



By "X"

*The betrayal of a client's trust
is the price of Ferrers Locke's
freedom from a gang of crooks.
If the famous detective refuses—
it is death!*

THE FIRST CHAPTER In Lawless Hands I

FERRERS LOCKE smiled grimly. It was the first time in his career that the Baker Street detective had been caught napping. The blow had fallen suddenly, swiftly. The hunter in his turn had been hunted; the trapper trapped; the thief-taker taken. But the fact that he lay, bound and helpless, at the mercy of his enemies, did not shake Locke's accustomed calm. It did not prevent him from seeing a grim humour in the situation.

He lay—as he had lain for hours—on a rug on the floor, in a room darkened by blinds. The room had been in utter darkness when the detective, bound hand and foot, had been carried into it, and dumped down on the floor by his unknown captors. But with the dawn had come a glimmering of light, and as the sun rose higher the light penetrated more and more, in spite of the blinds at the windows. Ferrers Locke was able to see his surroundings, but what he could see told him little.

The room was not a large one. It was furnished as an office, with worn linoleum

on the floor, a roll-top desk by the window, with a telephone standing on it; a gas-fire fixed in a disused fire-grate. A revolving-chair stood before the desk, a couple of cane-seated chairs by the wall. There was little more in the way of furniture.

Where was he?

He did not know.

By whom had he been seized, and why? He could find, as yet, no answers to those questions.

Whoever they were, they were in no hurry to deal with him.

It was, as he remembered, close upon midnight when he had been seized; at the very door of his house in Baker Street. The house had been in darkness. Jack Drake, his boy assistant, had gone to bed. Something had been wrong with the lock, and as he fumbled at it with his latchkey, there had come that sudden rush of feet, the grip of sinewy hands, the sack thrown over his head. In a few seconds he had been lifted, a helpless prisoner, into a closed car and driven away. Where? He did not know.

He had been driven miles—many miles. Whether they were taking him a long distance from London, or just covering

unnecessary ground in order to deceive him, he could not tell. In black darkness, he had been taken at length from the car and dumped down where he now lay. The sack had been withdrawn from his head, allowing him to breathe with more ease, but the hard, gripping bonds on his wrists and ankles remained.

Locke had tested his strength on the bonds and failed. He did not expect to succeed, and, having failed, he did not waste his strength in further futile efforts. He lay and waited.

It was now, as near as he could tell, getting towards noon. Closely blinded as the windows were, light filtered in more and more. Dim as it was, his eyes were accustomed to the dimness, and nothing in the room escaped his searching eyes.

He did not know where he was, but had he escaped from his prison he could have found it again with ease. Many times his eyes had dwelt on the telephone that stood on the desk. It was partly turned from him, and the dimness would have defied eyes less keen than Ferrers Locke's. But he could read the label on the instrument that gave the exchange and number:

"Greenover 131."

He knew nothing of Greenover or its exchange. Probably an outlying suburb of the great city. But, once free, it would have been a simple task to trace the house where he now lay by its telephone number and exchange.

That thought was in his mind, but it was useless enough. He was not free, or likely to be free, until his captors chose.

If he could but have reached the telephone—

Jack Drake, in the office at Baker Street, would be wondering why his chief had not returned. But he would not be alarmed. It was common enough for Locke to absent himself for days at a time without a word. Not for some days, at least, would Drake feel uneasy. There would be no search for him, for he would not be missed.

If he could have reached the telephone—

But he could not reach it. He could not even rise to his feet. He knew that he would not have been left where he was if he could have reached the telephone.

Yet, powerless as he was, the thought lingered in his mind. He could not have told Drake where he was, but "Greenover 131" would have been sufficient. Swiftly enough, Drake would have traced out that telephone number and flown to the rescue. Ferrers Locke visualised a fast car, packed with Scotland Yard men—

But it was futile to think of it. He lay helpless, his limbs aching from the grip of his bonds.

How long were they going to leave him like this? What did they want? Not his life—that would have been easy enough to take. He was kept a prisoner, for some reason. For what?

He smiled grimly.

They were leaving him like this, weary hour after hour, to realise his helplessness, to break his nerve. If that was their object, they were not likely to succeed.

