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TEDDY HERON'S LATEST WHEEZE!

An Amusing Incident from Our Long Complete Story Inside.

COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.**AFTER TWENTY YEARS!**

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.

A Page from the Past!

TWENTY years to-day!" Esdaile Oliphant, millionaire, stood at his library window and stared out into the dripping rain on the drive.

It was New Year's Day, and mist and rain were ushering in the New Year.

The leafless trees in the great drive were weeping, the rain pattered incessantly on the drive.

As far as the millionaire could see from the window of the great house on the downs, all was his—park and woodland and pasture-land, village, and farmsteads, and sweeping hillside.

His eyes fixed on the spire of the village church in the distance beyond the trees.

Twenty years before, Esdaile Oliphant had tramped out of that village, with all his possessions in a little leather wallet. And now he was the greatest land-owner in Sussex.

Where he had herded sheep, for a pittance, twenty years ago, he was now monarch of all he surveyed.

He turned from the window, and glanced along the well-filled book-shelves—stacked with expensively-bound volumes that he never opened. He smiled complacently.

"Twenty years has made a change," he murmured. "But what change has it made to Rufus Lindale?" He glanced at his watch. "Two hours more! When is Ferrers Locke coming?"

There was a sound of wheels on the drive, and he turned to the window again.

As the car glided up to the great portico of Wickstead House, he caught a glimpse of the man who sat within—a rather tall, lean man with clear-cut features and impassive face.

Two minutes later, Ferrers Locke, the famous Baker Street detective, was shown into the library.

The millionaire shook hands warmly with the man from Baker Street.

"I am glad to see you, Locke," he said. "I had almost given you up."

"I hope I am in time."

"With two hours to spare," said Mr. Oliphant.

"Good! I returned to Baker Street only this morning," explained the detective. "I have had a little holiday in Essex, and letters were not forwarded. I found your note and came on at once."

"Sit down, my dear fellow. Have you lunched?"

"Yes."

"Then help yourself to a cigar, and let us come to business."

Ferrers Locke sank into a luxurious arm-chair before the blazing log-fire. Esdaile Oliphant took a turn or two up and down the room, his brow corrugated with thought, but he came to a halt at last and sat down, and lighted a cigar.

"I've got rather a queer story to tell you, Mr. Locke," he said. "What I want you to do is something rather unusual. Probably it will not be necessary for you to take action at all. I want you to be present at an interview."

Locke nodded.

"Unseen," added the millionaire.

The Baker Street detective looked at him.

"I shall have to hear more of the matter before I can undertake that," he said. "Let me know exactly how the matter stands."

"I shall have to tell you something about myself. You have heard about me, of course—you know that I am a millionaire, that I made a fortune for myself from humble beginnings. Probably you do not know that I was born in yonder village of Wickstead, of poor labouring parents, and that I went to seek my fortune at the age of fifteen, with half-a-crown in my pocket, and a hunk of bread and cheese and one shirt in a wallet."

Ferrers Locke smiled.

"I congratulate you," he said.

"The half-crown was given me by the Wickstead innkeeper," continued Mr. Oliphant. "It was all the capital I had. Ten years later I bought the inn and made him a present of it—so the good fellow did not lose by casting his bread upon the waters. I made my fortune, Mr. Locke, and I came back here and bought Wickstead House, and all the land for ten miles around. Any man who has a claim on me can consider his fortune made. That is why I am very much on my guard to-day and want your help."

He paused, and the Baker Street detective waited in silence. "In those early days," continued the millionaire, "I had a chum—by name, Rufus Lindale. We started out into the world together—but took different ways. I went to London—he went to America. We started on New Year's Day twenty years ago. I saw Rufus last under the old oak tree at the bottom of Wickstead Park, by the old shepherd's hut—which was a ruin then, and is a ruin still. I would not have it altered. We were great chums, and we made a romantic vow before we parted to meet again in the same spot in twenty years' time, and to share whatever good fortune might have come to either or both of us. At four o'clock this afternoon, Mr. Locke, the twenty years will have expired, and I shall keep the appointment under the old oak."

