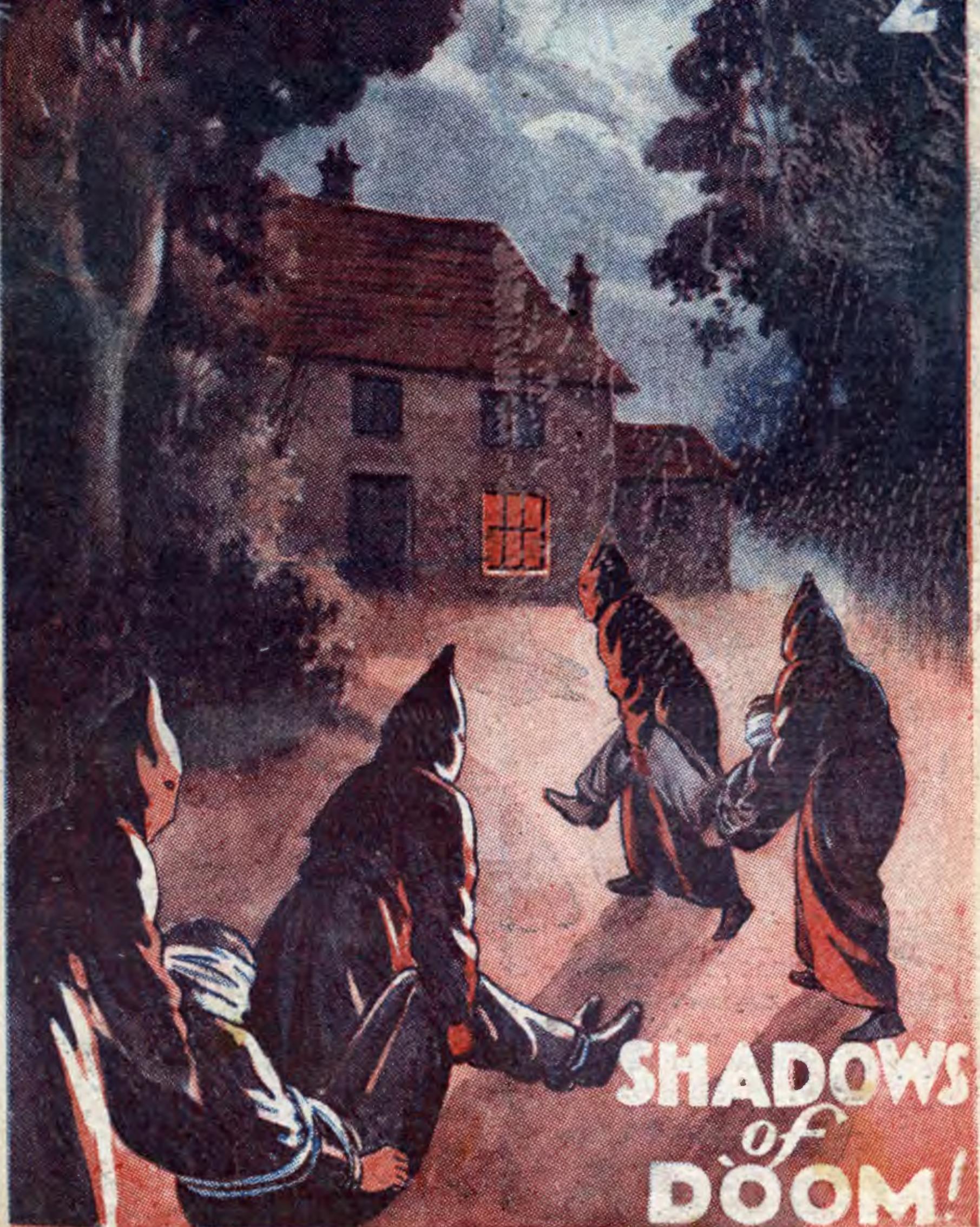


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SHADOWS
of
DOOM!

New Series No. 119.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

April 30th, 1932.

SHADOWS



CHAPTER 1.

Professor Zingrave's Boast!

“**W**ITHIN a week from to-day Nelson Lee will be dead, and I shall be headmaster of St. Frank's!”

Professor Cyrus Zingrave, the all-powerful leader of the League of the Green Triangle, uttered those words calmly, dispassionately, and earnestly.

But the men he addressed stared at him startled and dumbfounded.

“You're mad, Zingrave!”

