

3 LONG COMPLETE STORIES!

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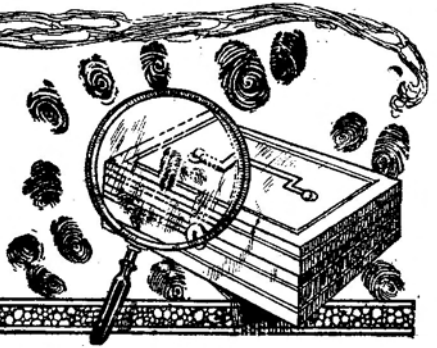


THE BATTLE OF FLOUR! See Inside.

COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.



The Case of the Cryptogram!



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 Message of Mystery.

CXXLXXX X
CXXXXMXX
XXXXX
XXXXX

FERRERS LOCKE looked at that curious array of letters and crosses, and glanced at the young man who had laid it on the table before him, in the consulting-room at Baker Street.

It was a newspaper cutting—evidently cut from the Personal Column of a daily paper.

Jack Drake, the famous detective's boy assistant, glanced at the paper, too, and raised his eyebrows.

Evidently it was some kind of a cryptograph, but what its meaning might possibly be, was a mystery to Drake.

But it was plain that it had some deep import for the young man who had laid it before Ferrers Locke. His rather handsome, well-cut face was pale and troubled, and there was a haunted, harassed look about it. His eyes were fixed eagerly on the Baker Street detective.

"Can you make anything of that, Mr. Locke?" he asked.

"At the moment, no," said Ferrers Locke, with a slight smile. "I have no doubt that I could decipher it, given the necessary time. But I should like to know something further of the matter first, Mr. Russell."

The young man hesitated.

"I will be frank, Mr. Locke," he said. "I have come to you, having heard that you take an interest in curious problems, and hoping that this might appeal to you and induce you to help me in my trouble. But—I believe that your fees are large."

"Quite correct."

"And—in that case——" Harry Russell coloured, and half-rose. "I suppose I should not have come."

"Sit down, my dear fellow," said Ferrers Locke, tranquilly. "It is quite true that my fees are large—sometimes very large—a circumstance which enables me to temper the wind to the shorn lamb. If your case interests me, I will take the problem, and the satisfaction of solving it as a reward. But let me hear the details before I can decide."

"You are too good, Mr. Locke," said the young man gratefully. "I—I think I am wrong to encroach upon your good nature like this, and yet—all my happiness depends on the solving of this wretched mystery. I believe that Celia's life depends on it—my wife," he added. "And—and when I see her looking worn and terrified, and—and I cannot help her——" His voice trembled.

"Tell me about it," said Ferrers Locke, soothingly, and he signed to Jack Drake to take his notebook.

"I don't expect you to understand it, Mr. Locke—it's beyond me, and I know Celia better than anyone else in the world, I think," said Russell. "It began a few weeks ago. I found her looking pale and worried, and asked her the reason—she gave me none. This occurred more than once—and I grew seriously alarmed. The clue came at last, when I found her almost unconscious one day, with the newspaper in her hand. It was the 'Daily Wire'—open at the page on which the Personal Column

is printed. After she was better, I asked her whether it was anything in the newspaper that had disturbed her—she gave me no answer. We had never had a secret from one another, but I understood then that there was a secret—something that she could not, or dared not, tell me. I was not curious, Mr. Locke, but for Celia's sake I was determined to know what was the matter."

He paused a moment.

"I searched carefully through the paper for anything that might have been the cause of the trouble. In the Personal Column there was a short paragraph—a cryptogram, such as often appears in such columns. It seemed incredible that anyone could be communicating with my wife by means of a secret cryptogram in a daily newspaper, but——"

"But!" said Locke.

"It seemed the only clue. I asked Celia the question point-blank, and she gave no answer, only asking me to forgive her. There was nothing, so far as I knew, to forgive. Her look was enough to convince me that I was on the right track, and I determined, somehow, to read the cryptogram—an arrangement of letters and crosses something like the one I have shown you. But my work claimed me, and in the evening the paper had disappeared—I could not help believing that Celia had deliberately destroyed it, to keep it from me."

He coloured painfully.

"Let the matter pass, at that," he continued. "But from that day I watched the Personal Column carefully in the 'Daily Wire.' I was on the look-out for a new advertisement of the same kind. This morning it appeared, Mr. Locke—and this is it, on your table now. Celia has not seen it yet, I think—I cut it out of the paper, and brought it up to town with me. I thought of you, Mr. Locke—and ventured to come here. If—if you can help me——"

"I shall try," said Ferrers Locke, quietly. "You see, Celia is everything in the world to me," said Harry Russell, simply. "And since this mysterious business started, she has become ill and harassed, and seems to be sinking under a secret trouble that she cannot or will not tell me. I believe that she is sinking into her grave, from sheer misery and fear."

