

**PACKED WITH FINE STORIES!**

# The BOYS' HERALD

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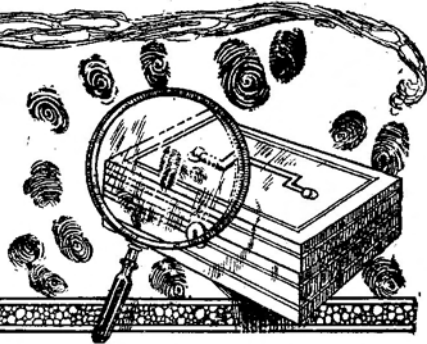
## **THE INVISIBLE POWER.**

An Amusing Incident From Our Long Complete Story Inside.



## COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.

# THE CASE OF THE SECRET SOCIETY!



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.

### The Ace of Spades

**W**ELL, Drake?" Jack Drake looked a little fatigued, as he came into Ferrers Locke's private cabinet in the house at Baker Street.

He sat down and smiled rather ruefully as he met the detective's inquiring glance.

"No luck?" asked Locke.

"Very little I'm afraid, sir!" answered Drake.

Locke glanced at his watch.

"You have been absent ten hours," he said. "I fear you have had a tiring day, my boy."

"Oh, that's nothing, sir," said Drake cheerfully. "But I don't think my report will interest you very much."

"Make it all the same," said the detective, with a smile. "The least detail with regard to Mr. Silky Smith is interesting, just at present. You have kept him under observation?"

"Nearly all day, sir."

"Without his knowledge, of course?"

"Of course," said Drake. "I have learned enough for that, Mr. Locke. But he seems to be taking a rest, so far as I can see. Only one circumstance was rather puzzling, but I dare say there is nothing in it."

"We shall see. Begin at the beginning."

Drake referred to his note-book.

"I went to No. 10, Bloomsbury New Gardens, where Silky Smith is living, known there as 'Mr. Smith.' I waited opposite the house, mending a puncture, till half-past ten. Then Mr. Smith came out, and I shadowed him—leaving the bike against the railings to be picked up later. He went to the post-office and bought a dozen stamps."

Ferrers Locke laughed.

"A quite innocent commencement to Mr. Smith's day," he remarked.

"Outside the post-office he took a bus, went on top, and I went inside. He got down at Piccadilly Circus, met a friend there, and went into a bar. He came out an hour later and took a taxi. I took another. He stopped at Galliaro's restaurant in Compton Street and lunched there. He lunched alone, read a newspaper, and smoked a cigar with his coffee afterwards. I lunched on a banana outside," added Drake, with a grin.

"After that?"

"He came out and walked some distance, and stopped at a stationer's. He was five minutes in the stationer's."

"What did he buy there?"

Drake smiled.

"I found that out, of course, sir. As soon as he was out, I went in. It was a little shop, with an old woman in charge. I asked her if my uncle—I promoted Mr. Smith for the occasion, sir—if my uncle had left his umbrella there when he bought the birthday-card."

"Good!"

"She told me that nobody had been in to buy birthday-cards. Nobody had been in but a gentleman who bought six packs of playing-cards."

"Six packs of playing-cards!" repeated Ferrers Locke.

"Silky Smith is a card-sharper, along with his other tricks, and perhaps he had run out of cards, I thought, sir," said Drake. "I followed him on—he had got ahead, but I picked him up easily enough. He took train for Putney and went for a walk across the heath. I made a few changes in my looks—such as changing my cap and putting a muffler over my collar and tie, and changed my dark moustache for a sandy one. And I took a walk over the heath."

He paused a moment.

"Then the rather puzzling circumstances, occurred, sir. Silky Smith threw away the cards he had bought in London into a deep hole in the heath."

Locke raised his eyebrows.

"And then?"

"He walked on and took a stroll about some rather big mansions near the heath. He was a good two hours on that job. Of course, I could see that he was making notes of the place, with a view to future business. He took down two or three addresses in a pocket-book, and then started off rather briskly, as if he intended to return home. An empty taxi was passing soon afterwards, and he jumped in. I heard him say 'Putney Station' to the driver, and they buzzed off."

"And you?"

"There was no chance of picking up another taxi, and I had to let him go, sir," said Drake. "But I was pretty sure that he was going home. It looked to me as if he had simply visited Putney to spy out the lie of the land, with a view to future operations."

"Very probable," said Ferrers Locke.

"But that is not all that you did, Drake?"

"You've guessed it, sir. I wasn't satisfied about the cards he had thrown away, after buying them only an hour or two earlier. I had made a note of the spot, and I found my way back to it."

"That's good!" said the Baker Street detective, with a nod. "I expected that, Drake!"

