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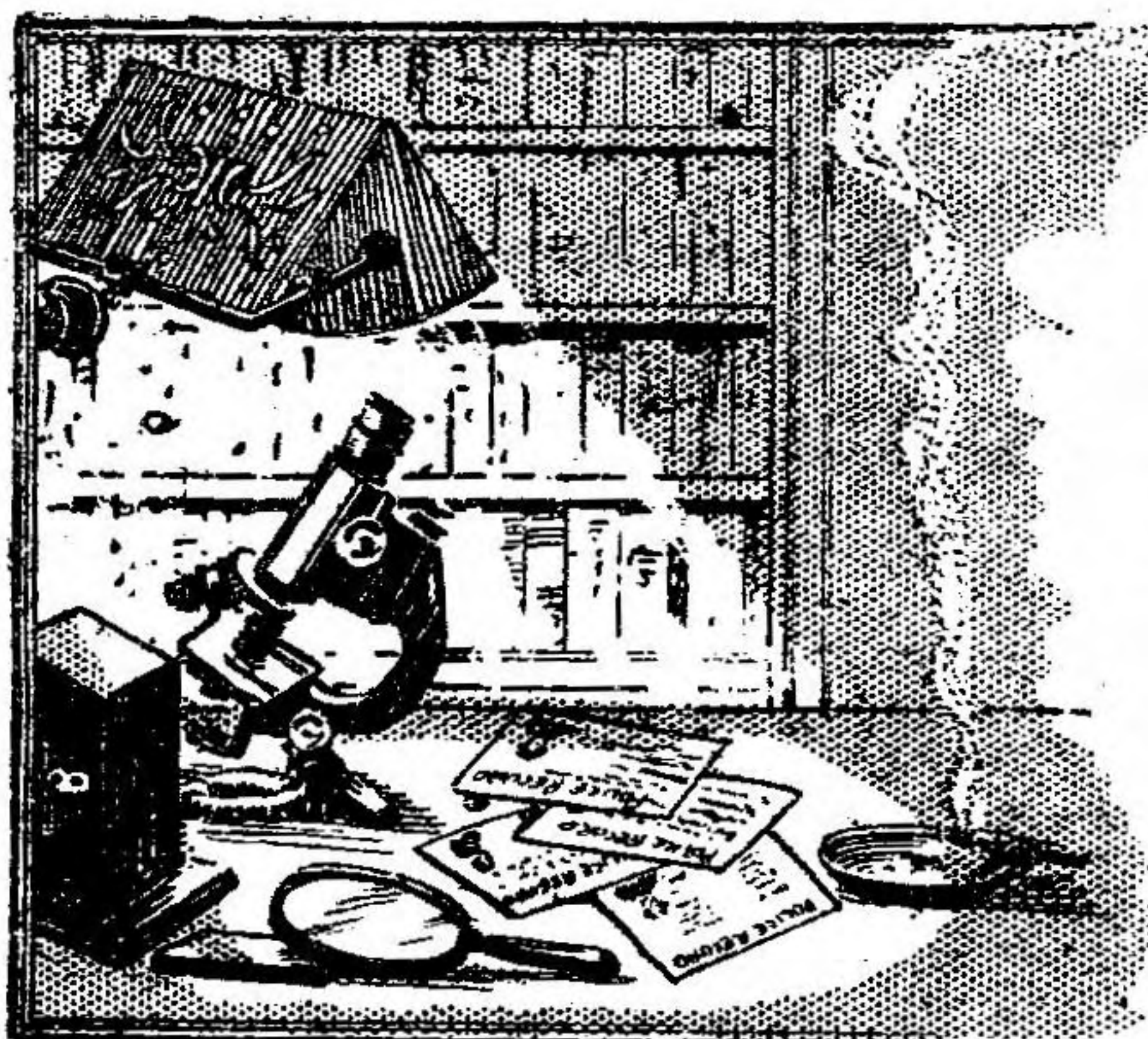
ON SALE EVERY TUESDAY.

July 30, 1921.



ALL THESE SPLENDID CHARACTERS INSIDE.

Another Splendid, Long Complete Story of Ferrers Locke, the Great Detective, and his Assistant, Jack Drake.



THE DETECTIVE'S TRAP!



A Grand, Long Complete Detective Story introducing Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake.

The Murder At Surbiton.

FERRERS LOCKE glanced up as the telephone-bell rang. "Take the call, Drake!" he said.

Jack Drake hurried to the telephone. It was the deep voice of Inspector Pycroft, of Scotland Yard, that came booming over the wires.

"Mr. Locke?"

"His assistant," answered Jack Drake. "Mr. Locke is here."

"Ask him to step to the 'phone."

Drake turned towards his chief.

"It's Mr. Pycroft, sir, and he wants to speak to you."

