

SPLENDID CHRISTMAS NUMBER!

The BOYS' HERALD

2^d

No. 113.

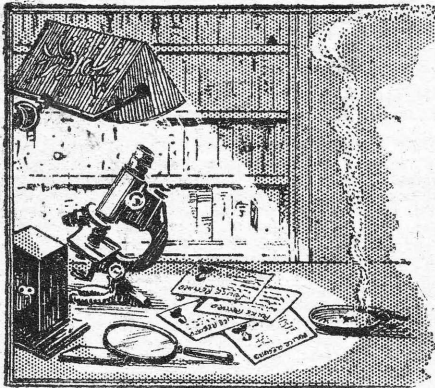
ON SALE EVERY TUESDAY.

Dec. 24, 1921.



REGGIE'S CHRISTMAS RAFFLE!
An Amusing Incident From Our Long Complete Story Inside.

COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.



THE HOUSE 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.

A Strange Case.

JACK DRAKE stood at the window of Ferrers Locke's consulting-room and looked out into Baker Street, into the dim December mist. Pedestrians hurried by with coat-collars or umbrellas up against the drizzle.

Christmas was close at hand, and Drake was thinking of the festive season, as he stood looking into the misty, drizzly street. Ferrers Locke, the famous detective, sat in the arm-chair by the blazing fire, the smoke curling up from his pipe. There was no sound in the room, save the distant rumble of the traffic without.

Locke glanced round at his young assistant at last, with a faint smile on his clear-cut face.

"Thinking of Christmas, Drake?"

"Yes, sir," said Drake, turning from the window, and smiling.

too. "You've made your arrangements?"

"The Greyfriars fellows have asked me, sir," said Drake. "I shall be jolly glad to see them all again. And you, sir—"

Ferrers Locke removed the briar from his mouth.

"I am going to have a little rest, Drake. A run into the sunny South—a few days of complete change and rest. We are free now for a time—and unless some importunate client should drop in at the last moment—"

"Better tell Sing-Sing 'Not at home,' sir," said Drake, laughing.

"There's a taxi-cab stopping at the door now."

Locke made a grimace.

"There goes my well-earned holiday, I suppose," he remarked.

"However, let us still hope that it is not a client."

Drake looked down from the window into the street.

A taxi had stopped outside, and he watched the passenger who alighted. Evidently it was a caller.

A girl, wrapped in furs, stepped from the taxi.

From the window, Drake could see her face, and he saw that it was deathly pale, the lips quivering with agitation and fear—as he thought.

The girl stood for a moment, looking to and fro in the misty drizzle, and it came into Drake's mind that she was fearful of pursuit.

The boy detective was interested at once.

"Well, Drake?" drawled Ferrers Locke.

"Will you step here, sir?" asked Drake quickly. "It's certainly somebody for you, I think, and— It's queer!"

Ferrers Locke was at the window in a moment.

His cool, keen eyes rested on the fur-clad girl on the pavement below.

As she stood hesitating, a car came along at a rush and pulled up suddenly, so close to the halted taxi-cab that there was almost a collision.

The door flew open, and a man sprang out.

He was tall, thin, with a dusky face that told of foreign blood.

His sharp, glittering black eyes fixed on the girl instantly.

Drake caught his breath.

The dark-skinned man strode towards the girl, who shrank back with a cry. He grasped her wrist.

The taxi-driver stared round—evidently astonished. He was waiting to be paid his fare.

Without a word, the tall, dark man drew the shrieking girl towards the big car.

For a second she resisted, and then, as if resigning herself to her fate hopelessly, she submitted.

"Come!" said Ferrers Locke.

In an instant he was out of the consulting-room, and Drake followed him fast.

A minute more and the detective was in the street.

But he was too late!

The big car was in motion, and it glided away into the traffic as Locke hurried down the steps.

"Stop!" Ferrers Locke shouted to the chauffeur.

The man did not even glance at him.

Locke ran into the road, but the car was putting on speed. It flashed away past a motor-omnibus and vanished.

The detective compressed his lips.

Drake stood amazed at the strange scene that had been enacted

so rapidly. Locke came back to the pavement with a gleam in his eyes.

It was evident that the girl had intended to call upon the famous detective, and had been pursued and prevented at the last moment. Ferrers Locke turned to the astonished taxi-driver. That individual was showing signs of excitement.

"Bilked!" he ejaculated.

"You have not received your fare?" asked Locke.

"No blooming fear!" said the driver emphatically. "Somebody owes me five-and-six, somebody does!"

"You need not worry about that," said the detective. "Your fare was coming here, I presume, and you may hold me responsible!"

"You're a gentleman, sir!" said the taxi-driver. "Blowed if I'd have thought that young lady a 'bilk.' Nicely-spoken she was, and all in a tremor. I fancy she didn't want to go with that bloke. If it hadn't appened so sudden, I'd have put a spoke in his wheel. Bolted from 'ome, that's what she's done, I reckon, and the old covey was arter her."

"You were told to drive her here?"

"This is the 'ouse," said the driver. "Mr. Ferrers Locke's 'ouse in Baker Street, she told me—she never knowed the number. You Mr. Locke, sir?"

"Yes."

"Then you're the gent she was calling on," said the driver.

"Do you know the lady's name?"

