

Splendid, Long Complete Detective Story Inside!

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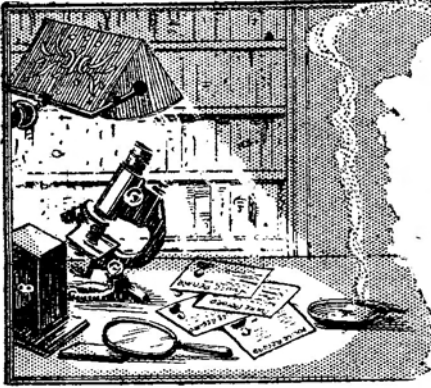
ON SALE EVERY TUESDAY.

Oct. 22, 1921.



FERRERS LOCKE AT BAY!

COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.

FROM THE
JAWS OF DEATH!

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.

Desperate Measures.

NIGHT on the Pacific!
One by one the stars were coming out in a dark velvet sky, glittering like points of fire.
Dimly in the starlight waved the palm-trees on the lonely Isle of Lai-Lai. Dimly (through the dusk, the white surf broke on the coral reef that circled the isle. On the smooth lagoon within the circling reefs, the stars were reflected as in a mirror.

In the black shadow of a group of rocks, where the lagoon's calm waters barely surged on the beach, Ferrers Locke stood. The Baker Street detective stood with his head slightly bent, listening intently, a revolver gripped in his right hand. Jack Drake, seated on a boulder, was listening, too, and watching his chief's face in the dimness.

Many a time, in his adventurous career, had the famous Baker Street detective been in a tight corner; but never had the wings of the Angel of Death seemed to rustle so closely as now.

On the lonely Isle of Lai-Lai, hundreds of miles from any other land in the South Pacific, the Baker Street detective was marooned with his boy assistant, and their lives were in their own hands. The only inhabitants of the isle were a hundred or so brown-skinned savages, and a handful of white men more worthless than the savages themselves. Well the detective knew that he might never see the sun rise again on the blue waters of the Pacific; well he knew that his quest of Sir Walter Pulteney, the lost baronet, might come to an end at any moment now—in a tragedy which would leave the fate of Ferrers Locke a mystery to all the world.

The detective broke the silence at last, speaking in a low voice.

"Drake!"
"Yes, sir." Jack Drake's voice was low, but quite calm. He realised the danger as well as his chief, but he was far from losing his nerve. He was waiting quietly for orders, and his face, though perhaps a little pale, was calm and composed.

"You know that our position is a fairly desperate one, Drake."

"I know it, sir."
"It is not hopeless, however, by any means," said Ferrers Locke, in a low, tranquil tone. "We have chances yet, my boy, and I will explain what I have decided on. I know I can depend on you."

"I hope so, sir."
"In the bungalow yonder," continued Ferrers Locke, "there are Vernon Pulteney and Black Henri, and the two beachcombers, Casco and the Dutchman. Casco is wounded—we can leave him out."

From the direction of the bungalow, at intervals, came the sound of a wild, howling voice. Drake shivered when he heard it. He knew it was the raving of the delirious Spaniard.

"If it were only the three, we could count ourselves secure," said Ferrers Locke. "But yonder by the forest is the village of the islanders, and undoubtedly they can be turned against us at any moment. That is what we have to fear, Drake. Casco is knocked out; but the Dutchman will get out of the bungalow under cover of darkness. I have little doubt that he has already gone to the native huts, and is rousing them to attack us."

The same thought was in Drake's mind.
In spite of his nerve, he shivered a little at the thought of scores of brown-skinned savages, spear in hand, rushing down upon the beach in the starlight, to the attack.

"We could put up a fight among these rocks," continued the Baker Street detective; "but the odds would be too

much for us. We should be speared in a few minutes, even if we shot down a dozen of the savage wretches first. We've got to get out of this, Drake."

"Blessed if I see how, sir," said Drake frankly. "If you cut into the forest, they'll be after us. The island isn't half a mile across. They'll run us down pretty soon."

"That is true."
"Well, sir—"

"There is another resource—a desperate one, I grant you," said Ferrers Locke. He made a gesture towards a light that rode in the lagoon. "There is the tramp steamer that brought Vernon Pulteney and Black Henri to Lai-Lai. On the beach is the boat that brought them ashore—waiting to take them back. They will not leave the bungalow until we are dealt with—they will not run the risk of our fire. You saw the boat, Drake, before the sun set."

"Yes, sir; there were four Kanaka boatmen in it."
"It is still on the beach, waiting," said Ferrers Locke. "We have four men—Kanakas—to deal with, Drake."

Jack Drake started.

