

NO. 53.—DETECTIVE TALES FOR ALL.—1^D.

Week ending
June 10, 1916.

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1^D



ZINGRAVE'S LAST CARD.

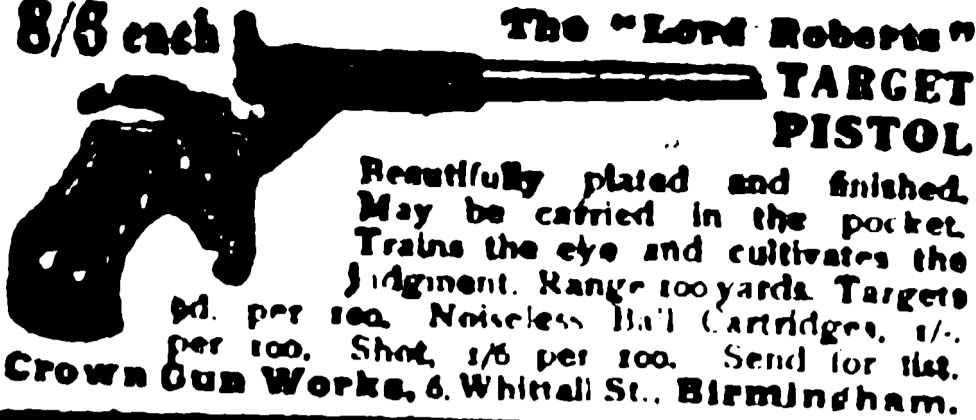
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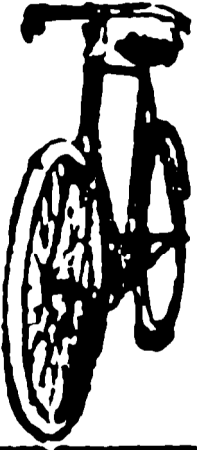
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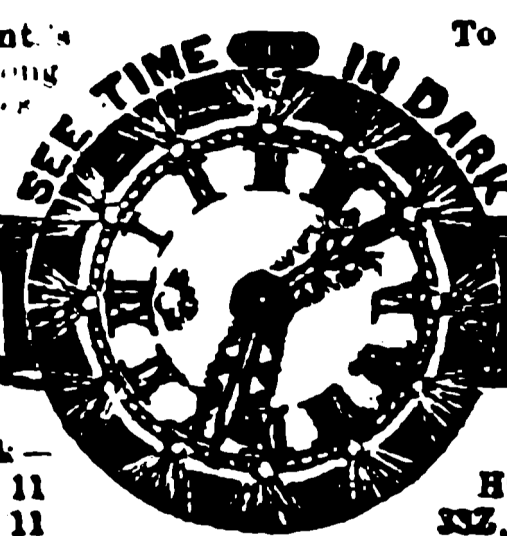
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ZINGRAVE'S LAST CARD.

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NELSON LEE'S Campaign
against "THE GREEN
TRIANGLE."

*By the Author of "The Buried Invention," "The
Doctored Racehorse," "The Ship of Doom,"
"The Great Club Raid," etc.*

CHAPTER I.

The Hiding Place—A Discussion—Nelson Lee's Theory.

THE League of the Green Triangle was demolished!

The great criminal organisation, which had for so long been a deadly menace to the whole country, was crushed and wiped out of existence. The Green Triangle had been a symbol to conjure with. Scotland Yard and the police of the whole country had been floundering helplessly for years, endeavouring to get at the root of the terrible evil.

But the police had been helpless. The League of the Green Triangle had beaten them at every turn, and had laughed at their fruitless efforts. The league had been all-powerful, all-destructive. The terrible work had gone on unchecked.

Unchecked, at least, by Scotland Yard.

The crash which had now occurred was the culminating point of a grim campaign which had been fought against the Green Triangle by Nelson Lee, the famous detective. Slowly but surely the league had been weakened and weakened until now, at last, the final blow had fallen.

That blow had been swift, stunning, and sure.

Nelson Lee had laid his plans with the most elaborate precaution and care. The Orpheum Club, the headquarters of the league, had been raided by a huge force of police, under the celebrated detective's command, and the result was satisfactory in the extreme except for one hitch.

At the time of the raid there had been a full meeting of the Governing Circle, and every man had been captured red-handed. All the Governing Members were now in the hands of the police.

These men, some of them titled, were all well known and famous. They had been highly respected by their friends and by the community. Every individual one had been utterly and completely above suspicion.

But the crash had come like the falling of a bombshell, and the Governing Circle had been captured under the most damning circumstances. Not a single member had the slightest ray of hope. Every man was self-convicted. And with the downfall of the league's leaders, so the whole great structure of crime fell in a crumbling mass. The working members of the league were disorganised and panic-stricken. A large number of them had been arrested, and the remainder were absolutely disbanded.

One fact was positively certain. Under no circumstances whatever could the League of the Green Triangle hold together. The wholesale arrest of the Governing Circle had been the blow which had left the great society stricken and dying.

But, in spite of the wonderful achievement, there was one fact which caused Nelson Lee bitter reflection. His plans had succeeded gloriously, and he had every cause to feel satisfied. Professor Cyrus Zingrave, the Chief of the League, was not amongst the prisoners, however. It was this fact which Nelson Lee was worried over.

The pill was a nasty one to swallow, but the great detective was forced to swallow it. Professor Zingrave was the man Nelson Lee had aimed at capturing all through the campaign.

And now, when the great raid had been accomplished, Zingrave had succeeded in making his escape. The professor was a wonderful man. A famous scientist, renowned and respected, he was the very last man upon earth whom the police had suspected of being the Green Triangle's chief. But Zingrave had been more than the chief. He had been the very brains of the league.

It was known now that Zingrave was a daring criminal, for he had been roped in with the Governing Circle. But, by a clever trick, he had foiled his captors, and had vanished. The police net was drawn tight, but there was a feeling that the professor would succeed in slipping through its meshes.

Nelson Lee himself knew Zingrave's capabilities only too well, and he was rather pessimistic. He respected the police, and was well aware of their value, but his knowledge of Zingrave caused him to be of the opinion that the police would lose their man.

The professor's disappearance had been puzzling.

After the raid on the Orpheum Club, the whole Governing Circle, Zingrave included, had been held prisoners in a big motor garage at the rear of the club. By the employment of a smoke-bomb the master-criminal had succeeded in effecting his escape. He had hurried away from the vicinity, and managed to get clear before it was possible for him to be recaptured.

But even Zingrave himself, astute as he was, did not know one thing. Nipper, Nelson Lee's clever young assistant, had managed to stagger out of the garage, and the lad followed the professor to the rear premises of his own house in Grosvenor Square. The time was close upon midnight, and Nipper's task had been easy.

In the centre of Zingrave's garden a beautiful artificial lake had been constructed, with a fountain in the centre. To Nipper's dismay, the professor had plunged into this lake, and had not come up again. Nipper had rushed back to his master, and had reported the professor's suicide.

Without delay the police had dragged the lake, but an amazing discovery followed. There was no body in the water! And yet Nipper swore that Zingrave plunged beneath the surface, and did not come up again.

The police theory was that Zingrave had pretended to commit suicide, and had scrambled out of the lake as soon as Nipper hurried off. Nelson Lee had made a thorough examination, and had remained thoughtfully silent. Whatever conclusions he came to, he made no remarks upon them—at least, at the time.

But yet Professor Zingrave's disappearance had an exceedingly simple explanation. When he had broken away from the police, he knew perfectly well that it would be impossible for him to make his escape under ordinary conditions. He had slipped away in the certain knowledge that he had a secure haven of refuge in which to hide.

When he had dived into the lake—totally unconscious of the fact that

Nipper was watching him—he had not plunged to death, as Nipper supposed, but simply to a hiding-place which was utterly beyond the chance of discovery. Once in that retreat, Zingrave knew that he would be safe. While the police thought him to be dead, he would be able to elaborate his plans—plans which had been prepared months and years ago. Zingrave had left nothing to chance.

The artificial lake was about ten feet in depth, and in one side of it was a low opening in the concrete wall, about four feet in height and two feet wide. Thus it was six feet below the surface of the water, and quite hidden. This opening was, in reality, a short, submerged tunnel. A few steps led upwards at the other end. So, when Zingrave had traversed the tunnel, submerged all the time, he had mounted the steps, and emerged above the surface once more. He was now in a rough apartment—small, but perfectly dry. The only entrance was the one by which he had come.

While Nelson Lee and the police were wondering what had occurred, Zingrave was calmly removing his wet clothes and attiring himself in a completely new outfit. He was quite confident that his retreat was impregnable. If, indeed, the opening in the concrete wall was discovered, all the advantage lay with Zingrave. Only one man could traverse the submerged tunnel at a time, and Zingrave was fully determined to deal summarily with any possible intruder.

And now, at this particular moment, the time was early morning, two or three hours after dawn. The police and Nelson Lee and Nipper had departed, nonplussed, and the professor was congratulating himself upon the success of his well-laid scheme.

The League of the Green Triangle, he knew, was no more. But the fate of his companions troubled him not one whit. Always, in the back of his mind, he had known that this terrible blow would fall, and he had always told himself that he, at least, would not submit to capture.

So far his plans had been successful, and he saw no reason why disaster should come now. His preparations had been so thorough that to escape from England altogether was quite an easy matter.

Although it was broad daylight, and the early morning sun was shining gloriously, not a ray of light entered that quaint retreat beside the lake, for the little apartment was constructed in the centre of an artistic rockery which occupied a position bordering one side of the little stretch of water.

This rockery was apparently solid, and nobody would have guessed its secret. Within, Professor Zingrave was busy. The little room was brilliantly illuminated by a strong incandescent electric lamp, the current for which was supplied from the house, underground.

Zingrave was seated upon a rough stool before a flat slab of stone which served as a table. Upon this were spread out many papers, and the electric light gleamed brightly down upon them.

The roof of the place was low. There was scarcely enough room for Zingrave to stand upright. The walls were rough bricks and stone and mortar and the floor concrete. The floor was perfectly flat and bare, except in one corner. Here there was a square hole, filled to within six inches of the top with dull, greeny water.

This water-hole, in fact, was the entrance to the apartment. Who could possibly imagine that Zingrave had entered this place when he dived, seemingly to death? It was a remarkably clever ruse.

The professor's wet clothes lay in a heap, and he was now attired comfortably in warm clothing. It had been exceedingly chilly in this damp stone retreat, but a small oil-stove had very soon warmed the atmosphere. Ventilating was effected by some cunningly contrived arrangement in the roof, quite unseen from the exterior.

"I have beaten them!" muttered Zingrave grimly, as he fingered the papers. "I have beaten them all! Even that clever hound, Nelson Lee, will be unable to find the slimmest trace of me!"

Time and again he congratulated himself upon the manner in which he had tricked his pursuers. Not knowing that Nipper had witnessed his plunge into the lake waters, Zingrave very naturally supposed that Nelson Lee was completely at a loss. For the police, Zingrave did not care a jot; but he was well aware of Nelson Lee's great ability, and he was not the man to under-estimate or belittle the cleverness of his foe. It was Nelson Lee whom the professor always considered, and he now told himself that the great crime investigator was right off the track and at a loose end.

Yet in reality quite the opposite was the case.

Nelson Lee was by no means at a loss. Owing to Nipper's shrewdness, he knew that Zingrave had entered the lake in a most singular manner and for an utterly unaccountable reason.

And now, while Professor Zingrave was comfortably preparing for flight, Nelson Lee and Nipper were holding a discussion upon the extraordinary events which had so lately taken place.

Zingrave's plans had been made months before, ready to be put into execution at a moment's notice. It was his intention to remain in his retreat during the whole of the coming day, and at night he would boldly emerge, disguised so that he would be absolutely unrecognisable, and make his way out of London in order to assume a new identity.

While he was actually going through the many papers upon the stone slab, Nelson Lee and Nipper were in the detective's consulting-room in Gray's Inn Road. The pair had not had a wink of sleep during the night, and now that it was early morning they were still as wide awake as ever.

They had, indeed, arrived home only shortly before. Nelson Lee had spent a considerable time in the garden of Zingrave's house, and had then accompanied Detective-inspector Lennard, of Scotland Yard, to Bow Street Police-station. Having assured himself that every member of the Governing Circle was safely under lock and key, the detective departed for his rooms, accompanied by Nipper.

"It is deplorable, my lad!" Nelson Lee exclaimed, puffing at his pipe fiercely, and pacing the consulting-room with jerky strides. "It is deplorable that Professor Zingrave has been allowed to slip through our fingers. The others are unimportant compared to Zingrave. My work is only half done, even now!"

"It wasn't your fault, guv'nor," began Nipper.

"My dear lad, I'm not saying whose fault it was," Nelson Lee retorted. "That is neither here nor there. The fact we have to face is that the master-criminal of the whole lot has disappeared. Sir Roger Hogarth, Dr. Northup, and all the others are big game, I'll admit, but it is lamentable that Zingrave found that opportunity of effecting his escape. The only gleam of hope lies in the fact that you were able to witness the professor's singular dive into his own lake."

"How does that help us, sir?" asked Nipper, yawning.

"Very materially, young 'un. If you had not followed Zingrave not a soul on this earth would have known what had become of him. As it is, we are aware that our slippery professor dived into the lake, and we are aware that he did not come up again."

"But the police say that he was bluffing, and that he crawled out of the water as soon as I nipped off."

"Tut-tut! The police are really inexcusably stupid at times!" Nelson

Lee interjected. "I am perfectly satisfied that Zingrave never came to the surface again."

"Then he really is dead, guv'nor?"

The detective was silent.

"And if he's dead," went on Nipper, "there's no need to worry."