"No, sir."

"Or where she comes from?"

"Only that I picked her up at Charing Cross Station, sir."

"Exactly when?"

"Just eleven o'clock."

"The young lady had just come by train when you picked her up at Charing Cross?"

"I think so, sir—she came out of the station with a lot of other passengers."

"Thank you," said Ferrers Locke. "Here is your fare. Leave me your name and address in case I want to see you again."

"Suttinly, sir."

Ferrers Locke stood for a moment in thought, as the taxi-cab drove away. Then he turned back into the house, still with a thoughtful wrinkle in his brow, and returned to the consulting-room with Jack Drake.

Taking Up the Case.

FERRERS LOCKE was silent for a few minutes, and Drake watched him without speaking. The strange happening had amazed the boy detective, and he could see that Locke did not mean to leave the matter where it was. The fear in the girl's face, and the dark menace in the manner of the man who had taken her away in the car, had not been lost on Ferrers Locke. His plans for a journey to the sunny South, and a rest over Christmas, had quite vanished from the Baker Street detective's mind now. His keen, clear intellect was on the alert; there was a gleam in his eyes that Jack Drake knew well. Ferrers Locke was in harness again.

"A strange affair, Drake," said Locke, breaking the silence at last.

"I don't quite catch on to it, sir," said Drake.

"The young lady was coming here to see me," said Locke.

"That could only mean that she was in need—or supposed that she was in need—of my help. The man—her guardian, perhaps—was determined that she should not see me. He knew whither she was bound, and followed, and recaptured her just in time."

"Her father, sir?"

Locke shook his head.

"He was not her father—not any relative, I imagine. The girl was fair, and he was as dark as a Hindoo. Unless I am greatly mistaken, there is Hindoo blood in him. He must have some authority over her—perhaps her guardian, or a step-father. She was obviously afraid of him. When a woman is afraid of a man, Drake, there is something wrong about the man."

Drake nodded.

"If he is her guardian, no doubt he has authority to control her movements—even to forbid her to have an interview with

so respectable a character as Ferrers Locke, the defective," said Locke, with a faint smile. "But I do not like the look of the affair. The dark gentleman has forbidden the interview, and taken drastic measures to prevent it. I do not feel disposed to allow the dark gentleman his own way unquestioned in the matter. We are going to look into this, Drake."

"I hope so, sir," said Drake. "But it's rather a problem, sir, isn't it? They've gone—and you don't know even their names, or where they come from."

"That is what we have to elucidate," said Locke. "The girl came up from Kent this morning—"

"How do you know that, sir?"

"By the very simple method of remembering the time-table, Drake. She came out of Charing Cross Station with a crowd of passengers at eleven o'clock. At five minutes to eleven there was a train in from Ashford, Kent."

"Oh!" said Drake.

"For some reason, the young lady hurriedly left her home this morning, travelled to London by train, and started to see me," said Locke. "It was evidently her own idea. She did not even know the number of my house, but had heard that Ferrers Locke lived in Baker Street. She was pursued by car—we will assume that she was missed after her train had started, and the next train would have landed her guardian in London much too late to prevent the interview. He came up in a fast car, and headed direct for my house. And luck befriended him. A few minutes more and she would have been safe inside. Doubtless he is now congratulating himself, and does not expect a visit from me to inquire into the matter."

Drake raised his eyebrows.

"A visit from you, sir?"

"That is the next item on the programme, Drake."

"But you do not know—"

"My dear boy, you saw me run after the car. I did not hope to catch a fast Daimler on foot. I was ascertaining the number."

"Oh," said Drake again.

"I have noted the number," continued Ferrers Locke, "and I am now going to call on my friend Inspector Riley at Scotland Yard, and I shall not be long in learning the name of the owner of the car, fancy." Locke touched a bell, and Sing-Sing appeared. "Tell Wootton to be ready in five minutes, Sing-Sing."

"Yes, Missa Locke."

"Get ready for a journey, Drake. We shall probably be taking a run down into Kent, and I cannot say yet how long it will be."

"Good!" said Drake.

In five minutes Ferrers Locke and his boy assistant were ready for departure, and Wootton, the chauffeur, was waiting outside with the fast car.

"New Scotland Yard!" said Locke briefly.

The car glided away.

Drake's heart was beating a little as the car glided through the wet, drizzly streets.

Crowds of Christmas shoppers thronged the pavements, most of them in cheery mood, in spite of the dismal weather. Jack Drake was not thinking of his Christmas holidays along with his old chums of Greyfriars now. All his thoughts were upon the strange case that had suddenly cropped up. It might end in nothing—some slight family quarrel, some trifling affair that Ferrers Locke would have no concern with. But Drake did not think so. The fear in the girl's pale face, the threatening malice in the look of the dark-skinned man, haunted him. There was something wrong somewhere. He knew that, and he was looking eagerly forward to the quest.

He waited in the car while Ferrers Locke was with Inspector Riley. The detective came back at last, and spoke a word to Wootton.

"Ashford—and let her out!"

The car bounded away.

Getting the Truth.

OUTSIDE the dismal confines of the great city, the car put on speed. In the fresh country air, among wide spaces and green fields and trees, the December weather did not seem so dismal. Mile after mile raced under the rapid wheels.

