

DON'T MISS THIS NUMBER!

The BOYS' HERALD

2^d

No. 95.

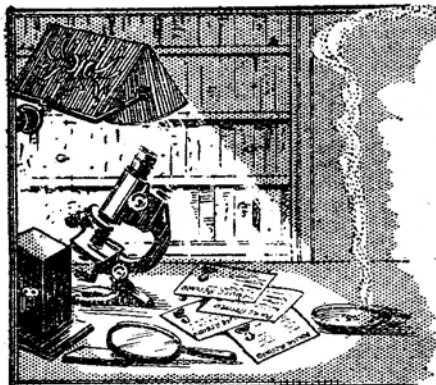
ON SALE EVERY TUESDAY.

Aug. 20, 1921.



Stringer!

Our Magnificent, Long Complete Detective Story of Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake.



FIVE HUNDRED POUNDS REWARD!

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

BY OWEN CONQUEST.

The Case of the Cashier!

BY gad! I hardly knew you for a moment, Pycroft!" Ferrers Locke smiled as he spoke. Jack Drake, glancing up from his desk in the corner of the consulting-room in Baker Street, smiled, too.

Inspector Pycroft, of Scotland Yard, did not present his usual official appearance.

His plump, ruddy face was the same as ever, but now it was surmounted by a big Panama hat. He was dressed in Norfolks, of a grey check pattern—a pattern that was not quiet. His plump legs were encased in golfing hose of brilliant hue.

He puffed and blew a little as he plumped into the chair Ferrers Locke offered him.

"Bit of a change—what?" said the inspector, glancing down at his array with some pride.

"Yes, indeed. Off on a holiday?" asked Locke.

"That's it. Business and pleasure combined," said Inspector Pycroft, with another puff. "I'm getting my holiday, but I'm working in a little business, too. Just dropped in to say good-bye. By the way, I suppose you've heard of Anstey Stacey?"

"Naturally," said Ferrers Locke—"the cashier of the City and Southern Counties Bank who has disappeared with ten thousand pounds' worth of bonds to bearer."

"I see you know all about it," grunted Inspector Pycroft.

"Only what the newspapers have told me," said Locke.

"I have not received any official request to take a hand in looking for Mr. Stacey."

The inspector grinned.

"You're not likely to, Locke," he said. "This isn't a case for your fine ideas, old fellow. Plain sailing—quite plain sailing. I suppose you know there is a reward out for Stacey?"

"Five hundred pounds if the bonds are recovered with him, or the greater part of them."

"Exactly. That's the business I'm going to work in during my holiday," explained the inspector. "Five hundred pounds is a nice little sum—it will buy me the bungalow I want in the Isle of Wight—what? And I fancy it won't be long before I lay a finger on the shoulder of Mr. Anstey Stacey."

Locke held up his hand.

"Better tell me nothing of your plans, then," he said.

"What? Why?"

"Because we are going to be rivals."

"Rivals!" ejaculated the inspector.

He stared at the famous private detective of Baker Street. Ferrers Locke nodded coolly.

"I am going to look for Mr. Stacey," he explained. "A run on the Continent will be a change for me, and for my assistant, Drake, who has had some rather painful experiences lately, and will be all the better for a change. And the five hundred pounds will come in useful if obtained. I intend to earn it if I can."

"Oh!" ejaculated Inspector Pycroft. "Dash it all, Locke—cutting in like this, you know—"

"But it is you who have cut in, Pycroft," said Ferrers Locke, with a smile. "My plans were made two days ago. Yesterday I finished seeing to the passports, and Drake and I take the train at twelve this morning. Our bags are already packed."

"By Jove, I take the same train!" said the inspector. "So—so we are going to be fellow-travellers after the same man."

"Apparently," assented Locke. "That is why I warned you to tell me nothing of your plans, Pycroft. I desire to take no advantage."

"I was going to ask you what you thought about the affair," said Inspector Pycroft, after a pause. "Not that

there's any use for fine theories in this case, Locke; but I'd have been glad to hear your opinions. Dash it all!" went on the inspector. "I'll tell you what, Locke—let's go into the thing together. Halves in the reward, old fellow."

Ferrers Locke was silent for a moment. Drake looked rather curiously at his chief. He did not think that Ferrers Locke was likely to obtain much aid from the portly inspector in the search for the missing cashier. Locke had his own methods, which were not those of Inspector Pycroft. But after a brief pause the famous detective nodded.

"I agree, Pycroft," he said. "We'll go into this together. Now we may as well compare notes."

"Good!" said the inspector, with satisfaction. "You've got a description of the man, of course."