"Fear?" said Locke.

"Fear—or terror is the word," said Russell. "That message, whatever it may mean, terrifies her—she has grown afraid of a shadow—she scarcely ventures out of the house, as if she thinks that some enemy is lying in wait for her—and she looks at me, sometimes in a way that makes my heart ache—and continually she asks me to forgive her, as if she had done me some wrong. Someone—some dastardly villain—is frightening her." The young man clenched his hands. "If I could find him—if I could get face to face with the scoundrel—I could deal with him. But I seem to be tangled in a horrible mystery. I don't know what to do—where to seek——" He broke off miserably.

"You did right to come to me," said Ferrers Locke. "You must tell me a little more, Mr. Russell, if I am to investigate the matter."

"Anything, Mr. Locke."

"How and when did you first meet Mrs. Russell?"

"It was during the war," said Russell. "I was knocked over at Ypres, and she was nursing in a hospital. We—we fell in love with one

another." He smiled faintly. "Not an uncommon case, Mr. Locke. We were married immediately after the Armistice. I'd had a fairly good position before the war, but all that went when I joined up, and after I was demobbed, I was glad to get my present berth in a City office. It's not much, but it was enough to begin married life on, and—and we started together. We've a little house Hendon way—and we've been as happy as anybody could be, till—till this wretched business started. There never was a better girl or a better wife, and now——"

"Her name?"

"It was Celia Anstey."

"Her people?"

"She hasn't any people—she was quite alone in the world," explained Russell. "She lived originally in Liverpool. She never talks about that—I fancy she had rather a hard time, and doesn't care to remember it."

"It must be some acquaintance—or former acquaintance—who is sending her those mysterious messages," said Locke.

"I suppose so."

"You have not asked her?"

"She does not answer my questions, only with tears," said Russell, miserably. "Only it's quite plain that she's frightened—afraid of being found by somebody—some scoundrel. Of course, whoever he is can't know where she lives, or he would write instead of putting these paragraphs in a daily paper. Don't you think so?"

"That seems fairly clear," said Locke.

"But it beats me," said the young man, with a look of desperation. "Why should anybody, scoundrel as he may be, be persecuting her like this? Why should she be afraid of him? Why can't he tell me the trouble? If it were anyone but Celia, I should know what to think—that there was some shady business in the past—but that, of course, is impossible."

Jack Drake looked at the young man. He liked Harry Russell for that simple statement.

"Quite impossible, we must hope," said Ferrers Locke.

"It's not a question of hoping, Mr. Locke—it's a plain fact. Celia is the best and dearest little woman in the world. She's got nothing to be forgiven—though she has asked me a hundred times to forgive her for deceiving me, as she puts it. It's this wretched business that has preyed on her nerves, till she doesn't know what she is saying. Mr. Locke, if you could find out the villain who is playing on her fears in this way——"

"I shall try. You may safely leave the matter in my hands, Mr. Russell," said the Baker Street detective. "By the way, have you a photograph of Mrs. Russell?"

Russell coloured, and drew a little case from his pocket.

"I—I always carry it," he said.

He laid it on the table. It was the photograph of a girl of about twenty—with a simple, pretty, sweet face, and rather saddened eyes.

"That was taken three years ago," he said. "But she had not changed—till this trouble came on us. Now she looks pale and ill—otherwise quite the same."

Locke nodded.

"You will leave this with me," he said. "Leave me your address also, Mr. Russell, and I shall hope to have some news for you soon."

The young man rose. "Heaven bless you," he said. "If you help me through this, Mr. Locke, you will have made me your debtor for life, if that's worth anything."

And Jack Drake showed the visitor out into Baker Street.

The Shadow of the Past.

MR. LOCKE!
"Well, Drake."
"It's here again!"
It was the following morning. What measures Ferrers Locke had taken, or whether he had taken any, with regard to the strange case of Celia Russell, Drake did not know. But he had been given instructions to keep his eye upon the Personal Column in the "Daily Wire."

Ferrers Locke looked up.
"The cryptogram again, Drake?" he asked.
"Yes."
"Good!"
"It's different this time," said Drake. "But it's the same cryptogram right enough—bristling with crosses. A different message."
Ferrers Locke nodded, and glanced at the paragraph his boy assistant indicated. It ran:

CCXXLXXX.X
RXNTXXXXXXR
XXXXX
DXXX.XX

"A very curious-looking message," remarked Ferrers Locke.

