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SPLENDID, LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL STORY--INSIDE.

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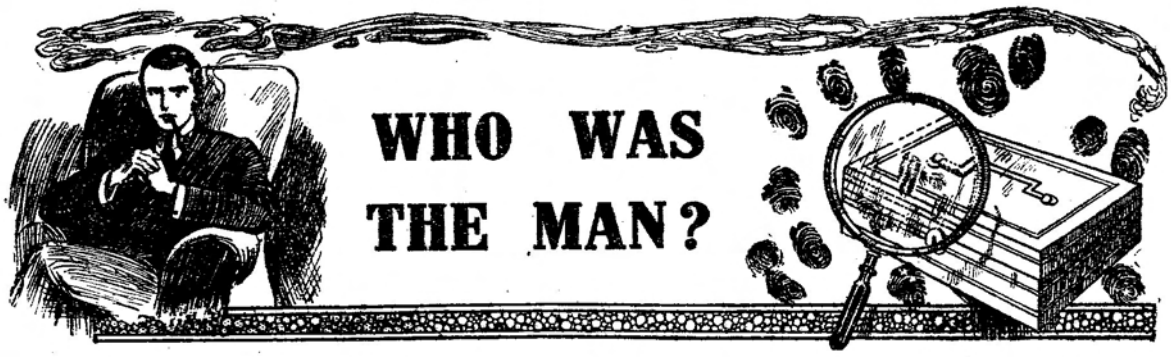

A Grand, Long Complete Detective Story introducing Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake.

BY OWEN CONQUEST.

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

Jack Drake's Case.

"JARRICK!"

"That is the name, Drake."

Jack Drake wrinkled his brow in thought.

"I've heard it before somewhere, sir," he said.

"It is an uncommon name," said Ferrers Locke. "If you have heard it before, my boy, you must cudgel your brains and try to remember where. It is quite probable that any Jarrick may be a relative of the Jarrick we want—and that might be a clue."

Drake nodded.

Ferrers Locke, the famous detective, had just come into the consulting-room at Baker Street. He had been called away suddenly by telephone, and Drake was rather curious to know what was "on." The mention of that uncommon name, Jarrick, had touched a chord in his memory somewhere—the name was more or less familiar. Where had he heard it, or seen it, before?

"But who and what is this Jarrick, sir?" asked Drake.

Locke sat down and filled his pipe.

"I will tell you, Drake. I have just been called to the City and County Bank, Baker Street branch. I found our old friend, Inspector Pycroft, there—not very pleased to see me on the case." Locke smiled. "The matter is in official hands—and has been in official hands for a fortnight—and Mr. Piddington, the manager of the Baker Street branch, decided to call me in at last. Jarrick was a messenger of the bank, and he has disappeared; and three thousand pounds have disappeared along with him!"

Drake whistled softly.

"The man had been fifteen years at the bank, and came with a good character," continued Locke. "He was trusted—and he has evidently betrayed his trust at the finish. A bundle of banknotes and certain securities had to be sent to a stockbroker's office in Throgmorton Street, and Jarrick was despatched—and he did not return. The same afternoon the police were communicated with, and they soon discovered that it was not a case of an accident to the messenger. They visited Jarrick's lodgings, and found that he had arrived there twenty minutes after leaving the bank, had packed a bag, and given notice to his landlady—informing her that he was going to join a relation settled in Canada. Then he walked out, and was not seen again."

"And hasn't been seen since?" asked Drake.

"No; and that is three weeks ago," said Ferrers Locke. "His description is widely circulated, and the police are looking for him everywhere. Mr. Piddington thinks that the man succumbed to a sudden temptation—but I scarcely think so. His disappearance is so complete that it appears to me fairly certain that he has his hiding-place arranged well in advance—which looks to me as if he was waiting for his chance to make a good haul before he bolted."

"If he has gone to Canada——" said Drake.

"He mentioned Canada to his landlady," said Locke. "That is fairly good evidence that, wherever he may have gone, he has not gone to Canada. Moreover, long before he could have landed, the wireless was at work, and he would have been arrested at the first port. I imagine that he is still in England, and that he is lying low in some quiet corner, waiting for the outcry to blow over. The question is—where?"

"You have taken the case, sir?"

"I have undertaken to do my best in the matter. But my time is pretty well taken up now; I can give very little to this affair," said the Baker Street detective. "But you observed, Drake, that you had heard the name of Jarrick before?"

"Yes, Mr. Locke."

