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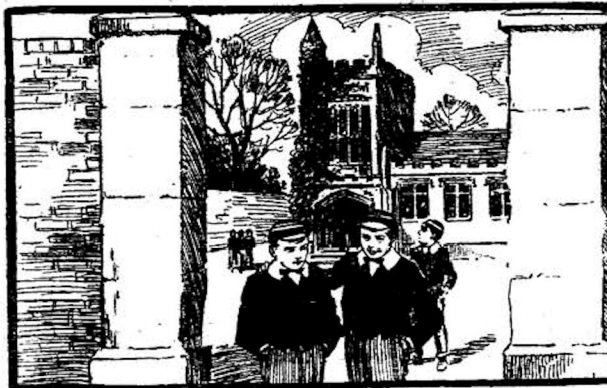
No. 91. ON SALE EVERY TUESDAY. July 23, 1921.



STRINGER'S SPORTS DAY!

Nibby Clink pushed his way past the commissionaire, and made straight for Stringer's party. (See the splendid, long complete story of *Stringer & Co.*—inside.)

Another Splendid Complete Detective Story of Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake.



The Medway Court Mystery!

A Grand, Long Complete Detective Story introducing Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake.

A Murder Mystery!

INSPECTOR PYCROFT!

Jack Drake made the announcement.

"Show him in, Drake," said Ferrers Locke, "and remain yourself, my boy."

Inspector Pycroft, burly and ruddy, entered the famous detective's sanctum with a heavy tread. There was a frown upon the brow of the Scotland Yard inspector, and he barely returned Ferrers Locke's genial greeting as he came in. Apparently Mr. Pycroft was not in the best of tempers.

"This won't do, Locke!" he remarked emphatically.

Ferrers Locke smiled.

"Take a seat, Pycroft, and tell me what it is that won't do," he answered.

Drake slid forward a chair for the inspector, and retired to his own desk by the window.

The former schoolboy of Greyfriars was feeling a sense of elation. Ferrers Locke did not do things by halves; and now that he had made Jack Drake his assistant, he was fully taking him into his confidence. Inspector Pycroft glanced disapprovingly at the boy seated at the desk, grunted, and devoted his attention to Locke.

"It won't do, Locke!" he repeated. "This Medway affair."

"But I don't quite see—"

"Cyril Medway," said Mr. Pycroft, "is under arrest, on the charge of murder. The case is in my hands, Locke. The young fellow was arrested here, in your consulting room. For some reason best known to himself, he rushed here, and was followed and captured in your rooms. He left a message with your lad here."

"Which was duly delivered," said Locke.

"I have the whole case at my finger-tips," resumed the inspector. "There never was a clearer case, Locke; and—excuse me for putting it plainly—there is no occasion whatever for an unofficial detective to butt in. Not that I mind, personally," said the inspector, though his tone indicated pretty plainly that he did mind, very much. "But I don't want to see you make a fool of yourself, Locke. There's such a thing as being too dashed clever, what?"

"No doubt. But—"

"I don't see that you are concerned in the case, anyhow," went on Mr. Pycroft. "The young fellow made an appeal to you, through your lad here—that is all. He can't employ you to work for his defence, even if it was any good—he hasn't a penny to bless himself with. You're not going into the case for your health, I suppose?"

"No," said Locke with a smile.

"Then why the thunder are you in it?" demanded the inspector. "I know that you have been at work already, Locke; that's why I've dropped in to speak to you. You've been making inquiries around Medway Court. You're an appointment to see Randolph Medway, the accused man's cousin."

"He has told you so?"

"He has." Inspector Pycroft slapped his plump knee. "Now, I want to tell you that it won't do, Locke. I'm willing to admit that you've assisted us several times, and I've acknowledged it. But this time we don't want any assistance. You don't mind my speaking plainly."

"Not at all."

"Then you're standing out?"

"Not exactly. You see—"

"I don't see!" answered the inspector, with some heat, "what good do you think you will do by butting in?"

"You are satisfied as to the guilt of the accused?" asked Ferrers Locke quietly. "The evidence is chiefly circumstantial—"

"It is good enough for me," said Mr. Pycroft, gruffly, "and I fancy it will be good enough for the jury. If ever a fellow had the rope fairly round his neck, Cyril Medway

has it now. Why he came here to ask your help I can't imagine. He knew he was guilty."

"If he knew he was guilty it was rather an odd proceeding on his part," remarked Ferrers Locke. "He could not, in that case, have hoped that my investigations would be of much use to him."

"Possibly he thought a jury might prefer your fine theories to our solid facts!" suggested the inspector with a grin.