"You—you mean to take their boat, sir—"

"I mean to try," said Ferrers Locke. "We have got to get away before we are rushed by a crowd of savages, and that is the only craft we have a chance of boarding. And out in the lagoon, Drake, lies the tramp steamer that brought Vernon Pulteney here. The captain and crew, of course, are in Pulteney's pay. But—"

Drake drew a deep breath.

He had a glimmering, now, of the desperate plan that had formed in the mind of Ferrers Locke.

"The crew are probably Kanakas, and will give us little trouble," said Locke. "Probably the only white men aboard will be the captain and mate—perhaps one or two others. If we can deal with them—"

"We'll try, sir," said Drake.

"You are ready, my boy?"

"Quite, sir."

"Good! With luck, my boy, we shall pull through," said Ferrers Locke. "We shall be chatting over this, some evening, in our rooms at Baker Street," added Ferrers Locke, with a smile.

"I—I hope so, sir. I'm ready."

"Follow me, then—and silence!"

With his revolver gripped in his hand, the Baker Street detective stepped out of the shelter of the rocks.

Drake followed him, calm and collected, though his heart was beating.

Their footsteps made no sound upon the soft sand.

Out in the lagoon, the lights of the tramp steamer twinkled in the dusky, tropical night. In the bungalow there was a glimmer of a lamp through closed shutters. In the native huts, on the edge of the palm crest, lights moved, and a buzz of voices came faintly across the beach. The Dutchman was there, and at any moment now might come the outbreak of the savages.

The boat from the steamer lay on the sands half-aft. The four Kanaka boatmen were waiting there—one seated on the gunwale of the boat, and three of them lying on the sands, talking together in low tones, patiently waiting.

They started up, as the shadowy figure of the Baker Street detective loomed over them.

The raised revolver glimmered in the light of the stars, and the four Kanakas drew together, staring at the detective in alarm. They were not fighting-men, by any means, but simple, native sailormen, accustomed to obedience to the white man.

"Silence!" rapped out Ferrers Locke, in low, tense tones.



"Get into the boat. You are to row me to the steamer. Savvy?"

"But the master—" said one of the boatmen.

"I am your master now." Locke made a movement with the revolver. "Do as I command you."

The Kanakas looked at one another, and stepped into the boat. If they had been inclined to argue the point, the raised revolver settled it for them. Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake followed them in, the boat was pushed off the shelving sand, and the boatmen put out the oars. As they glided out on the lagoon, the silence of the night was suddenly broken by a frightful uproar from the direction of the islanders' huts.

The loud, booming notes of a war-drum crashed through the silence, and the drumming was followed by an outburst of ringing yells. The natives were "up."

The Kanakas stopped rowing, and began to babble in their own tongue to one another, with frightened glances shoreward.

"Pull on!" rapped out Ferrers Locke. "Do you want your heads to be smoked in the huts of Lai-Lai?"

The Kanakas obeyed.

The yelling ashore grew louder and nearer. In the starlight, the gleaming and flashing of spears could be seen. The savages, roused to the work by the Dutch beachcomber, were crowding down on the beach, spear in hand, seeking the two white men there. But twenty yards of deep water separated the boat from the shore now, and Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake were safe from the spears. From the bungalow came a glare of light, as the shutters were thrown open. Vernon Pulteney and Black Henri were looking out into the tropical night, eager to know that their deadly enemy had fallen a victim to the savage islanders. Ferrers Locke smiled grimly. Louder and louder sounded the savage cries of the islanders, as they searched along the beach, and among the rocks, for the two whites who were no longer there.

In the dim lagoon, the boat pulled on. The lights of the tramp steamer twinkled nearer and nearer.

Ferrers Locke could make out the figures of the men aboard, staring over the side towards the island, doubtless wondering what was the cause of the sudden savage outbreak.

A hoarse voice hailed the boat as it floated alongside the anchored tramp.

"That you, Mr. Pulteney? By gosh, what's happened? Are the niggers up?"

A rope was flung to the boat, and one of the Kanakas caught it. A rough, bronzed, bearded face was peering down at the boat.

In the dim starlight, it was natural that the skipper of the tramp steamer should suppose that the boat was bringing his passengers back. The wide-brimmed hats worn by Locke and Drake quite concealed them from the man above.

Locke made a sign to Drake.

The skipper's mistake made his desperate task easier.

"What's happened, Mr. Pulteney?" exclaimed the skipper, as Ferrers Locke clambered on board. "If the niggers are up, I reckon the sooner we up anchor the better. We don't want a fleet of canoes round us before morning—Why—what—Gosh!"

The skipper of the tramp steamer started back, and his hand flew to his hip, as the barrel of a revolver was shoved fairly into his bearded face.

"Hands up!" snapped Ferrers Locke.