"Try to think it out," said Ferrers Locke; "it may be a help. The name is new to me—it is very uncommon. If we can find a relative of the missing man, we may pick up a clue to his hiding-place. No relatives of his are known to the bank's people, but Mr. Piddington has an idea that he came originally from the South of England. Think it over, Drake, while I get back to the task that Mr. Piddington's message interrupted."

Ferrers Locke passed into his laboratory, leaving his boy assistant to himself.

Jack Drake strolled to the high window, and stood looking out into Baker Street, thinking hard.

Where had he heard that name before?

It came into his mind at last that he had not heard it—he had seen it. Where had he seen it?

Was it in a book—in a newspaper—on a shop-front? He turned over every possibility in his mind.

On a shop-front—that gave him the clue! Back into his mind came the picture of a little dusky shop, in a dusky little street in a quiet village—a little shop stacked with second-hand furniture and odds-and-ends, entered by a step down from the street, and smelling musty and dusty. Over the shop-front, in half-obliterated letters, was the name of Jarrick.

He remembered at last!

With some excitement in his face, Drake tapped at the laboratory door, and entered.

Ferrers Locke was bending over his microscope, under which lay a sheet of notepaper, torn across and scribbled on.

The Baker Street detective's attention was concentrated on his task, and he did not move or look up. Drake did not venture to interrupt him. He waited quietly till Locke looked round.

"Well?" said Ferrers Locke tersely.

"I've remembered, sir."

Locke smiled.

"Well, Drake?"

"I've seen the name on a shop—a little second-hand shop, stuck away in a side-street in a village in Kent," said Drake.

"Good for you, my boy. What village?"

"Friardale."

"Friardale? Is not that the village near your old school, Greyfriars?"

"That's it, sir. It was when I was in the Remove at Greyfriars that I saw it. I suppose I passed it a dozen times or so, and never noticed it specially. I never went into the shop, but I remember seeing an old man with a grey beard looking out of the doorway sometimes. The name was Jarrick—and, as I remember it, it looked as if it had been painted up twenty years ago at least."

Ferrers Locke reflected.

"It may be a clue, or it may not," he said. "Listen to me, Drake. I cannot leave London at present." He made a gesture towards the half-sheet of notepaper that lay by the microscope. "I have a more important matter in hand—a man's life depends on it. I believe you are still on very friendly terms with your old schoolfellows at Greyfriars?"

"Oh, yes, sir."

"Could you run down and pay them a visit?"

"I'm sure they'd be glad to see me."

"That would be an excellent cover for your presence in the place," said Locke. "Whilst there you could look into the matter, and ascertain anything of interest with regard to this second-hand dealer, Jarrick. If nothing comes of it, it will be a little holiday for you, my boy; but I hope that you may have something to report. Make your own arrangements."

Drake's face brightened.

He was glad of the opportunity to revisit his old school and his old schoolfellows; and he was pleased, too, at being entrusted with the investigation by his chief.

"I'll do my best, sir!" he said. "Shall I get off at once?"

"By all means."

An hour later, Jack Drake stepped into the express at Charing Cross Station.

Greyfriars Again.

"I SAY, you fellows——"

"Buzz off, Bunter!"

"But I say——"

"Scat!"

"I've got some news——"

"Bow-wow!"

"I tell you——"

"Rats!"

Harry Wharton and Co., of the Greyfriars Remove, did not seem interested in Billy Bunter and his news.

The Famous Five of Greyfriars had more important matters to think of. There was a football match fixed for that afternoon, and they were thinking of the terrific licking they were going to bestow upon Temple, Dabney, and Co., of the Fourth Form. So William George Bunter was superfluous—as he generally was.

But William George was not to be shaken off. He had news—and he was determined to impart his news.

"Just like you fellows," said Bunter, with a sniff. "Just like you to forget an old pal! Not my style! I must say I'm rather shocked at you."

"What on earth are you burbling about now?" asked Bob Cherry.

"That chap Drake——"

"Drake?" repeated Wharton.

"Oh, you're interested now, are you?" said Billy Bunter.

"Well, what about Drake?" asked Harry Wharton.

"He's here."

"Here?"

Wharton looked round.

"I met him in Friardale," exclaimed Bunter. "You could have knocked me down with a feather, you know, when I saw him. Such a surprise, you know. There he was, nosing round a second-hand shop——"

"Drake was?" ejaculated Nugent.

"Yes. I asked him whether he was going to buy a second-hand sideboard," grinned Bunter. "But it turned out he was after an old tobacco-jar—some dashed old Chinese jar. Fancy Drake taking up 'bacey! I asked him to give us a look-in at Greyfriars."

The Famous Five were quite interested now. They had not forgotten Jack Drake, who had been in their Form, and had left school to enter the service of the celebrated Baker Street detective.