"It beats me," said Drake. "I've been trying to work it out, sir. But I can't imagine what the crosses stand for. Other letters, of course."

"No doubt."
"Mrs. Russell could give the clue," said Drake, glancing curiously at his chief. "She reads the messages, from what the young fellow told us yesterday."

"I fear that she has the best of reasons for not explaining the matter to her husband, my boy," said the Baker Street detective, quietly. "The poor girl is being persecuted—and she cannot help herself. But I think that we can help her."

He lighted his pipe.
"I was at Scotland Yard yesterday, Drake," he said. "Inspector Riley gave me all the assistance he could. The photograph was not unknown there."

Drake started.
"Mr. Locke! Is it possible—poor chap! Then—his wife was known to the police before he married her! That will be pretty rotten news for him."

"It is not so bad as it might appear, Drake. There was nothing against Celia Anstey personally. She had the misfortune to be the daughter of a scoundrel."

"Oh!" said Drake.
"Anstey is, I think, her mother's name," said Locke. "She had evidently taken it to conceal the fact that she was the daughter of Richard Plance. You have heard that name?"

"I believe so—"
"Plance the murderer!" said Locke, quietly. "No wonder the poor girl did not wish to tell Russell the facts, and allowed him to believe that she had no people. She ought to have told him, of course. But it is easy to understand the reason of her silence. Richard Plance and his brother, Cyril, were as thorough-going a pair of rascals as any mentioned in the records at Scotland Yard. For many years they kept up a good appearance where they lived, in Liverpool, and it was partly by chance that it was discovered that they were forgers of banknotes. When their house was suddenly raided, they put up a fight, and a policeman was shot dead. The affair made a great stir at the time. Plance narrowly escaped the gallows—both of them were sent to penal servitude for life. At the trial, it was clear that Celia Plance had known nothing of her father's and uncle's way of living—the discovery was a fearful shock to the poor girl, and there was general sympathy for her. Her mother died soon after the trial, and the girl disappeared—her father and uncle went to prison. The war came immediately after that, and it appears, from what Russell has told us, that she went to nursing—and so poor Russell's little romance came about."

"But—if they are in prison—it cannot be they who are threatening her—"
"Three months ago they escaped from prison together," said Ferrers Locke. "Nothing has been heard of them since. It is generally believed that they have succeeded in getting out of the country."

"Then—"
"I have not the slightest doubt that these hidden messages come from one or both of them," said Locke. "They have succeeded in evading discovery, but very probably they are in need of help that Celia Russell can give. The girl was used in passing counterfeit notes in the old days, unknown to herself—she was very useful to them, with her innocent face

and transparent honesty. The forgers are at work again, in some secret den, and they want her. Probably they would find her easily enough if she were still called Celia Plance or Celia Anstey; but her marriage has thrown them off the scent—they do not know that she is now Celia Russell. Hence the advertisements in the Personal Column of the 'Daily Wire.' No doubt she was accustomed to read that paper in her old home and the cryptogram, of course, must have been known to her then."

Ferrers Locke blew out a cloud of smoke.
"She was little more than a child when her father went to prison," he continued. "Although she was innocent of wrong-doing, there is no doubt that Richard Plance had already begun to warp her mind in the direction of helping him in his rascality. He had taught her the cryptogram for use in secret communications, if the necessity should arise—as doubtless it did even in those days. There must have been many incidents which she did not understand—but which she would have understood later, if the game had gone on. And it is very probable that she would have been trained, in the long run, to a life of crime, if the police had not got upon the track of the forger."

"The awful rascal!" muttered Drake. "And now—now he wants to make her join him again—now that she knows the truth, and wishes to keep clear of it."
"That is my theory."

"Will you tell Mr. Russell?"
"I shall tell the girl herself, and advise her to confide in her husband," said Ferrers Locke. "Russell is a good and loyal fellow, and I believe he will stand by her—I am sure of it. And I shall guarantee that neither of them will be troubled by Richard and Cyril Plance." He knitted his brows. "They shall pay dearly for their threats! I have sent a message to Mrs. Russell, Drake, and I expect her to come here this morning."

Drake started.
"You will ask her help in—"
"In tracking down her father? Not at all. I could not ask that—and neither would she give it. It is obvious that they know they can rely upon her not to betray them," said Locke; "and I do not need her assistance. I am quite able, I think, to deal with the two rascals without it. Ah! There is a ring at the door."

