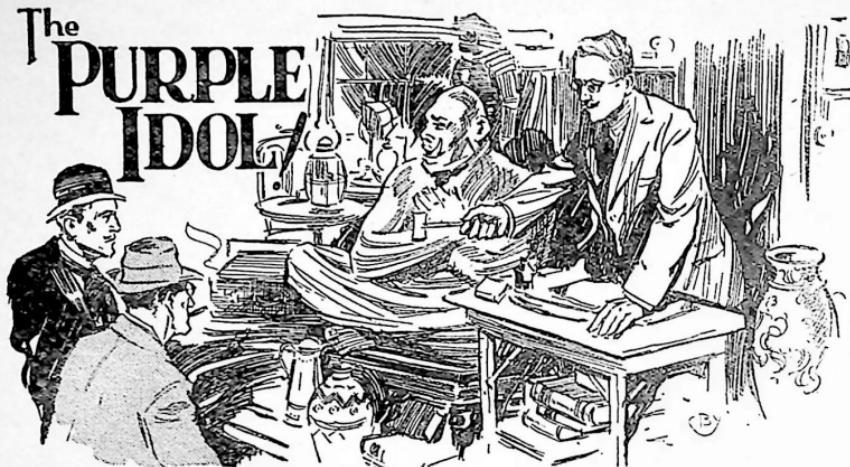


The PURPLE IDOL



THE FIRST CHAPTER

The Tragedy of the Curio-shop!

TWELVE o'clock."

Ferrers Locke restored his watch to his pocket and halted.

He and his young assistant, Jack Drake, had just emerged from Baker Street Tube Station. They had spent most of the morning with a friend of Locke, a Bengalee called Chandar Lal, who was staying at the Waldorf Hotel.

Both Locke and Drake had come away from the hotel the possessor of a valuable little souvenir. Locke's took the form of a small golden representation of the Hindu god Ganeesh. Drake's was an image of the sacred white peacock, beautifully carved in ivory.

These valuable gifts, presented by Lal, were in token of the Indian's appreciation of services rendered by Locke and Drake.

As Ferrers Locke halted outside the Tube station, his hand encountered the little box in which reposed the gift he had received.

"I think, Drake," he murmured, "we might walk home via Loftus Road. We have time before lunch. And I rather fancy my old friend, Andrea Ollson, would like to see these

examples of Indian workmanship with which we've been presented."

"Good idea, sir."

The two stepped off together. Instead of taking the direct route to their quarters in Baker Street, they turned down a side road. The first turning on their left brought them into the little-frequented thoroughfare known as Loftus Road.

"You know, my boy," said Locke as they strode along, "I've known Ollson almost more years than I care to remember."

"You never miss an opportunity of dropping in on the old fellow, I notice, sir," remarked Drake. "But he struck me, on the only occasion I met him, as though he were a bit old-fashioned."

"And so he is my boy. I don't think Andrea Ollson ever rode in a Tube train. It almost broke his heart when the old horse omnibuses in London were done away with. He's always had a profound distrust of banks, too."

Jack Drake smiled.

"Perhaps that is merely wisdom on his part, sir," he said. "However, he can't do a

In sinister circumstances Ferrers Locke finds his friend, Andrea Ollson, dead. Is it a case of murder or suicide? Read how the famous Baker Street detective sifts the mystery to the bottom—there are thrills and surprises throughout!

very great business in this out-of-the-way spot, I should think."

"On the contrary, I think his business connections are excellent. He has a number of clients among very wealthy collectors, I know. But I was thinking more of his habits. A more generous man never lived."

"He gave a good deal to a School for Tropical Medicine, I believe?" said Drake.

"Yes; Andrea Ollson's hobby is medicine and anatomy, I think. But he's spent a good deal on his protégé, Stephen Ferrell, one way and another."

"Stephen Ferrell!" repeated Drake. "That's his assistant in the curio business, isn't it?"

"Yes; but Ferrell is more like a son of the old man than an assistant."

