

**SPLENDID SCHOOL STORY INSIDE!**

# The BOYS' HERALD

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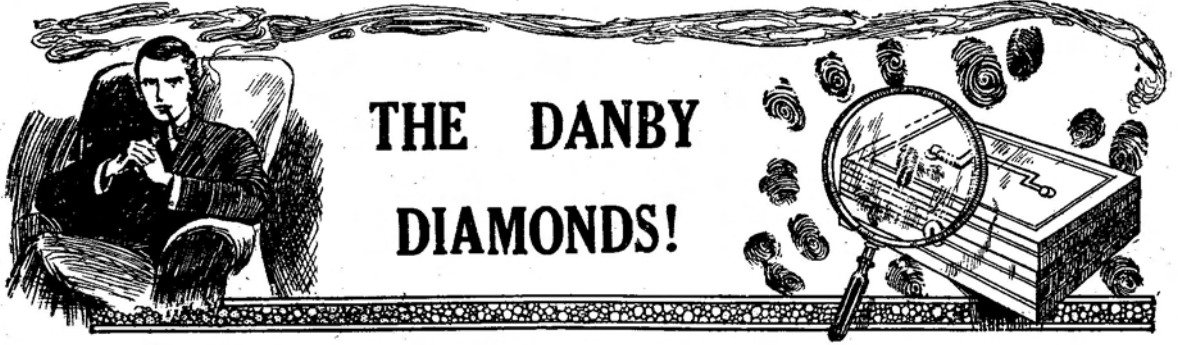
**ON SALE EVERY TUESDAY.**

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**THE GREAT PILLOW FIGHT. See Inside.**

## COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.



# THE DANBY DIAMONDS!

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 Thief in the Night!

**A** BOUT half an hour, sir!" said the chauffeur.

Ferrers Locke's touring-car stood silent and motionless on the quiet high road. The halt had been rather sudden. Wootton, the chauffeur, was busy; Ferrers Locke and his boy assistant—Jack Drake—stood looking at him.

The trouble had happened a few miles from Ware. It was eleven o'clock. A crescent moon sailed over brown woods and dusky fields. Ferrers Locke glanced at his watch.

"I think we may as well walk on, Drake," he remarked. "We are less than a mile from Duntingford. You will bring on the car, Wootton?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good idea!" said Drake. He was glad to stretch his legs a little after several hours in the car. The moonlit road stretched before them, between woods and park palings, patched with black shadows of trees.

"Come along, then, my boy," said the Baker Street detective.

Locke and Jack Drake started at a good pace. In a few minutes the halted car and the busy chauffeur were out of sight behind. There had been a fall of snow in that part of Hertfordshire, and though the road was clear, the snow was ridged along the roadside and glistening in patches in the fields. The church steeple of Duntingford was visible in the distance in the moonlight, when Ferrers Locke halted.

Drake glanced at his chief inquiringly.

A belt of grass, thinly scattered with snow, lay between the road and a low brick wall overhung with leafless trees. Close to the wall the snow lay more thickly.

"Anything up, sir?" asked Drake.

"I think so," answered Ferrers Locke tranquilly.

He pointed with his stick to a print in the snow. Drake glanced at it—not very keenly. He was rather anxious to reach the light and good cheer of the inn at Duntingford. The Baker Street detective and his boy assistant had had a long run that day—across Essex and into Herts. But Ferrers Locke was evidently interested in the foot-print, and Drake examined it.

"A fairly recent foot-print, Drake," Locke remarked.

"Looks like it, sir," agreed Drake.

"A little while ago someone left the road and approached the wall—and did not come back," said Locke. "There are no returning foot-prints. You see that the snow is disturbed on the top of the wall. Some intruder has climbed that wall, and is still within."

"Looks like it," said Drake again. Locke smiled.

"It is rather an unusual mode of ingress at this hour of the night," he remarked. "I know what you are thinking, my boy—we are on holiday now, and it is no business of ours. But if there is going to be a burglary at Eversley House—"

"Eversley House?" repeated Drake.

"You know this place, then, Mr. Locke?"

"Not at all. I have never traversed this road before."

"Then how—"

"A minute ago we passed the gates, and the name was on the gate," said Ferrers Locke. "You were thinking of your supper, my boy."

Drake coloured, and then laughed.

