

**SPLENDID CHRISTMAS EXTRA!**

# The BOYS' HERALD

**2<sup>d</sup>**

No. 114.

**ON SALE EVERY TUESDAY.**

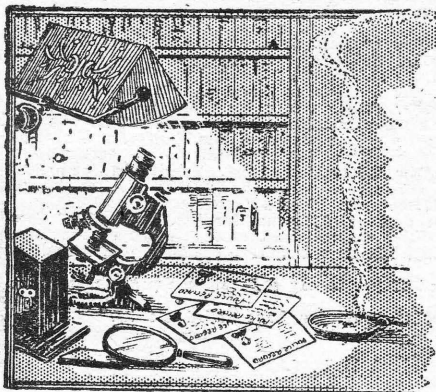
Dec. 31, 1921.



**STRINGER'S HOME-MADE SLEDGE.—See Inside.**



## COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.



# FERRERS LOCKE'S CHRISTMAS CASE!

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

BY OWEN CONQUEST.

## Ferrers Locke, the Up-to-Date Detective with New Methods.

On Christmas Eve.

"I MUST—I must see Mr. Locke!"

The door of the consulting-room was ajar, and the voice, almost hoarse with earnestness, came to Ferrers Locke's ears.

The Baker Street detective gave an impatient shrug of the shoulders.

It was Christmas Eve.

Only an hour ago Ferrers Locke had said good-bye to his boy assistant—Jack Drake—who had gone to spend Christmas with his old comrades of Greyfriars School.

Locke's preparations were all made for leaving London. His life was a busy one, and it was seldom that his time was free from demands. But he had determined to have Christmas Day, at least, to himself—to throw all professional cares to the winds, and to forget, for a brief interval, that he was the most celebrated criminologist in Europe.

Ten minutes more, and the door of the house in Baker Street would have closed behind him, and he would have been gliding through the dusky streets in the car to catch his train.

"I must see Mr. Locke!"

The voice was raised in excitement and agitation. Locke sat silent in the arm-chair before the dying fire in the consulting-room. He heard the soft purring voice of Sing-Sing, his Chinese servant, in answer to the importunate client.

"Missa Locke give ordel see nobody."

"But—Is Mr. Locke within?"

"No savvy!" said Sing-Sing calmly.

"Tell him—ask him for one moment. Just one word! Take in my name to him—Richard Carsdale. Tell him—"

"No tell. Missa Locke see nobody!" answered Sing-Sing stolidly, and he made a movement to close the big, heavy door on the young man who stood white-faced and agitated on the steps.

"For Heaven's sake—"

Ferrers Locke rose to his feet. There was something in the excited, almost wild, tones of the visitor that went to his heart. He said a mental good-bye to his Christmas holiday, and stepped to the door of the consulting-room and glanced into the hall.

"Admit the gentleman, Sing-Sing."

"Yes, Missa Locke."

The great door swung wider open.

A young man stepped in hastily. He almost ran across the hall to Ferrers Locke.

"You are Mr. Locke?"

"Yes."

"Will you help me?"

"Step into this room, please," said Locke.

And he stood aside for his client to pass in.

Locke closed the door and indicated a chair by the fire. There was a slight frown upon the detective's quiet, clear-cut face.

"I will hear you, Mr. Carsdale," he said. "But I must warn you that unless the matter is of the very first importance, I cannot have anything to do with it. My train leaves Charing Cross in half an hour, and I have an engagement for to-morrow that I do not care to break."

"It is a matter of life and death."

"Very well. Be seated, and tell me what is the trouble—as briefly as you can."

The young man sat down, his face flushing red.

"I must ask you to forgive me, Mr. Locke, for butting in like this on Christmas Eve," he exclaimed. "I know that I ought not to trouble you—I know that if you consent to help me, you will sacrifice your Christmas Day. I have no right to ask it of you, as a stranger, but—but"—his voice quivered—"but if you knew how I am placed—"

"I am waiting to hear," said Ferrers Locke.

"It is my father's life that is threatened," said Carsdale. "Unless something can be done to clear up this horrible mystery, I am convinced that he will not survive this Christmas."

He caught his breath.

"It is not a matter in which the police could help. If they heard my story, they would regard it as too wild to be listened to. I—I doubt if you can help me, Mr. Locke. At least, you will hear me and give me your advice. Heaven knows whether the enemy who threatens my father's life is of this world, or—or a phantom from the world of shadows."