"Possibly. But don't let us dispute, Pycroft. I've no desire whatever to waste my time. If the facts are as you say, I'm prepared to drop the case at a moment's notice. Unless I get my man off, I cannot even expect to be paid for my time. So if you have a clear case—"

"The very clearest."

"Shall we go into it?" suggested the detective.

Inspector Pycroft glanced at Drake and grunted.

"My assistant is quite in my confidence," said Ferrers Locke quietly. "You can speak before him as before me, Pycroft."

"Very well. Now"—the inspector ticked off the points on his fat fingers as he proceeded—"Squire Medway, of Medway Court, was murdered last Monday. The remains have been found. The squire lived at the Court, and his two nephews, his only known relations, lived there when they were in the country. Both of them had rooms in town also. On Monday they were both there—and there was a quarrel between Cyril and his uncle. The young man wanted money—the old man refused to hand it out—and there was a dispute, ending in a row. We've the evidence of four or five servants on that point, as well as of Mr. Randolph Medway. Mr. Randolph was very reluctant to speak against his cousin, but he had to admit the facts."

Locke nodded.

"Mr. Cyril left the house, apparently to return to London; but it transpires that he was seen tramping about the grounds and the woods, in a very excited state. He turned up at the railway station and missed the last train, and spent the night at the village inn, and left early in the morning."

"So I understand."

"On Monday evening, the squire and Mr. Randolph dined together. Mr. Medway had been very much disturbed by the quarrel. After dinner he walked out to smoke his cigar in the grounds—a habit of his in fine weather."

"And he did not return."

"He did not return," said the inspector. "An hour or so later, wondering why he did not come up, Mr. Randolph strolled along the terrace to look for him. He found two or three of the servants there, staring towards a big blaze in the woods at a distance from the house."

The inspector paused, impressively.

"There had been clearing going on in the woods for a week past, and the woodmen had been burning the brush-wood as usual—there was nothing surprising in the fire. It was much larger and brighter than was customary, that was all. That was why it attracted attention. But Mr. Randolph, who was getting rather anxious about his uncle did not attach much importance to that detail. He went indoors and smoked another cigar, and knocked the balls about in the billiard-room for a time; but at eleven o'clock, as Mr. Medway did not come in, he grew alarmed, fearing that some mischance must have happened."

"He called the butler, Jordan, and instructed him to have the grounds searched for the squire. The search was undertaken, but Mr. Medway was not found. Mr. Randolph passed a very uneasy night, wondering what had happened, and in the morning, as his uncle had not returned, he called in the aid of the local police."

"A systematic search was then made. A half-smoked cigar, of Mr. Medway's favourite brand, was picked up in the lane separating the grounds from the wood."

"The search was extended into the wood. The squire's hat was found within a dozen yards of the burning brushwood, which was still smouldering.

"Suspicion was excited now, and the smouldering pile was raked over. A number of discoveries were then made. The squire's watch and chain, burned and disfigured, but still recognisable, were found in the very heart of the pile—and a number of half-consumed bones."

Inspector Pycroft paused again, with his eyes on Ferrers Locke's quiet, attentive face.

"A woodman informed the police that a quantity of fag-gots had been taken from a stack near at hand and piled on the fire by some person unknown. Evidently this had been done to make the fire fierce enough to consume the body of the victim."

"And the bones—"

"Have been positively identified as human bones," said Mr. Pycroft. "There is no doubt about that. One thigh bone is complete."

He grinned slightly.

"You need not spin fine theories on that point, Locke. The bones in the fire were not a blind of any sort. One of our best men has examined them, and at the trial he will give evidence that they were undoubtedly the bones of a man."

"And then—"

"Then Scotland Yard was communicated with. The case was placed in my hands. After a very brief inquiry I decided to apply for a warrant for the arrest of Mr. Cyril. I went to his rooms in Jermyn Street—but he had quitted them within half-an-hour of arriving there that morning. His servant informed me that he had been rung up on the telephone, had seemed very agitated by the message he received, and had left his chambers immediately. The telephone message we have been unable to trace—possibly a confederate at Medway had informed him of the discovery of the squire's remains. The point is unessential.

"Cyril Medway was traced to a telephone call-office, where he had been seen searching the directory for a special number. He had marked that number with his thumb-nail—it was your number, Locke."

"Drake received his call," said Ferrers Locke.

"Apparently he did not get through to you—"

"I was absent."

"He was gone by the time we traced him—but the thumb-nail mark on the telephone number in the book was enough for me." Mr. Pycroft smiled complacently. "I came here and found him in your consulting-room, waiting for you."

