

SOMETHING NEW IN BOYS' PAPERS!

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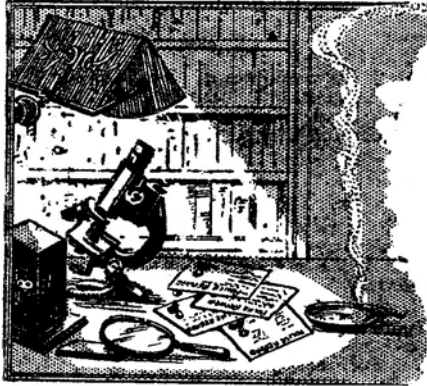


**FERRERS LOCKE:**

THE MASTER DETECTIVE AT WORK IN HIS STUDY. HE IS THINKING OUT THE SOLUTION OF A MYSTERY.

*Splendid Ferrers Locke Detective Story Inside!*

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



# THE GRIP OF THE LAW!

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

BY OWEN CONQUEST.

### A Startling Letter!

"No news of the boy, Locke?"  
"None, so far. And you—"  
"The same."

Detective-Inspector Riley dropped into a chair at the breakfast-table, opposite Ferrers Locke. The hour was yet early. Sing-Sing, Locke's Chinese servant, brought in the breakfast with his noiseless tread.

Ferrers Locke's cool, clear-cut face was growing graver than usual. The ruddy-complexioned inspector glanced at him curiously several times, as he tackled his substantial breakfast with a good appetite. Locke ate little. He spoke briefly to Sing-Sing as the Chinese was quitting the room.

"We've done all we can, Locke," said the inspector, with his mouth full. "Rather a new departure for you to be asking the Yard for help—what! Count Sazineff has not been seen in any of his usual haunts; he seems to have disappeared completely. He is keeping out of sight, of course."

"Of course," assented Locke.  
"No trace of Drake," continued the inspector. "But, as you could tell us nothing excepting that he had been taken out of Regent's Park in a taxi—Mr. Riley shrugged his broad shoulders—"it was not much to go upon, Locke."

"I expected little, and I am not disappointed," said Ferrers Locke tranquilly. "But I would not leave a chance untried. I'm much obliged to you for the trouble you've taken."

"And you've found no clue to the boy's whereabouts?" the inspector asked.

"None."  
"You are assured that he is in the hands of Count Sazineff?"

"There is no doubt on that point. The count telephoned to me to tell me how matters stood; and as Jack Drake did not return last night, I have no doubt that what Sazineff told me was correct."

"A cool hand!" said the inspector. "And he demands—"

"That I should pledge myself not to take a hand against him," said Locke. "A pledge that would tie my hands permanently, with regard to Sazineff and his confederates."

"Awkward for us, if we should call upon you for assistance," said Inspector Riley, with a smile. "And if you do not give the pledge—"

"Drake will never be seen alive again, according to the count's threat."

"Then"—Inspector Riley paused, with a very curious look at the famous private detective—"if the boy cannot be found, Locke, you are in an awkward scrape."

"He must be found!" said Ferrers Locke quietly.

"And you are expecting a letter from him now?"

"Exactly. In order to prove beyond doubt that he has the boy in his hands, the count declared that Drake should write to me. I am to receive the letter this morning. Until I receive it, of course, I cannot be absolutely certain that Drake is a prisoner in Sazineff's power. I am fairly certain of it, as he has not returned; but Sazineff knows that I must have proof before I give the pledge he demands." Ferrers Locke wrinkled his brows. "To save Drake's life, perhaps; but to tie my own hands, to pledge myself to stand aside while that scoundrel carries out his rascally schemes—"

Locke rose from the table, his breakfast unfinished, and paced the room.

Inspector Riley nodded sympathetically, and went on with his meal. Locke paced the room in gloomy thought until his companion had finished.

Then Locke led the way into his private cabinet, where the inspector filled his pipe and smoked sedately till Sing-Sing came in with a salver piled with letters. Locke's correspondence was generally heavy. Sing-Sing placed the letters on

the table before his master and glided noiselessly away. On top of the pile was an envelope addressed in a hand Locke knew well—the rather schoolboyish hand of his assistant, Jack Drake.

He picked up the letter.

"That is from Drake?" asked Riley.

"Yes."

"You want to be on the watch for a forgery," said the inspector. "We've never been able to get clear proof; but Count Sazineff is more than suspected of having had a hand in several cases of forgery. He covers up his tracks pretty completely."

"I do not think he could deceive me, however," said Locke. "But we shall see."

