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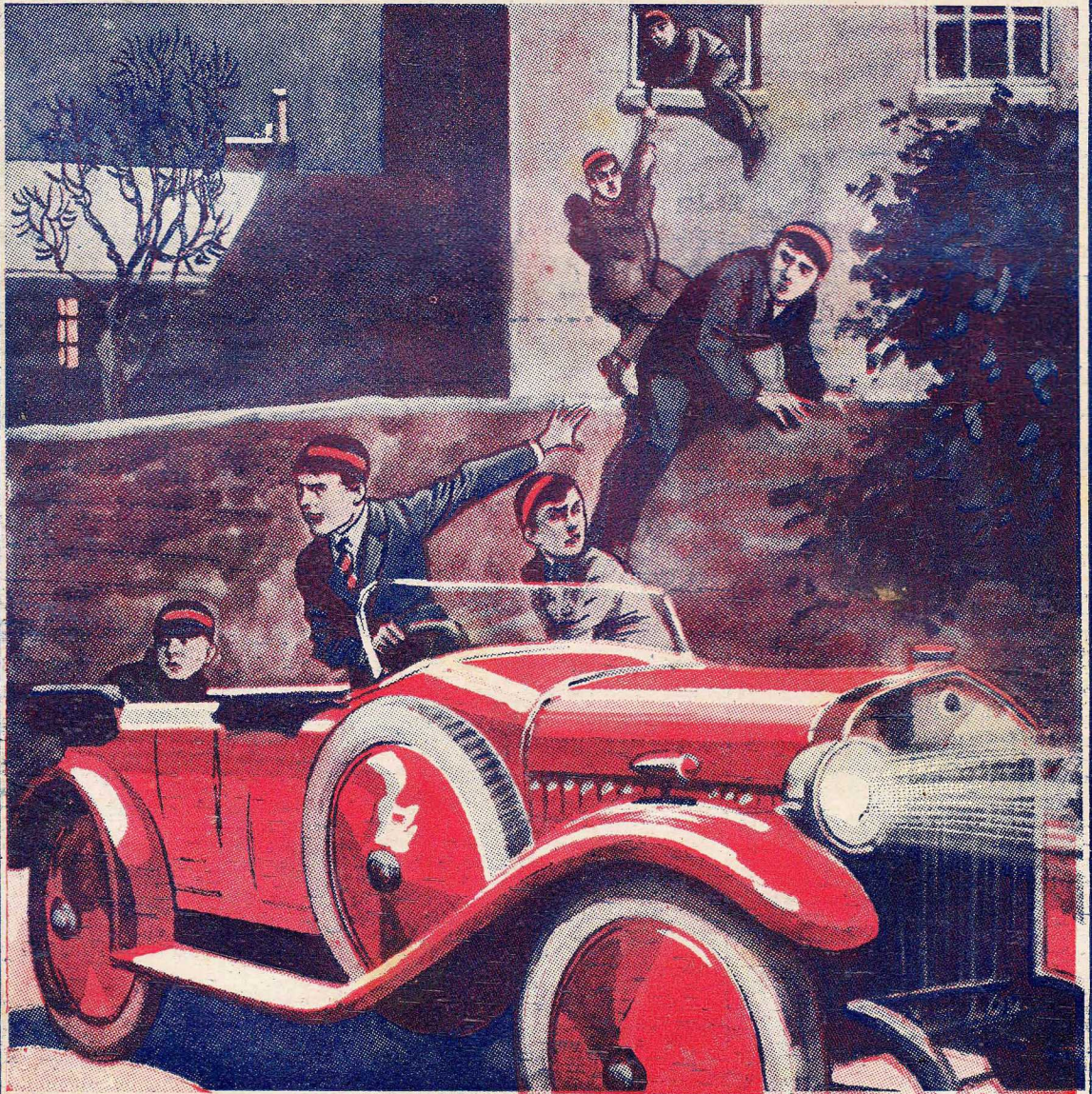
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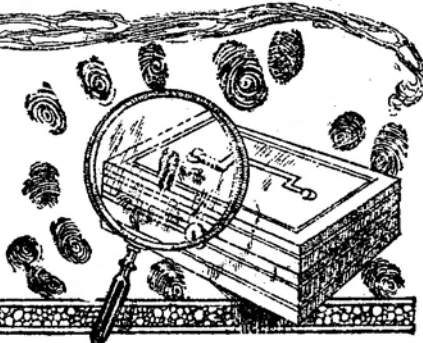


A MIDNIGHT ESCAPE!—See Inside.

COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.



FROM THE SHADOW 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.

Something Wrong Somewhere.

COME in, Pycroft." Ferrers Locke turned from the telephone, in his consulting-room at Baker Street, as Inspector Pycroft entered.