"And arrested him."

"Exactly. He was taken to Bow Street, and after being cautioned in the usual way, made a statement—tosh from beginning to end.

"He stated that he had intended to return to London after seeing his uncle, to attempt to make some arrangement with his creditors. But he felt himself in a hopeless position, and hung about the Court grounds, undecided whether to make another appeal to Mr. Medway. But he gave that up as hopeless, and finally started for the station—and missed his train. He came back to London by the first train in the morning—and was then rung up on the telephone. Some person warned him of what had happened at Medway Court, and advised him to take care of his safety, telling him that a warrant was out for his arrest. No one could have known outside the police, that a warrant was issued at that time, so the statement is wild enough."

"And then—"

"He lost his nerve, according to his statement; remembering the quarrel with his uncle and the fact that he had been wandering about in the woods alone at the time of the murder. He hurried away from his rooms before the police could arrive, and spent some time trying to think out what he had better do—all the more distracted because he was very much attached to his uncle, and grief-stricken at his death." The inspector shrugged his broad shoulders. "Then he thought of you as the man who could possibly save him—he tried to phone you, and then came to your rooms in the hope of seeing you."

"A fairly probable story!"

"You may think so, Mr. Locke. He admitted freely that he knew that his uncle's will was made in his favour—that Medway Court and a large sum in War Loan would descend to him—only five hundred a year being left to his cousin Randolph."

"A selfish motive."

"Pretty strong, I think, for a young man head over ears in debts and difficulties, and whom his rich uncle refused to assist out of his scrape."

"True!"

"There are some more minor points," added the inspector. "In his wanderings during the late evening he was seen by the woodman near the brushwood fire. He was seen to go back towards the Court. His account is that he changed his mind and turned back, and did not meet his uncle at all. A heavy walking-stick, stained with blood was found

at a short distance from the fire, and has been identified as belonging to him."

"How does he account for that?"

"He cannot!" smiled the inspector. "He admits having had the stick with him at Medway Court, but, in the excitement of leaving after the trouble with his uncle, cannot remember whether he took it away with him or not. If he did, he thinks he must have dropped it while walking about in the wood."

"That does not account for the stains on it."

"It does not!" smiled the inspector.

Ferrers Locke rested his chin on his slim, white hand, and wrinkled his brows a little, in thought.

The inspector eyed him triumphantly.

"Now I've given you the facts," he said, "I rather think you will decide not to butt into this case on behalf of the prisoner, Locke."

"There are a few more details you have not enumerated, Pycroft."

"Indeed!" snorted the inspector.

"The professions followed by Mr. Medway's two nephews, for instance."

Mr. Pycroft stared.

"What the thunder has that to do with the case?" he demanded.

"The most trifling circumstance is worthy of attention in a case where a man's life is at stake."

"As it happens, I am quite well informed on the point, though it is of no consequence whatever. Cyril Medway, the younger nephew, and the favourite, studied the law, but was never called to the Bar. He was a rather happy-go-lucky young man, and had an ample allowance from Mr. Medway, and seems to have pleased himself chiefly as to what he did, since his service in the army. He neglected his studies, lived carelessly, and got into debt."

"And the other?"

"Mr. Randolph studied medicine. He had a good reputation as a painstaking student at St. Peter's hospital."

Ferrers Locke gave a nod.

"Rather a contrast to his cousin," he remarked.

"Well, it seems that it was no secret that the younger cousin was the heir, and Mr. Randolph had to think of his future," said the inspector. "He had rooms near the hospital, and a bungalow at Seahill, where he used to retire to grind for his examinations. I would like to know, Locke, what importance you attach to these young men's professions."

"It is a point worth considering."

"In what way?" demanded the inspector warmly. "How is the case affected by the fact that Cyril studied the law and Randolph studied medicine?"

Ferrers Locke smiled.

"Either circumstance might affect the case," he replied. "I should not presume to instruct Inspector Pycroft of Scotland Yard," answered Locke. "I have, as yet, not formed a definite opinion on the case. But I am not satisfied as to Cyril Medway's guilt."

The inspector rose impatiently to his feet.



A man of about sixty, with iron-grey hair, sat in an arm-chair—there was a tray of unattracted food beside him on a table. He stared at the detective, and as he moved a little, there was a clink of metal. A chain was locked round one of his ankles. It was Mr. Medway!

"Does that mean that, after what I have told you, you are still going to butt into the case, Locke?"

"Unofficially," said Ferrers Locke.

And the inspector almost stamped out of the room.

At Medway Court.