He slit open the envelope and took out the single sheet of notepaper that was folded inside. He started a little as he glanced at it.

It was but seldom that Ferrers Locke's inscrutable face betrayed emotion of any kind; but now, for a moment, blank surprise could be read there. Riley's eyes were upon him.

Locke bent his brows over the letter. He read it through carefully a second time, and his face cleared.

"Read it," he said, tossing the letter across the table to the man from Scotland Yard.

Inspector Riley picked up the letter rather eagerly and glanced over it. Then he whistled.

"By gad! You've been mistaken in this boy, Locke; he is not worth your trouble."

"I admit that that was my first impression," said Locke. "That is why I was surprised, as you observed."

"The confounded young rascal!" exclaimed the inspector. "He's in the count's hands, right enough; but where is the courage you've told me about? Where's the nerve? I've never known you make a mistake in reading character before, Locke, but you've made a big mistake this time."

Locke smiled slightly.

"Read the letter again," he remarked.

Inspector Riley, with a frowning brow, ran through the letter again. Certainly it was not the kind of letter Ferrers Locke might have expected to receive from his boy-assistant. It was as follows:

"Dear Mr. Locke,—When you get this miserable letter, I half expect you will not please this wicked man by obeying his order. Only if you do not, he will kill me. Advertise on Friday in Personal Column, 'Daily Mail,' 'I give my pledge.' Remember I am only fifteen. This villain means to execute his threat. Remember that I only left school a month ago. Don't try to search for this house, you couldn't ever find it. Please, Mr. Locke, have pity, and end my imprisonment! Rescue is impossible. Don't try it, sir; I shall be killed!

"Relying upon your kindness, sir,

"I remain, hopefully,

"JACK DRAKE."

In utter disgust, Inspector Riley threw the letter upon the table again. His ruddy face expressed utter contempt and scorn. Ferrers Locke regarded him questioningly.

"Well, what do you think now?" he asked.

The inspector snorted.

"What is there to think, excepting that Drake is frightened out of his wits by the count's threats, and is whining to you to save his life by any means?" he exclaimed.

"Every line in the letter shows that he was terrified when he wrote it—quaking with fear, the wretched young fink. And this is the boy you are so concerned about! By gad, I should be tempted in your place to leave him to his fate!"

Locke smiled slightly.

"I picked out Jack Drake as a lad likely to be very useful

to me," he said. "I put him to the test before he entered my service. I found him true and loyal, and brave and determined. Not in the least the kind of boy to write a letter like that."

"Then you think the letter is a forgery?"

"No, it is evidently genuine."

"Then you admit that you were mistaken in the boy?"

Locke shook his head.

"If I am mistaken in him, I shall never trust my judgment again," he answered.

"I'm dashed if I quite follow you," said the perplexed inspector. "You believe that this letter was written by Jack Drake while a prisoner in the hands of Count Sazineff, who has threatened his life unless you give the pledge required of you?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Then the letter proves that he is a coward, and that—"

"I hope not."

"What else can it mean?" demanded Inspector Riley warmly.

"I hope," said Ferrers Locke slowly—"I hope, Riley, that it means that this letter has some hidden meaning, which I must make it my business to discover. Taking it at its face value, I must admit that I have been deceived in Drake. But I do not believe so. It follows that Drake, writing this letter under the eyes of his captors, has contrived to convey some secret message, hidden somehow even from the count's sharp eyes."

"By gad!"

The Scotland Yard man picked up the letter again and ran his eyes through it. He held it up to the light.

"A good quality of paper," he said. "No watermark, however. A single sheet, cut off with a paper-knife. No doubt the top half would have an address engraved on it. But there's nothing on this sheet. Are you thinking of invisible ink, Locke?"

"No; a prisoner in the count's hands would certainly have no opportunity of obtaining or using invisible ink."

"Then the message, if any, must be contained in the wording of the letter."

"Obviously."

The Scotland Yard man burst into a gruff laugh.

"My dear Locke, you have had successes enough to be able to admit a failure for once. You are mistaken in the boy. He is scared, and is pleading to you to make terms with the count and save his life—thinking only of his precious skin. That's as clear as daylight. My dear man, you are simply clinging to a straw!"

Buzzzzzz!

It was the telephone-bell, and the sharp, persistent ring interrupted the man from Scotland Yard.

### Seeking the Secret!

FERRERS LOCKE picked up the receiver.

"Hallo!"

"Good-morning, my dear Locke!" It was the soft, silky voice of Count Sazineff. "I trust that the present painful circumstances did not disturb your night's rest?"