Locke was silent for a long time, thinking, and Drake did not venture to interrupt him, though he was curious. But the Baker Street detective answered his unspoken question at last.

"I have learned what I wanted to know, Drake," he said. "The car of which I took the number belongs to a Mr. Dinjarree, of Ash Lodge, a few miles from Ashford!"

"The dark man?"

"Evidently."

"We are going to Ash Lodge now?" asked Drake.

"Mr. Dinjarree will not have the pleasure of making our acquaintance so soon, Drake. We do not know yet, definitely, if anything is wrong. I suspect that something is very wrong; but we have no proof so far. Until I know more, I shall certainly not put Mr. Dinjarree on his guard. I intend to know something more about the occupants of Ash Lodge before he sees me."

"I see, sir."

"Our inquiries will begin in Ashford," said Ferrers Locke. "Mr. Dinjarree must be a fairly well-known man in the neighbourhood. He is a Hindoo, which is rather out of the common, of course. He is apparently wealthy, as he has a country place and an expensive motor-car. I am acquainted with Inspector Benson, of the Ashford police, and it is upon that gentleman that we shall call by way of a beginning. No doubt he will be able to tell us something about Ash Lodge and its occupants."

"And then?" asked Drake.

"Then we must be guided by circumstances. But we shall certainly not return to Baker Street without knowing precisely how matters stand at Ash Lodge."

The fast car ate up the miles.

The Baker Street detective and his boy assistant lunched on sandwiches in the car as it sped on.

The car stopped at Ashford Police-station at last.

Fortunately, Inspector Benson was on duty, and Ferrers Locke and his boy assistant were shown into the inspector's room at once.

The ruddy, cheery county police-inspector greeted the famous detective warmly.

"An unexpected pleasure to see you down here, Locke," he exclaimed, as he shook hands with the man from Baker Street. "Business or pleasure? Business, I suppose?"

"Exactly," said Locke. "I am in want of a little information regarding one of your local residents."

"Wanted?" asked the inspector, with a grin.

"Not so far. At present I am merely looking for information. You have heard of a Mr. Dinjarree, of Ash Lodge?"

"Certainly! I know the gentleman quite well," said the inspector, with rather a surprised look. "Surely there is no intention of raking up that old affair again of the quarry?"

Locke's eyes glinted.

"The affair of the quarry?" he repeated. "I see that you have some news for me, Benson. There is, then, something against the man?"

"I should hardly say that. There was talk and suspicion at the time, of course, but at the inquest nothing could possibly be adduced against him. People will talk, you know—but, so far as could be ascertained, Mr. Dinjarree's conduct was quite above board. It is true that the poor fellow's death was a benefit to him—in a way. But there was absolutely nothing to connect Dinjarree with the tragedy. And it was five years ago."

Drake drew a deep breath.

"I should like to have the particulars," said Locke quietly.

"Who is this Mr. Dinjarree?"

"He came to these parts about seven or eight years ago," said the inspector. "He married the widow of Squire Langley, who left the Lodge to his wife. There were two children—a boy and a girl. Mrs. Dinjarree died a couple of years after her marriage. There was local gossip of ill-treatment and trouble in the home; but the poor woman, at all events, was never heard to complain. At the funeral there was something like a demonstration against Mr. Dinjarree on the part of some rustics. It was rather a painful affair, but it all died away."

"And the children—"

"They were left to their step-father's guardianship. When the quarry tragedy occurred later, I was on the case, and looked into all the particulars," said the inspector. "Ash Lodge was to belong to the boy, Cyril, when he came of age, and there was a sum of ten thousand pounds, invested in Trustee securities, for the girl, Enid, when she became twenty-two. The boy was five years older than the girl. It was within a few months of his reaching twenty-one that he was found dead at the bottom of a disused quarry on the estate."

"An accident?"

"So it was determined at the inquest. Mr. Dinjarree was absent at the time in Paris. He was summoned home by telegram. All the evidence was that Cyril Langley had stumbled into the quarry, taking a short cut home after dusk, and broken his neck in the fall. Of course, the fact that Mr. Dinjarree would have been called on, in a short time, to give an account of his stewardship, caused some talk."

"But there is no doubt that he was absent at the time?"

"None whatever."

"And the property after the boy's death?"

"According to the will in question, in case of the decease of either of the children, the property reverted to the other."

"Then Miss Enid Langley became heiress of the total?"

"Exactly."

"How did Mr. Dinjarree benefit in that case?"

"Not at all, directly. But he had, of course, a further five years as master of Ash Lodge, and the handling of the money for that period—nearly up now, by the way."

"When does Miss Langley become twenty-one?"

"I think early in 1922."

Drake's eyes met Ferrers Locke's for a moment.

"In case of another accident in a quarry," said Ferrers Locke grimly, "to whom does the property revert?"

"To Mr. Dinjarree."

"As sole heir?"

"Apart from some small bequests, I believe." Inspector Benson looked keenly at the Baker Street detective. "My dear Locke, another quarry tragedy could scarcely happen without suspicion so strong as to amount to certainty. Whatever Mr. Dinjarree may be, he is no fool. I have never met a man more keen and wary. There will certainly not be another quarry tragedy, if that is what you have in your mind."

"Miss Langley resides at the Lodge with her step-father?"