"The hole he had pitched them into was pretty deep; but I scrambled down into it, and found the cards lying mostly in a collection of rain-water. I fished them out and stacked them in my pockets. Not that they seemed of any value or interest, sir—but it was queer that a man should buy six packs of cards, apparently for the purpose of chucking them away soon afterwards."

"Very queer, indeed," said Ferrers Locke drily. "I am extremely interested in those packs of cards. Did you count them?"

"Yes, sir."

"Were all of them there?"

"Six missing."

"Which?"

"It was getting dark, sir, and I didn't stop to sort them out. But six were missing. I tried all over the place with my electric torch, and the odd six couldn't be found."

"Then Mr. Smith retained six of the cards in his possession?"

"Must have," said Drake.

"Very odd, indeed—and very interesting."

"He had thrown away the cardboard cases the cards were kept in, too, Mr. Locke. I gathered them in as well."

"Good!"

"Then I came home, sir," said Drake. "I've got the cards here, if you'd like to see them."

"I want to see them very much."

Drake sorted the cards out of his overcoat pockets. Most of them were soiled and muddied.

There were six packs—with only six cards missing! Ferrers Locke proceeded to sort them, and Drake watched him in silence. For ten minutes or so Locke was quietly busy, and any observer would have supposed that the great detective was relaxing his mind with a simple game of "Patience."

But when the game of "Patience" was over, the Baker Street detective looked up with a glint in his eyes.

"The ace of spades is missing from each pack, Drake," he said.

"The ace of spades?"

"Yes; the card that is supposed, by the superstitious, to bring ill-luck," said Ferrers Locke. "Evidently, Mr. Smith purchased these packs of cards in order to obtain six aces of spades. He threw away the rest because he had no use for them."

Drake made a grimace.

"Then my day goes for nothing," he said. "The rotter was laying in a supply of aces for card-sharpping tricks."

"It is possible," said Locke—"but very unlikely. If Mr. Smith wanted a supply of aces to keep in his sleeve, when playing cards with gulls, the other aces would serve his purpose equally well. That was not his object, Drake."

"Then what could his object possibly have been, sir?" asked the detective's boy assistant, in perplexity. "What could he possibly want six aces of spades for?"

"Evidently for some purpose," said Ferrers Locke. "That purpose we may discover—and when we discover it, it may give us our opportunity of catching Mr. Smith at his next cunning scheme. Certainly he did not take the trouble to supply himself with aces of spades for nothing. Evidently Mr. Smith was having an idle morning, and improved the shining hour in the afternoon by looking out a new crib to crack, and, on his way, he bought the cards, selected those he needed, and threw away the rest. What scheme he has in view, in which aces of spades can assist him, I cannot even guess at present. But you have done well, Drake—very well, indeed. It is quite possible that this may be the clue which will enable us to put in a safe place one of the most dangerous criminals in London. Now, you had better go and rest, my boy!"

After Jack-Drake had gone, Ferrers Locke sat for some time with the cards before him.

He was thinking deeply.

That Silky Smith was engaged in some new cunning scheme, he felt assured. The crook was never idle for long.

But, so far, not even the faintest glimmer

ing of that scheme came to Ferrers Locke's mind.

The future might tell; but for the present, the Baker Street detective had to admit that he was at a loss.

But Ferrers Locke was patient.

### An Echo from the Past,

R. HARNEY!

Sing-Sing, the Chinese servant, announced the visitor.

Jack Drake was absent from the house in Baker Street—he was still engaged upon his task of shadowing Silky Smith.

A fortnight had elapsed since Drake had shadowed the crook on Putney Heath, and since that day Drake had not been idle.

But, though he learned much of the daily habits and haunts of Mr. Smith, he learned nothing that would enable Ferrers Locke to drop his hand on Silky's shoulder.

That the crook had no suspicion of Drake's surveillance, the boy detective was certain. Jack Drake had learned to do his work well. More than once he had trailed the crook in visits to various quarters of London, as on the occasion at Putney, when Silky Smith was evidently engaged in spying out scenes of future operations in the crackman line. But, apparently, the crook was only filling up time in putting by information for future use.

Drake's daily reports were listened to very attentively by Ferrers Locke. The Baker Street detective was determined to put an end to Silky Smith's career of crime; but his chance had not come.

That Silky was engaged in some astute scheme Locke had little doubt—or rather, none. But, diligently as Drake shadowed him, he could not detect the rascal in overstepping the law. Lounging in bars—generally expensive ones—drinking and smoking, theatres and music-halls, seemed to fill up Silky's leisure hours. And so far as he attended to business, it was only to the extent of making surveys of likely "cribs" to crack.