"Sazineff?" breathed Inspector Riley.

Locke nodded, and made a gesture towards the second receiver of the telephone. The inspector put it to his ear and listened quietly while the count's silky voice ran on:

"You have received your morning's letters, my dear Locke?"

"Yes."

"Including a letter from our young friend Drake?"

"I have just read it."

"Good! That letter was written in my presence," said the count. "You will have observed that the postmark is East Ham."

"Quite so!"

"From which, with your usual acuteness, you have deduced that the letter was taken a considerable distance and posted there?"

"Precisely," said Locke.

There was a soft laugh over the wires.

"I cannot afford to give clues to Ferrers Locke," went on the count. "To save you the trouble of inquiring at the exchange, I will mention that I am speaking from a public call-office."

"I had guessed that."

"Naturally. I have only one more minute to spare. Are you convinced now that your boy-assistant is a—shall we say guest—in a mansion belonging to me?"

"I am convinced."

"Good! You are a very reasonable man, Locke; it is a pleasure to deal with you!"

"Is that all you have to say, count?"

"I have a question to ask. At my order, Drake has told you to insert an advertisement in the Personal Column of the 'Daily Mail' on Friday morning—to-morrow. Simply the words 'I give my pledge.' That will reveal nothing to inquisitive eyes, and it will satisfy me. I know that Ferrers Locke's word is his bond."

"Thank you."

"I believe that an advertisement for the next day's issue of that celebrated paper must be taken into the office fairly early," drawled the count. "I beg to remind you that you have no time to waste, Locke, in making up your mind."

"Thanks again."

"Will the advertisement appear to-morrow?"

"You can hardly expect me to give an answer to that question off-hand," said Ferrers Locke quietly. "I have to consider—"

There was another laugh.

"You mean that you still have some wild hope of tracing the boy?"

"Perhaps."

"You are welcome to make the attempt, Locke. But I beg you to bear in mind that the advertisement for the Personal Column had better not arrive at the office too late for insertion. For if the notice does not appear in the paper on Friday morning, Locke, you will receive a packet by the ordinary parcels post on Friday afternoon."

"A packet!" repeated Locke.

"Which will, I am sure, give you considerable pain when you open it, my dear friend. It will enable you to gaze once more upon the features of Jack Drake. Unfortunately the rest of him will be buried in a certain garden, and you will see nothing more of him."

Locke set his lips.

"You dastardly villain!" he muttered. "If you dare—"

"Come, come, no hard words!" chuckled the count. "I have offered you fair terms for a truce. Accept, and the boy returns safe and sound on Friday afternoon. Refuse, and you receive his head as a present, and as a proof that you have to deal with men who are in deadly earnest. Think over it, my dear Locke. Good-bye!"

Ferrers Locke put up the receiver, and the Scotland Yard man followed his example.

Inspector Riley was breathing hard, and there was a bead of perspiration on his brow. His ruddy face had paled a little.

"By gad, what a scoundrel!" the inspector muttered. "You—you think he will dare to carry out his threat, Locke?"

"Yes," answered the detective quietly.

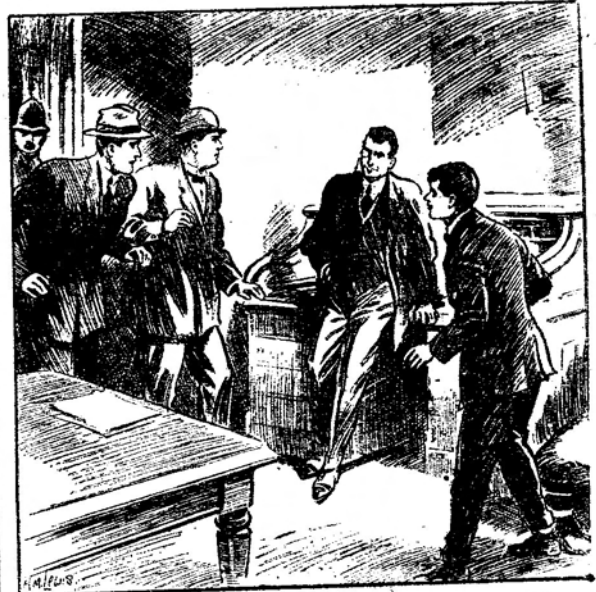
"It will put his neck into the noose."

Locke shrugged his shoulders.