FERRERS LOCKE rose to his feet and yawned slightly when the inspector was gone. Drake looked expectantly at his chief.

Locke met the boy's glance and smiled.

"You listened to the inspector's statement, Drake?"

"Every word, Mr. Locke."

"You formed an opinion?"

"I think it looks pretty black against Mr. Cyril Medway, sir," said Drake slowly. "But—"

"There is a 'but' in your mind as well as in mine?"

"He looked a decent young fellow when he called here," said Drake. "He was awfully upset. But I rather liked his looks."

"I am afraid you must not allow that to weigh too heavily, Drake. One of the frankest-looking young men I ever met was Steele, the poisoner."

"Oh!" said Drake. "But—there's another point, sir—"

"And that?"

"His rushing off to you for help, Mr. Locke. Why should he do that if he were guilty?"

"Undoubtedly that is a point," said Ferrers Locke. "Only an innocent man could hope to benefit by my help. But he may, of course, have calculated to effect just that impression on the minds of the jury."

"Apart from that, sir, the case looks jolly bad," said Drake. "I don't wonder that the inspector is convinced. It seems pretty obvious."

"It does!" agreed Ferrers Locke. "Perhaps a little too obvious. Mr. Cyril was badly in want of money, and he knew he was heir to his uncle's large fortune. He was disturbed and excited by the quarrel. He may have met the squire again—hot words followed—and a hasty blow."

"And then he thought of the brushwood fire in the wood, dragged the body to it, and burned it there," said Drake. "He piled on the faggots to make sure. And that marks off any stranger who might have had a grudge against the squire and killed him—"

"How so, Drake?"

"Because whoever burned the body in the fire knew about the fire being left alight by the woodmen, and knew where to find the faggots to pile on it," said Drake. "It was somebody who knew the neighbourhood, at least."

Ferrers Locke nodded approval.

"You are getting on well, Drake. We shall see. Tell Wootton to have the car ready as quickly as possible. We are going down to Medway Court."

"We?" repeated Drake, his face brightening.

"You are coming with me, my boy."

"Oh, good!" exclaimed Drake. And he hurried away.

Ten minutes later, Ferrers Locke was seated by Drake's side in the car, which Wootton, the chauffeur, was "tooling" along Baker Street at a good rate.

Ferrers Locke sat silent while the car threaded its way through the London traffic and over Blackfriars Bridge. Country lanes appeared in sight at last.

Locke seemed unmoved by the change from busy, roaring streets to quiet lanes and green woods. He sat silent as ever, hardly glancing from the car, his thoughts evidently busy. He woke to life, as it were, when the car approached the outskirts of a little village deep in the Kentish hills.

"We stop here?" asked Drake, as the detective signalled to Wootton.

"Yes; this is Beeche, the village close to Medway Court. We are walking the rest of the way."

Ferrers Locke alighted, and spoke a few words to the chauffeur. Then he started off at a good pace with Jack Drake, avoiding the village, and taking a lane that led towards a tall, grey building that showed over the trees in the distance.

Drake wondered why the car was not taken up to the house, but he was too discreet to ask questions. They passed a lodge, and entered upon a wide drive lined with ancient oaks, and arrived at the house.

Ferrers Locke's card was taken in, and Jordan, the butler, immediately returned to conduct the callers to Mr. Randolph Medway.

Drake followed Ferrers Locke into a handsome room, of which the tall windows gave a view of wide, sweeping parkland.

A young man rose to greet them.

"Mr. Ferrers Locke?" he said. Locke's card was still in his hand. "I am very glad to see you. And—" He glanced at Drake.

"My assistant, Mr. Medway," said Ferrers Locke.

Randolph Medway nodded.

He was a tall, thin young man with a somewhat pale face. It was evident from his looks that he had gone through a time of stress; fully accounted for by the murder of his

uncle and the arrest of his cousin on suspicion of having committed the crime.

"Pray be seated, Mr. Locke," he said, courteously. "This is a terrible affair. I can hardly believe that my unfortunate cousin could have been so mad—so wicked—I cannot believe it. At least, until a judge and jury have found him guilty, I shall refuse to believe such a thing of Cyril."

"But the evidence!" said Locke.

"It seems to be conclusive," said Randolph Medway. "In the case of anyone else I suppose I should regard it as quite conclusive. But it is not easy to believe one's own cousin a murderer."

"That is quite natural," said Locke. "You were, I believe, on friendly terms with your cousin?"

"Oh, quite. We did not see each other often, excepting when we were both down here," said Randolph. "Our ways in London lay rather apart. But—" He looked curiously at the detective. "I am, of course, very glad to see you, Mr. Locke—your reputation is well known to me, and it is a pleasure to make your acquaintance. But—"

"But you do not quite see how I am concerned in the case?" asked Ferrers Locke, with a smile.