"Yes. She was away at school and college for years, and came home only for the holidays. Last year, however, she took up her residence permanently at the Lodge."

"On a friendly footing with her step-father, do you know?"

"That I cannot say. There are few visitors at the house—Mr. Dinjarree is something of a recluse of late years. A dull place for a girl of twenty, but I believe she visits her old school friends a great deal."

"You can give me a description of her?"

"Easily; she is well-known to me. A rather pretty girl, very elegantly dressed; fair, with flaxen hair and blue eyes—"

The description was accurate enough. There was no doubt that it was Miss Enid Langley who had stepped from the taxi at Ferrers Locke's door that morning.

"I saw her only this morning," added the inspector. "She was hurrying along towards the railway station, and did not even see me—looked rather disturbed, I thought. I remember wondering at the time why she had walked from the Lodge instead of taking the car, on a rainy morning."

"What sort of a household is it at Ash Lodge?" asked Ferrers Locke. "There is Mr. Dinjarree and his step-daughter—who else?"

The inspector reflected.

"Miss Langley's maid," he said, "and a cook and a housemaid—they are all, with the exception of Mr. Dinjarree's personal servant and chauffeur—an Indian half-caste, named Kali Das. There is a gardener, but he lives in the village."

Locke knitted his brows.

"Has Kali Das been long with his master?"

"He came with him."

"Was he at the Lodge at the time of the quarry tragedy, while his master was in Paris?"

The inspector raised his eyebrows.

"Yes," he answered.

Ferrers Locke asked a few more questions. It was not long before he knew all that Inspector Benson could tell him of the Ash Lodge household. He rose at last.

The Baker Street detective thanked the inspector, and returned to the car with his boy assistant. In a few minutes more they were gliding out of the pretty Kentish town.

A Friend in Need.

"HUSH!" whispered Ferrers Locke. Drake stood silent in the shadow of the misty trees, almost holding his breath.

The early December night had closed in, there was a drift of mist over the downs. Lights gleamed from several windows in Ash Lodge, over the wide misty gardens. The wall that surrounded the grounds was overhung by thick trees, leafless now, and dripping with moisture. In the dark shadow of the wall, near the wide wooden gate, Ferrers Locke and his boy assistant waited and watched.

Why they were waiting, for what they were watching, Jack Drake did not know. The car had been left in a garage near Ashford, and the detective and his assistant had come on foot to the village near the Lodge. At the garage, Ferrers Locke had used the telephone for a few minutes.

That was all Drake knew. Now they were waiting in the shadows by the Lodge gate, and Ferrers Locke whispered "Hush," as a sound was heard within—the sound of a car on the gravel path.

The gate was opened wide, and the car came out. Even in the dusky mist, Drake recognised the big Daimler he had seen in Baker Street that morning.

At the steering-wheel was a dark-faced chauffeur. The interior of the car was lighted, and within could be seen seated a tall, dark-skinned man—the man whose grasp had fallen upon Enid Langley that morning outside Ferrers Locke's house.

Hidden in the darkness, Ferrers Locke and Drake had a full view of the interior of the car as it passed.

They saw every line of the dark, bronze-like face, and noted that the lips were set, almost in a snarl, and that the man's black eyes gleamed with smouldering fire.

Evidently, Mr. Dinjarree was in a disturbed mood. The Daimler passed on, and the bright lights died away in the darkness of the country road.

"He is gone!" said Ferrers Locke quietly. "Now we can call upon Miss Langley, Drake, without interruption from her guardian."

Drake dimly understood that the Baker Street detective had contrived, somehow, to cause the Hindoo to be called away. Locke caught his wondering look and smiled.

"The gentleman looked as if he had had a slight shock, Drake," he remarked.

"I noticed that, sir." "Doubtless it was caused by the telephone message he received a short time ago."

"You telephoned from the garage—?" "Exactly; but I fear that Mr. Dinjarree imagines that Inspector Benson telephoned from Ashford," said Ferrers Locke drily. "I have taken the liberty of using the inspector's name, Drake. It is absolutely necessary that I should see Miss Langley without the intervention of her guardian."

"But how—how could you be sure that he would leave his house, even to see the inspector, sir?"

"The message he received left him no choice, Drake. He was asked to call at Ashford Police Station as soon as he could, on account of certain circumstances that had transpired with regard to the quarry tragedy of five years ago."

"Oh!" breathed Drake. "If the man has a guilty secret, that message was certain to bring him there, in order to learn what he has to fear," said Locke. "And as you see, he ordered his car and went. He will be some time getting to Ashford and back—the interval is ours."

Ferrers Locke pushed open the gate and entered. Drake followed at his heels. They crossed the misty gardens towards the house. A minute more and Locke was ringing at the bell. The door was opened by a housemaid.

"Is Mr. Dinjarree at home?" asked Locke smoothly.

"He has just gone out, sir."

"How very unfortunate," said Locke. "My business is rather important. Perhaps I could see Miss Langley?"

The maid hesitated.

"I—I am afraid Miss Langley cannot see you, sir," she answered. "If you will call again this evening, Mr. Dinjarree will be at home."

"I fear that will be impossible," said Locke, shaking his head. "Perhaps you will take my name in to Miss Langley."

"I—I can't, sir."

The maid coloured, and looked confused. But she was evidently firm.