Ferrers Locke Takes Command:

"HANDS UP!" The skipper of the ocean tramp blinked at the detective, utterly amazed. He had taken it for granted, in the dimness, and without a suspicion of what had really occurred, that the boat had brought Vernon Pulteney and Black Henri back to the steamer.

The revolver looking him in the face apprised him of his mistake.

His hand gripped at a revolver in his hip-pocket; but he did not draw it.

"Who—who are you?" he stuttered.

"My name is Ferrers Locke."

"Great gosh!"

That name was evidently known to the skipper of the tramp steamer. The mate came out of the little chart-house, with a revolver gripped in his hand. But Drake's weapon covered him the instant he appeared.

Forward, six or seven Kanakas were staring at the scene, babbling among themselves, but not offering to interfere. It was not for the brown-skinned seamen to "chip in" in a quarrel among white men.

"You—you're Ferrers Locke!" gasped the skipper. "The—the man Pulteney is looking for—"

"Exactly. Put up your hands, captain, and let that revolver alone, or I shall lay you dead on your own deck!"

The skipper rapped out an oath.

"Bear a hand, Billings!" he shouted. Billings, evidently, being the mate. He dragged out his revolver.

Ferrers Locke did not hesitate.

Before the skipper could raise his weapon, the Baker Street detective pulled trigger.

Crack!

A yell rang out from the skipper, as he staggered, and pitched headlong on the planks.

Locke's eyes were turned instantly upon the mate. But Billings did not lift his weapon. Drake's revolver was levelled at him, and Billings evidently decided that it was not "good enough."

"Drop your weapon, sir!" rapped out Ferrers Locke.

The mate's revolver crashed on the dirty planks.

"Put up your hands!"

"Up they go!" said Billings coolly, and he put his hands above his head. "No concern of mine, that I know of, sir. Captain Tranter runs this here hooker, and he seems to have got his medicine."

"You will tie his hands, Drake," said Locke, keeping his revolver levelled at the mate.

Billings shrugged his shoulders; but he made no resistance while Jack Drake secured his wrists together with a length of cord.

Ferrers Locke cast a rapid glance along the deck.

Excepting for the captain and mate, there seemed no white men on board the old "hooker." The Kanakas backed away forrard as the detective's eyes turned upon them. Billings burst into a laugh.

"You won't have any trouble from them, sir," he said. "They're too well hammered by Captain Tranter to give any trouble to a white man."

"All the better!" said Ferrers Locke. He rapped out an order to the boatmen, who came on board. The boat was slung up to the davits.

Ferrers Locke looked towards the shore.

The yelling of the savages was louder and more menacing than ever. They were evidently searching up and down the dim beach, exasperated by the absence of those they sought. Billings, the mate, leaned against the rail, eyeing Ferrers Locke curiously. Mr. Billings was evidently rather a cool customer.

Locke glanced at the skipper.

He was lying insensible on the planks, with a pool of blood beside him. The bullet was deep in his shoulder.

"I reckon the Old Man's got his ticket for soup—what?" said the mate.

"I hope not," said Locke, with a shrug. "But if he has, he asked for it. You are mate of this vessel, Mr. Billings?"

"Ay, ay!"

"Are there any other white men on board?"

"Only Mac, the engineer."

"Where is he?"

"In his berth, I reckon."

"Call him up."

Billings raised his voice, and shouted in stentorian tones:

"Mac! Tumble up! Mac! Show a leg there! There's a new skipper come aboard, Mac! Look lively!"

A half-dressed man came up the companion, blinking round him with bleared eyes. It was the engineer, with a strong aroma of spirits clinging round him.

He stared at Ferrers Locke and Drake, and at the insensible captain.

"What's the trouble?" he asked, quite casually. "Your bally shooting woke me up, and I was dreamin' that I was back in Glasgae." He blinked at Ferrers Locke's revolver. "You needn't point that thing at me, sir—I'm not arguing with ye. I'm a man of peace—barring laying into the niggers with a boat-stretcher. What's the trouble?"

"I am taking command of this steamer," said Ferrers Locke quietly. "If you choose to act under my orders, the pay will be good. If not, I shall have you tied up and dropped into the hold, Mr. Mac. Take your choice."

The engineer grinned.

"And who may you be?" he asked. "A new Bully Hayes starting pirate in the South Seas—what?"

"Not exactly. I am a detective from London—and I mean business."

"It's Ferrers Locke," said Billings. "The man Mr. Pulteney was after—and he seems to have turned the tables on them somehow. No more your business than mine, Mac."

"True for you," said the engineer. "I'll take your orders, sir. Captain Tranter don't look as if he would give any more."