The premises were small and dingy. The exterior, with its small window, gave but little inkling of the valuable antiques and curios within. Behind the window, images of various kinds in brass, ivory, and ebony, wrought by Indian, Chinese, and African craftsmen, were cheek by jowl with ancient Babylonian coins, old English pottery, and age-worn Italian paintings.

The detective and Drake stepped into the shop. The interior, untidy and ill-lighted, was in keeping with the exterior of the place. The shop, though, had a greater depth than seemed likely for so narrow a building.

To the right was an old desk. Beside it were some glass cases in which reposed small objets d'art. These acted in lieu of a counter.

Japanese Samurai armour, war spears and shields surmounted by tufts of human hair from the Solomon Islands, grotesque idols from the East Indies, and totem-poles from Alaska, littered the shop.

Locke rapped on the desk with his walking-stick.

There was no response.

He knocked again, louder this time. Still receiving no response, he turned to Drake.

"Give that imitation of a canary, my boy," he said—"or, rather, of a thousand canaries rolled into one. That ought to fetch him."

Jack Drake smiled. Then, pursing his lips.

he sent a shrill, exultant piping reverberating through the curio-shop.

But even Drake's piercing whistle failed to bring the old curio-dealer into view.

By this time the eyes of the two visitors had become more accustomed to the dim light. Gazing through the shop, Locke became aware of the form of a huge Javanese idol which grinned from the back portion of the premises.

Often during his former visits to the old curio-dealer he had seen this selfsame grotesque, purple-coloured idol. Andrea Ollson had had it for years for the simple reason that he had never been able to find a purchaser for it. Always there was the selfsame ugly grin on the face of the image, though on this occasion it seemed to Locke as if the grin was just a trifle more evil and sinister.

Taking a step or two farther into the shop, Ferrells Locke halted, and again rapped loudly with his stick. Hardly had he done so than he sprang to attention. Every fibre of his being was a-quiver. His eyes had fallen and were large with horror. For there at the base of the purple idol was the motionless figure of a man!

Locke's inaction was but momentary. With a cry, he dashed forward and dropped on his knees beside the still form.

Hearing the cry, Jack Drake, whose view of the base of the image had been obstructed by a huge vase of Matsuma ware, rushed through the shop.

He arrived by Locke as the detective grasped the inert figure and turned it over.

"Andrea Ollson!"

The name left Locke's lips in an awed whisper. He who had unravelled so many gruesome mysteries was shocked beyond measure at finding his old friend in these sinister circumstances.

And certainly the old curio-dealer presented a pathetic spectacle. Despite the gloom which shrouded this back portion of the shop, his face revealed almost a marble whiteness. His eyes were set and staring. A few bubbles of froth rested at the corners of his lips.

"He's—he's dead, sir!"

Locke felt the old man's pulse. Then he took a small hand-mirror from his pocket and held it to Ollson's lips. A thin film of moisture settled on the glass.

"He's alive, my boy. Go with all speed for a doctor!"

Drake dashed from the shop.

Once outside the place, he glanced swiftly up and down the road. His eyes lighted on a brass plate outside a house on the other side of the thoroughfare.

Running to the house, he read with satisfaction the name on the plate, "Dr. Graham Stead, M.D."

As luck would have it, the doctor was at home. Bearing a small black bag, he hastily accompanied Drake back to the curio-shop.

They found that Locke had propped the old curio-dealer against the base of the big idol, and was rendering what first-aid he could. He had lighted a gas-jet, and by the aid of this the doctor made an examination of the patient.

Rising, he met Locke's inquiring gaze with a shake of his head.

"He is beyond human aid," said the medico quietly. "Mr. Ollson is dead."

Ferrers Locke drew a deep breath and turned to Drake.

"Help us to lift him into the room at the back of the shop, my boy," he said quietly. "Then go upstairs and see whether anyone is on the premises."

The three carried the body of the old curio-dealer into the back room and reverently laid it on a couch. That done, Jack Drake mounted the flight of stairs which led to the living-rooms and bedrooms of the place.

No one was on the first floor, but as he went up the stairs towards the second landing, he heard footsteps.

"Hallo! Who's, that?" called a voice.

"Is that Mr. Stephen Ferrell?" called back Drake.

A head appeared over the banisters.

