

SPLENDID FOOTBALL STORIES AND SERIALS!

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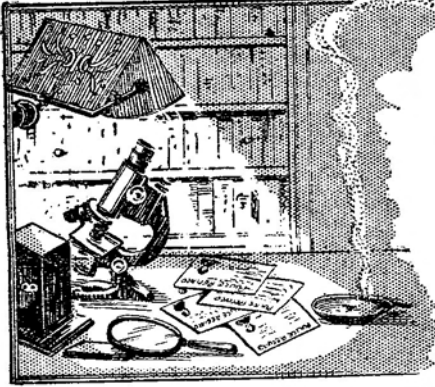
Oct. 15, 1921.



MONTY SCORES!

Harvey withstood the bombardment for nearly ten minutes, and then Monty slammed home a cross-shot which gave the Rovers' custodian not a ghost of a chance. Again the ground rocked with cheers, which the goalkeeper shared with Monty.

COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.



IN PERIL ON THE PACIFIC!

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

BY OWEN CONQUEST.

Ferrers Locke, the Up-to-Date Detective with New Methods.

The Isle in the Pacific

"I GUESS that's Lai-Lai, Mr. Locke."

The sun-tanned American skipper removed the cheroot from his mouth, spat on the dirty deck of the Palm Leaf sloop, and spoke to Ferrers Locke, the famous Baker Street detective.

Locke nodded, and gazed in the direction indicated by the skipper's thumb.

The little sloop was running before a fair wind over a smiling sea. Out of the vast expanse of the Pacific a single giant palm-tree rose into view, looking as if it rose from the waters themselves.

The great palm was all that could be seen, so far, of the lonely island of Lai-Lai.

Jack Drake, who was standing by Ferrers Locke's side, looked eagerly in the same direction.

The quest which had brought Ferrers Locke and his boy assistant so many thousand miles from Baker Street was now to begin in earnest.

On the little isle of Lai-Lai, Ferrers Locke hoped to pick up the trail of "Toffy Jack," the beachcomber; otherwise, Sir Walter Pulteney, heir to Friardale Court and thirty thousand a year.

The American skipper looked very curiously at the Baker Street detective. He was inquisitive, like all his race. Locke had engaged a passage on the little trading sloop from Honolulu to run down the islands; but what his business might be there Captain Stack did not know. But he wanted to know very much indeed.

"I guess we'll raise the reef in an hour," said the skipper, "and an hour arter that we'll be on the beach at Lai-Lai."

"Good!" said Locke.

"I guess it's an all-fired, out-of-the-way spot is Lai-Lai," said the skipper. "I've touched there six or seven times for copra, and I guess I shall take suthin' aboard this time; but I shouldn't have run in this trip but for you, Mr. Locke. Precious little doin' at Lai-Lai. The trade ain't worth shucks, and there's not more'n two white men on the island. Beachcombers both."

"Beachcombers?" repeated Locke.

"Sure! 'Tain't my business," continued the skipper, still eyeing the Baker Street detective inquisitively. "But if you reckon you're going to put up on Lai-Lai you'll have rough quarters there. But p'raps you've got business on the island."

"You know the place, Captain Stack?"

"Sure."

"Did you ever hear of a beachcomber there who was called 'Toffy Jack'?"

The skipper grinned.

"I guess so," he answered. "And a regular scallywag he was. He was a good bit of a toff in his way of speakin', and it was said he'd been something in the old country. But the way that galoot could shift fire-water!" Captain Stack shrugged his lean shoulders. "He was a daisy, and no mistake. But it's years since he vamoosed out of Lai-Lai. If you're goin' there to see Toffy Jack, you're some years too late, Mr. Locke."

"Where did he go?"

"Ask me another," said Captain Stack. "Men come and go in the islands, and they don't always leave a trail behind. I heard that he'd been killed by a shark up Alama way—"

Drake gave the Baker Street detective a quick look.

"But was that certain?" asked Locke, unmoved.

"I guess not—for there was a story that he was running a schooner in the black-birding business, Queensland way," said the skipper. "If he's still alive, I guess Toffy Jack is still shifting tanglefoot on the beach somewhere as fast as he can jerk his elbow." And Captain Stack grinned. "I

tell you that galoot was a holy terror in that line. When he was full, he used to tell amazing stories of great folks in England, and I guess there was a little bit of truth in them; he had ways about him that wasn't like every wastrel on the beach. When he was sober—which wasn't often—he was as mum as an owl, and you could never get a word out of him about his people. A queer customer was Toffy Jack."

"You say there are still two white men on the island?"

