Wharton recognised as the man he had seen on the Courtfield road the day before. He was a muscular, sullen-looking fellow of powerful build, dressed in dirty and shabby velveteens, with a dirty cap jammed on the back of an oily, curly head of black hair. He gave the juniors a suspicious, hostile look.

They only glanced at him in passing, but he followed and called to them.

"Stop a minute, young gentlemen."

The juniors stopped, quite on their guard, wondering whether the man was a footpad, as Skinner supposed. But his manner was awkwardly civil as he came up to them.

**Mick, the gipsy, has rendered Sir Hilton Popper a great service—**

"I'm looking for a boy," he said. "P'r'aps you young gents have seen him about this afternoon?"

"A gipsy boy?" asked Harry.

"Yes, one of my camp. I know he came in this direction," said the man, his eyes gleaming under his sullen brows. "Name of Mick."

The Greyfriars fellows exchanged quick glances. It was easy to guess that Mick was the gipsy lad whom they had encountered a couple of hours ago in Friar-dale Wood. They could guess also, now, why he had been loitering so far from the gipsy camp. He had been avoiding this muscular brute and his stick.

"You've seen him, p'r'aps?" asked the man, watching the faces of the school-boys keenly and suspiciously.

"If we have, we should want to know why you want him before we told you anything," said Bob Cherry bluntly. "Who are you?"

"My name's Barengro, if it's any concern of yours," said the man sullenly. "And the boy—he belongs to me."

"Are you his father?"

"That's my business."

"And it's our business whether we tell you anything, or not!" retorted Bob Cherry.

"Then you've seen him?"

"That's our business!" grinned Johnny Bull.

The gipsy scowled at them blackly. His stick slid from under his arm into his hand, and his look grew threatening. Harry Wharton & Co. eyed him coolly. The five of them were a good deal more than a match for Barengro, even with his cudgel.

"Looking for trouble?" asked Bob Cherry agreeably. "If you are, we can give you all you want, and a little over."

"With pleasure!" added Johnny Bull politely.

Barengro scowled, and slouched away without replying. Harry Wharton & Co. turned into the footpath in the wood without heeding him further.

"That kid must have a pretty hard time if he lives with that hulking brute," said Nugent in a low voice. "It's pretty plain that the fellow means to whop him."

"Looks like it," growled Bob. "We're not going to help him, anyhow."

"No fear."

The juniors followed the footpath, and came to the spot where the gipsy boy had been encountered. There was no sign of him there now, though they could see the traces where he had lain in the grass after the hard fight.

"I dare say he's somewhere about," said Bob. "It's pretty plain that he's dodging that brute with the cudgel. Let's look a bit through the wood, at any rate."

"Right-ho!" said Harry.

And the juniors pursued their way through the leafy wood as the dusk deepened. Four of the juniors were thinking of call-over, now due in Hall at Greyfriars; but Bob Cherry was determined to find the gipsy boy if he could, and his chums did not think of leaving him. The meeting with the brutal Barengro had deepened Bob's remorse for the conflict with the gipsy boy. It was clear that the unhappy lad had enough to bear without a fight thrown in, and Bob was very anxious to "set it right" somehow with him. It was probable that the gipsy boy, if he was eluding Barengro, was still somewhere in the wood; but the deepening dusk made even Bob realise that it was not much use to seek him longer.

"Help!"

Through the silence of the dusky wood that cry came suddenly, ringing and echoing among the trees.

"Help!"

"What—what the thump—" began Bob.

"Somebody up against it," said Harry Wharton. "This way!"

And the captain of the Remove dashed away in the direction of the cry, with his chums at his heels, forgetting, for the moment, all about the gipsy boy they were seeking.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### In Direst Peril!

**M**ICK, the gipsy, raised his head—a good deal like a woodland animal at a sound of alarm.

The gipsy boy was lying in the grass, on the margin of the stream that flowed through the wood to join the Sark at a distance.

He had bathed his bruised face in the cold water and found some relief; but his nose was swollen, his lip cut, and one of his eyes persisted in blinking. And sturdy as he was, he was feeling a dull, heavy ache, after the exertion of the fight with Bob Cherry, in which he had gone on past his strength. There were troubles on the mind of the gipsy boy—and the troubles of the body were added

now; and his face expressed the deepest gloom and despondency as he lay in the grass in the gathering darkness, with the stream rippling by within a foot of him.

There was a footstep in the wood, on a footpath at a little distance. The footpath ran down to the stream, which was crossed by a single plank bridge. A tall, stout man in shooting clothes, coming along the footpath from the direction of the village, had reached the plank bridge. It was his heavy footstep that had startled the gipsy boy.

The dusk was growing thick, but Mick, as he raised his head from the grass, could make out the tall man's figure, and sufficient of his rather hard face to recognise it.

He had seen the man before—it was Sir Hilton Popper, a local landowner, and a governor of Greyfriars School. Sir Hilton was not a popular man in the district—he was too hard a man for that. And he was thoroughly hated by the petty evil-doers of the countryside—poachers and vagrants and tramps. Mick, unseen in the shadowy grass, gave him a black look. Sir Hilton Popper had a deep-rooted dislike of gipsies and all vagrants, and he had already made one attempt to turn Barengro's party off Courtfield Common, where they had camped. Between Barengro and Mick there was no love lost, but he resented the persecution, and his vagrant, unhappy life had rendered the lad only too



Sir Hilton Popper's left foot slid off into the water, and the next moment the baronet, hardly knowing what was happening, was up to his neck in the stream. "Help!" he shouted hoarsely.

(See Chapter 5.)

—Will the baronet stand by the gipsy outcast?

prone to bitter feelings towards the powerful and prosperous.

Sir Hilton paused at the plank, and gave a snort that reached the ears of the gipsy boy along the stream.

In summer-time the woodland stream was shallow and slow; but the autumn rains had swollen it, and now it foamed along well up to the top of the banks, and the water washed over the plank bridge. The old plank was well sunk in the earth on either side, and there was a good inch of water over it. Sir Hilton, who was taking a short cut through the wood, snorted with annoyance at the sight of it. Sir Hilton was an autocratic gentleman, accustomed to having the ways of life made easy for him. At Popper Court fifteen servants appeared to have no object in life but to make things comfortable for Sir Hilton; though what they said of him to one another below stairs would have made the old baronet jump, could he have known it. Sir Hilton did not want to wet his boots—still less did he want to turn back and take the other longer path. So he halted on the bank and snorted—a snort of contempt and disgust addressed to a universe which did not move entirely to his liking.

But a snort, though a relief to the feelings, was not of any further use. Sir Hilton either had to splash along the wet plank or turn back; and he did not think of turning back. Having snorted at an imperfect universe, he strode out on the plank bridge, with the lofty stride which conveyed to any observer what an exceedingly important person Sir Hilton Popper was.

But Sir Hilton, in point of fact, would have done better to turn back, or else to cross the plank carefully picking his steps. The plank was wet and slippery, and loosened by the flowing water—not at all the place for a lofty stride.

Sir Hilton realised that when his foot slipped.

His left foot slid off into the water, and, with a gasp, the old baronet made a jump like a kangaroo, attempting to save himself. The result was that his other foot slipped also, and Sir Hilton came down and sat on the plank.

The plank, already loose, did not sustain the shock.

It slipped into the water, and the next moment Sir Hilton Popper, hardly knowing what was happening, was up to his neck in the stream.

He let out a startled howl, and threw up his hands. Swimming was not one of his accomplishments, and the water, fed by recent rain in the downs, was rushing fast. Struggling blindly, the baronet was swept down the stream, towards the spot where it poured, rushing into the wider waters of the Sark.

Mick, the gipsy, jumped up.

He had grinned—a sour grin—at the downfall of the haughty old gentleman. But the grin vanished at once as he understood that the old gentleman was in danger, and that the danger was very real and pressing.

Light as a deer, Mick ran along the stream after the struggling man borne along in the waters.

Had Sir Hilton swept out into the main stream nothing could have saved his life. But a broken branch trailed in the water near the stream's juncture with the Sark, and the baronet's wildly clutching hands caught it and fastened on it desperately.

He hung there, the stream tearing at him, clutching with both hands, panting for breath, drenched with water, and feeling the broken branch giving under the strain.

"Help!"

The baronet shouted hoarsely.

"Help!"

His voice rang through the dusky wood, awakening a thousand echoes. As he shouted Mick ran down the bank.

He stood for a moment staring out at the baronet. Sir Hilton was six yards from him, far beyond possible reach. But the tree was on Mick's side of the woodland stream.

"Hold on, sir!" he shouted.

The gipsy boy clambered into the tree like lightning. He crawled out on the branch over the water.

It was the broken end of the branch that trailed over the water and to which Sir Hilton Popper was clinging to save his life. The upturned face of the baronet, white under its ruddy tan, stared up at the dark face of the gipsy boy looking down. Mick looked down at him and at the branch—it was cracking already, and evidently on the point of being torn away by the weight of the clinging man.

The gipsy boy swung himself from the branch, holding on with his hands, and his feet were within the baronet's reach.

"Catch hold!" he shouted.

For the moment Sir Hilton did not understand; he was too dazed and bewildered by his sudden terrible danger for his mind to work quickly. But as the broken end of the branch parted he comprehended, and he caught at the gipsy boy's ankles just in time. He grasped them and held on as the broken fragment of branch dropped into the stream and was whirled away like a straw.

Mick held on grimly to the branch above him.

He had been only in time—only just in time—to save the baronet from being swept away into the river. But the danger had only been postponed.

Sir Hilton held to his ankles desperately, and Mick clung to the branch. But without help there was no chance for either.

"Hold to me and climb!" shouted the gipsy.

Sir Hilton panted helplessly. The gipsy himself, in the baronet's place, could have swarmed up, but such a task was utterly beyond the baronet's powers.

He could only hang on to the devoted gipsy, hang on desperately, while the water tore and sucked at him.

Mick set his teeth hard.

The baronet could do nothing but clutch hold of him with the desperate tenacity of a drowning man, and there was no possibility of Mick pulling him up. He had saved the life of the baronet for the moment, but only to throw his own away if help did not come. For with Sir Hilton's weight on him he could not hold on to the branch indefinitely. Already his muscles were aching under the strain.

"Help!" panted Sir Hilton.

But the wood was lonely in the dusk; help was little likely to come. The foot-paths were little used after sunset.

But help, unlikely as it seemed, was at hand. Through the thickets five breathless juniors came dashing.

"Help!"

"We're coming!" shouted Harry Wharton; "what— Oh, my hat!" The captain of the Remove halted as he saw the startling scene. "Buck up, you chaps; buck up!"

And Harry Wharton plunged headlong into the rushing water, and in moment the baronet was in his grasp.

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### A Fight for Life!

**H**ARRY WHARTON was one of the best swimmers in the Lower School at Greyfriars; and it was well for him now—he needed all his strength and all his skill. A few vigorous strokes carried him to the baronet, and he grasped Sir Hilton. He caught one fleeting glimpse of the gipsy's face above—set and strained—and he knew that Mick was at the end of his tether. The strain on him was too great, and his hands were slipping from their hold on the swaying branch.

"Hold to me, sir!" panted Harry.

The baronet, half-stunned by the rushing water, did not seem to hear.

"Hold to me, and let go the gipsy!" shouted Harry.

One of Mick's numbed hands slipped—he held by one hand only, and there was despair in his dark face now. The weight of the bulky baronet was dragging him down to death.

Then Sir Hilton seemed to understand. He let go the gipsy and grasped at Wharton, and they were whirled down the rapid current together.

The gipsy remained hanging to the branch by one hand over the rushing backwater.

Nugent and Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh rushed along the bank, keeping pace with Wharton. Bob Cherry did not follow them. His eyes were fixed on the gipsy hanging helplessly from the swaying branch.

Sir Hilton Popper was by this time in a state of helpless bewilderment, and had not a struggle left in him. That was all the better for Wharton, for he had his hands full without blind struggles to deal with. Holding on to Wharton with a blind, tenacious clutch, the baronet left the junior his hands free, and Wharton fought with the stream, seeking to swerve shoreward before the backwater swept him out into the broad bosom of the Sark.

"This way, Harry!"

Nugent was up to his arm-pits in water with outstretched hand.

With a desperate effort Wharton struggled within reach of his chum, and Frank caught hold.

The drag of the water would have whirled him away with his chum, however, had not more help been at hand. But Johnny Bull had hold of Nugent now, and Hurree Singh had hold of Johnny Bull. With a combined effort Wharton and the baronet were dragged ashore and landed in muddy rushes.

Sir Hilton sank on the ground, spluttering feebly.

He had swallowed a good deal of water, and his brain was in a whirl of bewilderment.

Wharton panted for breath.

"That was a tussle," he gasped. "Oh, my hat! Where's Bob?"

"Oh, ow, groogh!" came from Sir Hilton. "Oh, gad, coooooch!"

He sat up dizzily.

"I think Bob's helping the gipsy," gasped Nugent.

"Oh! Let's get back."

The juniors ran up the bank of the backwater again to the tree where the gipsy boy was clinging. Bob Cherry was in the tree, and he had crawled out along the branch to where Mick was hanging.

Mick had made a desperate effort to get on the branch, but his strength was spent, and he failed. He succeeded in getting a grip with both hands, and that was all. There he hung, without the

There is another ripping instalment of our grand serial—

strength to pull himself up, the racing water below his swaying feet. Bob Cherry, lying on the branch over him, looked down.

"Hold on, kid!" said Bob huskily.

He reached down, his chest on the branch, and grasped the gipsy by the collar of his ragged jacket.

The relief came in time to save the gipsy; it took the strain off his aching arms. He looked up, and his dark eyes met Bob's. He recognised the schoolboy with whom he had fought in the wood that afternoon.

"I've got you," said Bob. "I can't pull you up without help; but I've got you, kid, and I'm not letting you go unless my arm goes with you."

The gipsy smiled faintly. He could not speak.

Bob Cherry made an effort to pull him up, but he could get only one hand to the work, and the gipsy was too exhausted to help himself. There was nothing for it but to hold on till help came—and the other juniors were busy with Sir Hilton then.

It was only a matter of minutes, but it seemed ages to Bob before he heard running footsteps below and the voices of his comrades.

"Hold on, Bob; we're here——"

"Buck up!" called back Bob. "My blessed arm feels as if it's being jerked out."

Almost the whole weight of the gipsy was on Bob's arm now, and the strain was terrible.

Wharton wondered for a moment why the gipsy did not drop into the backwater and swim for it. It occurred to him at once, however, that Mick could not swim.

The captain of the Remove clambered hurriedly into the tree.

He crawled out on the thick branch, and there was an ominous crack.

"Look out!" yelled Johnny Bull.

Johnny, who was following Wharton, backed just in time. The long branch cracked under the weight on it, and broke close to the trunk.

A mass of foliage dipped into the water, and the three boys—Wharton, Bob, and the gipsy—plunged in.

There was a sharp exclamation from Sir Hilton Popper, who had tottered along the bank after the juniors.

"Oh, gad! They will be drowned!"