The silence was deep. He had heard no sound in all the weary hours he had lain there, waiting with grim, impassive patience till it should please his captors to come to him.

But there was a sound at last.

A key turned in a lock. A door opened.

The detective's eyes turned to the man who entered the room.

For the moment he had only a back view of the newcomer as he locked the door after entering.

Then the man turned towards him.

From the eyeholes of a black crape mask, two keen and penetrating eyes returned the detective's glance.

Locke was conscious of disappointment.

The black crape completely concealed the face, and the figure was hidden in the folds of a loose, almost shapeless, shabby ulster. Only the feet, well shaped and well shod, gave Locke the hint that a well-dressed man was hidden under the shabby ulster. The brisk step, light and springy, told him also that the man was young. But to his identity there was no hint of a clue.

For a long minute the man in the mask

"Refuse my request," said the masked man, a note of menace in his voice, "and the gas will be turned on—unlighted" !



stood looking down on the bound detective in silence.

Locke did not speak.

He waited.

It was the masked man who broke the silence at last.

"Ferrers Locke!" The detective listened for a familiar note in the voice, but in vain. Either the man was a stranger to him, or he was disguising his tone. "You are in my hands!"

"I do not need telling that," said Locke tranquilly.

"You have been given time for reflection——"

"More than enough!" said Locke.

"To help you to realise your position. No human eye saw you brought here. No one can even surmise where you are. You do not know yourself."

"That is true."

"If you never reappear in Baker Street, Ferrers Locke, your fate will be one more of the many mysteries of London."

"No doubt."

"Your fate depends on yourself. Do as I demand, and to-night the same car that brought you here will take you back to Baker Street. Refuse——" The masked man paused, on a note of menace.

"And then?" asked Locke calmly.

The unknown made a gesture towards the gas fire in the grate.

"The gas will be turned on—unlighted! I need not tell you what the result will be."

Locke smiled faintly.

"You need not," he assented. "It only remains to tell me what you demand."

"A little thing!"

Locke raised his eyebrows ironically.

"Only a little thing? You have taken all this trouble to ask a little thing?"

"A little thing—to you! A great thing—to me! In your safe at Baker Street there is an article I require—that I must have! If it be given to me, you live! If not——"

Another gesture towards the gas fire completed the sentence.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

The Price of Life!

THERE was silence.

The masked man had taken a seat on the revolving-chair at the desk, facing the bound detective on the floor.

As he sat the loose ulster fell aside a little, disclosing a portion of an elegantly-trousered leg.

The man was well dressed. His voice was cultivated. His eyes were cool, clear, dominating. It was no common criminal who sat looking at the Baker Street detective.

Minute followed minute. The man in the mask was waiting for Locke's reply; his penetrating eyes scanning the detective's face, perhaps for a sign of uneasiness or fear. But no such sign was to be read in Locke's impassive face. His expression was quietly thoughtful. It was the masked man who broke the silence again.

"Your answer, Locke?"

"I am not in a position to bargain," said Ferrers Locke. "What is the article you require? I admit that I cannot even surmise——"

"A little thing, as I said. Merely a document."

"There are some hundreds of documents in my cabinet at Baker Street."

"Only one that interests me."

"You must be a little more explicit," said Ferrers Locke. "At present I am quite in the dark."

"I will be explicit. You see this telephone? I shall ring up your office in Baker Street, and put you through to your assistant, the boy Drake. Then I shall lift the instrument down to you. You will speak to Drake. You will tell him that you are a powerless prisoner, in danger

of death; that your life depends on his instant obedience to the order you will give him."

"And that order?"

"To hand over to a man who will call at Baker Street this afternoon a certain document, which you will describe to him. The document is to be handed over without question. Once it is in my hands, you are a free man."

The eyes gleamed from the mask.

"But a word of warning! You are a clever man, Locke—a dangerous man, as the criminal world of London well knows. You may think of attempting to enlist Drake's aid—and the aid of Scotland Yard through him. You may, in spite of all my precautions, have some inkling of where you are at this moment. Take care! One word to Drake outside my instructions—one syllable that might bring danger upon me—and I cut off immediately, and leave you to the gas! If you fail me in this, it will not be easy to abstract the document I need from your safe, but it will be easier with Ferrers Locke dead than with Ferrers Locke living. You understand?"