"Yes, that's me! Who are you?"

In a few words Drake told the protégé of the late Mr. Ollson of what had occurred. At first Stephen Ferrell, a slim, dark man of about twenty-six years, stood clutching the banisters as though rooted to the spot.

Then, coming to life, he dashed madly down the stairs, brushing Drake roughly aside. Arriving in the little back room where Locke and the doctor were standing by the couch, he threw himself across the body of Andrea Ollson.

"Dad!" he cried, in agonised tones. "Dad! Speak to me!"

A few moments elapsed, and the doctor made a sign to Jack Drake. The boy raised Stephen Ferrell, and led him, sobbing and shaking convulsively, to a chair.

The doctor put his mouth close to the detective's ear.

"I think, sir," he said, "that the police should be notified at once. In my opinion, there will have to be an inquest on the deceased."

"You suspect poison?"

"To be frank, I do."

"And I, too."

Ferrers Locke made a gesture towards the left wrist of the dead man.

"Perhaps, doctor," he whispered, "you noticed, as I did, the bluish tint of the flesh about the left wrist? Imbedded in the flesh is a small black thorn."

The doctor raised his eyebrows.

"I did not notice that," he admitted. "But there's certainly a suggestion that death was caused by a particularly rapid and potent poison. The body must not be touched again until the police have been communicated with."

THE SECOND CHAPTER

The Coroner's Inquest

IT was shortly following the tragic discovery narrated in the previous chapter. In a dingy hall in the Marylebone district the coroner was holding his court. The inquest was on the body of Andrea Ollson, aged sixty-three, a naturalised British subject, whose occupation had been a curio-dealer in Loftus Road.

A number of witnesses had been called. Among these were Ferrers Locke, Jack Drake, Dr. Graham Stead, Stephen Ferrell, a noted Harley Street pathologist who was an expert in Oriental poisons, and Inspector Pycroft, of Scotland Yard.

Owing to the sinister circumstances in which the discovery in the curio-shop had been made, it had been necessary to call in the police. For three days Pycroft and his men had been amassing evidence of the habits, financial position, and so forth, of the dead man. In his evidence in court the inspector gave his opinion of the affair in no uncertain manner.

"A case of suicide," said Pycroft.

Moreover, there seemed to be no little ground for this opinion.

The evidence of the Harley Street poison expert tended to confirm it. He testified to having been called in by the police to see the body of the late curio-dealer. He had extracted a small thorn from the left wrist of the dead man. This thorn had been dipped in a paste made from the sap of the ipoh-tree, a species of plant which flourishes in Borneo.

The expert went on to explain that this type of poison was used by the Kenyahs of Borneo for putting on the points of the darts used with their blowpipes. Mr. Andrea Ollson, who had visited Borneo on a number of occasions, was well aware of the properties of this deadly poison. It was easy for the deceased to have taken a thorn from a rose-bush which grew outside his back window, dipped it in the poison, and jabbed it in his wrist.

The suggestion of suicide was startlingly confirmed in the evidence given by Stephen Ferrell.



An astounding sight met Jack Drake's eyes. Canning and his friend were kneeling before a drawer full of banknotes.

Pale, and dressed in deep mourning for the old man who had befriended him, he presented a pathetic spectacle as he took his place in the witness-box.

The coroner began his questioning in a quiet, sympathetic voice.

"Your name is Stephen Ferrell?"

"Yes, sir—Stephen George Ferrell."

"When did you first meet Mr. Ollson?"

"About two and a half years ago. It was in Sarawak."

"He took you into his employ?"

"Well, not exactly. That is, he didn't engage me as an assistant in his business

at wages. It happened that he had known my father. I was on my beam-ends after a period of ill-luck and ill-health in Borneo, and he offered me a passage to England. After arriving in London he invited me to stay with him."

"I may take it," said the coroner, "that the late Mr. Ollson was a man of kindly disposition?"

"Exceedingly so, sir," replied Stephen Ferrell. "He was—was like a father to me."

He bent his head forward and roughly brushed the back of his hand across his eyes.

The coroner paused for a few seconds until the witness had got over his emotion.