But Wharton and Bob Cherry both had hold of the gipsy now, and hold of the branch. The latter, sagging into the water, was not detached from the trunk, and it helped the juniors to scramble ashore with the gipsy. Johnny Bull and Nugent and Hurree Singh grasped them, and they were dragged out of the water.

"Oh, gad!" breathed Sir Hilton Popper, staggering against the trunk of the big tree. "Oh, gad! Is—is the boy alive?"

Mick had sunk into the grass, and his face was white and drawn. His eyes had closed; but they opened again, dark and flashing.

"I'm all right," he muttered thickly. "All right. You needn't trouble about me."

Sir Hilton pulled himself together. He stood and looked down at the exhausted gipsy, a strange expression on his usually hard face. Harry Wharton & Co. wrung the water out of their clothes, while the gipsy lay in the wet grass. The woods round them were dark now; the last glimmer of the sunset was reflected on the stream, rippling by under the trees. The gipsy was panting painfully, but gradually his breathing grew quiet and regular as he began to recover from the fearful strain he had gone through. He sat up and



Sir Hilton held to the gipsy's ankles desperately, and Mick clung to the branch of the tree. "Hold to me and climb!" he shouted. But the baronet was incapable of such a feat. Unless help arrived both were doomed to be drowned! (See Chapter 5.)

swayed back helplessly. Bob Cherry was kneeling by his side in a moment, supporting him.

"Take it easy, old bean," said Bob.

"Don't try to get up yet."

"I'm all right."

"Not yet. Rest a bit, kid."

Sir Hilton peered down at the gipsy in the gathering shadows. He frowned slightly.

"I think you have saved my life, my boy," the baronet said, after a long pause.

Mick did not answer.

"You are one of the gipsies who are camped near Courtfield?"

"Yes."

"What is your name?"

"Mick."

"Your other name?"

"I've no other."

"Oh!" The baronet paused again, nonplussed. "You are a plucky lad—a very plucky lad. You cannot swim, I suppose?"

"No."

"Then if you had fallen in, holding me——"

"I didn't."

"But if you had——" Sir Hilton

broke off. "I shall not forget this, my boy. Perhaps you know who I am——"

"Yes."

"Very well. It is in my power to recompense you," said the baronet. "Come to me at Popper Court tomorrow, my boy. I must go now—I am drenched. I want to see you again and speak to you. You will not forget to come?"

The gipsy did not answer, but Sir Hilton did not wait for an answer. His word was law.

He turned to the Greyfriars juniors.

"I am very much obliged to you," he said. "I shall certainly mention your conduct to your headmaster."

With that remark—a very gracious one for the stiff old gentleman—Sir Hilton Popper turned away. He was drenched and dripping, and his teeth were beginning to chatter. Sir Hilton was not of an age to take a ducking so easily as the Remove fellows, and he was in a hurry to get home and change. He was now, fortunately, on the right side of the stream, and he strode away by the shadowy footpath and disappeared into the wood.

—next Monday! Watch out for it, boys!

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

## Barengro Asks For It!

"FEEL better, kid?" Bob Cherry spoke very softly. "Yes," said Mick abruptly. He rose to his feet, Bob helping him. He drew away from the Greyfriars juniors, the moody, sullen, look settling on his face again. "Hold on a minute," said Bob quietly. "We came here to look for you, kid." "Did you want to fight me again?" asked the gipsy. Bob flushed. "No. We've found out why you kicked Bunter, and I wish you'd kicked him a little more." "Oh!" "If we'd understood we'd never have gone for you," said Bob. "I'm sorry I touched you. I came out here to find you and tell you so. I'm sorry." "Oh!" said the gipsy again, and he stared curiously at Bob. "You mustn't judge us by that fat duffer," said Wharton. "We know now that he cheeked you, and you kicked him as he deserved. We're not all like that at Greyfriars." "I thought you were." "Well, we're not," said Harry good-humouredly. "Some of us are quite decent. We all apologise." "The apologise is terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh; a remark that brought another stare from the gipsy boy. Hurree Singh's variety of the English language was a new thing to him. "Is there anything we can do for you, kid?" asked Bob. "No." "We met a rough-looking fellow in the lane. His name's Barengro. He was looking for a kid. You, I suppose?" "Yes." "You belong to his party?" "Yes." "You don't want to meet him?" "No." "But you're going back to your camp?" asked Harry. "I don't know." There was a rustle in the thickets, and the man in shabby velveteens came on the spot. He grinned sourly at the sight of the gipsy boy with the Greyfriars juniors. "So I've found you, Mick!" he said. The gipsy boy drew back a little, panting, his eyes gleaming. He cast glances to right and left in the shadowy wood, evidently thinking of flight. With a spring, Barengro seized him, and with his right hand he swung his stick into the air. "So you were running away, Mick!" he said between his teeth. "Tain't the first time—and you know what you got last time." "Let me go, Barengro!" muttered Mick. Barengro laughed savagely. "When I've thrashed you within an inch of your life, not before," he said. "I'll teach you to clear out of camp, you young cub. You'll hardly be able to crawl home when I've done with you." "Stop that!" said Bob Cherry. Barengro stared at him. "Don't you interfere here!" he said. "This boy belongs to me! You mind your own business!" "You sha'n't touch him!" said Bob. Barengro grinned, and brought down the stick with a heavy blow across the gipsy boy's shoulders. There was a sharp cry from Mick.

The ruffian had no time for another blow. Five juniors leaped on him at once, and he was dragged to the ground, struggling savagely. Mick tore himself loose. "Cut, while we hold him!" called out Johnny Bull. Mick did not need telling twice. While the ruffian struggled in the grasp of the Famous Five, the gipsy boy disappeared into the deep shadows of the wood. "Let me go!" roared Barengro. "Let me go! I'll—I'll smash you! I'll—I'll—" Nugent tore away his stick and tossed it out into the middle of the stream. Bob Cherry planted his knee on the gipsy's chest. Barengro struggled furiously, but he struggled in vain. The Famous Five were a good deal more than a match for him, and the ruffian, muscular as he was, had no chance. "Will you let me go?" he panted, choking with rage. "Not till that kid's got clear," answered Wharton. "I—I—I'll—" "You'll stay where you are, you brute," said Bob Cherry coolly, "and if you swear again I'll bang your head!" A torrent of abuse answered him, and Bob Cherry was as good as his word. He grasped the thick tangled hair of the ruffian and thumped his head on the ground. Barengro's cursing changed to a yell of anguish. "Is that enough?" asked Bob. "Oh! Ow! Oh! Ow! Oh!" roared Barengro. "If you want any more, say so!" Barengro did not want any more, that was clear. He ceased to curse, and lay panting in the grasp of the juniors, eyeing them with black eyes that gleamed like a wild animal's. The last rustle in the wood had died away—the gipsy boy was gone. But the chums of the Remove still held the ruffian—they were only too well aware of what would happen to Mick if the rascal succeeded in running him down. For ten minutes longer Barengro, the gipsy, was a prisoner, quivering with rage, in the grasp of the juniors. Then they let him go. Barengro staggered to his feet as he was released. He seemed inclined to rush at the juniors, but he restrained himself. They were quite ready to deal with him. "I'll not forget this!" he muttered. "Better not," said Wharton. "It will be a lesson to you." "Let me get a chance of meeting you on a dark night—" hissed the gipsy. "Oh, clear off!" said Bob contemptuously. "If you're not gone in two ticks we'll duck you!" "Duck him, anyhow," said Johnny Bull. Barengro took the hint, and disappeared into the wood. His savage voice could be heard cursing for several minutes. "I hope he won't find that kid," said Wharton. "The brute ought to be in prison!" growled Bob Cherry. "It's a rotten hard life for Mick! And he's no end of a plucky kid—he was risking his life for old Popper, and he would have been done for if we hadn't come along. Jolly lucky we came out to look for him." "Yes, rather!" "The luckfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Singh. "But it will be a boot on the other leg when we get back to the

esteemed school. The honourable Quelch will be infuriated." "Let's get back," said Harry. And the chums of the Remove started for Greyfriars—with rather uneasy misgivings as to what would happen when they arrived there.

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

## A Surprising Reception!

"PRETTY goings hon!" Gosling, the porter, made that remark as he let in the Removites—about two hours late for call-over. Gosling eyed them grimly. "Wot I says is this 'ere—" he went on. "Gosling, old man, dry up!" said Bob Cherry. "We're going to get it from Mr. Quelch. Save your eloquence, old bean." "You ain't going to get it from Mr. Quelch," said the porter. "You're a-going to get it from the 'Ead!" "Bow-wow!" said Nugent. "The Head won't bother about our cutting call-over, Gossy. That's a job for our Form master." "That's all you know," said Gosling. "The 'Ead's sent me a special message about you young rips. You're to go to him, and not to your Form master." "Oh, my hat!" groaned Johnny Bull. "Quelch must have reported us to Dr. Locke. I—I suppose we're rather late." "Two howers late!" said Gosling. "Pretty goings hon! Never seed such young rips since I was a porter at this 'ere school, and wot I says is jest 'this 'ere—" "Look here, is that straight?" demanded Wharton. "Have we got to go to the Head?" "Yes, you 'ave," said Gosling. "Not ten minutes ago I get a message from the 'Ead personal. 'Send them young raskils to me when they comes in,' was what the 'Ead said. 'I'll teach 'em,' he says." The juniors chuckled. "Yes, I can just hear the Head using that language—I don't think!" grinned Bob Cherry. "P'raps he didn't use them exact words," admitted Gosling. "The perhapsfulness is terrific." "But he's in a wax," said Gosling. "My belief is that he is going to make an example of you—not afore you need it, neither. Why, you're all wet!" "That isn't our fault," explained Bob. "It's owing to the action of natural laws." "Wot?" "You see, we've been in the water. Water's wet. You must have learned that at school, Gossy, when you were young—hundreds of years ago." "You—you—" gasped Gosling. "It isn't our fault that water's wet, and that it passed some of its wetness on to us," continued Bob. "It's owing to the jolly old laws of Nature. We didn't make Nature, Gosling." "You're a funny young rip, you are, Master Cherry," said Gosling. "I 'ope you'll feel just as funny when the 'Ead 'andles his birch. I 'ope so, I'm sure!" And Gosling snorted and retired to his lodge, and the Famous Five, not in the best of spirits, crossed over to the School House. Most of the fellows were in the studies, at prep, when they came in; but Billy Bunter was there—Bunter was never keen on prep, and always nourished a hope of not catching Mr. Quelch's eye in the Form-room.

On your travels, jaunts, and capers—

The Owl of the Remove grinned at the Famous Five.

"You're for it!" he announced.

"Oh, go and eat coke!" growled Johnny Bull.

"You're wet, too," said Bunter. "Been taking a bath with your clobber on? He, he, he! I say, you fellows, you look a pretty dilapidated crew!"

The juniors exchanged glances. They were all wet, and grubby, and muddy; certainly not in a state to present themselves in so august an apartment as the Head's study.

"Perhaps we'd better cut in and change before we go to the Head," murmured Wharton.

"The changefulness is indeed the proper caper," said Inky.

Wingate of the Sixth came along.

"Oh, you're back, are you?" asked the captain of Greyfriars, eyeing them.

"The backfulness is terrific, my esteemed Wingate."

Wingate grinned.

"You're to go to the Head at once."

"Hadden't we better cut off and change first?" asked Harry.

"Head's orders," said Wingate. "Cut along!"

There was no help for it, and the Famous Five, in a rather dispirited state, started for Dr. Locke's study. Coker of the Fifth was in the passage, and he grinned at the draggled juniors.

"What's Greyfriars coming to?" he asked Potter and Greene. "Look at that gang of tramps!"

"Shocking!" said Potter.

"Well, what can you expect of these fags?" said Greene in a philosophic sort of way. "They never wash if they can help it."

Harry Wharton & Co. resisted the temptation to charge the Fifth-Formers, and went on their way. Wharton tapped at the door of the Head's study.

"Come in!"

Five draggled juniors drifted into the study. They found Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, in the room with Dr. Locke. Both masters looked very curiously at the five.

The juniors waited for their sentence. They might possibly have staved off the wrath of the "beaks" by stating that they had got into their present state by helping to save a man's life. But it did not occur to them to make capital out of that circumstance. Besides, it was not really an excuse, for they certainly had gone out of gates knowing quite well that they would not return before lock-up. They had broken the rules with their eyes open, and they were prepared to take the consequences.

"Dear me!" said the Head. "You are wet—your clothes are wet—dear me!"

"That was to be expected, in the circumstances, sir," remarked Mr. Quelch with a smile.

The juniors stared, wondering what on earth Mr. Quelch could know about the circumstances.

"You must go and change at once, my boys," said the Head benevolently. "But I must say a word or two first."

The juniors blinked, wondering whether they were dreaming. This was not at all the reception they had been expecting.

"You are late—very late," said the Head, peering at them over his glasses. "You have left yourselves very little time for preparation. Doubtless you will excuse them, Mr. Quelch?"

"Certainly, sir."

"I am very pleased with you, my boys," said the Head. "You are a

credit to the school, and I am sure that your Form master shares my opinion."

"Quite!" said Mr. Quelch.

"I'm dreaming this!" murmured Bob Cherry blankly.

Really, it seemed like a dream. Two hours late for call-over, and having cut prep, and having turned up in a draggled and dilapidated state, the delinquents had certainly not expected to be told that they were a credit to Greyfriars. They had expected the birch—or, at least, the cane—with a lengthy lecture thrown in.

"Now you may go, my boys," said the Head kindly.

"We—we're sorry we're so late, sir," stammered Wharton.

"Quite so, Wharton. I hope you are feeling no ill-effects?"

"Nunno, sir."

"But you must change out of your wet clothes at once, or you may catch a cold. Good-night, my boys!"

"Good-night, sir!" gasped the Famous Five.

They left the study in a dazed state. It was necessary to change their wet clothing as soon as possible; but they paused in the corridor to blink at one another.

"This beats it!" said Johnny Bull.

"The beatfulness is great!"

"If the Head's so jolly pleased with us for cutting lock-up, we'll please him again in the same way," remarked Bob Cherry.

The juniors chuckled.

The Head's door opened again, and

Mr. Quelch came out. The chuckle died away instantly.

"Come, come! You must hurry to the dormitory and change!" said Mr. Quelch kindly.

"Oh, yes, sir! Certainly!"

"You need not trouble about your preparation this evening. You are probably tired."

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"I was very greatly relieved to hear that you were safe," said Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, were you, sir?"

"Yes, indeed! The back-water in Friardale Wood is very dangerous at this time of the year," said Mr. Quelch.

"Oh! You—you know about it, then, sir?" stuttered Wharton.

Mr. Quelch raised his eyebrows.

"Naturally. Dear me, the Head did not mention that Sir Hilton Popper had telephoned him—"

"Oh!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Sir Hilton acquainted the Head with your very meritorious conduct," said Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, I—I see!"

It was light at last. Mr. Quelch passed on, with a kind glance, and the juniors smiled at one another.