"And you expect—"

"I hope, at least, that Rufus Lindale will keep the appointment, on his side."

"Twenty years is a long time," said the detective. "You have had news of him in the interval?"

"None."

"He may be dead—"

"It is quite probable."

"But if he appears—"

"If he appears, rich or poor, I shall keep the compact I made with him twenty years ago," said Esdaile Oliphant. "I want to keep it. I would give a good slice of my fortune, Mr. Locke, to meet my old boyhood's chum again. If he is rich, well and good; if he is poor, my house is open to him, and my fortune at his command. But—"

"But—" said Locke, regarding the millionaire very curiously.

Esdaile Oliphant was known in financial circles as a strictly honourable, but rather hard and unbending, man of business. Certainly none of his City friends would have suspected the millionaire of anything like romantic weakness. But Ferrers Locke had seen too many curious phases of human nature to be surprised.

"But, after twenty years," said the millionaire, "Lindale will be greatly changed—as I am changed. I doubt if anyone would recognise in me the chubby country lad who started tramping to London on New Year's Day twenty years ago. I do not expect to recognise Lindale—if he turns up. I am quite aware that he may have talked of our compact—that others may have heard of it. He was always a communicative fellow in boyhood—good-natured and talkative. He may be dead now—he may have died in America, or he may have returned for the war and perished in Flanders—I know nothing. It was part of our compact that we should not communicate until the twenty years had elapsed. So I am not blind to the fact, Mr. Locke, that it is possible, at least, that some impostor may attempt to deceive me when I keep the appointment."

"I understand."

"I have very little expectation, as a matter of fact, of the appointment being kept at all," resumed the millionaire. "I hope so—but I have little expectation of it. If Rufus Lindale lives, he must have heard of me, and of my wealth, I think; and if he is poor, he may shrink from appearing to force a claim on me—a claim founded upon a rather foolish boyish compact. But if the appointment is kept, Mr. Locke, I want to be certain that the man who keeps it is Rufus Lindale. That is why I want you to be present—unseen—at the interview. I think that it will be rather difficult for any impostor to impose upon you."

Locke smiled.

"I agree with you," he said.

"You will find easy cover inside the old shepherd's cabin, which will also shelter you from the weather, if the rain keeps on," said the millionaire. "From the cabin you will see and hear all that takes place. If a man turns up claiming to be Rufus Lindale, you will observe him and form your own judgment. Whatever your judgment is, you will tell me afterwards."

"Certainly," said Ferrers Locke. "And if you keep the man in conversation in my hearing for—say, ten minutes, I think I shall be able to form a very accurate opinion as to whether he is genuine."

"I think so, too. Of course, the whole thing is a secret between ourselves. If Rufus turns up, and I am satisfied, I should not like him to fancy that I had distrusted him."

"Quite so," Locke glanced at his watch. "If Mr. Lindale—or another—comes to the appointment, he may be early at the trysting-place," he remarked. "It would be as well to settle all preliminaries in good time. I think you may as well guide me to the shepherd's cabin without delay, Mr. Oliphant."

"I was about to suggest it," said the millionaire. "A few minutes later, the millionaire and the detective, muffled up against the rain, left Wickstead House together.

The Meeting.

DRIP! Drip! Drip!

The rain fell steadily. Ferrers Locke moved about within the narrow limits of the dismantled shepherd's cabin, as the rain pattered outside, and the drip, drip came through the rotten roof.

The millionaire had left him there and returned to the house. It was three o'clock, and the appointment—made twenty years ago—was for four. But the Baker Street detective had wisely decided to be on the ground early.

There were a hundred chances to one that the appointment would never be kept. If it was kept, it was as likely to be kept by an impostor as by the genuine Rufus Lindale—since the fact that Mr. Oliphant was a millionaire would probably be known to whomsoever Rufus might have told the story of the boyish compact. It was probable that the Baker Street detective was wasting his time, possible that he might have to deal with a rogue—barely possible that he would be a witness to a meeting of old friends after a parting of twenty years. Ferrers Locke's interest was excited, and he was patient in his watch at the old cabin.