"Excuse me if I say 'Yes.'"

"Not at all. Mr. Cyril called at my rooms to ask for my aid—apparently under the belief that I could help to clear him. In consequence of that appeal I have decided to look into the matter. You are not, of course, under any obligation to assist me in any way," added Locke with a smile. "My presence here is wholly unofficial."

"You would proceed, however, in any case, I understand?"

"Undoubtedly."

"My only desire, of course, is to help you, if you can help my poor cousin. But—" Randolph paused—"I think I ought to mention, Mr. Locke, that I do not expect you to look to me for your fees. I could not undertake—"

Ferrers Locke made a gesture.

"That is immaterial," he said. "If I should succeed in clearing Mr. Cyril, doubtless he will meet the expenses; if not, the loss is my own."

"You seem to be somewhat of a philanthropist, Mr. Locke." There was the faintest suspicion of a sneer in Randolph's voice.

"Leave it at that," said the detective. "If you care to welcome my intervention I shall be glad to speak a few words to you, Mr. Medway."

"You are more than welcome, Mr. Locke. I am wholly at your service."

"Perhaps you will give me your impression of the occurrence, so far as your knowledge extends," suggested the detective.

"I know little," said Randolph. "I was in the library on Monday afternoon, and heard the dispute between my poor uncle and Cyril. Cyril quite lost command of himself, and his excited voice was heard by several servants."

"Did he threaten Mr. Medway?"

"I think not—but he was very excited. He said that he would be driven to desperation. Jordan heard this—he was in the hall."

"That is rather serious. And then he left?"

"Yes, and I have not seen him since."

"You saw him leave?"

"Yes! I was at the library window."

"Did you observe whether he had his stick with him?"

"I did not," said Randolph. "My impression is that it was under his arm, but I could not be certain."

"You dined with your uncle?"

"My poor, poor uncle," said Randolph Medway, with some emotion in his voice. "Yes—and then he went out to smoke his cigar. He was very much upset. As he did not return I looked along the terrace for him later, but I was not alarmed at that time. Of course, it did not occur to me that he might have met Cyril, and that violence might have taken place."

"Naturally! But afterwards—"

"Afterwards we were all alarmed, and there was a search. Next morning the police discovered all that remained of my poor uncle, in the brushwood fire."

"It was naturally a great shock to you."

"Naturally—and especially when I found that Cyril was suspected. I should hardly have been more horrified if I had been suspected myself." Randolph Medway smiled faintly.

"That was not a likely contingency," said Ferrers Locke. "I understand that you benefit only to the extent of five hundred a year under your uncle's will, while the estate and two thousand a year will descend to Cyril, unless, of course, he is executed for this crime."

"Quite so. Moreover," added Randolph, with the same faint smile, "I was in the house all the time, chatting to the butler after dinner, and playing billiards later with a friend who dropped in."

"A very complete alibi, if it were needed," said Ferrers Locke smiling. "The case seems so clear that I feel I ought to apologise for intruding, Mr. Medway. But now that I am here I should like to make a few investigations."

Perhaps you will send a servant to show me the spot in the wood."

"I will come with you myself," said Randolph, rising.

"Many thanks," Ferrers Locke glanced at his watch. "The train does not leave for London until twelve, we have ample time."

Drake's face gave no sign, but he thought of the car waiting in the woody lane near the village.

Ferrers Locke and his youthful assistant accompanied Randolph Medway from the house.

Between the park palings and the wood was a narrow, rutty lane, upon which a small gate opened.

Ferrers Locke glanced about him.

"Mr. Medway crossed this lane to reach the wood?" he asked.

"Either he crossed it, or he was carried, after being stunned," said Randolph.

Ferrers Locke, leaving his two companions standing by the gate, moved along the lane, his head bent, his eagle-eyes scanning the ground. Randolph Medway watched him with a slight sneer on his face. What the detective hoped to discover on the hard, sun-baked mud of the lane was a mystery. Certainly it retained no trace of footprints, even recent ones.

The detective proceeded a hundred yards in one direction, and then retraced his steps, and proceeded the opposite way. He rejoined Mr. Randolph Medway at last, and shook his head.

"It is not much use looking for footprints here," he said. "I hardly think so, Mr. Locke. Besides, the police and a crowd of curious people have been here since Monday."

"I am rather late for such an investigation," said Locke.

"By the way, where does this lane lead to?"