Locke made a movement of interest.

"You had better tell me the whole story," he said, and he settled himself down to listen.

"It is a strange story, Mr. Locke. You—you may not believe me—you may even laugh at such a tale."

"I will promise not to do that, at all events."

"I had better tell you something about—about ourselves, to begin with—about the Carsdales," said the young man, making an evident effort to collect his thoughts. "You have never heard of the Carsdales of Carsdale Manor, of course—though the family is well-known in our part of Essex, and has been well-known there for six hundred years at least. You have never heard of the Black Cavalier of Carsdale Manor?"

Locke smiled slightly.

"I confess that I have not," he said. "Who—or what—is the Black Cavalier?"

"A legend—a wild old tale! You will not believe it, of course! The Black Cavalier is a phantom that appears to the head of the Carsdale family to warn him when death is near."

"I should certainly find that very hard to believe," confessed Ferrers Locke. "You are not telling me that you have actually seen this phantom?"

"Not I—but my father—"

"He has seen it?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"Last night—and he lies sick in his bed, and there is death in his face," said Richard Carsdale hoarsely. "Oh, Mr. Locke, if it is truly a phantom, and my father's time has come, you cannot help us. But if it is some trick—some fiendish imposture—That is the hope I cling to. If it is that, you may be able to help us to save a good old man's life—" His voice broke. "Mr. Locke, you will help us?"

Ferrers Locke nodded.

"I will help you," he said. "And now—what has happened?"

### The Phantom of Carsdale Manor!

**R**ICHARD CARSDALE was silent for a moment or two striving to quell his agitation. Locke waited patiently. He could see that the young man's nerves were in tatters. Carsdale looked a sturdy, thoroughly fit fellow, with cheeks bronzed by an outdoor life, and a powerful frame. But it was evident that the strange happening in his home had quite unnerved him. He found his voice at last and went on, with some calmness.

"The legend dates from the time of the Civil Wars. There was a dispute in the family at that time. The head of the family—Sir Roger Carsdale—took the side of the Parliament, while his son, Rupert—the eldest son and heir—was for the king. At the battle of Marston Manor they came in conflict, and the son fell by the hand of the father. That much is true, at least. The rest I have always regarded as legend."

"And the legend?"

"It is said that in Sir Roger's last days, his son appeared to him and warned him of his approaching end. He was clad as a cavalier, as his father had seen him last, in black from head to foot. That was the beginning of the legend of the Black Cavalier. It is likely enough that Sir Roger suffered from remorse. He was a hard drinker, and in his last days his fancy showed him his slain son in some shadow—that is how I have interpreted the legend. The Black Cavalier appears to the Carsdales, when the end is near, and the second appearance is followed by the death of a Carsdale. And my father has seen it once—"

He paused a moment.

"On two successive nights the phantom appears to the doomed man," he continued, after a pause. "If the legend holds good, my father will see it again to-night, and to-morrow he will die! And—and my father—Sir Giles Carsdale—is an implicit believer in the truth of the legend. According to his belief, the Black Cavalier appeared to his father—my grandfather. At least, the old man told him so on his death-bed."

"A sick man's fancy, aided by superstition," said Ferrers Locke. "No doubt—no doubt! But, my father has seen something—of that I am certain. He is sick, but his illness is not serious in itself. His mind is quite clear. Last evening I was reading to him by his bedside, and I left him in good spirits, hoping that he would be well enough on Christmas Day for the usual festivities to take place. In the night—" Richard Carsdale shuddered.

"It was at midnight that I was awakened by a loud scream—a single scream, followed by silence. I sprang out of bed. I knew that the cry came from Sir Giles' room, which was further along the same corridor upon which my room opens. I feared that he had had a seizure. I rushed out of my room along the corridor, threw open his door, and switched on the electric light. Sir Giles was lying back on his pillows, white as chalk, and quite insensible."

"And then?"

"Two or three servants had been awakened, and they came hurrying up. I ran to my father at once and tried to restore him. He looked like a dead man, and I could see that he had had some terrible shock. At that moment, however, I did not think of the family legend of the phantom cavalier. I shouted to the servants to send for the doctor at once. My cousin Gerald went in the car for Dr. Reed. By accursed ill-luck there was a break-down, and it was two hours before he returned with the doctor."