"I am not satisfied, my boy," said Nelson Lee, suddenly halting before Nipper, and pointing to the lad with his pipe-stem. "There is something mysterious about the whole affair. Let us consider the facts. Zingrave plunged into the lake, and remained below the surface. Yet, when the water was dragged, not a trace of his body could be found. The problem is—where did the professor go to?"

Nipper scratched his head.

"Well, he didn't melt in the water like a lump of sugar, did he, sir?" he asked.

"He did not, Nipper. But he is not dead," declared Lee. "Zingrave is a remarkably clever man——"

"But the cleverest man on earth can't vanish into thin air—or green water!" protested Nipper. "Don't you think it's possible, sir, that his body may have lodged in a hole, at the lake bottom? If that happened the police drags would have missed him——"

"Leonard informed me that there was no indication of any unevenness in the lake's bed," the detective interrupted. "The whole thing is an artificial construction, with a flat concrete bottom. Had there been any hole, as you suggest, it would have been discovered at once."

"Then where the dickens did Zingrave get to?"

"That is the problem with which we are faced. I am positively convinced that Zingrave is in the lake, either dead or alive; and, absurd though it seems, I cannot bring myself to believe that he is dead. Of all the men on this earth I should think Zingrave would be the last to take his own life."

"But why are you so positive that the professor did not scramble out and crawl away while I was hurrying to tell you? I waited five or ten minutes for him to come up again, I know, but he might have been up to some trickery."

Nelson Lee was somewhat impatient.

"The exercise of a little common sense, my lad, was all that was needed to convince me that Zingrave remained beneath the surface," he replied. "Strangely enough, the police did not seem to be impressed by one very obvious fact. I noticed one thing which the police overlooked."

"What was that, guv'nor?"

"No man, however clever he may be, can crawl out of a lake, dripping wet, without conveying a certain proportion of the wetness on to the ground at the lake's edge," replied Nelson Lee grimly. "If Zingrave had indeed emerged, the gravel would have told its own story plainly nough. Perhaps you noticed that as soon as I arrived upon the scene I went round the whole edge of the pool, flashing my electric torch closely over the ground?"

"Yes, sir, I noticed that."

"Well, my dear Nipper, the gravel was perfectly dry—every inch of it!" was Nelson Lee's crisp reply. "There was not a single spot of water: not even a suspicion of dampness. Does that not prove that Zingrave did not emerge as the police so inanely assumed?"

"My stars! I should think it does!"

"One has only to apply a little elementary common sense, and these things are quite simple," went on the detective quietly. "The obvious conclusion, in this case—impossible as it appears—is that Professor Zingrave

is still in the lake! The fact that the lake was dragged without result is of no importance whatever. Since we have proved conclusively that Zingrave could not have left the water, it stands to reason that he must still remain in the water!"

"It sounds a giddy contradiction of things," said Nipper; "but there's no getting over the facts, guv'nor. What is your theory?"

"I don't know that I have formulated a theory so far, but to-morrow I intend to push my inquiries ahead without delay," replied the detective. "I have already a plan of action in mind, but I don't intend to get to work before darkness falls again."

Nelson Lee glanced at his watch as he ceased speaking.

"About bedtime, isn't it, sir?" asked Nipper sleepily.

"Good gracious! What an hour!" ejaculated Nelson Lee. "Why, it will be breakfast-time before long, and we have had no sleep. Off to bed with you, young 'un. We'll snatch a few hours, and have breakfast late for once. I have an idea that there is a good deal of strenuous work before us in the very near future."

And in a few minutes both Nelson Lee and Nipper were between the sheets, sound asleep. There is an old proverb to the effect that the mower loses no time by whetting his scythe. And it was certain that Nelson Lee and Nipper would be all the better prepared to face the day's labours refreshed by several hours of hard-earned sleep.

CHAPTER II.

Visitors—Nelson Lee's Plan—A Slight Repair.

"AN hour earlier, my dear Clifford, and you would have found us in bed," smiled Nelson Lee. "As it is, we have just had time to demolish a belated breakfast, and make ourselves presentable."

Douglas Clifford laughed.

"Well, I was disgracefully late in getting up myself," he replied. "But for the fact that I promised to meet Vera, I've no doubt I should still be in bed at the present moment."

The time was nearly noon, and the famous detective was looking as keen-eyed and alert as ever. He and Nipper had purposely slept late, and they both felt the benefit of their slumber.

At present there were visitors in the consulting-room—welcome visitors. Douglas Clifford and Vera Zingrave had called. Clifford was the young man who had helped Nelson Lee so admirably in the great campaign against the league.

It was no surprise to Nelson Lee that Clifford should introduce Vera as his promised bride. A magnificent diamond ring upon the third finger of Vera's left hand, indeed, was sufficiently eloquent.

Vera Zingrave was a delightful girl, charming to a degree, and wonderfully pretty. At this moment she was looking her very best. There was a sparkle of happiness in her big, brown eyes, and her cheeks were deliciously flushed. For months past she had been waiting with her answer, when her lover was in a position to put the all-important question.

Vera was the stepdaughter of the notorious professor; but she had known nothing whatever about Zingrave's villainy until quite recently. The shock had been a terrible one. But the fact that her stepfather had made a deliberate and cold-blooded attempt to take her life, had robbed her of any

slight regard which she may have ever felt for him. She, herself, was untainted by the professor's many crimes, and a sweeter girl did not exist. Douglas Clifford was a happy man to-day.

Nelson Lee had already congratulated the rich young man, and for a short while the conversation was centred upon the exciting happenings of the previous evening.

"There seems to be some mystery about the professor," began Clifford; but then he stopped speaking as Nelson Lee gave him a warning glance.

Vera instantly guessed the meaning of the glance, and she laid a little hand softly upon the detective's arm.

"Do not be afraid to discuss my stepfather in my presence, Mr. Lee," she said quietly. "Perhaps it is not right for me to say so, but I should feel intensely glad if you were to tell me that he is dead. I'm doing my very best to forget the dreadful happenings of the past, for the future is very bright for me."

"I'm quite sure of that," said the detective gently. "I had hoped to make a clean sweep last night, but, owing to an ingenious trick, Professor Zingrave gave the police the slip. There is now a considerable amount of uncertainty whether he perished, or whether he is still living."

Vera already knew about Zingrave's plunge into the lake, for Clifford had acquainted her with the facts. But Nelson Lee now told his visitors of his suspicions and conjectures.

"I don't quite understand, Mr. Lee," exclaimed Vera, with a pretty little wrinkle in her forehead. "The police found nothing whatever in the lake, and yet you declare positively that my stepfather never came to the surface again."

"I am only stating that which has been proved," Nelson Lee answered. "It is folly to dispute established facts, however contradictory they may appear. To-day I am going to make preparations for a little experiment which will prove positively whether Professor Zingrave is alive or dead."

Vera clasped her little hands.

"Oh, I hope he is dead!" she said quietly. "I know that I am not wicked in saying that, for my stepfather is a dangerous criminal of the most cold-blooded type. If he still lives I fear that he will attempt some dreadful vengeance upon us all. Oh, I am not afraid for myself, but——"

Nelson Lee smiled reassuringly.

"Have no fears of any sort, Miss Vera," he exclaimed. "The professor has been unable to harm me during the past months, when he had the whole organisation of the Green Triangle behind him, so I think I shall be able to look after myself now that he is quite alone and a fugitive from justice."

"Candidly, Lee, do you think that Zingrave is alive?" asked Clifford.

The detective nodded gravely.

"I do," he replied. "The circumstances of this affair are so puzzling that I cannot bring myself to believe that it is merely a commonplace case of suicide. There is something deeper behind it—something which is at present hidden. You may rest assured, however, that I shall soon get at the truth."

After a little further conversation Douglas Clifford and Vera departed. The young man was intensely happy, for he had longed for this day for many months. At last he could call Vera his very own, and he was determined to marry her as soon as possible, so that she should be provided with a home of her own—for at present she was compelled to stay with friends. Under no circumstances would she ever set foot again inside her step-

father's house in Grosvenor Square. The associations with that place were painful and sad. And Vera had no room in her heart for sadness now.

Almost as soon as the lovers had departed there was another visitor. This proved to be Detective-inspector Lennard, of Scotland Yard. The inspector bustled into the consulting-room with a brisk air. But it was obviously forced, for Nelson Lee could see at once that Lennard's face was rather long, and that his eyes were heavy for want of sleep.

"Thought I'd come and have a word with you, Lee," exclaimed the inspector, dropping into a chair. "You look fresh enough. I suppose you've been sleeping. I haven't had a wink!"

"You seem to be somewhat groggy," Nelson Lee remarked. "Well, any fresh news to report? Any sign of our prisoner?"

Lennard grunted.

"You can say what you like, Lee, but Zingrave isn't in that lake!" he declared firmly. "I and my men have been busy all this morning. We've dragged the lake afresh from corner to corner, and there's not even a dead rat in it! Zingrave diddled Nipper properly! He pretended to drown himself, and then slipped out again and sheered off!"

"But Zingrave didn't know I was following," said Nipper calmly.

"He must have known!" said the Yard man. "I'm not saying it's your fault, Nipper. You weren't to blame in any way. You naturally thought the brute had finished himself. He's infernally cute, even when in the last stage of desperation."

Nelson Lee made no reply for a few moments. He knew that it would be useless trying to convince Lennard that Zingrave could not possibly have emerged from the water. But he thought it as well to hear all that the inspector had to say.

"You positively say that the lake is empty?" he asked. "Don't you think it possible, Lennard, that the body is wedged in some——"

Lennard grunted again.

"How on earth could the body wedge?" he demanded. "The bed of the lake is as flat as your table—made of solid concrete. We even carted a small boat there—a collapsible thing—and sounded every blessed inch. There's not a hole deeper than an inkwell in any portion of the lake-bed!"

"H'm! That sounds fairly conclusive!"

"It's no good blinking the fact, Lee—Zingrave has tricked us!" Lennard went on. "I've withdrawn all my men from the professor's garden, and the police of the whole country have been instructed to keep a sharp look-out. It's my belief, however, that Zingrave has disappeared for ever! He's a clever chap, and once he's shaken off pursuit he'll lie low. Personally, I don't believe we shall ever get a smell of him!"

The inspector was decidedly dejected, although he attempted to speak cheerfully.

"Is there nobody at Zingrave's house now?" asked Nelson Lee.

"There's a constable in charge inside, of course."

"But the garden is deserted?"

"Yes. What's the good of guarding the place when the bird has flown?"

"I want to try a little experiment this evening," went on the detective.

"No; I'm not going to take you into my confidence just yet, Lennard. You have sole charge of this case, haven't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, I don't want to be disturbed in Zingrave's garden to-night," said Lee.

"Oh, well, it's your affair!" exclaimed the inspector. "If you like to go messing about round that confounded lake, you can! I've told you the bird's flown! But I'll see that the garden is empty to-night, and I promise

you nothing will disturb your nocturnal labours. I only hope you'll come across a clue."

After Detective-inspector Lennard had taken his departure, Nelson Lee and Nipper held a short discussion. Nelson Lee did not fully explain his plans to Nipper, but said that as soon as darkness fell there was grim work to be done.

But there was a good deal to prepare beforehand, and the detective sallied out on an errand, promising to be back in time for a late luncheon.

Nipper sprawled himself in a big chair before the open window, and looked over the morning papers. These were full of the previous night's startling happenings. The newspapers, in fact, raved about the gigantic coup.

The revelation of the Green Triangle's leaders provided ample scope for enterprising reporters, and the high social position of most members of the Governing Circle made the news all the more stunning.

Nipper became so engrossed in the reports that he scarcely noticed the passage of time; but over two hours had elapsed before Nelson Lee reappeared. Nipper heard his master ascending the stairs, and the lad stretched himself and pushed the newspapers aside.

"These reports are more or less true, guv'nor," he exclaimed, as the door opened. "But I must say they're rather flowery! Great Scott! What's all this, sir?"

Nelson Lee was carrying a huge, ungainly parcel, which almost concealed him as he entered the consulting-room. He set the parcel down on a chair and removed his hat. Then he smiled at Nipper's surprised look.

"Just a little article which I intend using to-night, my lad," he explained. "The firm promised to send it, but I thought it best to bring it myself. I taxied here, so I had scarcely any trouble."

"What the dickens is it, sir?"

"Open the parcel, and see for yourself."

Nipper lost no time in cutting through the cords. Then he removed the brown paper, and a curious-looking object was revealed. A large, round metal article, dull in colour, was the first thing which Nipper saw. Fixed to it were several pipes and a kind of valve. It had a glass front, protected with cross-pieces of metal. The rest of the parcel's contents seemed to be a mass of black rubber substance.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Nipper. "It's a diving-suit!"

"Exactly!"

"But what the—— Good lor'! Are you going to explore the bed of Zingrave's lake, sir?" asked Nipper eagerly. "What a stunning wheeze! But this doesn't look like an ordinary diving-suit at all!"

"It isn't an ordinary diving-suit—that's why," Nelson Lee replied.

"What is it, then?"

"As you can see, the apparatus is self-contained. There are no tubes connecting the suit to a pumping arrangement above the surface of the water. The air supply is provided by an ingenious arrangement which is affixed to the shoulders of the suit. It is all in readiness, and when donned it is only necessary to turn a tap."

"Sounds all right, guv'nor," remarked Nipper. "But the store of oxygen won't last long, will it?"

"There is no necessity for it to last long, my lad. The suit is only designed for very shallow water and for brief immersions. It will not be necessary to remain below the surface for longer than half an hour at the most; and the full capacity, I understand, is over an hour."

Nipper hauled the diving-suit out on to the table. It was a big, cumbersome thing, and rather heavy. The suit itself was made of some sort of

rubber material, and the big leg extremities, which were made to draw right over the wearer's ordinary boots, were heavily weighted.

"These look like number fifteen size boots," remarked Nipper. "The feet remind me of those clumsy overalls which motor-cyclists wear in the winter. What's the wheeze, guv'nor? How will you gain anything by diving down in this thing?"