There was but one room in the cabin, with a little garret above, through the gashed roof of which the rain dripped incessantly. There had once been a ladder to the garret, but it was gone now. The detective looked round the cabin and paced to and fro for some little time, and then he looked from the doorway—whence the door was missing. It was half-past three now.

A figure came in sight, across the fields in the distance. Ferrers Locke regarded it curiously.

Distant as the figure was—a moving blur on the fields—there was something that seemed familiar about it to the keen eyes of the Baker Street detective.

He drew a small pair of pocket field-glasses from his coat and adjusted them. As the glasses bore on the distant figure, it seemed to rush into sudden view—plain as if the man had been within a few yards.

Ferrers Locke smiled grimly. "Silky Smith! I thought so!"

The man wore a heavy mackintosh, and he was muffled against the rain. But one clear look at the narrow eyes and sharp-featured face was enough for Ferrers Locke.

Silky Smith—forges, cracksmen, kidnapper, rogue to the fingertips—was coming across the drenched fields straight for the trysting place.

"By gad!" muttered Ferrers Locke. "Was it chance that brought the cracksmen to that locality? Was he seeking a chance of exercising his skill upon a safe? Wickstead House contained enough booty to tempt the crook. Or was it possible that Silky Smith was heading for the old oak to keep the appointment with the millionaire?"

Locke's well-cut lips curved in a smile at the thought. Esdaile Oliphant, with his usual business caution, had wished that a detective should be present at the interview, in case an attempt was made to impose upon him. Certainly, if Silky Smith was there to keep the appointment, there was work for Ferrers Locke to do.

The man came closer and crossed a stile into the lane that led directly towards the shepherd's cabin. The high hedges now hid him from sight.

Ferrers Locke turned back into the cabin and approached the spot where once the wooden ladder had given access to the garret.

He knew Silky Smith of old, and he knew that if the crook was playing a crooked game on that spot, he would not fail to examine his surroundings with a keen eye. He would look into the shepherd's cabin, at least casting a cursory glance about the old ruin.

Locke proceeded to clamber up into the garret—a rather difficult task, but the Baker Street detective was lithe and nimble. He reached the garret and stepped out of sight of the opening. The crazy roof above his head let in the rain at a dozen points, and, through slits in the wall, he had a good view of the outside surroundings.

There were cracks in the floor under his feet, and he trod very carefully. He looked out, and saw Silky Smith arrive under the oak tree. The man looked up the path that led to Wickstead House and shook his head, evidently indicating that no one was coming.

Then he looked at his watch. Locke looked at him curiously. It was a quarter to four—fifteen minutes to the hour of the assignation. Silky Smith came towards the cabin and strode in. Locke heard him shaking the rain-drops from his mackintosh, and there was the scratch of a match. The scent of a cigar came from below.

Through a crack in the garret floor Locke watched him. Silky Smith stood at the doorway below, looking out into the dropping rain.

There was little doubt now. Silky Smith was there to keep an appointment. Whether with the millionaire or not, Locke was soon to discover.

From somewhere in the distance four strokes boomed out faintly across the fields.

The waiting figure in the doorway gave a start and strode out under the wide-spreading branches of the oak, which brushed the walls of the old cabin. The form of the millionaire appeared on the path.

Locke smiled again. It was clear now that Silky Smith was there to meet the millionaire. The portly master of Wickstead House approached, and Locke saw him start a little at the sight of a man standing under the oak tree.

"Esdaile, old fellow!"

That was Silky Smith's greeting. The millionaire stopped short. He looked fixedly into the face of the man before him, for the moment not heeding Mr. Smith's outstretched hand.

"You are Rufus Lindale?" he asked. "Don't you know me again?" asked Silky Smith reproachfully. Oliphant shrugged his shoulders.

"Do you know me?" he asked. "You have changed," said Silky Smith. "I suppose I have changed, too. Twenty years makes a difference. We were boys of fifteen when we stood last under this old oak, Esdaile."

The millionaire's manner relaxed. "It's a long time, Rufus," he said. "And now he took the hand of the crook and shook it heartily. "I won't say I know you, for you have changed out of all knowledge. But I'm glad to see you."