Mr. Pycroft was looking somewhat moody; and the Baker Street detective smiled slightly as he nodded to him.

"Any luck?" he asked. "None!" grunted the inspector, dropping into a chair. "The man seems to have vanished into space."

He glanced round the consulting-room. "Your youthful factotum away?" he asked, with a touch of sarcasm.

"Drake? Yes. I have entrusted him with an investigation on his own account," said Ferrers Locke. "As a matter of fact, he has gone down into Kent, to look for the missing bank-messenger, Jarrick."

"Your man—if you catch him!" said Locke. "Drake's man, perhaps—at least, I hope so."

The inspector regarded him rather curiously. "Down into Kent?" he asked.

"Yes." "Why Kent? This man, Jarrick, seems to have vanished without leaving a trace behind him—taking with him three thousand pounds belonging to the City and County Bank," said Inspector Pycroft. "I have been on the case for sixteen days, and I confess that I have not found the ghost of a clue to Jarrick. Yet you say the boy has gone down to Kent to look for him. Why?"

"Because I hope that a clue will be picked up there," smiled Ferrers Locke. "Mr. Piddington, the manager of the Baker Street branch, asked me to look into the matter, yesterday; I could not get away, so I entrusted Drake with the task."

"But why Kent?" repeated the inspector. "Why Kent any more than Cornwall, or Northumberland, by gad?"

Locke did not reply for a moment. "Come, Locke," said the inspector persuasively, "we haven't always agreed in our views—but I've often found you hit the right nail on the head. If you've got a clue to the man Jarrick, you can afford to pass it on."

"I've no objection," said Locke. "I have no time to take up the case, and I am willing to help you, Pycroft. The clue is a rather vague one. You may happen to know Jack Drake was at Greyfriars School, in Kent, before he came to me."

The inspector nodded. "Near his old school is the little village of Friardale. When Drake was at school, he noted the name Jarrick in the village—over a dealer's shop. It is an uncommon name—there was a possibility that this old furniture dealer, Jarrick, was a relation of the bank-messenger who has booted with the bank's money. Drake went down to the place yesterday to make some inquiries."

"By gad!" grunted the inspector. "About one chance in a thousand, I suppose, that there is something in it!"

"More than that, I think," smiled Ferrers Locke. "I had a letter this morning from Drake. He has found that the name of Jarrick has recently been painted out over the shop, and 'J. Andrews' substituted. Possibly a mere coincidence. Put worth looking into, I think."

The inspector seemed more interested. "Possibly more than a coincidence," he remarked thoughtfully. "You have not heard anything more from the boy during the day?"

"Nothing. He was to call me up on the telephone at seven-o'clock this evening," said Ferrers Locke.

"It is half-past seven now."

"For that reason, I have asked for a trunk call through to Greyfriars—and am waiting now to hear from the exchange," said Locke. "Drake's failure to phone at the appointed time may mean that he has made some discovery, and is busy—or—"

"Or what?" "Or that the other side has made some discovery, and my assistant may be in danger," said Locke quietly. "James Jarrick seems to be a cool and determined rascal; and if he has found Drake on his trail—"

"I will look into the matter, if you like," said Mr. Pycroft. "After what you've told me, I think I shall take a trip into Kent myself. You've no objection to my borrowing your clue?"

"None at all; and I will instruct Drake to acquaint you with anything he may have discovered," said Locke. "But wait till I am through to Greyfriars—there may be some news. Drake has put up at his old school; and I am telephoning to Mr. Quelch, his old Form-master, to ask for a few words with him. Ah! there it is."

The telephone bell buzzed. Locke rose and went to the telephone at once.

A few moments more, and the rather metallic voice of Mr. Quelch, the Remove master of Greyfriars School, came through. "Hallo!"

"Ferrers Locke speaking," said the detective. "May I trouble you to let me have a few words with Jack Drake on your telephone, Mr. Quelch?"

"Most certainly. I will send for him at once. Hold on!"

"Thanks." Ferrers Locke held the line. A full minute elapsed—then another! Mr. Quelch's voice came along the wires again at last.

"Are you there, Mr. Locke?" "Yes."

"I am sorry to say that Drake is not in the school at the present moment."

"Indeed."

"It is rather odd—he went out when afternoon classes began, after arranging with Wharton to have tea with him in his study at five. He has not returned, and the gates are locked now; it is very odd that he should have remained out. While he is here, of course, he is conforming to the rules of the school, and it is strange that he should not have returned by lock-up."

It is improbable, I suppose, that any accident can have happened to him?"

Locke's face set hard. "He did not tell Wharton where he was going?" he asked.

"No." "You are assured that he arranged to return at five?"

"Quite assured—Wharton tells me so, and he had several friends to tea to meet Drake, who did not return in time, and has not returned yet."