"Probably Miss Langley would be willing to see me, if you mentioned my name," said Ferrers Locke.

"Miss Langley can't see anybody, sir."

"You are sure of that?"

"Quite sure, sir."

The maid moved as if to close the door.

"Then perhaps you will mention to Mr. Dinjarree, when he returns, that I have called," said Ferrers Locke calmly. "Mr. Jenkins—Albert Jenkins—of the Excelsior Building Society."

"Yes, sir, I will tell him."

The door closed, and Ferrers Locke and Drake turned back into the misty gardens. They walked half-way to the gate, and then Locke's hand drew his companion into the shrubberies. They stopped in the misty darkness there.

"You know what happened this morning, Drake. Miss Langley fled to London, evidently without her guardian's permission, and was brought back practically by force. Now he is suddenly

called away to Ashford. He would not be likely to leave her free to run away again at her choice."

"You mean she is locked in somewhere, sir?"

"Obviously."

"The maid looked very confused—"

"She did not care to tell a stranger that Mr. Dinjarree was at high words with his ward, and had locked her in her room," he said. "But certainly, if Miss Langley was locked in, she could not see a caller. We have, however, called to see Enid Langley, and I do not intend to leave without seeing her. Keep near me, Drake, and make no sound."

The detective circled round the house cautiously in the mist. He scanned every window with a keen eye.

There was a light in the hall downstairs, and in the kitchen windows at the back. Upstairs there was only one light.

Evidently one bed-room, at that early hour, had a tenant. It was not difficult to guess that this was Enid Langley's room, and that she was locked in it by her dark-skinned guardian during his absence from the house.

After a careful survey of his surroundings, Locke picked up a pebble and threw it up to the window.

Clunk! It was a light sound, but must have been clearly audible to any occupant of the room. Drake watched with beating heart.

A few moments elapsed, and then the curtains at the window were drawn aside, and a shadow appeared against the light.

Dimly there became visible the outlines of a girl's graceful form.

Another pebble flew up to the glass.

The casement opened, and a fair head was projected into the dimness. Twenty feet below Ferrers Locke stood, with Drake, but he knew that the girl could not see them in the gloom.

He called softly.

"Is that Miss Langley?"

The figure at the window gave a violent start.

"Yes! Who is calling?"

"Ferrers Locke!"

"Good heavens!"

"I must speak to you, Miss Langley. I know you came to call on me this morning. You are in need of help?"

"Heaven knows I am!"

"You are locked in your room?"

"Yes."

Drake looked round apprehensively. But in the deserted gardens there was no one to hear. The lighted kitchen windows were at a distance. And Mr. Dinjarree was speeding along to Ashford in his car, driven by his half-caste chauffeur—his confederate, as Drake suspected. The coast was clear for the Baker Street detective.

"I must speak to you, Miss Langley," called back Locke, just loud enough for the girl to hear. "Have I your permission to ascend? I will find the means."

There was a momentary pause. The girl was evidently in a state of fear—and probably distrustful of a stranger. He gave a name that she could trust; but she could not see him. Locke waited.

"I will trust you, sir," came back the quivering reply. "If you are tricking me at Mr. Dinjarree's orders, Heaven forgive you. But my life is not safe in this house, and I must trust you."

"You may safely trust me, my dear young lady," said Ferrers Locke.

"The next room is my boudoir," came in faltering tones from the window. "There is a rain-pipe beside the window, if you can ascend. I will open the window."

"Lose no time."

The bed-room window closed. Ferrers Locke moved cautiously



A ghastly look came over the man's face, and he tottered. With a crash he went to the floor. The poison had done its work by the time Ferrers Locke stooped over him and looked at him.

along the wall and found the rain-pipe—thick, heavy, rusty—clamped to the wall. Above was a casement window similar to the one the girl had spoken from.

"Watch here, Drake, and whistle if there is danger," muttered Locke:

"Yes, sir."

Locke threw off his coat to Drake, clasped the iron pipe with his strong, sinewy hands, and climbed.

The Hand of the Assassin.

FERRERS LOCKE reached the window and grasped the sill. The casement was open, and a white face looked from the window. Two dilated eyes looked out at the detective.

"Have no fear, Miss Langley," said the Baker Street detective. "I am here to help you."

The girl stepped back. Locke climbed in actively at the window and closed the casement behind him.

Then the girl struck a match and a candle glimmered out. In the wavering light, Locke saw her face clearly—the face he had seen from his consulting-room in Baker Street early that day. It was as white as chalk, the eyes dilated with fear. From the adjoining bed-room the light glimmered in. The connecting door was open, but another door, evidently on a corridor, was closed and locked.

"Courage, Miss Langley," said Ferrers Locke, soothing. "Sit down, my dear child, and calm yourself. I am here as your friend—to help you, if you need help; to save you, if you are in danger."

The girl looked long and earnestly into his face.

"I trust you!" she said simply. "If you are indeed Ferrers Locke, you are worthy of trust. But how did you know—?"

Ferrers Locke quickly explained. She listened, catching her breath.

"I—I understand! And—and you did so much—for a stranger," she breathed. "Heaven reward you, Mr. Locke. But—but my guardian? If Dhuleep Dinjarree should return—?"

She trembled.