"What evidence would there be against the count? He will have a complete alibi; he will not do the deed with his own hands. We have heard his voice on the telephone, that is all, and voices are much alike on the telephone. I do not think such evidence as that would weigh very much with a judge and jury. The count is safe, unless we find Drake in his hands and save him."

"And then he can only be charged with kidnapping and threatening."

"Yes. But that is a matter of small moment. Once Drake is out of his hands I shall be free to act, and I shall not be long in coming to grips with Count Sazineff." Locke's



Sazineff met Locke's eyes with a mocking smile. "I did not expect to see you here this morning," he said. "I expected to see you thought!" said Ferrers Locke grimly.

eyes glittered. "I know enough to send him to Dartmoor for ten years; it is only a question of obtaining proofs, which I shall obtain when my hands are free. He knows it. That is what has driven him to this desperate trick. But the question now is to save the boy. He must be safe before I can act."

Riley shook his head slowly.

"There is only one way to save him—to give the pledge that the count demands," he said. "There is absolutely no clue—"

"Unless one is hidden in Drake's message."

The Scotland Yard man made a gesture.

"You are clinging like a drowning man to a straw, in sticking to that idea, Locke," he said.

"We shall see."

Ferrers Locke seated himself at the table and picked up Jack Drake's letter again. The remainder of his correspondence lay unopened and unheeded. Locke was concentrating himself upon the problem in hand—the problem in which was involved the life of his boy-assistant.

The inspector smoked his pipe and watched him, with some slight impatience gathering in his face. It was evident that he had not the remotest belief in the existence of a hidden message in Drake's letter.

He heard Locke draw a quick, hard breath at last. The detective looked up.

"I think I was right, Riley," he said. "Since Drake entered my service, I have given him a good deal of instruction in a rather important branch of our profession—the deciphering of secret cryptograms and ciphers. He showed himself very keen and intelligent. After the first moment of surprise in reading this letter, I was convinced that he had remembered our studies together, and was making use of them."

"The letter is exactly the letter that would be written by a frightened schoolboy," interjected the inspector.

"Granted! But it had to be so, or it would not have satisfied the count, who, of course, read the letter through very carefully before he placed it in the post."

Inspector Riley shrugged his shoulders.

"You suggest that the boy worded a letter so that it would satisfy the count, and yet contrived that the wording should bear a secret meaning?"

"Just so."

"Which he counted upon your being able to unravel?"

"That is it."

"If it is so, the boy is certainly a marvel, and you were right in your judgment of him. But I should want to see the secret message before I believed anything of the kind," said the Scotland Yard man, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"You shall see it, then," said Ferrers Locke unmoved.

Inspector Riley jumped.

"You mean—"

"I have discovered the secret," answered Ferrers Locke.

"The letter contains, as I surmised, a secret message."

"Good gad!"

"Drake has found out the address of the house in which he is imprisoned," said Ferrers Locke. "He has contrived to tell me, and now I know exactly where to lay my fingers on the count and his prisoner."

Inspector Riley gasped.

"Locke, you are joking!"

"I should not be likely to joke on this subject," said the famous detective drily.

"The address of the house—you say that the address is there?" almost shouted the inspector, seizing the letter.

"Yes."

"And the address?"

"Glenwood, Waidgrove Road, Shepherd's Bush," said Ferrers Locke quietly.

### The Secret!

INSPECTOR RILEY stared at the detective, and then at the letter in his hand. It was evident that Ferrers Locke was in earnest; but to the inspector's eyes the mystery of the message was as great a mystery as ever. Locke watched his puzzled face with a smile.

"You do not see it yet?" he asked.

"Dashed if I do!" growled the inspector. "Unless you're pulling my leg, Locke, I can't make head or tail of the affair."

"Yet the secret is not a very deep one," said Locke.

"Certainly, I should not have found it if I had not believed that Drake was attempting to send me a secret message. He depended upon my divining that; he depended upon my not believing that he was scared into making a cowardly appeal. Thank Heaven I did him justice! If I had taken this letter seriously, on its face value, the secret would have escaped me."

"But the secret?" exclaimed Riley.

Locke flattened the sheet of notepaper on the table.

"Take every third word," he said.

"Every third word—"

"I began by looking for something of that kind," said Locke. "When it came to me, it came to me suddenly."

"Every third word," repeated Inspector Riley. "That makes 'get letter expect not wicked obeying only—' Is there any sense in that, Locke?"

Locke smiled again.

"Now take the initials of every third word," he said.

"The—the initials—"

"Yes—here, I will put them in in capitals with a pencil. That will make it more simple to read at a glance."