"And now, Mr. Ferrell," he said, "as far as we can discover, Mr. Ollson died intestate. Did you ever hear him mention a will?"

"Never, sir. The matter was never discussed between us. I don't think he ever made one."

"Had he any wealth apart from the value of the stock in his curio-shop?"

"He had no other wealth as far as I know. He gave liberally to charities."

The coroner glanced at a paper which he held in his hand. Peering over his spectacles at the witness again, he opened up a fresh line of examination.

"Now, please, think carefully about this question, Mr. Ferrell," he said. "Had Mr. Ollson any private or business worry on his mind to your knowledge?"

Stephen Ferrell hung his head.

"Yes, sir; he—he had seemed worried of late."

Inspector Pycroft, sitting near Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake, nodded his head significantly.

"What was his worry due to?" the coroner resumed.

"To his health partly, sir. And he seemed depressed by the gloom of the English winter. Oft-times he regretted that his business would not permit him to reside always out in the East Indies."

"Did he ever mention the subject of suicide to you, Mr. Ferrell?"

"Er—no, sir. That is, he—he sometimes spoke rather strangely. For instance, he occasionally became morbid and made possi-

istic remarks about 'never seeing the sun shine again.' Once he told me that he expected he would be 'found dead in his musty curio-shop."

From the table in front of him the coroner took up a small metal box. He explained that the box, which contained a darkish coloured paste, had been found in the desk of the deceased. The paste, as had been proved by analysis, was a poisonous substance made from the sap of the ipoh-tree of Borneo.

The box was passed to Stephen Ferrell at the coroner's request.

"Now, Mr. Ferrell, have you ever seen this box containing this paste before?"

"Yes, sir. The paste is a deadly poison. Mr. Ollson brought it from Borneo with him. He took a delight in showing the box and its contents to certain of his clients, together with some darts and a blowpipe."

A small thorn with a dull crimson point was next shown to the witness, who shrank back in horror. This was the thorn taken from the wrist of the dead man. Ferrell was asked if he had ever seen it before, but replied that he had not.

As the coroner concluded his examination, Ferrers Locke rose.

"May I, sir, as an old friend of the deceased, be permitted to put a few questions to the last witness?"

"Certainly, Mr. Locke."

Rising to his feet, the detective faced Stephen Ferrell.

"Would it be correct to say that your benefactor, Mr. Ollson, was an enthusiastic student of anatomy?"

Ferrell appeared surprised.

"Why, yes, I should say he was."

"He was a man who could have pointed out, without hesitation, where the principal veins and arteries of the body are situated?"

"He could have done, I've no doubt."

The face of the witness wore a puzzled look. So did the countenances of others in the court.

"When did you last see Mr. Ollson alive?"

"About half an hour before that—that boy—Drake called to me to notify me of the tragedy."

"Roughly speaking, then, you saw Mr.

Ollson about half an hour before he died. Where was that?"

"Down in the shop. He had a customer—a Mr. Bream, an antiquary—with him. But I had something to do, and went upstairs to—"

"Quite so," murmured Locke. "But will you please tell me if, in your opinion, Mr. Ollson seemed in his normal senses on the last occasion you saw him alive?"

"Why, yes, he—he seemed all right."

"On the face of it, Mr. Ferrell, wouldn't you think it strange if it were suggested that Andrea Ollson had killed himself by jabbing a poisoned thorn into his wrist? The wound, we were assured by the doctor in his evidence, was fully half an inch from any important vein."

"I—I don't quite understand!" stammered Stephen Ferrell.

"I suggest to you," said Ferrers Locke, "that it must be regarded as strange that a man like Mr. Ollson, who had a thorough knowledge of anatomy, should so bungle the job of suicide as to give himself a more lingering death than was necessary. By pressing the thorn into a vein, he would have assured himself a speedier and less painful end."

Stephen Ferrell drew himself up.

"I see your point, Mr. Locke. I suppose it is queer. Doubtless, though, sir, my old friend was out of his mind at the time."

The detective paused until the clerk who was taking down the evidence had finished writing.

"There is one other question I wish to ask," he said. "Are you aware whether Mr. Ollson had any enemies?"