"He will not return yet," said Ferrers Locke reassuringly. "He has gone to Ashford and cannot return yet. But we have little time to spare. Calm yourself, and tell me what the danger is. Why did you flee to London this morning to call on me in Baker Street?"

A long shudder shook the girl.

"My life is in danger!" she breathed.

"Tell me all."

"I—I am the ward of that man—Dinjarree—my step-father. My brother Cyril was his ward. Five years ago Cyril was found dead in the old quarry. I was little more than a girl then, but—but— Oh, I feared and suspected—" She trembled. "But—but afterwards—away from here—it went out of my mind. I thought perhaps I had been unjust, because I disliked my step-father. But—but lately—"

She shuddered again.

"Something has happened lately?"

"In a month more I shall be twenty-one," whispered Enid Langley. "I—I could not help remembering that poor Cyril died just before he was twenty-one. And—and my step-father's looks have been so strange of late, and—and yesterday—" She choked.

"He spends a great deal of time in his laboratory. Once, when a dog was ill, he poisoned it—just a taste on the dog's tongue, and it was dead. I—I remembered that! Oh, Mr. Locke! Yesterday, I had a headache—I stayed in my room. My tea was brought to me. My little kitten—it was with me—I gave it some milk in a saucer before I had my tea, and—and it lapped up the milk, Mr. Locke, and—and died!"

"Died!" repeated Ferrers Locke.

"Just as the dog had died a year ago, when he killed it."

She shuddered. "The poor little thing died within five minutes after taking the milk—painlessly—without a sound. If—if I had taken my tea—if I had taken the milk—I—I should have died, instead of the kitten." The tears ran down the pale cheeks.

"I—I was surprised—frightened. Then it came into my mind about my brother, poor Cyril, and my suspicions at that time—and I knew he intended my death."

Locke set his teeth.

"What did you do?"

"I—I did not know what to do. I sent away my tea unfasted. In the evening I wanted to go out—to get away. He must have suspected something, for he forbade me in a voice that made me afraid. Then I came up here to write. It came into my head, Mr. Locke, all that I had heard about you, and I thought of writing to you to ask your advice and help, but he—he came in and saw the envelope addressed on the table. He asked me no questions, but he flew into a terrible rage. I believe he would have killed me if he had dared!"

"She broke off, weeping.

"And then?" whispered Locke.

"He tore up the envelope, took my writing materials away, and left me. I did not sleep last night. I lay awake in terror. Long after the servants were gone to bed I heard him pacing his room downstairs, and once I crept out on the staircase and heard him speaking to Kali Das—they often speak together in Hindustani. I locked myself in my room till dawn. Then—then from my window I saw him go out. I threw on my coat, and—and hurried out of the house. I dared not speak to the servants. I contrived to get out of the house unseen, and ran, and ran, on the road to Ashford, as fast as I could, till I was exhausted. I do not know how I reached the station—but I reached it. There was a train for London in the station, and—and so I fled—"

"She broke off, sobbing.

"At Charing Cross I got into a taxi and told the man to drive me to your house, but on the very doorstep— You know the rest. When he found I was gone, he guessed—from the letter I had been trying to write, I suppose. He came to London in

the car and—and intercepted me. He brought me back here. He talked to me in the car—he tried to reassure me, but—but his very look made me shudder. We had a late lunch when we came in. I would eat nothing—drink nothing. He flew into a rage again, and—and— Oh, Mr. Locke! A short time ago I heard the telephone-bell ring, and he prepared to go out; but first he ordered me to my room and locked the door on the outside. I do not know what he intends to do—but I know he means my death."

The poor girl shivered.

"He has sent away my maid, and the other servants are devoted to him. He is cunning. They would not believe me if I told them, and they could not help me. But he means my death. I dare not eat or drink in this house, and—and if I escape, who will believe my story? And I cannot escape?"

"I am here to save you," said Ferrers-Locke quietly. "You have a friend in me, my poor young lady. Thank Heaven I am here—"

The girl interrupted him with a faint cry of terror. There was a sound of footsteps on the stairs.

"He is coming!" She started to her feet. "He will find you here— Oh, Heaven help us! If—if he believes he is discovered, he is capable of anything! He will murder you, as he murdered my brother five years ago—"

"Calm yourself! He will not see me," said Locke quietly. "Keep calm, and do not let him know I am here. I depend on you, Miss Langley."

The heavy footsteps stopped at the door of the boudoir.

Silently, and with a reassuring gesture to the girl, Ferrers Locke stepped out of sight behind a high Japanese screen.

There was a click of a key, and the door opened.

The tall, dark-skinned man strode in. His dusky face was darker with savage anger.

He closed the door behind him and fixed his eyes on the shrinking girl.

"Have you come to your senses yet?" he asked savagely.

Enid Langley made no reply. She had sunk back in her seat watching the dark face like a hapless bird fascinated by a snake.

"I have been called away on a fool's errand," said Dinjarree. "Some fool of a practical joker telephoned to me—but no matter. Enid, you are not yourself now. You have made me angry, my dear girl, with your strange suspicions. You have eaten nothing for twenty-four hours. Why is this?"

She did not speak, only her dilated eyes watched him. A glitter shot into his black eyes.

"What was it you would have told Ferrers Locke?"

No answer.