"We'll be jolly glad to see him," said Bob Cherry heartily. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! Talk of angels! There he is!"

A sturdy figure had appeared in the gateway. There was a rush of the Famous Five to greet him at once.

Jack Drake, with a smiling face, shook five friendly hands in succession.

"Jolly glad to see you, old top," said Frank Nugent. "What are you up to in Friardale?"

"Fathead!" said Bob. "He's come to see us, and Greyfriars. Just in time to see us whop the Fourth at footer, Drake."

"Just in time to help us do it, if you like," said Harry Wharton. "We'll find you a place in the team, old man."

"Good egg!" said Bob.

"The good-fulness of the egg is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the nabob of Bhanipur. "It is a gigantic pleasure to see your cheery and ridiculous chivvy again, my esteemed Drake."

Jack Drake smiled genially. There was no doubt of the heartiness of his welcome from his old schoolfellows.

"How long are you down here for?" asked Johnny Bull.

"A few days."

"Then you're going to put up here," said Harry. "We can fix it up with Mr. Quelch; he will be glad to see you, too."

"Your old bed in the dorm.—what?" said Bob Cherry.

"I'd be jolly glad, of course," said Drake.

"Done!" said Harry. "Come in and speak to Mr. Quelch, and we'll fix it up at once. Where's your bag?"

"At the station."

"We'll send for it later. Come on."

Jack Drake, with a very bright face, walked into the quadrangle with his old friends. A dozen fellows came up to greet him before he reached the schoolhouse.

He was taken at once to Mr. Quelch's study, where his old Form-master greeted him very cordially, and acceded at once to Wharton's request that the "Old Boy" might be accommodated with a bed in the Remove dormitory.

Jack Drake sat in his old place at the Remove dining-table, with friendly faces all round him. No face was so friendly as the fat visage of Billy Bunter. Bunter was very pleased to see the Old Boy. He entertained hopes that Jack Drake, during his stay at his old school, might be induced to cash the celebrated postal-order that Bunter was always expecting, but which so curiously failed to materialise.

After dinner Bunter was the first to fasten upon Drake, as he left the dining hall. The fat junior slipped his arm through Drake's.

"It's ripping to be back in the old show, old fellow?" he asked.

"Yes, rather!" assented Drake.

"I suppose you're making pots of money as a detective in London?" asked Bunter.

Drake laughed.

"Not exactly."

"Oh!" said Bunter. "But you're making some?"

"Yes, some," assented Drake.

"The fact is," said Bunter, lowering his voice confidentially—"the fact is, Drake, it's in your power to do me a slight favour."

"Give it a name," said Drake.

"I'm expecting a postal-order——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Drake.

This was really like old times!

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at," said Bunter, blinking at him peevishly. "Nothing funny in my expecting a postal-order, is there?"

"Ha, ha! Just a few!" chuckled Drake. "Is it the same postal-order you were expecting when I was at Greyfriars?"

Bunter coughed.

"Hem! Nunno—another one," he said. "The fact is——"

"Your uncle, the duke, still absent-minded, and forgetting to catch the post with his remittances?" asked Drake sympathetically.

"This—this one is from my cousin, the baronet——"

"And the baronet is as careless in such matters as the marquis?"

"Hem! The fact is, it hasn't arrived," said Bunter. "It will be here by the afternoon post. In the meantime, I happen to be short of money. Could you stand me the five bob, and take the postal-order when it comes?"

"Certainly."

"Oh, good!" gasped Bunter.

He had hoped—but he had scarcely expected! The Owl of the Remove could scarcely believe in his good luck, when five silver shillings dropped into his fat palm.

"Good man!" said Bunter, his fat face beaming. "I say, you're not half such a beast as you used to be! I—I mean——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry came up. "Bunter sticking you for a loan already?"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"You fat bounder——"

"I suppose Drake can cash a postal-order for me if he likes, to save me a walk down to the post-office," said Bunter, with dignity.

"Where's the postal-order, you fat fraud?"

"It's coming——"

"And you're going!" remarked Bob, and he made a motion with his boot.

Billy Bunter did not wait for the boot; he went.

He had just devoured a remarkably good dinner; but his steps led him at once to the tuck-shop. One dinner, even a good one, did not make much difference to Bunter. He was prepared to consume tuck to the precise value of five shillings.

"Now about the footer, Drake," said Harry Wharton. "You'd like to join in a game?"

"Jolly glad!"

"Then we'll fix it up. Nugent doesn't mind standing out——"

"Not a bit," said Nugent; "and I'll lend you my things, Drake."