Sing-sing, the Chinese servant, showed a deeply-veiled lady into the consulting-room. Jack Drake quietly passed into Locke's private cabinet, leaving Celia Russell alone with the Baker Street detective.

The Clouds Roll By.

FERRERS LOCKE was busy for the remainder of the day, and Jack Drake saw little of his chief until the evening.

There had been several callers at Baker Street—among them Detective-Inspector Riley of Scotland Yard, and a rather sturdy young lady, named Miss Nina North—a female detective, who had sometimes assisted Ferrers Locke in his cases. Whether they came in connection with the Russell case Drake did not know, and he did not inquire. He was content to wait till his chief should take him into his confidence.

After dinner that evening, Locke retired to his private cabinet, to smoke his pipe among his books; and Jack Drake sat on the other side of the fire, with a green-coloured journal, in which he found a great deal of interest. It was nearly nine o'clock when Sing-sing announced Harry Russell.

The young man looked pale as he came in, but his face was brighter than when Drake had last seen him.

He shook hands warmly with Ferrers Locke. "I don't know how to thank you, Mr. Locke," he began.

"Don't try!" said Locke. "Sit down, my dear fellow. I asked you to drop in this evening, to let me know how matters have gone—I trust well?"

The young man nodded.
"Celia has told me everything," he said. "She told me that you advised her to be frank."

"It was the best advice I could give her."
"If she had only trusted me," said Russell.

"The poor, dear girl! She would have told me, but—but she was afraid it would make a difference to my feelings for her, if I had learned that her father was a criminal, though she was innocent of any thought of wrong-doing. It would have made no difference. I should only have been the keener to give her the protection of my name, if I had known. What a life must have been hers, Mr. Locke—and what a scoundrel her father must have been!"

"And still is!" said Locke.
"I fear so," said Russell. "It seems that he has escaped from prison—"

"That is so."
"And the cryptograms in the 'Daily Wire'

were his means of communicating with her—"

"Exactly."
"And you found that out!" said Russell. "Thank Heaven that is all! I shall see that Celia is protected from those scoundrels, her father and her uncle, if they should find her out. She has told me all—and—and I cannot blame her, Mr. Locke, for not wishing to assist in handing her father over to the police, villain as he is. If she consented to give the clue to the cryptogram, it would help, I suppose—but you would not ask that of her."

"No."
"Thank you, Mr. Locke. I—I hope that those villains will be taken again—though I fear it will be a shock to her," said Russell.

"They will be taken, I think," said Ferrers Locke, tranquilly.

"You have a clue to their hiding-place?"
"At least I hope to be able to lay my finger on them," said the Baker Street detective, with a smile.

"Then what has happened to me to-day is very fortunate," said Russell, with a deep breath. "I shall be able to get Celia out of the way before the blow falls."

"Indeed! May I ask what has happened?"
"I was going to tell you, Mr. Locke. You know, I am employed by Crane and Crane, in the Minories. They sent for me into the private office this afternoon, and offered me a post in their Paris office for three months—a very good opportunity for me to get on in the firm. They were very liberal in the matter of expenses, and I shall be able to take my wife with me—I should not have gone without her in any case. If—the blow falls on her wretched relations, she need hear nothing of it—I shall take care that English newspapers do not come her way. Could anything have happened more fortunately?"

"You seem to be in luck, Mr. Russell," said Ferrers Locke.

"I have to thank somebody for it," said Russell, with a smile. "I do not know whom. You see, I've never been taken much notice of in the firm before—the heads are rather big guns, and I'm one in a hundred there. It was through hearing Mr. Crane mention a matter in which you had helped him, Mr. Locke, that I first thought of coming to you in my trouble. Now, to-day I was, of course, rather surprised at being picked out for this Paris job, as the senior partner had never taken any special notice of me; and, though I picked up a good deal of French while serving in Flanders, it's not first-class, though I'm going to work hard to improve it and do justice to my appointment. I ventured to inquire of Mr. Crane how he came to pick me out, and he told me I had been warmly recommended to him by a gentleman in whom he had great confidence."

"Some old friend of yours, perhaps?" said the detective.

Russell shook his head.

"I can't imagine who it is," he said. "I never knew that I was in anybody's good books to that extent; especially of a man of such influence. It's some big gun, I should say, for Mr. Crane to respect his opinion so highly."

"It has happened very fortunately," said Ferrers Locke. "May I advise you to take Mrs. Russell away from London at the earliest possible hour?"