"You've still got your half of the sixpence?" asked Silky Smith.

Oliphant's face softened still more. Locke, watching, could see that he had begun the interview with strong doubts in his mind. Silky Smith's physiognomy had not impressed him favourably. But he believed now—or, at least, he was prepared to believe.

"I have it still," he answered. "And yours?" "Here!" said Silky Smith. He dived his hand under his mackintosh and drew out the half of a sixpence, with a hole in it.

Esdaile Oliphant took a similar section of a coin from his pocket, and placed the two together in the palm of his hand. The two halves fitted perfectly.

"That was to be our sign," said Silky Smith, with a smile. "You remember, Esdaile?" "I remember."

"And how have you been getting on, my old friend?" asked Silky Smith, with a hearty cordiality in his voice. "The world has used me well," said Oliphant. "I am rich now—as I told you I would be when we parted under this old oak, Rufus. And you?"

Silky shrugged his shoulders. "I have had my ups and downs," he answered. "But now?"

"Fairly well off," said Silky Smith. "Quite able to extend a helping hand to an old friend, if he were in need of it."

The millionaire laughed. "I am not in need of it, Rufus. I thought that perhaps you might be in need of a helping hand from me."

"Not at all." If Esdaile Oliphant had felt any lingering doubts, that answer would probably have dispelled them. "You say you are rich now?" asked Silky Smith, with a smile. "How many figures does that run into?"

"Seven," said Oliphant. "A millionaire?" "Yes."

"You've had good luck," said Silky Smith. "I cannot claim anything of the kind. A few thousands are all that I can show for my twenty years of knocking about the world. But I rejoice to hear of your good luck, old fellow! We both started out to make fortunes. You succeeded. But I was always a bit of a rolling-stone, even as a boy—you remember?"

"I do—I do!" "I suppose you are putting up somewhere near here?" said Silky Smith. "If not, will you walk back to the inn with me? I have taken a room at the Wickstead Arms—you remember the old inn? It's the same innkeeper who gave you half-a-crown when you started in life twenty years ago."

"I know—I know!" said Oliphant, in a moved voice. "But I am not putting up here, Rufus—I have just walked from my own house!"

"Your own house! Where?" "Wickstead House!" "By Gad! Is Wickstead House yours, in these days?"

"I bought it ten years ago, when the squire sold out. You will come with me, Rufus. I can give you something better than quarters at an inn. I will send a man for your things."

"Dash it all, Esdaile, you're up in the world now," said Silky Smith. "Are you quite—quite sure that you want to recognise your old pal?"

"Stuff!" "I'm not poor, and I don't want any of your wealth," said Silky Smith, laughing. "I haven't come back to sponge on you, Esdaile. But I'm not well-off enough to count millionaire's among my friends. Come, old fellow! If you've only kept this old appointment from a feeling of duty—if you'd rather I cleared—"

The millionaire grasped his hand again. "That's spoken like my old friend Rufus Lindale," he said. "But you will find that I have not changed, either—only outwardly, as you have. Rufus, come!"

"As you wish, old chap!" Silky Smith walked by the millionaire's side up the path that led to the gates of Wickstead House.

Ferrers Locke, from the garret of the shepherd's cabin, watched them curiously till they were out of sight.

Mr. Oliphant is Perplexed.

LOCKE! Ferrers Locke was in the downstairs room of the old cabin half an hour later, when Esdaile Oliphant entered. The millionaire's face was very bright.

"I've given you a lot of trouble for nothing, Locke," he said, with a smile. "For nothing?" asked Locke.

"Yes, as it turns out. You saw the interview?" "Yes—and heard all that was said," answered the Baker Street detective.

"It is my old friend Rufus Lindale who has come back," said Oliphant. "I am almost ashamed now of the precautions I took. But, after all, there might have been an imposture."

"There might," assented Locke. "But the matter is clear enough now. Mind, I am not exactly an unsuspicious or trusting man," said Oliphant, with a laugh. "But my old friend is quite above-board. He had the other half

of the sixpence we broke in two twenty years ago, and kept as a symbol. And—he does not want any money."

"That is convincing?"