"My dear Nipper, what's the good of asking me what I shall gain?" asked Nelson Lee. "I have decided upon this course because I believe that lake is not so innocent as it appears. The circumstances of Zingrave's disappearance are remarkably curious, and I have many suspicions——"

"Hallo! Hallo! What's this?" ejaculated Nipper suddenly.

There was something in the lad's tone which caused his master to look up sharply.

"What's that, young 'un?"

"This left foot doesn't seem any too secure, sir," Nipper replied. "There's a kind of crack in the rubber here, and I'll bet it will let the water in!"

"Let me see!" said the detective.

He examined the foot closely, and at once saw the crack Nipper had discovered. Just at this one spot the rubber seemed to have perished, and a slit three inches long was the result. It was only the outer surface which was cracked. There was no sign of the slit inside.

"H'm! This is a nuisance!" murmured Nelson Lee, frowning. "Lucky you noticed it, Nipper! There is still time to have the suit changed. It's an infernal bother, all the same!"

The detective at once got on to the firm which had supplied the suit over the telephone. He told them that there was a slight defect in the diving-dress, and ordered another suit round without delay.

With profuse apologies, however, the firm regretted that there was no other diving-dress in stock at the moment. But a man would be dispatched at once, and would effect a repair which would put matters thoroughly in order. The firm would have pleasure in allowing a liberal discount for the defect.

In less than an hour the man arrived, carrying a small bag. He thoroughly overhauled the suit, and declared that the crack against the instep of the left foot was the only fault.

Nipper watched the repair executed. The man produced a tube of some kind of solution, the smell of which nearly caused Nipper to faint away. He had smelt many varieties of rubber solution used for motor-tyres, but he had never come across anything quite so pungent as this.

But, as the man explained, the smell was a sure guarantee of its strength, for the solution was every bit as strong as the odour it emitted.

"Judging from the niff," remarked Nipper, holding his nose, "I should say that repair ought to be a jolly good one. Of all the hundred-horse-power scents, I reckon this perfume's about the most powerful!"

The man smiled and went on with his work. He placed a very neat patch over the crack; and then, to make doubly sure, he smeared a large piece of canvas-like material with the solution and placed it inside, stretching almost from the heel to the ball of the foot. Over this he smeared another liberal supply of the patent solution, saying that it would dry fairly quickly. The interior patch was not really necessary, but it was best to be upon the safe side.

Nelson Lee examined the repair, and was quite satisfied with the result.

But not for a second did he guess how that seemingly unimportant operation was to help him later on.

CHAPTER III.

Beneath the Lake—Zingrave Acts—A Surprise for Nipper.—The Escape.

THE garden of Professor Cyrus Zingrave's mansion in Grosvenor Square was in total darkness. It was by no means late, for there was still a very faint glow of sunset on the western horizon. But overhead were dark clouds, and the night had fallen prematurely.

Not a glimmer came from the house itself, and the lights of other houses were obliterated by the thick trees which grew all around the fairly large garden. The lake was situated in the centre, and was not overlooked from a single point. That which was going on there was taking place in absolute private.

Two dim figures moved about at the lake's edge. One of them was Nipper and the other a clumsy, cumbersome-looking person who moved with difficulty and whose head appeared to be absurdly small.

This effect was only natural, for the figure was that of Nelson Lee, and he was attired in the heavy diving-suit, minus the helmet. The latter was held in Nipper's hands, all ready to be affixed.

"Possibly we are here on a fool's errand, young 'un, but it is better to settle the matter in a way which will dispel all doubts," Nelson Lee remarked in a low voice. "If there is indeed some secret connected with this lake, I shall assuredly discover it now."

"What shall I do, guv'nor?"

"You will simply remain here on the bank, and wait for me to reappear," the detective answered. "I do not suppose I shall remain under water for long."

Nipper, however, was rather anxious.

"But suppose you don't come up again, sir?" he asked, with a note of concern in his voice. "Suppose this rotten suit goes wrong? You'll be drowned like a rat, and I sha'n't have any means of knowing. You ought to take a line down with you, sir—a signal-line!"

Nelson Lee laughed softly.

"My dear lad, it's not like you to be nervous," he said kindly. "You seem to forget that the water is only ten feet in depth, and that my head will therefore be no more than four feet from the surface. Should anything happen, it will be an easy matter for me to release the leaden weights from my feet and rise. Come! Let's have that helmet fixed on!"

Reassured, Nipper lifted the helmet and fitted it securely into the slots on the collar. One strong sideways pull locked the helmet; and it could be removed with even greater ease.

Nelson Lee at once turned a little tap within reach of his hand, and on his left shoulder. The oxygen contained in the reservoir at once made the air within the helmet perfectly breathable, and the valve automatically released the foul air. It was a cleverly constructed apparatus, but, of course, utterly useless for sea diving. It was only intended for use in very shallow water.

Nipper placed his face close against the glass front of the helmet.

"All right, guv'nor?" he inquired.

He saw his master nod his head, and then Nelson Lee walked clumsily and heavily to the very edge of the lake. He had fitted a heavy leaden weight to each foot, and these would serve to keep him in an upright position on the lake's bed. Both weights could be removed at a second's notice.

The detective slipped over the edge and quietly lowered himself into the black-looking water. For a second he hung by his hands and then released his hold.

He sank slowly, and then felt his feet strike the hard bottom. A few short steps forward assured him that he could walk in comfort and with ease. The air he was breathing was somewhat strange, but perfectly pure.

Pitch, utter darkness surrounded him, and the silence was like that of the grave. But the detective had come well provided, and before he moved again he took from his belt a powerful electric-torch. Pressing the switch, a brilliant beam of light shot out. But in this water, which was far from being crystal, the light was subdued and greenish.

It was quite sufficient, however, for the diver to see everything before him with perfect distinctness. Many tiny fishes darted about, and fairly close to him was the concrete wall of the lake.

He turned his light downwards and then upwards. Nipper, on the surface, plainly saw that greenish spot of light in the water, and the lad was reassured; but when his master turned the light horizontal again, it vanished.

It seemed to Nelson Lee as though he were exploring the deep end of a swimming-bath. The formation of the artificial lake was, indeed, very similar, although, of course, roughly constructed.

The detective turned his back to the wall and moved forward. Somehow he had a suspicion that there was some secret connected with the central fountain. Accordingly, he would commence his investigations in the centre of the lake.

The fountain proved to be merely a column of rough stonework, and Nelson Lee was soon satisfied that it was exactly what it appeared to be and nothing else. The stonework was smothered in slime, and after making two complete circles, the detective transferred his attention elsewhere.

He turned his light downwards, but could see nothing but a dull, muddy haze. There was a considerable layer of mud upon the bottom, and when he moved this was stirred up in thick eddies.

He walked with as much care as possible, but could not avoid stirring up the slime. Proceeding forward, he came to the perpendicular edge again. The blank wall faced him, dirty and dull-looking.

"I am afraid Lennard is right, after all," murmured Nelson Lee. "This lake is undoubtedly a very ordinary construction. Yet how was it possible for Zingrave to get away without making the ground wet? Upon my soul it was not possible! I will stake my life that the professor never came to the surface again!"

He set his teeth grimly and stepped forward again. There was still a considerable portion of the lake to explore, and so there was no reason why he should come to conclusions too hastily.

Suddenly he paused.

Then, with a click of his teeth which sounded tremendously loud in that space, he walked forward again with three long strides. The light of his torch gleamed out unwaveringly before him.

"By James," muttered Nelson Lee exultantly, "I was sure of it! But I certainly did not anticipate anything of this nature!"

He stood perfectly still. The light from his torch revealed a low cavity in the concrete wall. It was obviously deep, for the light failed to penetrate and the cavity showed perfectly black against the pale green of the surrounding water.

The aperture was no higher than four feet, and quite narrow. But there was ample room for a man to pass through, and the sight of it instantly filled the great detective with renewed suspicions. And now he was more than ever convinced that Professor Zingrave was still alive, and, moreover, more dangerous than ever.

The dragging operations of the police, of course, failed to reveal this

cavity," Nelson Lee told himself. "I am not at all surprised that Lennard found the lake to be empty."

For a full minute the detective remained still. Without knowing his exact bearings, he was nevertheless quite sure that this cavity was directly opposite the huge artistic rockery which was built at the very water's edge.

"The whole thing is plain—as plain as daylight!" Nelson Lee murmured. "Through this short tunnel lies a way of escape, and no doubt Zingrave slipped away while we were helplessly standing above. Indeed, it is quite possible that this is the end of a long tunnel leading into a neighbouring house."

Without further conjecture, the detective moved forward, and crouched down so that he could enter the narrow opening. It was a tight fit, and he progressed slowly. But, after working his way along for several feet, the beam of light gleamed upon a flight of slimy stone steps, leading upwards.

"Exactly as I supposed!" Lee thought grimly. "By mounting these steps, my head will be above the surface in a very few seconds. Zingrave merely plunged into the lake, traversed this short tunnel, and was out of the water again in less than half a minute. Gee, what a smart dodge!"

It was with the keenest satisfaction that Nelson Lee realised that his former deductions were not at fault. He fully believed that Zingrave was now miles away. But his inborn sense of precaution led him to switch the light off before ascending the steps.

In total darkness, he slowly mounted upwards, and almost at once he felt that he was emerging from the water. Two more steps, and he could feel that the upper part of his body was clear. He came to a halt.

Since he was out of the water, it would be as well to remove his headgear at once, for there was now no necessity to wear it. He raised his hands, turned off the tap, and then gave the helmet a sudden twist. It came off at once, and the first breath of air he took sent a sudden thrill right through him.

For the air was strongly scented with cigar smoke!

In a second, Nelson Lee knew that he was not alone. He laid the helmet down on the dry floor before him, and then switched his light on abruptly.

He caught a glimpse of a man's legs within four feet of him, but before he could alter the torch's directions, something descended upon his head with terrific force. The blow was a stunning one, and Nelson Lee rolled over sideways, unconscious, having seen nothing of his assailant except that first brief glimpse.

The torch rolled from his hand when he fell, but was not harmed. The light gleamed along the floor, for the switch was a permanent one; but this illumination was soon drowned in the sudden blaze of light which filled the small apartment.

Professor Zingrave, breathing hard, looked at Nelson Lee's inanimate form with glittering, fury-filled eyes.

The detective lay half in and half out of the water, in a most unnatural position, and obviously hors de combat. One glance was sufficient for the professor to see who his unexpected visitor was. Zingrave did not attempt to deceive himself. He had received a great shock.

"So even this retreat has been discovered!" he snarled to himself, with blazing eyes. "Nelson Lee! Always Nelson Lee! Curse the man for his infernal cleverness! I am never safe from him!"

He had never anticipated that the detective would discover the lake's secret, but he had now ample proof that his position was by no means so secure as he had fondly imagined. This impregnable hiding-place had proved to be accessible.

The professor was filled with wild alarm

Only an hour before, he had been congratulating himself that he had nothing whatever to fear; that he had completely shaken off pursuit, and that it would be perfectly easy for him to carry out his well-laid plans. And now?

"Good heavens!" Zingrave muttered savagely. "There's no telling what Lee's presence here may portend! Cooped up in here, I know nothing. I had been quite confident that the garden was deserted, and that I could walk out freely at any moment. But the garden may be filled with police. I may be hopelessly trapped!"

It was a bitter, maddening thought.

For some moments Zingrave almost went out of his mind with a kind of insane fury. All the time his strange eyes were fixed upon Nelson Lee's face. Sub-consciously he was aware that the detective's face was deadly white, and he suddenly became calm and cool.

"He is dead!" he muttered gloatingly.

But his thoughts changed the next instant. He rapidly considered his position, and told himself that he was in very great peril. Very probably his last hour of freedom had come. Zingrave thought it probable that Nelson Lee was working in conjunction with the police. If so, escape was out of the question.

But the prospect of capture maddened the professor afresh. His brain was working swiftly, and he came to the only decision practicable.

His very safety depended upon prompt action. To carry out his original plan was now no longer possible. He would have to adopt a scheme which the occasion demanded.

Having decided, Zingrave at once got to work.

Had Nelson Lee been able to see his attacker before the blow fell, he would have seen a perfect stranger, for Zingrave was disguised with consummate cleverness.

He had finished his labours very shortly before, and the result was extraordinary. Not only was the professor's face disguised, but his very form and bearing was totally different.

He was attired in a blue reefer suit, and his slight figure was so padded that he now seemed to be broad-shouldered and exceedingly muscular and brawny; but the padding had been accomplished with such skill that there was no suspicion of make-up.

Zingrave had spent hours upon his face. This was now covered with a fast preparation which had changed it to a ruddy tan. His chin was covered with a short, grizzled beard and a stumpy moustache adorned his upper lip. But his cheeks seemed to be fatter, his nose totally different in shape, and his forehead had lost its dome-like appearance. This was due to the fact that his wig came much lower than his real hair. And all the false hair—wig, beard, moustache, and eyebrows—was fixed on practically permanently. By a secret process of his own, Zingrave had performed his task so that he would be able to face any police-officer with perfect confidence. It was impossible to detect his make-up from actual reality. Even if his false hair were tugged at, and his beard pulled, they could not be removed. Professor Cyrus Zingrave had vanished, and a complete stranger had taken his place.

It will be understood, therefore, why Zingrave was so confident. But if he were caught here—caught red-handed—no amount of bluff would avail him. Once in the open streets, he could defy the police with impunity; but it was a question whether he could gain his freedom.

In his pockets he had a large amount of cash and foreign securities for very many thousands of pounds. It was his intention to escape from the country and to take a fortune with him.

His original scheme frustrated, he at once fitted himself to the fresh con-

ditions. The very success of his new plan may depend upon the swiftness of his immediate movements. He took a quick glance round to assure himself that he had forgotten nothing. He had, in fact, just finished his preparations when Nelson Lee made such a dramatic appearance.