"That's one of the conditions of my taking the post—that I start to-morrow morning by the early train from Charing Cross," said Russell. "I've been jolly busy to-day, getting ready; and so has Celia. And—and now that I know the facts, Mr. Locke, and she knows I'm standing by her, poor girl, she seems to have taken on new life. It was the fear of her father finding her, and telling me who she was, that scared her so terribly; and she feared him, too and his vengeance, if she refused to rejoin him. She feels she will be safe from him in a foreign country."

"You will take care that she does not see the 'Daily Wire' to-morrow morning, Mr. Russell?"

"You think there will be another cryptogram in the Personal Column?"
"I am certain of it!"

"She shall not see the paper," said Russell. "All that is over for her. If only I could know those two scoundrels were safe in prison again—"

"You will let me know your Paris address, and I shall send you word," said Ferrers Locke. "Many, many thanks. All my troubles seem to have rolled away, since I called on you, Mr. Locke. I don't know what I have done to deserve such good luck."

"You are making a good woman happy," said Ferrers Locke, with a kind smile. "The poor girl has much to forget, and you are helping her to forget it. I think she will never be troubled by her father or her uncle again; they will be taken care of. And the cryptogram that will appear in the 'Daily Wire' to-morrow morning will, I think, be the last."

After the young man, with a bright and

cheerful face, was gone, Jack Drake looked very curiously at his chief.

Locke met his inquiring glance with a smile. "I can see in your face, my boy, that you suspect the identity of young Russell's unknown friend at court," he said.

"It was you, sir," said Drake, at once.

The Baker Street detective nodded. "Exactly. I have some influence with Crane and Crane, owing to a case in which I served them some time ago. I have put in a word for Mr. Russell—partly for his own sake, for he is a good-hearted and loyal young fellow, and partly in order to get Celia Russell out of England before the blow falls upon Richard Plance and his brother."

"It was just like you, Mr. Locke," said Drake. "Kindest friend and noblest foe—"

"Tut, tut!" said Ferrers Locke, laughing. "One may do a kind action occasionally, I hope, though one's time is chiefly spent in waging war on crime and criminals."

"But how do you know for certain, sir, that the cryptogram will appear in the 'Daily Wire' to-morrow morning?" asked Drake.

"For the best of reasons, my boy; I have put it there."

"You!" ejaculated Drake. "Exactly!" Ferrers Locke rose, and knocked out his pipe. "Bedtime now, my boy, and we have a busy day to-morrow."

The Clue.

JACK DRAKE opened the "Daily Wire" in the morning at the Personal Column, and his eyes fell at once upon the cryptogram.

It ran:

TXXXSXXXX. XXXXTH
STRXX. XXT
BLXXXX. XXXXMSBXXXXXXRY.

Drake stared at it, and Locke glanced at him across the breakfast-table with a smile.

"Does that puzzle you, Drake?"

"A little, sir," said the boy detective ruefully. "You can read it, of course."

"Naturally. But I am not going to mystify you, my boy," said Ferrers Locke. "It is not a difficult cryptogram to decipher. How would you begin on it?"

"The X's baffle me rather," said Drake. "As E is the commonest letter used in the alphabet, I should, as a first shot, put down X as meaning E."

"Take the cryptogram that Mr. Russell brought to us in the first place," said Ferrers Locke. "Here it is. Turn your X's into E's, and see what you make of it."

Drake glanced at the curious paragraph.

CXXLXXX. X
CXXXXMX
TXXXX
XXXXXS

"CEELEEE. E," he read out, and grinned. "That doesn't seem to make much sense, sir."

"Very little, I think. Try again."

"If the X's stand for different letters, according to their grouping, it is rather a problem," said Drake. "Once a chap who had the key to it could make it out in that case, I should say."

"Try the X's as standing for the vowels, and leave the consonants alone!" suggested Ferrers Locke.

Drake started. "But—which vowels?" he asked.

"There are five vowels: A, E, I, O, U," said Locke. "Take a single X as standing for the first, a double X for the second, three X's for the third, and so on."

Drake uttered an exclamation.

"That's why a full stop is shoved in among the X's, then!" he exclaimed. "To separate one vowel from another."

"Exactly."

"I—I thought the full stop might have stood for a letter—"

"So it might; but it happens that it does not," said Ferrers Locke. "Now put A in the place of a single X, E in the place of two X's placed together, I in the place of a group of three, O for a group of four, and U for a group of five. See what results."