"Thank you, Mr. Quelch. Would you kindly mention to Dr. Locke that I am coming down to Greyfriars, and will call on him this evening?"

"Certainly." "Thank you, good-bye." "Good-bye."

Ferrers Locke put up the receiver. "Well," jerked out the inspector, eyeing the detective's grave face very curiously.

"Drake is not at the school," said Locke. "He went out, intending to return at five, and has not reappeared. It may mean nothing—but it may mean a good deal."

"Something's happened to the boy!" grunted the inspector.

"It is possible." Locke picked up a time-table and glanced down the pages. "There is an express for Courtfield at eight." He rang the bell, and Sing-Sing appeared at the door. "The car at once, Sing-Sing."

"Yes, Missa Locke." "You are going down to Friardale?" asked the inspector.

"Yes, at once. Dr. Locke, the Head of Greyfriars, is a relative of mine," explained the detective. "He will not mind my bothering him with a visit this evening. If you care to come at the same time."

"I was just thinking of it, if you'll give me a lift in your car to the station."

"Done!" said Ferrers Locke. "You have the warrant for James Jarrick?"

"Sure! I only hope that I shall get a chance to use it," said Mr. Pycroft.

"I begin to think there will be a very good chance," said Ferrers Locke. "Wait for me five minutes, my dear fellow, and then I will rejoin you."

In five minutes Locke returned to the consulting-room; in three more, the Baker Street detective and the Scotland-Yard inspector were seated in the car, gliding through the London traffic for Charing Cross Station.

Locke's face was calm and impassive as usual, as the express bore him and his companion away from the city, over the darkened fields of Kent. But there was a trace of anxiety in it.

The Hour of Doom.

JACK DRAKE stirred restlessly. He was in complete darkness. He lay on the bare floor, in the Jarret over the dealer's shop, in River Lane in Friardale.

Hands and feet were bound, and there was a gag in his mouth. He stirred restlessly, aching in the grip of his bonds.

There was something like despair in the boy detective's breast.

He had succeeded, almost beyond his hopes, in the task that had been entrusted to him by his chief.

That Jarrick, the absconding bank-messenger, was a connection of the old Jarrick, the furniture dealer of Friardale, was certain now; but even while he had made the discovery, the boy detective had fallen into a trap set for him by the man he was tracking.

For long hours he had lain in the garret, shivering with cold, cramped by the cords on his sturdy limbs.

He thought of Ferrers Locke, but the thought brought him little hope. If he did not telephone at the appointed time, the detective might call up Greyfriars. But he would only learn that his assistant was absent from the school. Drake did not think that Locke would throw up the case upon which he was busy, throw everything to the winds, in fact, for the bare possibility that his pupil was in danger. For it would only seem the barest possibility—there was nothing to cause alarm. From Ferrers Locke, the boy detective felt that there was nothing to hope.

And his friends at Greyfriars were in utter ignorance of his whereabouts. He had not told Wharton or Bob Cherry anything of his business in Friardale—they did not even know that he was interested in old Jarrick's shop. They did not know he had visited the place that afternoon. Drake was quite in ignorance of the fact that the inquisitive Billy Bunter had followed him as far as the shop door. So far as he knew, no one at Greyfriars would have the faintest inkling of where he was.

They would be surprised at his absence—alarmed, perhaps—but they would not know where to seek him. In a day or two Ferrers Locke, doubtless, would be alarmed—and would come! But this night, Drake realised, his fate was to be decided.

How long was he to wait there—waiting for his doom? He realised, without fear but with chill despair, that he was not intended to see another sun rise. The desperate man he had tracked out was not taking chances with him.

When would the end come?

He had no means of calculating the time. The early February evening had long closed in—it was pitchy dark in the cold, bare garret. He knew that Jarrick would wait till a late hour before seeking further flight—and that he would deal with the captured boy detective before he went. When was it to be?

There was a sound of footsteps at last on the creaking stairs. A light glimmered under the garret door.

Drake's heart throbbed.

They were coming at last! A key grated in the lock, and the door was flung open.

James Jarrick—or Andrews, as he was known in Friardale—entered, with the lamp in his hand.

The old furniture dealer followed him in. Old Jarrick was in a state of agitation and alarmed, and his gnarled old hands were trembling.

It was evident that he was both alarmed and dismayed by the situation he was placed in, and by the desperate expedient his brother had decided upon.

Drake, from the floor, eyed the two men in grim silence. The younger man placed the lamp on a shelf, and bent over the prisoner, his eyes gleaming down at him. He jerked the gag from Drake's numbed lips. Jack Drake panted.

"Don't try to call out, my lad!" said Andrews, in a grim, quiet tone. "The yell you give will be your last. I warn you. You understand?"