"It was published in the papers. Thirty years of age, tall, dark, with a slight moustache and a prominent nose, grey eyes, and curly hair—"

"Exactly."

"He escaped from England by way of the Folkestone boat to Boulogne," continued Ferrers Locke. "He had had his passport made out in readiness, and he was across the Channel before his theft was discovered. The police at Folkestone were notified a day too late. Boulogne has already been ransacked for him, and no trace of him has been discovered there," said Locke. "That he landed is certain, as his passport was examined in the usual way. Whether he took the train for Paris is not known."

"Pretty certain that he did," said the inspector. "He would want to put as wide a distance as possible between himself and England in the shortest possible space of time. And a big city is the safest place to hide in."

Locke nodded.

"The Paris police, of course, are looking for him?" he said.

"Yes, and it's queer that they haven't laid a finger on him yet," said the inspector. "Any traveller should be tracked easily enough by his passport, and the system of registering at hotels. This kind of thing was very slack before the war; it's stiffened up now. A traveller has to register whether he likes it or not. The police can look at his passports any time they please, so registering in a false name isn't the easy job it used to be. A man found registering as Smith, when the name on his passport was Jones, would be nailed on the spot and held for inquiries."

"But they haven't found him yet, all the same."

"All the better for us—we're going to nail the young gentleman," grinned the inspector. "But what have you been doing in the affair so far, Locke? Something or other—what?"

"I've been making a few inquiries, as I intended to take up the matter," assented Locke. "I've learned a few details. I went down to Southport yesterday morning."

"Southport?"

"Where Mr. Stacey lived before his bolt," said Locke. "I made a few inquiries there, and learned something of his habits in the past."

"What the thunder have his habits in the past to do with his bolting this week, Locke?"

"There might be a connection. For instance, he was accustomed to spending his summer holiday in the North of France."

"So are about ten thousand other young fellows in his position."

"Quite so. He generally crossed from Folkestone," said Locke. "Sometimes he went with a friend, and sometimes alone. Sometimes he had a walking tour along the French coast, putting up at little places like Le Portal, Ambleteuse, or Wimereux. He spoke French like a native— But I bore you, inspector. As you remarked, there is no use in this case for fine theorising, so I will not trouble you with

any. You will lunch with me, Pycroft, and my car will take us to the station together."

"Good!" said the inspector.

And when the boat train pulled out of Charing Cross it carried among its passengers Inspector Pycroft, Ferrers Locke, and Jack Drake.

Across the Channel.

CROSSING the Channel was not the simple business of the old days before the war. There were forms to be filled in by intending travellers—a formality that the official mind of Inspector Pycroft viewed with approval and satisfaction. He explained in his ponderous way to Jack Drake that by this system a track was left by which any escaping rogue could be traced unerringly—a statement which Drake took the liberty of doubting, though he was too polite to express his opinion to the inspector. Drake was of opinion that any rogue who knew his business—any experienced criminal—would be much more careful about his passport than any ordinary traveller would be, and that the most certain thing about any really bad character was that his passport and visé would be in perfect order. The man who was stopped at the barrier because he lacked the necessary document was pretty certain to be a careless traveller who had forgotten to put it into his pocket—a criminal with his wits about him was not likely to be found in such a situation. But Drake had already learned the wisdom of the north-country proverb to "Hear all and say nowt," and he let the inspector run on without arguing.

On the Channel, however, Pycroft's remarks ceased. "There is a fine for any hotel-keeper who allows a traveller very pale face, disappeared below.

Ferrers Locke and Drake, both good sailors, walked on the upper deck and enjoyed the wind and the keen sea air, and watched the white cliffs of England sink to the horizon, and the cliffs of France rise against the sky.

Inspector Pycroft did not reappear until the packet-boat was moored alongside the quay at Boulogne.

There was the usual rush of porters to capture the baggage of the travellers; but the trio were travelling 'light,' and they picked up their bags and went ashore without delay.

There they joined the queue of worried, perspiring travellers who passed one by one through a narrow doorway, and stopped one by one at a desk where a tired official jerked open the passports, blinked at the photographs therein, and blinked at the faces of the owners, and passed them on.

Then came the Customs House—another halt. But that halt was brief; there an obliging official asked a question in rapid and incomprehensible French, and, without wasting time in waiting for a reply, chalked the bags and passed them through.

The train for Paris was waiting in the station, and porters whizzed to and fro with baggage. Two or three of them haunted our travellers, apparently unable to comprehend why "les Anglais" should prefer to carry their own bags.