"That I don't know, sir. I shouldn't have thought so."

Ferrers Locke thanked the coroner for his courtesy, and resumed his seat. It was evident that Locke's point about the late Mr. Ollson's anatomical knowledge had made an impression in the court. And in the absence of any direct evidence bearing on the tragedy, an open verdict was recorded.

As Locke and Drake were leaving the place, Inspector Pycroft came up with them. It

was clear that he was not at all pleased with the turn that things had taken.

"You know, Locke," he said, in an annoyed tone, "this business is most unfortunate. A simple case—an old man tired of life—turned into an unsolved mystery! The newspapers will ask 'Was Andrea Ollson murdered?' Scotland Yard will be put in the pillory because no murderer is forthcoming. And what's the good of explaining to 'em that you can't catch a hare if there isn't a hare to be caught?"

Ferrers Locke smiled, and patted the inspector on the shoulder.

"Come, Pycroft," he said—"come along to Baker Street and have some lunch with us. I can promise you some very excellent jugged hare!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER An Unexpected Visit!

IT took but a couple of moments for the Yard man to regain his usual good-humour. Very cordially he accepted Locke's invitation.

As Inspector Pycroft said afterwards, the jugged hare, cooked by Sing-Sing, Locke's Chinese servant, was worth acquaintanceship!

After the meal the inspector, with a six-inch cigar stuck at an angle in his mouth, stayed to chat with his host and Drake. It was while they were conversing—talking "shop"—that the front door bell sounded. An interval elapsed, and Sing-Sing entered, bearing a visiting card.

"Stephen Ferrell!" said Locke. "Show him into the consulting-room."

Leaving the inspector to be entertained by Jack Drake, Ferrers Locke went to his consulting-room. A few moments later Stephen Ferrell was shown in, looking haggard and worried.

"You will pardon my taking a few minutes of your valuable time, Mr. Locke? I—I came—"

"Be seated, Mr. Ferrell. I can well spare the time this afternoon."

Stephen Ferrell accepted a cigarette, and seemed more at his ease.

"I called, Mr. Locke," he said, "because I was impressed by the questions you put to me this morning. You—you don't

think that Mr. Ollson committed suicide ? ”

“ Candidly, I don’t.”

“ And I suppose, Mr. Locke, as you knew Mr. Ollson well, you will endeavour to elucidate the mystery of his death ? ”

“ That is my intention.”

Stephen Ferrell breathed deeply.

“ I thought that was the situation,” he said.

“ Well, I think that I may be of some slight assistance to you, after all.”

The detective nodded his approval.

“ Needless to say, Mr. Locke, I am as anxious as you are to have this matter cleared up—if indeed Mr. Ollson was the victim of foul play. There exists one man at least who had a deep grievance against my old friend and benefactor. He was an antiquary, and coveted a very unique medallion unearthed at Nineveh, which Mr. Ollson possessed. But, for some reason, Mr. Ollson, who had a small private collection of antiques himself, steadfastly refused to part with that particular medallion. Once, I remember, after pressing Mr. Ollson to sell, this client completely lost his temper. The strange part of it is that I cannot trace the medallion now among the things in the shop. I had a look after the inquest to-day.”

“ That is certainly interesting,” said Ferrers Locke. “ And what is the name of the antiquary who was so persistently thwarted ? ”

“ Oscar Bream.”

The eyes of Ferrers Locke narrowed to two slits.

“ Bream ! ” he muttered, as though to himself. “ Bream ! That was the name of the man you mentioned in the coroner’s court—the man who was in the shop shortly before Mr. Ollson was found at death’s door.”

“ The same.”

Rising from his chair, Locke looked his visitor full in the face.

“ Inspector Pycroft, of the Yard, is here, Mr. Ferrell,” he said. “ Have you any objection to my repeating that statement to him ? ”

“ I—I have no objection whatever.”

When Inspector Pycroft and Jack Drake, in response to Locke’s summons, entered the consulting-room, Stephen Ferrell had regained his composure. He repeated his statement to the Scotland Yard man, and readily answered

a number of questions which Pycroft put to him.