"Yep—Casco, the Spaniard, and the Dutchman," said Captain Stack. "They're a gold-darned pair, too, and if you take any vallybles ashore you'd better keep your eyes peeled, Mr. Locke. If you've got a shooter about you, you'd better keep it handy. Savvy?"

"I have a shooter, and it is my custom to keep it handy," said Ferrers Locke, with a smile.

"Bully for you," said Captain Stack.

And he turned away to shout an order to his brown-skinned crew.

Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake remained watching the great palm over the blue, sunny waters, as it rose higher and higher into view.

The coral reef of Lai-Lai rose at last, with the waves breaking on it in a circle of white foam.

The sloop headed for the opening in the coral reef.

Jack Drake was watching the strange scene with all his eyes; it was a very novel experience to him. Outside the barrier of coral the sea broke in foam and spray, but inside the lagoon was as calm as a lake.

Captain Stack threw away the stump of his cheroot, and shouted loud orders, mingled with oaths, to his Kanaka crew, as he "tooled" the sloop through the narrow and dangerous passage in the reef.

Ahead of the Palm Leaf now was the white, dazzling beach of Lai-Lai blistering in the sun.

Far back from the sea was the forest of palms, with the great tree that served as a landmark rising high over the others on the summit of a little hillock.

On the edge of the forest Drake discerned a collection of palm-leaf huts, evidently the dwellings of the native islanders.

Closer to the sea was a wooden bungalow, sadly in need of painting and repairing.

As the sloop ran in closer to the landing-place, across the lagoon, Drake could make out two figures stretched in long chairs on the verandah of the little wooden building.

When the sloop came to anchor, opposite the bungalow, one of the sprawling figures detached itself from the chair and descended from the verandah, and came lounging down towards the sea.

"I guess that's Casco!" said Captain Stack.

Ferrers Locke eyed the Spaniard keenly.

He was a regular beachcomber to look at. He wore a pair of ragged linen trousers, a tattered shirt, a wide-brimmed hat, and ragged slippers. There was a belt round his waist with a revolver in it, and a knife on the other side. His dark Spanish face, burnt darker by the tropical sun, showed every sign of reckless living—and no sign whatever of washing.

"Sort of beauty, what?" grinned Captain Stack.

Locke smiled.

"How often does a vessel touch here, captain?" he asked.

"Not four times in the year, I reckon."

"Then the beachcombers here don't get much news from the outer world."

"I guess they don't want to," grinned the skipper. "They wouldn't be best pleased to be looked for. Casco killed a man in Spain before he came here, and I guess the Dutchman would see the inside of a prison if he ever went home. Oh, they're a pair of scallywags, I tell you. But if

they've got any copra at a reasonable figure I'm taking it on board. You going ashore, Mr. Locke?"

"Certainly."

"I guess we sail at dawn," said Captain Stack. "If your business keeps you longer than that, sir, you'll have to wait for another sail."

"I expect to stay only a few hours."

"If you want to know about Toffy Jack, I guess Casco can tell you as much as anybody; he was here in Toffy's time. But I reckon nobody knows where that waster has levanted to."

And Captain Stack shouted to his Kanakas to lower a boat. It was manned, and, with Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake sitting in the stern, it was rowed to the shore.

Black Treachery!

CASCO, the Spaniard, swept off his wide, plaited hat in salute to the new arrivals. Ruffian and loafer as he evidently was, if not worse, he retained a trace of Spanish courtesy. Locke and Drake returned his salute politely. Captain Stack grinned.

"Not looking for visitors, hay?" the skipper exclaimed.

"We see so few visitors here, senior," answered Casco, in good English. "We are glad to see you."

"I guess so. You figure it out that there's a bar'l of rum in the hold of the Palm Leaf, what?"

"If you are looking for copra, we're ready to trade."

"I guess I'm hyer on business, as I've humped along to land Mr. Locke hyer," said Captain Stack. "I'll talk it over with you."

"Please come into the house."

The Spaniard invited the strangers into the dilapidated bungalow with grave courtesy, as if the wretched habitation had been a palace.

They were glad to get into the shade of the verandah, out of the glare of the blazing sun.

The Dutchman half rose from his chair and nodded to the visitors. He had been drinking, and his look was heavy and dazed. A black servant brought out cooling drinks to a little table in the verandah.

Ferrers Locke glanced about him appreciatively.

"You have a splendid view from your verandah here, Senior Casco," he remarked.

Casco shrugged his shoulders.

"We are used to that, senior, and we value it little enough," he said.

"But it is very fine to a new-comer," said Locke. "Look at this, Drake; from here you can see the sea breaking outside the reefs. A fine sight, is it not?"