Drake nodded.

"Ferrers Locke sent you here?"

No answer.

"You had better speak freely, you young fool! I tell you that I have seen you a dozen times in Baker Street. I know that you are Ferrers Locke's assistant. Do you deny it?"

"No."

"Has Locke been called in by the City and County Bank?"

"Yes."

"He has taken up the case?"

"Yes."

"How does it happen that he has sent you here, instead of coming himself?"

"He is busy with another case."

"And he trusted you with this?" exclaimed Andrews.

"Yes."

"You have made a pretty success of it!" said the rascal, with a sneer. "What

brought you to Friardale? How did Locke get a clue?"

Drake did not answer. Andrews eyed him savagely, and groped in his pocket. He drew out a clasp-knife, and opened the blade.

"Jim!" muttered old Jarrick hoarsely.

"Quiet, you fool, Roger! This isn't a time for fooling," muttered Andrews, "There's liberty and three thousand pounds at stake. Are we going to lose all for the sake of this blundering spy? He has put his head into the trap of his own accord, and he can take the consequences."

"If he promises—" muttered the old man.

Andrews rapped out an oath.

"Answer my question you young fool! I don't want to put my neck in the noose for you, if I can help it. Answer me! How did Locke know enough to send you here?"

The sight of the clasp-knife had sent a cold shudder through Drake. But he was still calm.

He answered the rascal's question quietly.

"I remembered the name over the shop here," he said.

"You knew this village?"

"I was at school here not very long ago—at Greyfriars. I am staying at Greyfriars now," added Drake. "If I do not return there this evening, I warn you that I shall be searched for."

"You came here alone," said Andrews.

"He came alone," muttered old Jarrick. "The boys must have been at lessons at the time he came."

"I thought so! And he would not have told them where he was going—did you tell anyone, you young fool?"

Drake did not answer that question; but it was easy for the rascal to guess the truth.

"No one knows you are here," he went on. "Only Ferrers Locke knows that you came to Friardale to look out my brother and spy into his affairs. There is only Locke to consider."

"If you harm me, Ferrers Locke will call you to account for it," said Drake, as steadily as he could.

The rascal shrugged his shoulders.

"How will Ferrers Locke know?" he asked coolly. "Before morning I shall be far away—and Locke can learn nothing excepting that a man named Andrews stayed here for a fortnight. He will have no proof that you ever entered the place. If you could tell him—yes—but you will tell him nothing. I shall take care of that."

"If he promises—" muttered old Jarrick.

"Fool! Do you think he would keep his word, when he was once free?" scoffed Andrews. "But I think it's up to you, Roger. I'm going at midnight—if I leave the boy here, he will report to his chief that you sheltered me from the police—as soon as he is free. You can't keep him a prisoner long—Locke will be alarmed in a few days at most, and he would have the house searched. If he is still here, it is the stone jug for you. I shall be far away. It's either his death to-night—or you on the run. Will you cut it and take your chance with me?"

"And leave everything?" muttered old Jarrick. "The shop—the stock—the money in the bank—everything! It's ruin. I was a fool to let you come under my roof, Jim."

"You fingered five hundred for it," sneered Andrews. "You'll have that to help you through, if you throw all up and clear."

"Five hundred! I've twice that in the Courtfield Bank. Besides, I'm too old," muttered the old man, "I'm too old for it, Jim—it's different from twenty years ago. I should be nailed in a week—you know I should."

"Then there's only one way," said Andrews. "It's safer for me if he doesn't talk—"

Old Jarrick shuddered.

"But—but the danger—" he muttered. Andrews bent over Drake, and replaced the gag in his mouth, securing it there with a cord. Then he turned to his brother.

"There's no danger, if you keep a cool head," he answered. "That path behind your house leads down to the river."

"Yes!"

"It's lonely enough at night, I suppose?"

"Of course. But—"

"It's simple enough," muttered Andrews. "To-morrow, this meddling young fool will be picked out of the Sark. He was walking along the towing-path and fell into the river in the dark—simple enough. There's no moon to-night."

"But—but tied up as he is—"

"He will be untied after I have held his head under the water for five minutes," said Andrews, coolly.

The old man shuddered again.

If he was as great a rascal as his brother, it was evident that he did not possess the same nerve.

"I couldn't help in it," he groaned. I—I—"

"Your help's not wanted," said Andrews, contemptuously. "I can carry the young hound down the path, I suppose—I know the way well enough. You can stay indoors. Found drowned will be the verdict. If Ferrers Locke suspects anything, he can prove nothing." His eyes gleamed down at Drake. "You have an hour more, you young scoundrel—make the most of it."

He picked up the lamp and quitted the room, followed by the trembling old man.

Jack Drake remained alone in the darkness.

His face was white now, and there was despair in his heart.