“ I suppose,” said Pycroft finally, “ after you had left Mr. Ollson and Oscar Bream together in the shop you heard nothing from your room ? ”

The brows of the visitor contracted as though in deep thought.

Suddenly his face lighted.

“ By Jove ! ” he exclaimed. “ I remember. Shortly after reaching my room I heard a faint cry, as though of someone in pain. I was hardly conscious of it at the time; but now it comes back to me.”

Inspector Pycroft looked at Locke significantly.

“ This is a matter which must be followed up,” he said. “ Does Oscar Bream live in town, do you know, Mr. Ferrell ? ”

“ Yes; he lives in West Kensington.”

Reaching for the telephone directory, Ferrers Locke rapidly turned over the pages. Then, taking the receiver from the telephone, he gave a number. There was a pause, then:

“ Is that Kensington three five double-four double-nine ? ” he inquired. “ Is Mr. Oscar Bream at home ? ”

A pause ensued. Then Locke hung up the receiver and turned from the telephone.

“ Gentlemen,” he said, “ Mr. Oscar Bream has left his Kensington address, and the servants know nothing of his whereabouts.”

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

Unmasked!

DURING the course of the following days Jack Drake learnt little more about the curio-shop mystery than the papers published, and this was not much. For these two days he was engaged on another case concerning a forged cheque for a client who visited Baker Street.

On the evening after he had finished his work on this minor case he was sitting in his room in Baker Street when Locke entered. The detective had been out all day, and he looked a trifle tired and drawn.

“ Well, sir, what luck ? ”

Locke smiled at the boy’s question, and sank into a chair.

“ The man Oscar Bream is found ! ” he

announced. "As a matter of fact, although I did not tell you, I discovered yesterday that he was staying at an hotel in Liverpool."

"He is under arrest, sir?"

"Not yet—though he may be at any moment. Inspector Pyecroft himself has gone to the North, and Bream is being watched closely. But, by the way, my boy, I have another little job for you."

"Good, sir!"

"To-morrow morning," said Locke, "I want you to put on a suit of rough clothes, and be at a place called Duke's Crescent, Kentish Town, not later than nine o'clock. You will watch the house which is named Elmer.

You can't miss it. There's a mews which runs along one side of it, and an outbuilding at the back. Make yourself as inconspicuous as possible, and when this man comes out shadow him until he returns home again."

Ferrers Locke drew a small photograph from his pocket and showed it to Drake.

The picture was of a man of about thirty years of age, with a broad face, high cheekbones, and a heavy, cloven chin.

"This," said the detective, tapping the picture. "is a man called Frederick Canning!"



At Ferrers Locke's bidding Jack Drake snatched off the beard of Canning's companion, and then let out a gasp of surprise.

He has private means, and I have reasons for thinking he is going to attend the auction sale to-morrow of the property of the late Mr. Ollson. After he has returned home you must come back here."

Punctually at nine o'clock on the following morning Jack Drake arrived in Duke's Crescent, Kentish Town. The house Elmer was quite the most imposing residence in the crescent.

For fully an hour and a half Drake lounged about the corners of the crescent, and then

Frederick Canning emerged from the house. The boy recognised him at once from the photo he had seen.

That Canning was going to attend the auction sale to be held in the curio-shop was soon evident. He took the Tube to Baker Street Station, and then walked to Loftus Road. Jack Drake kept him in sight the whole time.

Entering the shop, Canning dropped into one of the few chairs which had been provided. Drake remained near the doorway.

Gradually, more and more folk gathered in the shop until the place was crowded. Stephen Ferrell was present, though he kept in the background, a pathetic figure in his suit of deep mourning.

The keen-faced auctioneer began the business of the day, and a number of coins and small curios found a ready sale.

With a tinge of interest Jack Drake saw the auctioneer walk to the large purple-coloured idol and tap it lightly with his hammer.

"Come, gentlemen," he said, "will someone name a bid for this Javanese image?"

Apparently to his surprise, the bidding was started, though at a small sum. Gradually it rose. Soon two men only were competing for the idol—Frederick Canning and a lean person with a blue chin and tortoise-shell spectacles, who spoke with an American accent. But finally Canning secured the ugly image for the sum of nine pounds.