"That you, Locke?" boomed the inspector. "Good! I'm speaking from Surbiton. Would you care to run down here this morning?"

"What is it, Pycroft?"

"A rather odd case," said the inspector. "One or two rather curious circumstances that I think might interest you. If you're coming I'll have everything left as it is until you arrive. The body has not been moved yet—"

"Then it is a case of murder?"

"Yes—Captain Corcoran, of Lotus Lodge, killed in his room last night—"

Ferrers Locke rang off, and turned to his boy assistant.

"Tell Wootton to bring the car round at once, Drake, and get your hat. You are coming with me."

Five minutes later Ferrers Locke and his boy assistant were in the car, speeding south-westward.

Once out of the traffic, and in the quiet suburban roads, the chauffeur let the car "rip," and in record time Ferrers Locke stopped at Lotus Lodge. It was an old-fashioned house, standing in its own little grounds, in a quiet street lined with lime-trees. Drake jumped out and opened the wide, wooden gate, and the chauffeur toiled the car into the narrow, gravel drive, that ran in a semi-circle before the house. Ferrers Locke alighted at the stone steps before the door, and he found Inspector Pycroft awaiting him there.

The burly inspector's face was serious, and his manner a little subdued. In the hall behind him a helmeted constable was to be seen. Inspector Pycroft shook hands with the famous detective.

"Come in, Locke! I'm glad you were able to come. There're one or two points in the case I'd like your opinion on. An odd affair—very odd!" He led the detective into the house as he was speaking, and Drake followed. "I'll give you in a few words what's happened so far. Early this morning Captain Corcoran's man, Simmonds, rushed into the local police station with the news that his master had been murdered. The police came at once, and I was sent down as soon as headquarters was communicated with. I've taken the case in hand—"

"No arrest, so far?"

"I'm detaining the man Simmonds. But begin at the beginning—come to the captain's room. Your lad had better stay down here—it's no sight for him."

"Remain here," said Ferrers Locke, with a glance at Drake.

"Yes, sir," said Drake rather reluctantly.

Ferrers Locke followed the burly inspector up the stairs. Lotus Lodge was not a large building; it consisted of only two stories, and in the upper story were three rooms, opening on the small landing. One door was open, and Ferrers Locke followed the inspector into the room.

In spite of his iron nerve Locke breathed hard, as a terrible scene met his view.

The bedroom was in a state of fearful disorder. A chair and a table were overturned, and a square of carpet crumpled, evidently by **trampling feet**. Bedclothes were dragged over

the floor, and a carafe had been knocked over and smashed.

In the middle of the room lay the body of a man. He was powerfully built, of late middle age, a thick, grizzled beard, and a tanned complexion. There were marks on his throat of the grip of fingers, but the cause of death was a terrible wound in his head, where a blow had been struck with some heavy instrument. The expression of rage and hate, which had marked the features in life, seemed to have been frozen there by death.

Ferrers Locke's glance took in most of the details of the scene in a moment. A revolver lay beside the bed, and the detective picked it up.

"Unused!" said the inspector. "He kept it handy, but he had no time to use it."

Locke nodded. The revolver was loaded in every chamber. He glanced at the door, which had been forced in.

"That was done by Simmonds, when he could not make his master hear in the morning," said Pycroft. "That is his story, at least."

Locke stepped to the window. Outside, a sheer wall dropped for forty feet to a gravel path. There was ivy on the wall far below, and traces where, in former days, it had climbed to the gutter above; but it had evidently been cut away at some time, and now grew only a few feet from the ground.

Four feet or so away from the window was the down pipe from the gutter, a thick iron pipe clamped to the brick wall.

"The door was locked?" he asked.

"Simmonds says so."

"Then the murderer entered by the window."

Inspector Pycroft rubbed his chin.

"Could a human enter by the window?" he said. "I've found traces of footsteps on the gravel below, but—forty feet up a sheer wall, Locke. There are no signs of a ladder. And the window was locked."

"There is the drain pipe."

"A monkey could climb it, perhaps, but who could reach four feet along to the window-sill and catch a safe hold?"

"Few men, I should think."

"None, I should think," said the inspector. "If the man came in at the window, there is something very unusual about the man. But if he came in by the door Simmonds' tale is false, and he is either the murderer or an accomplice. I am detaining him, of course."

The Man Who Hid.

THE man Simmonds was seated in a dusky room, the blinds being drawn, when Ferrers Locke entered, with the inspector and Jack Drake. He started to his feet, with anxiety in his face. He was a man of about seventy, but still hale and strong, and his weatherbeaten countenance hinted of a seafaring life.

"Oh, sir!" he exclaimed. "You don't suspect—you surely can't suspect—" His voice faltered.

