

SPLENDID STORIES FOR BOYS!

The BOYS' HERALD

2^d

No. 118.

ON SALE EVERY TUESDAY.

Jan 28, 1922.

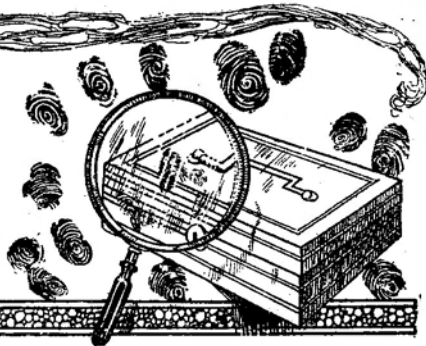


THE DORMITORY FEAST—BUT ONLY A BONE FOR NIBBY!

COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.



The Missing Outside-Right!



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.

Very Urgent!

"AFTER us!" said Jack Drake. Ferrers Locke nodded. "Looks like it!" he assented. The big car was bowling along a country road in Essex. Ferrers Locke and his boy assistant—Jack Drake—had stopped at the village of Tanfleet for lunch. They had started again in the crisp, cold January afternoon, and a few minutes after the red roofs of Tanfleet had dropped out of sight behind, a motor-cyclist came into view, following in the wake of the Baker Street detective's car.

Drake had glanced back as he heard the "gug-gug-gug" of the motor-bike. The motor-cyclist was going "all out," whizzing along at a terrific rate, and gaining on the car.

As Drake looked back the rider caught his glance and released one hand for a moment to wave to him.

Ferrers Locke looked back from the car. The motor-cyclist was a fat, portly man of middle age, but he drove his machine with all the recklessness of youth. Evidently he was in a great hurry.

"You know him, sir?" asked Drake. "I have never seen him before, to my knowledge," said Ferrers Locke. "But it looks as if he has some business with us. I think we will let him come up."

Drake smiled. "Perhaps someone recognised you, sir, at the inn at Tanfleet," he remarked. "And it may mean a case—"

"If so, I shall have to explain that we are on a holiday tour," said the Baker Street detective. "Anyhow, we will see what the man wants."

He spoke to Wootton, and the chauffeur slackened down.

The motor-cyclist came on with a terrific rush and passed the car on the road. He stopped a few yards ahead and clambered off. Jamming his bike against a tree by the roadside, he raced back to the car, puffing and blowing for breath.

"Excuse me!" he spluttered. "Certainly!" said Ferrers Locke. "What is wanted?"

"You are Mr. Locke?"

"Yes."

"Ferrers Locke?"

"Exactly!"

"The detective of Baker Street?" asked the man.

"Quite so."

"I—I thought so," gasped the stranger. "I saw you at the hotel in Tanfleet, and I thought I knew your face from the photograph in the papers. After you'd started it came into my mind who you were, so I jerked out the bike and rushed after you." He stopped, breathless.

"Well, you have caught me," said Ferrers Locke. "Is anything the matter?"

"Matter! I should say so! I want you. I am Mr. Pudsey—George Henry Pudsey—"

Locke's face was a blank. Probably, George Henry Pudsey was a well-known gentleman in Tanfleet. But his fame had

not reached as far as Baker Street. Certainly Ferrers Locke had never heard of him. "Manager of the Tanfleet F.C.!" added Mr. Pudsey.

"Ah! Quite so!" said Ferrers Locke. "You've heard of the Tanfleet Football Club, of course," said Mr. Pudsey. "We are in the final for the Burfleet League Cup!" "Then I hope you will win the cup!" said Ferrers Locke politely, and Jack Drake grinned.

Mr. Pudsey made a gesture of despair. "How can we win the cup, if Abe doesn't turn up?" he exclaimed.

"Abe?" repeated Ferrers Locke. "Abe Radford," said Mr. Pudsey. "Our great winger—the best winger in Essex. If Abe leaves us in the lurch, we're done for, Mr. Locke. We play Burfleet to-morrow on our own ground—and Abe's disappeared."

Mr. Pudsey panted. "That's what I want," he said. "I want you to find Abe Radford, Mr. Locke, in time for the match to-morrow. You can do it, if anybody can. You will? I was at my wits' end! The police can't find him—he's vanished into thin air! I don't believe Abe would leave us in the lurch of his own accord! Besides, why should he? He's been got at, Mr. Locke—got at by somebody who wants Tanfleet to lose the cup. I want you to find him! When it came into my mind that it was Mr. Ferrers Locke, of Baker Street, that I'd seen at the hotel, I said to myself, 'That's the man! That's the man to find out what's become of Abe!' Wonderful good luck that you happened to be passing this way, Mr. Locke."

As Ferrers Locke was on holiday, and had left all business cares behind him at Baker Street, the luck did not seem so wonderful to him as it evidently did to Mr. Pudsey.