Ferrers Locke called a cab—one of the ramshackle "voitures" that do duty as cabs in Boulogne, and the trio were driven to their hotel.

Inspector Pycroft intended to stay one day in Boulogne to make inquiries there before going on to Paris to look for his man.

After a substantial lunch the portly inspector prepared for a visit to the Bureau de Police.

Ferrers Locke and Drake occupied the time in a walk about the noisy town, interesting enough to Drake, though he was almost deafened by the clatter of vehicles on the cobblestones.

They returned to their hotel for tea, and a little later Inspector Pycroft came in, and dropped into a chair and puffed and blew.

"Any luck?" asked Ferrers Locke, as Jack Drake poured out a refreshing cup for the inspector.

"Only what I expected," said Pycroft. "The books of every hotel in Boulogne and its environs have already been examined. The name of Anstey Stacey is not found in any of them."

"And you conclude from that—"

"That he did not stay in Boulogne, of course—or in the neighbourhood," continued the inspector. "The search has been extensive."

"In the small coast villages—"

"The same system applies," said Inspector Pycroft. "There is a fine for any hotel-keeper who allows a traveller to put up without registering his name."

"Are these fines ever paid?" asked Locke.

"Eh? I suppose so."

"That would indicate that sometimes an hotel-keeper neglects to make his guest register."

Inspector Pycroft burst into a laugh.

"Theorising again, Locke—what, what? I can tell you the police system is pretty severe here—they don't let the grass grow under their feet, or the rogues slip through their fingers. There's a train for Paris this evening. We're catching it?"

Locke shook his head.

"I'm thinking of taking a look-round first," he remarked.

"My dear chap, that's already been done. It's no good combing over ground that's already been combed."

"What's your idea, then?" asked Locke.

"Paris!" said the inspector. "A hiding man is safer in a city than anywhere else. Probably he has friends in Paris to help him. Anyhow, that's where I'm going to look. You're coming on?"

"If I draw the coast blank I shall come on," said Locke. "Let us divide our forces here, Pycroft—you shall take Paris for your portion while I beat up the coast."

"Just as you like, Locke; but you're wasting your time."

"We shall see."

The three dined together, and then Ferrers Locke and Drake saw the inspector off in the train for the capital.

They walked back to the hotel, Drake silent, and Locke in a rather thoughtful mood.

"Anything to-night, sir?" Drake asked.

"Only supper," said Locke, with a smile. "Our search begins to-morrow, Drake."

"In Boulogne?"

"No, outside the town. Stacey crossed by the midday boat from Folkestone," Locke explained. "He arrived in Boulogne before two o'clock. He could have had no reason for delaying here to put up for the night at that early hour. He went on."

"Not to Paris?"

"I think not," said Locke. "I have formed a theory which we shall put to the test to-morrow, Drake. Now for supper and bed."

And Drake turned in contentedly, and slept as soon as the crash of wheels on the cobblestones allowed him to do so.

A Theory.

JACK DRAKE was up bright and early in the morning. He took a stroll down to the harbour to watch the fishermen before breakfast, and returned to the hotel with a good appetite. After breakfast there was a telephone call from Paris for Ferrers Locke. He smiled as he heard the deep, fruity voice of Inspector Pycroft at the other end. The inspector was in a very hopeful mood.

"I'm on the track of a man answering Stacey's description," he told the Baker Street detective. "I fancy it will lead to something. He registered at the Hotel Crevecoeur as Arthur Stacey—as far from the name on his passport as he ventured to go, what?"

"Stacey is not an uncommon name," murmured Locke.

Pycroft laughed.

"Still theorising?" he said. "Well, go ahead, Locke, and I'll go ahead, and see which lays his hands on the man. But, dash it all, I'm giving you half of the reward for nothing."

"It is not yet earned," said Locke, laughing. "Where shall I find you if there is news, Pycroft?"

"There won't be any news from your end," answered Pycroft. "But if you want to ask for news, ring me up here—Hotel Crevecoeur."

"Right-ho!"

Having finished his talk with the inspector, Locke paid his bill and left the Boulogne hotel with his young assistant. A powerful automobile was waiting for them without. Locke spoke a few words to the chauffeur in French, while Drake took his seat. Then he followed the boy into the car, and they started. Conversation was impossible until they were outside the town; the clatter and rumble on the stony roadway was deafening. But out in the country roads they were able to talk.

Drake found some excitement in the drive. The chauffeur, like most French drivers, was rapid and reckless. He barely missed a tram as the big automobile swept out of the town, and shaved a wheel of a market-cart a minute later—and swerved suddenly just in time to clear a startled cyclist.