"I suppose I was, sir," he answered. "I generally keep my eyes open. But this chap who has gone in—it may only be a poacher or something of that sort—"

"Scarcely, Drake. This wall encloses a garden and a lawn—it is quite a small country house. There is nothing to poach."

"Yes, that's so."

Ferrers Locke stood silent, contemplating the foot-prints in the snow under the wall. It was unlikely, to say the least, that anyone belonging to the mansion would have entered the grounds in such a way. Beyond the wall, at a little distance from the leafless trees, the house could be seen—a double-fronted villa, with a greenhouse at one side, and a little terrace in front. The house was in darkness; not a light could be seen in any of the windows. Evidently the occupants of Eversley House had long gone to bed, and, equally evident, some unknown person had entered the grounds surreptitiously by the wall from the road. It was a quiet and unfrequented country road; but for the accident to Locke's car, probably no pedestrian would have passed at that hour of the night.

Jack Drake waited for his chief to speak.

What Ferrers Locke would have decided to do, he could not guess; but as the Baker Street detective stood in thought, there came a sudden disturbance of the silence of the winter night.

A light flashed in a downstairs window of the house, which they could see beyond the low wall—and there was a sudden crash of breaking glass.

Crack!

The sharp report of a revolver followed the crashing of glass.

So sudden was the outbreak of sound in the silence that Jack Drake gave a jump.

Locke smiled.

"You see, the foot-prints mean something after all, Drake," he remarked.

Crack!

It was a second shot from the house.

A French window, with a large pane smashed, was thrown open, and in the light that streamed out, a tall figure in a dressing-gown appeared, revolver in hand.

Patter! Patter! Patter!

It was a sound of running feet.

"Stop, you villain!" shouted the man at the window.

Crack!

For a third time the revolver rang.

"Stand ready, Drake!" breathed Ferrers Locke, and he ducked his head to bring it below the level of the wall.

For the running feet within were approaching the spot where the detective and his assistant stood in the road.

The intruder, burglar or not, was fleeing—fired after by the man in the dressing-gown.

Loud startled voices rang from the house now, and lights flashed in several windows. The whole place was alarmed.

Patter! Patter!

Crack!

The man at the French windows fired again.

Drake breathed hard. There was a sound of panting breath, and then a pair of hands clutched the coping from within, and a head came into view. Unseeing the two figures in the road in his haste, a man came rolling hurriedly over the wall, and dropped into the snow beneath.

The next instant two pairs of hands grasped him and pinned him down. Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake were ready, and they did not lose an instant.

For a second the man they had seized lay motionless, hardly breathing, so astounded was he by the unexpected seizure.

Then he began to struggle furiously.

But his struggles were futile. Locke's grip was like iron, and he had the man's wrists together almost in a twinkling, and there was a snap as a pair of handcuffs closed on them. The man still struggled wildly.

"It is useless, my friend," said the Baker Street detective tranquilly. "You are my prisoner."

The man sat up dazedly, smothered with snow. There was a black cloth mask tied across his face, so securely that it had not become displaced in the struggle. His eyes gleamed like a wild animal's through the holes in the cloth.

"Let me go! Who are you? Let me go!"

"That is not likely," said Ferrers Locke.

"Hang you! Who are you?" panted the masked man.

"My name is Ferrers Locke."

The man started violently.

"The detective?"

"Yes."

"Good heavens!"

"I think we may as well see your face, my friend," remarked the detective, stretching out his hand to the black cloth mask.

The man started back, holding up his handcuffed hands in helpless defence.

"Let me alone! You don't understand—"

"I think I do!"

Locke jerked the black cloth away. The face that was revealed was not the lowering countenance of a criminal, as Jack Drake had expected. It was a rather well-cut face, somewhat weak in its lines, but rather handsome. It was deadly pale now, and the eyes were full of fear. Locke scanned the man.

"I have never seen you before," he said quietly. "I do not think they have your picture at Scotland Yard, my man. It will be added to the collection at the C.I.D. very shortly."

The young man groaned.

"Oh, you fool—you fool! What brought you here?"

"Chance," said Ferrers Locke. "An unlucky chance for you, my cracksmen friend; but a very lucky one for the man you have robbed—or tried to rob."

"I—I have not."

"We shall see."

Locke coolly slid his hand through the pockets of the handcuffed man's coat. A morocco case came from one of them, and Locke snapped it open. There was a sudden blaze of jewels in the moonlight.

Drake uttered a startled exclamation.

"Diamonds!"