"Calm yourself," said Ferrers Locke quietly. "You must not complain of being detained on suspicion. Simmonds, in the circumstances, I should like to put a few questions to you. I am a detective."

"I've told the gentleman here everything I know, sir," faltered the old man. "But to think I could be the murderer—"

"I know you are not the murderer, Simmonds," said Ferrers Locke.

"You know that, sir?"

"It is fairly obvious," said Locke, with a slight smile. "A man of your age, however hale, could not have put up so terrific a struggle as has evidently taken place with so powerful a man as Captain Corcoran. You may have admitted the murderer to the house."

"I swear I did not, sir."

"That is what we have to discover. Tell me what you can. You have been a long time with Captain Corcoran?"

"Ever since he left the sea, sir," said Simmonds, "and that was twenty years ago. I'd sailed with him, off and on, many times, sir. He was skipper of a tramp steamer in the North Sea then. He retired when he came into his money."

"He came into money?"

"So I understood, sir. He came to me one day in a sailor's boarding-house in Liverpool, and he says, 'Simmonds, I've had some good fortune, and I'm leaving the sea, and I want a man to look after the house, and would you care to take it on?' he says. Well, sir, I'd had enough of the sea, man and boy, and at fifty a man is glad to get a quiet berth on shore. I jumped at the offer. I reckoned, of course, that we'd live in sight of the sea," went on the old sailorman. "But after leaving it, Captain Corcoran seemed to have a horror of salt water. It was an easy berth for me, though there was drawbacks. He never went near the sea, and he was always rusty if I wanted to run down to a port to have a yarn with an old messmate. It was but seldom I went, sir, on account of that."

"Captain Corcoran kept no other servant?" asked Locke.

"No, sir; he was quite alone here with me. He seemed to like solitude. He wouldn't even have the tradesmen call at the house. I used to go down into the town and do the shopping. Never a friend called on him. It was a lonely life, I thought, but he seemed satisfied. He used to drink a lot, sir, and smoke all day, and walk about the grounds. Hardly ever did he go outside the walls."

"Did he seem to fear an attack?"

"That he did, sir—always keeping a loaded revolver under his pillow, and many a time I thought he'd do himself harm with it, when he was on the drink. He always locked his door at night, and bolted it, sir, and his window was always fastened."

"Was the ivy cut away from the walls during his time here?"

"The day afore we moved in, sir, by his orders, arter he had selected that room for himself. He says as how a monkey or a seafaring man might have climbed it."

"You say he went out very seldom?"

"Hardly ever, sir."

"When he did go, do you know where he went, or whom he saw?"

"No, sir. He would have a cab called and go away in it, and come back after a few hours, sir, and never say a word."

"Did he receive any letters?"

"Never, sir, in the twenty years I was here with him," said Simmonds. "He cursed something awful over the registration business in the war-time, sir. He hated putting his name down, for some reason. If he had any business, his solicitor did it, and had the letters for him."

"He had a solicitor, then?"

"Jest once I heard him speak of it, sir, but I never knowd the name or the address."

"No doubt something will be found among his papers," said Locke, with a glance at Inspector Pycroft. "It seems that the captain went in fear of his life. Was there ever any attack made upon him, to your knowledge, Simmonds?"

"Not that I know of, sir. Once in the night he woke me up by firing his revolver. He thought he saw a face at his window, and broke a pane of glass with the bullet."

"Now about what happened last night," said Ferrers Locke. "A terrible struggle took place. You heard nothing of it?"

"Nothing, sir. You see, I was down at the Black Bull yesterday evening," explained Simmonds. "I have a night there once a week. A man must have some company, sir."

"I came back at twelve," continued the old sailorman. "I had a drop, but I was perfectly sober, sir—sober as I am now. I let myself in with my latch-key, as usual—it's a Yale lock, sir—and shut up the door and bolted it and chained it, as usual. There wasn't a sound to be heard. I went up to my room, which is next to the captain's. Not a sound, sir. Not knowing that anything was wrong, I turned in and slept, as usual. And all the time"—the old man shuddered—"all the time, sir, he must have been lying dead on the other side of the wall."

"How did you discover it?"

"I turned out at six, sir, as usual. I was always an early riser. I got my breakfast, and then took up the captain's. I used to take him his breakfast in bed. He would get out and unlock the door—never left it unlocked at night once, sir, drunk as ever he might be. But this morning he never answered me when I knocked. I kep' on knocking, and thinking that he wanted to go on snoozing, I took the tray down again."

"Half an hour later, sir, I comes up again, and knocked. Still, there wasn't any answer. So I called out that if he didn't open the door I'd bust it in. But no answer, sir; and I fetched up the wood-chopper, and smashed in the lock,

feeling certain by that time, something had happened. And then—then I saw him—"

Simmonds broke off with a shudder.