But the portly gentleman's distress was so acute that Locke did not think of hesitating.

"I shall be happy to be of service to you, Mr. Pudsey," he said. "You want me to come back to Tanfleet, I suppose?"

Mr. Pudsey puffed and blew with relief. "Thank you from the bottom of my heart, Mr. Locke," he said. "If you can't find Abe, it can't be helped; but if he can be found in time for the match, you're the man to do it. I believe you charge rather high fees for your services, Mr. Locke, but never mind that—the Tanfleet F.C. can stand it. And if the Tanfleet F.C. can't, sir, then George Henry Pudsey can. I wouldn't have Abe Radford missing from the final for a fifty-pound note. Come to my house, sir—I'll show you the way, it isn't far. Just outside Tanfleet."

George Henry Pudsey dragged round his motor-bike, and "gug-gugged" back the way he had come. Wootton wheeled round the car and followed. Ferrers Locke smiled at his boy assistant.

"Evidently we are fated to mix business with pleasure, my boy," he remarked. "But I hope we shall be rewarded by seeing Abe Radford play in the final and win the cup for the Tanfleet F.C."

And the car glided fast in the wake of George Henry Pudsey.

The Missing Man.

MR. PUDSEY ushered Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake into his house, and they were greeted by Mrs. Pudsey, and seven smaller Pudseys, of varying ages and sizes, who peered at the celebrated detective round corners. The famous visitors came to anchor in a little sitting-room overlooking a muddy stretch of river. Mr. Pudsey produced refreshments of a liquid nature, which Ferrers Locke courteously declined, and then the portly manager of the Tanfleet Football Club plunged into business.

"Abe was due to practice on our ground at eleven, and he didn't turn up. I was there, of course—I keep an eye on the boys. It wasn't like Radford to slack, and I walked round to his lodgings to ask him what was the matter. You could have knocked me down with a feather, Mr. Locke, when Hutchford told me that Abe had gone out, with his bag packed for travelling, and had mentioned that he was going to Southend for the week-end."

Locke raised his eyebrows. "That doesn't look as if Mr. Radford had been 'got at,' does it?" he observed.

"But he has, Mr. Locke. If he's gone off for the week-end, leaving us in the lurch, he's not in his right mind," said Mr. Pudsey, with conviction. "He's been got at somehow, and he's got to be found and brought back."

"But if he has gone away of his own accord—"

"It's a trick somehow," said Mr. Pudsey. "I tell you he's not the man to leave us stranded like this. The match depends on Abe, and well he knows it, I rat him. He's got no cause of complaint. He gets full four quid a week from the Tanfleet F.C., as well as his wages at the timber-yard. He's doing well. Why should he chuck it all up for a week-end at Southend? If he's gone away and stranded us, Mr. Locke, the Tanfleet F.C. has done with him, and so has the timber-yard! The timber-yard's mine!" explained Mr. Pudsey. "I'm a timber-merchant myself. And I'll sack Abe like a shot if he's done this dirty trick on purpose! But he hasn't!"

"Let me have a few details, at all events," said Ferrers Locke, soothing the portly gentleman's excitement. "In the first place, who is this Abe Radford?"

"Outside-right."

"What else?"

"Under foreman in the timber-yard."

"Single?"

"Oh, yes—only twenty."

"Where does he live? At home?"

"No; he hasn't any people in this part. Came from Chingford originally. He lodges with Mr. Hutchford, in the village."

"And who is Mr. Hutchford?"

"Well, Jim Hutchford is by way of being a sporting gent," said Mr. Pudsey. "Folks say he's been a bookmaker, but I don't know. He seems to have plenty of money, and goes up to the City two or three times a week from Beaufleet. He has the gig from

the Blue Boar to take him to the station, and that costs money."

"But he takes lodgers?"

"Only one—Abe Radford. He's got rather a large, old-fashioned house, with lots of room, and, being all alone there, I dare say he likes to let a room, especially to a pleasant, sociable young chap like Abe. The six bob a week for Abe's room can't be much of an object to him—and it's cheap for Abe, of course. Abe gets his meals at the Blue Boar, except breakfast, which he has with Mr. Hutchford."

"The servants—"

"None. Old Mrs. Whippett goes in to do for them," explained Mr. Pudsey. "She gets the breakfast, does up the house, and clears at noon."

"She knows nothing of Radford's departure?"

"Not a thing; I've asked her. He was at breakfast all right. She left earlier than usual, as she had to post a registered letter for Mr. Hutchford."

"Then she did not see him leave?"

"No; she was surprised to hear he'd gone, when I asked her about it."

"Is this Mr. Hutchford a supporter of the football club?"

"In a way, he is," said Mr. Pudsey. "He makes a subscription to the club—not a large one—but every little helps."

"Exactly what happened, when you called to see Radford this morning?"