It was now Drake's regular task to shadow Silky Smith, and, generally, he succeeded in keeping on his track. Once, Silky had escaped him in a crowd at a railway-station, quite unintentionally, for he did not know that he was being watched. Drake hung about Marylebone Station for three hours until he spotted his man again—evidently returning from a trip into the country.

Ferrers Locke was giving a good deal of thought to the affair of Silky Smith; but he was engaged on other matters at the same time. The case of Silky Smith was taken up only in the interests of justice—there was no fee or reward to be expected for catching Mr. Smith tripping. In the meantime, Locke had his business as a private detective to attend to—the root of all evil being as necessary to the Baker Street detective as to anyone else.

Locke was in his consulting-room when Sing-Sing announced Mr. Harney. It was a gentleman of about sixty who entered—a well-set-up, ruddy-faced man, who carried his years lightly, and whose healthy and hearty aspect told of country air and sports.

"Mr. Locke?" he asked, as the Baker Street detective rose to greet him. "I am glad to find you in."

The detective waved his hand to a chair. "I am at your service, Mr. Harney." Locke smiled a little. "No doubt, you have called as a client; but you do not look as if very much trouble has come your way."

"None at all, personally, Mr. Locke," said the visitor, in his hearty tones. "It is my father whom I am concerned about."

"Your father?" repeated Locke.

"Mr. Harney smiled.

"I am sixty," he said. "My father is eighty-five—as hale and hearty a man as any in the kingdom. At least, so he was, until this strange affair began. I am a grandfather myself, Mr. Locke—but I am also, I hope, a dutiful son, and it is about my father that I want to consult you. Colonel Harney he is called. Though the title is really honorary, he has not borne it for more than half-a-century in earnest. May I take up your time with an explanation of the curious affair that has happened at Harney House, near Wendover."

Locke pushed across the cigarette-box.

"Please go on," he said.

"I shall have to go back a little—say sixty years," said Mr. Harney, with a smile. "You will recall a very great event of that date—"

"The American Civil War?" asked Locke.

"Exactly!"

Ferrers Locke gave his visitor a very curious look.

He was accustomed to surprises, but cer-

tainly he had never expected to be called upon to assist in a case connected with the great struggle between North and South in the United States, sixty years ago.

"To be brief," said Mr. Harney, "my father—then a young man about twenty-five—was in the States when the Civil War broke out. He had taken up planting in South Carolina. Naturally enough, he joined the Southern army, and he fought through most of the war. After the victory of the North, he went back to a ruined plantation, impoverished, like most of his friends and neighbours, to start life afresh. I don't know whether you've read much about that period of Transatlantic history, Mr. Locke—"

The detective nodded.

"Good! Then you will follow my story more easily," said Mr. Harney. "I was a baby at the time in the care of relations, and only know what I have learned since. After the Civil War, some of the people abused their victory—as victors sometimes do, I'm afraid. The South was trodden underfoot, and the blacks were given more liberty and licence than the planters considered good for them. There were plenty of outrages on both sides, I've no doubt. Anyhow, in many districts, the whites considered themselves threatened and endangered by the blacks, and the Ku-Klux-Klan was formed."

Locke's eyes glistened a little. He was getting interested.

"You've heard of the Ku-Klux-Klan, of course, Mr. Locke?"

"Naturally!"

"It seems to have been a very mysterious organisation," said Mr. Harney. "It was formed to keep down the blacks by secret means, since the planters did not dare to act openly, with the soldiers looking after their behaviour. Niggers were lynched by masked men—sometimes burned. Outrages by blacks were avenged by fresh outrages by the secret society. In some quarters a regular reign of terror was established. My father, unfortunately for himself, was a member of the Ku-Klux-Klan in his district—but his only desire was to act with his friends to keep order and law. When he found that the Ku-Klux was going beyond the limit, he dropped the whole thing, sold his plantation for what it would fetch, and left the country. That would be about 1870."

"A long time since," said Ferrers Locke. "You are not going to tell me that Colonel Harney has been troubled by anything dating so far back?"

"That is exactly what has happened, Mr. Locke," said Mr. Harney earnestly. "It seems incredible—yet it is true! My father's life is threatened by the Ku-Klux-Klan."

Locke raised his eyebrows.

"This is getting very interesting," he remarked. "Please let me have the details."

"It was a rule of the Ku-Klux that a member could not resign. Once sworn in as a brother, he was a member of the Ku-Klux for life. For some years my father had a secret fear of hearing from his old associates. But that passed away in the course of years. By the end of the nineteenth century, most of the old members must have been dead, and my father forgot his fears—and, indeed, was in the habit of talking freely about his old experiences with the Ku-Klux. The society was supposed to have died out. If it was carried on by new members, they were very secret—little or nothing was heard of Ku-Klux-Klan in later days. But you read the papers, Mr. Locke. You are aware that during the past two or three years—since the Great War—there has been a revival of Ku-Klux activity in the Southern states of America."