"So that's it," said Bob. "Old Popper butted in on the telephone, and told the Head we hooked him out of the water. Jolly thoughtful of him. I dare say he knew we should be licked for staying out of gates so late. Old Popper's got his good points, though he hides them pretty successfully as a rule."



The long branch sagged beneath the unaccustomed weight. Crack! "Look out!" yelled Johnny Bull. The branch broke close to the trunk; a mass of foliage dipped into the water, and the three boys—Wharton, Cherry, and the gipsy—plunged in. (See Chapter 6.)

And the Famous Five proceeded to the Remove Dormitory to change, in quite a cheery and satisfied frame of mind.

## THE NINTH CHAPTER.

### The Gipsy Outcast!

"I WONDER—"

Bob Cherry made that remark after dinner the following day, as the chums of the Remove walked into the quadrangle. Bob's rugged brow had a thoughtful frown on it.

"You wonder—" said Harry.

"About that gipsy kid."

"I was thinking about him, too," said the captain of the Remove, with a nod.

"I wonder what's happened to him," said Bob. "From what I can make out, he's cleared off from the gipsies, and doesn't mean to go back."

"It looked like it."

"He will be on his uppers, I suppose," said Bob.

"I suppose so."

"It's hard cheese."

"Jolly hard!" agreed Wharton. "But I don't see what we can do, Bob. He seemed a rather proud and touchy sort of chap, and we can't give him money."

"I wasn't thinking of that. I don't think he'd take it from us," said Bob. "Not that there's much going, either, so far as I'm concerned. But old Popper ought to do something for him."

"He's told him to see him at the Court."

"The kid won't go," said Bob. "I could see that in his face. I fancy he's not the kind to ask favours."

"Well, he ought to go!" said Harry gravely. "He certainly saved Sir Hilton's life, and if the old gentleman was willing to do something for him, he ought to accept. Though I hardly know what Sir Hilton could do, except give him a ten-pound note."

"I'd like to see the kid again," said Bob. "He's down on his luck, and we might be able to help him somehow—might advise him to go and see old Popper. A job about Popper Court would be better than tramping the country and starving, and Sir Hilton could protect him from that brute Barengro, at any rate."

"We are not likely to see him again," said Nugent.

"I suppose not."

Bob Cherry was very thoughtful when the Remove went into the Form-room to classes that afternoon. The pluck the gipsy boy had displayed appealed to Bob, and it was still upon his tender conscience that he had punched the gipsy without cause. He had found a little solace that day in kicking Billy Bunter a few times—a proceeding that contained no solace whatever for Bunter. But Bob would have been glad to find some way of helping the gipsy lad, who was so obviously down on his luck. Indeed, it was probable that he was in actual want of food now that he had turned his back on Barengro's camp. That was a troubling thought to Bob, though it was hard to see what he could do for the young outcast.

After lessons, the chums of the Remove strolled out of gates, and went by the Courtfield road. At a distance from the road, on the open common, the gipsy encampment could be seen. Smoke rose from a fire, over which an iron pot was slung on three sticks in the traditional gipsy manner, and two or three old crones were squatted round the fire, and half a dozen brown-faced children played

about the caravans. There were four or five men in the party, hangdog-looking fellows, but the juniors did not see Barengro among them. Neither was there any sign of Mick.

The juniors walked on, and lost sight of the gipsy camp. In the lane by Oak Tree Farm, near Courtfield, they came on Skinner of the Remove wheeling his bicycle. Skinner was grinning.

"See that?" he asked, pointing to a thin column of smoke that rose from the midst of a plantation at a little distance.

"What about it?" asked Wharton.

"There's a giddy gipsy encamped there."

"Phew! Farmer Bunce won't be pleased, if he spots him," said Nugent.

"He's going to spot him," said Skinner virtuously. "I'm jolly well going to the farm now to tell him!"

"Might as well mind your own business," suggested Bob Cherry. It occurred to Bob that possibly the camping gipsy was Mick.

"It's everybody's business to keep these rotten vagrants from picking and stealing," said Skinner, still virtuous. Skinner was a virtuous youth in his way; he never failed to do what he thought right, if the effect was to make somebody uncomfortable.

"How do you know he's been stealing?" said Bob gruffly.

"Gipsies steal," said Skinner.

"Some do, and some don't, like other people."

"Well, this one does," grinned Skinner. "I'll bet you he never bought the chicken he's cooking over his fire!"

And Skinner wheeled on his bike by the ratty path to the distant farmhouse, full of virtuous intentions.

Bob Cherry knitted his brows.

"Let's go and see," he said. "If it's Mick, we can give him the tip to clear off, at least."

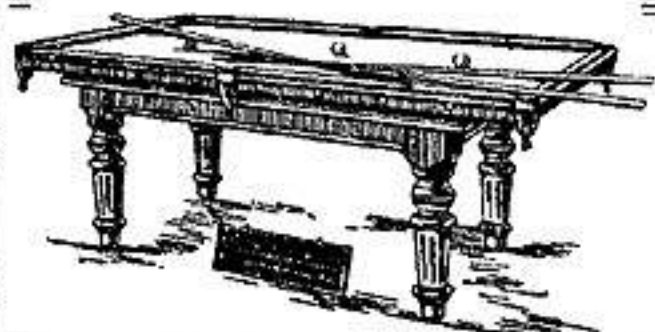
"He ought to let the farmer's chickens alone," said Harry, as the juniors struck into the path to the plantation.

"Of course he ought! But with the kind of training he must have got with a brute like Barengro, I dare say the kid doesn't know any better."

"Likely enough," assented the captain of the Remove. "Anyhow, if it's Mick we'll give him a tip to clear in time."

The juniors quickened their pace and entered the thick plantation. In a little clearing a fire had been built, and over red glowing embers Mick, the gipsy outcast, was broiling a chicken. Round about lay the feathers stripped from the fowl.

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The gipsy started at the sound of footsteps and sprang up, his eyes flashing. But his expression altered at the sight of the Greyfriars fellows, whom he recognised at once. His dark face became impassive and indifferent again, and he returned to his cooking.

The Famous Five halted by the fire and stood watching him. Mick took no notice of their presence. He did not now regard them as enemies, but it had not occurred to him to look on them as friends. He was as indifferent to them as to the trees around him.

His cooking was nearly finished. He finished it, and began to eat, with the aid of a clasp-knife. His eyes were fixed on his meal, and he did not even glance at the juniors, who felt rather awkward. Bob Cherry broke the silence at last.

"Well, here we are again, Mick!"

"Yes."

"Feel any the worse for your ducking yesterday?"

"No."

"Did Barengro catch you?"

"No."

"I'm glad of that."

The gipsy raised his dark eyes at last. "Thank you for keeping him off," he said. "I should have been beaten like a dog if he had caught me."

"He beats you?" said Nugent.

"He has beaten me all my life," said Mick calmly and stolidly. "Hardly a day without a blow, that I can remember. And when he has been drinking he is worse."

"The brute."

"He's not your father," said Bob.

"No."

"Is he any relation?"

"I don't know. I think—I hope not."

"You've always lived with him and his tribe?"

"Yes."

"You've left them now?"

"Yes."

The gipsy gave the juniors a curious, somewhat defiant look. Bob Cherry coloured.

"We're not asking questions out of curiosity," he said. "Don't think we're butting into your business, kid. We'd like to help you somehow, if we could."

"I don't want any help."

"Have you been to see Sir Hilton Popper?"

"No."

"You're going?"

"No."

"He means well by you," said Harry.

"I ask no help from the house-dwellers," said the gipsy. "I am not a beggar, though Barengro has tried to make me one—and a thief, too."

"The rotten brute!" exclaimed Bob indignantly. "But, I say, kid, you're on private land here, and the farmer, Mr. Bunce, would kick up an awful shindy if he found you camping in his plantation."

"What harm am I doing?" said the gipsy sullenly.

"Well, none, if you come to that; but it's a bit risky to light a fire in a plantation. And—that fowl—"

"I caught it."

"Dear old man, fowls are private property," said Bob, with a faint grin. "You mustn't catch other people's fowls, you know."

"I know."

"But you're doing it," said Bob.

Mick shrugged his shoulders.

"I am an outcast," he said. "I have left my own people now. I must live. In some countries I could live by hunting."

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Barengro brought down the stick with a heavy blow across the gipsy boy's shoulders. There was a sharp cry from Mick. The ruffian had no time for another blow. Five juniors leaped on him at once, and he was dragged to the ground, struggling savagely. (See Chapter 7.)

"Not in this country," said Bob, with a stare.

"That is not my fault."

"Oh," said Bob, quite nonplussed. "Apparently the gipsy had a code of ethics that was all his own. Yet it was certain that he was honest in the main, if he had resisted Barengro's brutality rather than become a thief. Evidently he did not regard the confiscation of the chicken as stealing. The unfortunate lad felt himself in the position of Ishmael—his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him."

"A fellow's seen you here, and gone to tell the farmer," said Bob. "You'd better get a move on, hadn't you?"

"When I have finished eating."

"But—"

"I am not afraid of the farmer." The gipsy's dark eyes gleamed. "If he beats me I will fire one of his ricks to-night."

"Great pip!"

"My dear chap, you—" exclaimed Wharton.

The gipsy continued his meal composedly, without looking up again, the juniors watching him in something like consternation. They had taken a liking to the outcast; but it was clear that, with all his good qualities, there was a great deal of the savage in him. He was a young barbarian, misplaced in a civilised country. There was silence—till it was broken by heavy tramping footsteps, and a burly man in gaiters, with a cart-whip in his hand, came through the young trees.

"So I've caught you!" roared Mr. Bunce.

## THE TENTH CHAPTER.

### The Only Way!

MICK sprang to his feet. The bones of the chicken lay on the ground with the feathers—plain traces of his guilt. The camp-fire was smouldering out. Across the dying embers Mick stared savagely and sullenly at the angry farmer.

"One of my fowls!" exclaimed Mr.

Bunce. "About the tenth I've missed since that rascally gang camped on Courtfield Common. So I've caught you, you young thief!"

Mick's dark cheeks flushed a dull red. "I am not a thief!" he muttered.

"You've stolen a chicken!" roared the farmer. "You've lighted a fire in my plantation—might have set the whole plantation on fire if there hadn't been rain lately!"

"I knew the plantation would not catch."

"A lot you cared, I'll be bound!" hooted Mr. Bunce. "I'll give you a lesson about trespassing and stealing, you young beggar! And Mr. Bunce tramped at the gipsy with the heavy cart-whip raised in the air."

"Hold on, Mr. Bunce!" exclaimed Harry Wharton hurriedly. "It's all right if the chicken's paid for, I suppose."

"Do you think that young scoundrel meant to pay for it?" demanded Mr. Bunce, with angry derision.

"I don't suppose he has the money. But I have," said the captain of the Remove. "Let me pay the damage, and call it square."

Mr. Bunce snorted.

"I don't want your money. Keep it in your trousers pocket, and walk off my land, too! I'm going to thrash this young thief as a warning to him!"

Swish!

The heavy whip came down, but it did not come down on Mick. A quick spring backward saved the gipsy boy from the blow.

"Hook it!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

The gipsy darted away. Mr. Bunce, brandishing the whip, started in lumbering pursuit.

"I don't think he'll catch him," grinned Bob Cherry, as the juniors followed on.

But Mick's luck was out. He broke from the plantation at a run and streaked across a field towards the Courtfield road. But there was a farmer's man at work in the field, and Mr. Bunce shouted to him.

"Stop that gipsy, Bill!"

Mick halted, panting, as Bill closed in on him in advance.

"Collar the young thief!"

"Oh, my hat!" muttered Bob Cherry in dismay. "I'll jolly well punch that cad Skinner for this!"

Mick darted away in another direction, but he had lost too much ground, and he had no chance now. A wire fence stopped him, and as he ran along the fence the farmer and his man closed in on him, and he was caught.

He struggled like a wild-cat in the grasp of the two.

"Hold him!" gasped Mr. Bunce. "Bring him along. I'll lock him up in a barn and send for the constable."

"Regler wild-cat, ain't he?" said Bill, getting a businesslike grip on the back of the gipsy's neck. "I've got him, zur."

"Bring him along."

The gipsy, still struggling breathlessly, was propelled away towards the farm buildings.

"Mr. Bunce"—Harry Wharton ran up to the farmer with an anxious face—"Give the kid a chance—"

"You mind your own business, Master Wharton," said the farmer gruffly.

"That kid doesn't belong to the gipsy gang now," said Harry. "He's cleared off from them, and he's been badly treated—"

"I dessay, if he steals their things as well as mine," said Mr. Bunce ironically. "I know I'm going to have him locked up. I ain't having all my fowls taken by a set of gipsies, I can tell you, and now I've caught one of them I'm going to make an example of him. Nuff said."

"But—I say—"

"You've said enough, Master Wharton. You walk off my land, and don't come on it again till I ask you," snapped Mr. Bunce.

And the farmer and his man propelled Mick onward. There was nothing that the juniors could do, and they had to admit that Mr. Bunce was in the right. A farmer whose chickens were purloined

(Continued on page 16.)

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## MICK THE OUTCAST!

(Continued from page 13.)

by vagrants had a right to feel, like the prophet of old, that he did well to be angry.

The juniors could not interfere. They had handled Barengro promptly enough, and were ready to do so again; but they could not handle a farmer who had caught a gipsy stealing his chickens.

They followed the prisoner and his captors with dismal faces.

Mick, finding that he could not escape from the muscular grasp laid on him, was submitting to his fate; the look of sullen indifference was already settling on his dark face again. Mr. Bunce led him to a barn and pitched him in headlong.

"Now you stay there till Mr. Tozer comes," he said savagely, and he drew the door shut and locked it, and put the key in his pocket.

Then he turned to his man.

"Get your bike, Bill, and get across to Friardale, and ask Mr. Tozer to come and take a thief in charge."

"Yes, zur."

Bill went for his machine. Mr. Bunce, with a last angry glare at the Greyfriars juniors, stalked into the farmhouse and slammed the door shut after him.

Harry Wharton & Co. walked back to the Courtfield road in a dismal frame of mind. They found Skinner there, standing by his bicycle and grinning. Harold Skinner had watched the whole scene from a distance.

"They've got him," he said. "I dare say he will get three months for this. Or, if the beak thinks he's too young for chokey, he'll get sent to a reformatory. Proper place for him, what?"

"You sneaking rotter!" roared Bob Cherry. "Why couldn't you mind your own business?"

Skinner looked as virtuous as he could.

"If you're sticking up for a vagrant chicken-stealer—" he said.

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

Bob Cherry gave Skinner a shove in passing, and Skinner sat down, and his bicycle, being left without any visible means of support, clanked over on Skinner's legs with a crash. There was a fiendish yell from Skinner.

"Yoooooop!"

Harry Wharton & Co. walked on without heeding Skinner further. A few minutes later Bill, the farmer's man passed them, pedalling away towards Friardale. He was going for P.-c. Tozer, and he gave the worried juniors a grin in passing. Bill had no sympathy to waste on robbers of hen-roosts. Neither had Harry Wharton & Co., as a rule; but they felt that the case of Mick was an exception.