"And your father—"

"He remained unconscious for a whole hour, but he came to his senses at last, shaken and trembling. His first words were 'The Black Cavalier! I have seen him!'"

The young man's voice trembled.

"I—I tried to calm him—to disabuse his mind of what I then thought to be a fancy. The doctor arrived and found him quite calm and composed, but convinced that his end was at hand. The doctor could do nothing. For the remainder of the night I sat up with my father, though he wished me to return to bed."

"And you saw nothing of the ghost?"

"Nothing. My father did not sleep again. He sat up in bed, propped on pillows, and his eyes continually watched every corner of the room. It was heart-breaking to see him. He was fully convinced that he had seen the phantom—and I am convinced that he had seen something. He is calm, and he is a brave man. He does not fear death. But he is convinced that he will die to-morrow, and the medical man says that in his present state, that fixed belief is quite enough to be fatal to him."

"It is very probable."

"I—I can see him sinking under my eyes," faltered Richard Carsdale. "He looks ten years older, and white and worn. In the night, Mr. Locke, he saw something—something that he believed to be the Black Cavalier of the Carsdales. I am certain of that. But—but I am trying to drive from my mind the belief that it was a phantom. Can someone—some villain—have played a dastardly trick upon a sick man?"

"That is possible, of course. Has Sir Giles any enemy who might be supposed to desire his death?"

"None—none! He is loved by everyone who comes in contact with him—the kindest-noblest-hearted man." Richard Carsdale's voice trembled again. "If—if my suspicion is correct, I cannot account for it. I only cling to it as a last straw of hope."

"You do not believe in the phantom. Are there others in the house who believe in it?"

"The servants—certainly. Two of them left this morning. And—and Gerald is a firm believer in the legend. He has warned me to be prepared for my bereavement."

"Gerald—a Carsdale?" asked Locke.

"Yes. The son of my father's brother, who was killed in Afghanistan. He makes his home with us," explained Carsdale. "His father left him very ill-provided for; but our home, of course, was open to any of the Carsdale blood."

"And he believes in the Black Cavalier?"

"Yes. He is not superstitious in other matters; but—but most of the Carsdales believe the story more or less."

Locke wrinkled his brows in thought.

"Your theory that some enemy may have played a trick on your father, Mr. Carsdale, scarcely holds water, if there is no such enemy known," he said. "Would it be easy for any outsider to gain admittance to the house?"

"Almost impossible, I think."

"Then the trick—if a trick it was—must have been played by an inmate?"

"I—I suppose so. Carsdale Manor is a very old place—full of rambling passages and secret doors and so on," said Richard Carsdale. "Many of the secret passages are known, and are pointed out to visitors. It came into my mind that there might be one known to some other, but not to us. I—I know it is an improbable idea—"

"Someone who has lived long in the house may have made such a discovery," suggested Locke.

"That is the difficulty. No one could have had the chance to explore the place and discover anything of the sort but my father, myself, or my cousin."

Locke nodded.

"If your father has no known enemy, Mr. Carsdale, and a trick has been played upon him that might result in his death, we must seek for some person who would benefit."

Carsdale crimsoned.

"It is I who would benefit," he said falteringly. "The title and the estate descend to me."

"The baronet's will is made?"

"Yes."

"Do you know any of the provisions?"

"I have seen it, certainly. Practically everything comes to me by the entail. My cousin is provided for by a bequest of Sir Giles' investment in War Loan, and there are the usual bequests to servants and friends."

Locke looked rather curiously at the young man.

"What steps do you wish me to take, Mr. Carsdale? I am quite at your service?"

"I hardly know! I cling to the belief that a trick of some kind has been played—improbable, impossible as it seems. But that that should prove to be the truth is the only hope of saving my father's life. He will not permit me to pass the night in his room. He knows, or believes, that the phantom will reappear, and he will not allow me to be present. To see the Black Cavalier is to die—so he thinks. If there is trickery, I cannot deal with it. But if you can help me, Mr. Locke, it is only upon the spot that you can work. Will you come to the Manor?"

"I will come," said Ferrers Locke.

The young man's face brightened.

"I came up in the car," he said. "It is waiting outside! Oh, Mr. Locke, if you will come with me now, we can be home this evening early—"

Ferrers Locke rose to his feet.

"My bag is packed," he said, with a smile. "I will tell my man to put it in the car. In three minutes I shall be ready."

"God bless you!" said Richard Carsdale.