"You're awfully good," said Drake.

And the boy detective accompanied the Famous Five to Little Side. His face was very bright. It was "on business" that Jack Drake had come down to Friardale that day. But business was banished for the present; and for the time, at least, the pupil of Ferrers Locke was a happy, careless schoolboy once more.

On the Trail.

JACK DRAKE enjoyed his day at Greyfriars School.

He kicked one of the goals of the two by which the Fourth Form were beaten; and after the football match there was a celebration in No. 1 Study in the Remove, at which Ferrers Locke's pupil was an honoured guest.

He slept soundly that night in the Remove dormitory; and when the rising-bell awoke him with its clang in the frosty morning, it almost seemed to Drake that the last few months of his life had been a dream, and that he really was a member of the Lower Fourth Form at Greyfriars.

He came down to breakfast with Harry Wharton and Co., and chatted with the chums of the Remove till the bell went for morning lessons. Then business came back into his mind.

When the Remove went into their Form-room, Jack Drake strolled out of the school gates and walked down to Friardale.

He had already taken a look at Mr. Jarrick's shop in the village, immediately after his arrival—when Billy Bunter had happened upon him. And he had noted a circumstance which roused all his keenness.

In his former days at Greyfriars Drake had many times passed the little shop. The back street in which it stood was a short cut from Friardale High Street to the towing-path by the Sark. There was nothing about the place to draw special attention at that time; but he had noted its existence, and he remembered the half-obliterated name of Jarrick over the "facia." Since then there had been a change.

For twenty years at least the "facia" of the second-hand shop had remained untouched, growing older and dimmer with every passing year. But of late it had been repainted.

The name of Jarrick was no longer visible. A new name—"J. Andrews"—was painted over the shop.

It was a circumstance that was calculated to rouse Drake's keenest suspicions at once.

Of course, it might be only a coincidence. But it was a coincidence that was well worth looking into.

Drake wanted to know now whether it was the same grey-whiskered old gentleman that kept the shop. If it was the same man, the change of name over the facia required explaining.

He strolled into River Lane, as the little street was called, and stopped at the shop.

Outside, on the pavement, stood a chest of drawers and a sideboard, with several small articles arranged on them; and in the dusky little window several jars and oddments were visible. It looked the same old quiet place that Drake remembered, excepting for the change of name over the shop-front.

The previous day Drake had observed the place; but now he sauntered into the shop.

There was a step down from the street, well-worn and rugged, and a tuneless bell jangled as the door was pushed open. Inside the atmosphere was heavy and stuffy. Drake found himself among second-hand articles of furniture, stacked here and there, leaving little room for customers.

From a dusky room behind the shop an old man emerged in answer to the bell.

Drake bade him good-morning cheerily.

His keen eyes scanned the old, wrinkled face and white beard and whiskers. It was the same old fellow he had seen about the place in his schooldays. Mr. Jarrick was still there, though his name had been painted out.

Why had the name of Jarrick been removed, when the same man was still keeping the shop? Was it to withdraw from public notice a name that had of late been prominent in the newspapers as that of the absconding bank messenger?

"Good-morning, Mr. Jarrick!" said Drake cheerily.

"'Morning!" answered the old man gruffly.

"I dare say you remember me," said Drake. "I was at Greyfriars a short time ago——"

"Can't say I do," answered Mr. Jarrick. "You wasn't a customer of mine that I know of."

"My study-mate at Greyfriars had some things here once, I think——"

"I dessay he did," said Mr. Jarrick. "Lots of the young gentlemen from the school have bought things here for their studies—cheap, too. What may you 'appen to want, sir?"

"I'm looking for a desk," explained Drake, which was quite true. The boy detective was prepared to purchase a desk, or anything else, as a pretext for visiting Mr. Jarrick's establishment. "I thought at first you must have gone out of business, Mr. Jarrick."

"Did you now?"

"Yes; there's a new name over the shop, isn't there?"

Mr. Jarrick nodded.

"That's my partner," he explained, quite uninterestedly. "Young Andrews. I'm getting old, and I've took him on as a partner in the business."

"Oh! The young man that used to be with you here?" said Drake.

"That's it," said Mr. Jarrick.

Drake's eyes glimmered.

He was quite well aware that Mr. Jarrick had run his business single-handed, and that no young man had been his assistant in former days. The dealer had fallen into the trap quite unconsciously, evidently desirous of allowing it to be supposed that "Andrews" had been with him some time.

"About a desk," went on Mr. Jarrick. "I've got that there big roll-top—too big for you, hey?"

"Yes, a bit," said Drake.