Bob Cherry halted in the road, with a gloomy brow.

"What's going to be done?" he asked.

"Blessed if I see anything that can be done," said Johnny Bull slowly. "We can't raid Mr. Bunce's barn."

"That kid's not going to be run in," growled Bob.

"After all, he did steal the chicken," said Johnny Bull. "I dare say if we were farmers, and lost our chickens of a night, we should feel rather waxy about it."

"The waxfulness would be terrific."

"I don't say the kid didn't do wrong," said Bob. "I know he did, as well as

you do. He's no right to trespass, or to bag Bunce's fowls. But there's a lot of excuses for him. It's a wonder he isn't worse, brought up by a dishonest brute like that man Barengro."

"That's so," said Harry Wharton. "We'd do anything we could, Bob. But what can we do?"

"If I may make a suggestive remark—" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"If you mean a suggestion, fathead, go ahead."

"The esteemed Popper—"

"What about Popper, bother him?"

"The worthy and admired Popper would, perhaps, put in an esteemed word for the unfortunate and ridiculous gipsy," suggested Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "He is a magistrate, and sits benchfully to try local offenders. He might let him off, or dismiss him cautiously as a first offender."

Bob Cherry uttered an exclamation. His face cleared, and in his delight he gave Hurree Singh a powerful smack on the shoulder, which elicited a terrific howl from the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Good old Inky—"

"Yaroooh!"

"Just the wheeze!" exclaimed Bob. "I'll buzz off to Popper Court. Mick saved the old fellow's life, there's no doubt about that—and Farmer Bunce is a tenant of Sir Hilton's. A word from the jolly old baronet would be enough."

"That's good!" said Harry, brightening. "But—but it's a jolly long way to Popper Court from here—and Bunce's man is on a bike. He'll be back with the constable before—"

"That's all right! I'm going on a bike."

"You've not got your bike here."

"There's Skinner's."

"Skinner's! Oh, my hat! But Skinner—"

"Skinner won't lend you his bike," said Nugent.

Bob Cherry grinned.

"I think he will. I'll try."

Bob Cherry ran back towards Skinner. That virtuous youth, who had suffered for his virtue as virtuous people so often have to do in a wicked world, was on his feet now, and preparing to mount his machine. He gave Bob Cherry a Hunnish glare.

"Skinner, old man—"

"Get out of the way, confound you!"

"Will you lend me your bike?"

Skinner stared.

"Lend you my bike!" he gasped.

"Lend you my jigger, and walk two miles to the school?"

"Just that!"

"No, I won't!" howled Skinner.

"Like your cheek to ask, I think, you ruffian. Get out of the way."

"You won't lend me the jigger?"

"No!" roared Skinner.

"Sorry," said Bob, and, taking Skinner by the neck, he sat him down in the road.

Skinner landed there with a bump that took away most of his breath. He could only gasp and splutter as Bob Cherry threw a leg over the machine and mounted.

"Grooogh!" gasped Skinner. "Mum-mum-my bike—mum-my b-b-bike! Oh, crumbs! I—I'll—mum-mum-my bike! Gimme my bike, you hooligan."

But Bob Cherry was already riding away like the wind, and he did not even hear Skinner.

## THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

### Bearding the Lion!

"A BOY, Sir Hilton—" "Show him in, Packer." "Yes, Sir Hilton."

The butler at Popper Court retired, and Sir Hilton sat up in his chair in the library and grunted. Harry Wharton & Co. and the gipsy outcast were feeling no ill-effects from their adventure of the previous day. But it was a different matter with the master of Popper Court. Sir Hilton felt twinges of rheumatism, and twinges of rheumatism always had an exasperating effect on Sir Hilton's temper.

His temper had been very sharp that day. Two of his gamekeepers had almost determined to go, a parlourmaid had been reduced to tears, and Sir Hilton's "man," Jenkins, had confided to Mr. Packer that he didn't know how much longer he could stand the old blighter. He would not have had to stand Sir Hilton much longer had the testy old gentleman heard Jenkins allude to him in that disrespectful way. But Sir Hilton had no knowledge of the conversation among the gentlemen below stairs. If he thought about the servants' hall at all, he probably thought that he was an object of awe and admiration there. Which was certainly not the case.

Sir Hilton was additionally annoyed by the fact that Mick, the gipsy, had not come. He had told the boy to come. He distinctly remembered telling him to come. And he had not come.

Of course, the boy might have had a serious accident. Only a serious accident—such as the breaking of a leg—could excuse Mick, or anybody, for not coming when Sir Hilton Popper commanded him to do so. And really, even with a broken leg, the boy ought to have managed to hop along somehow, for was not Sir Hilton Popper expecting to see him?

But he had come at last. Sir Hilton supposed that the boy who wished to see him was Mick. Certainly he was not expecting a visit from any other boy. Boys were not encouraged at Popper Court. They were not liked there. Sir Hilton had long ago forgotten that he had ever been a boy himself, and his regard for the rising generation was not friendly.

But it was not the expected Mick—it was the unexpected Bob Cherry who was shown into the dusky old library of Popper Court by the obsequious Packer.

Sir Hilton stared at him.

Bob was very red and rather breathless. He had given Skinner's bicycle some hard work on the way to the Court. Probably Skinner's jigger had never been ridden at such a speed before, since it had come into Skinner's possession.

Thunder gathered on Sir Hilton's brow at the sight of the junior; but at a second glance he recognised one of the fellows who had been in Friardale Wood the previous evening, and his brow cleared. But he snorted. He supposed at once that the junior had come to ask some favour, on the strength of the previous day's happenings.

"Well?" he grunted.

"Excuse me, Sir Hilton—" gasped Bob.

"What do you want?"

"I've something to tell you—"

"Something to ask, you mean," grunted Sir Hilton. "Well, what is it?"

"Nothing for myself," said Bob rather warmly. "It's about the boy—the gipsy kid—who fished you out of the backwater yesterday, sir."

"Oh," said Sir Hilton, rather taken

More Galloping Dick stories to follow!

aback, "I—I misunderstood. Well, what about the boy?"

"He's in trouble, sir," said Bob.

Grunt from Sir Hilton.

"Why has he not come here?" he demanded. "I told him to come here. He cannot have misunderstood."

Bob Cherry realised that it would not do to mention that Mick had no intention of coming to Popper Court. That was not the way to placate Sir Hilton.

"He can't go anywhere at present, sir," said Bob diplomatically. "He's locked up in a barn."

"Locked up in a barn!" ejaculated Sir Hilton, staring at Bob. "What do you mean?"

"He got into trouble with Farmer Bunce, sir," said Bob. "He—he—he bagged a chicken—"

"He what?"

"Bagged—I mean boned—that is, pinched—" stammered Bob, quite put out by the steady glare of Sir Hilton's sharp eyes.

"He stole a chicken?" boomed Sir Hilton.

"I—I don't think he meant to steal it, sir," faltered Bob. "He—he was hungry, and just caught it and cooked it."

"The lawless young scoundrel!"

"Oh!"

"The young rascal!"

"Hem!"

"So he is going to be locked up?"

"Unless—unless you interfere, sir!" gasped Bob.

"I!" thundered Sir Hilton.

"Yes, you, sir. Mr. Bunce is your tenant, and—and Mick saved your life, sir, didn't he?—and—and Mr. Bunce might listen to you—"

"Might listen to me!" snorted Sir Hilton. "Mr. Bunce would scarcely fail to accede to any wish expressed by me, I hope."

"Ye-e-es, sir, quite so," said Bob.

"He's sent for the bobby—"

"The what?"

"The peeler—"

"Have you not learned to speak English at Greyfriars?"

"Oh! Ah—yes! I—I mean the copper—"

"What?"

"The policeman," gasped Bob. "Mick is going to be run in—I—I mean nabbed—that is, taken into custody, on the charge of stealing the chicken, sir. If you put in a word for him—"

Sir Hilton snorted, and Bob was silent. He had done his best, but he wondered what the autocratic old gentleman would do. Sir Hilton's grim sternness with poachers and vagrants was well known; when he was on the Bench such evil-doers had no mercy to expect from him. But Mick had saved his life; and the life of Sir Hilton Popper, baronet, was of immense value, in the opinion of Sir Hilton Popper, baronet. So Bob hoped for the best.

The old baronet rose from his chair, and took a turn up and down the library. Bob, conscious that with every passing minute P.-c. Tozer was drawing nearer to his victim, watched him anxiously. But he did not venture to speak.

A twinge in his ancient joints made the baronet return to his chair. He sat down and grunted.

"The boy is not charged yet?" he asked at last.

"Not yet, sir."

"The matter is, after all, a trifle."

"We've offered to pay for the chicken, sir," said Bob. "But Mr. Bunce was ratty—"

Sir Hilton waved that aside.

"Is Oak Tree Farm on the telephone?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, sir!" said Bob eagerly. "Mrs. Kebble telephones there sometimes about the eggs and milk, from Greyfriars."

"Take the receiver and ring up Mr. Bunce."

"Yes, sir!" said Bob in delight.

Bob Cherry fairly jumped to the telephone. In a couple of minutes he was through to Oak Tree Farm.

"Through, sir!" said Bob cheerily. "Mr. Bunce is speaking, sir."

"Huh!"

Sir Hilton rose, and with a due regard to his stiff joints, navigated his way to the telephone, and took the receiver from Bob's hand.

"Mr. Bunce!"

"Yes, Sir Hilton!" came a very respectful reply. Farmers who leased their land from Sir Hilton Popper were

"Very good. Tell the constable that no charge will be made against the boy on this occasion."

"Wha-a-a-t?"

"Do I not speak plainly?" hooted Sir Hilton.

"Oh, yes; certainly!"

"Very good!"

Sir Hilton hung up the receiver. There was no doubt that his autocratic commands would be obeyed. Farmer Bunce was anxious about a renewal of his lease—moreover, Sir Hilton was a magistrate. The old gentleman picked his way back to his armchair and sat down. Bob Cherry gave him a cheery grin.

"It will be all right, sir?" he asked.

"Certainly! Good-afternoon!"

Bob Cherry retired. He rode away from Popper Court on Skinner's bicycle in a cheery mood. Sir Hilton Popper, crusty old autocrat as he was, had played up like a little man, as Bob would



"Regler wild-cat, ain't he?" said Bill, getting a business-like grip on the back of the gipsy's neck. "Bring him along!" roared the farmer. Mick, struggling fiercely, was propelled away towards the farm buildings. The Famous Five followed in the rear. (See Chapter 10.)

accustomed to treating him with the deepest respect—outward, at least.

"You have a—er—a gipsy boy locked up in a barn."

"Yes, Sir Hilton. Stealing chickens from—"

"I think I had better deal with the lad. Send him to me."

"Oh!"

"Did you hear?"

"I—I've sent for a constable, sir."

"You can send the constable back again, I suppose," said Sir Hilton testily.

"Oh! Ah! Yes, Sir Hilton."

"Send the boy over at once in a trap!"

"Oh!"

"What did you say?"

"Hem!"

"Cannot you speak plainly, Mr. Bunce?"

"Oh! Ah! Hem! Yes! I—I will send the boy over at once, Sir Hilton, for you to deal with."

have expressed it—and Mick, the gipsy, was saved. And that was more than enough to make Bob Cherry whistle gleefully, out of tune, as he pedalled away to Greyfriars.

## THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

### Mick's Request!

"YOUR name is—er—what?"

"Mick."

"Oh, yes, I remember! You have no other name?"

"No, sir."

Mick, the gipsy outcast, was standing before Sir Hilton Popper in the old library at the Court. Farmer Bunce's trap had landed him at the baronet's mansion, and Packer—concealing his surprise and disgust at such a visitor under an aspect of professional calm—had shown the way into the baronet's presence.

20  
GRAMO-  
PHONES.A  
RECORD!

Mick was quiet and stolid, as he stood before the landowner, but his dark eyes roved about him. He knew what Sir Hilton had saved him from, and perhaps he was grateful; but he was restless and ill at ease in the stately mansion, and longing to escape.

Sir Hilton, jamming his eyeglass into his eye, surveyed the waif, not wholly with favour. Sir Hilton was not unmindful of obligations, and he knew that he owed his life to the waif, and he knew, too, that Mick had very nearly perished in saving him. But Mick belonged to a class of persons for whom the baronet had a strong distaste, so his feelings were very mixed.

"Well! Hem!" said Sir Hilton. "It seems that you have been stealing chickens, boy."

"I took a fowl," said Mick sullenly.

"You have—er—left your friends—the other gipsies?"

"Yes."

"You do not intend to return to them?"

"Never!" said Mick, between his teeth. "I ain't going to be trained to be a thief, and beat if I won't steal."

Sir Hilton started.

"My dear boy!" he exclaimed with unwonted feeling. "That is very right—very right indeed! You have done me a great service. I wish to be of service to you in return."

"I ain't asking nothing," said Mick.

The baronet coughed.

"That is a very proper spirit," he said. "But it is not my wish to remain under an obligation."

Mick was silent.

"Now, tell me what I can do for you," said the baronet. "I do not minimise my obligation to you—I owe you my life. Anything that is in my power I will willingly do."

Mick started a little, and looked at the baronet earnestly.

"You—you mean that, sir?" he asked.

Sir Hilton raised his eyebrows haughtily.

## 100 "JAMES" COMET CYCLES



READY FOR THE ROAD.

Who wants a motor-cycle? Turn to pages 14 and 15!

"I am not likely to say anything that I do not mean, boy," he answered.

"Yes, sir—excuse me, sir!" said Mick humbly. "You're a gentleman, sir—a great gentleman in these parts, I know; and I know that I ain't fit to stand in your presence, sir."

Sir Hilton unbent very considerably. His glance at the gipsy boy was quite kind and benevolent.

"Tell me what I can do for you, Mick," he said graciously.

"Well, sir—"

"Speak freely."

"There's a cove I met—a cove I like," said Mick. "I 'eard the other coves call him Bob Cherry."

"A Greyfriars boy," said Sir Hilton. "He came here to speak up for you, my lad."

"Did he, sir? It was like him—he's got a good heart," said Mick. "He's at school, sir—"

"Yes, at Greyfriars."

"Well, sir, if—if—" Mick hesitated.

"Speak quite frankly, boy. I repeat that anything that is in my power, you have only to ask."

"If I could go to school, sir—"

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## POPULAR WIRELESS

Every Friday Of all Newsagents.

"To school?" repeated the baronet, in surprise. "You are—ahem—rather too old for a county council school, I believe."

"Bob Cherry's school, sir."

"Oh gad!"

Sir Hilton fairly jumped, as he realised that the outcast gipsy was asking to be sent to Greyfriars. His eyeglass dropped from his eye, and he stared at the gipsy in dismay and perplexity.

Mick read his expression, and his face coloured crimson.

"It's too much to ask, sir," he stammered. "I—I don't want anything, sir—what I did for you I'd have done for any covey—I don't want anything, sir, only as you offered—it's all right, sir, I ain't asking that, nor nothing else, sir."

And Mick almost ran for the door.