Five minutes later the Baker Street detective was seated by Richard Carsdale's side in the car, gliding out of the dusky London streets for the lowlands of Essex.

### The House of Shadow.

DAWK and gloomy Carsdale Manor looked as the car glided up the long drive shadowed with ancient oaks and beeches. Few windows in the long, low house were lighted. A dim mist hung over the park and thickened across the fields. It was a dark, chilly evening, and Ferrers Locke, as he glanced from the car, could not help thinking that if a phantom of the past haunted the manor, the house and its surroundings were a fitting setting. He could almost fancy the shadowy figure of the phantom cavalier gliding among the dusky oaks and beeches.

He thought of his boy assistant—Jack Drake—and he was glad that Drake had gone to join his Greyfriars chums for Christmas. He would not have liked the boy's Yuletide to be shadowed and darkened by this grim and tragic mystery. To his own lost holiday the Baker Street detective gave no thought; and his interest was roused by the strange tale Richard Carsdale had told him.

"It will be but a dismal Christmas for you, Mr. Locke," Carsdale remarked, a little shamefacedly, as they rolled up the drive.

"That is nothing, Mr. Carsdale. If I can help you, I shall be satisfied."

"It is very good of you to say so," said the young man gratefully.

"Does your father know you have called me in?"

"Oh, no!"

"Or anyone else?"

Richard Carsdale shook his head.

"No. I obeyed a sudden impulse in flying up to London to see you, Mr. Locke. And I scarcely hoped to catch you—on Christmas Eve. I have not mentioned the matter so far."

"How is your father likely to take it?"

Carsdale hesitated.

"I—I fear he may not like it, Mr. Locke. Would it be putting you in a false position if I do not mention that you are a detective?"

"I was about to suggest it," said Locke quietly.

The young man looked greatly relieved.

"Then I will introduce you simply as Mr. Locke—not Ferrers Locke, as the name, of course, would be known—"

"Make it John Locke," said the detective, with a smile. "John is also one of my names—I have several."

"Good! You will be simply a friend of mine, who has come down for Christmas. I may call you my friend?"

"I hope to prove a friend," said Locke.

"Thank you, Mr. Locke."

When the car stopped a young man of about thirty was standing on the wide stone steps, bareheaded. He had evidently come out of the mansion at the sound of the car.

"Gerald!" called out Carsdale eagerly. "Is my father worse?"

"He is just the same, Dick."

"Oh, good!"

"I have been wondering where you had got to, Dick," said Gerald Carsdale, with a curious look at his cousin. "You have been away a good many hours. Sir Giles has asked after you!"

"I've brought a friend back with me, Gerald. Mr. Locke, my cousin Gerald!"

"You are very welcome, sir," said Gerald Carsdale civilly. "You will find this a rather saddened house this Christmastide, I fear. No doubt you are aware that Sir Giles is ill?"

"Richard has told me so," assented Locke.

"Come in, Locke," said Richard Carsdale.

The Baker Street detective entered. A man carried in his bag, and Locke noticed that the servant had a pale, scared look. The legend of the Black Cavalier was evidently well-known "below stairs" at Carsdale Manor, and, doubtless, implicitly believed in there. Richard mounted the wide, old-fashioned oak staircase with his guest, and Gerald Carsdale looked after them from the hall, and then strolled away listlessly to the billiard-room. Gerald's spirits, too, seemed to be suffering from the atmosphere of sadness and brooding tragedy in the ancient house.

"This will be your room, Mr. Locke," Richard followed the detective in. "My own man shall look after you—we'll try to make you comfortable. But I suppose I may tell Gerald who you are? There is no need to keep your identity secret from anyone but Sir Giles."

Locke shook his head.

"Not a word to a soul in the house," he said quietly. "If there is a secret hand at work in this house, Mr. Carsdale, my identity must remain a dead secret. An incautious word would betray me."

"Gerald, of course, would be careful—"

"Please let me have my way, Mr. Carsdale. No one but yourself must know my business here."

Richard bowed his head.

"It is as you wish, of course, Mr. Locke. Perhaps the least said is the soonest mended. Gerald might possibly let slip a word that would agitate my father. I will be dumb."

When Ferrers Locke came down to dinner at half-past seven, he found the cousins together. Both of them looked very silent and distraught.