"There's some upstairs," went on Mr. Jarrick. "But they're packed away. The 'ouse is full of stuff, packed away, but I'll look out one for you, if you'll describe jest what you want."

Drake proceeded to describe just what he wanted; and he took a considerable time over the description.

He would have been glad to penetrate into the upper rooms of the house, which were packed with dusty, old goods, for the sake of catching sight, if possible, of Mr. Andrews.

But the dealer evidently had no intention of asking him to do so. He made some notes of Drake's description of the desk

he wanted, and the boy detective, having no excuse for lingering further, left the shop.

He strolled thoughtfully down Friardale High Street.

He had made a beginning with his case, the first "case" he had been entrusted with by Ferrers Locke "on his own." Drake was very keen and eager to make a success of it, and to have something tangible to report to his chief when he returned to Baker Street. And he felt that he had already something to "go upon."

It was necessary to get a sight of Mr. Andrews, and to ascertain whether that gentleman's appearance tallied with the description of the missing bank-messenger. But, though he had spent half an hour in the shop, he had not caught a glimpse of Mr. Jarrick's "partner."

A little later he sauntered through River Lane again. A cart was outside the dealer's shop now, and a chest of drawers was being loaded by Mr. Jarrick and a carter. Mr. Andrews, if he was on the premises, was not lending a hand with the work.

At a distance from the shop, but within easy observation, Drake sat on a fence-rail and read his latest number of the "Gem," still keeping one eye open for Mr. Jarrick.

The cart rumbled away, and the dealer went back into his shop.

At twelve o'clock Mr. Jarrick came out, locked the shop-door, and started down the street, turning into the Red Cow.

As soon as he was safe inside the public-house, Drake left his place, and came along to the shop. He knocked at the door, and received no reply from within. The next shop was a tobacconist's, and after knocking for several minutes, loud enough to be heard in the adjoining shop, Drake stepped into the tobacconist's.

"Can you tell me whether Mr. Jarrick is in?" he asked.

The tobacconist's young man glanced at the clock.

"Ten minutes past twelve!" he said. "No, he ain't. Jarrick goes down to the Red Cow at twelve, punctual."

"I want to see about a desk I've ordered," said Drake. "I suppose somebody's about the place, what? Isn't there a Mr. Andrews——"

"Bless you, he don't look after the shop," said the young man. "You can knock all the afternoon, and he won't come. Bit of an invalid, Andrews is, and keeps in his room mostly, I believe. Why, I haven't seen him more'n twice in the two or three weeks he's been along with old Jarrick."

"Two or three weeks," said Drake. "He hasn't been Jarrick's partner long, then?"

"Not more'n three weeks at the most," said the tobacconist. "Let me see—it was three weeks come Saturday that the new name was painted up. Jarrick told me he was taking a partner, the same day—man from Birmingham that he used to be in business with. Can't have been here much over a fortnight."

"When does Jarrick come back to his shop?" asked Drake.

"Half-past twelve, as a rule. You call again then, and you'll find him."

"I don't want to hang about till then; I think I'll take my chance of making Mr. Andrews hear."

The tobacconist grinned.

"He won't come," he said. "You'll see!"

"Well, I'll try," said Drake.

He returned to the street and to the shop-door of Mr. Jarrick. There he began to knock steadily.

Knock! Knock! Knock!

The tobacconist came to his doorway, and looked on, grinning.

"You can keep it up till Jarrick comes in," he said. "I tell you, Andrews won't come. Why, there was Mrs. Hooper came yesterday about her mangle, and Jarrick was out, and she knocked for a quarter of an hour, and nobody came."

Knock! Knock! Knock!

Drake knocked on vigorously. The knocking rang across the narrow street, and two or three villagers looked out of their windows. Three or four small boys gathered round.

Drake continued to knock.

If "Mr. Andrews" had any motive for keeping himself strictly secluded, Drake knew that he would be extremely annoyed and perhaps alarmed by the continuous knocking at the door, which was drawing the attention of all the street to the spot, it was probable that he would make some attempt to get rid of the obnoxious caller; and Drake only wanted one look at him.

He had carefully memorised the description of the missing bank-messenger: a man of forty, with a moustache, thick eyebrows, and a prominent nose. Drake had a photograph of the missing man in his pocket, and he had studied it carefully. One look at Mr. Andrews would be enough.

Knock! Knock! Knock!

Six or seven people had gathered round the shop, and a dozen heads were looking out of windows. The din at Mr. Jarrick's establishment had provided a little mild excitement for River Lane.

A window was suddenly thrown up above.

"What do you want?" called out an angry voice.

Drake looked up.