"Stop!"

Mick stopped.

"You surprised me, my boy," said the baronet. "What you ask is a more difficult matter than you can possibly imagine. You are—er—scarcely fitted, in many ways, to take a place among the boys of Greyfriars School. But I am a man of my word."

"Oh, sir, I ain't asking nothing!" said

20 MODEL STEAM  
LOCOMOTIVES.NO DANGER SIGNAL—  
ALL SPEED AHEAD!

Mick, in distress. "I only want you to let me go, sir, and I can look arter myself."

"A proper spirit," said Sir Hilton kindly. "A very proper spirit. But I am a man of my word, and you saved my life. There are difficulties in the way, my boy—many difficulties. But it shall not be my fault if they are not overcome."

"I—I didn't understand, sir. I'm an ignorant gipsy," said Mick, with a touch of bitterness. "I thought—but if you'll let me go, sir, I'll not trouble you any more—you've been kind enough to me already. I ain't asking any more, sir."

Sir Hilton smiled.

"I shall not let you go," he said. "I am a governor of Greyfriars, and I shall discuss the matter with Dr. Locke, the headmaster. For the present, Mick, you remain in this house."

"I ain't fit, sir—"

"Nonsense!"

And Mick—much to the surprise and horror of the portly and respectable Packer—stayed!

Skinner was in a state of fury when Bob Cherry arrived at Greyfriars with the bike. He treated Bob to untiring eloquence for ten minutes—and would have gone on longer, had not Bob held Skinner's head under a tap—which checked the flow of his eloquence. Then Skinner dropped the subject, and Bob Cherry dropped Skinner.

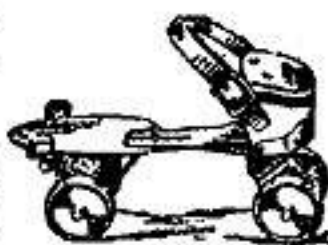
"I wonder if we shall see that gipsy kid again?" Bob Cherry remarked, at supper in Study No. 1.

"I wonder!" said Wharton.

The chums of the Remove little dreamed how soon they were to see Mick, the gipsy, and under what surprising circumstances. Little as they dreamed it, Greyfriars School was soon to see Mick—and the gipsy outcast was to be transformed into the gipsy schoolboy.

THE END.

(Don't miss "The Gipsy Schoolboy!"—next Monday's ripping Greyfriars story.)

100 PAIRS OF  
ROLLER  
SKATES.50 PAIRS OF  
BOXING  
GLOVES.ALL THESE  
PRIZES  
MUST BE  
WON!

Full particulars on  
pages 14 and 15.

With his heart full of bitterness against Sir Mostyn Frayne, gamester and rogue, who, in one stroke, has robbed him of a brother and the house and lands which had been the property of the Langleys for generations past, Dick Langley turns highwayman. With a price on his head he roams the countryside, seeking his livelihood behind a mask and a brace of pistols.

# GALLOPING DICK.

BY DAVID GOODWIN.

This Week:  
**CHAMPION  
OF THE  
OPPRESSED!**

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### The Mayor of Ugford!

**B**ACK, Kitty! Back into the green-wood! Odd's blood, what have we here? A hog'shead clad in scarlet; and mounted on a horse?"

Dick turned his black mare swiftly aside among the hazel-bushes that bordered the Ugford highway, and watched the travellers that were coming towards him. There were but two, and the first of them, mounted on a stout Flemish gelding, was certainly the fattest man Dick had ever set eyes on.

Behind him rode a thinner man, plainly a servant, at whose saddle-bow hung a pair of fat, trussed fowls and a bag from which the neck of a flagon showed suggestively.

Just before the two travellers came abreast of Dick's hiding-place the serving-man's horse stumbled, and the fat man turned upon his servant and cursed him roundly.

"Have a care with those capons, dolt!" he cried in a wheezy voice. "Hold up that stumbling steed you are riding, and feel his head! If aught happens to those fowls or the wine—Gramercy, what have we here?"

He stopped with a gasp, and his face turned a still flabbier hue as he looked down Galloping Dick's pistol, and saw the black mare barring his path.

"I perceive a purse of gold at your belt, sir," said Dick, holding the pistol steady, "and with all possible courtesy I suggest that you present it to me without delay!"

The man looked mighty frightened, but even more indignant. He drew himself up haughtily.

"Odd's blood, fellow, do you dare to stop the Mayor of Ugford? Who are you?"

"Ay, or twenty mayors, with their aldermen behind them!" said Dick impatiently. "I am Galloping Dick, of Milton!"

On that the mayor made no more ado, but turned a shade paler still, and pulled out his purse with all speed and handed it shakily to Dick, who took it, and rode towards the serving-man.

"Fear not, fellow. I do not rob those whose purses are light," said Dick. "But what do I see there? A fine pair of fat capons, egad, belonging to your master, and a flask of the right Gascony in yonder rush bag! These are mighty welcome, by my faith; for it is past my hour for dining, and the inns hereabout are very poor."

"Nay, sir! Have mercy!" shrieked the mayor, wheeling his horse round and clasp- ing his hands in supplication. "Take the guineas, but leave me the capons! They were fatted by my friend, Master Staynes, of Chilford, and there is not such another pair on the countryside!"

"Why, pink me, the man makes more fuss than if they were his children!" exclaimed

Dick, cutting the string by which one of the fowls hung and taking it.

"For weeks I have watched them growing plump!" shrieked the mayor piteously. "Ah, rob me not of them, gentle sir! And the Gascony is of a vintage I love well. Take my purse, but leave the capons and the wine!"

"I am no back-door robber, and do not thieve food and drink," said Dick. "So here is a guinea for the capon, and another for the Gascony! Put them in your pouch, fellow. And now begone!"

And, tossing the gold pieces to the serving-man, Dick gave the mayor's horse a cut with his whip, and sent the fat man, still lamenting, galloping off towards Ugford, and bumping heavily in his saddle.

"Egad," said Dick, as he rode, laughing, into the woods, bearing his spoils with him, "if yonder mayor attends as well to his civic duties as he does to his food he must be a model! It brought the very tears to his eyes to part with the capon, though I've left him one!"

Dick chose a shady, pleasant nook in the forest, where the golden sunlight filtered dimly through the screen of leaves, and lit himself a fire.

He made such a meal as seldom reached him, for he troubled little about food, and the fare of the inns contented him. But the capon had been fattened on chestnut-meal, and the wine was beyond praise.

"Faith," said Dick, as, after a pleasant rest, he mounted Kitty again and rode on, "I can almost understand the fellow's grief at losing that bird and the flagon!"

He rode along till he came among the scattered cottages on the outskirts of Ugford, and he felt a strong touch of pity for their inhabitants. The cottages were clean and well-kept, but sadly poor, and the people—even to their children—were thinly clothed and looked half-starved.

However, he rode to one of the houses where there was a pony-stable, and its owner—a gaunt but honest-eyed cottager—gladly provided corn for the mare, and gave Dick a place to groom her in.

"Well, good man, and how is the world with you?" said Dick.

"Badly, sir—badly! But, there, the poor must not complain!"

"Why, you look little prosperous hereabouts, sure enough! But the town yonder has a wealthier air. What is that fine building with the gilded spire?"

"The town-hall, sir. An', I' faith, that's where all the money is! We see little o' it!"

"Ah! So that's where the fat mayor holds court?" chuckled Dick. "He had an

air of wealth, too. Surely, with such a governor, the borough cannot be poor!"

"Indeed, sir, the mayor is an excellent man of business—has a bevy of aldermen with him as rich and as fat as he. They manage the affairs of the parish, and the tax and tithe that falls on us is sadly heavy. But the mayor and his friends care for naught in the world but good livin' and gormandisin'—rich food and fine wines. They hold three banquets a week, and that is where all the money goes. In business they help each other, being in power; and by degrees have waxed so rich in office that they have bought up most of the town and houses. The mayor, indeed, is my landlord, and a sore one I find him!"

"But, gadzooks," said Dick, "do they not spend the tax in improving the town? To be sure, the cobblestones are all broken and the streets are foul enough!"

"Not one penny, sir. A heavy tax was put on us three months ago to repair the wells, which are giving bad water. But the money was spent in feasts, and the wells are untouched. The bad water has killed two of my children, and you may see that the others of the town are as sickly as may be. As to living, we are so ground down by rent and tax that we cannot buy sufficient food!"

"Odd's blood!" muttered Dick, his brow growing dark. "And so the rascals rob the poor, and think of nothing but their own bellies! Might have guessed it, by the look of the mayor! Tell me, good man, when are these banquets given?"

"Why, sir, there is one to-morrow, at which the mayor and aldermen entertain in a great marquee on the green; for there are guests, and the town-hall will not hold them all. I hear 'twill be the most sumptuous feast the mayor has ever given."

"Ha!" said Dick. "But you and the other cottagers will do well to-morrow, then. After such a feast there will be abundance left, which, of course, is given to the poor, as in other parishes!"

"Not a crumb, sir! The mayor and his men give it to their dogs. 'A curse on the poor!' says he. 'Give them nothing; it does them good to fast!'"

"Do you tell me so?" said Dick, frowning. "Then, mark me well, good man! Do you come to the tent to-morrow just as the banquet is served, and bring with you a score of the hungriest of your friends—those who most need a good meal—and await my order!"

"Ay, sir," said the man, "say no more! Galloping Dick is the friend of poor men!"

"Yes," said Dick, "provided they be honest. See that you and your men are not late when the hour comes!"

The author at the top of the tree—Frank Richards!

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

## The Uninvited Guests!

THE marquee on the green was certainly gorgeous beyond description, its inner walls were richly draped, and hung all about with the arms of the borough of Ugford. A long table, laid with snow-white napery and gleaming silver and crystal, ran down the middle, and a small crowd of liveried serving-men waited round the walls with their noses in the air.

Outside, starved-looking children were standing at a respectful distance, sniffing humbly the rich fumes that rose from the cooking-tent annexed, and watching with wistful eyes the preparations for the feast. Now and again, if they ventured nearer, a disdainful footman drove them back with the coach-whip.

A trumpet blared across the green, and the procession of hosts and guests advanced, the mayor at their head. Clad in the full gorgeousness of their robes of office, shining in crimson and ermine, they paced pompously towards the marquee, preceded by the trumpeter.

It was a wonderful sight. A dozen fatter men could not have been found in Britain, and one or two of them ran the mayor himself very close. They entered the tent, and were ushered to their places by a stout and richly-dressed little master of the ceremonies, who took his own seat on a chair upon the small dais at the head of the table, to act as toast-master.

"Let the banquet be served!" said the mayor pompously.

A gorgeous feast was spread—boars' heads, venison, barons of beef, sucking-pigs, game, pasties in profusion—and the sunken little eyes of the banqueters gleamed with ecstasy. Just as they were about to fall to, a servant spoke to the mayor, who had called angrily to know the reason of a beseeching voice outside the tent.

"It is Simon Smith, your worship, a tenant of yours, who begs the favour of a broken loaf of bread, because his family are starving, and, his rent being due yesterday, you turned him out this morning—very properly, your worship. I told him to go away, because—"

"How dare he!" cried the mayor angrily. "Send the knave to the poor-house if he wants food! Tell the master to put him to a day's stonebreaking before he gets his skilly, though; and, hark ye, tell him not to make it too thick! 'Tis a mistake to overfeed these rogues! Haw, haw! Gazooks! What is this?"

The mayor gave a terrified gasp, which

was echoed by all his guests, for the tent-poles were flung open, and in rode Galloping Dick, sitting his mare like a centaur.

"Good-evening, gentlemen!" he said. "I have bidden myself to this feast, but before beginning we will make a few alterations. Who may this be? The master of ceremonies! Egad, I'll fill that place myself!"

And, jumping down from Kitty's back, he strode to the dais, bundled the fat toast-master from it neck and crop, and took the chair himself.

"What means this outrage?" bellowed the mayor. And then his tones changed. "Preserve us! 'Tis the highwayman that stopped me on the Ugford road! We are undone!"

Dick sat serenely in his chair, and laid a horse-pistol across his knees.

"I am hereby appointed toast-master!" he said. "Let no man hesitate to obey my rulings, unless he desires a sauce of leaden-bullet with his meal! Let every guest rise!"

The fat aldermen, led by their mayor, left their seats with an alacrity surprising in such fat men, each keeping a nervous eye on Dick's pistol.

"Take your places behind the chairs!"

It was done. The aldermen stood at the back of their seats, and shook in their shoes. Dick called aloud, and in walked the cottager he had spoken to the day before, with twenty hungry-looking comrades behind him.

"Welcome to the feast, good people!" cried Dick. "His worship the Mayor of Ugford makes you welcome, and will attend to your needs! Seat yourselves at the festive board!"

The men sat down, grinning at each other and wondering.

"Now, my lads, fall to and eat anything and everything you fancy! There is good food before you! Master Mayor and aldermen, take up the platters, and wait upon my guests—the guests of Galloping Dick—swiftly!"

"Wh-what!" stammered the mayor.

"Attend to the banqueters, and act as their serving-men!" cried Dick. "Do you understand me?"

He lifted his pistol, and the gorgeously-clad officials, trembling with fright and indignation, hastened to obey. The villagers, their first astonishment over, fell to work upon the choice viands like men who had not dined for a week, and the fat mayor and aldermen waddled wheezingly round, waiting on them hand and foot, not daring to resist, but with huge disgust on their flabby faces.

"Up with you, lads!" said Dick, when the fellows had eaten and rested. "There remains a wagonload of viands yet! Take them away to your homes!"

The villagers departed, giving three hearty cheers for Dick, and taking the remains of the feast in great delight for their families. The mayor and his men sank down by the walls of the tent, gasping and exhausted.

"As for you," said Dick, turning to them, "away to your homes, and think over what you have seen and done! See that you gorge less, and attend better to your duties; for if I hear that ever again you grind the poor and guzzle the taxes, by the rood I'll return and teach you a new lesson! Mend your lives, or you shall never eat a fat capon again! I can imagine no fate more terrible! Off with you!"

And Dick, swinging himself astride Black Kitty, rode out of the tent and cantered away across the downs.

## THE THIRD CHAPTER.

## The Smooth-Cheeked Youth!

"ODD'S fish! What's the matter with the fellow? He looks as though he were used to the horse, and yet he's all at sixes and sevens!"

Dick, posted at the cross-roads, and patting Black Kitty's neck, looked with some amazement at the young horseman who came trotting down the road on a handsome chestnut mare. A vastly well-dressed youth he was, and his clothes were of the richest. He seemed to ride passably, and yet it plainly irked him, for he twisted his face into strange grimaces, and, of all marvels, he wore his sword on the wrong side!

"Faith," thought Dick, "who can have sent this unfledged chicken abroad with a cockerel to guard it? On my life, I never before saw a youth with such pink cheeks and small features. And look to the sword of him! I had best relieve him of his purse, lest it fall to the hands of the ungodly."

And so saying, Galloping Dick drew Black Kitty across the path of the stranger, and drew a prodigious long horse-pistol from its holster.