There was a fourth at the dinner-table—Dr. Reed. Locke was introduced to the medical gentleman, and he rather liked the country doctor's ruddy, good-tempered face and genial manner. The doctor had most of the conversation to himself with Locke—both the Carsdales seemed moody and gloomy, and spoke little. Doubtless the thought of the sick man in the room above was weighing on their minds. When dinner was over, and the four gentlemen lingered over wine and walnuts, and the servants were gone, the talk came round to the strange visitation of the night before.

"A pure hallucination," said Dr. Reed emphatically. "Sir Giles has thought and brooded over the story of the phantom cavalier. Now that sickness has brought him low, he has fancied the apparition. Some moving shadow in the curtains—that is all!"

"It is possible!" said Richard, with a sigh.

"Mr. Gerald does not agree with me," said the doctor, with a smile. "He is a believer in the ghost of the Carsdales."

Ferrers Locke glanced rather curiously at the young man.

Gerald smiled faintly.

"Perhaps not a firm believer, doctor," he answered. "But—superstition apart—there is much to be said for the story. My grandfather, on his death-bed, told Sir Giles he had seen the apparition."



"Pure fancy," said Dr. Reed. "I have little doubt that every Carsdale, when he is low in health, and waking at midnight to hear the wind whistling round the house, will fancy that he sees the Black Cavalier."

"Probably you are right," said Gerald moodily. "I am sure of it."

"I have not had the pleasure of meeting Sir Giles yet," remarked Locke. "Is he a man you would judge to be subject to such fancies, doctor?"

Dr. Reed shook his head.

"Normally, no! But you must remember that he is now sick, and that that may make all the difference."

"True."

The doctor took his leave a little later. Richard Carsdale looked at the detective inquiringly.

"You would like to see my father?" he asked. "He takes his meals in his room, but I generally pass most of the evening with him after dinner. It is possible that you may cheer him a little."

"I shall be very glad to see him," said Locke.

"Are you coming, Gerald?"

Gerald shook his head.

"Not now—later! I—I can't bear to see my poor uncle look as—as he does now." The young man's voice faltered. "He is your father, Dick, but I think I feel it almost as much as you do."

"I am sure of it, old chap," said Richard.

Gerald was left in the smoke-room, and Ferrers Locke ascended the stairs with Richard Carsdale.

"Your cousin seems very much attached to his uncle," Ferrers Locke remarked.

Richard nodded.

"He does—and he is! My father has done everything for him, you know; and Gerald is a good-hearted fellow. I would never believe anything against him, for one."

"Does that mean that anything has been said against him?"

Richard looked embarrassed.

"My dear fellow," said Ferrers Locke quietly, "when you call in a detective, it is a great deal like calling in a doctor. You must answer his questions without asking the reason why."

"You are right, Mr. Locke, though poor Gerald's affairs have nothing to do with the matter in hand," said Richard, hesitating.

"If you wish to know—"

"I do!" said Locke.

"Well, Gerald has been in debt, and although my father saw him through, he was greatly shocked and pained," said Richard. "And—and some of his creditors have declared that Gerald treated them unfairly—that certain debts of honour—which could not be claimed in law—were left unpaid. But I have never believed anything to his discredit. I would not believe ill of a Carsdale."

Richard dropped the subject at that; it was evidently a distasteful one to him. Locke asked him no further questions, and they arrived at the baronet's room.

Sir Giles Carsdale was sitting up in bed, opposite a blazing fire. His fine old face was deadly pale, and he looked worn; but his manner was very calm, indeed, stately. When Richard introduced his "friend Locke," the baronet greeted him with old-world courtesy, and Locke shook a thin hand that was almost as white as the coverlet on which it rested.

"I fear that my visit is somewhat ill-timed, Sir Giles," Ferrers Locke remarked, after the baronet had greeted him.

"Not at all, Mr. Locke," said the old gentleman. "Any friend of my dear son is always a welcome guest. I only fear that your Christmas will be but a sad one in a house of sickness and shadows."

The baronet glanced at his son.

"You will be better to-morrow, father," said Richard.

The old man smiled—a wan smile.

"I have told Locke—," began Richard.

Sir Giles frowned slightly.

"Of the Black Cavalier?"

"Yes, father."

"A legend of our house, sir," said the baronet, turning his head to Ferrers Locke. "Few but the Carsdales believe it."

"But you place faith in it, Sir Giles?"

"You may think me superstitious, Mr. Locke. But the tradition has been handed down from father to son."