It did not take Drake long to fill in the vowels with a pencil, and he read out:

"Celia come to us." "Good!" he exclaimed. "There are plenty of Celas; but, of course, the use of the code showed Mrs. Russell that it was addressed to her, as her father had used that code with her before."

"Just so."

"And the second cryptogram, that appeared the next morning—"

"Here it is."

CXXLXXX. X
RXXTXXXXXXRN
XXXXR
DXXX. XX

Jack Drake's brow darkened as he deciphered the message.

"Celia return or die."

"That is it," said Ferrers Locke. "The scoundrels!" said Drake, with a hard breath. "Then they were threatening her life."

Ferrers Locke's eyes glinted.

"Whether the threat was seriously meant or not, there is no doubt that we have to deal with two ruthless scoundrels," he said. "They were determined to get the poor girl into their power again, for the purposes of their crimes, and I think they would have stopped at very little."

"But how did they expect Mrs. Russell to reply, if she replied at all?" asked Drake. "Even in a secret code, they would not venture to advertise their address."

"Scarcely. There was only one way in which Richard Plance's daughter could have answered—by inserting a message in similar code in the Personal Column of the 'Daily Wire.'"

"I see."

"For which reason," said Locke tranquilly. "I called at the office of the 'Daily Wire' yesterday, with a message written in this code—which I had deciphered, my boy, within ten minutes after Mr. Russell left us. Now you can read my little paragraph."

Jack Drake turned to the 'Daily Wire' again.

TXXXSXXXX. XXXXTH
STRXX. XXT
BLXXXX. XXXXMSBXXXXXXRY.

He filled in the vowels with his pencil, and read:

"Ten, South Street, Bloomsbury."

"They are expecting an answer from Celia Russell," remarked Ferrers Locke. "Naturally they watch that column for the reply they expect and hope to see. When they read this paragraph this morning, Drake, what will they think?"

"That the poor girl has been frightened by their threats into answering, and giving her address," said Drake.

"Precisely."

"I—I see now," breathed Drake. "You have got Mrs. Russell out of the way, and answered the messages in her place. She will know nothing of it—"

"Nothing."

"And at 10, South Street, Bloomsbury—"

"At 10, South Street, Bloomsbury, I think there will be one or two visitors very soon," said Ferrers Locke. "Miss Nina North, the lady detective, whom you saw here yesterday, has taken rooms there—it is a lodging-house. She has taken them under the name of Miss Celia Plance. And No. 10, South Street,

Bloomsbury is being watched very carefully. Visitors for Miss Plance will be admitted freely but they will not find it so easy to leave again."

Ferrers Locke rose from the breakfast table, and looked at his watch. "You would like to be in at the death, Drake?"

"Yes, rather, sir."

"Then you will come with me."

A few minutes later the detective and his boy assistant were walking down Baker Street, and there was a look upon Ferrers Locke's clear-cut face that showed that the famous detective was in a satisfied mood, which was not likely to be a cause of satisfaction to those with whom he had to deal.

In the Hands of the Law.

KNOCK! Jack Drake drew a deep breath, and his heart throbbed a little.

He was seated in a dusky corner behind a shabby screen, in a shabbily-furnished sitting-room in a back street of Bloomsbury.

At a table near the window sat a young woman, veiled.

Standing beside Drake, hidden by the shabby screen, was Ferrers Locke, with his hand on the revolver in his pocket.

It was close on noon; and the Baker Street detective, patient and tireless, had been on the watch, scarcely moving, for two hours.

Ferrers Locke was fairly certain that Richard Plance would lose no time in answering the supposed message from Celia. He had arranged for Detective-Inspector Riley to take his place in the afternoon, if the morning brought nothing. But he was expecting events to happen in the morning, and he was right.

A murmur of voices was heard in the shabby hall without, following the knock at the street door.

Then there was a tap at the sitting-room door, and it opened. The plump, red-faced landlady looked in with a scent of soap-suds.

"Two gentlemen to see you, Miss Plance," she said.

"Thank you, Mrs. Smith! Please ask them to walk in," said the veiled girl, in a low voice.

"This 'ere room, sir," called out the landlady, and she returned to her kitchen, having thus elegantly announced the visitors.

Two men in overcoats appeared in the doorway. The girl at the table rose to her feet. Both of the visitors were of powerful frame, and thickly bearded. One of them, with light grey, glinting eyes, made a quick step toward the girl.

"So I've found you at last, Celia."



Richard Plance reeled back against the wall, with a ghastly grin. "Too late, inspector!" he breathed. "No more prison for me—too late, my man!" He reeled from the wall, and fell to the floor with a crash.