Ferrers Locke at Greyfriars.

"T'S Mr. Locke!"

Harry Wharton, the captain of the Greyfriars Remove, was the speaker.

It was close on bedtime for the juniors at Greyfriars; and Harry Wharton and his chums, with rather anxious faces, were discussing the absence of their old schoolfellow Jack Drake.

That Drake was engaged upon some professional business in the neighbourhood, they knew; but he had to return for tea in No. 1. Study at five—and he had not returned. Now it was nearly bedtime; and at Greyfriars the youthful guest, was expected to keep the same hours as the juniors. He would not willingly have stayed out so late, they knew, while he was a guest at the school. And their anxiety was growing.

The sight of Ferrers Locke's cool, clear-cut face was a relief to Harry Wharton and Co. A car had stopped on the drive outside, and as the detective entered, Harry Wharton recognised him at once. It was not the first time that the juniors had seen the celebrated Baker Street detective on visits to his relative, the reverend Head of Greyfriars.

Ferrers Locke gave a nod and a kind smile to the group of juniors in the passage, and then joined Mr. Quelch, who had come out of his study as the car stopped outside. With the Remove master, he walked on to the Head's study.

Harry Wharton and Co returned to the junior common-room. There was a buzz of voices there.

"Mr. Locke's come down about Drake!" Bob Cherry said decidedly. "Must have heard that he was missing—"

"Quelchy was on the phone to somebody in London this evening," said Billy Bunter.

"How do you know, fatty?"

"I happened to stop near his study door, and heard him at the phone—"

"Did you happen to know where Drake is?" grinned Bob. "Have you happened to look through a keyhole and see him?"

"Oh really, Cherry—"

"Half-past nine!" said Vernon-Smith, glancing at the clock. "The prefects don't seem in a hurry to get us off to the dorm. to-night."

"I dare say Mr. Locke wants to see me," remarked Bunter. "We were very pally the last time he came down to Greyfriars—"

"Fathead!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

Wingate of the Sixth looked in.

"Fourth Form, get a move on!" he said. "You remove kids are to stay up a few minutes, till Mr. Locke's seen you."

"Right-ho, Wingate."

"I shouldn't wonder if Locke wants my help!" said Bunter confidently. "I offered it to Drake, and he declined it—Locke may have more sense. I should not refuse to help him—for a moderate reward—"

"Ass!"

"Mr. Locke wants to know if we can tell him anything about Drake, of course," remarked Harry Wharton. "I wish we could! But I don't think there's anybody has a remote idea where he is."

"I haven't, for one," said Nugent.

"Bunter says he saw him in the village, looking round a secondhand shop," said Johnny Bull. "That's not much use."

"None at all, that I can see."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Mr. Locke," exclaimed Bob Cherry.

Every eye was turned on the rather tall, athletic figure, as Ferrers Locke came into

the junior common-room. The famous detective shook hands with Harry Wharton. "We're jolly glad to see you here again, Mr. Locke," said the captain of the Remove. "I really hope nothing's happened to Drake—"

"That is what I am here to discover," said Ferrers Locke. "Possibly some of you can tell me something."

"He went out at the same time that we came in to lessons this afternoon," explained Wharton. "We haven't seen him since. We expected him in the study at five, but he never came."

"You do not know where he went?"

"He did not tell us anything, and as we were at classes—"

"No one was late for classes this afternoon?"

"Yes, Bunter was—"

"I got two hundred lines, Mr. Locke!" said Bunter pathetically. "Rotten, wasn't it, when I was late out of sheer kindness of heart. I felt that I ought to help Drake, you know."

Locke looked at the fat junior. "You were late for classes?" he asked.

"Yes, I—"

"And you saw Drake after he had gone out?"

"I followed him down to Friardale," said Bunter.

"Judged; why?"

"The beast wouldn't tell me what he was up to," said Bunter. "So I thought I'd— The Owl of the Remove broke off. "I—I mean I decided to walk down to the village, to see if I could help Drake in his case, you know—and happened to walk a short distance behind him. That's what I meant to say, of course."

"Ananias!" growled Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"You followed Drake—never mind your motives now, Bunter," said Ferrers Locke, quietly. "Did you see him enter any building?"

"Yes; Jarrick's secondhand furniture shop in River Lane."

Locke's eyes glared for a moment. "Jarrick's?" he repeated.

"Well, it used to be Jarrick's," said Billy Bunter. "There's a new name up now—J. Andrews. Never seen Andrews; it's still old Jarrick in the shop, I know that. Drake spoke to him when he went in—about some silly desk he was going to buy. He wasn't there on business at all—just nosing after a secondhand desk on the cheap." Bunter sniffed. "So I came back—there wasn't anything to find out—I mean, I was fed-up."