Directly Canning's name had been taken by the auctioneer's assistant he left the curio-shop and returned direct to Kentish Town. In accordance with his instructions, Jack Drake followed him, and saw him enter the house called Elmer. Then the boy returned to Baker Street, where he reported to Ferrers Locke.

"Thanks, Drake, my boy!" said Locke, with a smile. "I thought he might visit other places beside the auction. As a matter of fact, I was well aware that he visited the shop in Loftus Road. You see, I was there myself."

"You were, sir?"

"Yes, I was the guy with the tortoise-shell spectacles and the American accent. After-

wards, from the auctioneer's clerk, I discovered that this man Canning has arranged to have the idol removed at five o'clock this afternoon by the Brennan Haulage Company. Mr. Ted Brennan is a friend of mine, and I have arranged for you to enter his employ."

"I'm to help take the idol away, sir?"

"Smart lad!" murmured Locke. "That's exactly the idea! This afternoon you will disguise yourself as a typical vanboy, and join a motor-lorry which will be waiting for you in Brennan's yard. Here is the address. It is not far from here. By going with the motor-lorry you will find out where the idol is taken. Then I want you to keep your eyes on this fellow Canning again."

Late that afternoon Jack Drake presented himself at the yard of Messrs. Brennan, haulage contractors. He was wearing his oldest clothes. His face was begrimed with dirt, and a blue scarf was about his neck. They were expecting him, and he took his seat on a lorry, the driver of which was a coarse-looking, gruff-speaking Cockney.

Proceeding to the curio-shop in Loftus Road, Drake found that Frederick Canning was waiting there. With him was a man whose age appeared to be about forty-five or fifty—a slim individual, with a lined face and a fringe of beard.

All assisted in getting the idol out of the shop and on to the lorry.

When the image had been placed in the van and covered with a tarpaulin, Canning and the bearded man climbed into the vehicle.

In half an hour's time they arrived at the place, and the driver took the lorry up the mews by the side of the residence, where the idol was taken into an outbuilding.

After the lorry had been backed out of the mews, Drake slipped off the back of it. He watched for a moment as the vehicle lumbered slowly along Duke's Crescent, and then he stole back to the outbuilding.

The door was shut, but a gleam of light shone through a crack in the boards of which the shed was built. Drake put his eye to the crevice, but could see nothing. He walked round the building. But there was no other

crack in the sides through which he could obtain a clear view of the interior.

Walking quietly back into the mews, he gazed up at the roof. A broad beam of light shone through, and, taking a ladder which was lying near the building, he placed it gently against a wall.

Very gingerly Jack Drake mounted the ladder, and, leaning forward, peered through the broken roof.

An astounding sight met his eyes. A cavity showed in the base of the idol. On the ground beside it lay a drawer. And Canning and his friend, kneeling beside the drawer, were running their hands through a pile of banknotes which it contained.

With staring eyes Drake leaned over the roof a little farther to obtain a clearer view. In doing so, he lost his balance and fell on to the roof. The rotten wooden tiles gave way, and with a cry he crashed through into the shed, close to the two men.

"Look out—a spy!"

Canning sprang to his feet. The bearded man hurled himself downwards at Drake. But the boy, twisting sharply over, avoided him.

Next moment Drake had gained his feet. He felt shaken and bruised, but luckily not otherwise hurt. The man called Canning thrust his hand into his jacket pocket. Jack Drake lashed out with his right and sent the fellow reeling from a sizzling swing to the chin.

Then there was a terrific crash at the door of the shed. Drake glanced round and saw the driver of the lorry burst into the place. In the hands of the newcomer were a couple of grim-looking Colt revolvers. Feeling not unlike a trapped rat, the boy started to make a dash for liberty, when the lorry driver spoke:

"Hands up, you scoundrels!" And the voice was the voice of Ferrers Locke!

The hands of Canning and his bearded friend went above their heads in almost ludicrous haste.

"And now, Drake, my boy," said the detective, "kindly remove the facial growth of our friend, the Beaver!"