"Quite. And the document I am to describe to Drake——"

"I will make that clear. It is a document as yet unread by you——"

"Unread?" repeated Locke.

His eyes narrowed.

"Unread, because you are a man of your word. It was placed in your hands sealed, not to be opened till a certain date."

Locke was silent.

"I will refresh your memory." There was a tone of irony in the cultivated voice that came from under the black mask. "Some weeks ago a Captain Harrington called on you in your office in Baker Street. You remember him?"

Locke made a sign of assent.

"He explained to you that he had become involved with a gang of West End criminals, led by a man well placed in Society, whom the police never dreamed of suspecting, who was beyond the suspicion even of Ferrers Locke." The eyes from the mask glinted mockingly. "He had long desired to withdraw from the association,

but he dared not. His life would have been the forfeit for desertion. You remember this?"

"I remember."

"His associates found him too useful to let him go. And they could not have trusted him once he had broken loose from them. He was warned; he knew what to expect. To protect himself, for he was determined to break off his criminal associations, he wrote out a full confession, giving the names of his associates, and a list of the robberies in which they had been engaged, with full details. Most important of all, the name of the leader of the association——"

"Your name?" asked Ferrers Locke.

The man in the ulster shrugged his shoulders.

"I need not deny it, since my identity will never be known to you. My name! This document he sealed and placed in your hands, on your promise to keep it sealed and unread, unless you received the news of his death. This service you promised to perform."

"I remember."

"If you received news of his death, you were to break the seal, read the confession, and act upon it."

"That is correct."

"Having taken this measure to save himself, the captain broke with us, warning us of what he had done, not doubting that it would protect him from our vengeance."

Locke felt a chill.

"It did not protect him," went on the quiet voice under the mask. "At the present moment an unidentified body is floating somewhere in the Thames. When it is found and identified, you, if a free man, would break the seal of that envelope, and act on the confession written within. But you are not a free man, Ferrers Locke, and you will never break that seal!"

Ferrers Locke breathed hard.

"That document, unseen by your eye or any other, will be placed in my hands when I call at your office this afternoon," said the man in the mask. "My safety, even my life, depends on it! I have told you what happened to the weak-kneed

traitor who deserted me. You may guess that I shall not deal with you more gently if you fail me."

He paused.

"You will telephone to Drake, and fix an hour this afternoon when he will hand over the document to the one who will call for it. Attempt any trickery, and you will not have a second chance. The document safe in my hands, to be destroyed, you are free. I do not fear you once Harrington's confession is out of the way. Refuse, and—— But I need not repeat that."

Locke was grimly silent.

"It is a matter of life or death for you, Ferrers Locke!" said the man in the mask quietly. "If I leave this room unsatisfied, I leave the gas turned on. Your answer?"

"Give me time to reflect!"

"That is only reasonable. I will give you a quarter of an hour." The man in the ulster rose from the chair. "In fifteen minutes I shall return—for your answer. Let it be ready!"

"It will be ready," said Ferrers Locke.

The door opened and closed.

The man in the mask was gone.

Ferrers Locke lay alone again, in silence, in the dusky room.

As he lay, his eyes were fixed on the telephone that stood on the desk. His brow was wrinkled with thought.

From time to time his lips moved, as if he were murmuring and repeating words under his breath, but no sound came from him.

The minutes ticked away.

Minute by minute the sands of the detective's life were running out. He knew that he had no mercy to expect. The man whose secret life of crime was betrayed by the document locked up in the office at Baker Street had shown no mercy to the poor wretch who had deserted him, and he would show none to the detective who would gladly have hunted him down to his just punishment. Only the surrender of the confession could save Ferrers Locke, and with the confession would be surrendered the possibility of bringing to justice the most dangerous criminal in London.

Even if he yielded—not that he dreamed

of yielding—would the unknown keep faith?

Was he likely to spare the life of the detective who had been a prisoner in his den, and might find his way there again? It was not likely.

The door opened quietly.

The man in the mask was with him again. He stood over the bound detective.

"Your answer?"

Locke drew a deep, deep breath.