"Was he intoxicated last night?"

"I left him drinking when I went out, sir."

"It seems clear that he had enemies. Do you know anything of them?"

"Nothing, sir. He was a hard man afloat, and I've heard hands in the fo'c'sle say they'd do for him; but sailormen talk like that and forget all about it."

"Were you with him on his last voyage?"

"No; it'd been two years since I sailed with him when he came to me in Liverpool."

"Do you know where his last voyage was?"

"In the South Seas, sir. I don't know the ship. But he had some curious things he brought home from the islands—war-clubs, and queer shells, and such."

Ferrers Locke knitted his brows. He asked a few more questions, to which the old man replied freely enough. Drake glanced at his chief; but he could read nothing in the detective's inscrutable face.

"I think we have finished here," said Ferrers Locke, at last. "And I think, Simmonds, that you may comfort yourself with the knowledge that you have nothing to fear."

"Thank you, sir."

And the old sailorman was left alone again.

Reconstructing the Crime.

FERRERS LOCKE returned to the death chamber, with the inspector. Drake was allowed to enter after a sheet had been thrown over the dead man. With the inspector's eyes upon him Locke made a thorough examination of the room. Everywhere were signs of the fearful struggle that had taken place, in overset and smashed furniture.

"He fought hard for his life," said the inspector. "Even the chest of drawers was knocked over, and it is heavy."

Locke glanced up from his search.

"The chest of drawers was not knocked over in the struggle," he said quietly. "You see that drawer has been torn out, and the contents scattered. That was done in a search."

"A search?"

"The murderer may have come here to kill an old enemy," said Locke. "But he had another object—to find something. The chest of drawers was dragged away from the wall, and turned out. The mattress of the bed had been ripped wide open with a slash of a knife."

"Intended for the sleeper," said the inspector.

"I think not. It was done after the murder," said Ferrers Locke. "At the time of the struggle the unknown man had no knife in his hand, or he would have used it. He used some thick cudgel in the fight. Afterwards, searching the room for what he wanted, he opened a clasp-knife and ripped up the mattress."

Inspector Pycroft started.

"Why a clasp-knife, Locke? This sounds to me like one of your fine theories."



Ferrers Locke quickly disposed of the lock of the sea-chest. Drake drew a deep breath as the lid was thrown back. "The pearls!" he muttered. "What remains of them," said Ferrers Locke, quietly.

"I said a clasp-knife because seafaring men generally carry clasp-knives."

"Then the murderer was a seafaring man?"

Locke smiled.

"Taking Simmonds' tale as true," he said, "the murderer could not have entered by the door. The chimney is too narrow for anything larger than a cat. He entered therefore by the window. To do so he had to climb a drain-pipe clamped to the wall, and swing himself to the window-sill nearly four feet away. Only a very active and accustomed climber could do that—a man, for instance, whose life had been spent in the rigging."

"Something in that," assented Mr. Pycroft.

"That is not all. Captain Corcoran was hiding from some enemy. He went in fear of an attack—which came at last. His whole life, until he retired, was spent at sea. Surely it is a natural inference that his enemy was encountered at sea—a seafaring man."

"But, sir—" said Drake, and paused.

"You may speak, my boy."

"Surely a vendetta could not last over such a length of time as twenty years, sir," said Drake. "Could any man keep up so bitter a hatred for such a length of time—"

"Such cases are very rare," said Ferrers Locke. "The bitterest hatred might be expected to die away in so great a lapse of time."

"Then, sir—"

"Then," said Ferrers Locke, "that helps us to the conclusion that the murderer had a second object—beside that of revenge. Captain Corcoran possessed something that the murderer coveted, and when he found where the captain was hidden, he came here to search for it."

"And how did he find where the captain was hidden, after so long a lapse of time?" asked Inspector Pycroft, with a touch of irony.

"During one of Simmonds' rare excursions to the sea, I should suggest. On such occasions Simmonds would mix with seafaring men—in public-houses and sailors' boarding-houses—and doubtless he would tell, sometimes, of the curious life he led in Surbiton, especially when he had been drinking. On a dozen occasions, probably, nothing came of it, on the last occasion it gave the clue to Captain Corcoran's old enemy."

"By Jove!" said the inspector.

"Learning where Corcoran was hidden, the man came here and watched the house for some time. Otherwise he could not have learned on what nights Simmonds was absent at the Black Bull, or which was the window of the captain's room. He fixed last night for the deed. He was prepared to kill the captain if he resisted—perhaps prepared to kill him in any case. He swarmed up the drain-pipe, swung himself to the window-sill—certain death to anyone but an accustomed climber, but possible to an active sailorman. Kneeling on the window-sill, he was probably surprised and pleased to find the window unfastened—"

"He found it unfastened?"