"I got in about twelve," said Mr. Pudsey. "Mr. Hutchford came to the door—the charwoman being gone, as I've said. He seemed surprised when I asked for Abe—"

he thought Abe would have told me he was going. Said he'd left two or three hours before, with a bag in his hand, and a rug on his arm, and just mentioned as he was going out, that he was going for the weekend to Southend."

"Was not Mr. Hutchford aware that Abe was playing in Saturday's match?"

"Of course."

"Then he must have been surprised when Radford told him of this intended sudden trip to Southend?"

"He was! He told me he called after Abe and asked him about the match, but Abe was trotting off in a hurry to catch his train."

"Benfleet, I suppose, is the station for Southend, from this quarter?"

"That's it—a matter of three or four miles."

"Have you inquired there?"

"I have!" said Mr. Pudsey. "I drove over to Benfleet on the motor-bike, and inquired at the booking-office. Abe is known by sight, naturally, to folks round about. Nobody remembered having seen him at the station."

"If he had taken a ticket for Southend there, the booking-clerk would surely remember the circumstance, if he knew him by sight."

"He would—and he does know him by sight," said Mr. Pudsey. "But he tells me he never saw a sign of him."

"Then it is fairly certain that your missing winger did not leave by rail from Benfleet."

"Pretty certain, Mr. Locke."

"Doubtless, if he left you in the lurch intentionally, he would expect to be followed and inquired after—"

"You bet."

"In that case, he may deliberately have gone to another more distant station, or may even have walked to Southend, or taken a trap from some village, to throw you off the track."

"I desay! But he didn't!" said Mr. Pudsey, with conviction. "Why should he? He ain't the man to sell his side?"

"Now we come to that!" said Ferrers Locke, with a nod. "Is there, to your knowledge, any money on Saturday's match?"

"Top-hats full of it," said Mr. Pudsey. "There's a betting crowd round our ground, you know. Bobs and half-crowns, and quids, too. One or two men make a regular book on the game here."

"Do you know of any heavy backer against Tanfleet, to whom it would be worth while to get your winger out of the way?"

"That's what I've been trying to think out," said Mr. Pudsey, scratching his head.

"Must be something of that kind! There's a man in Tanfleet who's got a hundred pounds laid on the match. But he's backing our team, so, of course, he's as wild as a Hun at Abe backing out like this. May be a man with a hundred or two on the other side, who sees his money gone if Abe plays. Make no mistake about it, Mr. Locke," said George Henry Pudsey emphatically,

"if Abe Radford plays for Tanfleet to-morrow, we win! There isn't any man in the Burfleet crowd to touch him."

"Taking it that some unknown betting-man has laid heavily against your team, Mr. Pudsey, that is the man who has got Abe Radford out of the way—if he has been got. Either Radford has been bribed to go—"

"Impossible!"

"Or he has been put out of the way over the week-end," said Ferrers Locke.

"That's what's happened, sir," said Mr. Pudsey. "I tell you, I've known Abe since he was a nipper, and I'd trust him with tons of money. Besides, they couldn't offer him enough to make it worth his while to break off with the football club, and get the sack from the timber-yard. There isn't such big money on our matches as there is on League games—taint a question of thousands."

Ferrers Locke nodded.

"Is Mr. Hutchford at home now?" he asked.

"Yes; I saw him this morning."

"Then I think I had better see the gentleman," said Ferrers Locke, rising. "He may be able to tell me some slight detail that will give me a clue."

"That's what I ope!" said Mr. Pudsey.

"Jest a little teeny-weeny bit of a clue, and you're all there, sir—what? I've heard of you, Mr. Locke! I'll take you there in two jiffies."

And Ferrers Locke and his boy assistant walked down the street of Tanfleet with Mr. George Henry Pudsey, heading for Mr. Hutchford's house.

Jack Drake glanced rather curiously at his chief.

On the face of the affair, the inference was clear enough; that Abe Radford had been "got at" by some backer of Burfleet, and had quietly taken himself off to lose the match for his side.

Against that, however, was to be set Mr. Pudsey's confidence in the honour of his champion winger—and Mr. Pudsey looked like a keen business man, not likely to be imposed upon.

It remained to be seen what could be discovered at the young man's lodgings, and Mr. Pudsey, at least, looked very hopeful as he proceeded thither with the Baker Street detective. And Ferrers Locke certainly intended to do his very best to justify George Henry's confidence in his powers.

In Quest of a Clue.

BANG! Mr. Pudsey stopped at the door of a rather large, rambling house, on the edge of the village. He knocked at the door with terrific vim.

The house stood well back from the road, with ten or twelve yards of untidy garden in front.

Behind it was another stretch of untidy garden, and beyond that, what looked like waste land running down to a muddy rivulet, which wandered into the Thames somewhere near Canvey Island.

Bang!

The knocker rang again under Mr. Pudsey's energetic hand.

The door opened.

"Afternoon, Hutchford!" sang out Mr. Pudsey cheerily, as the occupant of the house presented himself in the doorway.