"Quite! I admit," said Oliphant, "that if Rufus Lindale had turned up poor and in want of money, I should have been much slower to believe in him."

"Quite so!"

"But he is well off, in a moderate way. I have already hinted at doing something for him in a larger way, and he declines point-blank. It is old friendship that drew him here. He does not want my money; indeed, he did not even know that I was a millionaire."

"He is staying with you now?"

"I am putting him up for the night, and I hope to induce him to stay longer. But he is a little independent and rather restive at the thought that I may suspect him of having an eye on my millions." Oliphant shrugged his shoulders. "I like him the better for it. I am looking forward to a good long talk over old times to-morrow."

"Not to-night?"

"Rufus is tired—he came down from London to-day, you know. He has gone to his room to rest now, and he thinks of going to bed early."

Locke nodded.

"What do you think of him, Mr. Locke?" asked the millionaire abruptly.

"If you are satisfied that he has proved his identity—"

"I am!"

"Then my professional opinion is hardly required," said Ferrers Locke, with a smile.

"You believe him?"

"I would rather make no statement as yet," said the Baker Street detective. "You must remember that I never heard of Rufus Lindale's existence until this afternoon."

"True; but— Mr. Oliphant hesitated. "The fact is, Locke, I would greatly prefer that Lindale should not know that I consulted a detective in the matter. He is sensitive, and it would hurt him. He might not see that it was only a reasonable precaution."

"Quite so."

"If it is agreeable to you then, I would rather that Rufus did not see you at the house, Locke."

Ferrers Locke smiled.

"You mean that you would prefer me to take the car back to town, and drop the matter where it stands?"

"I hate to seem inhospitable," said Oliphant, colouring. "But if that would be agreeable to you, Locke— To tell you the truth, I have already told your chauffeur to take the car to the village inn."

"I understand perfectly, Mr. Oliphant. You are naturally desirous of avoiding anything looking like suspicion, as you are satisfied that Mr. Lindale is genuine."

Oliphant looked relieved.

"I'm glad that you understand just how the matter is, Locke," he said. "Of course, you will let me know the figure of your fee, and I shall send you a cheque at once."

"Never mind the fee for the moment," said Ferrers Locke. "I will go to the village inn now, and think the matter over. For various reasons, I do not wish to return to Baker Street this evening. My assistant—Drake—does not return from his Christmas holiday until to-morrow, and I am going to call for him in the car and drive him back to London. I will, therefore, remain at the village inn for the present."

"My dear fellow," exclaimed Oliphant warmly, "you shall do nothing of the kind. You shall stay at Wickstead House. I will introduce you to Rufus simply as a friend of mine, and he need not know that you are a detective, or that you have witnessed our interview."

Locke shook his head.

He smiled inwardly at the thought of an introduction to Silky Smith, whom he knew as well as any detective in the Criminal Investigation Department at Scotland Yard. But his face remained grave.

"Your first thought was better, Mr. Oliphant," he answered. "It is better for Mr. Lindale not to see me at all. My features are fairly well-known, you know, from photographs in the picture-papers, and he might recognise me."

"True! I had not thought of that!"

"Moreover, I should like a few words with you later in the evening," said the detective. "What is your bed-time?"

"Ten-thirty in the country."

"Your old friend will go to bed earlier?"

"He has asked me if I would mind his retiring immediately after dinner. He is looking forward to a long day with me to-morrow."

"Very good. If he has gone to bed by ten, will you step out on the terrace and light a cigar? I shall see you, and will come into the library."

There was a short silence.

"Locke," said the millionaire at last, "does this mean that you distrust the man I have recognised as an old friend?"

"My dear man," said the Baker Street detective, "you called upon me for my assistance in this affair. So long as Mr. Lindale's feelings are not wounded by any appearance of mistrust, surely you can afford to let me have my own way in the matter?"

The millionaire nodded.

"It shall be as you wish, Locke."

"It is settled, then."

They shook hands and parted, the millionaire returning to the mansion, and Ferrers Locke taking his way to the village inn.

At Midnight!

A GAINST the lighted windows of the library a figure stood on the terrace of Wickstead House, lighting a cigar.