"At the upper end, it enters the road to Beeche, our village. The lower end becomes a footpath through the fields."

"Then it is probably not much used?"

"Very little, as a rule," said Randolph. "It has been crowded lately by people interested in the murder, that is all."

"Let us see the spot where the remains were discovered," said the detective.

They crossed the narrow lane and entered the wood. The charred remains of the fire were still visible—at a distance, a new brushwood fire was smouldering; the woodmen were still at work. Ferrers Locke made a careful examination of the ground, but rather as if he were going through a formality than as if he expected to make any discovery. Randolph looked once or twice at his watch.

Ferrers Locke came back towards him with a gesture of discouragement.

"Too late, I fear," he remarked. "I apologise again for wasting your time, Mr. Medway. Perhaps you will give me the nearest direction to the station from here."

"I should be glad if you would stay to lunch," said Randolph graciously. "You might care to continue your investigations in the afternoon."

Ferrers Locke shook his head.

"Thank you very much! I fear that there is nothing to be done here," he answered. "I have some matters to see to this afternoon, so I will take my leave."

"Just as you like, Mr. Locke."

Randolph Medway walked up the little lane with Ferrers Locke and Drake, pointed out the railway station in the distance, and then they parted. The young man was smiling as he walked back to Medway Court. Ferrers Locke and Drake walked into the village. But they did not stop at the railway station. They walked on at a good pace, and reached the leafy lane where Wootton was waiting with the car.

"Jump in, Drake."

"We're not taking the train, after all?" Drake said with a smile.

"Our friend may suppose so, if he likes," said Ferrers Locke, with a shrug of the shoulders. "Wootton, you know the shortest route to Seahill?"

"Yes, sir," said the chauffeur.

Ferrers Locke stepped into the car, and the engine hummed. Drake stared at his chief.

"Seahill, Mr. Locke?" he ejaculated.

"Yes! Because Mr. Randolph has a bungalow there."

Drake opened his eyes wide.

"You cannot guess why we are going to visit Mr. Randolph's bungalow unknown to him, Drake?"

"N-n-no, sir."

"There is a reason. It is because there was the track of a motor-car in the lane by the wood!" said Ferrers Locke tranquilly.

The Prisoner of the Bungalow.

THE sea came into sight at last, shining and blue in the distance. The car hummed on by a hilly road. Ferrers Locke seemed deep in thought; but he turned to Drake at last.

"You are puzzled, my boy," he said with a smile.

"I confess I am, sir," said Drake frankly. "I—I don't quite see the connection. Mr. Randolph Medway believed that you had found no traces in the lane by the wood."

"Quite so. And it was useless to look there for footprints, especially after the lapse of time. But the hard mud, though it retained no footprints, was scored by the tyres of a car. In two or three places I picked them up at a distance from the gate where I left you with Randolph."

"A car had passed down the lane," said Drake. "But—but what does that signify, Mr. Locke?"

"Remember the lane and figure it out, Drake. It was a narrow lane, and it led from the road into a field footpath at the end of the wood. It cannot have been used for motor traffic under any circumstances whatever. Why should a car enter that narrow lane, grind over hard, rutty mud, and turn back?" said Ferrers Locke. "There was no destination ahead of it. It had to turn, in the one spot where the lane was wide enough, and come back the way it had gone. Why?"

"It went down the lane for a special purpose, sir," said Drake, with a nod.

"Exactly—and it must have been a very special purpose," said Ferrers Locke. "I require to know the special purpose for which a car was driven down that almost inaccessible lane which leads nowhere. Is it too much to suppose that this very remarkable incident has some connection with the mysterious happenings near the lane?"

Drake reflected.

"If the car is brought in, that lets Cyril Medway out," he remarked. "There is no connection between Mr. Cyril and the car. But Inspector Pycroft did not mention the traces of a car."

"He did not even look for them, Drake; he was satisfied with the evidence that was under his nose," said the detective with a smile. "Within the past three days a car has been driven through that lane. With what object, Drake?"

"To bring the murderer to the spot," hazarded Drake.

"Why? He could have left the car on the road and walked more easily."

"But if not to carry someone there?"

"Perhaps to carry someone away, my boy."

Drake stared.

"The—the body!" he stammered.

"Perhaps."

"But the body was consumed in the fire, Mr. Locke, excepting the few bones found in the ashes."

Drake drew a quick breath.

"You believe that the bones discovered were human, sir?"

"Certainly; the police surgeon could not make a mistake on that point," Ferrers Locke smiled again. "Cyril Medway had a powerful motive for the crime. But the same motive, though in a lesser degree, applies to his cousin."