Drake followed his chief along the verandah, and looked in the direction in which Locke pointed. The detective sank his voice to a low whisper, and spoke without looking at Drake.

"Drink nothing that Casco has not already tasted."

Drake repressed a start.

"Certainly, it's a magnificent view, sir," he said, in a tone loud enough to reach the ears of the men around the table.

They strolled back. Drake's heart was throbbing a little.

Why Ferrers Locke should anticipate danger and treachery in the lonely isle, the moment he had landed there, Drake did not quite understand; but he knew that Locke must have observed some sign that had escaped his own eyes.

The Dutchman dragged himself out of the chair, and passed into the house with Captain Stack.

"Sit down, senores," said Casco to Locke and Drake.

"My partner sees to the business here, and he is going to chaffer with your skipper. Leave them to themselves."

The black servant had placed several bottles and a carafe of water on the table, with glasses.

"Thank you, no," said Ferrers Locke, with a smile, as Casco indicated the rum bottle.

The Spaniard smiled, too.

"You are wise, senior—lime juice is better in this climate," he said. "You will help yourself to the lime juice, will you not?"

Locke took up the bottle.

"Your glass, senior," he said.

The Spaniard had half-filled his glass with water.

"No, senior," he answered. "To-day I am drinking only water. Last night"—he smiled apologetically—"last night there was too much rum going, and I am not well to-day—I am confined to water."

"I will follow your example," said Locke, noting that the Spaniard had swallowed some of the water from his glass.

"But the lime juice, senior, is very good," said Casco, with a strange glitter in his black eyes.

"I do not care for it, thanks," said Locke calmly. "You have very few visitors here, senior?"

"Very few."

"No ships have touched here lately, I suppose?"

"Not for several months," said the Spaniard. He was sipping the water in his glass and eyeing the detective curiously.

"A strange life," remarked the detective. "Captain

Stack tells me that you and your partner are the only white men on the island."

"That is true, senior."

"Of course, there are natives?"

"Some hundreds," said Casco. "Very quiet and peaceable, however. Are you staying long on Lai-Lai, senior? If so, we shall be very glad to offer you hospitality. You will find no other house on the island."

"You are very kind, senior," said Locke. "But we leave with the Palm Leaf in the morning. Perhaps you will add to your kindness by giving me some information of which I come in search."

"I am quite at your disposal, senior."

"I am here to look for a beachcomber who was once living on the beach of Lai-Lai," explained Ferrers Locke.

"He was called Toffy Jack. You knew him?"

"Oh, very well, senior—an old friend."

"He left the island?"

"Five or six years since."

"I am looking for him as a friend," said Locke. "He is heir to a large estate in England. If I can find him it will be a piece of great good fortune for him, and there will be an ample reward for anyone who can help me in the search."

Casco nodded.

"Alas, senior! It is too late!" he said. "He is dead."

"You are sure of that?"

"He was drowned in a storm in the islands," said Casco.

"But—"

"I saw his body, washed up on the beach at Alama," continued Casco. "He was buried there, a few yards from where the sea threw him on the sands."

"Then my search will be useless?" said Ferrers Locke.

"I fear so, senior."

"There is another man in search of the beachcomber," said Locke, after a pause. "He has a relative, one Vernon Pulteney, the next heir to the estate. This man seeks him to cheat him of his inheritance. He would be very glad to hear that Toffy Jack is dead. As we had some delay on our journey, I feared that perhaps Vernon Pulteney might have reached Lai-Lai before me. But he has not come?"

The Spaniard shook his head.

"The name is quite strange to me," he said. "No white man has visited the island for several months. It is an out-of-the-way spot, senior. You are sailing at dawn, then?"

"Yes."

"Will you accept the hospitality of my roof for the night?" asked Casco. "It will be a change from the close quarters of the sloop, senior."

"Thank you very much," said Ferrers Locke. "But I think we will return with Captain Stack when he gets aboard." He rose from the table. "With your permission, senior, we will take a look round the beach, while the skipper is busy with your partner."

"As you please, senior."

Locke and Drake went down the verandah steps, the Spaniard watching them with a strange look in his eyes.

Ferrers Locke did not speak till they were out of hearing of the bungalow, with the wide, shimmering beach round them.

"Keep you eyes open, Drake," he said, then. "We are in danger here. I do not think that scoundrel will dare to use firearms within sight of the sloop. But we must be on our guard."

"You—you think—" stammered Drake.

"I know."