"Get him into his bunk, then, and look after his wound," said Ferrers Locke. "We are leaving Lai-Lai at once, Mr. Billings. Can you take the steamer through the reefs?"

"Not in the dark," said Billings. "I reckon I should pile this old hooker up on the first reef, Mr. Locke. I'm your man at dawn."

"There will be a full moon to-night," said Ferrers Locke. "When the moon is up, Mr. Billings, we will try the passage through the reefs."

"It's asking for trouble," said the mate. "I can tell you that the sea's alive with sharks."

"We shall risk the sharks," said Locke tranquilly. "If you choose to take the ship out, you may; if not, I shall take the risk myself. We shall be attacked long before dawn, and I

need not tell you, Mr. Billings, that if the ship goes on the reefs, we shall all go down together. You will do your best if you are a sensible man."

"Ay, ay, sir," said the mate, civilly enough. "If there's a full, bright moon I may manage it. But it's a ticklish passage. By gum, those niggers seem excited on the beach!"

Locke looked to the shore again.

Amid the yelling of the savages, a white man's voice was heard shouting. Apparently Vernon Pulteney had missed the boat, and was shouting for the Kanaka boatmen.

Mac, the engineer, came out of the chart-house, where he had placed the skipper in his bunk.

"How's the Old Man?" asked Billings.

Mac shrugged his shoulders.

"He ain't come to," he said. "I reckon the Old Man will be laid up for repairs all the way back to Honolulu—if we're going there. But he's tough—he'll pull through. What's the orders, Mr. Locke?"

"You will get up steam," said Ferrers Locke. "I am taking this ship out to sea as soon as the moon is at the full. It is rising now."

A silver gleam from the rising moon was already falling on the sea and the lagoon.

As the light strengthened, the moving figures on the beach became plainer to view. A hundred islanders at least were still seeking, to and fro, waving their spears and yelling to one another. But a large group had gathered round the landing-place, from which the boat was missing. Possibly it had occurred to Vernon Pulteney, by this time, what had happened.

Among the half-naked figures of the islanders, Locke could faintly make out Pulteney and Black Henri, and the heavy figure of the Dutchman. The latter was pointing towards the steamer.

"They know we are here, sir," said Jack Drake.

"They've set the niggers on you—what?" grinned Billings. "A dirty trick. I reckon they'll be coming out in their canoes to look for you; and if there's a fight, I shouldn't be surprised if they cut every throat on board when their blood's up. Mac, old man, the sooner you get your old iron going the better for all concerned."

"I think ye're right, mon," said Mac. And he slouched away to the engine-room, shouting to the firemen.

Locke, revolver in hand, stood watching the shore. And as the moon sailed higher over the Pacific, turning night into day, he could see a crowd of the islanders dragging canoes down to the beach.

News of Toffy Jack.

FERRERS LOCKE waited patiently.

The engines were beginning to throb. But to attempt the dangerous passage in the circle of reefs, before the light was good, was to invite destruction. Fortune had favoured the Baker Street detective so far; as it is said to favour the brave. But the danger was not yet past. Vernon Pulteney knew, by this time, that the detective was on board the tramp steamer—he could see the boat swinging at the davits, and probably he had seen Locke himself on deck—the gleam of a pair of binoculars on the beach had caught Locke's eyes, in the hands of Vernon Pulteney. Amazed as he must have been by the success of the detective's desperate enterprise, Vernon Pulteney was losing no time in dealing with the new situation. Unless he regained the steamer, he was marooned on the lonely island—and Ferrers Locke was free to carry on his search for the heir of Pulteney unhindered. Two or three dozen canoes were gathered at the landing-place, crowded with the islanders. It was evident that an attack would not be long in coming.

As Locke watched the beach, he saw a single canoe shoot out into the lagoon, with four or five brown-skinned men paddling. Vernon Pulteney was on board the canoe, and he held a white flag in his hand. Locke leaned on the rail, grasping his revolver, and watched the canoe as it approached. He would not fire on the white flag, but he was prepared for treachery.

Pulteney waved the flag as the canoe paddled within speaking distance.

"Stop where you are!" called out Ferrers Locke, raising his revolver. "No nearer!"

Vernon Pulteney stood up in the canoe. His eyes burned as they were fixed on the Baker Street detective.

"So you are there!" he panted.

"As you see!" smiled Ferrers Locke.

"You—you hound!"

"Is that what you have come to say?"

"Where is Captain Tranter?"

"In his bunk, with a bullet in him."

"And—the mate—the engineer—"

"Taking my orders."

Vernon Pulteney ground his teeth with rage.

"You have taken possession of a vessel chartered by me, Ferrers Locke—you are playing the pirate, then?"

Locke laughed.

"Your cannibal friends are not desirable acquaintances, Mr. Pulteney. I had to get out of their reach."