Ferrers Locke jotted over the paper with a pencil, the Scotland Yard man watching him breathlessly now.

"Leave out the 'Dear Mr. Locke,'" said the detective.

"That was a necessary preliminary to the letter. The cipher begins in the letter itself. Look!"

When Locke had put in the capitals, the letter was as follows:

"When you Get this miserable Letter, I half Expect you will Not please this Wicked man by Obeying his order. Only if you Do not, he Will kill me. Advertise on Friday In personal column 'Daily Mail,' 'I Give my pledge.' Remember I am Only fifteen. This Villain means to Execute his threat. Remember that I Only left school A month ago. Don't try to Search for this House; you couldn't Ever find it. Please, Mr. Locke, Have pity, and End my imprisonment. Rescue is impossible. Don't try it, Sir; I shall Be killed.

"Relying Upon your kindness, Sir,

"I remain, Hopefully,

"JACK DRAKE."

Inspector Riley followed the capitals with his eye. Taken away from the context, they formed the line:

"GLENWOODWAIDGROVEROADSHEPHERDSBUSH."

"Easy enough to space the letters out into words, I think," remarked Ferrers Locke.

The inspector nodded.

"Glenwood, Waidgrove Road, Shepherd's Bush."

"That is it," said Locke.

"By gad!" The ruddy inspector breathed deeply.

"Who'd have thought of such a trick?"

"Not Count Sazineff. He was too thoroughly convinced that his prisoner was in a state of terror," said Ferrers Locke.

"Drake has evidently played his part well. His words 'Remember I am only fifteen,' and 'Remember that I only left school a month ago,' are exactly the sentences that might be written by a schoolboy in a state of dire terror. They sound as if he were trying by every kind of appeal to induce me to yield to the count's demand, and save his life."

"They do, by gad!"

"And, at the same time, they enabled Drake to put in the necessary words, to furnish the list of initials he required for the secret message."

"True! A clever trick—a dashed clever trick!" exclaimed the inspector, in great admiration. "But if you had not guessed that there was a secret message—"

"I should not have searched for one, in that case; but Drake relied upon me to do him justice," said Locke drily.

Riley coloured a little.

"I misjudged the lad," he said. "But, on the face of it, anyone would have formed the same opinion. Even you were staggered by the first sight of the letter, Locke."

"I admit it."

"But now—" The inspector rubbed his hands.

"Evidently Drake can have had only one object in conveying that address to you."

"Evidently. It is the address of the house where he is kept a prisoner," said Locke. "Otherwise there would be no object in communicating it to me."

"Then it is all plain sailing now."

"It will be necessary to be careful. We know now where Drake is kept a prisoner, but we must remember that he is still a prisoner, and in desperate hands. Let us see what the directory can tell us of the house and its occupants."

Locke opened the directory and ran his finger down a column.

"Here it is—'Waidgrove Road, 'Glenwood,' Mr. Arthur Plummer, Leather Merchant,"

"That sounds innocent enough."

"Extremely so. 'Glenwood, Waidgrove Road, is the private address of Arthur Plummer, leather merchant; but I fancy we shall find that Arthur Plummer is another name for Count Sazineff, or one of his confederates, and that the gentleman is no more a leather merchant than he is Emperor of China.' Locke closed the volume with a snap. "Now, I want your help, Riley. The alarm must not be given until the house is completely surrounded and the escape of every soul within it cut off. Count Sazineff is quite capable of putting a bullet through his prisoner to revenge his defeat, if a way of escape was left open for him, but he will not put his neck into the noose. Once he knows that he must be taken, he will be as careful of Drake's life as his own."

"The charge will be one of kidnapping and threats to do

"grievous bodily harm," said the inspector. "I'd rather nab the scoundrel on a capital charge, but that would be rough on Drake." He grinned. "Anyhow, it's the first chance we've had of getting our hands on Sazineff on any definite charge at all, and if he is on the premises, we shall have him this time. He can be put away on a bit of a stretch for this. I only hope we shall find the rascal at 'Glenwood,' Waidgrove Road, Shepherd's Bush."

"I attach more importance to finding Drake there," said Locke. "But I certainly hope that we shall nail Sazineff at the same time. Unless he is there, we can scarcely sustain a charge of kidnapping against him. But I think he will be there; this quiet suburban house is evidently one of his safest retreats." Locke glanced at his watch. "When can you have a dozen of your best men ready, Riley?"

"In a very few minutes. I shall need only to ring up the Yard."