"My fate rests with Chance now!" the professor muttered fiercely. "But I shall escape—I must escape—I intend to escape!"

He dragged Nelson Lee forward until he lay full length upon the floor. Then, working rapidly, he unfastened the diving suit and wrenched it off. Without pausing, he donned the cumbersome dress himself, until all was ready except the helmet.

"This is my only chance!" Zingrave told himself. "If Lee has companions outside, they will think that I am Lee returning. And they will be at my mercy. Were I to make my exit by my original method it would be I who would be at their mercy. But I shall take them by surprise—and that may mean deliverance for me."

At such moments as this all the professor's cunning was uppermost; and his hastily formed scheme was cunning to a degree. The element of surprise is always one that cannot be reckoned with.

But quickness of action, too, was an all-important factor.

Zingrave examined the helmet for a moment, and saw that the method of fixing was extremely simple. He donned the helmet, secured it, and turned the supply tap. A few seconds were sufficient to assure him that the apparatus was in perfect working order; and he picked up the electric torch, and stepped down the stone stairs.

Once on the actual bed of the lake he gave an upward spring, and slid up through the water like a cork. He bobbed out into the night air, and grabbed at the stonework of the pool's edge.

Zingrave was strong, and one great heave sent him floundering on to dry ground. He picked himself up, and looked round quickly and searchingly through the glass window in the helmet.

Only one figure faced him—that of Nipper.

Zingrave saw this dimly, for the garden was dark and gloomy. In scrambling out of the lake, the professor had dropped the torch to the bottom. His heart was throbbing heavily, and he did not hide from himself the fact that he was nervous.

But, by all appearances, Nipper was the only person to be reckoned with. There were possibly others, but they were unseen. Zingrave's brain was working rapidly as he removed the heavy helmet, and dropped it to the ground.

"Thank goodness you're up again, guv'nor!" Nipper exclaimed. "I'd begun to think that you were never coming. It's been rotten waiting here alone——"

Professor Zingrave drew his breath in sharply.

Alone!

Then Nipper was indeed the only enemy to be dealt with. Zingrave set his teeth grimly, and felt a wave of infinite relief flood over him. But he was at a disadvantage while he wore the diving-suit. Rapidly loosening the belt, he slipped out of the big, clumsy dress.

"What's the result, sir?" went on Nipper eagerly. "You're jolly silent! Why don't you speak? Oh, hang this darkness! Let's have a little glimmer on the scene. I hope that rotten oxygen hasn't got into your noddle!"

As Nipper was speaking he switched on his own electric torch, and the bright beam of light wavered for a second upon Zingrave's falsely broad form, and the blue reefer suit. Then, before the light could reach the professor's face, the master-criminal acted.

He acted promptly and drastically.

It was of the utmost importance that Nipper should not see his disguised features, for Zingrave had no intention of being identified with his new personality. Once he got clear of the vicinity he would be safe—but only if Nipper remained in ignorance of his present appearance.

With one swift movement Zingrave knocked the torch out of the lad's hand.

"Why, what the—— You're not the guv'nor at all!" roared Nipper, as the torch clattered down yards away. "By Jimmy! What the thundering dickens——"

The young detective got no further.

Zingrave was upon him like a tiger. He gripped the lad fiercely, and swung him bodily off his feet. Nipper's hands beat the air for a second, and his fingers clutched at his assailant's throat and found a grip.

But Nipper stood no chance against the desperate man. The whole incident happened in a moment. Kicking and struggling, Nipper flew through the air, and came down with a terrific splash into the cold waters of the lake.

He disappeared below the surface, and Professor Zingrave turned his back, and flew with rapid footsteps across the dark garden.

He had escaped! He was free! And neither Nelson Lee nor Nipper had caught a single glimpse of his disguised features. In spite of the odds, Zingrave had slipped out of the trap, and his new identity was undiscovered.

CHAPTER IV.

Nelson Lee's Vow—A Brilliant Idea—William the Conqueror!

NIPPER came to the surface spluttering, and spitting out mouthfuls of lake water. Two powerful strokes took him to the edge, and he hauled himself out, and stood there gasping, with streams of water running from his clothes and forming big puddles all round him.

"He's gone!" he gasped breathlessly. "Heavens! What can it mean? It wasn't the guv'nor at all! That chap was Zingrave—Zingrave himself! Oh, my goodness!"

For a moment Nipper was almost overcome. He knew that it was useless dashing off in pursuit, for there was no way of telling which direction his late assailant had taken. Moreover, Nipper's brain was in a dizzy whirl.

His thoughts were so numerous, and of such an alarming nature, that they tumbled over one another in dire confusion. But out of all the chaos, one fact was clear and startling.

Nelson Lee had dived below the surface, and Professor Zingrave had come up!

But how could such an impossible thing be?

The whole affair was staggering, and Nipper couldn't bring himself to think clearly for a time. What had become of his master? What was the strange secret of this singular pool?

Nipper found himself shivering, as the keen night air blew against his soaking clothes. And he suddenly became alive to the situation. In some extraordinary manner Professor Zingrave had risen up out of the lake instead of Nelson Lee; the latter, therefore, must still be below, somewhere.

It was altogether inexplicable and astounding.

"I'm blessed if I can get the hang of it!" muttered Nipper anxiously. "But it's as plain as anything that there's some under-water exit to this lake. When Zingrave dived last night I thought he was committing

suicide, but it's clear that he was simply hiding away. The guv'nor, of course, came across him, and——"

But Nipper didn't like to think further. Something had happened to Nelson Lee—that was obvious. And it was equally obvious that Zingrave had tricked the detective. Nipper had no actual proof that his assailant had been the professor, but he was quite sure of the fact in his own mind.

And now, without wasting another second, Nipper got to work. He intended donning the diving suit himself, but when he picked up the helmet he discovered that the glass window was cracked clean across—this being the result of Zingrave's throwing the helmet to the ground. Nipper was taken aback, but he was by no means discouraged.

"If Zingrave could dive down, so can I!" he muttered grimly. "I'm soaked through, anyhow, so it won't make any difference!"

In the dim gloom he looked round him. It struck him at once that the exit below the surface could only be in one spot—the spot where the rockery was built. So, grasping his electric torch, he took a clean header into the murky water.

Nipper slid downwards with a rush, and the light from his torch dimly showed him the concrete wall. And he caught a glimpse of a small, dark opening. Before he could act, however, he was forced to the surface again.

"There's a giddy opening there!" Nipper told himself. "My stars! This is a queer place, and no mistake!"

He nimbly hopped out of the water, ran round the lake edge, and then took a short run. This time he dived in such a way that the swift rush would take him directly to the tunnel cavity, six feet below.

The lad's judgment was correct, and almost before he knew it he was struggling inside the narrow opening. Keeping his breath in, Nipper pushed forward. The sensation was far from being pleasant, for he did not know what lay ahead of him. Totally submerged he was groping forward with tightened lungs. But he was ready at any moment to turn back and strike to the surface once more.

The next moment he stumbled upon something, and then became aware that the water above his head glowed greenish, as though a strong light burned above.

"Steps!" he thought, as he stumbled.

Less than five seconds later Nipper's head was above the surface, and he breathed deeply. An astonishing sight met his gaze. He was in a small apartment, made of rough stone work, like the dwelling-place of a prehistoric man. But, incongruous enough, a modern electric light gleamed in the stone ceiling.

But Nipper neither looked at the light, nor the apartment. He gazed straight at Nelson Lee. The famous detective was sitting up within a yard of Nipper, passing a hand over his brow, and apparently dazed. But the sight of his master sent a wave of relief through Nipper's frame.

"Guv'nor!" he cried. "What's happened?"

Nelson Lee started, and looked at Nipper in a dull kind of way.

"Hallo, young 'un!" he muttered. "Dear me! You look like a drowned rat. What on earth are you doing, Nipper? Where are we? By James, my head feels——"

"My goodness, guv'nor, are you hurt?" asked Nipper anxiously.

He scrambled out of the well-like aperture, and stood close against his master, the water running from his clothes in miniature cataracts. Nelson Lee was still suffering from the effect of the blow, and Nipper acted very sensibly. He hastily fumbled in his master's coat, and produced a brandy

flask. Then he placed the flask to Nelson Lee's lips and made the detective drink.

Three gulps of the fiery spirit acted instantly, and Lee's brain began to clear. Nipper soon discovered an ugly bruise upon his master's head, and he proceeded to bathe it with his soaked handkerchief.

"That's better, Nipper!" murmured Nelson Lee. "You'd make an excellent nurse, my boy. I feel almost myself already, except for a throbbing headache. By James! I was properly bowled over! Something hammered down on my head in the dark. But how on earth did you get in here?"

"By diving through the water. It's the only way in, sir."

"But I don't quite understand——"

"I thought you came to the surface again, guv'nor," went on Nipper quickly. "Somebody came up in the diving-suit, and, of course, I thought it was you. The rotter must have been Zingrave!"

Nelson Lee struggled to his feet.

"So the professor has escaped!" he exclaimed bitterly.

"Clean gone, sir. But I don't see that I'm to blame," Nipper replied. "How the thunder was I to know what had been happening down here? Of course, as soon as Zingrave had taken the diving-suit off I smelt a rat at once. But before I could even switch on my light he knocked it out of my hand and sprang at me. He simply chucked me into the lake, and I took a beautiful header. When I came up he'd completely vanished, and I was too flabbergasted to think properly."

Nipper went into details, and then Nelson Lee briefly explained how he, himself, had met with disaster. Several minutes had now elapsed, and the detective, although feeling somewhat shaky, was keenly alert.

"For my own part," he said, "I don't see that either of us is to blame for what has happened. I was utterly taken by surprise, and you, Nipper, suffered the same disadvantage. We know that Professor Zingrave is very much alive indeed; and we have had ample evidence that he is as desperate as ever—and infinitely more dangerous. It is a terrible pity that he escaped."

"And we had him absolutely cooped up!" said Nipper disgustedly. "Cooped up in this hole, and yet he diddled us! My word, sir, he's got some nerve! There's no telling where he is now, and there's no telling whether you'll ever nab him."

Nelson Lee laid his hands on Nipper's shoulders.

"My boy," he said quietly, "I solemnly swear to you that I will undertake no other case until I have laid Professor Zingrave by the heels. This affair is something in the nature of a challenge. Well, I accept that challenge, and I shall not rest until I have caught my man. The League of the Green Triangle has got to be stamped out thoroughly, and so long as Zingrave is at liberty my work is incomplete."

"But how are you going to start, sir?" asked Nipper.

"By getting out of this hole, to begin with," Nelson Lee answered briskly. "But tell me, did you see the professor clearly? I was knocked senseless immediately, and I saw nothing. Perhaps you had better luck."

Nipper shook his head.

"Sorry, guv'nor," he replied. "I didn't even get a peep at his face. My light rested on his legs and body for a tick, and then he jerked the torch out of my hand. Practically speaking, I didn't see anything."

"How was he dressed?"

"In a kind of blue reefer suit," the lad answered. "And he seemed

to be broader and fatter, now that I come to think of it. I say, sir, I suppose the chap really was Zingrave?"

"My dear Nipper, who else could it have been? You, yourself, saw the professor dive into the lake last night, and we know that nobody else took the plunge. Oh, yes, the man was Zingrave. The fact that he seemed broader to you only corroborates my suspicions."

"What suspicions?"

"That Zingrave was disguised," replied the detective grimly. "That is the pity of it. The professor was disguised with singular care and cleverness. Of that I am sure. And neither of us saw him. Therefore once he reached the open roads he was safe. We might even pass him in the street when we emerge, and yet we shall be unable to lay hands on him. It is a great set-back—an overwhelming misfortune."

Nelson Lee looked round him, frowning thoughtfully.

"But how are we to get out of this remarkable chamber?" he went on.

"By diving back through the water, guv'nor; there's no other way."

"There must be another way, young 'un," said the detective. "How did Zingrave intend to leave? By plunging through the water? Assuredly not. After taking extreme pains with clothes and make-up was he going to ruin all his labours by soaking himself to the skin?"

"But we can see there's no other exit," Nipper remarked.

"We must look more carefully. Zingrave was not fool enough to construct this retreat in such a way that there was no means of escape. From the exterior, perhaps, the lake is the only means of entering, but there is certainly an emergency exit of some sort. Suppose Zingrave dived through the water? He would be an object of conspicuous interest to everyone."

"But he did leave by diving——"

"That is of no importance," Lee interrupted. "The diving-suit was here, and so he took advantage of the opportunity. The ruse had the added advantage of his being able to deceive you until it was too late for you to act. Originally, the professor had quite another plan in mind."

The detective gazed round him searchingly, holding his head gingerly as he did so. He was still in great pain, and somewhat dizzy. Many men would have been too completely prostrated to move; but Nelson Lee's iron will gained the upper hand over his physical suffering, and he was firmly determined to press forward the pursuit of Professor Zingrave.

"Ah! What is this, Nipper?"

The detective uttered the words after he had been examining the sides of the apartment only a few minutes. Nipper, who was standing over the oil-stove, came over to his master's side.

"Found something, guv'nor?"

Nelson Lee pointed. Low down in one corner the rough pieces of stone were obviously loose, and weakly fitted. Above, and all round, the stones were closely cemented together, forming a strong wall. But this particular square was quite the opposite. The pieces of rock were merely laid one on top of another.

"Looks a likely spot, sir," said Nipper eagerly.

There had been no attempt to conceal the weak place in the wall, and so Nelson Lee had found it easily. Zingrave had constructed this place for his own exclusive use, and there had been no necessity for particular care.

The detective quickly removed several lumps of stone, and the others rapidly followed. Another wall of rock was revealed—this one plastered together securely. Nipper was about to make a remark when his master placed his foot against the wall and exerted his strength. There was a crumbling noise, and the wall fell to pieces.