"And you have actually seen the Black Cavalier?"

"Last night!"

"For the first time?"

"Yes."

Locke gazed at the fine old face of the master of Carsdale Manor. The baronet was quite calm, and evidently resigned to what he believed to be his fate. He seemed to take his sentence of death as a matter of course, and had not thought of resisting his doom. The call had come—and he was a brave man, ready to answer it. That was all. There was no sign of agitation in the well-cut face.

"You expect to see this vision again, Sir Giles?"

"To-night will be the second time," said Sir Giles calmly—and the fatal time. The visits are always on successive nights. So it was with my father, and with his father." He smiled slightly. "You do not credit it, Mr. Locke; but has not our great poet told us that there is more in the heavens and the earth than is dreamt of in our philosophy?"

"But," said Locke gently, "you will not remain alone to face this—this visitation. I am your son's friend—let us both remain—"

Sir Giles shook his head.

"I know my fate, and I do not fear it," he answered. "My last day has come, and all my preparations are made. I grieve only to leave my dear boy—but the parting must come some day. Richard, you should not have brought your friend here to be saddened by what must happen."

"But if you do not see the vision—," said Locke.

"I shall see it."

There was no doubt about the baronet's conviction. And there was no doubt, in Locke's mind, as to what would happen when the ghastly phantom of the night appeared—whether a phantom,

a trick, or a fancy of a sick man. The faint light of life in the old man's face would go out like a candle that is blown. Even now the old man looked as if the shadow of the wings of the angel of death rested upon him.

Ferrers Locke looked round the room—the dark, oak-panelled walls, the heavy curtains that draped the windows, the old-fashioned bed with its canopy. Was it possible that the legend was something more than a legend? Without, the wind and the rain were lashing on the windows, and there were strange, eerie sounds in the old mansion. The ivy rustled on the walls and wet panes.

Locke shook aside the oppressive thought. It was an illusion or a trick—he was there to discover which. Against a sick man's disordered imaginings he could not contest—but if it was a trick of human agency, Locke was there to deal with it. His jaw set grimly at the thought. If the vision was a trick, Ferrers Locke would have no mercy on the trickster—the ruthless schemer who was dooming a kind old man to untimely death.

There was a nurse in a chair by the fire, and she made a sign to Richard. He rose.

Locke took his leave of the baronet, and quitted the sick chamber with Richard Carsdale.

"Does the nurse remain for the night?" he asked, as they stepped into the broad corridor upon which a long line of bedrooms opened.

"No; he will not permit it." The young man looked troubled. "I have asked Dr. Reed whether I should over-ride him and act against his wishes. He says that my father is now in such a low state that any shock might kill him. I dare not oppose him."

"Step into my room!" said Ferrers Locke.

From somewhere below came the faint, distant sound of a piano. Gerald Carsdale was playing—sad and monotonous music, in keeping with the brooding shadow of death that hung over the ancient mansion. Locke closed his door.

"What is your opinion now, Locke?" asked Richard, in a low voice.

"Your father saw something last night," said Ferrers Locke quietly. "He saw what he believes to be the Black Cavalier, warning him of his doom. He expects to see it again to-night—and to die on Christmas Day. If the legend is true, your father will not see the sun set on Christmas. And if it is a trick, he is equally doomed, unless the trickster is discovered and exposed."

"But how—how—"

"Sir Giles will allow no one to remain in the room. From his own point of view, he is right. His wishes must be disregarded—unknown to him. The light remains on at night, of course?"

"All night."

"You will see your father again—"

"The nurse leaves him at eleven. I shall then say good-night to him."

"Good! You will contrive, somehow, that the electric light is turned off for a moment or two. In that moment I shall slip into the room and conceal myself behind the window curtains."

Richard drew a deep breath.

"Unknown to your father, I shall keep watch. If there is a phantom—let it come!" Locke set his lips for a moment.

"Christmas morning, Mr. Carsdale, will see the truth of the legend established, or the cheat exposed! You will do as I direct."

"I will follow your orders in everything, Mr. Locke. I shall not sleep to-night."

"You must go to your room as usual and put out your light. No one in the house must suspect that anything unusual is taking place—not even your cousin."

"It shall be as you wish."

"He will not be there when you say good-night to your father?"