"Do you intend to leave us marooned here?"

"Certainly. I will let you come aboard as a prisoner, however, if you like."

Pulteney spat out a curse.

"You are not outside the reefs, Ferrers Locke, yet. You will pile up the ship if you try. My turn will come yet."

He snarled out an order to the islanders, and the canoe paddled back to the beach.

Billings, the mate, gave a low chuckle.

"Now I reckon there's going to be trouble," he said. "You are some shooter, Mr. Locke, and you'll want it now. If you like to cast me loose, and give me a shooter, I'll bear a hand."

Locke looked at him very doubtfully.

"Straight!" said Billings coolly. "I mean business, honest Injun, sir. They've raised the devil in setting the niggers on. They ain't likely to leave a man alive on this old hooker, once they get aboard with their blood up. Mr. Pulteney don't know the stuff he's handling—he's new to the islands. I reckon I'd never have had a hand in this game if I'd known that murder was intended."

"You did not know?"

"Cap'n Tranter didn't tell me much, or Mac either. We knew that Mr. Pulteney wanted the steamer to run down the islands, and he paid the skipper through the nose for it; and I knew there was some game on, but the Old Man kept it to himself. He was in Mr. Pulteney's confidence, but I wasn't—and Mac wasn't. I don't say we're particular men." Billings grinned. "We may have taken a hand in blackbirding occasionally, and perhaps a little pearl-raiding here and there; but this isn't the kind of game we cotton on to at all. We knew that Mr. Pulteney was after Ferrers Locke, from something the Old Man dropped—some quarrel, or other, we figured it out. It wasn't our business. But this game is too thick, and if we'd known, I reckon Mac and me would have dropped off the old hooker before she cleared out of Honolulu."

Locke eyed him.

There was something about Billings, the mate of the ocean tramp, that struck him. The man looked a rough, hard-fisted mate; but there were traces in his voice and looks of better things.

"You have not always been a 'bucko' mate, Mr. Billings?" Ferrers Locke said suddenly.

Billings laughed.

"You've found that out?" he said. "Well, sir, I've been better, and I've been worse, and if I was to spin you a yarn about myself, I dare say it would surprise you. Not that I'm going to. But young Pulteney yonder is a bad egg—as bad as they make them; I found that out while he was on board. A good many of the Pulteneys were bad eggs. There was a black strain in the blood, I reckon."

Ferrers Locke started.

"What do you know about the Pulteneys, Mr. Billings?" he exclaimed.

The mate laughed again.

"I guess that's my secret," he said coolly. "But Mr.



"You will tie his hands, Drake," said Ferrers Locke. Billings shrugged his shoulders, but he made no resistance while Jack Drake secured his wrists together with a length of cord.

Vernon isn't the first Pulteney that came to the South Seas—though he's the worst."

Locke made a step towards the man.

"You have met a Pulteney in the South Seas?" he exclaimed. "Have you ever met Walter Pulteney, who was once a beachcomber on Lai-Lai, and was called Toffy Jack?"

"I reckon so."

"You knew his real name, then?"

"Ay, ay!"

"Do you know where he went after leaving Lai-Lai?" asked Locke eagerly.

"Ay. He went north to Hawaii," answered Billings.

"So you're looking for Toffy Jack, are you, Mr. Ferrers Locke?"

"I came from England to find him," answered the Baker Street detective quietly.

"You won't find him," answered Billings.

"Why not?"

"Because he is dead."

"Dead!" exclaimed Locke.

The mate of the tramp steamer nodded.

"Dead as Bully Hayes," he said. "He was fed up with the life of a beachcomber, and he died—on his own account."

"You mean that he committed suicide?"

"I mean that he's dead," said Billings. "If you're looking for Toffy Jack, the beachcomber, you may as well go back to London—that is," he added, with a laugh, "if the cannibals yonder will let you. They're coming, Mr. Locke."

Locke glanced swiftly shoreward. A couple of dozen canoes, manned with crowds of brown savages, had put out from the beach, and were paddling towards the anchored steamer.

"Better give me a gun, and chance my shooting you in the back," grinned Billings. "I reckon it will come to the same thing, as soon as that crowd gets round the hooker."

Mac, the engineer, put his tousled head into view.

"She's ready, mon," he said.

Locke glanced at the sky. The moon, almost at the full, was sailing overhead, streaming down light upon the shimmering lagoon. He called to Jack Drake, who released Billings from his bonds.

"I will trust you, Mr. Billings," said Ferrers Locke quietly.

"Up anchor, and get the ship under way. We are going to try the passage in the reefs."

"I reckon it will be touch and go."

"Let it."

"Ay, ay," said Billings recklessly, and he shouted orders to the Kanaka crew.