"As I suspected, Nipper," said Nelson Lee, with satisfaction. "This second wall is merely a blind. From the outside it appeared to be as strong as the rest of the rockery, but from the interior it is easily forced down."

A few more kicks and there was sufficient space for the pair to crawl through. They found themselves under the stars, a short distance from the lake, at the back of the rockery, and in a kind of shrubbery.

Nelson Lee glanced at his luminous watch.

"Dear me! The hour is surprisingly early," he said. "It is only a comparatively short time since I donned the diving-suit. Much has happened in a little time, Nipper."

"Zingrave's hopped it," growled Nipper. "That's much, anyhow!"

The detective seated himself on a lump of rock. He wanted to think, but his head was throbbing agonisingly. He bent forward, and rested his aching temples upon his hands. Then, suddenly, he sniffed the air sharply.

"By James!" he muttered, as a startling thought struck him.

For a full minute he remained perfectly still. Then he rose to his feet with shining eyes, and called Nipper to his side.

"When we emerged from that hole, my lad, I was completely at a loss," he said crisply. "Now, however, an excellent plan has suggested itself to me. There is still a chance that we may get on the track on Zingrave."

"Good egg, guv'nor!" said Nipper promptly. "What's the wheeze?"

"Listen to these instructions."

And Nelson Lee rapidly gave his young assistant some precise, brisk orders. In three minutes Nipper was off, as hard as he could run, across the garden to the rear door. Nelson Lee remained sitting on the rock, thoughtfully lighting a cigarette.

"I wonder if it will succeed?" he murmured. "By Jove, I hope so!"

It seemed a long wait to the detective, alone in the garden, listening to the dull, subdued roar of the West End traffic. But Nipper was back after the lapse of twenty-three minutes—and the lad did not return alone.

He was accompanied by a clumsy, ugly-looking dog of no recognised breed, although the animal certainly bore a resemblance to a bloodhound. He sniffed at Nelson Lee suspiciously for a moment, and then lazily wagged his tail.

"You have been prompt, Nipper," exclaimed Nelson Lee, patting the dog. "And, upon my word, you have changed your clothes, too! It's just as well, for those wet things would have given you influenza—even at this season. All right, William, old boy, there'll be plenty of work for you presently."

The dog, notwithstanding his unprepossessing appearance, was as sharp as a needle, and he was dignified by a name which few dogs can boast of. William the Conqueror was certainly a name to be proud of; but it is doubtful if the shade of the celebrated William I. of England was flattered.

The animal was the property of a friend of Nelson Lee's, and the great detective borrowed him occasionally. For the dog, although not a true bloodhound, was capable of picking up the faintest of scents, and of following it with absolute accuracy. In many respects Nelson Lee had found William the Conqueror to be of more value than many pedigree bloodhounds.

The detective had taken a parcel from Nipper, and this proved to contain a pair of boots. Nelson Lee quickly removed his own boots and donned the fresh ones. Nipper, feeling as fit as a fiddle in his dry things, was intensely curious and eager to get to work.

"How do you propose to set William on Zingrave's trail, sir?" he asked. "And why the dickens did you want those boots? I've been puzzling——"

"Then you need puzzle no longer, my boy," interjected the detective.



As they staggeringly retreated, Lee saw the masses of lava pouring down the mountain, and in less than two minutes the spot where Zingrave had been standing was covered—every inch of it—by the awful liquid fire ! (See page 40.)

"I will tell you of my reasons for adopting this plan. You remember, of course, that the diving-suit was repaired shortly before we used it?"

"Well, guv'nor?"

"You remember, also, that the solution with which the repair was effected was somewhat odoriferous?"

"That's a good word," said Nipper. "Niff's good enough for me. My stars! What a terrific niff it was, too! I seemed to catch a suspicion of it just now, too, when you were taking off your boots."

"And for a very excellent reason, young 'un. Look at this."

Nelson Lee handed the left boot of the pair he had just removed over to Nipper. The lad, flashing his light upon the boot's sole, immediately saw what the detective indicated. Near the instep, and partly on the heel, was a trace of a dark, sticky substance.

"The solution did not dry," Nelson Lee went on. "That is not surprising, for no air could get at the repair right down inside the leg of the suit. Consequently, although the repair was satisfactory, a certain portion of the solution transferred itself to my boot. And I told you to bring me a new pair, Nipper, because I did not want the trail to be confused."

"The trail, guv'nor? By gum, do you mean——"

"I mean that Zingrave, in escaping, unconsciously played into my hands," replied the detective tensely. "I wore the suit scarcely any longer than Zingrave must have done, and since some of this evil smelling solution is on my boot, it is only natural to suppose that the professor's left boot is in a similar condition."

"My goodness, do you think William can follow the trail——"

"I do not think at all—I positively know!" interjected Lee. "Such a trail would remain fresh for hours and hours, and even a third-rate blood-hound could follow it. Our unprepossessing friend, William, will be able to lead us on Zingrave's track with absolute accuracy. The fact that the rubber solution is extraordinarily pungent is all in our favour."

"What a stunning idea!"

Nipper was fairly dancing with excitement, and no further time was lost. Nelson Lee had remained still during Nipper's absence, so that his own boot would not confuse the trail.

And now, taking a firm grip on William the Conqueror's leash, the detective placed the boot he had just removed to the dog's sensitive nose. William sniffed eagerly, and continued sniffing for some seconds.

"Seems to like it!" remarked Nipper. "I don't admire his taste, guv'nor!"

Nelson Lee led the dog to the side of the lake, murmuring soft, urging words as he bent over the animal. For some moments William sniffed the ground sharply but unsuccessfully. Then, with a low whine of excitement, the dog tugged at his leash, and made straight across the garden.

"He's got the trail!" exclaimed Nelson Lee exultantly. "We have had some bad luck this evening, Nipper, but I hope this is the turning point."

CHAPTER V.

The Trail Ends—Some Inquiries—The Ivy-clad Cottage—A Puzzle.

WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR evidently found the trail hot, for he never faltered, and was not once at fault.

After leaving the garden of the Grosvenor Square mansion the dog led Nelson Lee and Nipper through many quiet streets, and it soon became

evident that Zingrave had refrained from traversing the crowded thoroughfares.

"The professor was somewhat nervous," Lee remarked. "This trail plainly tells its own story. Zingrave had no wish to expose himself to unnecessary scrutiny, and so chose his route with judicious care. From our point of view, nothing could be better, for the trail, strong as it is, might have become obliterated in the crowded streets."

Following a roundabout course, William led the detective and Nipper a considerable distance. Right through the West End the pair went, the keen animal hot on the scent the whole time.

Now and again William hesitated at some crossing where traffic was constant, but he picked up the scent almost without a falter. The evening was still fairly young, but as the street lamps were drastically darkened, Nelson Lee and Nipper did not attract much notice. Occasionally a few passers-by would pause, but the dog and his companions soon disappeared into the gloom.

The detective had feared that as the distance grew greater William would be at fault. But this was not the case. In the quiet streets the dog never hesitated. The night was fine and the roads dry, and the pungent-scented rubber solution had made a strong and lasting trail.

"Where are we getting to, guv'nor?" asked Nipper, as they were traversing a quiet residential avenue. "Perhaps Zingrave has gone into a house in this district. The fact that he walked all the way shows that his destination was not very far off."

Nelson Lee nodded.

"Our early failure is amply repaid by this success," he remarked. "Zingrave, of course, has no inkling that we are after him, and we shall therefore take him completely by surprise. But—— Hallo! What's this?"

The detective uttered the last words in a concerned tone, for William the Conqueror, arriving at the end of the avenue, was making straight across the road for a quiet suburban railway station.

"Blow!" muttered Nipper. "This doesn't look healthy, guv'nor!"

Nelson Lee said nothing, but followed the dog, with set lips. He hoped that William was going to pass the station, but this hope was not fulfilled. William turned into the booking-office, passed through, and in a few moments was on the platform.

Here he wandered about for a short period, and then went to the edge of the platform and sniffed keenly. Finally, William turned a pair of regretful eyes up to Nelson Lee and gave an apologetic wag of his tail.

"Drawn blank!" muttered the detective regretfully. "This is bad, Nipper—very bad! I am afraid we have lost our man now."

"How absolutely rotten!" said Nipper, clenching his fists.

The ticket-collector was eyeing the pair and the dog curiously, and with a certain amount of suspicion. There were several people on the platform, too, and these were also greatly interested in the little scene.

"What's this?" demanded the collector. "What's the game?"

"The game, my man, is a man-hunt," replied Nelson Lee smoothly, "and I am very much afraid we have lost our quarry. How long is it since a train left this platform?"

The ticket-collector glanced at the clock.

"Forty minutes ago," he replied.

"H'm!—Just about the train Zingrave would have caught!" muttered Lee. "Was it a local train?" he added aloud. "Did it stop at every station?"

"Yes, sir. We don't get main line trains through here."

"Were there many passengers? I mean, did many people get in at this station?"

"Only a handful," replied the man. "But look here, mister——"

Nelson Lee drew the collector aside and spoke to him quietly for a few moments, and a couple of large silver coins were transferred from the detective's pocket into that of the railway official. He touched his cap at once and stiffened respectfully.

"Think carefully!" Nelson Lee said. "A great deal depends upon your memory. Exactly how many passengers were there, and give me their descriptions?"

The collector rubbed his hair.

"I'll do my best, Mr. Lee," he said. "Lemme see! I don't usually take much notice of folk, but I think I recollect most of them as went by that train. There was an old lady and a queer-lookin' kind of kid with her. And there was a courtin' couple, judgin' by their looks. And a short, thick-set man with a black beard, dressed in blue serge."

"Ah! He sounds likely!" said Nelson Lee. "Anybody else?"

"Yes, sir. There was an old gent, as far as I remember—a tall kind of bloke—and a couple of soldiers. Officers I think they was. Oh, yes! And a sailor, judgin' by the looks of him—a short, broad man, with a peaked cap. He asked me how long the train would be."

"Do you mean a naval officer?"

"Oh, no! Just a sailor," said the collector. "Looked like a bargee, or an officer off a tramp steamer. Dressed in blue reefer clothes, he was——"

"Blue reefers!" interjected Nipper eagerly. "That's him, guv'nor!"

"Wait, Nipper! Let us hear who else——"

"No more, sir," said the railwayman. "That's all, I think. There may have been one other, but I don't remember any more."

Nelson Lee drew Nipper aside.

"Out of all the travellers the collector mentioned, there are only two who could possibly be Professor Zingrave," he said. "The short, thick-set man in blue serge and the reefer-suited sailor. Hold William a moment, Nipper."

The detective went to the ticket-office, and returned in a few minutes.

"The booking-clerk is a smart young man," he exclaimed. "He remembers that the thick-set man booked for the next station, and vouchsafed the further information that the gentleman has undertaken the trip on past occasions. So we may as well dismiss him."

"What about the reefer——"

"The broad-shouldered sailor booked for a small village called Pelton, just past Staines. We may be on the wrong scent, young 'un, but I think it would be wise to run down to Pelton. It is a comparatively short distance, and there is a train in a few minutes."

Under the circumstances, there was nothing else to be done. Nelson Lee and Nipper boarded the train which presently steamed in, and William the Conqueror was hugely disgusted at being hustled off to the guard's van.

Pelton Station was a small place, and was reached in due course. No other passengers alighted except a middle-aged woman. Nelson Lee at once made William happy by rescuing him from the guard's van. The station was dimly lighted, and the platforms were of thick wood.

As the detective and Nipper were walking to the exit, their canine companion suddenly uttered a whining cry of excitement and sniffed eagerly at the ground. Then he nearly pulled Lee off his feet as he tugged at the leash.

"Hurrah!" ejaculated Nipper. "We're all right, guv'nor! Billy's picked up the scent again already! How ripping!"

There was no doubt about it. The dog had certainly hit the trail, and

Nelson Lee made no attempt to conceal his keen satisfaction. Professor Zingrave had passed out of this station less than an hour before. When he had donned that diving-suit, he little thought that he was providing his enemies with the means of tracking him to earth. It was splendid good-fortune.

In five minutes the trio were in the dark village street, William pulling away energetically. The scent was strong and practically untouched. There had been no traffic here to obliterate it.

It was by no means late, and Nelson Lee and Nipper passed more than one villager as they proceeded. The night was glorious, stars shining overhead and the air soft and warm. Apparently there had been a political meeting of some sort at the schoolroom, for Nelson Lee overheard one or two heated arguments where little knots of men were collected.

Soon, however, William the Conqueror turned out of the main street, and led his companions up a narrow country lane. Along this were occasional cottages on either side. After proceeding a couple of hundred yards, the dog quite suddenly turned abruptly to the left, and entered a half-open gateway. He pulled Nelson Lee up the short path, and came to a halt before the front door of a pretty little cottage.

"Quiet, boy—quiet!" murmured Nelson Lee softly, as William seemed inclined to display excitement.

The detective withdrew from the garden, and had some little difficulty in tugging the dog with him. A few yards away Nelson Lee and Nipper came to a halt. The cottage, they could see, was only small and was covered with ivy. In the front garden a short flagstaff had been erected.

"Run to earth!" murmured Nelson Lee. "Zingrave is in that cottage, Nipper! We have not seen him, and there are no lights there, but the fact is indisputable. Before acting, however, I should like to learn who is the actual occupier of the cottage."

"There's some chap standing across the road," Nipper suggested. "Suppose we ask him, guv'nor?"

Lee, knowing that the capture of Professor Zingrave was now only a matter of minutes, at once decided to take Nipper's advice. On the opposite side of the lane, a little distance away, a row of cottages stood. At the gate of one of these stood a figure, and a rather pungent smell of shag tobacco floated on the air.

The smoker proved to be an old countryman, and he was leaning on the gate contentedly. He regarded Nelson Lee and Nipper with interest.