"He is very unwilling to be in the room. The sight of my poor



With a sudden movement Ferrers Locke threw wide the hangings which had concealed him, and sprang into the room. There was a hoarse cry from the baronet. It was echoed in a sharp, fearful gasp from the phantom. The Black Cavalier spun round towards Ferrers Locke.

father affects him so much. I shall easily contrive to stay after he is gone."

"Then all will be easy. I shall go to bed now," said Locke. "You can tell Gerald that I am fatigued with my journey and have turned in. It will be true."

"Very well, Mr. Locke."

And, after a few more words, Richard Carsdale descended the stairs, and Ferrers Locke was left alone.

### The Black Cavalier.

"YOU must go now, my boys!"

The baronet's tone was gentle, but very firm. The nurse was gone, after settling the baronet for the night; Richard and Gerald Carsdale stood by the bedside. The old man was calm, almost smiling. Gerald Carsdale, with a white face, pressed his hand and quitted the room. Richard lingered. The old man gave him an affectionate look.

"Dick, my boy, you must go."

"You will not let me stay—"

"No!"

"Good-night, dear father!"

"Good-night, my boy!"

Richard went unsteadily to the door. As he opened it, his hand came in contact with the electric light switch, and turned it. The room was plunged into sudden darkness.

There was a faint footfall—that was all.

Richard switched the light on again. He looked back at his father, who met his glance with a smile.

"Your nerves are unsteady, my boy," said the baronet. "Go to bed—sleep. You need sleep, my poor boy!"

"Good-night!" muttered the young man.

He went heavily from the room, and the door closed.

The baronet's head sank back on the snowy pillows. As soon as he was alone the steady smile he had kept on his face vanished—like a mask that is dropped.

He looked haggard now—haggard and worn. His eyes had a restless gleam, and wandered to and fro in the room.

Not for a moment did he dream that he was not in solitude—that the heavy velvet hangings at the window embrasure concealed a silent, watching figure. Ferrers Locke stood motionless, with the curtains concealing him—only a narrow slit left in the hangings, through which he could watch the room.

He felt a pang at his heart as he saw the change that came over the baronet's kind old face when he believed himself alone.

Courage the man certainly had—he was calm and resigned. But in the grip of the old family superstition he had no hope. He had seen the phantom cavalier once—the warning of doom. This night he was to see the vision a second time—if the old tale ran true—and he believed it. And the second visitation was death! When the wintry sun rose on Christmas morning, it was to gleam upon the pallid face and sightless eyes of the head of the Carsdales.

Locke waited, without a sound.

Only the ticking of the clock broke the stillness within; but from without came the wailing of the December wind—the eerie rustling of ancient ivy on the panes.

The baronet lay still, but not asleep.

His eyes remained wide open, fixed unblinkingly before him.

Faint sounds from below died away at last. The eve of Christmas was growing old; the household was sunk in slumber. Midnight had passed. Ferrers Locke, with a little start, realised that it was Christmas morning—the morn of the day of festivity! Never, truly, had the famous detective spent a stranger Christmas.

He had scarcely moved, and hours had passed. But he seemed tireless. He was watching, listening. Even the sick man under the canopy of the ancient bed was listening and watching.

There was a faint sound. Was it the scuttle of a rat behind the old oak panels?

Locke's heart beat a throb faster.

His steady eye was on the narrow slit between the hangings. Silently, a panel in the oaken wall slid back.

Locke breathed hard.

The wall where the panel had moved was almost directly opposite the window—out of sight of the baronet, owing to the hanging canopy of the bedhead. The head of the bed was towards the wall where the panel had moved.

Locke's eyes fastened on the opening.

It was a black gap in the polished wall—large enough for a man to pass through by stooping his head. The panel had moved without a sound. There was no motion from the baronet. He was waiting—waiting—watching with sleepless eyes. Not the faintest suspicion crossed his mind that a secret door had opened.

But Locke's eyes, from the window hangings, were fastened upon it. A form appeared in the opening.

Prepared as he was, Locke felt a shiver run through him, and he caught his breath.

The figure that appeared in the wall was that of a cavalier of ancient times, clad in black from top to toe.

Even the lace ruffles on the old garb were of jet-black.

The plume that draped the hat was black as the raven's wing. Long black hair descended upon the shoulders of the dark doublet. Only the face was white, with an unearthly whiteness. White as the driven snow was the face of the phantom cavalier—white, stony, set in a rigid fixity—only the eyes showing a sign of life.

Noislessly, the Black Cavalier stepped into the room.