Ferrers Locke nodded.

"Bands of men, with masked faces, ride about by night—sometimes lynching negroes, sometimes, I hear, committing robberies. In fact, the Ku-Klux is going again, in all its old ways," said Mr. Harney. "My father, naturally, was interested in this news in the newspapers. I have heard him wonder, sometimes, whether any of his former associates have lived to a good old age, and are still acting in the old way. But, certainly, he never expected to hear from them. But, now—"

"He has heard?"

"Yes."

"In what way?"

"Ten days ago, there came a letter, accompanied by the symbol of the Ku-Klux of South Carolina."

"The symbol?" repeated Locke.

"Perhaps you are aware that the Ku-Klux bands adopted various signs—such as a palm leaf, a cross, or a card—and this was generally sent to a victim as a warning that

the Ku-Klux were on his trail. When he received the warning, the victim had so many hours to clear out of the country—if he did not go, his assassination followed. The particular organisation to which Colonel Harney belonged had adopted a playing-card as their symbol—the ace of spades!"

Locke started.

"The ace of spades!" he ejaculated.

"Yes. You seem surprised—"

"Please go on with your story!" said Ferrers Locke, and he leaned back in his chair, his eyes half-closed.

But under the drooping lids there was a glint! Mr. Harney had interested the Baker Street detective more than he imagined.

### Blackmail,

M R. HARNEY took out his pocket-book and selected from it a letter and a playing-card—the ace of spades! He laid them on the table.

"That is the first letter," he said. "Read it, Mr. Locke."

Ferrers Locke glanced at the letter. It was type-written, and ran:

"To Colonel John Harney, member of the Ku-Klux.

"Your old comrades call upon you for assistance."

"The ace of spades was enclosed in the letter," said Mr. Harney. "My father opened it at the breakfast table one morning. He had recently returned from a holiday at Brighton, and was the picture of health. But when the ace of spades dropped out of the letter, he turned as white as chalk, and fainted. Needless to say, I was greatly alarmed. My father is remarkably fit for his age; but, naturally, when a man is past eighty-five, he is not in a condition to stand violent shocks. The doctor was called in at once—my father recovered. But he was in a state of nervous agitation, and he sent for his solicitor the same day, and made his will afresh. He had no doubt whatever that his old associates had found him out, and that the ace of spades was the warning of death."

"He did not think of obeying the demand?"

"Not for a moment. He was not likely to think of joking an organisation run for robbery and terrorism. How they had found him out, after so many years, he could not guess. But—"

"You had your doubts?"

"You have read my thoughts, Mr. Locke. I had! I have mentioned that my father often spoke freely on his old days in South Carolina, and of the lawless doings of the Ku-Klux-Klans in that country. In his holiday at Brighton, he probably chatted on the subject, and my idea was that some stranger—with a cruel sense of humour—had worked a hoax on him to give him a scare. Some thoughtless holiday-maker—"

"It is possible. But after that—"

"Two days later another letter came."

Mr. Harney laid it on the table.

Locke glanced at it. It was type-written like the other.

"To Colonel John Harney, member of the Ku-Klux.

"Put the letters 'K.K.K.' in the Personal column of the 'Daily Mail' if you intend to rejoin your comrades."

"There was an ace of spades with the second letter," said Mr. Harney. "This time my father was more prepared, and he took it calmly. He did not insert the personal advertisement; but it was easy to see that he expected his assassination to follow. Two more days elapsed, and then came this third letter. Read it!"

The letter ran:

"Colonel John Harney.

"You have not answered. Will you serve your old comrades with life or money?"

"Place £1,000 in our hands and rest in peace."

"You see, there is no indication how and when the money is to be paid, Mr. Locke. That was to follow. My father was greatly relieved by this letter. In the latter portion of his life, fortune has favoured him, and he is a rich man. He could pay £1,000 without missing it very sorely. He hesitated to buy his exemption in this way, only from a consideration of the bad uses to which the money might be put. He was still in doubt when the fourth—and last letter, so far—arrived this morning, accompanied by the ace of spades like the others."

"Let me see the letter."

"I have it here."

Ferrers Locke read the type-written missive with keen interest. It ran:

"Colonel John Harney.

"Place £1,000 in banknotes, of five and ten, in a bundle, in the hollow oak near your garden gate on Friday night."

"Obey this order, and you are exempt from the Ku-Klux-Klan—fail, and you know the penalty! This is the last communication.—K.K.K."