"I'm waitin' for my George," he volunteered. "He's been to the meetin' up yonder, an' I reckon they've been havin' a fair argyment. He oughter been up home long since. Fine night, mister!"

"It is indeed," Nelson Lee replied. "I and my young friend are out for a walk, and I was just wondering who lived in that cottage opposite. It is a neat little building, and one of the most picturesque——"

"Oh, old Cap'n Martin lives there, sir!" interrupted the old man. "Nice old gent, he is. Been about these parts this two year come August. I was havin' a word with the cap'n not more than an hour gone."

"Have you been at this gate long?" asked Nipper keenly.

"Nigh two hour. I allus come to the gate on a fine evenin' for a last smoke," said the old fellow. "To-night I'm main late, bein' as I'm waitin' for my George. All the men-folk have been at the meetin'. I ain't seen a soul come this way 'cept the cap'n hisself. He went off to Lunnun this mornin' to greet an old shipmate of his who'd just come from furrin parts. The cap'n came back just under an hour ago."

Nelson Lee thoughtfully lit a cigar.

"Does the captain live alone?" he asked, as though casually interested.

"Allus alone, sir," said the old countryman. "I've never seed a man go inside his door, and I reckon I oughter know, seeing as I'm opp'sit, so to speak. No, master, Cap'n Martin never has no visitors."

"I think he had one to-night," said Nelson Lee quietly.

"That he never!" replied the old man, removing the clay from his mouth. "I ain't left this gate not since the meeting started, when George says good-bye to me. That was two hour ago. George oughter been back by now. I'll lay he's argyfyin' wi' some o' them——"

"But are you quite certain of this?" asked Nelson Lee, making no further attempts to appear carelessly interested. "I think, if you will use your memory, you will recollect that a man came from the station less than an hour ago and entered Captain Martin's cottage!"

"Right enough, sir; but that was the cap'n himself. Oh, I ain't makin' no mistake! He stopped and chatted with me for five minutes or more, and lit his pipe with one o' my matches, so he did. Then he went indoors."

Nelson Lee remained a few minutes longer, and then he and Nipper walked away. They halted, however, as soon as they had reached a spot within sight of the captain's cottage.

"Well, guv'nor, this is queer, isn't it?" remarked Nipper.

"Very queer, my boy! The facts are so contradictory," replied the detective. "I am inclined to believe the old countryman implicitly. But yet how can we reconcile ourselves to the situation? We know positively that Zingrave entered the cottage. The fact that William followed the trail there is sufficient proof of that. But our friend up the road declares that nobody entered except this old retired sea captain!"

"Can he be Zingrave, sir?"

"How is that possible, Nipper?" Nelson Lee countered. "This captain has lived here for two years, is well known, and was certainly in the village the day before yesterday. Zingrave, as we know, was in London at that time. Captain Martin cannot be Zingrave in a hidden identity. Yet one man only entered the cottage, and that man was the captain. We, however, have tracked Zingrave there. Moreover, if you will remember, the trail led right past that old countryman's gate. Everything points to William having followed this captain from the station. Can the dog have made a mistake?"

"Blessed if I know, sir!" said Nipper, rubbing his head. "It's a giddy puzzle! My hat! I wonder if Zingrave changed boots with this old captain in the train!"

Nelson Lee shook his head.

"Such an explanation is far too improbable," he answered. "No, my boy; I do not accept that theory. I am becoming firmly convinced that there is something very deep in this affair—something deeper than we have hitherto suspected."

CHAPTER VI.

Nelson Lee Decides—A Trick—A Mad Race—Vanished!

NELSON LEE was not long in making up his mind.

"There is nothing to be gained by hanging about here, indulging in idle conjecture," he said grimly. "We have proof, Nipper, that Zingrave is in that cottage. Whether he is connected with Captain Martin, or whether he is actually the captain himself, is of little consequence. Once we have the professor a prisoner, we can find out the facts later!"

"What's the programme, sir?" asked Nipper eagerly.

"The best thing is to strike at once," said the detective. "I have a

warrant for Professor Zingrave's arrest in my pocket, and I shall therefore be fully justified in acting drastically."

"But as soon as you knock, he'll suspect——"

"I have no intention of knocking. Wait here with William for a few moments."

Nelson Lee left Nipper's side and quietly walked up the road to the gateway of the cottage. Entering the little garden, he passed round to the rear, and was there confronted by a small lattice window. A subdued light was glowing within the room, and a cloth blind was three-parts drawn.

Stepping close, Nelson Lee peered into the room. He could see fairly distinctly all that was within. An oil lamp was standing upon a little table, burning none too brightly. Close beside it, with its back towards Nelson Lee, was an old-fashioned easy-chair. In this the detective could see the motionless figure of a man. A peaked cap was upon his head, and he was evidently reading or had dozed off. Nelson Lee thought it more probable that the captain was reading, for he was sure that the man was the cottage's owner.

As he watched there came a slight sound from the other end of the cottage, and Lee looked round sharply. But he could see nothing, and the sound was not repeated. He concluded that there were probably chickens or some pet animals in an outhouse.

Nevertheless, he determined to waste no further time.

In a few moments he was back with Nipper, and he softly told the lad to follow him. They entered the cottage garden quietly, and Lee took his revolver out and held it in readiness.

"Be prepared for any emergency, Nipper!" whispered the detective. "Zingrave is desperate, and he may make a dash. If so, loose the dog. William will very soon bring the professor to a standstill!"

Nelson Lee placed his hand upon the latch of the rear door, and found that the door opened readily. A small kitchen was before him, and a gleam of light from beneath a door to the left was sufficient to guide him.

The detective strode forward boldly, making no attempt now to conceal his movements. He flung the inner door wide open, and burst into the lighted room. The thought struck him, as he did so, that he would have blundered absurdly if he found the sole occupant of the house to be an innocent old sea-captain. A few words of explanation, however, would soon set matters right.

But Nelson Lee paused as he entered the lighted room.

Everything was quiet. Right before him sat a figure in blue reefer clothes, exactly as he had seen from the window. But the man was motionless, and a handkerchief covered his face, the hem of it being tucked under his peaked cap.

"By James," muttered Nelson Lee, "what has happened here?"

There was something unnatural about the pose of the figure, and Lee was instantly filled with suspicions. The man was so motionless, too—so deadly still. In that second the detective was convinced that he was in the presence of a dead man.

With a sharp intake of breath, he stepped forward and lifted the handkerchief. Then he gasped amazedly.

"Tricked!" he roared. "Nipper, look at this! James, what a ruse!"

Nipper hurried into the room, and he, too, stood open-mouthed with astonishment, for the figure in the chair was a dummy!

It was a stuffed suit of clothes, and the hands were hanging down over the arms of the chair so that they would not be noticeable. They were merely gloves! There had been no attempt to place a mask where the face should

have been. The handkerchief had been sufficient to hide the ball of paper which served as the head.

"Great Scott!" gasped Nipper. "What does it mean, sir?"

Nelson Lee had picked up one of the boots, and he had been examining it.

"These boots are the ones which Zingrave himself wore!" he exclaimed tensely. "See, Nipper, there is still a trace of that solution upon the instep, where it did not come in contact with the ground. By James, what a trick!"

"But what does it mean, guv'nor?" repeated the lad.

"It means that Professor Zingrave has slipped away again," replied the detective. "How on earth he got wind of our presence I do not know, but he evidently did. One thing is certain, he cannot have got far."

"But if they are his boots, the ones he was wearing, William can't track him any more!" exclaimed Nipper blankly.

"That is what I was thinking. This is most disconcerting, Nipper! I am convinced now that Zingrave is actually Captain Martin—or was made up to exactly resemble him. I wish I knew the precise truth! Zingrave evidently made elaborate preparations, but suddenly took fright."

Had Nelson Lee known what these preparations were, he would have been astonished at the professor's forethought.

It had, indeed, been Zingrave who had spoken with the old countryman at the gate, but he was the exact double of Captain Martin, so the aged cottager was hardly to be blamed for having been so emphatic.

The whole thing was a carefully thought out scheme of the professor's. Years before he had made preparations for an emergency such as this. He knew very well that the League of the Green Triangle would collapse some day, and he had accordingly made early provision for the safety of his own skin.

The plan was complete to the last detail.

Captain Martin was a confederate of Zingrave's, although he had taken no active part in the league work. His existence, in fact, was unknown to another soul in the league with the exception of Zingrave himself.

Martin had come to live in this village for one reason. That reason was to establish an identity for the professor when the latter would have necessity to seek one. Zingrave had, at periodical intervals, met the supposed captain, and had disguised himself so as to exactly resemble his colleague. Then, when the time came, he had donned his make-up with the greatest ease and with amazing accuracy. Side by side, there would have been no difference between Zingrave and Captain Martin.

That morning Martin had journeyed to London. Arriving there, he had shaved off his beard and moustache and had dyed his hair. Attired in ordinary clothes, he had become a totally different man.

And Zingrave, emerging from his secret retreat, had gone down to the village at night, all by prearrangement. He was now Captain Martin. He had been primed up on every point, and intended taking up the captain's life at the moment the real Martin left it off.

Thus Zingrave vanished off the face of the earth. Who could possibly suspect this old retired deep-sea skipper of being the escaped Chief of the Green Triangle? It was not as though the captain had just appeared in the village. He had been there two years! The police would never have suspected the trick. Even Nelson Lee himself would have been completely floored.

But merely because of that repair to the diving-suit the detective had been able to track the professor accurately, and all the plans were upset.

The whole elaborate scheme was rendered useless.

Zingrave had been confident of safety the moment he reached the cottag

Once there he would be able to rest and to make future plans. He had escaped from the garden in Grosvenor Square, and had congratulated himself that everything was perfectly in order.

Then the shock had come.

He had been at the front window of his cottage, looking out on to the road. As a matter of fact, he was watching for a boy who had been told to bring some groceries to the house. Zingrave had done this so as to make his presence in the village that night an established fact.

But he had seen Nelson Lee and Nipper and the hound come up the path and halt at the front door. Instantly all Professor Zingrave's self-satisfaction left him, and he was intensely alarmed.

His fury was terrible. Just at the moment of success, when he had shaken off the last chance of pursuit, he knew that his position was more dangerous than ever! The shock was a stunning one.

But Zingrave, despite his anger and alarm, was equal to the occasion.

Seeing Nelson Lee talking to the old countryman, he guessed that the detective was making inquiries, and so he had made hurried preparations for instant departure.

But he wished to delay pursuit as long as possible.

Very shrewdly he guessed that Nelson Lee would come and make quiet investigations before acting, and if the detective saw his quarry quietly seated in a chair, he would be in no particular hurry.

It was evident to Zingrave that the dog had tracked him. So accordingly he removed his boots, and discovered the reason for the ease with which he had been trailed. It had been the work of a few moments to fake up the dummy figure.

Then Zingrave fled—fled to the station, for he knew that there was a train to London almost at once. He reckoned on being able to catch the train and be well on his way before Nelson Lee discovered the trick.

At this moment the professor had no idea of vengeance. To remain would be to court disaster. He did not know how many companions Lee had. Possibly there were police officers not far off.

To flee!

That was the most urgent necessity. Revenge could come later, at a more opportune time. It would be of small consolation to Zingrave if he killed Nelson Lee and was captured himself.

In spite of his downfall, the professor still had gigantic plans for the future, and he was resolved to escape.

Any other man would probably have given up in sheer exhaustion. But Professor Zingrave was a most remarkable man. He would never admit defeat. He had given his pursuers the slip so far, and he would finally give them the slip altogether.

And so he fled. Nelson Lee had actually heard him getting out of a little side window, but the detective had thought nothing of the slight sound. There had been no cause for him to suspect the actual truth.

The detective and Nipper, faced with the stunning truth, rapidly recovered themselves, and set about the task of finding out what had become of their quarry. A search of the house was barren of result. The cottage was empty, and there was no clue to show how Zingrave had left.

"We must hurry to the station, young 'un!" said Nelson Lee crisply, after five precious minutes had been wasted. "There may be a train almost at once. There are frequent trains on this suburban line."

"But do you think——"

"We have no time to think!" rapped out Lee. "Zingrave had smelt a rat, and the most likely thing is that he has rushed for a train, relying on my not discovering the trick until too late."

The detective had hit upon the professor's actual plan, and he and Nipper and William the Conqueror rushed to the railway-station at the double. But when they arrived they were met with another set-back.

A train was even then steaming out of the station!

As they hurried on to the platform the rear lights of the train were disappearing into the gloom of the night. Nelson Lee clenched his fists, and turned to the solitary porter, who was on the platform.

"Where is that train bound for?" he asked sharply.

"London, sir. You'll have to wait another hour now——"

Nelson Lee did not wait any longer. He turned abruptly and ran into the booking-office, leaving the latter part of the porter's sentence unheard. The detective could not afford to be courteous at a time like this.

"Do you know if Captain Martin travelled by the train which has just left?" he demanded of the booking-clerk.

"Why, yes, sir," replied the man promptly. "Captain Martin did go on that train. He took a ticket for London."

Nelson Lee set his teeth, and Nipper looked at his master in a helpless kind of way. By a few seconds only they had lost their quarry again. They had proof, now, that the supposed captain was none other than Professor Zingrave.

"Tell me, what stations does that train stop at before it reaches London?" he asked, turning to the ticket-hole again.

"No stations at all. It's a fast——"

"What time is it due in?" rapped Lee.

When the clerk stated the time at which the train would steam into the London terminus Nelson Lee consulted his watch, and then turned abruptly to Nipper. The pair hastened out of the station, William the Conqueror running contentedly beside Nipper.

"There is a chance—a faint chance!" said the great detective tensely. "The train does not stop before it arrives at the terminus, and therefore Zingrave will have no opportunity of leaving the train. Judging by the time at which it arrives, the train is not a very fast one, and we may—with exceptional luck—get there ahead of him."