"He seemed very civil, sir," said Drake. "I—I don't see why he should want to harm us. He looks a pretty tough customer; but we're strangers to him, and he ought to be glad to see a white man now and then."

"We are not strangers to him, my boy," said Locke tranquilly. "Vernon Pulteney is on the island, and those two ruffians at the bungalow are in his pay."

Marooned!

JACK DRAKE started violently.

He knew that Vernon Pulteney and Black Henri had dogged their steps from London to San Francisco, and from San Francisco to Honolulu. But since then nothing had been seen of the plotter who had stained his hands so deep in crime to win the Pulteney estate and fortune.

"You—you think Pulteney was ahead of us here, sir?" he exclaimed.

"I am sure of it."

"We saw no sail—"

"I imagine that Vernon Pulteney's vessel is out of sight on the other side of the island," said Ferrers Locke quietly.

"He knew, of course, that we should head first of all for Lai-Lai, to pick up traces here of the lost baronet. We came in a trading sloop—I think it is probable that he succeeded in chartering a steamer."

"But—but how do you know, sir?" exclaimed Drake, in complete bewilderment. "I've seen no sign—"

"I have used my eyes, my boy," said Ferrers Locke gravely. "You heard Senor Casco assure me that no other white man had visited the island for months."

"Yes; he was positive about that."

"Did you notice the shoes that he and his partner were wearing?"

"Some sort of shabby old slippers," said Drake.

"Exactly. And the natives are bare-footed."

Drake glanced at two or three of the brown-skinned islanders who were loafing under the palm trees.

"That's so, sir," he said. "But what—"

"As we came up from the boat," said Locke, "I picked up several footprints in the sand. Did you not notice them?"

"I noticed there were footprints," confessed Drake. "But I didn't take any special notice of them."

Ferrers Locke smiled.

"If you had noticed them more particularly, Drake, you would have observed that they were the footprints of two different men who wore well-made European boots."

"Oh!" ejaculated Drake.

"Certainly those footprints were not made by those tattered beachcombers, or by the natives," said Locke. "Casco assured us that no other white man had been here—and so he lied. Why should he lie? Because the other white men, Drake, have bribed him to conceal their presence. He is in their pay. Vernon Pulteney and Black Henri are already on the island, and those two scoundrels are ready to do their bidding for payment. If we had touched the rum or the lime juice, Drake, I fear that we should never have touched anything else in this life."

Drake shuddered.

"You—you think he would be villain enough—"

"He is villain enough for anything," answered Locke. "You observed that he would touch nothing but water—not his usual drink, I should say."

"Hardly!" said Drake.

"And so we shall not accept the hospitality of his roof for the night," said the detective, with a slight smile. "We should sleep long, I fear, if we closed our eyes under Senor Casco's roof to-night. We have learned all we can learn here, Drake—if Casco knows more, he will not tell us; he has already lied with regard to Toffy Jack's death, of which he knows nothing. We shall return to the Palm Leaf as soon as the boat goes back with our skipper."

"The sooner the better," said Jack Drake with a slight shiver. "It's beautiful here, on a South-Sea island; but I'm beginning to think that I like Baker Street better after all."

Ferrers Locke laughed.

"There is much to be said for civilisation," he remarked. "Let us wait by the boat for the skipper."

Ferrers Locke walked down to the water's edge, where the boat lay, with four brown-skinned boatmen lounging about it. Captain Stack was still busy in the bungalow, and the Spaniard had now disappeared inside the house. Locke and his boy assistant waited patiently; but it was a good half hour before the lean, loose-jointed American skipper came down the beach from the bungalow.

Locke's eyes rested on Stack's face, and he noted a slight, subtle change there. Captain Stack seemed desirous of not meeting the detective's eyes.

"Waitin' to go aboard?" he asked, with a sort of forced heartiness.

"Whenever you please, captain."

"Mr. Casco's a bit displeas'd at your not having a drink with him," said Captain Stack.

"I am sorry," said Ferrers Locke. "Drinking is not one of my weaknesses."

The skipper laughed, but rather uneasily.

"I'm doing some trade with them galoofs," he said. "I guess you may as well be civil to them, Mr. Locke. They're sending down a lot of stuff to put aboard."

Captain Stack turned away, and rapped out orders to the boatmen. A dozen or more natives appeared from behind the bungalow, bearing large packages. The boat was soon plied with coconuts and bananas, and large packets of which the contents did not appear. The boat was rather low in the water when Captain Stack stepped in, and it was shoved off by the natives.

"Come along, Mr. Locke," he said. "Hold on, though! Would you mind waiting till I come back for the rest? We're rather deep."

The boat was shoved further off as the captain spoke.