"Rather a rich prize!" said Ferrers Locke drily. "These are the famous Danby diamonds, my boy."

"You know them?"

"They are pretty well known—I have seen photographs of them. This house must belong to General Danby, the owner of the stones—the gentleman in the dressing-gown, no doubt. Probably he will be pleased to see his diamonds again. That rascal would have got clear with them."

The prisoner panted breathlessly.

"Take the diamonds and let me go!" he breathed. "For mercy's sake, Ferrers Locke, let this go no further."

"You are generous with General Danby's property," said the Baker Street detective ironically. "Come!"

His hand dropped like iron on the young man's shoulder.

"Where are you going to take me?" whispered the wretched man.

"Into the house, at present. No doubt there is a telephone, and the police can be called from Ware to deal with you."

"Oh, heavens!"

The young man seemed paralysed as the iron grip of Ferrers Locke led him along the road to the gates of Eversley House. He stumbled, with leaden steps, like a man in a dream. Jack Drake, as he followed, could not help feeling a glimmering of compassion for the wretched man. Caught red-handed as he was, it was pretty clear that he was no common thief. Drake guessed that this was probably his first crime—a crime that had landed him in utter disaster. It was clear that he was overwhelmed with shame and misery.

Locke, still with a grip on the prisoner's shoulder, reached the wooden gates which were locked. With his free hand the Baker Street detective rang a loud peal at the bell.

#### General Danby.

**E**VERSLEY HOUSE was buzzing with excitement like a frightened bee-hive.

Lights blazed from the windows, voices were calling, the shriek of a scared servant was heard.

The arrest of the burglar outside the walls was as yet unknown in the house. The peal at the gate-bell was unheeded in the excitement that reigned.

The prisoner leaned on the wooden gate, his face white and almost convulsed.

"Ferrers Locke!" he muttered. "You—you will not take me into the house—for the love of mercy! I am your prisoner—you have handcuffed me." He shuddered. "What do you want more? Don't expose me to—the shame of it! Have pity! I am not a thief—you don't understand! Take me to the police, if you will—not there—not there!"

His voice broke off in a groan.

Locke eyed him sternly.

"That means that you are known in the house?" he asked.

"Yes," breathed the wretched man.

"You will be recognised?"

"Yes."

"You gained your information, then, as a guest of General Danby, in order to rob him?" said the Baker Street detective scornfully.

"You don't understand!"

Ferrers Locke gave him a very keen look. It was borne in upon the Baker Street detective's keen mind that there was more in this strange affair than a commonplace burglary.

"The servants would know you?" he asked.

"Yes," said the young man, with a shudder.

"That was why you covered your face so carefully?"

"Yes."

"Your name?" asked Locke.

The young man did not answer.

"Come, concealment will not help you now," said the Baker Street detective im-

patiently. "You are a prisoner—you will have to stand your trial. Give me your name."

No answer.

Locke shrugged his shoulders.

"You seem to have a sense of shame left," he said. "I will not expose you to the contempt of the servants who will know you by sight. Drake, you will keep him here, and see that he does not escape, while I enter and speak to General Danby. Wootton will be here in a few minutes now with the car, and we may take the man on to the police-station at Ware. Secure him."

"Yes, Mr. Locke."

Drake did not intend to take risks with the prisoner. He took a whipcord from his pocket and shackled the young man's legs. It was impossible for him then to attempt a desperate bolt. Drake led him a short distance from the gate, while Locke rang a second louder peal at the bell. The young man gave the boy detective no trouble. Overcome as he was with shame and dismay, he seemed relieved that he was not to face the eyes that knew him in Eversley House. He leaned on the wall, his face white, his lips trembling as if dazed by the position in which he found himself.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

Ferrers Locke rang again and again.

There was a step on the gravel path within at last. But the gate did not open—a deep voice called over it.

"Who is there?"

"Ferrers Locke!" answered the detective.

"Is that General Danby?"

"Yes! What do you want?"

"There has been a burglary—"

"Gad! How do you know?"

"I was passing when the disturbance broke out, and I have caught the burglar. He dropped almost into my arms as he came over the wall," answered the detective.

"What!"

It was not an exclamation—it was rather a startled roar from the man within the gates.

"You—you have caught him?"

"Yes, General Danby."

"Good gad!"

There was a click of a key in the lock and the gate opened. A tall, powerfully-built man, with a bronzed complexion, stood within. The general was in slippers, and he had thrown a heavy motoring coat over his dressing-gown to come down to the gate. The revolver was still in his hand.