"By your good leave, sir, a word with you!" he said.

The youth on the chestnut mare gave a frightened squeak, and reined her in with trembling hands.

"Forgive me, I did not mean to alarm you," said Dick, laughing; "but I should tell you that you are wearing your sword on the wrong side, and in return for that information I must request the gift of your purse."

To Dick's amazement, the youth covered his face with two slim, white hands, and burst into tears.

"Odd's bodikins!" exclaimed Dick; and then the truth dawned upon him.

The comely stranger was no youth, but a lady. It was plain enough, though what she was doing in man's attire, and with a sword at the wrong side, was beyond him. Dick, twitching Black Kitty swiftly out of the way, doffed his riding-hat, and bowed low.

"I beg a thousand pardons!" he said gravely. "Your way is clear before you, and if you are in any such case as a swift rider, and a sword may help you, I beg you to command me!"

"Alack-a-day, sir!" sobbed the maid, putting a laced handkerchief to her eyes, "I fear no help can mend my folly, for I am—"

She was interrupted by the clatter of hoofs, and round the corner galloped a young horseman on a roan gelding, as richly dressed as the maid, but covered in dust, and evidently in a great hurry.

"Quick, Elaine," he cried to the girl, "they are after us! What, in tears? Has this fellow molested you? A highwayman, as I live! Defend yourself, you scoundrel, and I will teach you manners!"

And the hot-headed gallant, furious with anger, whipped out his sword, and rode at Dick like a whirlwind.

The young highwayman, laughing, turned Kitty aside, and his assailant dashed by. The youth wrenched his horse round so furiously that he brought it down, and horse and man rolled over in the dust. Dick jumped down from Black Kitty, and in a moment the youth was up again, and rushed at Dick, rapier in hand.

"On guard, rascal!" he cried. "I will teach you to bully gentlewomen on the highway!"

"Jack—Jack!" cried the girl, slipping down from her steed. "Indeed, he has done me no harm; he was most courteous! Oh, pray, sir," she panted, turning to Dick—"pray do not kill him!"

"Never fear!" laughed Dick.

But, seeing that words were useless to check the hot-headed youngster, he drew and stood to him.

The youth made a wild onslaught, devoid of skill, and the steel clashed furiously. Dick parried every thrust with the greatest ease, smiling at his adversary, and the youth, exhausted by his own fury, reddened with shame as he saw how the young highwayman played with him, and how completely he was at Dick's mercy.

Then, with a twist of his wrist, Dick sent the youth's sword flying into the air, and left him weaponless.

The disarmed youth stood with white, set face, expecting to be run through. The girl gasped, but, seeing that Dick had no mind



The youth wrenched his horse round so furiously that he brought it down. (See Chapter 3.)

School, adventure, and detective stories every week!

to pluck him, she darted forward, picked up the fallen rapier, and held it tight.

"You sha'n't fight him again, Jack!" she said.

The youth, red with shame, looked loweringly at Dick.

"Come, sir," said the young highwayman, lowering his point, "if you have had enough sword-play, let us hear what all this bother is about."

The young man glanced at Dick, and then at the girl.

"I will," he said, "since you have won the right to know. This is Mistress Elaine Melton, niece and ward of Lord Hawley, and I am Jack Vandelys, at your service, and the pith of the story is that we're eloping because—"

"Because we love each other," said the girl.

"Ay," said the youth, stepping beside her; "and we shall ride to Gretna, where the good blacksmith will make us one."

"I see," said Dick. "Gretna will be a short ride, with Mistress Elaine to win at the end of it"—he bowed to the girl—"although it is two hundred miles. And Lord Hawley, I take it, does not approve?"

"I asked his consent," said the youth, "and he said he would see us—"

"Hush, Jack!" broke in the girl.

"You see, sir," said the youth, turning in a harassed way to Dick, "I am Lord Hawley's ward, too, and there is no good reason why we shouldn't marry, for my fortune, though smaller than Elaine's, is sufficient. But he swears she will wed Sir Grafton Simes, who is enormously wealthy, and Hawley wishes to join the two estates. Sir Grafton is hung at her night and day!"

"A wheezy old man, with a red nose, who has had three wives already!" cried Elaine, with a stamp of her foot. "I won't marry anyone but Jack!"

"The deuce of it is, sir," said Vandelys, "that our uncle has complete powers in his wardship, and can deprive us both of our fortunes, and let them go to other relatives, if we do not marry according to his choice. And he will do it."

"So you are going to Gretna with nothing apiece?" said Dick.

"Save our love," said the pair defiantly.

"Very pretty, but it will not pay the ostler's bill," said Dick. "Besides which, sir, your horse is crippled by the fall, and will not carry you another mile."

The couple looked despairingly at the roan, and the girl began to cry again.

"We must find a better way out of it than that," said Dick. "Who is this Sir Grafton, and where does he live?"

"At Barrow House," replied Vandelys; "and this very day he goes to arrange with my uncle the date of the wedding, after riding to the bank at Barton with his half-year's rents, which the old miser always collects and pays in himself!"

"Odd's fish!" exclaimed Dick. "Why, this is the high-road to Barton!"

"Ay, and I hear the hoof-beats of that wind-galled mare of his even now, unless my ears deceive me," said the youth hastily. "Come, Elaine, we must push on!"

"Nay, stop!" said Dick, springing on Kitty's back. "Withdraw into the coppice by the wayside here, and leave the matter to me. By the rood, we're in luck, and if you've got a stout heart in you, Jack Vandelys, I'll bring you through with colours flying. In with you!"

Just as the couple, bewildered but obedient, led their horses into the coppice, a horseman on a big, raw-boned grey came trotting round the corner, and found himself face to face with a highwayman with a cocked pistol.

## THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

### All's Well!

"**S** DEATH!" thought Dick, as he noted the stranger's flabby cheeks and avaricious, bloodshot eyes. "A pretty bridegroom for the dainty Elaine! She shall have Jack Vandelys, if I have to run the rascal through!"

"What do you want?" squeaked Sir Grafton, for it was he. "How dare you stop me! A highwayman, are you? Nay, sir, pray let me go! I have nothing! I am poor—I swear I am poor!"

"Ay, a miser is always poor!" said Dick.

"Morgan o' the Main!"—sensational pirate serial—starting in the "Popular"!



The tent-poles were flung open and in rode Galloping Dick.  
(See Chapter 2.)

grimly. "Do not forswear yourself, Sir Grafton Simes. I judge you not by your clothes or your horse, but by the half-year's rent you have in your saddlebags. Out with them, sirrah, for they are not destined for Barton Bank this day!"

The baronet gave a shriek, and his eyes rolled wickedly as he clutched his money-bags. But he had no spirit to fight, and in a few minutes Dick had possessed himself of the steel-clasped pouches and their key, and sent the skinflint on his way lamenting.

"A good haul, I faith!" laughed Dick, calling the youth and the girl out again. "Two thousand guineas, if there's one, and plaguey heavy. Now, Jack Vandelys, where's the nearest parson?"

"There's Parson Snell, the Vicar of Barton, at the manse close by," said Jack, staring. "What of him?"

"Then come quickly," said Dick, "for Lord Hawley will soon be hot-foot upon your trail. Get Mistress Elaine on her horse, and call on your roan for an effort. You may spate him when all's done."

The masterful young knight of the road took the bewildered couple in hand, listening to no protests, and soon they were knocking at the door of Parson Snell.

The vicar came to the door, a thin and meagre-looking cleric, with a long, grave face, vastly scandalised to find his oaken door rapped on by a sword hilt; but he did not know Dick, though the knight of the road had unmasked, not to scare the parson too hardly.

"Good-day to you, reverend sir!" said Dick. "Here is a pair of young gentlefolk who need your good offices, so pray you take the Book and marry them as soon as you may!"

"Impossible, sir!" said the scandalised vicar. "The thing cannot be done. What sorry jest is this to bring a maid to wed in man's clothes?"

"I would have you observe, sir," said Dick, "that I am chief groom-man in this matter, and will permit no comments on the lady's dress, or your cloth may not save you from my displeasure. Come, sir, 'tis a good deed to make man and wife of those who desire it, and though the notice is short, the fee is the better for it, so proceed without more words."

The parson winced as the young highway-

man's stern eye caught his, and, moreover, it was seldom a fee came to the Vicar of Barton. Being a man of peace, he thought it well to oblige these turbulent folk, and get rid of them.

"Be it so," he said. "It is irregular, but I can tie you as tight in my parlour as in the church, which is shut. So come in, and let us get it over, for I shall be well pleased to see the backs of you!"

In they went, but as soon as they came to close quarters in the parlour, the parson looked at the bride and started.

"Mercy on us!" he exclaimed. "'Tis Mistress Elaine Melton! This will never do! Good folk, I pray you be gone swiftly, for nothing will induce me to wed you. The Earl of Hawley is my patron of living, and I dare not dream of offending him by such an act. I know too well how his wishes lie."

"It must be done!" said Dick firmly.

"On my honour, I would not do it for a thousand guineas!" said the parson hurriedly. "Pray, sir, begone!"

"Would you do it for two thousand?" said Dick.

And he emptied Sir Grafton Simes' money-bags on the table. The parson stared, open-mouthed.

"Come, man, read the service, and take the fee!" said Dick. "A churchman should do his duty without fear of worldly disfavour; but I do not ask you to offend Lord Hawley for nothing. The guineas are yours when the deed is done."

"A wedding gift from Sir Grafton, I faith!" laughed Jack Vandelys merrily.

The vicar took his Book without another word, and twenty minutes later Jack and Elaine left the house with their hearts' desire accomplished, and Dick rode by their side.

"'Tis mighty well!" chuckled Dick. "But you have lost your fortunes, my turtle-doves!"

"We care nothing for that," said the two, joining hands.

"But I do," returned Dick. "I have pledged my honour to bring you through the matter with flying colours, and believe me, I have taken so many purses I know the value of them. We will go to Hawley Court, and I will bring my lord to my way of thinking, whether with lead or steel, the old curmudgeon!"

"Ecce!" said Jack, staring down the road, and dismounting from his horse, which could no longer carry him. "He is about to save you the trouble, for yonder he comes!"

A horseman came galloping furiously up the road, his steel flecked with foam, and as he drew near Dick saw that he was an elderly man, of handsome but choleric features, which were contorted with rage.

He galloped up, threw himself from his horse, and, drawing his sword, rushed upon Jack Vandelys.

"Rascal! I have caught you in time!" he cried. "Your blood shall pay for this piece of insolence!"

The young man whipped out his rapier and defended himself, but he would have been run through instantly had not Dick knocked the swords up with his own.

"To me, Lord Hawley!" he cried. "He is but a stripling, and I take his quarrel on myself!"

"Ah! The cursed highwayman who robbed Sir Grafton!" cried Hawley, turning viciously on Dick. "The young fools have taken you for their champion, have they? You think—"

(Continued on page 25.)

**ANSWERS**  
EVERY MONDAY—PRICE 2s

# THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE WHITE HEATHER



A powerful detective and **FERRERS LOCKE** at work in on an unprecedented scene on which the wonder-detective

adventure story, featuring Russia. The curtain rings up tyranny and political intrigue has sworn to abolish.

Told by "X."

## "Awaiting Shipment!"

"AFTER what happened to-night," continued the detective in a quiet tone, "I think I have drawn Red Mask from Moscow, and that will mean the temporary end of his tyranny there. But I still have to discover what has happened to the other victims of his dastardly away; you know as well as I do that many Britishers—and others—have vanished from Moscow during these last two years. Most of them are supposed to be dead; but we know that that is not true. Both you and Prince Ivan are supposed to be in Butirka Fortress; the world would never have heard that you were sent off like this. Red Mask's secret lies at the end of the long, long journey, Maltby, and I want to find out what it is."

"But to go alone—you and this youngster—"

Again the engine's whistle sounded, and Locke pointed towards the door.

"Get ready now," he said. "As soon as the train stops you must get away."

The speed slackened, and at last the train came to a halt. Locke reached for the door and swung it open, then held out his hand.

"Good-bye, Maltby!" he said. "You shall hear from me very soon. And I think I shall have a very interesting tale to tell you."

Maltby slipped through the open doorway, and the prince followed him, vanishing into the darkness. Ferrers Locke closed the door again, and dropped into his place beside Jack Drake, drawing the heavy hood over his head.

"Keep your wits about you now, Jack," he warned. "There's just a chance of Dimitri waking, though he may not do so. Boris is not going to wait very long here."

Jack had had the manacles adjusted over his wrist, and he leaned against his master now, with the hood well

down over his head. In build he was very much the same as Prince Ivan, and the shapeless robe made detection nearly impossible.

A long silence fell. Then, with a jerk and a rattle, the train started again.

## THE CURTAIN RINGS UP ON

**FERRERS LOCKE**, England's premier detective, who has journeyed to Moscow and founded a secret society known as the Brotherhood of the White Heather. Its governing object is to stamp out the tyrannical power of Red Mask, alias Count Heinrich, who holds some mysterious sway over the destinies of distressed Moscow.

**JACK DRAKE**, the detective's young and able assistant.

**PRINCE IVAN** and **MR. MALTBY**, members of the Brotherhood, who have fallen into the clutches of Red Mask.

**BORIS SAROV**, a prominent member of the Brotherhood.

Two victims of the cruelty of Red Mask have already been rescued, thanks to the untiring efforts of the great detective.

Locke's next task is to rescue Prince Ivan and Mr. Maltby, who are about to be secretly deported from Moscow. The train bearing them to their unknown destination, however, contains three stout allies in Ferrers Locke, Boris Sarov, and young Jack Drake. By means of a cylinder containing a potent "sleeping-draught" Locke renders the sentries guarding the two prisoners unconscious.

Despite the entreaties of Prince Ivan and Mr. Maltby, Locke insists that he and Drake should take the places of the prisoners. The exchange of clothes is made, the voluminous robes and hoods of the prince and Mr. Maltby making the identity of Locke and Drake well-nigh impossible of discovery, and the detective urges the prisoners to alight from the train when Boris, who is driving the engine, slows down.

"But what is going to happen to you?" inquires Mr. Maltby. "We cannot leave you here."

"Remember," says the detective, "that I have sworn either to rescue or avenge my countrymen. I am going to seek out Red Mask's stronghold!"

(Now read on.)

As it lumbered past the high water-tank Jack fancied that he heard another sound—the quick starting-up roar of a motor-car engine.

"Look out, Jack!"

Ferrers Locke's warning whisper came to the youngster, and he turned his head.

The hunched-up figure of the armed man in the far corner was just commencing to stir. He raised his head, yawned, then half started to his feet, gripping at the rifle by his side. His heavy, blank face stared across at the two motionless prisoners for a moment. Then dawning intelligence came into his eyes, and he dropped into his seat again with a grunt.

"I believe I must have been half-asleep," they heard him mutter as he picked up his pipe from the seat. "This confounded carriage is stuffy enough to send anyone off!"

He lighted his pipe and puffed for a few moments, glancing across at the prisoners. Then he reached out and tapped Ferrers Locke on the chest.