His statement was true enough; the boat was loaded so deep, that the addition of Locke's weight, with Drake's, would have been dangerous. The detective looked fixedly at Captain Stack. His keen eyes had read that something had passed at the bungalow, that was not in the ordinary way of trade; and the thought of treachery was in his mind. But if Casco and the Dutchman meditated an open attack, and had "squared" the skipper, the latter's presence was no protection.

Yet it was apparent to Locke's keen mind that Stack had overloaded the boat intentionally, in order to leave him on the beach. The skipper's crude cunning was like an open book to the detective.

The natives were shoving the boat off, and Drake glanced anxiously at his chief. He was aware that something unusual was passing, though he could not make it out.

Locke looked away towards the bungalow.

Casco had reappeared on the verandah, and he was standing leaning on the barrel of a rifle, watching the group on the beach.

"I guess you'd better wait for the next trip, Mr. Locke," called out Captain Stack.

"As you like," answered Locke.

"I'll sure come back in half an hour."

The brown boatmen put out their oars, and the overloaded boat "walloped" away across the lagoon. The natives who had carried down the cargo dispersed, grinning among themselves. Ferrers Locke's hand was in the pocket of his linen jacket, and Drake knew from the bulge that his grip was on a revolver there.

"What are you expecting, sir?" he whispered.

"If Casco raises that rifle, I am going to put a bullet through his heart, before he can pull the trigger," answered Ferrers Locke tranquilly.

But Casco did not raise the rifle. As soon as the boat was a dozen yards from the beach, he disappeared into the bungalow again.

"Follow me, my boy!" whispered Locke.

He moved along the beach to a spot where a large rock jutted up from the sand. He placed the rock between himself and the bungalow, and Drake joined him there.

Then they watched the boat swamping on heavily towards the anchored sloop, far out in the shining lagoon.

They watched the cargo passed on board; and then Drake gave a start, as the boat was swung up to the davits.

"They're taking the boat in, sir!" he exclaimed.

Locke's jaw set grimly.

"I looked for that!" he answered.

"But—but they're raising the anchor!" shouted Drake, in consternation. "Mr. Locke! They're stranding us here!"

He stared at his chief. Ferrers Locke's lip curled bitterly.

"Vernon Pulteney's minions have got the better of us this time, Drake," he said quietly. "That rascal of a skipper was bought over while he pretended to be talking business in the bungalow. Casco and the Dutchman fixed it with him to maroon us here. That was why the boat was overloaded—to make a pretext. I was pretty certain that he did not intend to come back for us—though I could not be sure."

Drake gasped.

"But—but in that case, sir, why didn't we force him to take us in the boat?"

"Because, sitting in the boat we could have been picked off like partridges by a rifle in the bungalow," said Ferrers Locke quietly. "They've bribed that rascal to leave us here—and if we had forced him to take us, they would have used their last resource—and we should have been riddled with bullets before we were halfway to the sloop. We have fallen in with desperate men, Drake—we knew we were taking our lives in our hands in making this search, my

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boy. In the boat we should have been utterly at their mercy—exposed to their fire without defence."

"I—I understand, sir," said Drake. "Oh, the villains—they wanted to poison us first, and now—now they've got at that scoundrel to strand us here—at their mercy."

"No doubt he was handed that cargo as a bribe," said Locke. "That kind of South Sea trader is not very particular, my boy. Possibly he does not know that murder is intended—probably he does not care to know anything. Ah! The sloop is clearing."

In the distance the Palm Leaf was edging through the passage in the coral reefs.

Beyond the reef barrier the brown sails were spread, and the little sloop danced away in the westering sun, till it looked no larger than a sea-bird on the vast ocean.

Drake drew a deep, quivering breath.

"Marooned!" he muttered.

"Marooned!" assented Ferrers Locke quietly.

"And—and you believe that Black Henri and Vernon Pulteney are on the island, sir?"

"I am sure of it! What has happened is pretty good proof, if any were needed."

Drake glanced at Locke in wonder. It seemed to him that the wings of the Angel of Death were already rustling over him. But Ferrers Locke was as cool, as quiet, as impassive, as ever he had been in his consulting-room at Baker Street.

The sail of the trading-sloop dipped below the horizon and vanished. From somewhere in the distance the throb of an engine was heard.