A man's head was projected from a bedroom window a dozen feet above, and a pair of angry eyes stared down at him.

"Clear off!" shouted the man. "What the thunder do you mean by kicking up that row at the door?"

"I want to see Mr. Jarrick——"

"He's out; the shop's closed till half-past twelve."

"But I want——"

"Shop's closed, I tell you," shouted the man above. Drake's eyes were fixed on him, but he could see little of the man's face. Mr. Andrews was muffled up, as if he had a bad cold and was afraid of the open air. Drake could see little but a prominent nose.

"You see, I can't wait," called back Drake. "I've got to get back to the school. Are you Mr. Andrews?"

"Yes! Go away, I tell you!"

"Can't you come down?"

"No, I can't!"

And the window slammed.

"He won't come down," said the tobacconist, with a grin. "You'd better wait for Jarrick, young 'un."

"Oh, I think I'll call again," said Drake. And he strolled away, only a few minutes before Mr. Jarrick returned from his midday visit to the Red Cow.

Bunter is Inquisitive.

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Just in time for tiffin!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as Drake came in at the school gates.

Drake went into the schoolhouse with Harry Wharton and Co.

The captain of the Remove regarded him rather curiously. He was aware that it was not only to visit his old schoolfellows that Jack Drake had returned to Greyfriars, and he could not help wondering a little how the boy detective had been occupied during the morning.

He did not think of asking questions; but William George Bunter was not so particular. William George was keenly interested in the boy detective's business—Bunter was always interested in everyone's business but his own. After dinner, when Drake strolled under the old elms in the quadrangle, thinking out his next move, Billy Bunter joined him, and bestowed on him a friendly nod.

"Getting on all right?" he inquired.

"Topping!" said Drake.

"Got your man?"

Drake stared.

"Man! What man?"

Bunter indulged in a fat chuckle.

"Can't pull the wool over my eyes," he remarked sapiently. "I know you're after somebody. You didn't come back to Greyfriars just to see me."

"Not just to see you, certainly," said Drake, laughing.

"Or the other fellows," said Bunter, blinking at him. "You've got something on, Drake."

"I have!" assented Drake.

"Tell me what it is."

"Certainly."

"Well, what is it, then?" asked Bunter eagerly.

"My coat."

"Eh?"

"I've got my coat on," said Drake gravely. "It's cold weather, you know."

"Oh, don't be a silly ass," remonstrated Bunter. "Look here, Drake, you just tell me what's on, and I dare say I can help you out. I'm a pretty keen chap, you know. I've often thought that I've got the gifts to make a jolly good detective. Are you looking for a murderer?"

"Ha, ha! No!"

"Not a murderer?" said Bunter, looking disappointed. The Owl of the Remove had apparently hoped for something dramatic. "Well, what is it, then? A missing will?"

"Not at all."

"Somebody kidnapped, I suppose?"

"Not that I know of."

"But you're up to something," urged Bunter.

"Quite so."

"Well, what are you up to, then?"

"Snuff!" said Drake.

"Oh, really, Drake! Look here, if you

Drake made a spring for the stairs, and old Jarrick grasped him instantly. The next moment Andrews' grip was upon him. Drake struggled fiercely. But in the grasp of the two men he was swept off his feet to be carried bodily and struggling into the garret.

like to confide the whole matter to me, I'll help you." said Bunter. "I sha'n't ask for a fee. If there's a reward, of course, I should expect a whack. Just tell me the whole thing from start to finish, and I'll advise you."

Drake chuckled. He was not likely to make a confidant of the egregious Owl of the Remove.

Bunter blinked at him anxiously. He was burning with curiosity; but his inquisitiveness was not likely to be gratified.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Is Bunter telling you about his postal-order?" called out Bob Cherry, as he bore down upon the Greyfriars guest. "Cut off Bunty!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! Drake was just asking my opinion about the case he's engaged on," said Bunter, with dignity.

"Ha, ha! I don't think!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Never mind Drake's case, Bunter—that's not your bizney. Drake, old top, are you up to the neck in business, or will you come and punt a ball about with us?"

"I'll come and punt," said Drake, laughing.

"But, I say!" howled Bunter.

Heedless of the inquisitive Owl, Jack Drake walked away with Bob Cherry, and until the bell rang for afternoon classes he was busy on the football-ground with the Removites.

When the Remove started for the Form-room Jack Drake strolled down to the gates. Billy Bunter blinked after him morosely through his big spectacles.

"Beast!" he murmured.

"Come on, fatty, you'll be late!" called out Bob Cherry, as he passed the fat junior.