"Is it you, father?" breathed the girl, in a scarcely audible voice.

Richard Plance laughed. "You know it is I, even with this beard," he said. He closed the door. "You've taken a long time to make up your mind, Celia."

The other man glanced round the shabby room.

"You don't seem to be in very luxurious quarters, Celia," he said. "Your father and your uncle will find you something better than this." He stared at the girl. "Come, take off your veil—why are you veiled? Were you just going out?"

Richard Plance made a sudden stride towards the girl, with quick suspicion in his glinting eyes.

"What is this?" he exclaimed. "Are you—?" He tore at the veil, and as it was rent aside, he gave a shout of fury. "You are not Celia!"

"Not Celia!" exclaimed Cyril Plance, with an oath. "Tricked! The girl has given us away!"

"Hold your fool tongue," hissed the other. "Celia would never betray her father! I knew that, and you know it."

"Then how—why—?"

"This woman shall explain," said Richard Plance, savagely. "She—"

"Put up your hands!"

It was a cool, quiet voice—cool as ice; as Ferrers Locke stepped from behind the screen. The two rascals spun round towards him.

There was a revolver gripped in the Baker Street detective's hand, and it was at the level, with Ferrers Locke's steady eye glittering over it. Jack Drake was in sight the next second, revolver in hand, and his weapon also was at a level.

Richard Plance stared blankly at the detective.

"Who—who are you?"

"Trapped!" muttered his brother. "Sold and trapped!"

"Trapped—but not sold!" said Ferrers Locke, quietly. "Your daughter, Richard Plance, knows nothing of this. You trusted to her regard for a worthless father, and you, were right. But you did not count on Ferrers Locke."

"Ferrers Locke!" muttered the forger.

"Put up your hands," said Ferrers Locke, grimly. "I shall not stand on ceremony with you, Plance, if you touch a weapon. Your whistle, Drake."

Drake had a police-whistle in his left hand. He put it to his lips and blew a loud blast.

The whistle rang through the house, and through the street. It was answered immediately from without.

Richard Plance panted.

"Trapped!" he muttered, hoarsely. "And who—who is this—?" He glared at the female detective, who smiled coolly. "Not my daughter—a spy of yours, I suppose, Ferrers Locke, you meddling hound."

Locke shrugged his shoulders.

"You are my prisoners," he said. "Take warning that I shall fire if you try to draw a weapon."

A quick, desperate look was exchanged between the two rascals. Already there was a thundering at the street door, and the scared landlady was rushing to open it.

Plance drove his hand desperately into his pocket for a weapon.

Crack!

Ferrers Locke fired without a second's hesitation.

There was a loud yell from Plance, as his arm dropped to his side, broken by the bullet.

Crack!

The second report was closer than an echo of the first, and Cyril Plance fell on the shabby carpet, a revolver in his hand, and a bullet in his shoulder before he could use it.

"You asked for it!" said Ferrers Locke, grimly.

There was a trampling of feet in the narrow hall.

"This way!" shouted Ferrers Locke.

Drake threw open the door. Detective-Inspector Riley appeared there, with three or four constables behind him.

Cyril Plance made an effort to rise, and fell back fainting. His head rolled unconscious on the carpet.

Richard Plance changed his revolver from his useless right hand to his left, backing to the wall. There was desperate rage and defiance in his bearded face.

"Stand back!" he muttered, hoarsely.

"Put down that pognon," said the inspector, coolly. "the game's up, my man."

He jerked the handcuffs from his pocket.

Without a moment's hesitation, he advanced upon the cornered rascal.

Richard Plance jerked up the revolver, as if to fire at him, but he realised that the game was indeed up. The constables were closing in on him.

With a quick movement, he turned the revolver upon his own breast, and a second before the inspector could reach him, he pulled the trigger.

Crack!

He reeled back against the wall, with a ghastly grin.

"Too late, inspector!" he breathed. "No more prison for me; too late, my man!"

He reeled from the wall, and fell to the floor with a crash. Inspector Riley bent over him, and shrugged his burly shoulders.

With the glare of defiance frozen on his face, Richard Plance, the forger and murderer, lay dead at his feet.

"Gone!" said the inspector, coolly, as he rose.

Ferrers Locke looked down on the man who had fallen by his own hand, with an impassive face.

"It is better so," he said.

"And we shall want the ambulance for the other," said Inspector Riley. "He will pull through, I reckon. Well, it's a clear catch, Mr. Locke—two of the most dangerous rascals in the kingdom will never give any more trouble. But how you got them to come here, and why they came—?" The inspector shrugged his shoulders again. "You're a magician, Locke. I've acted on your instructions, but I will admit now that I never quite expected to bag the birds."