"There are no signs of force being used upon it."

"It was locked when we entered this morning," said the inspector, with another touch of irony.

"It's a spring lock," the detective said. "The window opens as a casement, as you see, and a push—or a pull—will lock the window. We know that the captain was drinking before he went to bed last night. He locked and bolted the door as usual, and pushed the window shut. In his semi-drunken state, he did not notice that the lock did not click as usual. The window was shut, but it was not locked."

The inspector nodded very slowly.

"It would have made little difference," continued Locke.

"Having risked his neck to reach the window, the desperate man would not have hesitated to smash the glass and leap into the room."

"No doubt. But—"

"The seafaring man pushed the window open, and dropped into the room," Locke went on. "The sleeper awakened, he clutched the revolver from under his pillow, but he was seized before he could use it, and it dropped from his hand in the struggle, or was forced from it. The struggle was a fierce one; the assassin had the unfortunate man by the throat, but for some time Corcoran kept off his weapon, but it was used at last, smashing in the captain's skull. Leaving him where he fell, the murderer proceeded to search the room, turning everything out for what he sought—even ripping up the mattress of the bed—scattering articles recklessly on all sides—"

"You might have been there, Locke," said Inspector Pycroft, not without a touch of sarcasm. "Can you tell me whether he found what he sought?"

"At the present moment, no. It was something of great value, since he was risking his life to obtain it, and the man was no ordinary thief, for, as you see, he has not touched the captain's watch and chain, which are still hanging on the bedhead. He was thinking of a larger prize than that. We have to discover what."

Locke paused. There was a gleam in his eyes, and a

tightening of his sensitive lips. His clear-cut face had something of the look of a bloodhound on the trail. It was plain that his interests were deeply aroused by the mysterious case.

"And the man went the way he came?" said the inspector.

"Evidently."

"Closing the window after him?"

"He pulled it shut, and it locked."

"Why should he take that trouble?"

"To give the room its normal appearance. This window was always kept closed at night, and last night there was clear and bright starlight. Look from the window."

The inspector looked.

"What do you see, Pycroft?"

"Garden, and trees, and a strip of the street," answered the astonished inspector.

"Exactly. A portion of the street can be seen from this window, and in consequence, this window can be seen from a part of the street. If the constable on the beat, passing, had noticed the window open, his suspicions would have been aroused. If Simmonds had gone in by the back door, he would have passed under this window, and could scarcely have failed to observe if it was open. It was evidently safer for the murderer to close it after he left. An immediate alarm would have meant immediate pursuit, but as the matter stands, he had until eight in the morning to make his escape and cover his tracks."

"Well worked out, Locke," said Inspector Pycroft. "Anything more? You figure it out that the captain had something valuable here, that the unknown knew of it, and came here for it, killed him, and searched for it. Do you reckon he found it?"

"If he did, he is far enough away by this time," said Locke. "But I think it highly improbable. Because a thing of so much value, and small in compass, could easily be concealed in a safe hiding-place, too safe to be unearthed in a hurried search."

"Of small compass?" repeated the inspector.

"It could not have been a thing of large dimensions, as the murderer evidently intended to carry it away with him, climbing down a drain-pipe from a height of forty feet."

"True. Money, perhaps—"

"Or something of greater value than gold," said the detective. "Captain Corcoran's last voyage was in the South Seas, and after that voyage he was rich. It may have been pearls. Whatever it was, it is extremely doubtful whether he came by his treasure honestly. Men who make a fortune by fair means do not settle down to enjoy it in the peculiar manner adopted by Captain Corcoran."

"That is so. He seems to have been a pretty rough and tough customer, anyhow."

"Then the rare and mysterious journeys he made by cab," said Ferrers Locke. "It is easy to form a surmise as to their object. I suggest that he was disposing of his treasure—whatever it was—by slow degrees, probably in order not to excite suspicion, probably realising a little at a time as he required money."

Inspector Pycroft pursed his lips.

"We are getting into deep waters, Locke. If I were to put all this into my report, my name would become a standing joke in the Yard. Imaginative, my boy."

Locke shrugged his shoulders.

"If I haven't been able to assist you, Pycroft, I'm sorry."

"You've helped. I'm going to keep my eyes peeled for a seafaring man. But I'm keeping my hands on Simmonds," said the inspector grimly. "Simmonds was here, and he can't have liked the captain, and he came home intoxicated. A drunken row and a fight, and then Mr. Simmonds spins a yarn of a locked and bolted door. Well, we shall see, Locke. You look for your mysterious seeker of hidden treasures, and I'll keep my hands on Simmonds."

"So be it," said Ferrers Locke. "I'm glad you called me in, at any rate, Pycroft. I suppose the police will remain in occupation of the house?"