"Ring up Baker Street!" he said.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

The Message!

Buzzzzzzzz!

Jack Drake stepped to the telephone in Ferrers Locke's office in Baker Street.

From without, the murmur of the traffic in Baker Street came dully to his ears. He had been looking from the window, watching the endless procession of vehicles and passengers, and wondering when his chief would return, when the telephone bell rang sharply.

"Hallo!"

"Hallo! Is that Drake?"

"Drake speaking, Mr Locke." The detective's assistant recognised the cool, clear, incisive voice of Ferrers Locke at the first word.

"Good! Listen to me carefully, Drake. I have fallen into the hands of a man I do not know, and am a bound prisoner in a place that is strange to me."

"Mr. Locke!" gasped Drake.

"Keep cool, my boy! My life depends on you, and on your carrying out the instructions I give you."

The receiver trembled in Drake's hand for a moment. The colour had faded from his face.

Ferrers Locke a prisoner, in danger of his life! A bound prisoner in some unknown den of crime! And yet his voice had come to Jack Drake's ears quietly, calmly, in the cool, incisive tones he knew so well.

Drake pulled himself together.

He would have risked his life, given his life, to save his idolised master. But there was nothing he could do—nothing but listen, with all the steadiness he could

muster, to that quiet voice on the telephone.

"You hear me, Drake?"

"Yes, sir."

"The man into whose hands I have fallen, and who holds my life at his mercy, demands a certain document, now locked up in my office. Unless this be given up to him, I am a dead man."

Drake caught his breath.

For a second he almost doubted whether he was listening to Ferrers Locke, for the words told of surrender—told that the Baker Street detective, to save his life, was yielding to the demand of a criminal.

Life was sweet, but if Ferrers Locke was saving his life by such a concession to a criminal, he was not the man Jack Drake had always believed him to be.

"Listen to me, Drake! I shall give you directions where to find that document, and instructions what to do with it. Do not fancy that you can help me in any way. You can only save my life by acting exactly as I tell you. You understand?"

"I understand," faltered Drake.

"There must be no mistake. A mistake means death to me, Drake. Take down my instructions in writing."

"I have my fountain-pen, sir."

"Write, then," said Ferrers Locke.

"I am ready, sir." Drake had opened his fountain-pen, and he drew a writing-pad towards him.

With a hand that shook a little in spite of himself, Jack Drake wrote down the words that followed, in the quiet voice over the wires:

"The document is in the steel cabinet under the telephone, packed away among a number of other papers. It is sealed in a long green cartridge envelope. Hand it over immediately, without question, to one who will call at three o'clock this afternoon. No one else can give me help; only this can save me."

There was silence.

"I've got it, sir," said Drake.

The silence was unbroken.

Ferrers Locke did not speak again.

"Are you still there, sir?" asked Drake.

A voice came through—another voice, strange to Drake's ears. It was a soft and

cultivated voice, with a tone of mockery in it.

"You have heard your master's instructions! Carry them out, Jack Drake, if you value the life of Ferrers Locke."

"I am here to carry out Mr. Locke's orders," answered Drake. "I shall do exactly as he has told me."

"Then expect a caller at three, and remember that any attempt to detain him, to watch him, or to follow him will cause the death of Ferrers Locke."

"You are a clever man, Locke," said Sir Peter Denaby, "but I cannot fathom how you contrived to outwit me."



"I shall do exactly as my master has directed me—no more and no less," said Drake.

"That will be well."

Drake put up the receiver.

That strange message from a man who lay in the shadow of death was at an end.

Drake stood very still.

His face was white and set. But as he read over the instructions he had written down, a faint smile played over his face.

He looked at his watch.

"Twelve! Three hours to work in!

Three hours to save Ferrers Locke and lay that scoundrel by the heels! More than enough, I fancy."

Once more he read over the instructions written on the page of the writing-pad.

Then he picked up the receiver again, and gave a Scotland Yard number. As soon as he was through, he asked for Inspector Cornish.

The deep, rather gruff voice of Inspector Cornish, with whom Locke had often worked, came through in a minute or less.

"Drake speaking, from Ferrers Locke's office," said the detective's boy assistant.

"Fire away!"