"Where are we going, sir?" Drake asked at last, as the car ran on by white roads over low hills.

"Wimereux," said Locke.

"Where's that?"

"A little holiday town a few miles along the coast from Boulogne. There was a big military camp there during the war," said Locke. "The shore is still pretty well covered with fragments of huts, and corrugated iron, and petrol cans, and such things." He thought for a moment.

"But we're not going to see the remnants of the old camp especially?"

"They may be interesting," said Locke. "But we are going to Wimereux chiefly because it was Anstey Stacey's favourite resort in his holidays before his flight."

Drake looked dubious.

"I suppose there are plenty of English at Wimereux," he said.

"There are always some, and in the season a good many."

"They'll have seen the English papers—"

"The 'Daily Mail,' at least," said Locke, with a smile.

"Then they'll know about Stacey's having cut and run with the bonds from the City and Southern Counties Bank."

"Undoubtedly."

"Is the man likely, then, to go where he is probably pretty well known?" exclaimed Drake, in surprise. "It looks to me like asking for trouble if he does."

"On the surface of things, yes," nodded Ferrers Locke. "But you must remember, Drake, that a hunted fugitive does not always have a wide choice. Doubtless he would have preferred to flee across the Atlantic, but time was against him; the vessel would have been set to work, and he would have been arrested when he reached the other side. He chose France as the nearest foreign country, and the only one he was able to reach before his crime was discovered. Once in France his object, of course, was to disappear from sight and lie low till the hue and cry had died down."

"Of course."

"Remember, my lad, that we are not dealing with an habitual criminal," continued Ferrers Locke. "The young man had been defrauding his employers for more than a year, and he did not bolt until discovery was inevitable, and then he took advantage of his position of trust to lay hands upon a valuable booty to take with him. But he had not the resources of a practiced criminal—he had no gang of lawless associates to help him. He had to depend upon himself."

Drake nodded.

"Knowing, as he did, that the crash must come sooner or later, it is probable that he prepared for it," continued Ferrers Locke. "He knew the time must come when he would need a hiding-place. Is it not likely that during his last holiday in France he made some arrangements to this effect—preparing some retreat into which he could vanish?"

"I suppose so."

"We know," went on Locke, "that his holiday was spent on this coast. If he made such arrangements, he must have made them within touch of where he was living at the time. Extensive inquiries have been made in Boulogne, where he is known to have landed," added Locke. "I believe them to have been useless. Admitting, for the moment, that he had prepared some retreat within a certain radius of the town, he would not be likely to pass a night there, or to take a cab or even a tram away. He would walk out of the town, thus leaving no trail behind him."

"I suppose so," assented Drake.

"We will put it that he walked out of Boulogne, and thus avoided being seen, and perhaps noted, by railway officials and porters and waiters and hotel-keepers and taxi-drivers, and so on," said Locke. "It was obviously his safest course, and his well-planned flight shows that he is a cool customer, with his wits about him."

"And then, sir—"

"If he was bound for Wimereux he would no doubt walk out of the town on the other side, and make a detour in the hills to reach his destination. We must remember that he spent many holidays here, often on walking excursions, so we must suppose him to know the roads and paths well. Moreover, he arrived in Boulogne early on a summer's afternoon, but he would probably not wish to reach his new quarters before dusk."

"In case anyone who had known him should see him?"

Locke smiled.

"In case anyone should see him," he replied. "When he was safe out of view in the hills I fancy he made some changes in his appearance. He left England with a moustache; he must have had a razor in his valise, and a change of clothes. Probably he cropped his well-known curly hair, as well as shaved off his moustache."

"Then his looks would no longer tally with the photograph on his passport."

"As his passport bore his true name, Drake, it was no longer of any use to him after his crime was known and the police warned to keep on the look-out for him."

"True," said Drake. "He could not use it again without immediate discovery. But a foreigner travelling in these days without a passport, sir—"

"A foreigner?" repeated Locke.

"He is English—a foreigner here," said Drake, puzzled. "His passport might be asked for at any minute. He could not put up for the night even according to Inspector Pycroft—"

"Pycroft is an official, and takes an official view," said Ferrers Locke. "I suspect Mr. Stacey of having prepared a retreat last summer against his sudden flight. But it is very likely that he put up for the first night at an hotel or inn."

"Signing a false name in the register at the risk of detection?"