Drake started. There was a steamer somewhere at hand, and he remembered Locke's theory—that Vernon Pulteney's vessel was concealed on the other side of the little island. Round a rocky headland a little steamer came in sight, a dirty-looking old tramp-steamer. It came throbbing on along the shining lagoon to the landing-place opposite the bungalow. And Locke and Drake, standing in the shadow of the big rock, watched it as it came, and watched two men who stood on the deck looking shoreward, and recognised Black Henri, the crook, and Vernon Pulteney, the man who had shed blood for the sake of the Pulteney fortune, and who was seeking in the islands for the lost beachcomber, the last who stood between him and his prize.

For Life or Death!

FERRERS LOCKE drew Drake into the cover of the rocks as the tramp-steamer throbbed on to the landing-place and dropped anchor fifty yards from the shelving beach.

A boat was immediately dropped over the side, and from the rocks the detective watched Vernon Pulteney and Black Henri step into it. They sat in the stern sheets, while three Kanaka seamen took the oars and pulled for the shore.

Locke's face was grim.

He had fallen into a deadly trap, and yet he could not blame himself. He had stayed a few days in Honolulu to

make inquiries there for the lost beachcomber, and the time had been wisely spent, for he might have dropped there on some clue to "Toffy Jack," and saved the long out-of-the-way trip to Lai-Lai. Luck had not favoured him, however, for the beachcomber, once a well-known figure in the islands, seemed to have vanished years ago, and Locke, who came upon several men who had known him, had been unable to learn anything of his whereabouts.

And so the detective had taken a passage in the Yankee trading-sloop to Lai-Lai, and found that his enemies had preceded him there. Vernon Pulteney was a day, perhaps, ahead of Ferrers Locke at Lai-Lai, but he had made the best use of his

time. Evidently Casco and the Dutchman were in his pay, and equally evidently Casco had appealed successfully to the greed of the trading skipper, to induce him to maroon the detective on the island. What were the next intentions of the scoundrels, Locke did not know, but he could guess that he was not intended to leave Lai-Lai alive.

Having kept out of the way while the Palm Leaf was in the lagoon, Vernon Pulteney had now arrived, to learn what fortune his rascally associates had had with the newcomers. Probably he expected to find Ferrers Locke already dead, as indubitably he would have been had he tasted the rum or lime juice of the rascally Spaniard.

Jack Drake, keeping in the cover of the rocks, watched his chief's face in silence. He understood the fearful danger they were in—marooned on a lonely isle in the Pacific, with deadly enemies on all sides. The crew of the tramp-steamer were in Pulteney's pay undoubtedly, and the two beachcombers at the bungalow, and in all probability the natives in the village by the edge of the forest could be roused up by Casco and the Dutchman against the two strangers. It would need little urging from the two degenerate whites to rouse the old head-hunting instincts of the savages, peaceful as they now looked, lounging about in the shade of the palm-trees.

The boat grounded on the beach, and Vernon Pulteney and Black Henri stepped out on the shelving sands.

They exchanged a few words, looking round them, and then started up the beach towards the bungalow.

Casco came out of the verandah to meet them, grinning. The heavy Dutchman loomed after him, still under the influence of drink, and grinning like his comrade. Evidently the two wasters of Lai-Lai were pleased and satisfied with the way they had dealt with Ferrers Locke.

Pulteney and Black Henri joined them in the bungalow.

"Is he here?" was Vernon Pulteney's first question.

Casco waved a dusky, oily hand towards the rocks by the lagoon.

"He is there, and the boy."

"Alive?"

"Ah, senor, the detective had his eyes open!" said Casco, with a laugh. "He would not drink in my house."

"But he did not suspect—" exclaimed Pulteney.

The Spaniard shrugged his shoulders.

"What he suspected or not, I do not know, senor. But he would not drink. But it was all one. We did business with the Yankee skipper who brought him here. In return for a boatload of coconuts, bananas, and copra, he agreed to leave his two passengers on the beach. The sloop is gone, and Ferrers Locke and the boy remain."

"Marooned, pardieu!" exclaimed Black Henri, his dark eyes glittering with satisfaction.

"Si, senor."

Vernon Pulteney nodded.

"Good!" he said. "It was the best you could do, Casco, I don't doubt. But that human bloodhound remains to be dealt with."

"That is easy enough. If you spare his life, he remains on the island. If you desire to make sure of him, he dies before the moon rises," said Casco, shrugging his shoulders again.

Pulteney ground his teeth.

"Only death is safe for Ferrers Locke," he said. "You do not know the man, Casco, or you would not speak of sparing his life. He would find some means of getting away from the island, sooner or later. He would ruin me, and he would not forget you, my friend. But how do you propose to deal with him? He is certainly armed, and he is a dangerous man. It would have been simpler if he had taken refreshments here."