Through Deadly Peril.

JACK DRAKE'S heart beat fast, as the tramp steamer began to glide through the silvery waters of the lagoon, heading for the narrow opening in the reefs.

He remembered the passage of the reefs the previous day, in the sloop which had brought him to the island; the cruel rocks that were barely hidden by the waters, the sharp points that jutted in the surf. Locke gave him a reassuring look.

"It is easier for a steamer than for a sailing craft, Drake," he said. "I think we shall pull through all right."

"Anyhow, it's better to take the chance than to wait for that crew of yelling beasts, sir," said Drake, with a glance back at the array of canoes.

The canoes were coming on fast, in a half-circle, and were already passing over the spot where the tramp had been anchored. In one of the fragile crafts, the heavy figure of the Dutchman could be seen, standing up, but Vernon Pulteney and Black Henri were not to be seen. Apparently the two plotters did not care to join in the savage attack. Casco, wounded and delirious in the bungalow, was hors de combat—perhaps a fortunate circumstance for Ferrers Locke, for the Spanish beachcomber was a cunning and dangerous enemy, and had far more command over the savages than the half-drunken Dutchman. But Casco was out of the campaign now.

Ferrers Locke left the handling of the steamer to Billings, who was not even looking for a moment at the array of canoes. All his attention was given to "tooling" the tramp steamer through the reefs, and he was rapping out directions every moment to the Kanaka at the wheel. Locke believed that Billings was to be trusted; and, in any case, he was certain to make the passage safely if he could; for if the old "hooker" had struck a reef, every soul on board would have gone down to the sharks. Mac, the engineer, was busy below, sweating in the engine-room. It seemed to Drake that the steamer was crawling, as she neared the reefs; and the canoes, swiftly paddled, were drawing nearer every moment.

Locke stepped into the chart-house. Captain Tranter lay in a bunk there, still insensible. But Locke did not look at him. He soon found what he sought—a rifle and cartridges. With the weapon in his hand, he stepped out again, and loaded quietly and calmly. As the half-circle of canoes swept on, the Baker Street detective took aim with the rifle at the Dutch beachcomber, who was shouting to the savages in their own tongue. Although too far for pistol-shooting, the

Dutchman was well within the range of a rifle, and Locke dwelt carefully on his aim and pulled trigger.

Jack Drake watched anxiously the result of the shot. He saw the Dutchman stagger in the canoe, and fall back among the paddlers.

Locke dropped the butt of the rifle to the deck, with a grim smile.

"He is hit, sir!" panted Drake.

"He is dead!" said Ferrers Locke quietly.

Drake drew a deep, quivering breath. It was for life or death now, and he knew it, and it was no time for half-measures. It was possible that the death of their leader might cause the savages to draw off. Ferrers Locke hoped so—he was unwilling to fire upon the ignorant wretches, who, after all, were only obeying the dictates of their savage nature.

There was a loud yelling from the canoes; and Drake saw the heavy body of the Dutchman pitched into the water. The wretched beachcomber floated in the moonlight, till a white flash showed in the sea, and a dark fin, and ferocious jaws snapped at the body and it disappeared. A shark had claimed its prey.

The canoes paddled on faster than ever.

The savages had been roused for the destruction of Ferrers Locke by the beachcombers of Lai-Lai; but now that their savage blood was fired, they were ready for any fierce work. It was pretty certain, now, that if they boarded the tramp steamer, they would not leave a soul alive. Casco and the Dutchman, who might have controlled them, were gone—one disabled, the other dead. The unrestrained savages were pretty certain now to do any evil work that came their way—and the plunder of the ocean tramp was enough to make them rich. They came on, paddling furiously, every now and then letting out a threatening howl.

Locke shrugged his shoulders, and began to fire with the rifle. There was no help for it. Through the passage in the reefs, the steamer had almost to crawl, and he could not afford to allow the canoes to draw near.

He pitched his bullets into one canoe after another, and paddler after paddler dropped, howling.

Still the canoes came on.

They were in the channel now, with bristling reefs on either side of the ship, and the tramp wound on its way like a snake through one opening after another.

The canoes could no longer keep their array, and they fell into line behind the tramp steamer. One larger than the rest, crowded with brown-skinned warriors, shot alongside, between the hull of the tramp and a jutting coral reef.

Locke fired into the canoe, and Drake blazed away with his revolver. Wild yells answered them, and two or three spears flew over the deck, and stuck quivering in the planks. One active savage leaped and clutched the rail, and in another instant he would have tumbled aboard. Drake rushed at him with clubbed revolver, crashing the butt full in the fierce face, and the islander dropped with a splash into the sea.