"Why, what the dickens——" Nipper broke off. "We can't walk to London, guv'nor!"

But Nelson Lee already had a plan in mind; a really desperate plan. A couple of hundred yards from the station, outside a large house, he had seen a low, racing motor-car. Two military officers had been climbing out of it, evidently with the intention of entering the house.

And now as Nelson Lee and Nipper came within sight of the car, they saw that it was unattended, and that the lights were burning. The engine, too, was softly throbbing in motion.

"Jump in, Nipper!" said Lee curtly.

"But, my goodness, we can't pinch this——"

"Zingrave is escaping!" declared the detective. "By using this car there is a faint hope that we may arrive in time. The train only left two minutes ago, and the road is much shorter than the rail—several miles shorter, for the railway takes a roundabout route. Desperate emergencies need desperate measures!"

Without another word, but excited and breathless, Nipper hopped into the seat beside his master, and the powerful car jerked into motion as Nelson Lee slipped in the clutch and opened the throttle. William the Conqueror squatted at Nipper's feet.

In a few seconds the car was roaring along at high speed. What the unfortunate officers thought Nelson Lee did not pause to consider. His

action in appropriating the car was rather high-handed—but the situation fully warranted the liberty.

Telegraphing, the detective knew, would be worse than useless. For Zingrave would be on the alert, and would instantly take alarm once he saw that the railway detectives were on the look out. Nelson Lee was quite positive, in fact, that Zingrave would easily give the railway officials the slip. It would be infinitely better to have no alarm given, but to be at the terminus personally and surprise Zingrave as he was emerging.

It was a mad ride. The car was a very fast one, and Nelson Lee threw precaution to the winds and hurled the automobile along at a pace which would have been appalling under ordinary circumstances.

But a finer motor-driver than Nelson Lee did not exist, and where other men would have met with disaster he did not even come near to it. He took chances frequently, and more than once only averted a serious accident by sheer skill and dexterity of driving. But every second was of vital importance.

Not one man in a hundred would have thought of such an expedient at this. But Nelson Lee would offer profuse apologies and a full explanation to the car's owner after he had achieved his object.

Whether he arrived at the London terminus ahead of the train depended upon luck more than anything else. It could be done, but with only a margin of a few seconds. The train, although a non-stop, was only a local one after all, and its speed did not exceed more than thirty miles an hour at any point of its journey. Moreover, the road was shorter, for the railway made a detour.

On several occasions police-constables signalled to the roaring car to come to a standstill. But Nelson Lee took no notice of any of these summonses. Possibly he would be forced to pay a fine later on, but if he captured Zingrave the money would be well spent—and, in any case, it was only a detail.

At last, after a breathless journey, the car turned into the big yard of the London terminus. It was getting late now, and the city streets had been deserted save for motor-buses and taxis.

Bidding Nipper remain in the car with the dog, Nelson Lee ran swiftly into the station. Even as he was doing so the train he had raced was just entering the platform. It had been terribly close, but Lee had beaten the train by a few seconds.

But the famous detective drew a complete blank.

His exciting race had been futile. For not one of the passengers who alighted from the train resembled Professor Zingrave in the slightest degree. Nelson Lee was closely on the alert for any fresh ruse, for he thought it more than probable that the professor would change his disguise on the way up.

Every passenger, however, was of such build and character that it was a sheer impossibility for Zingrave to be hidden amongst them. And Lee learned the explanation shortly afterwards.

Upon inquiry he found that the train had been nearly pulled up when nearing London owing to a slight block on the line. Professor Zingrave, without a doubt, had seized that opportunity to leave the train—an opportunity which had presented itself unexpectedly and by sheer luck.

It was a bitter disappointment for the great crime investigator. After all the excitement of the evening the master-criminal had slipped away, and not a single trace could be discovered as to his movements.

CHAPTER VII.

Lennard's News—A Matter of Deduction.

DOUGLAS CLIFFORD knocked the ash from his cigarette and gazed thoughtfully out of the window of Nelson Lee's consulting-room. Nipper turned the pages of a newspaper over and pretended to read. There was a tenseness in the atmosphere which was far from comfortable.

Nelson Lee himself was pacing the room with short strides. A frown marred his brow, and he suddenly came to a standstill before Clifford.

"I have done everything!" he exclaimed bitterly. "Professor Zingrave has utterly vanished. And yet last night he escaped me only by the merest of flukes. I was on his track the whole time. But now he has got clean away, without leaving a trace."

"Don't put yourself out, Lee," said Clifford concernedly. "It's perfectly rotten, I know, but Zingrave is a clever scoundrel, and all the luck was with him. In the long run, however, he will be tripped."

"It is impossible to tell what his plans are—that is the galling part of it," went on the detective. "He may be hiding in London, or in the provinces, or he may try to leave England. The police have spread their net in every direction, but I have no faith in it. An ordinary criminal would have no chance of escape, but Zingrave is no ordinary criminal——"

The door suddenly burst open and Detective-inspector Lennard strode into the consulting-room. It was easily to be seen that the Scotland Yard man was excited. Evidently he had brought important news.

"We've got him, Lee!" he exclaimed exultantly.

Nelson Lee, Nipper, and Clifford started round.

"Got him!" cried Clifford. "By Jove, that's splendid! How on earth did you manage to lay him by the heels?"

"Acting on your advice, I at once instituted the most searching inquiries," said the inspector, turning to his unofficial colleague. "I have learned that three days ago a passage was booked in the Atlantic liner, *Magnolia*, for New York. The passenger's name was Captain Martin, and the liner sailed soon after dawn this morning. By wireless we have found out that the captain arrived just before sailing time, in a very exhausted condition, and having evidently travelled through the night."

Clifford's eyes sparkled.

"Of course, this Captain Martin is Zingrave himself—we know that, Lee," he said. "Either he or a confederate booked the passage, and Zingrave thought it a wise policy to get straight out of England. Of course, he'll be detained in New York and sent back to England for trial."

Nelson Lee did not appear to be very jubilant.

"H'm! It is something, at all events," he commented.

"Something!" echoed Detective-inspector Lennard, with a stare. "Why, Zingrave can't possibly escape now. The captain of the liner has already been instructed by wireless to have 'Martin' placed under observation. Zingrave was desperate, and acted rashly. Probably he thought that by leaving England boldly in the guise of the old retired mariner he would escape successfully by sheer audacity."

"But Zingrave wouldn't be such a fat-headed ass as all that!" said Nipper bluntly. "He knew that the gov'nor and I had twigged his new identity, and——"

"You have no actual proof that Captain Martin is Professor Zingrave," put in the inspector. "He relied upon that fact to see him through, meaning to bluff it out if any trouble arose. We all know that Zingrave has cheek enough for anything."

Nelson Lee shook his head.

"Nipper is right," he said quietly. "Moreover, if we have no actual proof of the fact that Captain Martin and Zingrave are one and the same person, we shall very soon obtain it. There is something about last night's affair that I can't quite get the hang off. But the professor has a confederate—the man who has lived in Pelton for two years—and this confederate is the man now bound for the United States."

"Why," cried Lennard, "what do you mean to——"

"My dear fellow, I don't wish to belittle your really sparkling intelligence, but surely you can see that Zingrave would not make such a fatal blunder," said Nelson Lee smoothly. "The trick is too obvious, although quite clever enough to be swallowed by the police. Really, Lennard, I am surprised at you. Zingrave is too cute to act in such a way. While you are centring your attention upon this 'Captain Martin' Zingrave himself is making himself scarce in quite another direction."

Lennard flushed somewhat.

"I hadn't looked at that aspect, I'll confess," he admitted uncomfortably. "But surely——"

"Your news, however, is very welcome," interjected Nelson Lee. "It has suggested a possible line of inquiry to me. Let us consider the facts. This confederate of Zingrave's has taken the trip to America in order to give the professor breathing space; in order to centre the attention of the police upon the Magnolia. What would Zingrave probably do? He would get out of England by another boat, travelling to a totally different quarter of the world."

"That's possible, of course," Lennard agreed. "But how are we to make inquiries? We don't know how Zingrave is disguised, or what preparations he has made. It seems to me that he's too clever for us."

"There are two trivial clues," the detective said. "No, I won't tell you what they are at the present moment. If I am successful, it will be a long shot; but there is a chance. Throw over that 'Times,' Nipper."

Nelson Lee cast his eye down the shipping announcements.

"By James! A mail-steamer left Southampton about an hour ago bound for Australia," he exclaimed. "It's the only vessel leaving British shores this week-end. If my theory is correct, Zingrave is on that boat."

"But how will you inquire, gov'nor?" asked Nipper. "Zingrave will be disguised——"

"Exactly. But if I describe certain features of his disguise, and the shipping clerk verifies my statements, I think we can be fairly assured that we have located our man," said Lee calmly. "You wonder how I can possibly know what Zingrave's disguise will be like? Well, let us hurry along to Fenchurch Street and put my plan to the test."

In a very short time Nelson Lee and Detective-inspector Lennard were interviewing the clerk in the offices of a large shipping firm. The clerk stated, in answer to an inquiry of Lee's, that he had been on duty all the morning."

"The liner, Andromeda, sailed a short while ago," went on the detective. "Can you tell me if a passage was booked in the boat this morning?"

"Yes," said the clerk, at once. "There was one gentleman booked a suite as soon as this office opened. It is not usual that bookings are left until so late, but it so happened that the suite—a most exclusive saloon suite—was booked by the Earl of Ramsdale, and cancelled at the last moment."

"And a stranger came in this morning—probably a foreigner—and paid spot cash for the berth?"

"Yes, a Frenchman, I think. I'll tell you his name."

Nelson Lee shot a keen glance as the clerk looked up the name of the supposed Frenchman.

"The Comte de Lemerre," said the shipping clerk.

"Thank you. And now," went on Nelson Lee, "can you satisfy me upon two points? Number one. Did you notice anything strange about the count's gait when he walked?"

"He limped slightly, if that's what you mean," replied the other. "Yes, he certainly limped. There was something wrong with his right foot."

"Excellent!" murmured Lee. "And now for the second point. The Comte de Lemerre, of course, wore a collar. What kind of collar was it?"

The clerk stared for a moment, and then smiled.

"Evidently you know the French gentleman, Mr. Lee," he exclaimed. "His collar was strikingly high. I do not think I have seen such an absurdly high collar for a long time. The thing stuck right up into his chin."

"Both points home!" said Nelson Lee quietly. "I thank you very much. Come, Lennard, we need waste no further time. Professor Zingrave," he added, when they were outside, "is on board the liner *Andromeda*, bound for Australia, and masquerading under the name of the Comte de Lemerre."

Detective-inspector Lennard gasped.

"Are you a wizard, Lee?" he exclaimed blankly. "How on earth did you know that there was something wrong with Zingrave's foot, and that he wore an excessively high collar? The professor always wore low collars!"

Nelson Lee smiled.

He had, as a matter of fact, arrived at his conclusions by two perfectly simple but decidedly ingenious deductions. The previous night, while examining the boots which Zingrave had left in the little cottage, Lee had noticed that a sharp nail was sticking up in the heel—probably it had worked up during Zingrave's walk through the West End. There were traces of blood upon the nail, proving that the professor's heel had been pierced. Accordingly, it was fairly obvious that by this morning the slight injury would pain Zingrave somewhat and compel him to limp.

The second point was rather more subtle, but even more important. Nipper, in his brief struggle with Zingrave on the edge of the lake, had clutched at his assailant's throat. The lad positively declared that he had scratched the professor's neck rather severely. Nelson Lee had found out that while disguised as Captain Martin, the master-criminal had worn a muffler—obviously to hide the wound. But, Lee argued, Zingrave would certainly not conceal his injury by the same method when he adopted a new disguise. That he would hide it, the detective was sure. But how? There could be only one way, and that was by wearing a collar of excessive height.

Detective-inspector Lennard was astonished at the explanation, but readily agreed that it was positive proof. The matter of the high collar alone was quite sufficient evidence that the Comte de Lemerre was none other than Professor Cyrus Zingrave.

But what was the next step to be?

CHAPTER VIII.

Desperate to the Last—The Volcano—The End of Zingrave—Finis.

BATAVIA, the capital of the Island of Java, lay bathed in glorious sunshine. The heat was rather oppressive, and the sky had rather a molten-gold appearance. Many of the oldest inhabitants of Batavia declared that they had never experienced such a curious phenomenon before. The weather was altogether unusual.

Under the awning of a large steam-yacht in the harbour sat a small group of people. They were, as a matter of fact, Nelson Lee, Nipper, Douglas Clifford, and Vera Zingrave. In addition, Lord and Lady Cantyre were present.

A good deal had happened, and several weeks had passed since that morning when Nelson Lee and Detective-inspector Lennard had made inquiries at the shipping office in Fenchurch Street.

Nelson Lee had decided that it would only be possible to capture Zingrave by arresting him personally. To leave it in the hands of foreign—or Colonial—authorities would be to run the risk of allowing the professor to escape altogether. Moreover, Nelson Lee was not at all averse to a long sea trip. After the great campaign against the league it was just what he and Nipper wanted to brace themselves up for fresh work. Douglas Clifford and Vera, too, elected to take the trip, in order to forget the miseries of the past.

Therefore, it was for two excellent reasons that the famous detective had undertaken the journey. He and Nipper would get a splendid holiday, and the capture of Professor Zingrave would be assured. For, having no suspicion of coming danger, Zingrave would be off his guard.

It had so happened that Lord and Lady Cantyre were starting on a trip to the East Indies the very day following the departure of the liner *Andromeda*. Nelson Lee was well acquainted with Lord Cantyre and had approached him without delay. There was no other vessel sailing for Australia for many days, and so Nelson Lee put a proposition before the peer.

His yacht was a fast one, and it would be easily possible to arrive at Batavia ahead of the liner which carried Zingrave as a passenger—for the *Andromeda* called at Batavia en route for Australia.