"That is so, sir. But—"

"And if Cyril Medway is condemned for the crime, Randolph's motive becomes stronger and clearer—he stands then in the shoes of the favoured heir. Logically, then, equally strong motives must be assigned to both cousins for desiring their uncle's death," said Ferrers Locke, "so long as Cyril is condemned for the crime."

"That is so," said Drake, in a low voice. "But—but there is an argument against it, sir."

"What is that, my boy?"

"Cyril might have struck the old man down in a passionate fit of temper. But the other—Randolph—had had no quarrel with him—he must have committed such a fearful crime in cold blood. It's scarcely possible to believe—"

"It is possible, but not probable," said Ferrers Locke. "Mr. Randolph appeared to me to be neither wicked enough, nor to have nerve enough for so atrocious a crime. That he hated his cousin was probable—as Cyril was the favoured heir, which probably seemed unjust enough to Randolph. But he had received only kindness from his uncle, and it is difficult to believe that mere greed could have driven him to so fearful an action."

Drake stared blankly at the detective.

"But isn't that against your own theory?" he asked.

"Not at all. You must remember that Randolph Medway is a surgeon."

"I—I don't see—"

"Neither did Inspector Pycroft. But we shall see soon. Here is Seahill," said Ferrers Locke.

Drake looked about him. The little town on the Kentish coast basked in the sunshine. Further on could be seen dotted bungalows, on the green hillside facing the sea. The car halted at the police-station, and Ferrers Locke descended and entered the building. He returned in a few minutes, and gave a quick direction to the chauffeur, and the car glided on.

"Mr. Randolph's bungalow is called Hill Crest, and is the most lonely of the bunch," said Ferrers Locke. "We shall soon be there."

Drake sat silent, his thoughts in a whirl. That Ferrers Locke's suspicions had fixed upon Randolph Medway he

knew; yet the detective declared him probably incapable of the crime. And he had admitted that Randolph had a complete alibi—his time was accounted for during the period at which the crime had been committed. Drake was utterly puzzled.

The car halted at last, outside the gates of a pretty garden, in which a red-roofed bungalow stood well back from the road. Ferrers Locke and his companion alighted, and Drake observed that Locke glanced at a revolver and replaced it in his pocket.

"You have your loaded stick, Drake? You may need it. You will follow me, Wootton."

The detective tried the gate, but it was locked. He vaulted over it easily enough and there was a bark and a deep growl, and a large dog came leaping down the garden path. He flew directly at Ferrers Locke but Drake sprang forward, and a lash of his loaded stick half-stunned the savage animal, and drove it panting away.

They pushed on to the house. The door opened before they reached it, and a burly, bull-necked man stared out at them angrily. He had a heavy stick in his grasp.

"What the thunder do you want here?" he exclaimed.

"The gate's locked. What do you mean?"

"Is Mr. Randolph at home?" asked Locke sweetly.

"He ain't!"

"Has he left you in charge here?"

"Yes, he has," growled the bull-necked man surlily, "and if you don't clear off, you'll get put, and sharp."

"You are rather an unusual caretaker for a little seaside bungalow, my friend," said Ferrers Locke. "Do you keep the windows always shuttered in this sunny weather?"

He made a gesture towards the room on the right of the door, of which the windows were closely shuttered. The bull-necked man started, and a savage look came over his rough face.

"Who the dickens are you, Mister Inquisitive?" he ejaculated. "No business of yours, that I can see. What do you want 'ere?"

"I want to see your guest."

The man started again.

"I'm alone 'ere," he said. "I'm minding the 'ouse for Mr. Randolph Medway."

"I mean the guest who came here in a motor-car on Monday night," explained Ferrers Locke.

There was something like fear in the eyes of the bull-necked man as he stared at the detective. But it gave place to fury, and he sprang out of the doorway, whirling aloft the heavy stick.

"Clear off!" he shouted savagely. "Here, Tiger, Tiger! Seize them! Now, you prying hound. Oh!"

Ferrers Locke eluded the brandished stick, and closed with the ruffian. The next second the bull-necked man crashed on the ground with a shock that almost scattered his senses.

"Pin him, Wootton."

"Yes, sir," said the chauffeur.

Ferrers Locke strode into the house, with Drake at his heels. The door of the shuttered room was closed, and stood fast as Locke tried it.

"Locked!" said the detective quietly. "They keep the windows shuttered here, and the door locked, in the daytime. There are curious customs in Mr. Randolph's seaside bungalow, Drake. Wootton, see if that man has a key in his pocket."