"For some days at least."

"I'll ask you a favour, then. Let me know twenty-four hours before the police clear off the premises."

"Certainly. But why?"

"One of my fancies!" said Locke grimly.

And a few minutes later the famous detective and his boy assistant were in the car, speeding back to Baker Street.

House to Let!

"ARE you comfortable in your quarters here, Drake?" Drake looked up. It was some days since the visit to the house of death at Surbiton; and the "Mysterious Murder in a London Suburb" had filled the morning and evening papers to overflowing.

During those days Jack Drake had seen little of his chief. Ferrers Locke had been busy. It was at the breakfast-table that Locke asked his sudden question. He met Drake's surprised glance with a smile.

"The fact is, my boy, I have bought a house."

"Oh!" exclaimed Drake.

"Rather a new departure for me," smiled Ferrers Locke. "I have done many things in my time, but this is the first time I have speculated in house property."

"You have some special reason, sir," said Drake shrewdly.

"You will think so, when I tell you that Lotus Lodge, Surbiton, is the house I have purchased."

Drake started.

"Captain Corcoran's house—"

"Exactly. In spite of the house shortage, still severe, I have obtained the little property at a bargain. People will not willingly live in a house where a murder has been committed," said Ferrers Locke. "When I called on the late Captain Corcoran's landlord, I found him not only willing, but eager, to sell, and he was glad to take a fair price."

Ferrers Locke cracked his second egg.

"Is there any more news, sir?" Drake asked.

"I have been making inquiries—at first in Hatton Garden, where I know a good many of the dealers in gems. I gained a few details from Abraham Isaacs, an old acquaintance of mine. He deals largely in pearls. For many years he has been accustomed to buy pearls from a rough, seafaring man, who came to him once or twice in the year, always with a few very valuable pearls to sell. From his description, there is little doubt—or, rather, none—that his man was Captain Corcoran, of Lotus Lodge."

"Then he had pearls—"

"Which he disposed of a few at a time, as he needed money," said Ferrers Locke. "There is no reason to suppose that he had come to the end of his store. We know now what the murderer was after. The police have searched the house rigidly, but they have discovered nothing. I hope we shall be more lucky when we take possession."

"Oh," exclaimed Drake, "that is why—"

"That reason—and another. Everything depends now on whether the murderer found the pearls that were left. It is practically certain that he did not; for the police have found no trace of a secret hiding-place, and surely Captain Corcoran would not keep such a treasure lying about his room. I conclude that it was packed in some recess so secret that the police search has failed to reveal it—and if it is so well hidden, it is not likely that the murderer found it in his hurried quest."

"And if he did not find it, he will try again?" Drake asked.

"Exactly. We are going to set up in business as house agents, Drake, with a neat little house in Surbiton to let. The police leave the premises this morning, and we immediately take possession. We shall make some slight changes in our appearance," added Ferrers Locke, with a smile. "One cannot be too careful."

"Nothing else has been discovered, sir?"

"Inspector Pycroft has found a solicitor who dealt with some affairs for the captain. His name was among the dead man's papers."

The Detective's Find.

SOME time later, when Ferrers Locke and his boy assistant left the house, by a rear exit, few would have recognised them.

Locke, with a grey beard and moustache, and rusty black clothes, looked twenty years older; and Drake, with a slight moustache and darkened eyebrows, looked nineteen at least, and very unlike his usual self.

They found a policeman in charge of Lotus Lodge when they arrived in a taxi.

"Mr. Smith?" the constable asked, as he opened the door to Locke's ring.

"Precisely."

"Mr. Pycroft told me to remain till you came, sir."

"Thank you."

The constable took his leave, and Ferrers Locke and Drake—otherwise Mr. Smith and his nephew—were installed in the house.

In Captain Corcoran's time, the house had been solitary enough; it was as solitary now. But Ferrers Locke and Drake were very busy. The detective's search was unremitting.

The front garden was overgrown with weeds; and among the grass and thistles a notice-board looked out on the street. It bore the legend:

"House to Let.—Inquire Within after 7 p.m."

But the house of death was not sought after. Few callers came to view it, but up to 7 p.m. every day the detective was seeking the secret that he knew existed, and which still baffled him.

That the captain had hidden his treasure in a secret place appeared to Locke a certainty. And after Ferrers Locke and Drake had been five days in the house the former, who had been busy in the dead man's room, called down the stairs to Drake.

Drake fairly flew up the stairs.

"You have found it, sir?" he exclaimed breathlessly.

"At least, I am on the track," said Ferrers Locke. He pointed to the wall against which the captain's bed had stood. "There it lies."