Locke glanced at the man.

Jim Hutchford was a man of about forty, with a plump red face, and a fat prominent nose. His complexion looked as if he were in the habit of looking upon the wine when it was red. He was dressed in a check suit of a rather striking pattern, with a red and green necktie, and a large paste-diamond pin. Although he was indoors, he wore his hat—a hard bowler—cocked a little on one side of his head. A big black cigar stuck out of one corner of his large, rather flabby, mouth. Certainly, Mr. Hutchford looked like a "sporting gent" of a very pronounced variety.

He nodded rather surlily to Mr. Pudsey and looked with grim inquiry at the two strangers.

"This is Mr. Locke," said George Henry. "The celebrated London detective. He's come to find Abe."

Mr. Hutchford started.

"Ferrers Locke of Baker Street?" he asked.

"The same!" said Locke.

Hutchford eyed him.

"I've heard of you, sir," he said civilly. "I should have thought you were a bird to fly at bigger game than this."

"Mr. Locke happened to be passing

through Tanfleet in his car, and I recognised him," explained Mr. Pudsey. "I asked him to take up the case, and he's took it. You tell him everything you can, Hutchford—it's little enough Mr. Locke needs to set him going."

Ferrers Locke laughed.

"I am afraid you flatter me, Mr. Pudsey," he said. "I am not a magician. But I shall be very glad to look into the matter. Can you tell me anything about it, Mr. Hutchford?"

"I'm afraid I can't, sir," said Hutchford. "I would if I could, of course. I've got a tinner on Tanfleet, with a man in Southend, and I stand to lose it if Abe doesn't turn up to play."

"You agree with Mr. Pudsey that the game depends on Radford?"

"Oh, quite! Abe Radford's the beginning and end of the Tanfleet team. But I hope he'll come back in time."

Mr. Hutchford showed no intention of asking his callers into the house. He leaned on the door, his plump legs stretched across the doorway, to talk, and smoked his cigar.

But Mr. Pudsey did not stand on ceremony.

"Ain't you going to ask Mr. Locke into the house, Jim Hutchford?" he demanded.

"Perhaps he'll pick up a clue."

"What's the use?" said Hutchford impatiently. "There's no clue to be found. It's as plain as the nose on your face that Abe Radford has been paid to sell out the match."

"That ain't true!" bawled Mr. Pudsey.

"What do you make of it, Mr. Locke?" asked the sporting man. "Here's Abe Radford walks off, with his bag packed, and says he's going to Southend over the Sunday. Not a word from him since. Don't it speak for itself?"

"It certainly looks like it," said Ferrers Locke. "But, in justice to the young man, we must find out what we can in his favour."

"I should jolly well think so!" snorted Mr. Pudsey.

"Well, I think I ought to see Mr. Radford's room," said Ferrers Locke.

Mr. Hutchford shifted his rather bulky figure from the doorway.

"You can come in," he said. "Taint any good, but I'm not stopping you."

"Thank you," said Ferrers Locke urbanely.

He followed Mr. Hutchford up the stairs to the next floor. There were four rooms on this floor, and Hutchford stopped at one of them. Locke glanced up the further staircase.

"Only garrets up there," said Hutchford. "This here is Abe's room."

He threw open the door, and stood back for Locke to enter. He stood, as Jack Drake noted, between the visitors and the upper staircase.

Locke entered the bedroom.

It was plainly furnished and clean and very tidy; the charwoman had done her work there for the day.

Hutchford watched him with a rather sarcastic smile as he moved about the room, his impassive face giving no sign of what thoughts were in his mind.

"Radford seems to have been a very orderly young man," said Locke, with a smile.

"He was that, sir," said Mr. Pudsey.

"Everything very tidy—nothing out of its place," said Ferrers Locke.

"Mrs. Whippett has tidied up the place," said Hutchford.

Locke glanced at him.

"But Mrs. Whippett left before Radford, I think?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Where was Radford when she left?"

"In the sitting-room downstairs."

"How long afterwards was it that he departed for Southend?"

"About half an hour, I think."

"He did not come up to his room before he went?"

Hutchford hesitated a moment.

"I was in the garden, smoking my pipe," he said. "I can't say as I noticed whether he did or not."

"He would have come up to pack his bag," said Mr. Pudsey. "He hadn't packed it before Mrs. Whippett went, or she'd have known."

"I s'pose so!" assented Hutchford.

"Well, there seems nothing here," said Ferrers Locke. "We may as well go downstairs."

"I told you so!" said Hutchford.

"You certainly did."

Ferrers Locke left the bedroom and moved, as if by chance, towards the upper staircase instead of the lower. Hutchford ran quickly past him.

"Where the thump are you going?" he exclaimed.

Locke glanced round.

"Dear me! The stairs are the other way!" he said. "I beg your pardon, Mr. Hutchford."