"A very interesting story," said Ferrers Locke. "What has your father decided to do?"

"To place the notes in the spot indicated," said Mr. Harney. "He can spare the money, and he feels, too, that he is under some obligation to help his old comrades, who may have fallen on evil days. At the same time, he fears that the money may be used for evil purposes by the Ku-Klux-Klan. But, on the whole, the idea that his former membership of the society is still binding on him has gained the day. To-day he looks much better, and when I left him, he was going to the bank to obtain the notes."

Mr. Harney paused. "You approve?" asked Locke. "No, sir, I do not!" said Mr. Harney emphatically. "I cannot help thinking that if these scoundrels obtain money from my father so easily, they will not be satisfied with this amount. Fresh demands will follow."

"It is very probable." "Colonel Harney scouts the notion," continued the visitor. "He declares that the members of the Ku-Klux were men of honour, in their own way—men who had turned to desperate remedies in a desperate state of affairs, but were incapable of treachery to one another. It may be so. But, if he is mistaken, as I fear, the money will be paid, and the persecution will recommence. I confess I have little faith in the honour of men who make raids with masked faces and lynch negroes on suspicion."

Locke nodded. "But your father—" "He feels assured, and he is resolved to buy his exemption from the Ku-Klux in this way. Now, Mr. Locke, I want your advice. If my father is right, doubtless that is the easiest way to get rid of the whole affair. But is he right?"

"I scarcely think so." "I was sure you would agree with me," said Mr. Harney, looking relieved. "You think this is but the first step in a matter of blackmail?"

"Undoubtedly!" "And the Ku-Klux—" "You tell me that your father has talked freely of his old association with the Ku-Klux-Klan," said Locke. "Putting it that I've made some acquaintance during his last holiday at Brighton, who is unscrupulous enough to take advantage of an old man's confidences, it is quite possible that these letters do not emanate from the revived Ku-Klux in the States at all. It is highly improbable that they would have an agent in England."

"You are right." Locke was silent—thinking. He played idly with the ace of spades, and a slight smile crossed his face.

"And you advise, Mr. Locke?" said the old gentleman at last. "Let your father carry out his plan."

Mr. Harney looked surprised. "But—" "You can contrive to obtain the numbers of the notes he receives at the bank?" asked Locke.

"Easily. He would not allow me to take them and act against his old friends. But the bank-manager is a friend of mine, and I can easily obtain the numbers from him."

"Do so, with the greatest care." "And then—" "Then send me a list of the numbers by registered post. Let your father place the packet in the hollow oak—"

"Ah! You intend to be on the watch?" exclaimed Mr. Harney. "I fear that that will not do. My father has strictly refused to call in the police, although he may suspect that I am taking advice in the matter. He has made me promise that I will not watch the place, or cause it to be watched, or interfere in any way with anyone who may come to take the packet from the hollow oak on Friday night."

Ferrers Locke smiled. "I was not thinking of watching the hollow oak," he said. "You have to deal with a scoundrel who has his wits about him, Mr. Harney. Depend upon it that if there was a watcher in the neighbourhood of the oak, the man would not approach near enough to be captured—and the threats to your father would recommence at once."

"Then I confess, Mr. Locke, that I do not see your plan," said Mr. Harney. "But I know you have your own methods, and I will ask no questions. You shall receive the

numbers of the notes this evening. To-night they will be placed in the hollow oak, and, undoubtedly, taken away by the agent of the Ku-Klux-Klan. You hope to get on his track afterwards?"

"Undoubtedly." "Well, I will ask no questions." Mr. Harney restrained a very evident curiosity.

"One word more, Mr. Harney," said Ferrers Locke, as his visitor rose. "If it should turn out that these communications came, not from the Ku-Klux, but from some blackmailing rascal who had learned your father's history, what would be Colonel Harney's line of action?"

Mr. Harney smiled grimly. "He would prosecute the rascal with the utmost rigour of the law," he replied. "I can answer for that."

"Very good! You may leave the matter in my hands, Mr. Harney—and I think I may say that I see light ahead already."

And Ferrers Locke bowed his visitor out.

**The Clue and the Criminal.**

**J**ACK DRAKE came into the consulting-room a couple of hours later. He found Ferrers Locke examining a set of playing-cards. The Baker Street detective looked up with a smile.

"Well, Drake?" he asked. "I've been on Smith's track all the morning, sir," said Jack Drake, with a rueful grin. "Nothing doing. He has been haunting bars, and playing billiards, and now he has gone back to his boarding-house in Bloomsbury to lunch."

"An idle life!" smiled Ferrers Locke. "Yes, sir. It really looks as if Silky Smith has given up crime for the present," said Jack Drake. "He may suspect that you are keeping an eye on him, sir."