"He did not leave the shop again while you were there?"

"I didn't stay."

"How do you know he called about a desk?"

"Because I heard old Jarrick say he'd got one upstairs, and ask him to step upstairs to look at it," answered Bunter.

"And he went upstairs?"

"I think so—but I didn't stop! And I got two hundred lines when I came back!" grunted Bunter.

Ferrers Locke smiled slightly. Bunter's inquisitiveness had come in useful for once. There was no doubt in the Baker Street detective's mind that his assistant had entered old Jarrick's shop—and that he had not left it.

"Thank you very much, Bunter," said Locke. "I will not delay you any longer, my boys. Good-night."

Gwynne of the Sixth shepherded the Remove off to their dormitory; and Ferrers Locke, after a few words with Dr. Locke, returned to the waiting taxi. By the time the light was out in the Remove dormitory, Ferrers Locke was turning out at the gates of Greyfriars. The taxi buzzed along the dark lane to the village.

It stopped at the little police-station. In the doorway Inspector Pycroft's burly form leaned on the doorpost. The Scotland Yard man was smoking a cigar, and talking to Police-constable Tozer. The village policeman listened to the great man from London with deep respect and awe. Mr. Pycroft broke off, as the taxi stopped, and ran across the pavement.

"Any news, Locke?"

Ferrers Locke alighted.

"Yes," he said briefly. "Come with me—and you had better bring the constable along. The taxi can wait here. I will explain as we walk along to—"

"To where?"

"Mr. Jarrick's shop."

"You think Drake is there?"

"I know he went into the shop this afternoon, and that he has not returned," said Locke quietly. "Lose no time. It is already

ten o'clock, and Heaven knows what may have happened—or may be happening—"

And the Baker Street detective started with long strides, the Scotland Yard inspector by his side, and the fat and portly Mr. Tozer bringing up the rear.

In the Name of the Law.

CLICK!

Jack Drake felt a throb at his heart as the key turned in the garret lock once more.

It was Andrews who entered. He came alone this time. He was muffled in a heavy coat, with a cap pulled low over his brow. A bull's-eye lantern was slung to his belt. Drake's eyes glared at him.

He could not move—he could not cry out. He was utterly at the mercy of the ruffian, and he realised that he had no mercy to expect.

For years, probably, the rascally bank-messenger had been watching his opportunity to make a great "coup," and bolt with his plunder. His chance had come at last; he had bolted with three thousand pounds belonging to the Baker Street branch of the City and County Bank, and for nearly three weeks the police had failed to discover the slightest clue to him. The advent of the boy detective had been like a bolt from the blue to the rascal, who had deemed himself quite secure in his hiding-place. Face to face with the danger of arrest, prison, and the loss of his plunder, all the evil in the man's nature had come to the surface. The alternative now was ruin, or the death of the boy detective, and his hard face and glinting eye told only too plainly which alternative he had chosen.

He did not speak a word, and he did not meet the boy's eyes. He bent over Drake and picked him up and threw him over his shoulder like a sack. Then he tramped out of the room with his burden.

Down the creaking stairs, to where there was a glimmer of light in a passage on the ground floor. A cold wind blew upon Drake's face; the back door was open. Old Jarrick stood trembling in the passage.

"Jim—" he muttered huskily.

"Silence, you fool! Leave it to me," growled Andrews. "Get back to your room and take a stiff whisky. Leave me alone."

Jarrick tottered into the little room behind the closed shop, and there was a

clink of glass and bottle. Andrews, with the bound prisoner on his shoulder, stepped out of the back door.

He stood there for a minute, looking about him with a cautious, cat-like eyes.

Not a light was to be seen. From somewhere in the village ten strokes boomed out. Friardale folk were early to bed; even at the Red Cow the last light was out at that hour.

The night was dark; hardly a star glimmered from the sky. From the back garden a lane ran down, between other garden fences, to the towing-path beside the river. Andrews paused a moment to shut off the light of his lantern, and then strode through the garden and into the alley. And black despair settled upon the helpless boy detective, hanging like a sack of coke on his brawny shoulder. There was no help now—and the silent, icy river was close at hand.

In the little parlour old Jarrick poured out glass after glass of the potent spirit, to quieten his shaking nerves. Suddenly the glass fell from his hand, and dropped to the floor, breaking into a hundred pieces.

Knock!

It was a loud, sharp knock on the street door.

The old man started to his feet, trembling. From the street, through the door and the dusky shop, came a deep, powerful voice.

"Open, in the name of the law!"

Old Jarrick's teeth chattered together.

"The police!" he breathed.

His knees knocked together. But he took courage with the thought that Jack Drake was safe out of the house—that Andrews was gone. He had to open the door—delay meant exciting suspicion—if it was not excited already! He tottered through the shop and unbarred the door.