"Come, Enid, you are high-strung—hysterical—you need rest and sleep. I have called on the doctor as I was in Ashford, and obtained a soothing draught for you. Let me see you take it, and then go to bed."

A faint cry came from the girl.

"Never!"

"Enid—"

"Leave me," she said huskily. "Go, or I will scream for help! The servants will not let you murder me—"

"What folly is this?" said Dinjarree soothingly. "Silence, child! You are hysterical." He took a small phial from his pocket and a wineglass, and poured out a small dose of a colourless fluid. "This was given me by your doctor—your own doctor—"

"It is false—it is the same poison—"

"What?"

"Yesterday, I did not suspect—now I know—"

A black and savage look came over the Hindoo's face.

"You know—what?"

"I know it is poison—the poison that leaves no trace. Oh, I know it! I will not touch it!"

"So that is what you would have told Ferrers Locke," he sneered. "Well, you will not have the opportunity. I cannot keep you locked up in your room—I cannot let you go out to malign me in public. Take your draught, Enid, and go to bed—your mind will be clearer to-morrow."

"I will not touch it," said the girl faintly.

Dhuleep Dinjarree stamped his foot on the floor lightly. The door opened to admit Kali Das. He stepped in softly, closed the door, and came to his master. A sign from the Hindoo, and he had grasped the girl by the arms.

"Drink!" hissed Dinjarree.

The girl's lips opened for a scream. Kali Das clapped his dusky hand over her mouth. Dinjarree placed the wineglass on a little table and stepped towards her. At the same moment the Japanese screen was flung aside, and Ferrers Locke sprang into view.

Crash!

The butt of the detective's revolver crashed on Kali Das' head, and the scoundrel fell to the floor, senseless.

Dinjarree sprang back with a cry.

"You— Who are you? What is this? What—" he articulated.

The revolver was levelled at him. Ferrers Locke stood between him and the wineglass on the table.

"Stand back, you scoundrel!" said the Baker Street detective.

"You are my prisoner!"

"Ferrers Locke!" hissed Dinjarree.

"Yes, you villain—and here to baffle you. Miss Langley, take courage—you are safe!"

Dinjarree made a move towards the table.

"If you attempt to touch that wineglass, Dinjarree, I will shoot!" said Ferrers Locke quietly. "That draught is to be analysed by the police, and your guilt brought home to you, you dastardly villain."

(Continued on page 21.)

COMING SOON!

Our Great New School Serial "THE COLLEGE OF SPORTSMEN," by Walter Edwards. Don't Miss It!

THE MASTER-STROKE!

(Continued from page 19.)

couple of yards, and pushed the leather forward. Jack snapped it up and tried a solo effort, finishing with a daisy-cutter which had Joyner beaten right from the word "Go."

It should be put upon record that this early and sensational lead caused a little mild excitement amongst the Norchester supporters.

Whether Braydon was suffering from an "off" day, or whether Norchester was at the top of their form, is neither here nor there, but the fact remains that half-time found Jack's eleven leading by four goals to nil.

It was a very discouraged and glum-looking Athletic which strolled off the field, and their demeanour was no less cheery when they came back for the resumption of play.

A detailed description of what followed would prove wearisome, for, in sporting parlance, Norchester United were "all over 'em!"

The Braydon players were run off their legs, and the defence appeared to be helpless against the short-passing movement, which resulted in three more goals.

This brought the score up to seven to nil, and Jack added the eighth at exactly two minutes to full time.

Smiling and happy, Jack and his men trooped back to the dressing-room, and the frantic cheering of their delighted supporters still came to their ears long after the whistle had shrilled.

"Colonel!" boomed Stringer.

"Hallo, old man?" cried the flushed player-manager.

"I'm a brave man, but there is one thing I would not attempt at this moment!" said the red-headed fellow.

"And what are you afraid to do?"

"I should fear to go into the Braydon dressing-room, ask for the captain, and wish him a Merry Christmas!"

THE END.

"The College of Sportsmen." The greatest school serial ever written, will appear in the "Boys' Herald." This wonderful story introduces Nibby Clink and a host of other favourites at Arundel College.

THE HOUSE OF DEATH!

(Continued from page 16.)

A bitter look came across the man's dusky face. It was succeeded by a cynical, ironical grin.

"The game is up," he said, in a silky, soft voice. "Once was enough—twice has been my undoing. But you will not have the satisfaction of seeing me in your court of justice, Ferrers Locke—you will never see the prison gates close on Dhuleep Dinjarree. You have saved the girl's life, you cannot save her fortune—there is little left, my friend! But your prison cells were not built for Dhuleep Dinjarree!"

His hand went to his mouth. Locke watched him grimly. He knew the man's intention, and he did not raise a hand. A ghastly look came over Dinjarree's face, and he tottered.

With a crash, the Hindoo went to the floor. The poison had done its work by the time Ferrers Locke stooped over him and looked at him. Dhuleep Dinjarree was dead!

The telephone brought Inspector Benson and a couple of constables to Ash Lodge within half an hour. Enid Langley, fainting and overcome, kept to her room, overcome with horror of what she had gone through. Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake remained at Ash Lodge that night with the startled servants—and the dead body of the man who had planned the death of another, and had escaped punishment only by his own death. Kai Das, still unconscious, was removed to the police-station. He recovered, but not to stand his trial. With sullen Oriental fatalism, he escaped punishment as his master had done.