"Very probably," said Ferrers Locke drily. "But a character like Silky Smith does not give up crime for very long. A few days ago, Drake, you lost sight of him at Marylebone railway-station?"

"Yes, Mr. Locke. I picked him up again when he came back from wherever he went," said Drake eagerly.

"Marylebone is the station for Wendover, Drake."

"That is so, sir."

"And a Colonel Harney, once a member of the Ku-Klux-Klan in South Carolina, lives near Wendover," said Ferrers Locke. "And a couple of weeks ago, my boy, Silky Smith was in Brighton."

Drake looked puzzled. "But what does that imply, sir?"

"Look!" said Ferrers Locke.

He pushed four aces of spades across the table to his boy assistant—and a heap of playing-cards.

"These are the cards that Silky Smith threw into the hole on Putney Heath," said

Locke. "Examine the backs. Now, examine the backs of these four aces of spades."

Drake uttered an exclamation. "Four of the missing cards, sir!" he exclaimed.

"Exactly!" "They're from four of these packs, right enough," said Jack Drake, examining the cards carefully. "The other two aces—"

"Are still in Silky Smith's possession," smiled Ferrers Locke. "He has not had occasion to use them yet."

"He has used these four?" asked Drake, in perplexity.

Ferrers Locke nodded. "In what way, sir?"

"I will explain, my boy. I have had a caller while you have been busy watching Mr. Smith."

Ferrers Locke gave a succinct account of the visit of Mr. Harney, and of the strange story the old gentleman had told.

Drake's eyes opened wide. "The awful rascal!" he exclaimed, when the Baker Street detective had finished.

"Then that was the game?"

"That was the game, my boy! Silky Smith, in his character as a swell mob-man, undoubtedly met Colonel Harney at Brighton, and the garrulous old gentleman talked to him—little dreaming of the manner in which his confidences were destined to come home to roost. Silky Smith thought the matter over—blackmail is one of his many activities," Locke smiled grimly. "Little as you knew it at the time, Drake, you put your finger on the clue that afternoon on Putney Heath."

Drake's eyes gleamed. "Have we got him now, sir?"

"I think so," said Ferrers Locke tranquilly. "It is a cunning scheme. And had not Colonel Harney's son consulted me, doubtless it would have been a complete success. And I confess, Drake, that but for your discovery, I should have been perplexed. But the mention of the ace of spades was enough for me—and an examination of the cards clinched the matter. Silky Smith has not been so idle as he looked. And now for lunch," added the Baker Street detective.

Ferrers Locke was in a cheerful mood at lunch. More than once, Silky Smith had succeeded in baffling the Baker Street detective; he was as slippery as an eel, and, rascal as he was, with uncounted crimes to his credit, Locke had been unable to lay him by the heels.

The detective reflected that now Mr. Smith, cunning as he was, was walking into a trap of his own laying.

By the evening post came a letter from Mr. Harney.

It contained a list of banknotes, supplied by the Wendover bank-manager to Colonel Harney that morning.

Locke glanced over the list and smiled. "You need not trouble about Mr. Smith

**NEXT  
WEEK'S  
GREAT  
DETECTIVE  
STORY IS  
CALLED:  
"THE  
MYSTERY  
OF  
GABLE  
FARM!"  
DON'T  
MISS IT!**



There was a startled exclamation from the man who started up in bed as Inspector Riley, followed by Ferrers Locke and Drake, entered the room. "You've nothing against me now, inspector?" he asked savagely. "I've served my last sentence."



further, Drake," he remarked. "You have learned more than enough. Even on the day you missed him—the day he undoubtedly visited Wendover in order to spy out the Harney's home—you learned enough. Marylebone Station was a sufficient clue to his engagement that day, in the light of what we have learned since. Someone will be busy at the hollow oak near Harney House to-night—and we are going to take a rest, Drake. Would you care to come to the theatre?"

"What-ho, sir!" said Drake brightly. Ferrers Locke's boy assistant was still schoolboy enough to enjoy his evening at the theatre. He could not help wondering how Ferrers Locke proposed to deal with the crook, who, in those same hours, was undoubtedly carrying out his cunning scheme of blackmail. But Locke had apparently dismissed the matter from his mind, and Jack Drake followed his chief's example.

#### At Last.

INSPECTOR RILEY, of Scotland Yard, was in the consulting-room when Jack Drake came in after a morning walk the next day.

The inspector was in conversation with Ferrers Locke, and there was an expression of great satisfaction on his ruddy face. He smiled and nodded to Drake.

"Call a taxi, Drake," said Ferrers Locke. "We shall not use the car this morning."