"Signing no name, probably. It is correct that every hotel-keeper must see that his guests comply with the prescribed rule. In big hotels, where there are many guests and a large staff, no doubt the formalities are regularly observed. In small places, where guests are few and labour short, and probably overworked, these wearisome formalities are liable to be overlooked. If Stacey put up at some small

rural inn, he would probably find the proprietor more concerned about the health of his cow, or the state of his vegetable crop, or the price of fish, than about forms and form-filling."

Drake laughed.

"Only the dread of trouble with the police, in fact, would make the little innkeeper force himself to remember that these formalities must be complied with," said Locke. "On the second or third day he would come along with the form and a cross-nibbed pen for the guest to fill in the required particulars. In case of a guest staying only one night the matter would most likely be overlooked altogether."

"Oh!" ejaculated Drake. "Then Inspector Pycroft's belief in the passport and the registration as an infallible means of tracing a fugitive—"

"Is like many of the inspector's other beliefs—unfounded," answered Ferrers Locke. "The fugitive would not stay more than one night in any one inn, and in all probability he would never even be asked to sign his name."

Drake whistled.

"At that rate, he could travel across the Continent without leaving a trace behind until he came to a frontier where he would have to produce his passport!" he exclaimed.

"Certainly he could, by the exercise of a little care."

"He could not have crossed the Channel without a passport, though," said Drake.

"Which he had still in his possession from the previous year, as anyone might have," said Locke.

"Of course, as he had been abroad before," assented Drake.

"So it is quite probable that he put up one night, or even several nights in succession, at different inns," went on the Baker Street detective. "I shall not waste one moment in making inquiries in that direction. I am quite certain that his name is not written in any of the hotel registers, even an assumed name."

"Then it seems to me that we haven't anything at all in the shape of a clue," said Drake.

"Only what we can deduce from what we know," said Locke quietly. "A cool customer like Anstey Stacey would not be taken by surprise when the crash came. He bolted at once for Folkestone, and got across the channel in time. Then he vanished. That he changed his appearance after quitting Boulogne, as much as he could, is fairly certain. If he stayed the night at an auberge or estaminet, he left no trace there. But he would not venture to stay more than a day or so in one hotel—and he knew beforehand what his position would be like. From that I deduce that his retreat was already arranged—if not already prepared—and even if fatigue caused him to put up one night at an inn, doubtless he walked to his chosen retreat the next morning in broad daylight."

"And is there now?" exclaimed Drake.

"Probably."

"In this region?"

"Undoubtedly, if my deduction is correct, for it was only in this region that he had an opportunity, last year, of preparing a retreat."

"But a foreigner—an Englishman—surely he would be



From the bank the two were able to watch the little field and the hut. A few minutes later a man came out. "You see," murmured Ferrers Locke. "He has taken to flight already—without losing a second. "That's proof, if we wanted any," said Drake.

bound sooner or later to get an eye on him—and, at least, be asked to show his passport by some inquisitive official."

"No doubt. But you must remember that Stacey is reputed to have spoken French like a native."

"Oh!" exclaimed Drake. "You think—"

"Whatever attention an Englishman might attract, a Frenchman can naturally move about in his own country without undue observation," said Locke. "I am strongly inclined to think that, with his intimate knowledge of the language to help him, Mr. Stacey dropped his nationality along with his passport—and it is not for an Englishman, but for a Frenchman, that we are going to look for in Wimereux, Drake."

Looking For a Clue.

THE Hotel Bonne Bouche lay by a quiet route near the golf links. There was a café attached to it, where thirsty travellers stopped to refresh themselves with coffee or wine. There was a dining-room where generally two or three golfers were to be seen. From the windows there was a wide stretch of green country towards the sea, ending in crumbling cliffs of brown earth that hung high above the blue waters. The green fields were speckled with black dots—the remnants of old army huts, and piles of rusting corrugated iron. In the long grass, the cattle wandered and fed, picking their way among tangles of abandoned barbed wire, deadly traps for the unwary walker. The debris of the war had not yet been cleared entirely away at Wimereux-sur-Mer—but wind and weather were destroying what was left.

Mine host of the Bonne Bouche—Monsieur le Patron—was very glad to welcome his two English visitors. "Les Anglais" were very popular in his country, he told them; partly, no doubt, on account of their excellent qualities, and partly, undoubtedly, on account of their financial resources. And on their first evening, the two travellers dined upon excellently-cooked veal; and the next day they lunched upon veal; and on the second evening, veal made its appearance again, till Drake wondered whether the staple diet of the country was "le veau."

Monsieur Locke and le petit monsieur Drake spent most of their time in walking excursions about the countryside.

They were both good walkers, and the walks they took were extensive ones, occupying most of the sunny day.