From the darkness of the gardens, Ferrers Locke emerged into view, and came up the steps to the terrace before the house.

Esdaile Oliphant peered at him over the glowing cigar.

"That is you, Locke?"

"Yes," answered the Baker Street detective's quiet voice. "Your old friend has gone to bed?"

"An hour ago," said the millionaire.

He followed Locke in at the French windows of the library. The detective had a small bag in his hand.

Oliphant regarded him questioningly.

"You had something to say to me, Locke. I warn you that I shall not be easy to inspire with doubts of my old friend."

"That is not my object," said Ferrers Locke blandly. "The fact is, Mr. Oliphant, I have altered my mind about putting up at the village inn. If you could give me a room for the night, I should accept it with gratitude. I have left my car and chauffeur at the inn, and brought this bag for my own needs."

Oliphant smiled, though he looked a little puzzled.

"Of course, a room here is at your disposal, Locke," he said. "I am glad you have decided to come to me. You will be careful to betray nothing at breakfast to-morrow to Lindale."

"I shall not see Lindale at breakfast," answered the Baker Street detective. "I am an early bird, you know. I am afraid that this change in my plans puts you out a little—"

"Not in the least! I have only to give an order for one of the guests' rooms to be prepared for you."

"I shall be infinitely obliged."

"Say no more, my dear fellow."

The millionaire touched a bell and gave brief instructions to the butler. Then he sat down, and pushed the cigar-box across to Locke.

"One more smoke before you go to bed," he remarked. "Rufus is sound asleep by this time, poor old fellow. He seemed very tired."

"No doubt," assented Locke. "I suppose you are rather keen to go over old ground with him, and exchange reminiscences of childhood."

Oliphant laughed and nodded.

"Well, yes," he said. "We've got a lot of ancient history to rake up. But it will keep till to-morrow. Rufus was tired, and I let him go to bed. I showed him round the house and that was all."

"He asked you to do that?"

The millionaire raised his eyebrows in surprise.

"He was naturally interested in the place," he said. "He left me a poor country boy; he returns to find me the master of Wickstead House. Naturally, he was interested."

"Naturally," assented Ferrers Locke. "I should be interested myself to see some of your fixtures, Mr. Oliphant. You have a safe in this room, I see."

Oliphant smiled.

"Yes—a fairly good one," he replied. "You see, I often have to keep a good many securities and other valuables here. I had



The waiting figure under the oak gave a start as the form of the millionaire appeared on the path. Locke, from his hiding-place in the garret, smiled. It was clear to him that Silky Smith was there to meet Esdaile Oliphant, the master of Wickstead House.

the safe put in specially when I purchased the property. It's a combination lock, guaranteed to defy any of the gentry you speak your time in tracking down, Locke."

"Some of them are remarkably skilful," said Locke musingly. "There is one gentleman known as Silky Smith, who has a wonderful gift for cracking safes. You have never heard of him?"

"Never."

"He came out of prison a few months ago, and is probably looking—at this moment—for such a crib as this to crack!" smiled the detective.

"Ha, ha! Then if he should happen to pay us a visit to-night, I shall be glad that the celebrated Ferrers Locke is on the premises!"

"Unlikelier things have happened," said Locke.

At half-past ten, Ferrers Locke went to his room, and the millionaire shook hands with him at the door.

Locke closed his door, and ten minutes later he switched off the light.

But the detective did not go to bed. He had removed his boots, and placed on his feet a pair of noiseless rubber shoes. That was all!

In the darkness he sat on the edge of his bed and waited. A smile was flickering on his face.

From the clock-tower of the great mansion eleven strokes boomed slowly out. Then the Baker Street detective moved.

He opened his door silently and stepped out without a sound, and shut the door behind him with equal caution.

Not a light glimmered in the great house.

But Ferrers Locke seemed to have the gift of a cat for seeing in the dark. He groped his way to the great staircase, and descended to the ground floor without a pause and without a sound.

He reached the door of the library, opened it, passed into the long, lofty apartment, and closed the door behind him.

Black darkness reigned in the great room.