"No harm done," said the sporting gentleman; but he remained behind Ferrers Locke until the Baker Street detective had descended to the ground floor.

In the hall downstairs Locke paused. Mr. Pudsey looked at him hopefully.

"Found a clue, sir?" he asked.

"That is not an easy question to answer," said Ferrers Locke, shaking his head. "You saw all that I saw in Radford's room. But I shall certainly take the case in hand. My car—"

"Room in my garage for that," said Mr. Pudsey. "And there's rooms in my house for you and your young friend, sir."

"I'd rather not trouble you, Mr. Pudsey," said Ferrers Locke. "As Abe Radford is absent, probably Mr. Hutchford would not object to my taking his unoccupied room for the night."

Hutchford stared.

"I should!" he answered.

"But—"

"I don't take in lodgers," said Hutchford. "There's the inn, if you want a room."

"It is possible that by a more thorough search of Radford's room, I might chance upon something—"

"Stuff!"

"If you really will not let me have the room—"

"I've said that I don't take in lodgers," said Hutchford sourly. "This house isn't an hotel. And my belief is that you're wasting your time, Mr. Locke. Abe Radford has sold out."

"He hasn't!" roared Mr. Pudsey. "Think I don't know an honest lad when I see one? You ought to be ashamed of saying such a thing, Jim Hutchford!"

The sporting gentleman shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, that's my opinion," he said obstinately. "Time will show."

"He's been put away!" snorted Mr. Pudsey. "Some sneaking rotter got him to go to Southend, and he's been nobbled there."

Ferrers Locke gave a nod.

"Isn't that possible, Mr. Hutchford?" he asked.

"Well, I suppose it's possible. I wouldn't bet on it. Still, it might be worth your while to look round Southend," agreed Mr. Hutchford.

"I shall certainly put it to the test," said Ferrers Locke. "Upon the whole, Mr. Pudsey, I will not impose on your hospitality to-night. If you will give my chauffeur directions for the shortest route to Southend—"

"That I will!" said Mr. Pudsey.

"Then I think we had better go," said Ferrers Locke. "Thank you very much, Mr. Hutchford. I'm sorry we've given you so much trouble."

"No trouble at all," said the sporting gentleman amicably.

And he bowed his visitors out of the house.

Ferrers Locke Figures It Out!

"BEST of luck, sir!" called out Mr. Pudsey, waving a fat hand, as the car started.

Locke smiled and nodded.

He sank back in his seat, and the big car rolled out of Tanfleet. A crowd had gathered to watch the celebrated Baker Street detective depart, and among them Locke recognised Jim Hutchford. The sporting gentleman raised his hat politely, and stood staring after the car as it disappeared.

Jack Drake gave his chief a puzzled look. This sudden departure quite confounded him.

Mr. Pudsey was obviously left with the hope that Ferrers Locke had found a clue, and was going to Southend with the practical certainty of unearthing the missing off, he's very likely the man," said Drake. could see, there was no evidence that Abe Radford had ever reached Southend—indeed, little evidence that he had ever started for that breezy resort.

Locke met his assistant's puzzled glance and smiled.

"I've perplexed you a little, my boy," he remarked at last.

"A lot, sir!" answered Drake.

"What was your impression of the case, Drake?" the Baker Street detective asked. Drake considered.

"Well, I don't trust that man Hutchford

much," he said. "If ever a man looked a regular welsher, he does."

"My opinion!" said Locke.

"If anybody's paid Abe Radford to clear off, he's, very likely, the man," said Drake. "He may have money laid against Tanfleet without Mr. Pudsey knowing anything about it."

"True."

"That would account for his unwillingness to help, sir," said Drake.

"You thought he was unwilling?"

"Well, he didn't want us in the house," said Drake. "Didn't that strike you, Mr. Locke?"

"It did."

"I had an idea that the sooner he got rid of us the better he would be pleased."

"I agree."

"I know you've got it cut and dried in your mind, sir. I could see that."

"Truly?" said Ferrers Locke. "I am glad others do not read my thoughts so easily, Drake. What did you observe?"

"You discovered something in the bedroom, sir," said Drake. "And when you were coming out you went towards the upper staircase on purpose. Why, I don't know."

"You are observant, my boy," said Ferrers Locke approvingly. "You did not note what I discovered in the bedroom?"

"Well, no, sir!"

"I discovered that Mr. Hutchford had been lying to Mr. Pudsey and to us," said Ferrers Locke tranquilly, "and as there is no reason why he should lie, excepting one, I look upon Mr. Hutchford with very great suspicion."

"But how, sir?"

"That morning—contrary to her usual custom—the charwoman left early," said Ferrers Locke. "That was a coincidence, at least. She left early because she had to go to the post-office to post a registered letter for Mr. Hutchford. So it was that gentleman who was the actual cause of her going early. Thus it came about that she did not witness Abe Radford's departure. Only a coincidence, so far. But even a slight coincidence is enough to begin upon, Drake. Now, after Mrs. Whippet had gone, we are led to suppose that Radford left with his bag for Southend. Evidently he packed the bag after his room had been "done" by the charwoman. Yet there was absolutely no sign in that room of a young man having prepared for a journey."