With a gliding motion, he passed over the polished floor, till he came within the range of vision of the man in the bed.

There was a faint gasp in the stillness.

Sir Giles Carsdale sat bolt upright, the coverlet falling away from him, his startling eyes fixed in a wild stare on the phantom.

The black cloak moved as an arm was raised, and a pointing finger was turned upon the baronet.

Still, rigid stood the black-robed figure, silent as the grave. Still and rigid was the unhappy man in the bed, staring at the grisly spectre with staring eyes of dread.

Ferrers Locke set his teeth. For the moment a thrill of superstitious horror had run through him. But he cast it aside. With a sudden movement he threw wide the hangings, and sprang into the room.

There was a hoarse cry from the baronet. It was echoed in a sharp, fearful gasp from the phantom.

The Black Cavalier spun round towards Ferrers Locke.

But as the detective sprang upon him, he made a leap for the open panel. But the Baker Street detective was too quick.

His grasp was upon the Black Cavalier, and his fingers closed—not upon a bodiless phantom—but upon solid flesh and bone!

Crash!

With an inarticulate cry, the Black Cavalier crashed on the floor, and Ferrers Locke's knee was planted on his chest.

The baronet cried aloud.

"In Heaven's name—"

Locke pinned the struggling trickster to the floor with a knee that seemed of iron. Quietly he turned his head towards Sir Giles Carsdale.

"You have been tricked, Sir Giles!"

"Tricked!" panted the baronet.

"Raise yourself a little, look round, and you will see an open panel in the wall. That is how the impostor entered."

"Good heavens!"

The door was flung open and Richard Carsdale ran into the room. He had not slept, and the crash in his father's room had reached his ears. He gave a shout as he rushed in.

"Locke! You have caught him! It was a trick—"

"It was a trick!" assented Ferrers Locke.

"Father!"

The young man ran to the bedside. His father leaned heavily on his shoulder.

"Tricked!" muttered the baronet hoarsely. "Oh, Dick—Dick! Tricked! And—and I should have died—I should have died!"

Tricked! What villain, then, is it who has planned my death?"

"We shall soon see," said Richard. "Call my cousin, Mr. Locke—he will help you secure that scoundrel till he can be handed over to the police—"

"I do not think we need to call your cousin, Mr. Carsdale," said Ferrers Locke quietly. "When the paint is washed from this villain's face, I think you will recognise Gerald Carsdale!"

"Gerald!"

"My nephew!"

"Let me go!" muttered the exposed rascal, in choking tones.

"For mercy's sake, let me get out of his sight! I give in—I confess—only let me escape his sight—"

Locke dragged his prisoner to his feet. The Black Cavalier's cloak had been torn off in the struggle, the plumed bat lay on the floor, and with it the wig of long, curling black hair. The face was working, and it was still white—white as chalk—from the paint that had been laid upon it thickly.

"Bring him closer!" said the baronet, in a stern, strong voice.

Locke dragged the shrinking rascal nearer the bed. The old man's eyes were fixed on the painted face, and in the glare of the electric light—without the shadow of the plumed hat—Gerald Carsdale could be recognised, in spite of the paint.

"Gerald, you sought my death?"

"You—you villain!" muttered Richard Carsdale brokenly.

"You!"

The wretched young man shuddered.

"Why have you done this, Gerald?" asked the old man steadily.

"Forgive me—"

"Why have you done this?"

"I—"

The wretched trickster's voice faltered and failed.

"Perhaps I can explain," said Ferrers Locke. "Debts, and a legacy of a large investment, in your will, Sir Giles, account for it. I will do this young villain the justice to say that he has not acted as he has done without some qualms of conscience. But he stands before you an attempted murderer—and I am ready to place the handcuffs on his wrists."

Sir Giles shook his head. The colour was creeping back into the old man's face now.

"He has sought my life—but he is a Carsdale," he said. "I will not disgrace an old name by exposing his villainy to the world. Let him go—let him go at once, and never enter my presence again. Let him find repentance, if he can—but let him go at once! Out of my sight!"

"Uncle—"

"Go!"

With Ferrers Locke's iron grip on his shoulder, Gerald Carsdale was led from the room. By his father's bedside, Dick Carsdale sat for the remainder of the night, while a hopeless, wretched outcast tramped away, blindly, through wind and rain, to greet the morning of Christmas with black despair in his heart.

THE END.

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