"Mr. Locke has been made a prisoner, and his life is threatened."

"Good gad!" ejaculated the inspector.

"I cannot say whose hands he is in, or where he is," went on Drake. "But the telephone number of the place is Greenover 131. That is all Mr. Locke was able to tell me."

"But how——"

"I will explain when I see you. I am

coming round as fast as the car will move," said Drake hurriedly. "You'll be ready, with as many men as you think you'll need, Mr. Cornish?"

"Rely on me."

"How long will it take you to trace out the address of that telephone number?"

There was a chuckle.

"I'll have that ready before you get here, young 'un. If you want to be in at the death, lose no time."

"Right!"

Drake jammed the receiver back on the hooks. Two minutes later a fast car was threading the traffic of Baker Street, with Drake sitting in it, his eyes gleaming, his heart beating fast.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

Brought to Book!

FERRERS LOCKE lay and listened.

He was left alone, and for a long, long hour he had lain and listened intently.

The man in the mask had held the telephone to his lips, the receiver to his ear, while he spoke to his boy assistant at Baker Street. Immediately he had given his instructions to Drake, the instrument had been taken away. His hands had not been freed for a moment; his captor was taking no chances with him.

The masked man was gone, the door locked, and silence brooded over the dusky room, with its dark blinds.

If there were others in the house—and Locke knew that there must be—no sound of them reached him.

He listened with painful intentness. Until three o'clock that afternoon, the hour fixed for the document to be handed over to the one who would call at Baker Street for it, his life was safe. Not until then could the man in the mask know that he had been tracked.

Drake had time to work in, and there were men at Scotland Yard, old friends of Locke's, who would be eager to help. If Drake had understood! But Locke had no doubts on that point. He knew that Drake had understood. There was time for help, time for rescue, and it was for the sounds of rescue that Locke was listening as he lay in

dusky silence, his limbs aching from his bonds.

He started suddenly.

The silence was broken at last!

A crash, a shout, a sudden ringing shot, a tramp of feet, a howl of excited, alarmed voices!

Then a shout that reached the detective clearly, in tones of surprise and terror:

"The police!"

Trampling footsteps passed his door. Voices called and shouted; another shot rang out. Desperate work was going on in that unknown house of mystery while the Baker Street detective lay helpless, unable to stir a limb.

But the uproar calmed at last. Obviously the denizens of the mysterious house had been taken by surprise by the sudden raid. A brief, desperate resistance had been overcome, and the house was in the hands of the police.

Footsteps and voices—a voice that Locke knew—the voice of his boy assistant.

"Mr. Locke! Mr. Locke! Where are you?"

"Here!" called back the detective.

The key turned back in the lock, the door was hurled open. Jack Drake sprang into the room. Behind him loomed the burly figure of Inspector Cornish.

"Drake, my boy!" Locke's face lighted up at the sight of the eager, excited face of the boy.

"We've got them!" came the inspector's deep voice. "Three of them—and one a bird in fancy feathers, by gad!"

Drake's pocket-knife was already sawing at the cords that bound the Baker Street detective. The bonds fell apart. Ferrers Locke, stiff and cramped, rose to his feet with Drake's assistance, and stood leaning heavily on the boy's shoulder. His face was pale with the twinges of pain in his cramped limbs.

The burly inspector grinned at him cheerfully.

"We've got them, Mr. Locke! Three of them—and more to come now that we've got their headquarters! Come and look at them! One of them's a priceless bird—no less than a baronet. A man I've seen

knocking about the West End for years, and never dreamed—— But come and look at them!"

He chuckled.

"We've not had time to search the place yet, but it's stacked—crammed. The loot of a good many robberies here, Mr. Locke." Mr. Cornish rubbed his plump hands. "By gad, you've put us on to the catch of the season—or, rather, your lad here has! Come and look at the fine bird that's dropped into the net! He handled a revolver when we got him—luckily for his neck, without any damage. Come!"

Locke pressed Drake's hand; it was all the thanks the boy needed. They followed the inspector.