"That is so!" exclaimed Drake.

"You are an orderly lad, Drake, but when you have packed your bag to catch a train, you do not leave your room looking as if it had not been touched since the housemaid left it."

Jack Drake laughed.

"Nothing out of its place—not a loose collar or a collar-stud—not a drawer in the chest-of-drawers left open—no sign of a final wash and brush-up at the washstand!" said Ferrers Locke. "If Mr. Radford packed his bag and prepared for departure for the week-end, without leaving a trace of it in his room, he is a most unusual young man. The obvious inference is that he did nothing of the sort. But if he did not, then he did not go to Southend for the week-end, and Mr. Hutchford has told us a lie. Add to that that he was unwilling to admit us to the house, that he was quite determined that I should not take up my quarters there, and that he was glad to be rid of us—"

"He's the man!" said Drake.

"I think so."

"But whether he has bribed Radford to clear, or had him put away—" hesitated Drake.

"If he had bribed him to clear, his story of Radford going to catch a train, bag in hand, would probably be true. But it is false."

"Then he has had him put away?"

"It comes to that."

Drake looked dubious.

"Hutchford's a rather big man, but he's fat and puffy," he said. "Could he handle a fellow of twenty—a footballer?"

"Hardly."

"If he had help, and there was a struggle in broad daylight, too—"

"It's true the charwoman was got out of the way, and the house is detached and a bit solitary. But, in the full morning—"

"It is unlikely that Hutchford had any help, and unlikely that there was a struggle," said Ferrers Locke. "It is much more likely that Mr. Hutchford mixed a sleeping draught with his morning coffee."

"Oh!" exclaimed Drake.

"It was a little odd in the first place, sir, for Mr. Hutchford to take the young man in as a lodger," said Locke. "He may have had some idea of this in his mind at the time—to have Tanfleet's champion player at his mercy, if a time it suited him to let Tanfleet down—after making a 'book' against the local club."

"That's likely enough, sir, but—but—"

"But what, my boy?"

"Where is Radford now?" asked Drake.

"If Hutchford acted alone, how could he get him away? In broad daylight—the house isn't lonely enough for that. He has no car. How on earth did he get rid of the man, sir, even supposing that Radford was drugged and unconscious?"

"That is very easily answered, Drake."

"By you, sir—not by me!" said the boy, with a smile. "How do you answer it, Mr. Locke?"

"Simply that Hutchford did not get rid of him."

"What!"

"You saw me step towards the upper staircase, Drake?"

Jack Drake gave almost a shout.

"You—you thought—"

"I suspected!" said Ferrers Locke. "The house is a large one, with unused garrets at the top, and Mr. Hutchford has it to himself. If the charwoman comes as usual to-morrow morning, she will not ascend to the unused garrets—she has no motive for doing so. And you may depend upon it that, if a secret is hidden there, Hutchford will take good care that she does not. You saw what he did—and how he looked—when I affected to mistake the way. For a second he feared that I was going to ascend the upper staircase. He pushed past me, with as ugly a look on his face as one could wish to see. That was enough for me, Drake. The scheme was simple enough. Abe Radford, drugged, probably went to sleep in the sitting-room. What could be easier than for Mr. Hutchford to carry him up to a garret, and lock him in?"

Drake drew a quick breath.

"Then—all the time that Mr. Pudsey is tearing his hair over Abe Radford's disappearance, the man is only a few yards off!" he ejaculated.

"So I think."



As their heads came to the level of the landing above, Ferrers Locke and his assistant, Drake, stopped, and looked across into the open doorway. Jim Hutchford was smiling evilly over his cigar at a bound figure stretched on two or three old rugs on the floor.

"Then what the merry thump are we going to Southend for, if you think that Abe Radford is a prisoner in Hutchford's house?" exclaimed Jack Drake blankly.

Ferrers Locke laughed.
"We are not going to Southend, my boy. We are allowing Mr. Hutchford to believe that we have gone off on a wild-goose chase to Southend—which is quite a different matter."

"Oh!" exclaimed Drake.
"We are going to make a little tour of the Essex lanes, and return to Tanfleet about midnight," said Ferrers Locke. "What evidence I have would not be sufficient for a search-warrant to be issued at the local police-station. We are going to deal with Mr. Hutchford ourselves. We shall leave the car a mile from Tanfleet, and walk to that interesting village—and call upon Mr. Hutchford without apprising him of our intention. If Abe Radford is not in the house, we shall leave as quietly as we enter—and no harm done! But, I think," drawled the Baker Street detective, "that we shall find the missing winger very near home."

The Winning Goal!