"Who—who is there?" he faltered.

"Inspector Pycroft, of Scotland Yard!" came the grim reply. "Let me in at once."

"Hopen that there door, Mr. Jarrick!" came Police-constable Tozer's voice. "You know me, I 'ope."

Old Jarrick opened the door. Inspector Pycroft entered, followed by Ferrers Locke. Then Mr. Tozer's portly form filled the doorway.

What—what do you want, gentlemen, at this hour?" faltered the old man.

"Where is Jack Drake?"

"Wh—a-at?"

"The boy was seen to enter this place this



Old Jarrick was already handcuffed when Ferrers Locke arrived. "Found the boy?" asked Inspector Pycroft. "Yes, I am thankful to say," answered Ferrers Locke. "But we were only just in time—a few minutes more and it would have been a hanging matter. I have a prisoner here for you, Pycroft." "Bring him into the light!" said the inspector.

afternoon," said Ferrers Locke in his quiet tones. "What have you done with him, Mr. Jarrick?"

"The old man stared at him.

"Seen?" he stammered.

"A boy named Bunter followed him here," said the Baker Street detective.

"I—I he left—"

"You took him upstairs to show him a desk," said Locke. "He has not been seen since. If anything has happened to Drake, Mr. Jarrick, you will be held accountable."

Old Jarrick staggered back against his counter with a hoarse gasp. The boy had been seen to enter, then—and when the body was found floating in the Sark—

Into the old rascal's dazed mind came the certainty of ruin now—all his calculations, and those of his brother, had been laid on the assumption that Drake's visit to the shop was unknown—or, at least, could not be proved, if suspected.

The terror in the gnarled old face was only too obvious. Locke's brow set grimly. He made a stride forward and dropped a heavy hand on old Jarrick's shoulder.

"What have you done with the boy?" he demanded between his teeth. "If you have harmed him, by heavens you shall hang for it. He was seen to enter here, and he did not leave. Speak! Where is he?"

"I—I never harmed him—"

"Where is he?" thundered the Baker Street detective.

Old Jarrick groaned. It was too late—too late! His own life, as he realised now, hung on Jack Drake's—and Drake was in the grasp of the assassin—they must almost have reached the river now—

"Speak!" exclaimed Ferrers Locke, who did not lose a trace of the anguish and terror in the gnarled old face. "Where is he?"

"It's too late!" groaned Jarrick, utterly losing his nerve. "You're too late—they're gone."

"They? Gone! Where?"

The old man pointed with a shaking finger. "The path at the back—to the river—hurry, and you may catch them in time. Oh, hurry, hurry!" His voice rose to a scream. "I had no hand in it—no hand in it, I tell you! Hurry, hurry! You may stop him yet—and save his neck from the rope—"

Ferrers Locke did not wait to hear more. He dashed through the house, tore open the back door, and ran as fleet as a greyhound into the dusky garden.

For a second he paused there, to take his bearings.

He saw the line of palings that marked the alley among the gardens. He cleared the little gate at a bound and dropped into the alley—one glance round again and he was speeding down the narrow path in the direction of the river.

At the Eleventh Hour.

JACK DRAKE shivered as he was dropped from the shoulder of the man who carried him, on the soft, oozy earth of river bank.

Close at hand the Sark murmured among the rushes and bushes. The towing-path was dark and deserted. Many back windows looked on it, but there was not a light in any of them. The spot might have been in the heart of the Downs, so lonely and deserted did it seem.

Andrews stood for a few moments, breathing hard. Then he bent over the bound lad. He did not speak, and his hard face was

white now. But there was a grim and relentless determination in his looks.

Drake made a herculean effort to break loose—to rid himself of the gag, but it was in vain. He shuddered as the grasp of the ruffian closed on him, and he was rolled over through the rushes, towards the margin of the cold, glimmering water.

Suddenly Andrews stopped and started, raising his head to listen. The silence was broken.

From somewhere in the shadows came a pattering of running feet.

The man muttered a curse and dragged Drake deeper into the shadow of the bushes. Someone running on the towing-path. But as he listened he realised that the footsteps came from the alley leading from his brother's house.

A dark figure loomed in the dusky shadows of the bank, and Andrews spat out a curse.

"Roger, you fool, you startled me. Why have you come—"

He got no further, and he realised that the newcomer was not old Jarrick as the shadowy figure leaped at his throat.

Astounded as he was by the attack, he returned grip for grip, and struggled fiercely with the Baker Street detective.

"Who are you?" he panted. "What—what—"

"You dog! Where is Jack Drake?"

"A thrill ran through the bound lad lying

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"BOYS' HERALD."

DON'T MISS IT!

in the bushes. He knew the voice of his chief.

Andrews gave a gasping cry.