Greatly wondering, Drake snatched off the beard of Canning's companion.

"M-my hat! It's Stephen Ferrell!"

"None other," said Locke. "The murderer of my old friend, Andrew Ollson!"

While Canning stood whitefaced and shaken, the other man broke down completely.

"I'll confess, I'll confess!" he whispered. "I—I did it! I was mad—mad!"

"That will be for the jury to decide, Mr. Ferrell," said Locke solemnly. "But for two things you might never have been caught. Firstly, my suspicions were aroused by the fact that the deadly thorn had not penetrated a vein in Mr. Ollson's wrist. In other words, I suspected that it was a case of murder—not suicide, as you attempted to lead the coroner to believe. Secondly, you gave yourself away in your eagerness to throw suspicion on another. When you found I did not believe in the suicide theory, you attempted to cast suspicion on a Mr. Bream. But you went a trifle too far. You told us that you heard a faint cry from the shop when you were in your room."

Stephen Ferrell sank on to his knees. But Ferrers Locke continued remorselessly.

"As a fact, I knew you could have heard no human cry from your room on the second floor," he said. "When we were in the curio-shop before the body was recovered, my assistant, Drake, whistled louder than anyone could have called. Yet you did not hear that. So while Inspector Pycroft of the Yard watched Oscar Bream, I watched you. I overheard a conversation between you and your precious friend, Canning, in a coffee-shop in the Edgware Road. You told him that you knew that Ollson had a considerable amount of wealth, and that he kept it in the purple idol. And you sought his assistance in getting the idol to this place."

"I'll admit it," interposed Canning dully. "But I knew nothing of the murder—that I'll swear."

"I don't think you did," replied Locke. "This arch villain and hypocrite, who killed the man who had befriended him, alone is responsible for that. He will meet his just due at the hands of the law. Drake, run and fetch a policeman!"

The Bells of GREYFRIARS!

by DICK PENFOLD.



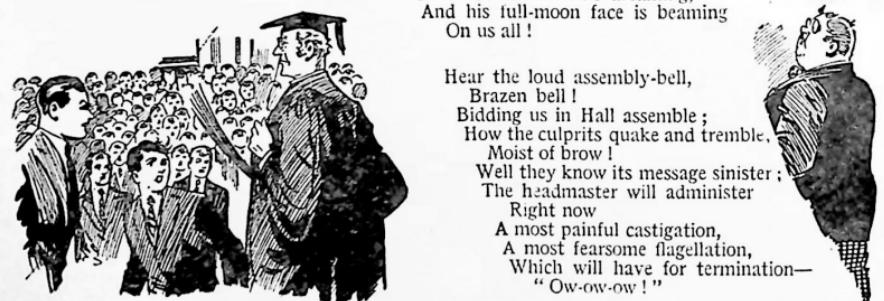
HEAR the hated rising-bell,
Booming bell !
In the murky winter morning
How we dread the sombre warning
Of its chime !
Falling on our ears like thunder,
Surely Gosling's made a blunder
In the time ?
If the porter, sour and surly,
Has awakened us too early
To the day's fierce hurly-burly,
It's a crime !



Hear the horrid lesson-bell,
Beastly bell !
On our spirits it's a damper,
To the Form-room we must scamper
In a throng,
As it tolls its solemn summons
To the gloomy and the glum 'uns,
"Come along !"
We must hurry, we must hustle ;
Breakfast bolted, we must bustle
To begin our tedious tussle—
Ding ! Dong !



Hear the mellow dinner-bell,
Golden bell !
There is music in its tocsin
As the hungry rabble flocks in
To the hall.
How we love its jolly jingle
As right merrily we mingle,
Large and small.
Billy Bunter's eyes are gleaming,
Of a feast divine he's dreaming,
And his full-moon face is beaming
On us all !



Hear the loud assembly-bell,
Brazen bell !
Bidding us in Hall assemble ;
How the culprits quake and tremble,
Moist of brow !
Well they know its message sinister ;
The headmaster will administer
Right now
A most painful castigation,
A most fearsome flagellation,
Which will have for termination—
"Ow-ow-ow !"