A SINGLE light glimmered from a window in the old house on the edge of Tanfleet.

It caught the eyes of Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake as they came across the waste land at the back of the house.

It was close on midnight, and the village was long asleep. Only that one faint light broke the darkness.

"Someone is up in Mr. Hutchford's house," murmured Ferrers Locke, "and he is in one of the garrets, Drake. We shall see! Quiet, my boy! For the present, we must use the methods of Mr. Silky Smith to gain an entrance."

Silently as shadows, the Baker Street detective and his boy assistant approached the garden fence and crossed it. They stole on towards the dark house, losing sight of the faint light in the garret window at the back.

Every door was bolted, every window was fastened. But in a very few minutes a sash opened under Ferrers Locke's hand, and he crept silently in at the window and gave a helping hand to Drake.

Drake's heart was beating hard.
What they were doing now was illegal, even in the cause of law, but it was the only way to catch a rascal napping, and Drake did not hesitate for a moment to follow his chief.

They were in the kitchen of the house, and Locke, who seemed to have a cat-like faculty for seeing in the dark, led the way into a passage.

All was black darkness round them.
Locke took Drake's hand to guide him, and they ascended the first staircase noiselessly in their rubber-soled shoes.

A glimmering of light showed on the upper staircase. It came from the open door of a garret above.

In the silence, a murmur of a voice came to their ears. Jack Drake could not distinguish the words, but he recognised the beely tones of Mr. Jim Hutchford.

Locke made him a sign to be cautious, and ascended the upper stairs. It was evident now that Hutchford was not alone in the house—he was not likely to be talking to himself. Drake followed his chief without a sound, his heart beating.

As their heads came to the level of the landing above, they stopped, and looked across into an open doorway.

They were looking into a bare, unfurnished garret, lighted by a tin-backed lamp that stood on a little mantelpiece.

Jim Hutchford was in full view of the

doorway, his profile turned towards it. He was smiling evilly over his cigar at a bound figure stretched on two or three old rugs on the floor.

It was the figure of a young man of muscular frame, with an open, honest face, now very pale and worn. Between the prisoner's lips a wooden gag had been fixed, tied with string round his head. Strong cords were on his wrists and ankles.

The murmur of Jim Hutchford's voice came more clearly. The two detectives on the staircase caught the words now.

"Nod your head if you mean 'Yes,' Abe! I can't afford to let you open your mouth! I reckon nobody would hear you if you yelled, at this hour of the night—but I'm not taking chances."

No sign came from the bound figure on the rugs.

"What's the good of being a fool, Abe?" went on Hutchford persuasively. "You're bent over Abe Radford, and, in a few minutes, the young footballer was free. He staggered to his feet with Ferrers Locke's assistance.
"God bless you, sir!" he gasped.

Hutchford blew out a cloud of smoke.

"You've been tied up here for the best part of a day. I reckon you've got a bit of a headache from the draught you took in your coffee. You can't like it, Abe. Do you want to be tied up here all day to-morrow—and Sunday? Do you reckon anybody will believe you when you spin such a yarn? If you don't listen to reason, you'll be worse off than ever. I don't want to be hard on you—we've been friendly. But I've got to think of business first. Bless you, man, I've had this scheme in my head for three months or more. That's why I took in a lodger!" He grinned. "Look here, Abe, if you stick it out like an obstinate fool, do you know what will happen? I shall give you a whiff of chloroform on Sunday night, and take you out in a barrow and leave you on the road. You'll be found—drunk. I'll see that you smell of spirits. Do you think anybody will believe that you haven't just got home after a glorious razzle? Tell them that you've been a prisoner here, and you'll get laughed at. Why, if there was any risk of that yarn being believed, I'd carry you down to the river and drop you in there!"

The man's eyes glistened evilly as he spoke. Still there was no sign from the young winger.

"Do the sensible thing, Abe!" urged Hutchford. "A hundred of the best! I shall have to keep you here over the match on Saturday—I can't take any chances. But, if you agree, I'll hand you the hundred immediately after the match, and you can go on your travels—as everybody in Tanfleet believes you've done already. Nod your head if you mean 'Yes.'"

The bound man's head moved—but it was shaken, not nodded. Hutchford rapped out a curse.

"You refuse, then?"
There was a nod this time.

"Then lie here till you get sick with cramp," said Hutchford savagely. "I've given you your last chance! I'm not coming up here again till Sunday night, and you know what's going to happen then! Take your gruel, for the fool you are!"

He rose and crossed over to the lamp.

Taking it in his hand, he stepped to the door of the room, evidently with the intention of leaving the hapless Radford locked in the darkness.

"Not so fast, Mr. Hutchford!" said a tranquil voice.

The man uttered a gasping yell of alarm as a tall figure loomed before him. The lamp dropped from his nerveless hand and smashed on the floor. Jack Drake's electric lamp blazed out at once.

Hutchford staggered back.