"Very good, sir."

A few minutes later, Jack Drake was seated in the taxi, with his chief and the portly Scotland Yard inspector.

"Number ten, Bloomsbury New Gardens!" was the direction Ferrers Locke gave to the chauffeur.

The taxi buzzed away through the busy London streets.

Drake glanced at his chief, who nodded.

"We are going to call upon Mr. Smith, my boy," said the Baker Street detective. "We shall find him at home, I think."

"I fancy so, since the house has been watched since dawn, on your instructions, Mr. Locke," said the inspector, with a grin. "By Gad! Have we really caught that slippery scoundrel this time."

"I think so."

"We shall soon see, at all events," said Mr. Riley, rubbing his hands.

The taxi stopped at 10, Bloomsbury Gardens—a typical Bloomsbury boarding-house, which Mr. Smith was honouring with his residence. The hour was still early, and the maid who answered Ferrers Locke's ring doubted whether Mr. Smith was up yet.

"Possibly not," assented Ferrers Locke.

"He was absent last night, I believe?"

"Yes, sir. He returned very early this morning, and went to bed."

"No doubt he was tired after the run from Wendover."

"Mr. Smith has been to Southend, sir—he mentioned it when he came in."

"Ah! My mistake," smiled Ferrers Locke.

"I had an idea that he had been to Wendover. Will you show me up to his room, please?"

The maid hesitated.

"This gentleman is Inspector Riley of Scotland Yard," said Ferrers Locke. "He has authority to enter Mr. Smith's room; but we do not wish to make a scene."

"I will call madam, sir," said the scared maid.

"Madam," when called, showed the three visitors upstairs at once, to the door of Mr. Smith's room.

The door was locked on the inside; but it opened after Ferrers Locke had manipulated it—so quietly and skilfully that "madam" did not even see him pick the lock.

Inspector Riley was the first to enter.

There was a startled exclamation from the narrow-eyed man who started up suddenly in bed.

"What the thunder—"

"Good-morning, Mr. Smith!" said Inspector Riley cheerily. "Quite a little surprise for you—what?"

Silky Smith glared at him over the bed-clothes and breathed hard.

"You've nothing against me now, inspector," he said savagely. "I've served my last sentence—"

"And haven't done anything to forfeit the ticket-of-leave?" said the inspector genially.

"Nothing."

"All the better for you, Smith—if true!" smiled Inspector Riley. "Do you object to our making a search?"

"What do you want?" hissed Smith.

"A thousand pounds in Bank of England notes."

Silky Smith started so violently that the bed shook. His hand, as if instinctively, slid under his pillow.

"Drop that!" roared the inspector. "Shooting won't help you, you fool—it will make matters worse!"

"I don't think Mr. Smith is feeling for a revolver, inspector," said Ferrers Locke tranquilly. "Mr. Smith is not of the shooting kind. But there is something of value under his pillow—is there not, Silky Smith?"

The crook gave him a look of bitter hate. "You've done this, Ferrers Locke," he muttered, between his teeth.

Ferrers Locke nodded.

"I think you may thank me for it—and my assistant here," he said. "Hand out what you are holding under your pillow, Mr. Smith. I have a list of the numbers here for comparison."

"A thousand curses—"

"Save your breath, my man," interrupted the inspector. "You are fairly caught at last."

"What is the charge?" hissed Silky Smith.

"Blackmail."

"Ridiculous! Whom have I black-

mailed?"

"Colonel Harney, of Harney House, Wendover."

Silky Smith was pale to the lips, and his narrow eyes had a hunted look.

"You are charged with writing threatening letters with a view to extorting money, making use of Colonel Harney's former association with the Ku-Klux-Klan of South Carolina, and with obtaining from the said Colonel Harney the sum of one thousand pounds by means of these threats. And it is my duty to warn you that anything you may say will be taken down in writing to be used in evidence against you," said the inspector ponderously. "Are you satisfied, Mr. Smith?"

Silky Smith set his lips hard.

"I have you to thank for this, Ferrers Locke," he said—"and how you found it out beats me! You are a fiend! Take the packet, and a curse along with it!"

The crook jerked the packet from under his pillow and threw it on the floor, with a savage oath.

Jack Drake picked it up.

Keeping one eye on the savage-faced crook in the bed, Inspector Riley examined the notes in the packet, and compared the numbers with those on the list Ferrers Locke had received from Mr. Harney.

"About as clear a case as a man could wish for," said the inspector genially. "Mr. Smith, I will trouble you to rise and dress yourself."

"Give me ten minutes—"

"Not ten seconds," said the inspector coolly. "You are a little too slippery for that, Silky. My dear man, I'm too fond of your company to run the risk of an early parting."