In a large room three men in handcuffs were guarded by a number of plain-clothes men from Scotland Yard. Two of them were lowering, common crooks. The third was a handsome, well-dressed man in the prime of life, whose elegance of manner and cool assurance had not deserted him even in his present situation. His eyes shot one glance of deadly hatred and revenge at Ferrers Locke. It was the man who had worn the mask and the ulster.

"Sir Peter Denaby!" grinned the inspector. "Man about town, living by his wits. But who would have picked him out as a cracksman? Member of the best clubs, by gad! You've seen him about town, Locke, but I'll bet you never guessed the other side of his life."

"I've seen him about town, and I never guessed the other side of his life," assented Ferrers Locke quietly. "But I have a document in my office which will, I think, let in considerable light upon Sir Peter's proceedings for the past few years."

"This is their headquarters—the headquarters of the most daring and dangerous gang that has worked the West End in my time," said the inspector. "And Denaby's the leader, by gad! We'll get them away quietly, and wait for the other birds to drop in—what? But it was touch-and-go with you, Locke. If your boy had misunderstood——"

"I was sure that he would not," answered

Locke tranquilly. "I leave them in your hands, Cornish. Drake——"

"The car's outside, sir," said Drake.

"Let us go, then!"

"One moment!" Sir Peter Denaby's voice, calm and cultivated, was the same that had spoken to Ferrers Locke from under the mask. Desperate rascal as he was, the man was game. "You have me now, Ferrers Locke. The tables are turned. What will be found in this house will leave little need for Harrington's confession, locked up in your safe at Baker Street. The game is up—for me! You can afford to satisfy my curiosity—an idle curiosity in my present circumstances, I admit. How did you work this?"

Jack Drake smiled.

"You spoke on the telephone, in my hearing," said Denaby. "I heard every word, and weighed every word. Yet I gather that you conveyed some message to your assistant."

"I did!"

"You have me guessing," said Denaby. "You are a clever man, Locke, and I have often admired your cleverness. Yet I cannot fathom how you contrived to outwit me."

Locke turned to his assistant.

"You have the instructions you wrote down at my dictation, Drake?"

"Here, sir."

Drake produced the paper from his pocket.

"Read that," said Locke.

Denaby read the paper over:

"The document is in the steel cabinet under the telephone, packed away among a number of other papers. It is sealed in a long green cartridge envelope. Hand it over immediately, without question, to one who will call at three o'clock this afternoon. No one else can give me help; only this can save me."

"I heard this, every word, as you spoke to Drake," said Denaby. "It tells me nothing."

"Fortunately, it told Drake much," said Ferrers Locke dryly.

"What did it tell him?"

"The telephone number of this house."

Denaby started.

His eyes sought the paper again, and he shook his head.

"A secret code?" he asked.

"A code long ago arranged with my assistant, for use in emergencies when secrecy was essential," said Locke. "It was never more essential than in this instance, Sir Peter Denaby."

"True!" The gentleman cracksman smiled faintly. "Had I detected the trick your life would have paid for it, Ferrers Locke! But the trick, if it is there, escapes me even now!"

Locke shrugged his shoulders.

"Read every fifth word," he said.

The cracksman started again, and once more his eyes scanned the paper.

A bitter smile crossed his lips.

"That is why you asked for time for reflection, Ferrers Locke! You needed time—a little time—to prepare this message for your assistant."

"Precisely."

The cracksman read out slowly the message that was made up by selecting every fifth word in the instructions Jack Drake had written down at his master's order:

"THE TELEPHONE NUMBER IS GREEN OVER ONE THREE ONE. HELP ME."

"The telephone number is Greenover 131. Help me," he repeated. He handed the paper back to Ferrers Locke with his manacled hands and bowed with sardonic politeness. "You have beaten me, Locke, and I deserved to be beaten for giving you the chance. Another time—"

"Another time, I think, will never come," said the Baker Street detective quietly.

Locke made a sign for Jack Drake to follow him, and walked past the prisoners, the eyes of the cracksman following him with a deadly gleam in them. A few minutes more, and the car was bearing Ferrers Locke and his boy assistant back to Baker Street.

THE END

Riding the Storm

AN inferno of noise, stunning to the senses, paralysing to helpless inaction all but the strongest-nerved of men out on the bosom of the sea or in the air—howling wind, raging water, madly scurrying clouds, slashing rain, and clammy sea-mists swirling and blotting out everything. The stage is set for an epic battle with the elements.