"Wake up, you Englishman!" the man barked.

Locke pretended to start, and stretched himself, the chains clanking on his wrist. A hoarse guffaw came from the armed man, and at the loud, raucous sound the other sleeper stirred, swinging into a sitting position, and raising his arms above his head.

"It's time you awakened," the other man remarked. "You sleep like a dead man."

They began to talk then, and one of them fetched out a black bottle, which he handed to his companion.

"No reason why we shouldn't be comfortable," the man said. "It's a confounded job, guarding these dogs!"

He leered across at the taller figure.

"You will not always travel thus, you English dog!" he said. "Wait till they

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haul you out and put you in the cage—the tall, cold cage, with iron bars—wait till they send you on the road—the long, rough road, with the whip to sting you if you lag behind!”

His guffaw was echoed by his companion, and the bottle was passed again.

“You’re a stiff-necked race, but your time is coming!” the hoarse voice went on. “They’ll bend you—break you just as they have done the others that went before you! Do you hear me? They’ll bend you!”

There was no reply from the motionless figures opposite, and, with an angry oath, the ruffian lunged out, driving the butt of his rifle into Ferrers Locke’s ribs—a cruel, vicious blow that made Jack Drake start forward; but a strong hand fell on his wrist beneath the robe, holding him motionless.

“Oh, let them alone!” the other sentinel broke out. “There’ll be enough of that for both of them later. Let us get to Nijni-novgorod and rid ourselves of these pests—we shall be free to enjoy ourselves then.”

They settled into a corner together, and the long journey continued. The engine was moving at top speed now, and Locke, under that disguising hood, smiled grimly to himself as he pictured Boris at his double task of keeping the fires going, and driving the powerful engine.

It was a big risk that Ferrers Locke was taking now. He had deliberately revealed his identity to Red Mask, knowing that by doing so he would force that ruffian to concentrate on finding him. That dive into the river had been followed by a long swim, and a rapid flight through the dark streets of Moscow to where Boris had been waiting for him.

Red Mask would be searching Moscow now, from house to house, and the following morning, when the news came to him that Locke had vanished, there was little doubt but what Red Mask would set off himself to seek the man who had tricked him so cleverly.

By drawing Count Heinrich out of Moscow, Ferrers Locke was saving the little, dwindling colony of Britishers from fresh tyranny at the hands of the blackmailing rogue.

The letter which Ferrers Locke had snatched from Red Mask’s hand had consisted of a list of names—some twenty-five or thirty in all. Under the list there had been a single line of writing—a familiar trade term that had a double meaning. The line ran, “Awaiting shipment,” and it was signed by someone named Snazine. There was no address on the sheet, but it was headed “Nijni-novgorod.”

Ferrers Locke knew that that was the destination for which the little train was heading now. Those twenty-five names contained many British ones, and there were some women among them. They were all of them Red Mask’s victims—spirited away by that hardened ruffian before they could make sign or protest.

The two half-drunken soldiers kept up a low-murmured conversation in their corner. Jack Drake had dropped into a half-dozzle, leaning against his master’s side. Ferrers Locke, keeping on the alert behind the heavy hood, watched the dark countryside race past under the brilliant stars.

The line to the Volga runs through flat, monotonous steppe-land—uninteresting and barren. Now and again they would thunder through some small, isolated station, and signals would clank and lights flash. In the early dawn the train halted at one big wayside station,

and some food was bundled into the carriage by a ragged-bearded railway official.

Ferrers Locke caught a glimpse of Dimitri, stretching his long legs on the platform; but they did not stop more than a few moments, and the long two hundred and seventy-five miles’ journey was continued.

It was almost dusk before the train, winding down a long embankment, gave Locke the first sight of that wonderful inland city, built where the Volga and Oka join. He saw the towering Kremlin—no Russian city worthy of the name is without its fortress-prison. Beyond were the great houses on the edge of the river, with their terraces, gardens, and lawns, and the broad bosom of the river was choked with craft of every imaginable description.

A warning shriek from the engine heralded the turning of the train into a single line. It glided smoothly on, passing through a cluster of galvanised-roofed sheds, coming to a halt at last near a range of cattle-pens. In the half-light Ferrers Locke could see the lights of the city beyond, but here all was darkness and gloom.

Red Mask’s passengers were not sent on to the great main station—it was typical of the ruffian’s mind that he should select those cattle-pens as the arrival platform.

A footfall sounded outside, and Dimitri’s harsh voice barked out a command. The door of the carriage was opened, and Jack Drake and Ferrers Locke rose stiffly to their feet.

They were hustled out by the armed men, and, with Dimitri walking in front of them, walked down through the lines of long pens, trudging through heavy mud. Once Jack—only half-awake—stumbled, and the man behind him jabbed the point of his bayonet in the youngster’s arm, muttering an imprecation as he did so.

“Keep your feet, you fool!” the brute snarled. “Princes must walk now, the same as others!”

### The Fight in the Cell!

**F**ERRERS LOCKE felt the youngster by his side quiver, but no sound came from Jack’s lips, though he had to clench his teeth to repress the cry of pain.

“Hurt you, Jack?”

Ferrers Locke managed to breathe a low whisper to the youngster at his side. “Not very much, gov’nor,” Jack replied. “But I’d like to get my own back on that hulking brute!”

“So you will, my lad—sooner than he expects!”

They had been led through a broken-down gateway into a muddy lane, and were pacing down towards the dark river. The shadow of a man appeared for a moment round the edge of one of the sheds. It darted across the road and vanished over the low wall.

Dimitri called out a challenge, but received no reply, and Ferrers Locke smiled quietly to himself. He had recognised the lithe, tall shape of Boris, and knew what that swift movement meant.

A high wall, with an arched gateway, loomed ahead, and Dimitri halted and knocked at the gate. There was a long pause before a voice spoke, and Dimitri answered. Then a creak of rusted bolts sounded, and the gate was thrown open. The two dark-robed figures were marched across the dingy courtyard into a stuffy, stone-built building in the centre of the yard. A light was brought, and one of the escorts followed them into the gloomy interior. Arranged along the wall were one or two cots, and a table and bench stood in the centre. There was a jug of water and a loaf of black bread, and some hard cheese.

“Not exactly princely quarters, Prince Ivan,” came the cold voice of Dimitri at the door. “But they are better than you will have presently. Make the most of them while you have the chance!”

Dimitri withdrew from the doorway, and Locke heard him talking to the sentries for a moment. Then the door was closed and locked by one of the



With a savage cry Dimitri flung himself at Ferrers Locke, whilst the sentry pounced upon Jack Drake.  
(See page 24.)

—in next week’s issue of the MAGNET! You might be a prize-winner!

sentries, and they heard him commence to pace to and fro in front of their prison.

Locke crossed to the bench and seated himself with Jack at his side.

"Not very appetising fare, young 'un," he said, reaching for the loaf. "But we might as well make the best of it. We've got to wait now until Boris gets into touch with the White Heather Brotherhood here."

"Are there some members here, guv'nor?"

"Oh, yes, a few! Boris knows where to find them. We must wait until he turns up again."

Ferrers Locke had taken a quick glance round the chamber. There was only one small window, high up on the left. He lifted the folds of the hood from his grimed face, and nodded to his young companion.

"We've given Maltby and Prince Ivan a good twenty-four hours," he said. "By this time they ought to be safe. We're going to end our little masquerade now, Jack. Dimitri has got to be told what has happened."

"You're going to let him know, guv'nor? But why?"

Ferrers Locke broke the loaf, handing half across to Jack.

"Because I want to draw Red Mask away from Moscow," the detective returned. "I want him to follow me. And when he finds out who it is has tricked him again, I know he'll come."

Ferrers Locke slipped his manacled hand under his robe, and drew out a small automatic, which he handed across to Jack.

"They did not think it necessary to examine us again," he remarked. "You'd better take this, young 'un. I've got another."

Presently he produced a bunch of keys, and the handcuffs were removed from their wrists.

"Boris is going to give us a signal when all is ready," Locke pointed out. "But we may have to wait some time yet."

A long hour dragged past, and Jack was half-dozing over the table when he found himself suddenly on the alert. He had heard a quick whistle from somewhere beyond the courtyard. It was repeated twice, and Ferrers Locke arose to his feet with a startled exclamation.

"By Jove! That means trouble!" he whispered to Jack. "Boris is signalling to us that something has gone wrong!"

A sudden fracas broke out in the courtyard, and they heard an angry shout. It was Dimitri's harsh voice.

"Quick! That light! Put it out!"

Jack reached for the candle and extinguished it. Then Ferrers Locke caught him by the arm, and they crossed to the door. Someone thudded against the solid barrier, and Dimitri's angry tones sounded again.

"Open the door, you fool! I tell you we've been tricked—deceived! If those two have gone we shall pay for it. They are not that Britisher, Maltby, and Prince Ivan. I have had a message from the chief. Open the door. Quick! Quick!"

Ferrers Locke's hand fell on Jack's shoulder.

"Steady, young 'un!" he breathed. "As soon as they come in, jump for the door and close it. I've got my automatic here, and I'll cover them. Look out! Here they come!"

The door swung inwards, and two stumbling shapes came barging into the dark chamber.

"A light, you fool! Get a light!"

Dimitri halted half-way across the room, and the armed sentry blundered into him. Next moment the door crashed into place, and a beam of white light shot across the darkness, landing on Dimitri and the bearded sentry. In the centre of the beam was a hand holding a revolver. The shining muzzle was as steady as a rock. From the darkness behind the torch came a quiet, warning voice.

"Don't move, Dimitri, or you're a dead man!"

Dimitri stopped dead against the table, and the thick figure of the other soldier turned, blinking into the powerful light. He was still holding his rifle across his chest.

"Drop that! Quick! Drop it!"

The revolver moved an inch, and there was a clatter as the rifle fell on the hard floor.

"Take that away, Jack," said Ferrers Locke. "It'll be safer in your hands."

Thrilling with sheer joy, the youngster slipped from the door, and picked up the heavy rifle. He went back to his master and levelled the shining steel into the shaft of light.

Ferrers Locke walked quietly back to the table, and lighted the candle again, and its feeble yellow gleam revealed the whole scene. Dimitri, with his black eyes bulging from his head, stared for a moment at the clean-cut, grimed face looming above the grey robe.

"Who—who are you?" he broke out.

"My name will convey nothing to you, Dimitri, but it may to your master. You can tell him it was Ferrers Locke who took the place of Maltby."

The face of the Russian went livid.

"You! The Englishman my master wants to find?"

"Then you have spoken with him—eh? That makes it all the more interesting. I am afraid he must have been very angry over the telephone?"

The cool, dry tones of Ferrers Locke's voice seemed to send a sudden, mad fury into the listener. With a savage cry, Dimitri flung himself bodily at Locke, gripping his wrists and twisting the revolver upward.

The swiftness of the attack took Locke completely by surprise, and he staggered back, while Dimitri clung to him in a fierce lock. As they rolled on the floor together they thudded against the table, and the candle fell over and went out.

Jack Drake, quick as a flash, swung the rifle round, and aimed a blow with the butt. He was only just in the nick of time, for already the thick-set sentry had leaped for it. Jack felt the butt crash hard on the man's tough head. Then, next moment, the rifle was knocked out of his grasp, and two clawing hands gripped at him, and he went down on his back, with the heavy sentry on top of him.

### The Secret Wireless Station!

FOR a moment Jack Drake lay helpless under the weight of his heavy rival, for the fall had knocked the wind out of the youngster. Then, as Jack made a wild swing, punching up in the darkness, his fist came in contact with the bearded face above him. It was not a very powerful punch—more of a push than anything else—but, to Jack's amazement, he felt his adversary roll aside. Then, like a flash, the truth dawned on the youngster. That swinging blow with the butt of the rifle had stunned the fellow, and his attack had been a mere blind rush before his strength gave way.

Jack wriggled out from beneath the burly shape, and, gasping for breath, arose unsteadily to his feet. He heard a scuffling sound from the other side of the cell, then a low, choking gasp.

"Where are you, guv'nor? Where are you?" Jack called.

"All right, Jack. Stand where you are."

The calm, assured voice of Ferrers Locke brought a surge of relief to the youngster, and he came to a halt, peering through the darkness. Again the half-choking sound reached him, and a heavy body thudded against the wall. A moment later the light from Locke's electric lamp flashed through the gloom.

"Quick, Jack! Get to the door!"

Jack strode across to the heavy door and stood there. He saw the huddled figure of Dimitri lying on its side against the wall, and noticed that the ruffian's wrists were fixed to the long, slender chain.

Crossing to the sentry, Locke stooped, and, with an effortless swing, raised the fellow in his arms, and carried him across to the bench against the wall. Then, lifting one of the voluminous grey robes, he wrapped it round the inert figure, pulling the hood well down over the man's face. It was Dimitri's turn next, and he, too, was swathed in the grey garb and laid near the sentry.

Locke produced a couple of lengths of cloth, and adjusted them over his prisoners' lips. Then the hoods were readjusted, and there was a grim smile on Locke's face as he attached the other end of the chain to the sentry. Finally he bound them by their ankles, and tied them to the legs of the benches. He passed one end of the chain through a couple of rings set in the wall, and now he stepped back to view his handiwork.

Jack chuckled. In the grey robes the two figures, lounging against the wall, would easily be accepted as those of Locke and his young assistant.

"Now, youngster, you've got to be careful. Come!"

Locke had reached the door, and he extinguished the electric-lamp. They waited for a moment, listening. Then Locke opened the door and, followed by Jack, stepped out into the narrow space.

"Keep beside the wall, Jack," Locke whispered, "and wait until I signal to you."

Jack stood aside, pressing himself against the dark wall, and his master, closing the door, turned and walked quietly towards the gateway in the wall. A towering figure, with a rifle slung over his shoulder, was pacing up and down the narrow gateway, and as Ferrers Locke drew near to him he came to a halt and turned.

Locke's cool nerve held Jack spell-bound then. He walked quietly towards the man, completely at his ease. The figure at the gate leaned forward to peer through the darkness at the oncomer. Locke waited until he was within three paces of the man before he made his effort. His leap was followed by a beautifully-timed punch—a straight-arm left, that went home on the sentry's jaw, dead on the point. It was a blow that would have felled an ox. As the man reeled Locke caught at him, checking his fall.

"Now, youngster! Come on!"

Jack darted to the gateway, and Ferrers Locke allowed the sentry to slip helplessly to the ground. As the youngster cleared the gateway Locke followed him, turning to the right, and together

**Don't forget: Monday is MAGNET Day—the best day of the week!**

they darted along the line of sheds and descended a range of wooden steps, reaching a narrow embankment that ran along the river.

A tall figure came out from the darkness, and a low voice hailed them.

"Is that you, Mr. Locke?"

It was the voice of Boris, and Locke replied.

Boris slipped his weapon back into his pocket and, hurrying to Locke, caught him by the arm.

"Dimitri came along here a few minutes ago," Boris said. "I heard him talking to his companion. He knew that a trick had been played on him, and he knew that Maltby and Prince Ivan got away. I was afraid of what was going to happen to you. You have had a miraculous escape."