"Good! You will come down with them," said Ferrers Locke. "You will find me at the corner of Waidgrove Road, Shepherd's Bush, and I shall have ascertained the lay of the land by the time you join me."

"If they catch a glimpse of you—"

"They will not know me, if they do," said Ferrers Locke. "You will find a grey-headed pedlar at the street corner, and he will offer you bootlaces at a bargain."

Riley chuckled.

"Good man! I'm off, then!"

The inspector hurried away. Five minutes later Ferrers Locke was whirling westward in a closed car, and the man who stepped from the car in a quiet street in Shepherd's Bush was very different in appearance from the famous detective of Baker Street.

### In the Grip of the Law!

"POLICE!"

The word ran in a whisper through the silent house. It reached Jack Drake's ears as he stood, breathing quickly, in the dusky room where he had so long been a prisoner.

"Police!"

The word brought dismay and terror to the gang of rascals in the house, but it brought hope and relief to the imprisoned boy-detective.

There were hurried footsteps in the passages and on the stairs. The door of Drake's room suddenly opened, and Count Sazineff came hastily in.

There was an unlighted cigar clenched between his white teeth; his face was hard and set. He did not glance at Drake, but hurried across to the window.

Jack Drake watched him breathlessly.

The count drew aside the heavy curtains a trifle, and through the narrow opening peered into the garden without, into which the morning sunlight fell on trees and grass and flower-beds.

Across the garden he could see the wide wooden gate that gave access to the road.

Outside the gate a motor-car was halted, and close by the car stood four helmeted constables.

Count Sazineff gritted his teeth. Larry Burke came hurriedly into the room, his rugged face blank with dismay.

"You see them, gov'nor?"

The count muttered an oath.

"They show themselves plainly enough," he said. "And that means that the house is already surrounded."

"No doubt about that," growled Burke. "There's four men in the back-garden now, with Inspector Riley. I know him. And I dare say there's a dozen more round the house that we can't see."

"A thousand curses! How did that fiend, Ferrers Locke, discover the place?—How—"

"He's done it!" grunted the ruffian. "What does it matter how? We're trapped—trapped on all sides. Smiley's taken already; I heard him give a yell from the garage. They're in the garage."

Count Sazineff turned towards Drake, a deadly glitter in his black eyes. Drake stood by the sofa, to which the steel chain held him by the ankle, his heart beating thickly.

He knew now that the secret message had been understood by his chief, and that Ferrers Locke had lost no time in acting upon it.

The house was surrounded, the escape of the kidnapers was cut off on all sides. Drake was assured of that. Locke was not a man to leave a single loophole for his enemy. Drake knew, as well as if he had seen the famous detective at work, that Locke had watched the house and ascertained all that was to be learned about it, and had then placed his men in position. Every avenue of escape was closed before the police showed themselves. At any moment now might come the official knock at the door, and the demand for admittance in the name of the law.

Drake's heart throbbed.

He had done his duty, and the count was as good as taken. But he was still in the desperate man's hands, and he

felt a chill as the black eyes turned upon him, glittering.

If the master-criminal chose to risk everything for the sake of revenge—if he chose to put his back into the noose—the boy-detective was at his mercy. Yet Drake did not regret what he had done. At least, justice was at the heels of that master of crime.

"You dog!" The count hissed the words between his white teeth. "You have done this somehow! How have you done it?" He slid his hand into his pocket and drew out a nickle-plated revolver. "You have contrived somehow to betray me, but you shall not live to boast of it."

Drake faced him steadily.

The man was in a mood of savage hate and revenge, and capable of anything at that moment.

"You're dreaming, count!" broke in Burke roughly.

"How could the boy have—"

"The letter!" hissed the count. "There must have been some trick in the letter."

"We both read it before it went—"

"I care not! Before Ferrers Locke received that letter he had no idea where to look for us; now he knows!" snarled Sazineff. "Locke is with the police without—I have not seen him, but I know he is there. It is the boy's doing, and his life—"

Burke struck the count's hand aside.

"Are you mad?" he snarled. "Do you want to put all our necks in the halter? If they find the boy here dead, we are as good as hanged. Keep your senses!"

The count glanced from the window again. A sergeant and three constables were advancing up the garden drive to the door.

"If there were time," Sazineff muttered—"if there were but time, I would see that no trace remained to tell that he had been here—"

BZZZZZZ!

The bell of the telephone on the roll-top desk rang loudly. The count broke off with a curse.

"A warning, perhaps, now that it is too late!" he snarled. He tore the receiver from the hooks and placed it to his ear. "Who is there?"