"Br-r-r-r!" growled Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove stood hesitating. Cutting classes was a rather serious affair, and had to be answered for to Mr. Quelch; but never had Billy Bunter been so strongly tempted to "cut classes."

Drake was going out—evidently on business. And every nerve in Bunter's fat body tingled with curiosity to know what that business was. It did not concern him in the least; but that made no difference to William George Bunter. He was always keenly interested in matters that did not concern him. He made an heroic resolve at last. Quelchy or no Quelchy, he was going to know what Drake was "up to." And while the rest of the Remove went in to lessons, William George Bunter quietly slipped out of the gates.

Drake was still visible in the distance, walking at a rather brisk pace towards the village. He did not look round; knowing that lessons had commenced at the school, he naturally did not suspect that any Greyfriars eye was upon him. Billy Bunter grinned, and rolled in pursuit of the boy detective.

He lost sight of Drake in the High Street of Friardale, but spotted him again at the corner of River Lane. At a safe distance, the Owl of the Remove rolled after Drake as far as the door of Mr. Jarrick's second-hand furniture-shop, where Drake entered. Bunter, rather puzzled, rolled on as far as the shop-door. He did not venture to show himself, but he could hear what was said in the shop.

He lost Drake's first remark; but he heard the crusty tones of Jarrick in reply.

"I think I've found just the desk that will suit you, sir. Would you care to step upstairs and see it?"

Billy Bunter gave a snort of utter disgust. Instead of a thrilling detective case, Drake was apparently bent on buying a second-hand desk. It was a bitter disappointment. This was what he had cut classes for!

Words could not have expressed Billy Bunter's disappointment and annoyance. He snorted, and he sniffed, and he grunted, and he turned his back on Mr. Jarrick's shop, and rolled away. He arrived at Greyfriars half an hour late for dessons, and was rewarded with two hundred lines—and for the rest of the afternoon Billy Bunter sat glowering.

Trapped!

JACK DRAKE did not allow his face to express his satisfaction as Mr. Jarrick invited him to step upstairs and see the desk. He was keenly eager to survey the interior of Mr. Jarrick's establishment. His suspicion with regard to the mysterious Mr. Andrews was growing into something like a certainty, but he had nothing definite yet to report to Ferrers Locke. The old man opened the parlour-door, and Drake followed him into a stuffy little room, and through another doorway to a dusky staircase. On a landing half-way several articles of furniture were stacked, and in two or three rooms above there was more furniture—all dusty and more or less dilapidated.

"It's on the next floor sir," said Jarrick civilly.

"Right-ho!" said Drake.

Jarrick stood aside on the landing for the boy to pass up the narrow stairs first. Drake ascended the stairs, and came out on a narrow landing, upon which a garret opened.

"That there's the room, sir!" said Mr. Jarrick.

He followed the boy up.

Something in his tone caused Drake to glance round at him sharply. He caught a glitter in the old man's eyes, and he could see that Mr. Jarrick was now breathing hard. Drake drew a quick breath. The look on the old dealer's face caused a sudden suspicion to flash into his mind.

"Go in, sir!" said Jarrick. "You'll find the desk there, just under the winder. Jest the thing you want, I fancy."

He came up heavily to the landing, and threw open the garret-door. There was a sound of a movement in the room. Someone was there.

"Won't you step in, sir?" said Jarrick, turning his sharp, glittering eyes on the boy detective.

Drake hesitated. It had flashed into his mind that he was suspected—that somehow Jarrick had guessed the reason of his visit. Jarrick stepped quickly between him and the stairs.

"Jim!" he called quickly.

Mr. Andrews stepped out of the garret. He was not muffled up now, and Drake saw his face clearly enough—feature for feature corresponding to the photograph in his pocket. It was the meeting he had desired—it was no longer a matter of suspicion—he knew now! But the look on Andrews' face showed that he, too, knew that he was tracked down.

"Step in, sir!" said Andrews. "Just waiting for you, sir."

Drake breathed hard.

"I think I'll call another time——" he began.

Andrews grinned unpleasantly.

"I think not!" he answered. "You've walked in, my fine young fellow, and now you'll stay. Get into that garret!"

There was no mistaking the state of affairs now. Drake made a spring for the stairs, and old Jarrick grasped him instantly. The next moment Andrews' grip was upon him.

Drake struggled fiercely.

But in the grasp of the two men he was swept off his feet and carried bodily, kicking and struggling, into the garret.

"Give me the rope," muttered Andrews, between his teeth.

Drake was flung upon the floor, and Andrews' heavy knee was planted on his chest. He was pinned down helplessly.

"What—what do you mean by this, you ruffian?" Drake panted.