The powerful destroyer in our picture—grace in every line of her, thick armour-plate enclosing a collection of that giant-powered machinery of the sea to which the twentieth century has given birth—is direct descendant of the stoutly-built wooden barques of our uncivilised ancestors, and is therefore thoroughly at home in this turmoil of savage Nature.

But her escort of seaplanes is in another category altogether. For seaplanes are the babies of the world's transport, and sea and sky and knife-edged slashing rain combine as common enemy to beat all aircraft down to doom. The art of navigating the waters has long since been learned. The airman is still learning; he is only at the beginning of his schooling, as this is reckoned by the measure of Time.

But every year that passes now sees gigantic strides in the complete conquest of the air. No matter though the thick, clammy mists blot out the destroyer completely for long minutes together, her escort of seaplanes keep in touch with her, by wireless, even as they keep in touch with shore stations set up to aid the airman flying "blind." And when ships and sea and horizon are blotted out utterly, the air pilot is able to fly solely with the aid of his instruments—products of the scientist's uncanny skill.

The man at the wheel of the storm-wracked destroyer and the navigating officer on its bridge, by reason of the greater protection afforded them, know little of the ordeal the air pilot passes through when sea and sky are conspiring to defeat all mankind!

THE END



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RIDING THE STORM!

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A SCHOOL PORTER

by
William Gosling
(In an Interview)



I tugs at the risin'-bell until my pore old arms
is well-nigh wrenched from their sockets!

"AND work never killed nobody."

That's wot the 'Eadmaster told me when I complained to 'im that I was bein' rushed off me legs, an' swept off me feet, an' worried off me 'ead by the numerous dooties which falls to my lot.

Well, p'r'aps 'ard work ain't killed nobody—yet; but I've got an uncomfortable feelin' that I shall be the first victim! You see, when a man gets to my age 'is constitution is the worse for wear an' tear, an' it ain't nearly so robust as wot it used to be. They say that the first seventy years of a man's life is the worst, but don't you believe it. It's when you're between seventy an' eighty that the pace begins to tell, an' your joints get rusty, and you're leg-weary an' body-weary an' soul-weary.

Wot I says is this 'ere—why should a man 'ave to work, manually an' annually, all 'is days? Why should he 'ave to work at all, for the matter of that? I often wishes as 'ow I was a beautiful lily, wot toils not, neither do it spin. But if man *must* work, as the song says, then the only job wot appeals to me is that of a wine-taster—with plenty of overtime! But wine-tastin' is one of the overcrowded professions, so there's no chance in that quarter.

'Ere at Greyfriars, in my job as school porter, I works me fingers to the bone; an' as soon as the flesh 'as 'ealed, I works 'em to the bone again; an' so it goes on. I rises earlier than the lark, on winter mornings dull an' dark (poetry!), an' tugs at the risin'-bell until these pore old arms is well-nigh wrenched from their sockets!

Then, after a bite of breakfast, I spends the mornin' runnin' errands for the 'Ead, an' sweepin' the leaves in the Close, an' cleanin' the winders, an' polishin' up the

'andle of the big front door; an' a thousand an' one other dooties, most of which ought to be done by Trotter, the page. But whenever the word *work* is mentioned, Trotter trots so fast that you can't see 'im for dust!

In the afternoons I runs more errands, an' sweeps more leaves, an' cleans more winders, an' polishes up more 'andles of more big front doors. The summer is my busiest time, because we generally gets 'eavy falls of snow durin' an English summer. An' when the Close is snowbound, it's jolly 'ard work gettin' it clear—especially with snowballs whizzin' all around you, an' knockin' off your 'at, an' squelchin' into your face. Drat these English summers, I says; an' drat the young ribs wot spends 'em a-snowballin'!

If the Governors of Greyfriars possessed 'earts instead of flintstones, they would find me a nice little cottage where I could pass the evenin' of me days, with a pension of five 'undred a year to retire on. My terms is quite modest, but the Governors an' the 'Ead won't 'ear of them. So there's nothin' for it but to stick to my dooties—in fact, to carry on until I'm carried off!