A curse was the crook's answer.

He rose and dressed, with the inspector at his elbow, grimly determined not to part with his prisoner until he was safe in the cells.

Silky Smith came downstairs with Inspector Riley's arm through his and stepped first into the taxi. There the handcuffs were fastened on his wrists.

"I shall see you later, inspector," said Ferrers Locke, and the portly gentleman from Scotland Yard nodded and smiled.

"Good-bye, Locke—and many thanks for your present!" grinned Mr. Riley.

And the taxi rolled away with the inspector and his prisoner.

Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake walked back to Baker Street in a very satisfied humour.

"I think we can congratulate ourselves, Drake," remarked Ferrers Locke. "Silky Smith will disappear from the haunts of crime for three years at least—and honest folk can sleep more securely in their beds for that period. I have some good news for Mr. Harney—and for his father. That well-preserved old gentleman will probably be glad to hear that his existence is ignored by the Ku-Klux-Klan, and that he has only to deal with a London crook with a taste for blackmail!"

There was no doubt that the news from Ferrers Locke was very welcome at Harney House. And when Silky Smith was "sent away" for the three years, during which he was to be kept out of mischief, and the thousand pounds was returned to its owner, Ferrers Locke received a handsome cheque for his services.

THE END.

Another fine, long detective story next week.

## THRILLS BEFORE THE CAMERA.

### Thrilling Feats of a Cinema Artiste.

The other day a moving-picture producer planned a most sensational scene for that popular artiste, William Duncan. But fate took a hand in the game, and the result was that the affair turned out to be a good deal more dangerous than anyone expected.

The hero and heroine were making their escape in a motor-car, and they had to cross a ravine, spanned by a small wooden bridge. The idea was that the villain would foresee their plan, and would blow up the bridge. Then, as the occupants of the car turned a sharp curve, going at full speed, they would fall to see the gap in time to stop the machine.

This was how the thing was planned, and the producer intended that the audience should see William Duncan drive off in the car, round the curve, and apparently go over the bank. In reality, however, the car would be stopped close to the edge, and another one, similar in appearance, filled with dummies, would be substituted—and this would make the fateful crash!

The motor-car containing the two people made the curve successfully, but as they came to the spot where they were to stop, the brakes refused to work in time. Duncan realised the dangerous predicament at once.

It was too late to stop the car now, so he opened the throttle wide and the motor shot, like an express train, over the gap and cleared it safely. It was going at sixty miles an hour. Luck was certainly with them, and beyond a battered wheel and a little jarring the occupants suffered no ill effects.

Everyone flocked around William when it was all over, but the "star" showed little excitement.

"It is all in the day's work," he remarked, with a smile.

He did not seem to realise what a narrow escape from death he had had, and he was anxious to get on with the rest of the picture.

### An Ordinary Day's Work!

It is really wonderful what Bill Duncan regards as an ordinary day's work. I do not want any of you boys to go and copy his extraordinary feats, because you will be almost sure to meet with an accident if you do. To perform unusual acrobatic feats requires a good deal more than mere nerve or pluck. It is necessary to know just how to do them, and a good deal of experience and hard training is essential.

A boy who tries to copy something he has seen performed by a cinema artiste on the screen is courting disaster. More than one youngster has been seriously injured through giving his chums a free exhibition of cinema stunts!

Bill Duncan's thrilling feats include jumping off a suspension bridge from a great height, and going hand over hand on a wire rope strung across a wide space from cliff to cliff. One little slip here would have meant "Good-bye, Bill!"

On one occasion, Duncan carried someone across an "air route" of this sort for a distance of twenty yards, after he had first thrown a lasso to a tree-top. This was a perilous thing to do, in spite of the fact that the lasso had been especially strengthened for the ordeal.

Duncan enjoys perfect health, and he has a magnificent physique. It has been said that he has no fear in his system—and he has proved it over and over again by his deeds before the camera. Outdoor life and regular exercise are the only medicines he believes in.

Sometimes when he is out in the wilds making films, it is necessary to live under canvas or in a wooden shack for weeks at a time, and these are just the experiences he revels in. If there is a big tree in the way, Bill just takes an axe and chops it down himself, and, in between scenes, he likes nothing better than a lively scrap or a wrestle with some of his fellow players.

He has had some champion tussles with that "over-worked villain," Joe Ryan—for Bill and Joe have been the hero and villain in a great many films. Their fights are the real things, and a black eye or a broken thumb is an ordinary occurrence.

Once Bill had got rather badly knocked about, and someone came along to sympathise with him.

"Oh, that's nothing!" he replied cheerfully. "But you ought to go along and see Joe Ryan."