Wootton's heavy knee was pinning down the bull-necked man, who wriggled savagely but ineffectually. In a minute or less, the chauffeur threw a key into the hall, and Ferrers Locke picked it up.

He inserted it in the lock of the front room, and turned it back. The door was thrown wide open, and the detective strode in. The room was in half-darkness from the shuttered windows. A man of about sixty, with iron-grey hair, sat in an armchair—there was a tray of untasted food beside him on a table. He stared at the detective but did not rise. But as he moved a little, there was a clink of metal.

A chain was locked round one of his ankles, the other end being locked to a leg of the chair.

"Mr. Medway?" asked Ferrers Locke.

The man with the grey hair gasped.

"That is my name!" he breathed. "I am a prisoner here—I have been a prisoner for days—it seems like weeks. If you are an honest man, help me, and you shall name your own reward."

"Mr. Medway!" breathed Drake, dazedly. "The murdered man!" Drake wondered whether he was dreaming.

"I am here to help you," said Ferrers Locke quietly. He stooped beside the chair and busied himself with the chain.

"You do not know where you are, Squire Medway?"

"I have no idea," muttered the squire. "I was seized near my own grounds on Monday night, stunned, and I have a faint recollection of being pitched into a car. I came to myself, to find that I was here—a prisoner—with that ruffian on guard. But who are you—who—"

"I am Ferrers Locke. You are a prisoner in your nephew

Randolph's bungalow," said the detective. There was a snap as the chain parted. "Your nephew Cyril lies in a cell charged with your murder."

"Good heavens!"

"A charge of which he will soon be cleared," said Ferrers Locke. "I have a car outside, Mr. Medway—come, if you can walk—take my arm! Wootton, put the handcuffs on that scoundrel and lift him into the car, we will drop him at the police-station as we pass. Come, my dear sir."

And Ferrers Locke gently enough, helped the dazed man from the bungalow.

A Surprise For Mr. Pycroft.

INSPECTOR PYCROFT!" It was again Jack Drake who made the announcement, in Ferrers Locke's rooms in Baker Street, and he smiled as he did so. It was a crestfallen gentleman who almost limped into the detective's presence.

"You've done us, Locke," said Inspector Pycroft, sinking into a chair. "Who'd have thought it? The man wasn't killed after all—there was no murder. And it was the trace of a motor in the lane that put you on the scent?"

"Why was the car there?" smiled Ferrers Locke. "It is my habit to look for a reason for everything. And I kept in mind that Randolph benefited as much by his uncle's death as Cyril—if the latter was hanged for a supposed murder. But I was not prepared to believe that so unnatural a murder had taken place—without the completest proof." Ferrers Locke smiled.

"He took enough trouble to make himself look guilty," grunted the inspector. "He fled from the police, and told a cock-and-bull story of a warning received by telephone."

"He received that warning," said Ferrers Locke, "and it was intended to alarm him and cause his flight. I think you will find that it was Randolph Medway who telephoned to him that a warrant was issued for his arrest—a falsehood at the time, but sufficient to scare the unhappy young man into flight."

Mr. Pycroft nodded slowly.

"Possibly," he said. "Well, we've got our man on a conspiracy charge, and he will get a good stretch—and he's lost everything with his uncle, of course. Mr. Cyril is taken into favour again—let us hope he will have sense enough to keep out of debt after this. You've taken a big case out of my hands, Locke—but I'm still busy, you did not discover whose body had been consumed in the fire—and that is my job."

The inspector rose.

"I wish you every success, Pycroft," said Ferrers Locke cordially. "By the way, you remember the hint I gave you the day you called, regarding the professions of those two young men."

The inspector stared.

"I remember it," he said. "It proved to have nothing to do with the case, Locke. You were a little too clever in that—ha, ha!"

"I hardly think so," drawled Ferrers Locke. "You see, Mr. Randolph being a surgeon had a great deal to do with the case—it gave me one of my most important clues."

The inspector stared.

"You see," murmured Ferrers Locke, "a surgeon has access to such things as human bones—without the trouble of committing a murder to obtain them. It is very probable that Mr. Randolph had a skeleton in his own possession—from which he could select the bones that were found in the embers of the woodland fire—"

Mr. Pycroft gasped.

"Before seeking to discover the identity of the victim, I should question Mr. Randolph a little further," said Ferrers Locke blandly. "As he has nothing further to lose, I think it is probable that he will confess that the bones belonged to a surgical subject, and that he provided them for his bull-necked accomplice to place in the fire. Only a suggestion, of course. Good-morning, Pycroft."

Inspector Pycroft was shown out by Jack Drake, with quite a dazed look on his ruddy face.

THE END.

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