He glared, rather than stared, at the quiet face of the Baker Street detective.

Ferrers Locke eyed him calmly, searchingly.

The emotion that struggled in the general's face was indefinable, but it was deep.

"Ferrers Locke!" he said. "The famous detective of Baker Street? In Heaven's name what brought you here?"

"An accident to my car."

"You say you have caught—you—have—caught—"

"The thief!" said Ferrers Locke, with a nod. "And I have recovered the celebrated Danby Diamonds—which were in his coat pocket."

"Good heavens!"

"I saw you bring after the man as he ran from the house, general," said Locke. "I was looking over the wall—"

"The devil you were!" muttered the general.

"I had seen the man's foot-prints by the wall," the detective explained. "I knew someone was lurking about the house—and then the alarm came suddenly."

"You say you have captured him?"

"He is now in handcuffs in charge of my assistant."

"Where?"

"A dozen paces away." Locke was watching the general's bronzed face, quietly but keenly, as he was speaking. "You must prepare yourself for a shock, general."

General Danby started.

"In what way?" he ejaculated. "Mr. Locke—"

"The burglar is a young man, and he has confessed that he is known in your house—"

"Known!" muttered the general.

"Yes! The servants would recognise him."

"Ah! You have seen his face, Mr. Locke?"

"I unmasked him for the purpose," said Locke. "Shall I bring him into the house, general, to wait for the police? It is for you to decide?"

"No, no!" exclaimed the general hastily.

"You wish to spare him the humiliation—"

"Yes—exactly! If—if it is someone I know—" The general stammered. "I—I must see this—this man, Mr. Locke. Let me see him."

"I will call to my assistant to bring him within the gates, at least."

"No, no! I will come out!"

"Your slippers—in the snow—"

"That is nothing."

General Danby came out into the road. He saw the dark shadows along the wall, and almost ran to the spot where Jack Drake stood guard over the captured cracksmen.

Ferrers Locke watched him, with a curious glimmer in his keen eyes. Strange thoughts were working in the brain of the Baker Street detective.

#### A Strange Mystery.

**T**HE young man raised his downcast eyes to the general's face, as the old military gentleman came striding up.

He did not speak, but his face was as white as the snow that lay about him.

The general gazed at him silently.

For a full minute there was no word. A hubbub could still be heard from the house, and there was a footstep grinding on the gravel path. General Danby turned hastily.

A man-servant looked out at the open gate, stared at Ferrers Locke, and called:

"General Danby, sir—"

"Go in!" rapped out the general.

Locke observed that he stood between the prisoner and the servant at the gate, screening the young man from view.

"I was afraid you had fallen in with the burglar, sir!" stammered the man.

"Go in, I tell you!"

"Very well, sir! The butler has telephoned for the police from Ware."

"Yes, yes! Go in!"

The man-servant went back along the gravel path to the house, obviously very much surprised by the general's manner.

Locke looked questioningly at General Danby.

"You know this young man?" he asked.

"I—I— Yes, I—I know him! I have seen him," said the general haltingly. "He—he—his name is—Smith—"

"Indeed!" said Locke drily.

Jack Drake cast a quick glance at the general, and then at his chief. If ever it was palpable that a man was lying, it was palpable that General Danby was lying now. It was only too clear that he recognised the thief—and that he had uttered a false name for him.

"A friend of yours?" asked Locke.

"Yes!" breathed the general. "I—I am very much disturbed, Mr. Locke. I—I am shocked! I—I trusted this young man—the son of a very old friend—"

"I understand!" said Ferrers Locke.

The Baker Street detective understood a great deal more than he cared to say at that moment.

"He—he has—robbed me," said the general. "But—but I must think! I—I must think what to do—"

"I fear that is settled already," said Ferrers Locke. "He must be handed over to the police."

The young man started and his face quivered.

"You—you are right, Mr. Locke," said General Danby. "Of—of course! I—I cannot spare him, though this is—a shock to me. I will see that he is secured until the police arrive."

There was the hoot of a motor-horn on the road. Locke's car came in sight, with Wootton at the wheel. Ferrers Locke waved his hand to his chauffeur, and the car stopped in the road, opposite the group by the wall of Eversley House.

Again the general shifted his position, standing between the young man and the chauffeur sitting at the wheel.