"But—"

"There is no trace; but measurements cannot lie," said Locke. "I have mapped out and measured every cubic foot of the house. The house is thirty feet from side to side. The adjoining room takes up ten feet—Simmonds' former room. Allowing a foot for the thickness of the intervening wall, this room shall measure nineteen feet. It measures sixteen," said Ferrers Locke.

"Then the wall between is four feet thick," exclaimed Drake.

"Precisely. Certainly this house was not built with one bedroom wall four feet in thickness," said Locke. "The only explanation is, that a new wall has been added, enclosing a certain space. That space can only have been enclosed to make a secret recess. Simmonds knew nothing of this—no doubt the work was done during one of his absences to see his old messmates at Liverpool. But it was done."

"There must be an opening—"

"It is cunningly concealed, but I shall find it," said Ferrers Locke.

And he bent his energies to a careful examination of the wall, assisted by Drake. The wallpaper was of a thick, dark kind, and very old. Here and there it had been patched. There was absolutely no trace of an opening of any kind, and Drake looked at his chief at last dubiously.

"Our friend the captain had his wits about him, Drake," he said. "It was but seldom, of course, that he entered the secret recess—only on the occasions once or twice a year when he took away a part of his treasure to realise it. He could take the trouble to cover up his tracks."

"But how—"

"By pasting fresh wallpaper over the secret door," answered Locke. "With so many patches all over the room a fresh patch attracted no attention from Simmonds—the only person who saw the room besides the captain. And a stranger searching the room would scarcely think of penetrating beyond wallpaper that looked unbroken. We shall now strip the paper from the wall."

It was a long task, but at last the old wallpaper—several thicknesses of it—lay in dusty strips at the foot of the wall. It was not necessary to remove it all. For the wall was only half-bared, when a narrow wooden door, exactly flush with the lath and plaster wall, was revealed.

The door was locked, but Ferrers Locke's tools quickly opened it. Darkness lay beyond. Ferrers Locke turned on the light of his electric torch. A narrow, dusty room, crowded with cobwebs, was revealed, with a thick and heavy atmosphere. In one corner lay an iron-bound sea-chest.

The chest was locked, and the detective dragged it out into the bedroom, where he quickly disposed of the lock. Drake drew a deep breath as the lid was thrown back.

There were many things in the chest—a sailor's knife, a suit of blue broadcloth neatly folded, curious shells and carved stones. And a leather bag, which the detective picked up and opened. He poured the contents on the table, and Drake gave a cry, as more than fifty large and lustrous pearls glimmered under his eyes.

"The pearls!"

"What remains of them," said Ferrers Locke quietly. "Captain Corcoran had been disposing of them for many years, and yet this number remains, worth at least five thousand pounds. The captain certainly made a good pile in his last voyage to the South Seas; and it is impossible, of course, that he can have come honestly by such a treasure."

"I suppose so," said Drake, eyeing the pearls as if fascinated by their glimmer and gleam. "What will become of these now, sir?"

"They will go to the police, and to the captain's heirs, if any, ultimately, Drake. But for the present they will remain locked in this sea-chest until—"

"Until—" repeated Drake.

"Until the murderer returns," said Ferrers Locke. "He did not, as we now know for certain, succeed in finding what he came for. As soon as he feels safe, he will return—and he will learn that the house is to let. I think, my boy, that he will be very glad to see our notice-board in the garden. I think he will conclude that the easiest way of searching for the pearls is to take the house as a tenant—"

Drake smiled grimly.

"So if a seafaring man is among the applicants, sir—"

"Exactly. As soon as there is an applicant to whom the rent is no object, who is determined to have the house in any case, and who looks as if he has been a seafaring man, then, my boy, we shall be able, I think, to wind up our stay in Surbiton, and return to Baker Street."

Caught In The Trap!**T**ING-A-LING!

It was nearly a week since the discovery of the hidden pearls—a discovery that remained a secret known only to Ferrers Locke and his boy assistant. During the week three or four applicants had called about the house, even the shadow of the murder not deterring them. But one and all had departed in loud indignation at the exorbitant rent demanded by "Mr. Smith."

Drake went to the house door and opened it. Ferrers Locke sat in the front room, at the table, prepared to receive the caller. A drawer of the table was open under his hand, and in that drawer lay a revolver.

Drake came back along the dusty hall, and showed into the room a powerfully-built man with a short, black beard, and watchful dark eyes. The roll in his gait, as well as other signs that did not escape Ferrers Locke's keen eyes, revealed the seafaring man.

Drake's face gave no sign. Already there had been a seafaring man amongst the callers at the house, but he had proved a retired mate looking for a suburban home where he could take up gardening, and he had departed with a volley of seafaring words when he was asked one hundred and fifty pounds a year rent. It was possible that the fresh caller would be another blank. But the fact that he was a seafaring man made Drake on the alert, and after showing him into the room, he closed the door and remained near it.