Lord Cantyre was rather struck by the sporting nature of the proposition, and readily assented. Moreover, he invited Clifford and Vera to accompany them on the trip.

The voyage had been uneventful except for a rather severe storm in the Indian Ocean. The yacht had dropped anchor in the harbour at dawn that day, and it was eminently satisfactory to Nelson Lee to know that the *Andromeda* was not due until the late afternoon. But for that storm the yacht would have arrived a clear day ahead.

Having been in wireless communication with many ships at various points, the detective had known exactly how the chase was progressing. And now it merely remained for him to board the liner as soon as she anchored, and to quietly and formally effect the arrest of Professor Zingrave. Nelson Lee was quite sure that the infamous criminal would receive the biggest shock of his life.

"I think it is quite safe to say that our campaign is now at an end, my dear Clifford," remarked Nelson Lee, laying back in a deck chair and sipping an iced drink. "To-day will see the Green Triangle's chief arrested, and he will be conducted back to England with all speed. That he will be ultimately hanged is, of course, certain."

"And I shall not grieve in the least," put in Vera Zingrave quietly. "The professor may have been my stepfather, but he was so coldblooded and

murderous that the world will be cleaner and sweeter when he has gone. Oh, I wish it were all over now!"

"Don't worry your head, little girl," said Clifford quietly. "There will be no hitch to-day, you may be assured."

But the young man had no suspicion of the exciting events which were to happen before Professor Zingrave went to his last account. In some respects the final scenes in the great drama of the Green Triangle were to be the most appalling and terrible of all.

It was towards evening when the 15,000-ton liner *Andromeda* was sighted. The heat was now more oppressive than ever, and although the sky was cloudless, it had assumed a coppery hue which caused many misgivings among the inhabitants of Java—both European and native.

Nelson Lee wished to get his unpleasant task over as soon as possible, and as soon as the *Andromeda* dropped anchor he and Clifford and Nipper started off in a small motor-boat, in order to be the first to arrive. The detective meant to give Zingrave no opportunity of landing.

The sides of the great ship were alive with passengers when the trio clambered up the gangway and went aboard. Nelson Lee at once approached the chief officer, and learned that the man calling himself the Comte de Lemerre was in his cabin, slightly indisposed. The detective was in no way prepared for the dramatic incident which occurred a few moments later.

Professor Zingrave, as a matter of fact, had been idly gazing from the window of his state-room as the liner came to anchor. He had seen the motor-boat approaching, and had gazed at its occupants through his binoculars. With awful force the blow struck him. The new-comers were Nelson Lee, Nipper, and Clifford!

Strangely enough, Zingrave did not fly into a rage. He turned pale, and remained deadly calm. Nelson Lee had dogged his footsteps for months past, and now, when he deemed himself to be perfectly safe and utterly unrecognisable in a new identity, it was suddenly brought home to him that his hours of freedom were numbered. Zingrave knew at once that the famous detective had crossed the world for one purpose only.

And the professor thought rapidly and intensely. He saw the motor-boat grind against the gangway, which was almost beneath his own porthole. A desperate scheme entered the professor's mind, and he lost no time in putting it into execution. At any second he expected his state-room to be entered and to find himself confronted by Nelson Lee.

But there was a chance—a bare chance. Even if it only delayed the fatal hour for a few days it mattered not. Zingrave was a man who never admitted defeat. While there was the slightest possibility of freedom he would not throw up the sponge.

He saw that the motor-boat was floating placidly on the smooth sea a good distance below him, and many feet to the right. He knew very well that if he attempted to go on deck he would be stopped at once.

But here—here was a way of escape!

Without the slightest hesitation the desperate man climbed through the porthole and took a neat header into the blue water. He did not know whether sharks infested these waters—he did not even give the possibility a thought. In any case he would only remain in the water for a few seconds.

He struck the surface of the sea with an astounding splash which instantly attracted attention from the deck above. Then, with a few powerful strokes, he reached the motor-boat and clambered in with the agility of a monkey.

Any second might mean failure, and so Zingrave wasted no time. He heard shouts from above, and an officer slithered down the gangway. The

next moment the man dropped like a log as Zingrave fiercely attacked him and struck him down with the butt end of a revolver.

By the time Nelson Lee and Nipper were half-way down the gangway the motor-boat was speeding away from the ship's side and making straight off for the shore.

The detective was furious. He had not anticipated such a dramatic incident as this. It was altogether absurd, and Nelson Lee muttered many uncomplimentary things regarding Zingrave, under his breath. The pig-headed obstinacy of the professor was amazing. Surely he was able to realise that escape was hopeless now!

The motor-boat was not making for the town. Zingrave knew perfectly well that he would be made prisoner the very instant he set foot on shore—for the alarm would be signalled. Accordingly he steered parallel with the shore, intending to land at some remote spot along the coast. Once ashore he would be able to hide, and would possibly devise some fresh plan of escape.

But his hopes of getting clean away before Nelson Lee could come in pursuit were doomed to disappointment, for, after he had covered a considerable distance of the glassy water, he observed, on looking back, a large motor-launch speeding from the liner's side.

The launch had been floated with all possible haste, and it was a much faster boat than the one in which Zingrave was fleeing. Very soon he knew that he was being quickly overhauled.

It was obvious that the chase could not continue for long. If Zingrave stuck to the motor-boat, he would be captured in a very short time. Accordingly he made straight for the shore at a point where he could see no buildings—only green trees were visible, luxuriant tropical vegetation.

The professor made no attempt to stop the motor-boat. The little vessel drove ashore and grounded heavily. In a moment he had leapt out and raced up the beach with surprising agility. Quite close behind he could hear shouts, and knew that his pursuers were hard on his track.

He broke through the trees with grim desperation. Very soon he found that he was passing through a well-cultivated plantation. Away in the distance, hills arose on the skyline. But something about half a mile ahead of him caused Zingrave to gain fresh hope.

He could see a small, old-fashioned locomotive standing upon an embankment. The engine was stationary, and unattached to any train. Steam was issuing lazily from the safety-valve, and the native driver was leaning out of his cab.

As the professor ran, he glanced behind him, and saw three figures bursting through a belt of trees. With renewed efforts, Zingrave pressed on. He was panting heavily, his face was streaming with perspiration, and his clothes were disarranged.

As he ran, he made up his mind what to do. He mounted the embankment with rapid strides, and panted up to the stationary locomotive. At the foot of the embankment he had picked up a heavy stone, and now he hurled this at the engine-driver with all his strength. It struck the man full upon the forehead, and he fell out of his cab without a cry. Being a native, his skull was probably thick, and he was doubtless merely stunned.

But Zingrave leapt upon the engine and pulled the throttle over. The small locomotive started forward, with many snorts and grunts, and rattled away down the narrow-gauge lines. As it disappeared round the curve, the pursuers burst upon the scene.

"The man is amazing!" panted Nelson Lee. "His resource knows no limit, and he is ready for any emergency!"

"The infernal blackguard!" gasped Clifford furiously. "Why the deuce can't he give in like a man?"

The necessity of the moment, however, was to find some means of pursuit. And this was easily obtained, as it turned out. A short distance away was a tiny station, and here a small train was waiting against the so-called platform. Many natives were grouped about it, all staring in the direction of the Britishers.

Nelson Lee had seen that the light engine had been standing on a siding, and Zingrave had evidently had to slow down some little distance away in order to shift the points so that his quaint vehicle could reach the main track.

Nelson Lee, Nipper, and Clifford hastened to the station, and the detective rapidly explained the situation. After a short delay, all the passengers were turned off the train, and the chase began afresh.

The engine was only a tiny one, and there was no room for the trio of Britishers. So they climbed aboard the first open-sided coach, Lee instructing the driver to send his train forward with every inch of speed safety allowed.

It was one of the most exciting races Nelson Lee had ever experienced. The driver took the detective at his word, and, indeed, sent the train roaring over the rails at a speed which was positively dangerous. Perhaps it was the promise of a handsome reward which caused the man to take these risks. But Zingrave, too, was desperate. And his desperation was of a totally different character from that of his pursuers. He was almost mad now—mad with cold rage and foiled hopes.

His engine rattled and roared along the uneven track with all the fury of a demon. In some miraculous way, the locomotive kept to the rails. The scenery on both sides during that mad journey was magnificent and wonderful. But the professor saw nothing of it. His whole attention was centred upon the line directly ahead.

It seemed as though hours had passed before he saw any sign of pursuit. The evening was drawing in, but upon looking round after traversing a long, straight stretch Zingrave clearly saw the pursuing train.

He set his teeth grimly and looked ahead again. The line disappeared into a thick belt of trees. A curve, sharp and dangerous, was just beyond. He knew quite well that his engine would never negotiate it in safety. He applied the brakes with promptitude, and shut the throttle. Before the locomotive came to a standstill, Zingrave had leapt off and plunged into the trees beside the track.

And that which he had hoped for took place. The pursuing train came thundering along, but even the promise of a huge reward was not sufficient for the driver to proceed round that bend without applying the brakes. The man intended taking a certain amount of risk, but not to absolutely court disaster.

As the train neared the bend, Nelson Lee, who was standing upon the foot-board, uttered a hoarse cry. He had seen Zingrave's form pelting up a hill adjoining the line some distance ahead. And the detective knew at once that a catastrophe was almost inevitable. The train would certainly crash into the stationary engine.

"Jump!" roared Nelson Lee.

Long grass grew beside the track, and the train was slowing down even at that second. The trio leapt off almost at the same moment, and rolled in the grass like so many shot rabbits. The ground was soft, however, and the speed had not been very excessive. As they picked themselves up, bruised but whole, a dull crash came to their ears. It was caused by the two engines colliding.

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"My stars!" gasped Nipper. "We're having a fine time, guv'nor!"

Even as he spoke, his words were drowned by three terrific reports, which proceeded from a point apparently a mile or two away. It sounded as though fifty heavy naval guns had been fired at the same second. The ground shook and quivered.

The trio gazed round in amazement, and were instantly aware of a lurid glare from the hill. As they watched the glare grew more pronounced, and a vast column of fire could be seen shooting up into the sky. A further awful report sounded, and the fire shot higher towards the clouds.

"Good heavens," exclaimed Nelson Lee, with a sound of awe in his voice—"a volcano! An eruption has just broken out over yonder!"

Nipper and Clifford could scarcely speak; but they all three wasted no further time, and rushed off after Zingrave. The professor's capture was of far more importance than watching the eruption of a volcano.

Believing his pursuers to have been involved in the train smash, Zingrave had made for open ground, and could be seen clambering up the grassy side of a hill half a mile distant. It was an awe-inspiring spectacle. The sky above was blood-red with reflected fire, and the solid earth was trembling violently.

Seemingly quite close, the volcano was pouring forth streams of red-hot lava, and the whole mountain-top was on fire. Ear-splitting detonations boomed upon the air like the continuous firing of heavy-calibre guns. It was now almost impossible to walk, for the earth was trembling so fearfully.

The hill upon which Zingrave could be seen was actually a lower slope of the volcano. As Nelson Lee and his companions paused, they saw him standing, clear-cut against the livid glare in the background. The eruption had taken place with such stunning abruptness that the famous detective hardly knew what to do.

Fate, however, decided for him.

They all saw Zingrave start forward, and he disappeared behind a pile of boulders. Nipper took a step forward over the quivering ground, but Nelson Lee held him back.

"We must not venture forward, my lad!" shouted the detective in order to make himself heard. "The eruption is growing worse, and we are even now in a position of great peril!"

They stood watching for several minutes. It seemed hours to them, but they were held by an invisible force, gazing upon the awful spectacle. Then, without warning, the whole top of the mountain seemed to vanish into a thousand particles. The blood-red glare became as vivid as lightning, and a series of reports followed which caused their noses to spurt with blood.

High up into the air millions of tons of white-hot lava were projected, and down the mountainside, right towards them, a great river of the molten mass was plunging with a diabolical roar.

"Back for our lives!" shouted Nelson Lee desperately.

As they staggeringly retreated, they saw the masses of lava pouring down the mountain, and in less than

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two minutes the spot where Zingrave had been standing was covered—every inch of it—by the awful liquid fire! The professor must have perished instantaneously.

As Nelson Lee and his companions fled, they could picture Professor Zingrave being overtaken by the white-hot floods. It was a ghastly picture, and they preferred not to think of it.

But the chase was ended. The master-criminal was wiped out of existence.

The volcano was one of the worst ever experienced in Java. Several hundred natives met their deaths that awful night. Right until dawn the explosions followed one another in rapid succession, and thousands of acres of land were devastated.

Nelson Lee, Nipper, and Clifford reached the railway line successfully. Tearing along this with every ounce of speed they were capable of, they finally reached the spot beyond the danger zone, their throats parched and their brains numbed by the awful fumes with which the air was filled. They were compelled to remain in a native hut during that night; but the following day they returned to the yacht, much to the intense relief of Vera and their host and hostess. A week later, after the great disaster was all over, the steam yacht left Java. Nelson's Lee's mission was accomplished, but he had no prisoner. Professor Zingrave had answered to a higher tribunal.

By the time England was reached once more, the horror of that awful night was nearly forgotten. The party was an extremely merry one, and Nelson Lee and Nipper promised to be present at a very interesting ceremony which was due to take place a month afterwards.

By that time the famous detective was sternly in harness again, but he and Nipper made time to travel down to a pretty country village and to be present at the wedding of Douglas Clifford and Vera Zingrave.

It was a quiet wedding, but all the more delightful because of that.

No mention was made that day of Professor Zingrave and the once-dreaded League of the Green Triangle. Those pages of the past were cast into oblivion. The future was a happy one for the bride and bridegroom.

And Nelson Lee confidentially whispered to Nipper that he had never seen such a truly beautiful bride as Vera—a remark with which Nipper heartily agreed.

THE END.

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