Crack, crack, crack! Locke was using his revolver now, with deadly effect. The canoe, with half its crew dead or disabled, floated helplessly behind the steamer. The surf was roaring now round the tramp—but Billings held steadily on, in the bright moonlight.

He signalled to the engine-room at last:

"Full steam ahead!"

Then, rolling a cigarette in his brown fingers, he came towards Ferrers Locke. There was a grin on his face, but the sweat was in drops on his brow.

"We're through!" he said.

"Oh, good!" breathed Drake.

The open ocean was before the steamer now; the bows plunged through the waves as the engines throbbled and pulsed, and a long, white wake streamed behind in the moonlight. The canoes had been dropped as if by magic as Mac put on steam.

"It was nip and tuck," said Billings, wiping his brow with the back of his hand. "Did you know that we grazed a reef twice, Mr. Locke—a reef with an edge like a razor?"

"I felt it, as we grazed," answered Locke. "But a miss is as good as a mile, Mr. Billings."

"You're a cool customer, Mr. Locke," said the mate. "I reckon I'm glad I didn't take a hand against you in this picnic. Did the niggers get close?"

Locke pointed to the spears still quivering in the deck. "I hadn't time to look," said Billings carelessly. "I wanted all my eyes for that channel. I reckon I'd have been stuck in the back if they'd got a footing."

"Now we're clear," said Jack Drake.

The mate lighted his cigarette.

"We've got a clear run before us now, Mr. Locke," he said. "What's the sailin' orders—as you're master here." He laughed. "You'll have an argument with Captain Tranter when he comes to."

"I'm quite prepared to argue with Captain Tranter—if he wants any further argument," said Ferrers Locke tranquilly. "For the moment, Mr. Billings, I am thinking of those men left on the island."

"Oh, I reckon Casco and the Dutchman will kick the niggers back into order again, if you're fool enough to trouble your head about them."

"Casco is disabled and delirious, and the Dutchman is dead," answered Ferrers Locke.

"Holy smoke! Then I don't envy Mr. Pulteney and his friend the Frenchman, ashore there with a gang of mad savages," said Billings.

"You think the savages will turn upon them?"

Billings laughed.

"They're beaten, and there's been bloodshed. They'll get ashore ready to tear any white man in pieces," he said.

"It would have been a hefty job for Casco, who's their master, to bring them to heel again. But those two merchants don't even speak their lingo. I reckon the niggers will make hot-pot of them, and keep their heads to smoke in their huts—a nice little way they have in these islands. What does it matter?"

Drake looked at his chief. Locke's face was very thoughtful.

"They deserve their fate," said Locke. "They sought my life. But—but—" He paused. "They are white men, after all."

"White men—of sorts," said Billings. "And one of them is a Pulteney—a bad egg, but a Pulteney. If you want to help them out of the scrape they've landed themselves in, Mr. Locke, I'm game to help you—if there's anything to be done. But I don't see—we can't go back."

The Baker Street detective shook his head.

"If they've got any hoss-sense, they'll get hold of a canoe, and clear, before the niggers get round the bungalow," said Billings, chewing his cigarette thoughtfully. "We might stand off and on till morning, and pick them up if they get clear. That's the best you can do for them now, Mr. Locke."

"It is all we can do," said Ferrers Locke.

There was no sleep for Jack Drake on board the ocean tramp that night. Wicked and unscrupulous as Vernon Pulteney was—hardened criminal as his companion was—Drake could not help thinking of the two hopeless wretches, shut up in the coral island with a horde of maddened savages—who might turn on them at any moment—who were sure to turn on them. In the moonlight, Jack Drake watched the sea, and he was still watching when the moonlight died away into the rosy dawn.

A Night of Horror.

VERNON PULTENEY paced the room in the bungalow, with quick, restless steps, gnawing his lip. Black Henri was in the verandah, with his binoculars to his eyes, watching the lagoon. From the Spaniard's room came the incessant babbling of the delirious Casco.

Pulteney was racked with anxiety and doubt. He had laid his plans well—and all had gone well up to a certain point. But the astute detective from Baker Street had got the better of him after all, and all depended now on the result of the savages' attack on the steamer.

The thought of being abandoned on the lonely isle made Vernon Pulteney rage and chafe. It might be months before another vessel touched there—a year perhaps. While he was cooped up, helpless to intervene, Ferrers Locke would carry on with his quest, and find Walter Pulteney, if the lost baronet was still living. The plotter's journey to the South Seas would have been for nothing then—the crimes he had committed to win the Pulteney title and fortune, would have been committed in vain. As he paced the room restlessly, savagely, imprecations fell from his lips, with the name of Ferrers Locke. A sudden exclamation from the Frenchman drew him into the verandah.