The days passed very agreeably. Locke had rung up Inspector Pycroft in Paris, and learned that the "Arthur Stacey" upon whose track the inspector had set out, had been discovered. He had proved to be a commercial traveller, and quite above suspicion, much to Inspector Pycroft's disgust.

"And what are you doing in that dead-alive hole, Locke?" the inspector asked, after giving Locke his news.

"Walking, chiefly."

"Have you forgotten Anstey Stacey?"

"Not at all."

"There's absolutely no news of him," said the inspector.

"The police are completely baffled. I conclude that he has somehow bagged another man's passport, and is using it."

"It is possible."

"Oh, practically a certainty," continued the inspector. "That's the only conclusion I can come to, in fact. What are you chuckling at, Locke?"

"Did I chuckle?"

"Well, I thought you did. I'm keeping busy—I fancy I'm nearer to our man in Paris than you are at Wimereux."

"The best of luck, Pycroft. I'll ring you up if I have any news."

"Oh, you won't have any news."

And the inspector rang off.

"What about the casino, sir?" Drake asked his chief at breakfast the next morning. "There's always a big crowd there in the evening, and the English always go. Mightn't our man drop in for a little excitement?"

"Not if he has his wits about him," answered Locke. "There would probably be half-a-dozen people there who remember Anstey Stacey from last summer—and the search for him will have quickened their memories. His disappearance had roused a great deal of excitement. And the £500 reward is a very handsome sum. He would scarcely run such risks."

"Then it's walking again!" said Drake.

"Are you tired of walking, my boy?" asked Ferrers Locke with a smile.

"Not a bit of it—I'm enjoying myself here," said Drake cheerily. "It's a change after dusty old Baker Street."

And the detective and his young assistant set out again after breakfast as usual. Ferrers Locke, whose French was equal to any test, engaged in conversation with at least a score of people every day—an easy enough task, for the cheery Gallic race is fond, above all things, of a talk. The hardest-working Frenchman can generally find time to leave off for a little chat. Drake did not always follow the rapid French, though he listened

with all his ears. The rate at which the natives poured out their words was a never-ending surprise to him.

More than once the two walkers had passed an ill-cultivated "terre," a couple of miles from the Hotel Bonne Bouche, where a shabby peasant laboured on the unpromising soil. Locke had spoken to the man over the rusty, corrugated fence that surrounded his field, but he had found the peasant taciturn—a contrast to most of the inhabitants of the region. A second time Locke had passed the field, and spoken to the man again—and received little more than a grunt in response. On the morning after the talk with Inspector Pycroft, the detective's steps led him again in the same direction.

"Hallo, there's that chap!" Drake remarked, as they came in sight of the "terre." "He seems to go it pretty hard with that hoe."

"And yet he does not make much of his field," remarked Ferrers Locke. "He hardly keeps pace with the weeds, and his vegetables look scrubby enough. He cannot be much of a gardener; and if he lives on his patch of land, he can scarcely be growing rich."

"He doesn't look it, at any rate. Surly brute!" added Drake, as the man, catching sight of them, turned his back, and hoed in a different direction.

"You heard me speak to him yesterday, Drake?"

"Yes, he snapped out a few words," answered Drake.

"Did you observe anything else?"

"Only that he was surly," answered Drake.

"He spoke in very excellent French for a peasant of Picardy," said Locke. "There was barely a trace of the country accent. His name, it seems, is Leon Hamblay."

"You've been asking questions about him?" exclaimed Drake in surprise.

"Yes; I asked a few questions of our host at the Bonne Bouche, and of some carters I met in the inn yard, and of a postman," said Locke. "The man's name is Hamblay, and he comes from Calais. He hired that field last year from the owner, Jean Lesage, who lives at Ambleuse. Although he paid the rent on it, he went to Paris for work there, and left the field quite neglected all the winter, and all through the early summer. He did not return to take up work on it until a fortnight ago."

Drake looked puzzled. Why the proceedings of that surly peasant should interest Ferrers Locke was a mystery to him.

"Do you observe any coincidence, Drake?"

"N—no, sir."

"Figure it out, my boy. Monsieur Hamblay hired that field last summer—at the time when Anstey Stacey was staying in the neighbourhood. He paid for it for a considerable term, but left the neighbourhood—about the time that Anstey returned to England."

"Oh!" ejaculated Drake.

"He returned, apparently from work in Paris, about the time Anstey would have reached Wimereux after his flight, if he came here to hide."

"Mr. Locke!"

"Although apparently a peasant of the region, he speaks excellent French without a country accent. And he has no desire whatever to be civil and polite to 'les Anglais,' as most of the folk hereabouts have."