Locke felt his way with extended fingers. The detective forgot nothing—the interior of the room was imprinted upon his memory—and he moved without a fault.

Within a few yards of the iron safe let into the wall between two bookcases, was a Japanese screen. Locke had memorised its position, and he felt his way to it with quiet certainty.

He ensconced himself behind the screen, drawing it a little closer to the wall, so that he could not be seen by anyone entering the library, or standing at the safe.

Then he waited.

He knew that he had a long wait before him—the cracksmen was not likely to stir before midnight. Midnight, and the hour after it, was Silky Smith's favourite time for his little operations.

If Ferrers Locke's theory was correct—the theory of which he had given no hint to the millionaire—that night, the first of the New Year was not to pass without incident.

He waited with quiet patience. Midnight tolled out faintly in the distance.

He had waited an hour. Another half-hour passed, and the Baker Street detective was more keenly than ever on the alert.

A faint sound came through the deep silence of the night.

It was the sound of the library door cautiously opening. It closed again, and someone, as well as Ferrers Locke, was in the great room, in the black darkness.

The detective made no sound or movement.

A light glimmered out—the gleam of an electric torch. It crossed the library directly towards the safe in the wall.

There it stopped. A minute passed, and then there was a low, steady sound—the sound of a drill upon metal.

Ferrers Locke peered from behind the screen.

The electric torch concentrated its light upon the iron door of the safe, at the spot where the cracksmen's drill was grinding.

Dimly the cracksmen's figure loomed in the gloom, kneeling at the safe.

Ferrers Locke watched patiently.

He heard a low exclamation in the silence. The iron door of the safe swung open!

Silky Smith had not lost his old skill!

Still Locke waited—but now his hand was on a switch of the electric light in the wall. He waited, while he heard the faint sounds of the cracksmen groping in the safe, transferring to his capacious pockets the plunder—securities, bonds, banknotes—the richest haul that Silky Smith had ever struck in a long career of crime.

Then cautious footsteps re-crossed the library towards the door. Ferrers Locke moved at last.

His finger pressed the switch in the wall, and the library was suddenly flooded with brilliant light.

There was a startled gasp from the cracksmen.

He blinked round, dazzled by the sudden brilliant blaze of light.

And as he did so, Ferrers Locke was upon him with the spring of a tiger.

Crash!

With a gasping cry, Silky Smith went to the polished floor, and before he could even attempt to struggle, the handcuffs clicked on his wrists. The cracksmen was a prisoner—and he lay, dazed, on the floor, staring up into the cool, quiet face of the Baker Street detective.

Sight at Last!

WHAT the thunder—
Eadalle Oliphant started from sleep, as the electric light was suddenly turned on in his bedroom, and there was a footstep.

He sat up and blinked at Ferrers Locke.

"Locke! You—"

"Get up!" said the detective quietly. "Put on a dressing-gown, Mr. Oliphant. You are wanted downstairs."

"What—what has happened?"

"A burglary!"

"Good heavens! The servants—Are they up?"

"No need. I think we had better deal with this matter ourselves," said Ferrers Locke. "I have secured the man."

"Upon my word!" The millionaire sprang from his bed, and hurried on a dressing-gown and slippers. "Who—who's the man?"

"Silky Smith!"

"The man you mentioned to me this evening?"

"Yes!"

"What an astounding coincidence!" exclaimed the millionaire, in amazement.

Ferrers Locke smiled.

"Not such a coincidence as you suppose, Mr. Oliphant. You see, I happened to know that the cracksmen was in the house!"

"In the house? You knew! But how—"

"Because I saw you meet him under the oak tree by the shepherd's cabin," answered the Baker Street detective drily.

Eadalle Oliphant started violently, and his face paled.

"Locke! You—you do not mean to say that—that my old friend, Rufus Lindale—I refuse to believe it!"

"Calm, yourself, Mr. Oliphant," said the detective tranquilly. "The man you took on trust as Rufus Lindale is not Rufus Lindale at all. He is Silky Smith, a cracksmen, whom I recognised as soon as I saw him."

Oliphant breathed hard.

"And you did not tell me?"

"I waited."

"Why?" broke out the millionaire.