It was certainly not by accident that he had screened the prisoner first from the man-servant and now from Ferrers Locke's chauffeur. Drake gave his chief a startled look, but Locke's face was inscrutable.

"This is my car, general," said the Baker Street detective. "If you are willing, I will take the thief into Ware and hand him over to the police. If you care to accompany me, I will wait till you are dressed."

The young man did not speak; his eyes were fixed on the general's face. That face was now almost as pale as the prisoner's own.

"No!" said the general. "Thank you very much, Mr. Locke, but I will not give you the trouble."

"It will be no trouble."

"I will lock the fellow up in an outhouse," said General Danby. "He will be safe when

the police arrive. They will have started already, as my butler has telephoned for them."

"No doubt! But the man would be safer in the cells," said Locke.

The general made an impatient gesture. "Really, Mr. Locke, it is I who am chiefly concerned in this affair, and you must leave it in my hands."

"Undoubtedly," assented Ferrers Locke, unperturbed by the snub. "Take the rascal into your charge, by all means. Shall I help you to secure him in the outhouse you refer to?"

"My servants will help me if necessary." "I will call—"

"Do nothing of the kind," interposed the general. "I am quite capable of taking charge of a single person, I think."

"Quite so—he is handcuffed," said Locke. "There is no need for that. You may remove the handcuffs, Mr. Locke," said General Danby.

"What?"

The general bit his lip. "Leave them where they are if you think best, Mr. Locke," he said hastily. "But I will not detain you any longer. Good-night, sir!—I thank you for what you have done!"

"There is one thing you have forgotten, general."

"What is that?"

"The diamonds."

General Danby started.

"I—I—Yes! Give them to me."

Ferrers Locke handed the morocco-case to the general. He glanced at it hurriedly, and slipped it into the pocket of his dressing-gown.

"Thank you! Thank you! Now, good-night, Mr. Locke."

The general's anxiety to be rid of the Baker Street detective was almost pitiable to witness. Certainly he did not look like a man who had just been saved from a heavy loss. The shock of recognising a friend in the man who had stolen the Danby diamonds perhaps accounted for it. But it did not account for all.

"You are sure you will run no risk with the thief?" the detective asked, and Drake detected a note of sarcasm in Locke's voice.

"I am sure—yes! I have my revolver, too—"

"Ah, yes, there is your revolver," said the Baker Street detective, with an ironic smile.

"Then I will say good-night, general."

"Good-night—good-night!"

Locke stepped into his car, and Drake followed him in.

Wootton re-started the engine, and the car glided away down the road, leaving the general standing by the handcuffed prisoner.

"He's not in a hurry to get him locked in, sir," Jack Drake remarked, looking back from the window.

"Apparently not!" said Ferrers Locke, with a grim smile.

He was silent as the car glided on. He spoke a word through the tube to Wootton, and the car, instead of keeping on to Duntingford, turned into the road to Ware.

It slowed down as a smart gig came in sight, dashing up the road in great style. It was driven by a police-inspector, and a constable sat behind him. Ferrers Locke leaned from the car window, and waved his hand.

"You are for Eversley House?" he called.

The gig stopped.

"Yes! Have you anything to tell me?" called back the inspector.

"Only that the burglar was captured, and left in the hands of General Danby."

"Good!"

"You will need to hurry," said Locke.

"I have a presentiment that the cracksmen will escape. I left him in handcuffs, but I fear that you will be too late."

The car glided on again before the astonished inspector could reply. He stared after it for a moment, and then the gig dashed on again in the direction of Eversley House.

"You think the thief will get away, sir?" asked Drake.

"I know he will!" answered Locke tranquilly. "I have given the inspector a tip—it is not my duty to say more. When he finds that the burglar is gone, he may ferret out the rest—or not. General Danby is probably a big gun in this locality, and that may throw dust in the eyes of the local police."

"But—" said Drake puzzled.

Ferrers Locke smiled.

"Leave the affair alone for the present," he said. "We will turn back to Duntingford now—I wanted only a word with the Ware police. I felt bound to give them so

much warning. But now for supper and bed."

And Locke did not speak again of the strange affair. Half an hour later they were at supper at the inn in Duntingford, and Drake, as he ate with a good appetite, could not help wondering what had happened at Eversley House. But Locke did not mention the subject—and Drake went to bed and slept soundly enough, and dreamed of his old schooldays at Greyfriars.