"Yes, it was a rather close thing," Locke admitted. "We'd better get away from here as soon as we can."

As he made the suggestion a muffled shot rang out in the darkness behind, followed by another and yet another. They were to discover afterwards that Dimitri, returning to consciousness, had managed to slip one hand free and draw his revolver, and he blazed away in the darkness to attract the attention of his subordinates.

"Right. This way."

Boris led the way down the narrow embankment, and reached another flight of steps, that led down to the river. Here a flat-bottomed boat was tied, and the three climbed into it. Then Boris, casting off, took up his position in the stern and punted off downstream.

They were only just in the nick of time, for, as the craft reached mid-stream, lights appeared on the bank of the river, and Jack Drake saw the armed

figures of the searchers as they moved to and fro. Slowly the boat surged onwards, swinging round a bend into a wider stretch. Ahead Jack saw the tall arms of cranes standing out in the darkness, while from foremasts and forestays the riding-lights glimmered from a line of trading vessels.

And beyond lay the town of Nijni-novgorod, the lighted bridge that links the old town with the new, shimmering on the left. The punt stole onwards, and finally swung inwards, rasping against a stone quay.

Boris signalled to his companions to land, made fast the boat, and stowed the pole. Then jumping after them, he led the way through a labyrinth of narrow passages and alleys, finally coming to a halt in a small courtyard, with a stone-built house in front of them.

Boris whistled softly, and received an answering signal. Then a heavy bolt rattled, and a door opened.

"Who waits?" a voice asked.

"Brothers of the White Heather," Boris returned.

"Enter, brothers."

Jack found himself pacing down a narrow hall. Then Boris drew aside a curtain on the right, and a blaze of light appeared. Ferrers Locke and Jack strode into the lighted chamber, blinking for a moment under the powerful rays. It was a curious apartment. Ranged along the far side of the wall were a number of polished discs, a dynamo, and a retort of some kind. There were test-tubes, and a small crucible in another corner, while on the table in the centre was a powerful wireless set.

Seated at the table was a little wizened man in a shabby alpaca coat. He had

evidently been listening-in, for the head-pieces were in his hand as he looked at the newcomers.

"These are your friends, then, Boris?"

"Yes, Excellency. This is Mr. Ferrers Locke, and his assistant, Jack Drake."

Boris turned to Locke.

"His Excellency Prince Michel Romanoff."

Ferrers Locke found himself bowing to the last representative of the unfortunate royal family. The prince gave Locke a warm hand-shake.

"I've heard of you, Mr. Locke," he said. "And, as you see, I have joined the brotherhood that you organised."

In the lapel of his shabby coat was a sprig of white heather, and his keen, studious face lighted into a wistful smile.

"You have done great work for my unfortunate country," the prince went on. "And you are a marked man."

Boris leaned forward.

"It was his Excellency who picked up the wireless message concerning you, Locke," he explained. "It only came through an hour ago from Moscow. I'm afraid they found out about our little railway adventure; the men we bribed gave us away."

His handsome face darkened.

"One cannot trust those sort of people; it would have been better had you allowed me to carry out my suggestion: that engine-driver and his fireman would not have been able to betray us."

"What does it matter now, Boris? They have done us little harm, and we are here, where the game really starts."

"There have been many wireless messages," the prince said. "Someone in Moscow, who seems to be a great tyrant, has been flashing message after message.

## GALLOPING DICK!

(Continued from page 21.)

yourself a sportsman! By the rood, if I don't plink you in two minutes the brats shall wed with my blessing! Come on!"

"I shall hold you to your word!" said Dick coolly.

And the two rapiers ground viciously together.

Lord Hawley, fine swordsman as he was, soon found he had met his match. He was pressed back foot by foot, contesting every inch.

He fought valiantly, but the strength and determination of the young highwayman soon brought him to weariness, and at last he found his sword twitched from his grasp by a turn of Dick's rapier, and sent spinning over the hedge. He stood at his rival's mercy, but Dick lowered his point and saluted.

"Egad, you can fight!" panted the earl. "Who are you?"

"Galloping Dick is what they call me on the road," said the victor; "but now, Lord Hawley, here is an inkhorn and paper which I brought from the vicarage and I will ask you to fulfil your word, and give your consent in writing to the marriage of my friends here."

"Egad," said Lord Hawley, "so you're young Dick Langley of Langleys, are you? Ay, give me the paper!"

Dick took the document when it was signed and witnessed, and handed it to Elaine.

"Excellently done!" he said. "And now, Lord Hawley, as their fortunes are secured to them, let me present you to Mr. and Mrs. Jack Vandelys!"

"Married!" gasped the earl, staring.

"Twenty minutes ago!" replied Dick, with a grin.

"Egad!" said his lordship. "Then let's all go home and dine!"

THE END.

(There is another magnificent story of the Broad Highway coming shortly, chums. Look out for it!)

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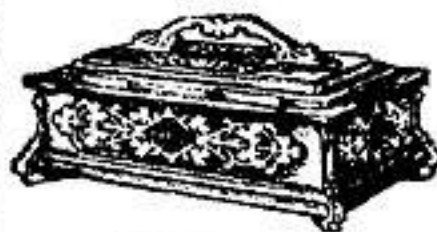
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Boris drew aside the curtain and a blaze of light appeared. Ferrers Locke and Drake strode into the lighted chamber. Seated at the table was a little wizened man. He had evidently been listening-in, for the headpieces were in his hands. "His Excellency Prince Michel Romanoff!" said Boris respectfully. (See page 25.)

Your description and that of your friend, Boris, here, has gone to every town and village. They will seek you out, Mr. Locke, and their orders are to kill." He seated himself again, and now Locke noticed that the man was a cripple. His lower limbs were shrunken and twisted.

"I took many of the messages," he went on. "They are here."

He handed a bundle of slips to the detective, but Locke did not do more than glance at them.

"You carry your life in your hands," the prince continued. "Yet it does not seem to trouble you a great deal."

"There are others whom I have to trouble over, your Excellency, and their needs are more urgent than mine. I have to find a man called Snazine; he is somewhere here in Nijni-novgorod. Does your Excellency happen to know anyone of that name?"

The man seated in front of the little table thought for a moment, then shook his head.

"It is a peasant's name," he said, "and not at all common in this part, although there are many of that name in Siberia."

"I must find him," Locke repeated. "He is somewhere here in Nijni-novgorod, and he holds the key to the secret that I wish to solve."

He turned to Boris.

"To-morrow you and I, Boris, must go in search of him; there is no time to lose; he is here in Nijni-novgorod, and he must have some connection with the shipping, so if we make inquiries along the wharves we are bound to get some news of him."

The prince touched a bell, and a

servant appeared. Jack, Ferrers Locke, and Boris were led into a comfortably-furnished room, where a meal was prepared for them, and they were afterwards shown to their bed-rooms.

"Prince Michel says we are free to do whatever we like," Boris said. "But we are not to trouble him. He spends his life almost at that wireless installation. It is a secret one, and nobody knows of its existence except a few friends; but through it he has been able to help the brotherhood a great deal; it is the only way that he can serve."

#### Red Mask's Victims!

ON the following afternoon Ferrers Locke and Boris turned into a dingy thoroughfare that led to the bridge which linked the old town with the new. Boris was wearing a suit of rough serge and a peaked cap, while Locke was dressed in rough dungarees. They looked like two seafaring men, and there were many such wearing similar dress in that quarter of the town.

Presently they turned on to a long wharf, and halted beside a shed. On one end of the shed was painted the proprietor's name, and Boris touched Ferrers Locke quietly on the arm.

"This is Snazine's place," he said.

The notice was in Russian, and stated that Alexis Snazine was a dealer in hide, and the strong aroma of tanned leather came quite plainly to them as they studied the solid structure.

Moored to the wharf was a small motor-launch, and presently a man emerged from the shed, and crossed to the edge of the wharf. He was carrying

a heavy wicker basket, which he lowered into the launch.

Boris strolled forward and spoke to the man.

"Is there any work to be had, my friend?" he asked. "We two have just been discharged from our boat, and it is hard to find work here in Nijni."

"There is no work to be had here," the man replied in a surly tone.

"We are ready to do any sort of work, as long as we earn a few roubles," Boris went on.

"You but waste your time, my friends," the other returned.

"Could we speak to your master?" Boris persisted.

"No. He is not here just now, and I do not know when he will return."

The man had turned, and was pacing back towards the shed, and Boris, playing his part well enough, followed him to the door of the great structure. He was able to see into the interior, and he noticed there were only a few bales of hides stowed in the place.

Along one side of the shed there was arranged a number of rough litters, and there was a table and a number of forms down the centre of it. On the left was an oil-stove, and a small cupboard.

"Where is Mr. Alexis Snazine?" Boris asked.

"That is more than I can tell you, and I would advise you not to wait here for him," the man broke out. "He does not like to see strangers here; if you take my advice you will go."

Boris drew back, and presently the man reappeared again, carrying another basket. He halted to close the door of the shed, and, crossing to the wharf, lowered his burden into the motor-launch. Then, climbing down after it, he started the engine, and the launch slid off into mid-stream.

Boris went back to where Locke was seated behind a pile of sleepers, and gave him a brief account of the conversation.

"I think we've located the right place, Locke," Boris added. "That shed is merely a blind; it is obvious that quite recently it has been used as a living-room for a number of people."

The shed and wharf were in a rather isolated position—well away from the general lines of docks. The launch was chugging steadily onwards, and Locke and Boris watched it until it reached the side of a broad, flat-bottomed barge.

The barge had a heavy super-structure on it—not unlike a houseboat, but no windows were visible. It seemed as though it was built of solid boarding. The launch was tethered to the barge, and the man clambered aboard, lifting the wicker basket and the other receptacle.

"That's a queer sort of craft, Boris," Ferrers Locke said. "What is it used for—do you know?"

The tall Russian had been staring steadily at the barge, and he turned to Ferrers Locke now with a curious frown on his face.

"I haven't seen one of those for a long time, Locke," he said. "But I know what they were used for once upon a time. In the old days they used to ship the Siberian prisoners in barges of that sort, and send them on down the river to Perm. I suppose the barge is being used as a stores now."

Locke suddenly leaned forward, and touched Boris on the arm.

"There must be something very valuable on that barge," he said. "Look! There's an armed man."

In the narrow space of the stern another figure had stepped from the interior of the barge, wearing a cartridge-belt and carrying a rifle. He vanished almost as soon as he appeared, and the other man followed him, dragging the wicker basket through the narrow doorway.

Locke glanced at Boris for a moment, his keen eyes grim. "Our friend Snazine must think an awful lot of his hides when he puts an armed man to guard them," he said.

He arose to his feet and drew nearer his companion. "I want to inspect that shed," he went on. "And I think this is a good opportunity; let us get inside before that fellow returns."

They moved down the wharf, and Locke, slipping to the back of the shed, found a narrow window which was covered by a strip of sacking. It was fastened on the inside, and Locke, taking a narrow steel tool from his pocket, manipulated the catch, and the window swung inwards. In another moment he and Boris were inside the shed, and the window was re-secured.

Locke began a swift examination of the place, and Boris watched him. There were fragments of food on the long table, and other indications that the shed had been occupied recently.

"From what I can see of it there's been about a dozen people here, Boris," Locke said at last. "And it's not very long ago that they were here."

"Why should anyone live in a hole like this?" Boris asked. "I don't think they lived here from choice, my dear chap," the detective returned. "They were herded here—like so many animals. Look—this proves it!"

Locke had halted between two of the narrow pallet beds, and Boris came over to where he was standing. Fixed in the wall between the beds was a stout iron ring. Locke indicated it, and Boris saw the roughened edges where a chain had rasped the hard surface. Between each bed was a similar ring, and they all bore evidence of recent use.

"The occupants of these beds were in irons," said Locke. "They were linked together by chains that passed through those rings."

"Then you think that—"  
Locke's clean-cut face was tense and set. "I mean that Snazine was quite right when he sent that message to Red Mask," he returned quietly. "The unfortunate wretches were awaiting shipment; and it was here that they were being kept."

He was standing beside the table, and suddenly his quick eyes were attracted by a few scratches on the wall. He leaned forward, studying them for a moment. Then he beckoned to Boris.

"Look! You'll need no further proof now," Ferrers Locke said.

On the board someone with a sharp, pointed implement had scrawled a few words. It was all Boris could do to make them out, but the message ran:

"There are fifteen of us left—Heaven help us!"  
"JAMES KERSHAW."

"Kershaw? Kershaw? That was one of the names on the list in the letter you collared!" Boris broke out, looking at Locke with his dark eyes aglow.

"Quite right, Boris," Ferrers Locke said. "James Kershaw is a Britisher, who was employed in a bank in Moscow. He was one of the men who disappeared five or six months ago. He was arrested, and it was given out he was shot trying to escape from the Kremlin. In other words, Boris, he is one of Red Mask's victims."

Boris looked round the foul, evil-smelling shed. "Fifteen of them," he repeated. "Herded here like so many cattle. By James, Locke, I pity them!"

The man by his side smiled grimly. "They are needing our help as well as our pity, Boris," he returned. "And they are going to get it, too. That poor fellow little knew what he was doing when he left that message behind; we know now we are on the right track."

The door of the shed was immediately opposite them, and as Locke turned away a sound came to his ears, bringing him to a halt. It was the beat of a motor-car engine, and came nearer and nearer, finally stopping close to the shed, and a murmur of voices sounded.

"They are coming here," Boris called as he heard the hurrying footfalls.

To the left were bales of hides, and Locke and Boris made a rush for them. Boris slipped over the top of a bale, and Locke followed him. They flattened themselves out on the strong-smelling piles, and had only just settled into position when the scrape of a key sounded, and the door was thrust open.

A towering figure appeared on the threshold, and Boris' fingers tightened on Locke's wrist.

Red Mask!

(Now look out for next Monday's ripping instalment, boys.)

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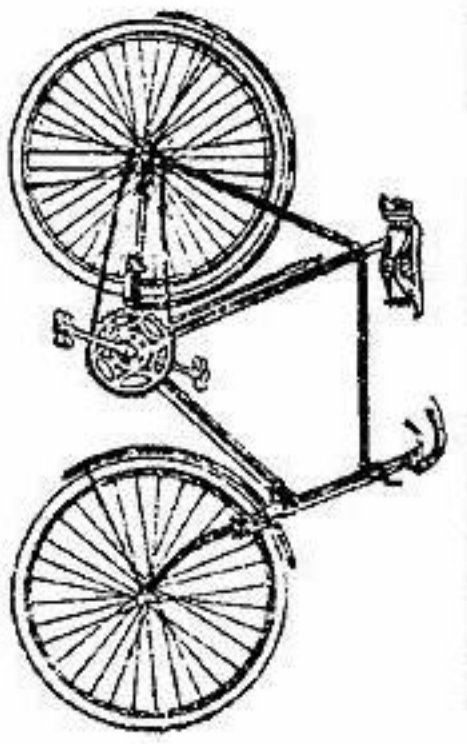
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