"Ferrers Lock," came the quiet reply over the wires. Sazineff started.

"Locke! A thousand curses—"

"Save your breath, Count Sazineff," said the detective coldly. "You will need it for your defence when you stand in the dock."

"I am not in the dock yet," said Sazineff savagely.

"Where are you speaking from, you devil?"

"From a house in the same street," answered Ferrers Locke. "I have found Arthur Plummer's number in the telephone directory, count. I have rung you up to warn you."

"Warn me!" hissed the count.

"Your house is surrounded—a rat could not escape! Inspector Riley's men are armed, and have orders to use their firearms, if necessary. Jack Drake is in your hands. I warn you, count, that if harm befalls him, you will pay for it with your life!" The detective's voice was cold and clear.

"The warrant for your arrest has been issued on a charge of kidnapping. If you change the charge into one of murder, I give you my word—which you know I never break—that you shall not escape the last penalty of the law. That is my warning. Take heed to yourself, Count Sazineff!"

The count flung down the receiver with a curse.

Knock!

It was a heavy knock at the front door of the house, and it rang and echoed the hollow passages and rooms of the rambling, old-fashioned building.

Knock! Knock!

"Caught!" muttered the count, his lips writhing with rage. "Caught like a rat in a trap! Caught—trapped like a brute beast!" He gripped the revolver almost convulsively. "If there were a chance to fight a way out—"

"There's no chance," growled Burke savagely. "We're in for it, and shooting will only make matters worse."

"But to let the boy live after this—" Sazineff's black eyes glittered at Drake again. "It is almost worth the rope—to let Ferrers Locke find him dead when he enters—"

Knock! Knock! Knock!

"In the name of the law!" came a deep, powerful voice.

Larry Burke quitted the room, and went slowly to the front door. He knew that the game was up, and that a hopeless resistance would only make matters worse for him when he stood in the dock. He turned back the lock and threw the door wide open.

"You can come in!" he said, with an oath.

Inspector Riley stepped into the hall, with three or four constables at his heels. Ferrers Locke stepped in by his side. There was a revolver in the hand of the Baker Street detective.

"Larry Burke!" said Inspector Riley. "So you are in this! Wrists, please!"

Burke silently held out his hands for the "bracelets." The handcuffs clicked on his young wrists.

"Where is Drake?" asked Ferrers Locke, his eyes on the ruffian.

Burke, with a sardonic grin, made a motion of his head towards the open door of the room.

In a second more Ferrers Locke was in the doorway.

"Mr. Locke!" panted Drake.

Locke hardly heeded the boy for the moment. His eyes fixed upon the slim, elegant figure by the roll-top desk. The count had snatched a bundle of papers from the desk, and thrown them into the grate with a lighted match. Now he lounged against the desk, the nickel-plated revolver in his slim, white fingers.

He met Locke's eyes with a mocking smile. His furious passion had passed; he was once again the cool, smiling, debonair count that had visited the detective in his quarters in Baker Street.

"Well met, Locke!" he said coolly. "I did not expect to see you here this morning."

"I expected to see you," said Ferrers Locke grimly.

"Drop that revolver, Sazineff! If you raise your hand, you go down with a bullet through your heart! I shall not stand on ceremony with you, count!"

The count laughed lightly. "If I had intended to use the revolver, Locke, you would not be standing alive in that doorway at the present moment." He tossed the revolver lightly on the table.

"Ah, Inspector Riley, I see!" The ruddy face of the Scotland Yard man looked in over Locke's shoulder. "Well met, inspector! You have some charge or other against me, I believe? Otherwise, I cannot account for your bursting into my house in this unceremonious way."

The inspector smiled grimly. "You were always a cool hand, Sazineff," he said. "We've never been able to nail you before, but there's a definite charge this time, thanks to Mr. Locke and his boy here."

"May I inquire the charge?"

"Kidnapping, and threats to murder."

"Melodramatic, at least," smiled the count. "I suppose it is no use my explaining that the whole affair was simply a jest upon Mr. Locke—a merry jest, my friend?"

"You can explain that in the dock, my man!" grinned the inspector. "I'll trouble you for your paws just now."

"One moment." The count slipped his hand into his pocket, and the inspector raised his revolver suspiciously. But it was only a small steel key that Sazineff drew out, and

he tossed it upon the table with a light laugh. "You'll find that useful, Locke. The boy is chained to the sofa, and the chain is a strong one. The key will unlock it."

"Thank you!" said Ferrers Locke.

He picked up the key and unlocked the chain from Jack Drake's ankle. The boy-detective stood free at last.