**A Surprise for General Danby.**

**F**ERRERS LOCKE was already up and gone out, when Jack Drake came down to breakfast the following morning in the inn at Duntingford.

Drake found Wootton in the yard with the car. He strolled about until breakfast at nine, and then Ferrers Locke came in and joined him. The innkeeper and his people had already heard of the burglary at Eversley House, and there was a good deal of excited discussion going on. Ferrers Locke chatted of indifferent matters till breakfast was over, and then strolled out of the inn with his boy assistant.

"I have been into Ware already, Drake," he explained. "I was curious to ascertain whether my surmise was correct with regard to the prisoner."

"And it was?" asked Drake.

Locke nodded.

"Yes. The bird had flown when the inspector arrived at Eversley House last night."

Drake drew a deep breath.

"But, how, sir—"

"It appears that the general locked him in a shed, and he got out of a window," said Locke negligently.

"In handcuffs?" ejaculated Drake.

"He got rid of the handcuffs—they were found broken on the floor of the shed."

"Mr. Locke!"

"General Danby has given his description to the police," continued Locke. "The description does not wholly tally with my observation of the young man."

"He has let him go, and does not want him to be taken," said Drake.

"That is clear enough to my mind, though the inspector does not suspect it—naturally, perhaps," said Ferrers Locke. "He did not see all that we saw. The general gave him the young man's name as Smith, and stated that he had known his father. But, as to

where Smith is to be found, he had no information to give."

"Smith was not the true name," said Drake.

"Obviously."

"The general recognised him and wished to spare him," said Drake. "It was wrong; I suppose, as the man was a thief, but—but it was generous."

Locke smiled.

"That is your impression, Drake?"

"Isn't it yours, sir?"

"Not quite. Did the general's conduct seem precisely that of a man saved from a great robbery, Drake?"

"He was so anxious about his old friend's son, perhaps—"

"Perhaps!" said Ferrers Locke ironically.

"It is curious that he cannot give any details of the haunts or habits of his old friend's son. It is odd that he locked him in the shed without a single servant at the house seeing him. Odder still that the young man broke his handcuffs without assistance, and escaped. The case is altogether too odd, Drake. The Danby diamonds are worth ten thousand pounds, and that is too large a sum for me to allow a plotting rascal to annex, even if it interrupts our holiday tour, my boy."

"The Danby diamonds!" exclaimed Drake.

"But they are safe! You took them from the thief, and returned them to General Danby."

"Quite so! But here we are at the post-office," said Locke. "I have to get a trunk-call here."

"To Scotland Yard?"

"No; to the Aquila Insurance Company."

Drake's expression was so astonished that Ferrers Locke burst into a laugh.

"I happen to know that the Danby diamonds are insured with that company," he explained.

"Insured!" repeated Drake.

"Naturally, the owner of such valuable jewels would not neglect to insure them," said Locke.

"I suppose not," said Drake.

"They are insured, naturally, against burglary and fire, for their full value, and at a pretty stiff premium," said Ferrers Locke.

"They are in no danger from fire, I think. Even a determined old military gentleman who feels the pinch of poverty is not likely to burn down his own house. But they have been in great danger from burglary, as you have seen."



The young man raised his downcast eyes to General Danby's face as the old military gentleman came striding up. Ferrers Locke looked questioningly at the general. "You know this man?" he asked. "Yes—I know him?" came the halting reply.

Locke passed into the village post-office, leaving Drake staring. A light was broken on his mind.

He had a glimmering now of the theory that had formed in the Baker Street detective's keen brain.

Wootton came up with the car and waited outside the post-office. It was half an hour before Ferrers Locke emerged.

He signed to Drake to enter the car, and followed him in.

"Eversley House!" he said to the chauffeur.

The car glided away.

"We are calling on the general!" asked Drake.

"Exactly."

In a very short time the car passed the spot where, the previous night, the escaping cracksmen had fallen into the hands of the Baker Street detective. The foot-prints were still visible in the hard snow, and there were many other tracks round about them now. The police had doubtless made an examination of the prints.

The gates were open now, and the car turned into the gravel drive and stopped before the house.

The butler opened the door and shook his head when Locke asked to see General Danby.

"The master's so upset by the burglary, sir, he's given orders that no one is to be admitted," said the man.

"I think he will see me," said the Baker Street detective—"at least, take him my card, and tell him I have called on behalf of the Aquila Insurance Company."

"Very well, sir."