"Drake—what—who are you?"

"Ferrers Locke, you villain, and if you have harmed him—"

Drake strove hard to cry out, but he could not. But the swaying, struggling men stumbled over him, and Locke's eye caught the dark figure lying silent and motionless.

"Drake!" he cried.

Andrews muttered a fierce curse, and strove to drag himself away from the detective's grasp. He was thinking no longer of carrying out his murderous scheme—it was too late for that. He was thinking only of escape. But in the steely grip of Ferrers Locke there was no escape for him. There was a crash as the ruffian went down in the grass, and Locke's knee was planted on his chest.

Click!

The handcuffs fastened on his wrists.

Leaving him gasping on the ground, Locke sprang up and ran to the silent figure in the rushes.

"Drake!" he panted, as he bent over the boy.

For a moment he feared that his boy assistant was dead. He flashed on the light of his pocket torch, and a sigh of relief

escaped him as he caught Drake's wide-open eyes.

"Thank Heaven!" he panted. "Drake, my boy, I—I feared—"

A few moments more and the gag was off and the cords cut through. With the help of the Baker Street detective's strong hand, Jack Drake staggered to his feet.

"Thank Heaven you came, sir!" he muttered huskily. "A few minutes more and it would have been too late." He made a gesture towards the river and shuddered.

"He meant—he meant—"

"I understand," said Locke quietly.

Andrews had staggered up. Handcuffed as he was he attempted to break into flight along the dark towing-path. But the Baker Street detective's grasp fastened on his shoulder.

Locke flashed the light into the man's face and smiled grimly.

"James Jarrick!" he said. "You have found your man, Drake! You have made a success of your first case, my boy."

"Not if you hadn't come when you did, sir," said Drake. He rubbed his numbed limbs.

"Follow me, my boy," said Locke.

With an iron grip on his shoulders Ferrers Locke led the handcuffed man back up the alley to the house. Jack Drake limped after them, his limbs still aching from the bonds, but his face very bright.

In the house old Jarrick was already in handcuffs, and Police-constable Tozer was keeping watch and ward over him. Inspector Pycroft was at the back door, gazing out eagerly, when Ferrers Locke arrived.

"Found the boy?" asked the inspector.

"Yes, I am thankful to say, safe and sound," answered Ferrers Locke. "But we were only in time—a few minutes more and it would have been a hanging matter. I have a prisoner for you, Pycroft."

"Not the—"

"Yes."

"Oh, good! Bring him into the light."

Andrews, with a savage and sullen face, was marched into the house. Inspector Pycroft scanned his face and grinned with satisfaction.

"I hold a warrant for your arrest, James Jarrick!" he said. "By gad! I'm pleased to see you! Mr. Tozer, you'll give me a hand along to the station with these two scoundrels."

"Yes, sir!" said Mr. Tozer.

And ten minutes later, Police-constable Tozer, feeling of more importance than he had ever felt before in his somnolent existence, had the great satisfaction of turning the key upon the two Jarricks.

Jack Drake stayed the remainder of the week at Greyfriars with his old schoolfellows—Ferrers Locke returning to Baker Street the morning after the arrest.

Fifty times, at least, Drake had to relate the story of his adventure to the Remove fellows. But he made little of it. It was all, as he explained, in the way of business.

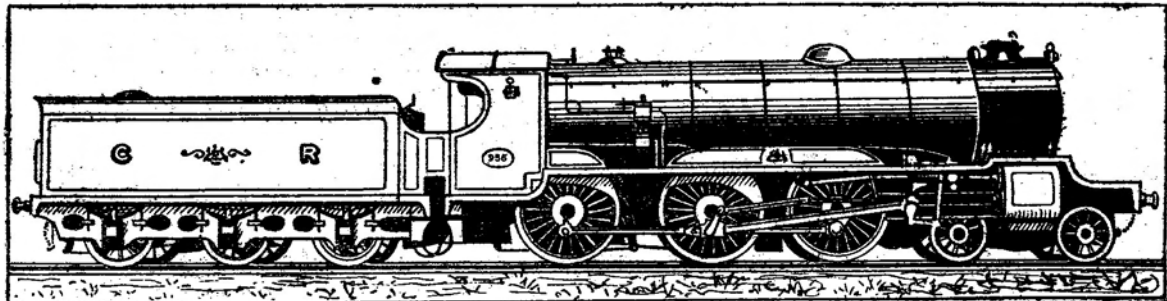
But there was no more "business" for the boy detective during the remainder of his stay at Greyfriars, and he thoroughly enjoyed his holiday at the old school, and when Saturday came, Harry Wharton and Co., and half the Remove, marched down to the station to see Ferrers Locke's assistant off, on his return to Baker Street.

THE END.

Another fine detective story next week.

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