"What has happened?" he exclaimed eagerly. "Are they aboard the steamer?"

"The Dutchman is killed!"

Pulteney muttered a curse.

"That matters little enough."

"The steamer is making for the passage," said Black Henri, still with the glasses steadily to his eyes. "If they do not pile her up on the reefs, they will get clear."

"They can never make the passage safely at night," muttered Pulteney.

"The moon is bright—they may succeed. If they do, we are marooned here," said Black Henri. "And—and—" He gnawed his lip. "The Dutchman is dead—and Casco a delirious madman. Who is to control those savages when they return—especially if they return defeated?"

Pulteney started

"You do not think—you do not fear—" he exclaimed breathlessly.

"Can you speak a word of their language—can I?" said Black Henri. "It was Casco who handled the brutes; we

cannot control them. They are as likely to murder us as not, now that they have been roused to the pitch of murder. Ma foi! We have been working here with dangerous tools, mon ami."

Vernon Pulteney's face paled. This was a new danger—he had not thought of this so far. But he realised immediately what a fearful danger it was. In planning the death of Ferrers Locke, he had caught himself in a deathtrap. He hurried into the house again, to the Spaniard's room. Casco lay in his bunk, raving in Spanish, his face white, his great, black eyes glaring and rolling. A frightened black servant crouched by the bunk. Pulteney looked down on the beach-comber. There was no help to be expected from him. His delirium, when it ended, was likely to leave him as weak as water. And there was no sign of its end. Babbling words poured from the wretched man's lips in a constant stream.

With a curse, Vernon Pulteney turned from him, and rejoined his comrade again in the verandah. Black Henri had snapped the binoculars into their case.

"How does it go now?" muttered Pulteney.

"The steamer is clear," said Pourpoint. "The canoes are coming back! They have lost a dozen or fifteen men, I should say. They're paddling back to the beach now."

"What accursed luck! Then Ferrers Locke is gone?"

"And we remain!" said Black Henri grimly.

"You are sure the Dutchman is dead?"

"I saw him fall, and saw the blacks slide him into the sea. Besides, you can see that he is not in any of the canoes."

"Casco cannot help us again—he is raving still. I fancy he will be dead before morning," said Vernon Pulteney. "Do you think the brutes are likely to attack the bungalow?"

Black Henri shrugged his shoulders.

"Mon Dieu! It is more likely than not," he answered.

"If we are still here when they return—but we had better not be here, mon ami. We can at least watch more safely from a distance, and judge by circumstances. There are two or three canoes left on the beach—"

"Come!" said Pulteney, between his teeth.

The two dismayed rascals quitted the bungalow, and hurried down the beach of Lai-Lai. The canoes were returning—defeated. A crowd of native women and children thronged the beach, wailing and howling. At a little distance, a small canoe was drawn up on the sands, and Pulteney and Black Henri headed for it. They pushed it out into the lagoon, and thrust the paddles into the water. The crowd on the beach paid them no heed—all attention was fixed on the returning canoes. Pulteney and Black Henri paddled clumsily away along the lagoon, and a bulge of the shore hid them from the landing-place. Then they drew the canoe in to the shore, and Black Henri climbed a high rock, from the summit of which he could watch the bungalow.

He watched the savages beaching the canoes, and landing. Then in a body they started for the bungalow. Whether their intentions were already hostile, or whether the voice of their master could yet have subdued them, Black Henri could not guess, but he could guess what would happen when they found their master delirious and helpless. Through his binoculars, he watched the savages crowd into the bungalow—and then there was an outburst of yells. In a few minutes, the islanders were crowding out again—still yelling, and in their midst, carried on the end of a bamboo pole, was a human head. The Frenchman's very heart turned sick within him. It was by fear that Casco had ruled the savages of Lai-Lai; they had found him helpless, and they feared him no longer. It was the Spaniard's head that swept aloft on the bamboo pole—a warning to the other white men of what would happen to them if they fell into the hands of the islanders.

Black Henri scrambled down the rock, white and panting, and leaped into the canoe again.

"Allons!" he muttered hoarsely. "They have killed Casco! For the love of Heaven, paddle your best, mon ami! Our lives hang on a thread!"

"But where—where?" muttered Pulteney. "What safety is there for us now? We are lost!"

Without replying, the Frenchman plied his paddle, and Vernon Pulteney, at last, followed his example. The canoe shot across the lagoon, and headed for the passage to the open sea. There was little hope of life, in that fragile skiff, on the wide waters of the Pacific; but behind was torture and death, and the two baffled plotters pushed on desperately.

THE END.

Read the further thrilling adventures of Ferrers Locke, and his boy detective, Drake, in next week's issue of the "Boys' Herald." Order your copy now.