The butler returned in a few minutes and requested the visitors to follow him. Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake were shown into a morning-room, where they found the general. The butler retired, and the general—pale and troubled in looks—rose to greet his visitors. His eyes looked sunken in the morning light, and his old bronzed face was deeply lined.

"I am not feeling very well this morning, Mr. Locke," he said. "But I could not refuse you admittance, after the—service you rendered me last night."

Locke bowed.

"I did not know that you had any connection with the Aquila Insurance Company!" the general added.

"Neither have I!"

"My butler stated—"

"That I have called on their behalf. That is true, general. My object is to save them from being swindled—my duty as an honest man, if not as a detective."

"I do not understand you, Mr. Locke."

"I will try to make myself clear. In collusion with your nephew, you have attempted to swindle the insurance company of ten thousand pounds, which, of course, I cannot allow."

**The Quality of Mercy.**  
GENERAL DANBY stared blankly at the Baker Street detective.

Drake drew a deep breath.

The old military gentleman seemed paralysed for a moment. Then something like a roar of fury burst from him, and he made a stride towards Ferrers Locke.

"What! You dare to insinuate—" "I insinuate nothing," said Ferrers Locke coldly. "I state a fact."

"You libelous scoundrel!" roared the general. "Out of my house this instant, or I will call my servants to throw you out! By gad, I will throw you out with my own hands!"

He advanced menacingly on the Baker Street detective. Locke did not stir.

"Better language, please," he said quietly. "And calm yourself, general. You are within an ace of being arrested on a charge of conspiracy—and it is only on account of your record in the war that I am disposed to spare you—to spare an honoured name from being dragged in the mire. If I do so, there must be an unmistakable assurance that no such attempt will be made again."

The general stared at him with clenched hands. Drake fully believed, for the moment, that he would spring at the Baker Street detective. But the knowledge was forcing itself into the general's mind that he was at Ferrers Locke's mercy. He controlled himself, and the red rage died out of his face, which became pale again—almost ghastly in hue. He sank heavily into the chair from which he had risen.

"What do you know—what do you think you know?" he muttered.

"I know that the burglary last night was a comedy, designed to deceive your servants, the police, the public, and the insurance company," said Ferrers Locke quietly.

"You dream—why—"

"Come, come, general. You fired four shots after the fleeing burglar, in clear moonlight—and not one of them took effect," said Ferrers Locke. "You—the man who killed five Germans with your revolver in a trench at Ypres. You have sadly lost your skill in shooting, my dear general. Was not the revolver-thing a little dramatic touch of realism in the comedy? Four shots at close range—and nobody hit! And the bullets, which missed the fleeing man, did not strike the wall, or the trees. I was too close to fail to note that. Shall I be wrong in suggesting that you had been very careful to load your revolver with blank cartridges, in case of accidents?"

"A—mere suspicion! Nonsense!"

"The young man was well-known in your house—he begged me not to expose him to the humiliation of being seen by the servants. In conversation with the Ware inspector this morning, I learned a few details of your household—especially that you had a favourite nephew often here named Rupert Danby. I was interested in Master Rupert. I drew from the inspector a description of him. Quite unconsciously he described the burglar whom I seized last night."

General Danby groaned.

"The whereabouts of your nephew would be easy enough to discover, general. My assistant and I, I think, would be able to identify him as the thief—though you so carefully screened him from observation of my chauffeur and your own servant!"

"Cease!" panted the general. "Mr. Locke, suppose—suppose it was my nephew who—who robbed me. You understand that I—I wish to spare him—my brother's son—"

"No doubt! But he did not rob you," said Ferrers Locke coolly. "That would not account for the blank cartridges, general, or for your unmistakable dismay, when you learned that the thief was taken—before you had seen him, and could have guessed that it was your nephew, General, you are a bad actor, and a worse liar," said Ferrers Locke ironically. "Doubtless, if I had not come on the scene, the scheme would have worked remarkably well. The alarm in the night, the firing, the glimpse of a masked burglar by the servants, the foot-prints left in the snow by the wall to prove that the robber came from outside—you have not forgotten your strategy, general. Unfortunately for you—fortunately for the Aquila Insurance Company—I was on the scene."

The general's face had sunk into his hands. Drake felt a throb of pity as he looked at the sunken, beaten man.

The owner of the Danby diamonds raised a haggard face at last.