"Because Silky Smith must have had the story from Rufus Lindale. The man must be living, and Silky Smith learned the story from him, and stole from him the half sixpence that convinced you of his identity. Rufus Lindale lives, but he has not kept the appointment—Silky Smith has kept it in his place. But why did not Lindale come, if he lives? Silky Smith can tell us."

"You mean," said the millionaire huskily, "that the man I received as my old friend, has put away the real Rufus Lindale in order to come here as an impostor, in his name, and worm into my confidence? You suspect—murder?"

The Baker Street detective shook his head.

"Silky Smith would not run that risk," he said. "Neither was there need. He had no hope of keeping up the imposture, Mr. Oliphant. When you began to compare notes with him on boyish remembrances, he would have failed to play up in a hundred ways. He has learned much from Lindale, but he could not be well-posted in a thousand trifling details that you would remember, and to which you would refer."

"If you had denounced him on the spot—"

Locke smiled.

"He would have left us in ignorance of the real Rufus Lindale's whereabouts, Mr. Oliphant. But I think that Silky Smith will be glad to inform us now, in exchange for his own liberty."

Oliphant started.

"I—I understand. Let us go down."

The millionaire followed Ferrers Locke down the staircase. They entered the library and closed the door. On the floor lay Silky Smith, his wrists handcuffed, his ankles tied together. His narrow eyes turned in a blaze of hate upon the Baker Street detective.

"You've done me again!" he muttered thickly.

Eadalle Oliphant glanced at the broken safe. Then he fixed his eyes upon the cowering thief.

"You scoundrel!" he said. "You imposed on me—"

Silky Smith grinned.

"You asked for it!" he answered. "I came down to Wickstead thinking it was a ten to one chance you would see through the game. I only half-believed the yarn that fool told me when he was a three-parts tipsy. But I thought it was good enough for a try-on. And I'll trouble you to take these things off my wrists."

"I shall telephone for the police at once!"

Silky Smith shrugged his shoulders.

"If you do, a man you knew twenty years ago will die of hunger in the cellar where he's now locked up," he answered coolly. "He was tipsy when I locked him up, but I fancy he's come to before this, and is wondering if he will ever see daylight again."

The millionaire winced.

"We must make terms with the scoundrel, Locke," he whispered.

"Think first!" said Ferrers Locke quietly. "I do not belong to the official police, and I can stand aside and allow you to act as you think fit. If you wish to ransom Rufus Lindale by giving this rascal his liberty, well and good. But it is pretty clear that your former friend has gone to the bad, and it may not be worth—"

The millionaire interrupted him.

"He would have kept the appointment but for this scoundrel's intervention," he said.

"Doubtless."

"That is enough for me. If he has gone to the bad, I will reclaim him—at least, he shall never want," said Oliphant steadily.

"There is good in him still, I am sure. He shall have a chance at least, even if he has become a drunkard and the associate of criminals like this reptile here. You dog! Where is Rufus Lindale?"

Another shrug from Silky.

"I want Ferrers Locke's word of honour that I go free when you have found him," he answered. "I can trust your word, Locke—which is more than you could say to me!"

And Silky Smith grinned.

"I give it!" said Ferrers Locke quietly.

On the following day, a man, released from the cellar of a thieves' den in Limehouse, travelled down to Wickstead House in a fast car, with Ferrers Locke by his side. The same afternoon, Silky Smith took the train for London—a free man once more. He had scored a failure, thanks to Ferrers Locke—but the world was an oyster, which Silky was confident of opening. Ferrers Locke saw the meeting between the millionaire and his old chum—the one who had prospered, and the one who had gone down—deep. And he left them together—the wastrel to be saved—as he hoped—by the friendship of the man who had not forgotten.

At Baker Street, Locke found Jack Drake, his boy assistant, awaiting him.

"Anything on, sir?" asked Drake, bright and cheery after his Christmas holiday with his old chums of Greyfriars.

Ferrers Locke nodded.

"Yes, my boy," he answered quietly. "We are going to devote our very special attention now to Mr. Silky Smith!"

THE END.

Another Grand detective story next week.