The newcomer glanced at Ferrers Locke.

"Please be seated," said "Mr. Smith." "You have called about taking the house, I suppose?"

"Ay, ay, that I have," said the man dropping into a chair. "Looks a pretty little place, and may suit me."

"A most desirable suburban residence, sir," said Locke.

"Ay, ay. But—"

"There are six rooms, one large, and a very large garden," continued Mr. Smith. "The house is completely detached, and is not overlooked. It is in very fair condition—no new decorations needed."

The bearded man showed signs of impatience.

"I'll take it," he said. "Belay the talk, matey. I'll take the house."

"The rent—"

"Well, what's the rent?" growled the man.

"One hundred and fifty pounds a year, sir."

"That's high!" said the bearded man, with a stare.

"All prices are high at the present time, sir," said Mr. Smith, smoothly. "The cost of repairs is—"

"I'll take the house."

"You will, of course, give me the usual references," said Mr. Smith. "There is another party after the house at this very moment, but if your references are satisfactory—you have not told me your name yet, sir."

"Roberts!" said the man, after a second's hesitation.

"George Roberts. And as for references, I dunno that I've got friends in London. I'm from Liverpool. But money talks, I suppose."

"A cheque for a quarter's rent in advance, of course—"

"I don't know about a cheque. I can give you the money."

Mr. Smith smiled.

"Equally good, my dear sir, equally good. Of course, the rent might be considered rather high—"

"Never mind that! Make out a receipt for the money."

"But you have not viewed the house—"

"I'll take it, I tell you. It will suit me," said Mr. Roberts, gruffly. "Belay the talk, and let's get to business. When can I move in?"

"You are in a hurry?"

"Ay, ay; I'd like to set up house here as soon as can be managed," said the bearded man. "When can it be?"

"I shall engage a charwoman to clean down the house, and then—"

"Never mind that; I'll take it as it stands. Do you want me to sign an agreement, or anything?" grunted the bearded man.

"Perhaps I ought to warn you that a murder has been committed in the house," murmured Mr. Smith. "I desire to be quite fair—"

"That won't hurt me, I reckon. The murderer ain't likely to come agin and do for me, I s'pose."

"Scarcely," smiled Mr. Smith. "Besides, it appears that the murderer came in search of a number of pearls he believed to be in the house—"

The bearded man gave a violent start.

"What's that?" he exclaimed huskily. "How—how do you know that?"

"So it is stated by a detective, at least," said Mr. Smith calmly. "But now that the pearls have been discovered and removed from their hiding-place—"

The seafaring man leaped to his feet, with an oath, knocking his chair backwards, in the violence of his agitation. For a moment he had completely lost command of himself.

"The pearls found—removed!" he choked. "After all these years—death and the devil!" He spat out a curse. His eyes turned evilly and threateningly on Mr. Smith. "How do you know—who are you—what—"

He had no time to speak more. Ferrers Locke was upon him with the spring of a tiger, and he was borne backwards to the floor.

The bearded man went down, with the detective upon him. He struggled madly, and Locke, powerful as he was, had his hands full. Jack Drake rushed to his aid, and grasped the seafaring man's wrists, and dragged them together by main force. There was a click as Locke snapped the handcuffs on.

"Well caught," said the detective, a little breathlessly. "Drake, you will call the nearest cab, and we will take our friend to the station."

A stream of oaths came from the handcuffed man.

"Who are you?" he roared. "What's this game? I'll make you suffer for this, my hearty! What's the game, I say?"

"You are under arrest, my fine fellow, for the murder of Captain Corcoran," said Ferrers Locke. "Although an unofficial detective, I will warn you to say nothing now that may be used against you. You may go, Drake; our friend is quite safe."

Inspector Pycroft had been reluctant to release Smimonds; but his reluctance vanished when he received the new prisoner Ferrers Locke had captured for him.

It was from the prisoner that the last details of the case were subsequently learned—a story of bloodshed and robbery in the South Seas, of a pearl-robber who had cheated his confederate and fled with the whole plunder after a desperate raid. For twenty years Captain Corcoran had enjoyed the fruits of his treachery, though in ceaseless alarm and fear, till his old confederate and bitter enemy had found him at last, through falling in with Simmonds on one of his excursions to Liverpool, as Ferrers Locke had deduced.

The murderer's hurried search for the pearls having failed, he had fled, but he had returned to try again, when he felt that the coast would be clear, and so he had seen the "House to Let" board in the garden of Lotus Lodge, and had fallen blindly into the detective's trap.

And Ferrers Locke smiled with genial amusement when he read in his newspaper a glowing account of the astuteness, the ability, and the success of Detective-Inspector Pycroft!

THE END.

Another grand long story of Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake will appear in next week's "Boys' Herald." Look out for it!

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