Ferrers Locke smiled faintly.

"I will leave the matter in your hands now, Riley," he said.

The inspector nodded, and Ferrers Locke quitted the room, and the house, with his boy assistant. Drake's face was very grave, as they made their way through the crowd attracted round the house by the shooting.

A telegram awaited Ferrers Locke at Baker Street.

It was from Harry Russell, giving his address in Paris.

The terrible scene through which he had passed, in the lodging-house at Bloomsbury, had left Ferrers Locke quite unmoved. His clear-cut face was calm and impassive as usual.

He took a telegraph form from his desk and scribbled.

"Good news for Russell," he remarked. "If he is careful, his wife may never know her father's fate; to Russell himself it can only be a relief. Send this wire off as quickly as you can, Drake."

And Jack Drake hurried away with the telegram that was to tell Harry Russell that Richard Plance was dead, and his brother safe in the hands of the police.

THE END.

Another grand detective story next week.

FIGHTING FOR THE CUP!

FOOTBALL FACTS AND FIGURES BY AN OLD INTERNATIONAL.

As an illustration of the evenness of the contestants of Cup finals since the inauguration of the competition in 1871-2, it is interesting to note that on twenty-two occasions the verdict has been gained by an odd goal, and on no less than fifteen occasions only one goal has been scored in the final tie.

Big wins have, of course, been recorded; the biggest being Bury's 6-0 defeat of Derby County in 1902-3, and Blackburn Rovers succeeded in beating Sheffield Wednesday in 1889-90 by 6-1.

It is a long time now since any club has been successful in winning the trophy for two successive seasons. The last performance of the kind being as far back as 1889-90 and 1890-1, Blackburn Rovers having the honour.

Prior to this, both Blackburn Rovers and the Wanderers had won the Cup for three successive seasons—the latter club actually winning it outright during seasons 1875-6-7-8. They, however, handed it back to the Association as a perpetual trophy. And on Blackburn Rovers emulating the feat in seasons 1883-4-5-6, they were awarded a special trophy as a memento.

It is probable that it will be very many years before any one club again manages to win for three consecutive seasons, and it is a fact, that, a few years back, it was the usual thing for the Cup-holders to be knocked out in the first round the following season.

Two clubs have a specially meritorious feat to their credit. Preston North End in 1888-9, and Bury in 1902-3 both went through the competition without a single goal being scored against them.

Preston North End must have had a tremendously good side that season, because not only did they win the Cup, but they won the League Championship as well, and, moreover, did not lose a solitary match in the League competition.

The only other club to achieve the double feat of winning the Cup and the League Championship the same season is Aston Villa, who managed to do so in season 1896-7.

Some clubs stand out conspicuously as Cup fighters, and to mention a few, Aston Villa, as well as winning the Cup six times—a record number—have been defeated in the final on one occasion, and in all have figured in eleven season's semi-finals. Blackburn Rovers whose wins total five, have contested ten semi-finals, as also has West Bromwich Albion. Then, Newcastle United, although they have only won the trophy once, reached the final five times in seven seasons.

In striking contrast to these successful clubs, some others never seem to have the knack of doing well, and the Second Division team—Clapton Orient—in the course of their career have so far only once succeeded in reaching the second round, and even then got no further.

Crystal Palace, apparently, delight in springing surprises in the Cup-ties. This season, in the first round, they unexpectedly trounced Everton at Goodison Park by 6-0, last season beat Manchester City, and it is not so many years ago that they were drawn against Newcastle United, at a time when the "Magpies" were at the height of their fame; but, although the Palace were then only in the Southern League, they amazed everybody by vanquishing their doughty opponents at St. James' Park.

It is perhaps the greatest ambition of every footballer to win a Cup-final medal, but some of the greatest men have been denied the honour. One such was Bob Crompton, the famous Blackburn Rovers' right-back, who for so many years was the captain of England in the International matches. During his splendid career he won many honours, including thirty-four "caps," against Scotland, Wales, and Ireland, but he never played in a Cup-final.

There was no competition during seasons 1915-19; but except for that period the contest has had an unbroken run since it started in 1871-2.

This season a big incentive to win is given the players. Winning clubs may pay a bonus of £5 to each member of the team in any round of the competition proper, and £10 for success in the final. Similarly, a draw may be rewarded with a bonus of £1.

Extra time must now be played in the final tie, if the result at the end of ninety minutes is a draw.