"Wrists, please!" said Riley.

Click! In spite of his coolness, a shiver ran through the count at the contact of the handcuffs. In the course of a long career of crime, it was the first time he had felt that cold contact of metal on his slender wrists. For a moment his eyes blazed with fire; the next he was cool as ice again, and a smile was on his well-cut lips.

"I am your prisoner, inspector," he drawled. "May I ask a last favour—a closed car. You will not forget that I am a Russian nobleman by birth, and I have made a figure in the world. You do not want to make an exhibition of a nobleman who has fallen upon evil days."

"There's a closed car outside," said Inspector Riley. "Come along with me, my man; I'm not losing sight of you in a hurry! This way!"

He led the count from the room. In the doorway Sazineff glanced back at Ferrers Locke and his boy-assistant.

"Adieu, Locke; adieu, my young friend!" he said. "I shall not forget this; I have a good memory!"

And he passed out with the inspector.

**Danger Ahead!**

JACK DRAKE hardly spoke a word as the car bore him back to Baker Street, sitting by the side of his chief.

His brain was almost in a whirl, but his heart was light. He was free again; the fearful peril that had overshadowed him had passed. The house in Waidgrove Road was occupied by the police. Count Sazineff, Larry Burke, and Smiley were on their way to the cells. Ferrers Locke's triumph was complete.

"Home again!" said Ferrers Locke, with a smile, as the car stopped outside the house in Baker Street.

"Thank heaven!" said Drake.

Locke led his boy-assistant into the house. Drake was a little pale and tired, but he was recovering fast from his terrible experience in the house at Shepherd's Bush.

Sing-Sing greeted him with a friendly grin as he came in.

(Continued on page 21.)



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### THE GRIP OF THE LAW!

(Continued from page 20.)

A little later, seated at the lunch table with Ferrers Locke, Jack Drake felt quite himself again. And then he came to the subject of the letter. He coloured a little as he looked at Ferrers Locke.

"I know that you understood the letter, sir, as you came to the house in Waidgrove Road," he said. "But—but I'm afraid when you first opened it that you thought I was showing the white feather."

Ferrers Locke looked at him gravely.  
"The letter startled me," he said. "I could barely believe my eyes when I read it through. But it instantly flashed into my mind that it covered something else. If I did you injustice, Drake, it was only for the first moment."

"I thought you'd tumble to it, sir—that there was a secret message. I thought you knew me well enough to know that I'd never ask you to make terms with that scoundrel for my sake."

"I did know it, Drake. It was a clever device," said Ferrers Locke. "If the count had discovered it—"

Drake shivered a little.  
"I had to take the chance of that, sir. But—but he believed that I was frightened out of my wits, and so he never suspected. But—but if you hadn't found the message—"

"Once I had guessed it was there, it was only a matter of time before I found it," said Ferrers Locke. "I began to put the letter to the test methodically, and I was certain to find the clue sooner or later. Fortunately I was able to read the true meaning within an hour. And after that we lost no time. Now that it is all over, Drake, I am scarcely sorry that it happened. It has proved to me—if it needed

proving—that my judgment of you was right, and that you are all that I believed you to be."

Drake flushed with pleasure.

"And I shall need your aid in the near future," went on Ferrers Locke. "We have not done with the count yet."

"He will be sentenced," said Drake.  
Locke smiled.

"True. It is the first chance the official police have had of formulating a definite charge against him, and they will make the most of it. The news will cause a sensation in the West End, where the count is known as a man of fashion, and where the secret of his double life is not yet suspected. The exposure will ruin him, so far as society is concerned, and will make him a more reckless and unscrupulous criminal than ever. He will be found guilty at his trial and sentenced, but—"

Ferrers Locke paused, and pursed his lips.  
"But—" said Drake.

"Even if he serves his sentence it will not keep him out of mischief for more than a couple of years," said Ferrers Locke. "We shall have to deal with him again. But I do not think that he will serve his sentence. I fancy that the prison walls are not built that will hold so slippery a customer as Boris Sazineff."

And Ferrers Locke was right. It was a month later that an announcement in the "Daily Mail" caught Drake's eye one morning, and he took it to his chief. It was the brief announcement of a convict's escape from Dartmoor, and the convict was a former Russian nobleman, by name Count Boris Sazineff. Ferrers Locke smiled grimly as he read it.  
"We shall hear of him again—soon!" he said.

THE END.

Further adventures of Ferrers Locke and his boy detective, Drake, will appear in next week's "Boys' Herald."

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