"You!" he stuttered.

"Yes, you scoundrel!" said Ferrers Locke. The man gave him a desperate look. With a spring like a tiger, he bounded to the door. Locke's grasp was on his shoulder the same moment, and they closed and struggled.

Click! Ferrers Locke rose from the brief struggle, and Jim Hutchford lay on the boards with the handcuffs on his podgy wrists, and hate and rage blazing in his purple face.

Ferrers Locke turned to the prisoner, who was watching him with staring eyes. He bent over Abe Radford, and, in a few minutes, the young footballer was free. He staggered to his feet with Ferrers Locke's assistance.

"God bless you, sir!" he gasped.

Mr. Pudsey received the surprise of his life that night.

At precisely half-past twelve, he was knocked up, and he inquired from a window, in a far from amiable voice, what was wanted.

Ferrers Locke's reply brought Mr. George Henry bolting downstairs in a dressing-gown and one slipper.

He almost hugged the rescued winger, and almost hugged Ferrers Locke.

Abe Radford was soon in bed in Mr. Pudsey's house. And George Henry, when he had heard the story, rushed off to the police-station. He had a constable with him when he called on Jim Hutchford.

There was a surprise for Tanfleet, too, the following day. The missing winger was no longer missing, and Mr. Hutchford, the sporting gentleman, was in a cell at the police-station, on the charge of drugging and kidnapping.

When Tanfleet turned out on the field to meet Burfleet in the final, the crowd was numerous and uproarious. Abe Radford still showed some signs of his hard usage, but he was a tough young fellow, and he was quite himself when he took his place with the Tanfleet footballers. There were roars of welcome from his admirers.

Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake were Mr. Pudsey's distinguished guests in the grandstand for the great occasion. They watched the match with great keenness, and joined in the applause as heartily as the keenest Tanfleet supporter, when Abe Radford kicked the winning goal for his side. Mr. Pudsey rushed up to Ferrers Locke and gripped both his hands and wrung them ecstatically.

"You've done it, Mr. Locke!" he spluttered. "You've done it! You've won the cup for Tanfleet F.C.! One goal to nil—and that one kicked by young Abe! And who found young Abe? You've won the cup for us, Mr. Locke!"

And Mr. Pudsey almost wept with satisfaction and gratitude. And the football crowd, when they had cheered themselves hoarse for Abe Radford, cheered themselves hoarser for Ferrers Locke. In all Tanfleet and for three miles around, only the savage and ruined rascal sitting in the cell at the station was dissatisfied with Ferrers Locke's success in finding the missing winger.

THE END.

Another splendid, long complete yarn of Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake in next Tuesday's "Boys' Herald." Don't miss it.

: Editorial :

My dear Chums,—Mr. Walter Edwards' great yarn, "The College of Sportsmen," has romped in straight away, an easy winner. I have heaps of letters from my chums who are delighted with it, and I felt this would be the case immediately young Nibby tramped into Arundel College with the fame of Stringer to back him up.

There was a learned professor who once advised a crowd of fellows to write down something every day about what they thought of things in general. Some of them suggested he should go and boil his face. Anyhow, they were not disposed to take to the diary stunt. All the same, a few notes jotted on a postcard and sent to me concerning what you think of the various features in the BOYS' HERALD would not be amiss. I like hearing from my readers.

Now, are detective tales really popular?

To my mind, this ripping series of the doings of Ferrers Locke is just what is wanted. There is resource in every line of these stories, and resource is what we want, to say nothing of imagination. Ferrers Locke is doing just what detectives are busy at every day—seeing what has happened by reason of that gift of deduction.

I get letters about the Navy in plenty, letters stimulated by the thought of the wonderful Thundercloud tales. Is the Navy a good career? That is the burden. None better. That is the answer. Of course, the fellow who enters a great Service has to work, but is there any calling where everything is soft and easy? If so, would it be worth embarking on? I much doubt it. Life is not jolly easy. Neither is a game of footer. With everything it means being all in or nothing. Personally, I am proud of these sea stories, for they have the real magic of the life, with its ups and downs, its sporting spirit, and its big triumphs.

One of these days I mean to ask the author

to give us something about the shipping life which is linked up with London. Most Londoners hardly give a thought to the fact that their city has its direct pathway to China, and further. If you know the region east of Poplar you are aware of all this kind of thing.

The BOYS' HERALD has jumped into the New Year all right. I have my eye on the cricket season, though it is still far ahead; also the myriad other interests of the summertime.

Once January has run its course we go: thinking of the summer holidays, and stunting across country with the camera or the collecting-box. You may take it from me I am preparing a record programme, so when in doubt just ask your newsgate for the BOYS' HERALD. By the way, I hope shortly to announce the result of our great £200 competition. There was a very large number of entries; in this contest, but the work of judging is getting on famously. Look out for another magnificent number of the BOYS' HERALD next week.

YOUR EDITOR.