The man grinned down at him savagely.

"What did you come here for?" he asked.

"About a desk——"

"Nothing else?" sneered Andrews.

Drake was silent.

"You wanted to see me," said Andrews, setting his teeth. "You made me put my head out of the window this morning. You saw me—and I saw you, Master Jack Drake. I've seen you before—going in and out of Ferrers Locke's house in Baker Street. I knew you, my fine young fellow—knew you at a glance."

Drake's heart throbbed.

He had found the absconding bank-messenger. It was obvious now, as he had suspected before, that Jarrick, the messenger, was a relative of Jarrick, the second-hand dealer of Friardale, and that he had, after his flight, taken refuge in the old man's shop in the village. Certainly, but for Drake's remembrance of the name, it was not likely that the thief would have been traced there. For two or three weeks he had lain low in his hiding-place—doubtless making it worth his relative's while to shelter him from the police. Drake had found him out—but only to fall into his hands! And as he read the man's desperate face, the boy detective felt a chill at his heart.

Old Jarrick brought the rope, and Andrews proceeded to bind Drake's hands and feet with savage thoroughness. Resistance was impossible—the ruffian was more than twice a match for the boy detective. In a few minutes Jack Drake lay a helpless prisoner.

Then the rascal proceeded to gag him. He fastened a cloth gag in the boy's mouth, and tied it there securely.

He rose to his feet, and surveyed the prisoner with savage satisfaction.

"You won't do much harm now!" he remarked.

"I s'pose you're sure about it, Jim?" mumbled old Jarrick.

"I reckon so—but he'll have something about him to prove it. Turn out his pockets."

Drake's pockets were turned out, and one of the first articles that came to light was the photograph of the absconded bank-messenger. Andrews uttered a sharp exclamation as he saw it.

"That settles it!"

"It does!" growled old Jarrick. "I was a fool to let you come 'ere, Jim. You'll bring the police on me."

"You've had your share in what was going," grunted Andrews; "and nothing's known yet, excepting by this young hound, and he won't talk. We've got plenty of time to act. I shall have to clear, but you'll be safe enough; there's nothing to give you away."

"The boy——"

"The boy won't talk after I'm gone," said Andrews grimly. "Come away."

The two men left the garret, and the door was closed and locked on Jack Drake. He lay on the dusty planks, scarcely able to move a limb—unable to make a sound. The afternoon sunlight filtered dimly through a dusky window, gradually fading into gloom as the early winter evening came on. Jack Drake shivered as the light was blotted out at last. For it was borne in upon his mind that the desperate man he had tracked intended to flee under cover of darkness; and he had said that Drake should not "talk" after he had gone. And, unless a miracle happened, that dark night was to be the last night on earth for Ferrers Locke's pupil! Poor old Jack!

THE END.

Get next week's "Boys' Herald" and read what extraordinary adventures befall Ferrers Locke's plucky young assista-.

: Editorial :

My dear Chums,—Mysteries at Greyfriars have been fairly plentiful in the past, but hardly one so thrilling as the sensation described in the new Ferrers Locke detective series. I am more than a bit proud of these yarns. The whole business seems to dove-tail in. What more natural than that young Jack Drake, the coolest and most courageous assistant any detective could possibly wish, should fit in as he does, coming back to his old school in order to "spot" what is happening?

There is no need to imagine that I am hanging on to Greyfriars because of Drake. It just happens like that, and, so far as that goes, we are all pleased to have anything which touches on the old school of so many triumphs. I shall be glad if you will give special attention to the new stories. They are worth it.

What most readers like is variety. They are keenly interested in the doings of the ignoble Percy in William E. Groves' story, and they also like to hear about Nibby Clink. "The College of Sportsmen" has proved itself to be an outstanding school tale. Other features are going strong. You can have nothing but praise for Teddy Heron; and when Gordon Gay comes along, the celebrated Grammarian is sure of a hearty welcome.

The Thundercloud yarns go on their hilarious and triumphant way. Did anybody dimly realise there was so much fun in the Navy?

I think readers want character in stories these days more than ever. The mistake some folks make is in imagining that to be really interesting an author must get beyond life, and describe impossible happenings. There is no greater error. I am determined to have real human nature in the BOYS' HERALD, for there is nothing more appealing.

Everybody ought to make a point of collecting the really magnificent Engine Plates which the "Popular" is giving away. Be sure you get the whole wonderful series. You will be vexed if you miss this unrivalled opportunity.

Turn at once to page 21 and read the particulars of the Great Free Gift Scheme for readers of the "Boys' Herald."

YOUR EDITOR.