On the morning of Christmas Eve, Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake stood again in the consulting-room at Baker Street. There was frost on the windows, a biting crispness in the air. Drake had finished packing his bag.

"Now you are off to join your friends," said Ferrers Locke, with a smile. "We have had rather an exciting week, Drake, and have fairly earned our Christmas holiday. A happy Christmas, my boy!"

And Ferrers Locke shook hands with his boy assistant and saw him off to join his old Greyfriars chums. He returned to the consulting-room and sat down to smoke a last pipe before he took his bag out to the waiting car to start on his own journey. But that journey was destined not to be made—Ferrers Locke's Christmas was not destined to be a day of rest! But that is another story.

THE END.

Another grand detective story next week.

Stringer's Xmas Wheezes.

HOW TO AMUSE YOUR FRIENDS THIS YULETIDE.

THE boy who knows a trick or two is always very popular at Christmastide; so, at the request of the Editor, I have collected a few wheezes that you can all work off at the party. Like "new-laid eggs," they do not claim to be entirely fresh, but if they raise a laugh or two I think you will agree that they have served their purpose.

To begin with, here's a little stunt I once worked off on the Norchester fellows, and they were so delighted that they pelted me with potatoes—and other fruit. All you require is an old wooden horse—an article which is quite easy to obtain—and you place this in a prominent position on your platform or stage.

Make a little speech to your audience—this always impresses them—and then inform them that the tableau represents an island in the Mediterranean. What they have to do is to try and guess what it is. In the event of failure on their part, you greatly chide them on their lack of geographical knowledge, and answer "Delos" (deal-oss). It is then advisable to dodge out of danger as quickly as possible.

Draw the curtain across your stage, and keep the audience waiting a few moments. They imagine, of course, that you are preparing some other tremendous sensation for them. Then, with a flourish, draw aside the curtain again, and, to their surprise, they see the same horse upon the stage, but with one leg missing.

This, you inform your patient audience, represents another island in the Mediterranean. Ten to one they will be stumped again, and you remark that the answer this time is Lamos (lame-oss). Usually, an audience is highly amused at this, and if you find the wheeze going well, repeat the business once more.

The horse again represents an island in the Mediterranean, and it is Somos (some-oss). The great thing is to work the audience up so that they expect to see something fresh on each occasion, and if you do this well, the effect of seeing the same old "oss" there causes great amusement.

"Proverbs" is a good game to play at the Christmas party. We played this at Stringer Hall the other day when we celebrated Mallison's birthday. Nibby Clink turned out to be a surprising success at it.

One of the party goes out of the room, while the rest select a well-known proverb. You don't want one of those dry affairs from Shakespeare—just a simple little thing like "Boys should be seen and not heard," or "a rolling stone gathers no moss."

We will suppose the first one has been selected, and the boy has been re-admitted to the room. His duty is to question others of the party with a view to finding out what the proverb is; and everyone, when addressed, must give a reply to the question, bringing in a word of the proverb.

It is their job to disguise it as well as they are able, but remember, a word of the proverb must be given, and in its right order. For instance, we will suppose that the question was:

"Do you like Christmas pudding?" The reply could be, "The two boys next door do!"

This answer contains the first word of the proverb, but the questioner will most likely not obtain a clue to the complete sentence yet. So he proceeds to the next of the party.

"Are you going skating to-morrow?" he asks.

"I should like to. Shall we make up a party?"

This contains the second word of the proverb, but even now the cross-examiner may not have obtained sufficient information.

His next question might be:

"Do you read the 'Boys' Herald'?"

"I should be silly if I didn't!" comes the reply.

Of course, a great deal depends upon the one who is asking questions. If he is clever at the game, he can frame them in such a way that he is soon able to drag out the necessary information. A difficult question usually requires a difficult answer.

Thus, suppose the questioner now says:

"What is two plus two?"

The person who is asked will find it a fairly difficult matter to drag in the word "seen" without giving the game away. If he is cute, he will probably reply something like this:

"The answer is four; but I have seen mistakes made even in such a simple sum as that is!"

This will give the inquisitive gentleman something to think over.

So the game goes on until the rest of the words—"and not heard"—are named.

If at the end the questioner does not succeed in obtaining the information, he must pay a forfeit, as arranged.

Here is a very simple trick indeed, but it is very successful, and you will gain an end of a reputation as a conjurer among your aunts and uncles—especially if they are a bit short-sighted.

All you require is a long wooden stick, a gold ring, a piece of thread, and a small black tack. With this equipment you should be able to make the ring slip up and down the stick in a most mystifying manner.

First of all, hand the stick and ring to the audience for their examination. Then, when they are returned to you, take out the tack—which you have secreted under your coat—and when pretending to hypnotise the stick, press it firmly into the top end.

You have already tied one end of the black thread to the tack, while the other end is secured to a waistcoat button. It will be impossible to see this from any distance.

The gold ring should be placed over the stick and thread. All you have to do now is to speak to the ring and order it to move up and down as you wish—and it will do this according to the distance you hold the stick away from your body.

But go easy. Don't break your thread whatever you do, for it will be impossible to repair it in front of the audience without giving the whole show away.