"True; but it is simple enough." Casco waved a brown hand towards the native village. "Ten years ago they were all cannibals there, and nature does not change. Carambo, they would cut off our heads and dry them in smoke to adorn their huts, if they dared! A few words to them, a present of glass beads and a knife or two, and they will turn out, fifty strong, to tear Ferrers Locke limb from limb."

"Good!"

Black Henri looked uneasy.

"But will they quieten again, after such an outbreak?" he asked. "Pardieu! We don't want our own throats cut by your sacred cannibals, mon ami!"

Casco laughed.

"They fear me," he answered. "There was one who attacked me once. He died slowly—slowly, tied by the beach for the land-crabs—"

Pulteney interrupted him, with a shudder. Scoundrel as he was, the plotter felt a sense of loathing for this dastardly ruffian whom he was employing for his own evil ends.

"Enough, Casco!" he said. "Make good your words at once—let your blacks look for Ferrers Locke, and offer them anything you choose, in trade goods, for his head. I will pay."

"Muy bien, senor."

"Where is the detective now?"

THE MAN WHO KNEW THE SECRET



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"He scuttled behind the rocks yonder as your steamer came round the headland. Doubtless he has fled into the interior, to take refuge in the palm-forest," answered Casco. "It matters nothing—the natives know every inch of the island, and before the sun sets in the Pacific, they will bring his head here strung on a bamboo-pole."

"Then set the brutes on at once."

"Si, senior."

The Spaniard quitted the bungalow and strode away across the sand towards the group of native huts.

His dark face was wreathed in a grin.

The crime he contemplated was little enough, in the eyes of a man who had stained his soul with every ill-deed for a score of years—a man whose life was forfeit a dozen times if he had ventured within the borders of civilisation. The crime was nothing, and the reward was a sufficiency of rum to keep him in a state of drunken contentment for a year—Vernon Pulteney was a liberal paymaster. The ruffianly beachcomber was looking forward to a long debauch when his reward was paid over, and he grinned with satisfaction as he slouched away across the sand. He cast one glance towards the bunch of rocks by the shore as he went; that was where he had last seen the Baker Street detective. He did not doubt that, under cover of the rocks, Ferrers Locke had already fled, and had taken refuge in the palm-jungle. It mattered little, as he had told his master, for the natives, once roused, would not fail to run down the fugitive.

But the rascally beachcomber, in his satisfaction, was making a mistake. Ferrers Locke had not fled; he was watching the bungalow from a cleft in the rocks, and his cold, clear eyes rested on Casco as the ruffian strode along. Locke's revolver was in his hand now, and the expression on his clear-cut face gave Drake a slight chill as he saw it.

Casco was fifty yards distant, but Locke was an unerring shot with rifle or revolver. He knew the Spaniard's object—after the brief conference with his employers in the bungalow, Casco had started for the native huts—that, and the look on his face, was enough to tell the Baker Street detective what was intended. He rested his revolver in the cleft of the rock, his eye on Casco, and waited till he was quite sure of his aim.

Crack!

The ringing report of the revolver was answered by a fearful yell from the Spaniard.

He sprang into the air, pitched forward, and fell upon his face on the sand.

In the Tropical Night.

VERNON PULTENEY rushed out of the bungalow, revolver in hand, at the sound of the shot. A loud babbling rose from the brown-skinned natives at the huts. They gathered in a crowd, staring towards the fallen Spaniard.

Pulteney stared round him.

"Casco!" he shouted.

A scream from the fallen man answered him.

"Dio mio! I am shot! Help me, senior!"

"But who—where—" panted Pulteney.

"Help me!" yelled the wounded man.

He made an effort to rise, but his leg had been smashed at the knee by the bullet, and he fell back on the sand, clawing it up in anguish.

Vernon Pulteney ran towards him, but only for a few paces. He stopped suddenly, as it was borne in upon his mind that Casco lay within range of the unseen marksman.

"Come back!" muttered Black Henri. "Let him lie. It is Ferrers Locke, and he is in cover. Ah! Mon Dieu!"

Crack!

A bullet knocked up the sand at Black Henri's feet. But he was too far off for even so excellent a marksman as Ferrers Locke. But the bullet had gone very close.

Black Henri caught Pulteney's arm and dragged him back into the shelter of the bungalow verandah.

"Keep in cover!" he muttered.

"Ach, was is it?" asked the Dutchman, lumbering out of the house into the verandah, with a black bottle in his hand.

"Casco is shot!" muttered Black Henri.

"Ach!"

The three men stared from the building across the dazzling sand to where the Spaniard lay. Not one of them ventured to get outside the cover of the house. They realised only too clearly that they had a desperate man to deal with now.