Drake drew a quick breath.

"Mr. Locke! You think it possible—"

"I think most things are possible," said Ferrers Locke tranquilly. "But let us have a word with our friend."

And the detective stopped by the corrugated fence, built of remnants of the military camps, like many of the fences about Wimereux, and called out cheerily to Leon Hamblay:

"Bon jour, monsieur!"

Taken At Last!

THE man in the field did not answer, and did not even turn his head. His profile was towards the detective; and Drake watched it curiously. The man was tall, and his nose was prominent—in those respects, at least, he resembled the missing cashier of the City and Southern Counties Bank. In all other respects he was almost ludicrously unlike what an English bank cashier might have been expected to look like. His face was deeply tanned by the sun, a rag of a cap was on his tousled head, and his chin was covered with a ragged beard. He wore old army trousers and a blue, dirty blouse, strapped in at the waist with a belt, and heavy sabots on his feet. He looked like a peasant crushed down by poverty and labour, seeking hopelessly to extract a living from the soil. The cottage at the end of the field was little more than a hut, and had been patched against the weather by fragments of rusty iron from the abandoned camps. If the worker in the field was genuine, his circumstances were an excuse for his surly temper.

"Bon jour!" repeated Ferrers Locke.

The bearded man glanced round at last.

"Could you not give a thirsty traveller a drink of water?" asked Locke in English.

The man shook his head.

"Je ne comprends pas, monsieur."

Locke repeated his question in French, and the man shook his head again.

"There is little water here," he said. "What I have I need for my garden. Pass on your way, monsieur; there is an inn half a kilometre up the hill." He spoke in good French, without the blurred accent of the district, as Jack Drake noticed now that he was on the alert for it.

"Soit!" said Locke. "But the sun is hot, mon ami, and you will allow me and my boy to sit in the shade and rest."

"You will please yourself, monsieur," grunted the man, and he turned to his hoeing again; but, as Drake noticed, in a half-hearted way, as if his work were rather a formal occupation than a necessary business.

"Merci bien!" said Locke, and he pushed open the creaking gate. The man turned on him like a flash.

"Sortez!" he shouted.

"But you gave permission—"

"I did not mean that you should enter my garden—there are trees by the route, if you wish for shade. Sortez!"

Ferrers Locke measured the man with his eye. So much incivility was very uncommon in any part of France, even from a poor peasant ground down with toil.

"You will not allow a tired traveller to rest in your garden?" asked the Baker Street detective.

"I have said no."

"We are English—"

"That is nothing to me!" snapped Hamblay. "If you do not leave my garden I shall do you a mischief." He swung up the hoe, with his eyes on Locke.

"Alors, je m'en vais!" said Locke, with a shrug of the shoulders. And he turned out of the garden, the peasant crashing the gate shut behind him. He turned and spoke to the man again over the corrugated iron fence. This time he spoke in English.

"My friend, you are wise to keep strangers out of your garden, considering the articles of value that are concealed in your hut. Bonds to bearer are not easily traced when once stolen."

The man gave a violent start. The words of the detective came to him as an utter surprise; though, of course, if he had spoken the truth in declaring that he knew no English, the speech would have expressed nothing to him.

Never was a man so utterly taken aback. His jaw dropped, and he stared at Ferrers Locke like a man demented.

Locke smiled at him coolly and cheerfully.

"Your face speaks more truthfully than your tongue, my friend," he said. "You may as well speak in English now."

He leaped back as the man, almost beside himself with passion, made a lash at him with the hoe. The long handle of the implement crashed on the corrugated fence. "Not this time, my friend," said Ferrers Locke coolly. "Bon jour, bon jour, mon ami—I am going back to Wimereux, and ere long you may expect the gendarmes to arrive and look at what you have hidden in your hut."

He made a sign to Jack Drake, and they turned down the hill and walked away.

The man in the garden stood staring after them, his face white under its tan; his eyes glaring. He watched them, without movement, till a fold of the hill hid them from his sight. Then, panting for breath, he rushed into the hut.

Out of sight of the field, Ferrers Locke halted. He looked at Jack Drake with a smile.

"What do you think now, Drake?"

"It—it must be the man!" gasped Drake. "It—it beats me! But—but if it hadn't been—"

"If he had been the French peasant he appears to be, he would not have been alarmed or surprised by a remark in a tongue he did not comprehend. It was a perfectly safe venture. If he had not understood English, he would only have supposed that my speech was some reproach for his incivility. But, understanding it, he received so sudden a shock that he could not help giving himself away."