"I am at your mercy, Mr. Locke," he said brokenly. "I believe I could save myself yet, by throwing the whole guilt upon poor Rupert. You have me there! I confess! Do as you like with me, Mr. Locke—but spare that unfortunate boy! I am the elder—you can guess that it was under my influence that he entered into the wretched scheme—"

"Possibly!" said Locke. "But you general—you, a man with an honoured name—distinguished in the war—that you should have fallen to this—surprises me, with all my experience—"

General Danby made a weary gesture. "It surprises me," he said. "I was a rich man before the war—I am a poor man now. My fortune was invested in Russian bonds—you know what that means—the Bolsheviks have ruined me by repudiating the Russian debt. My nephew, poor lad, had expensive tastes—he had been brought up to expect a fortune, and I had nothing left but my pension. I am in debt, too. I thought of selling the Danby diamonds, the only thing of value that remains to me. Then—then I suppose the devil tempted me, he went on wretchedly. I—I drove away the thought when it first came into my mind, but—but it came back—it haunted me, and I had been robbed by others—those Russian scoundrels! But what is the good of excuses? I am a thief! I have ruined my nephew instead of enriching him with stolen money, and I am at your mercy! No doubt you have the handcuffs in your pocket." He shuddered. "Mr. Locke, I am a soldier—I have a soldier's honour left, if I have lost my honesty, give me five minutes in my room." He smiled a haggard smile. "They will not be blank cartridges this time—"

Locke held up his hand.

"You forget what I have said," he answered quietly. "This is your first step in crime, General Danby—I feel assured that it will be the last. I do not belong to the official police—it is my duty as a citizen to prevent a robbery—and that I have done. Give me your word that you will sell the Danby diamonds within three days, and thus place yourself out of the reach of temptation, and I will take your word—and go, and you will never hear a word of this wretched affair again from me at least."

Jack Drake drew a deep breath of relief. Whether Ferrers Locke was right or wrong, he hardly knew; but he was glad to know that the man who had fought bravely for his country was not to stand in the felon's dock.

General Danby looked at the Baker Street detective in wonder.

"You give me that chance?" he muttered. "I do—if you will take advantage of it. I have telephoned to the Aquila Company—"

"Heavens! Then they know—"

"They know nothing yet. I asked them for the particulars of the insurance policy—so far, that is all. Do as I advise you, and they will know nothing more. Otherwise, of course, I am bound to inform them of all I know."

The general laughed faintly.

"Do you think I should refuse your offer?" he asked. "I have been a madman—but I am not mad enough for that! I accept the chance you have given me, Mr. Locke, and bless you from my heart for giving it. I give you my word—if the word of a dishonoured man is any good—that this lesson what I suffered when I knew that Rupert was taken." He shuddered. "This very day the accursed diamonds shall be sold—my word on that! God bless you, Mr. Locke!"

Ferrers Locke's clear-cut face was very thoughtful as he sat in the car by Jack Drake's side, and they glided swiftly by the roads and lanes of Hertfordshire. They left a repentant man behind them; a man who shuddered at the thought of the black abyss upon the brink of which he had trodden. It was a couple of days later that Locke pointed out a paragraph in the "Daily Mail" to his toy assistant, announcing the sale to an American millionaire of the famous Danby diamonds.

THE END.

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## : Editorial :

My dear Chums,—You will be pleased about this splendid new series of school yarns, dealing with Gordon Gay, which I have coming along in the "Boys' Herald." Gordon Gay possesses a name to conjure with. In the past he and his doughty followers (and some of his friends who are not doughty) have been in many sprightly adventures; but the future is always much bigger than the past—and usually superior. Look out for Gordon Gay, of the Grammar

School. New features come along in the "Boys' Herald" as regularly as the days of the week!

You will not get better sea yarns than those describing the Thundercloud.

They show the lighter side, the sparkle and the jollity, as when a giddy menagerie is shipped. They also reveal the sterner features of the Service which goes on, and is always ready. Then there are our magnificent detective stories dealing with Ferrers Locke. These gripping stories cannot be beaten.

"The College of Sportsmen" has romped in

a winner safe enough. There will be another fine long instalment of this grand story next week. If anything, this story gets more thrilling every week, and you should tell your chums to start reading it at once. I am sure they will all like it. I hope soon to be able to announce the result of our great £200 Competition. There were a very large number of entries for this, but the work of judging is almost completed. Don't miss next week's magnificent number of the "Boys' Herald."

Your EDITOR