Casco raised himself painfully on one leg and his hands, and started to crawl back towards the bungalow.

He left a trail of blood on the sand as he moved.

He reached the steps of the verandah and called for help again faintly, and the Dutchman ventured out and helped him in.

Casco sank down helplessly in the verandah, his dusky face chalky white with pain and loss of blood. He signed to the Dutchman to hand him the black bottle, and he drank from the bottle itself, swallowing the fiery liquor in gulps. It brought back a faint flush of colour to his cheeks.

Vernon Pulteney and Black Henri stared at him gloomily. They had felt themselves masters of the situation, but they realised that Ferrers Locke was dangerous when he was cornered—even if he was cornered yet. The two rascals did not care to leave the shelter of the bungalow, even to reach the boat in which they had come ashore, they had to risk the detective's fire.

The sun was sinking into the western ocean now, the sky was ablaze with crimson and purple and gold, while in the east grey shadows deepened. The sunset was at hand—the rapid tropical sunset, when all things would suddenly be blotted out with darkness. The half-drunken Dutchman, kneeling beside his partner, clumsily bound up his wound. Casco shrieked and quivered with pain as he did so.

The three men lifted him to his bunk in the house, and he lay there moaning and cursing. In his present condition, soaked to the marrow with strong drink, the Spaniard was likely to be long in recovering—if he recovered at all. For the present, at least, he was hors de combat, and no longer to be reckoned with by either party on the island.

Vernon Pulteney and Black Henri consulted together in low tones. They had depended on Casco to deal with the native islanders, not one word of whose language they themselves knew. The Dutchman remained, but he was in a semi-intoxicated state, evidently his habitual condition. Even now he was sipping rum, and grinning stupidly at the adventurers. They consulted together, while delirious howls and yells came from the bunk of the Spaniard, in raving delirium now.

Pulteney approached the Dutchman at last. He shook the nodding ruffian by the shoulder.

"You know what is to be done!" he exclaimed angrily. "Pull yourself together, man, and let the liquor alone for a while. You can talk to the niggers in their lingo, I suppose?"

"Ach, yes."

"Then go and tell them—"

The Dutchman shook his head cunningly.

"Casco is shot," he grunted. "Ach, I do not want to be shot, too."

"It will be dark in a few minutes," said Black Henri; "then it will be safe for you to go."

"Dot is so."

"You will set the niggers on to that accursed detective at once, then," said Vernon Pulteney. "Promise them anything in return for his head on a bamboo-pole."

"Ach, yes!"

Pulteney stared anxiously out of the verandah. Darkness was over-spreading the sky from the east. A minute more, and the sun had dipped, and night lay dark on the wide Pacific.

The Dutchman staggered to his feet. He reached for the black bottle again but Pulteney knocked it angrily aside.

"Drink afterwards," he hissed. "You know what you have to do."

The beachcomber glared at him for a moment, and then nodded sullenly. He quitted the bungalow, and, half-drunken as he was, he was cautious enough. He crept round the house and vanished into the darkness.

Black Henri threw the door to and bolted it. Vernon Pulteney gave him a savage stare.

"What's that for?" he snapped.

The Frenchman shrugged his shoulders.

"Do you want Ferrers Locke here?" he said. "I tell you, mon ami, he is a desperate man, and he knows that his life is at stake now. He did not stand upon ceremony with Casco, hein? I think he would reck little of rushing the house and shooting us down where we stand, now that he is driven to extremities. Ma foi, I know how Ferrers Locke can shoot, and I prefer a bolted door!"

"You are right," said Pulteney, with a nod. "I had not thought of that. But he will soon be at the end of his tether."

He filled a glass and tossed it off moodily. Black Henri followed his example. They waited, listening intently. Through the silence of the night came the wash of the surf on the coral barrier of the lagoon, and cries and howls from the delirious Spaniard in the next room. They did not heed him, even when he cried pitifully, "Agua, agua!" they did not heed. They were listening for some sound that would indicate that the Dutchman had done his work—that the savages were roused to attack the detective and his comrade.

Black Henri raised his hand suddenly.

"Listen!"

Through the night came a yell, followed by an outburst of savage yelling and howling, with a clatter of drums and a clash of spears. Vernon Pulteney breathed hard through set teeth. The savages were up, and the sands of Ferrers Locke's life were running out! Louder and more threatening rose the savage yell, till it seemed that pandemonium had broken loose on the beach of Lai-Lai.

THE END

For the further adventures of Ferrers Locke and his boy detective, see next week's issue of the "Boys' Herald."