"That was plain enough," said Drake. "He understood at once, and was fairly floored. But now you've given the game away, sir—as soon as he's able to think he will know that you are a detective, and have tracked him out."

Locke nodded.

"It was my intention to give the game away, if the man was Anstey Stacey," he said. "In the first place, to surprise him into betraying himself—it was the simplest way. In the second place, those stolen bonds are certainly hidden in a very safe place, known only to the rascal himself, and even in case of his capture, he might never reveal where they were hidden. He might very probably prefer to leave them concealed, as a nest-egg when he came out of prison. But now he knows that he is known, and he believes that I have gone for the gendarmes. What is he likely to do?"

"Bolt!" said Drake.

"I give him ten minutes," said Ferrers Locke, coolly. "Follow me, Drake."

The detective clambered up a high bank on the hillside, at the top of which a straggling thicket grew. From the bank,

concealed by the thicket, the two were able to watch the little field and the hut.

A few minutes later a man came out, with a shabby coat over his peasant's garb, a bundle under one arm, and a heavy ironshod stick in his hand. He glanced like a wild animal to and fro, hurried across the garden, and struck into a path up o'er the hill.

"You see!" murmured Ferrers Locke. "He has taken to flight already—without losing a second."

"That's proof, if we wanted any," said Drake. "But now—he will be far enough away before we can call in the police, sir." And Drake glanced at Wimereux, shimmering by the sea four or five miles away.

"I am aware of that, Drake; we are going to tackle Mr. Stacey ourselves," said Ferrers Locke. "Follow me."

A moment more, and the detective was speeding like a deer on the track of the disguised fugitive, with Drake at his heels.

The man was plodding on at a good rate over the hill, but he was not running. But when he had covered a hundred yards he turned and looked suspiciously back; and started as he saw Ferrers Locke and Drake in full pursuit.

The man bounded on, with the detective hot on his track. He looked back and saw Ferrers Locke gaining. A furious spasm passed over his tanned face, and he glared round, like a wild animal seeking an avenue of escape.

The detective came on.

The rascal spun round at last, the ironshod stick gripped in his hand.

"Stand back!" he shouted hoarsely, in English now.

"Whoever you are, stand back, or I'll crack your skull."

"Drop that cudgel, Anstey Stacey!" retorted the Baker Street detective without pausing.

"You—you fiend! Who are you?"

"My name is Ferrers Locke."

"Good heavens!"

The man stared blankly at the famous detective for a moment. But as Locke came on, he swung up the ironshod stick.

"Stand back! I am desperate—"

Crash!

Locke's Malacca met the sweeping blow, and turned it aside. The next moment the detective was springing on the rascal before he could raise his weapon again.

With Ferrers Locke's grip on his throat, Anstey Stacey went backwards with a crash, into the grass of the hillside.

The handcuffs clinked on the dazed rascal's wrists before he could resist further. He sat up dizzily, and spat out curses, while Locke calmly jerked open the bundle.

"The bonds!" said Ferrers Locke. "We shall have news after all, to telephone to Pycroft."

There was a crowd round Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake when they marched their prisoner into the Bureau de Police in Wimereux. Half the inhabitants of the little town followed them there, with unceasing flow of talk and gesticulation. And the Chief shrugged his shoulders almost over his ears in his astonishment when Locke explained—and Anstey Stacey's extremely irregular arrest was immediately turned into a regular one, with all the forms of law dear to the official heart. And then Ferrers Locke telephoned to Paris, and Inspector Pycroft, at the Hotel Crèvecoeur, almost dropped the receiver when he heard the news.

"You—you—you've got him!" stammered Inspector Pycroft.

"Yes."

"And the bonds?"

"Yes."

"Well, this beats cock-fighting!" gasped the inspector.

"I—I was going to make an arrest this evening. I—I've got gendarmes to—to help—"

"What?"

"I was fairly certain of my man, but—"

Locke laughed.

"Better let your man alone, Pycroft—unless you think there are two Anstey Staceys. Come along to Wimereux and see him."

"Next train!" spluttered the inspector.

And the worthy inspector was gasping when he arrived at Wimereux, and looked as if he had been gasping all the way from Paris.

Anstey Stacey returned to England in official hands; and the stolen bonds found their place once more in the safes of the City and Southern Counties Bank. And a cheque for £500 was divided between Ferrers Locke and Inspector Pycroft, though what Inspector Pycroft had done towards earning his share remained an open question.

THE END.

Another grand, long story of Ferrers Locke and his boy detective Drake will appear in next week's "BOYS' HERALD."