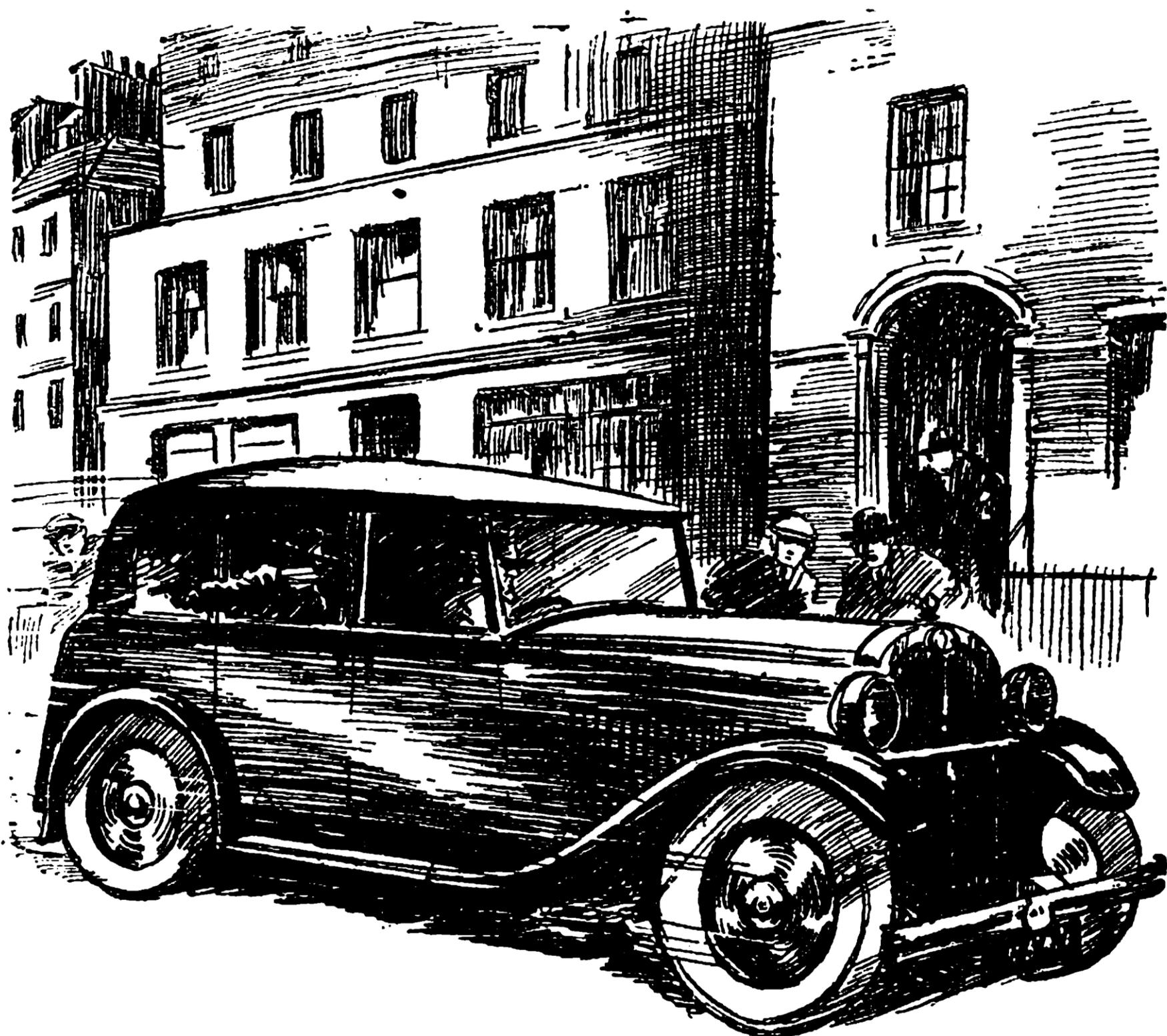
“It's a crazy notion!”

“Why don't you listen to reason?”

They all spoke at once, some excited, some fearful, some angry. And Zingrave listened to the storm without comment. These men were members of the League's Inner Council, and each was wearing a hood. There were ten of them, and they were seated at a long table, five on either

A Brilliant New Complete Detective-Thriller!

OF DOOM!



**“ WITHIN A WEEK FROM TO-DAY NELSON LEE WILL BE DEAD,
AND I SHALL BE HEADMASTER OF ST. FRANK’S ! ”**

This is the astounding threat of Professor Zingrave, the all-powerful leader of the dreaded Green Triangle League. How Zingrave sets out to put his terrible threat into effect and comes to grips again with Nelson Lee, the celebrated detective, is told here in vivid, breathless fashion !

side. At the head sat Professor Zingrave. The chair at the foot was occupied by a mild-looking man, his face innocent of a mask, clad in a rough old Norfolk jacket; he favoured a soft collar and a bow tie of unusual size.

The scene was a remarkable one, in its way, for it was taking place in the parlour

of a little country cottage, tucked away in a rural lane in Sussex. The window was heavily curtained, and the only light in the room was provided by a heavily-shaded oil lamp which hung from an old beam in the low ceiling.

Ever since Professor Zingrave's attempt to victimise the Earl of Edgemore, and

rob him of his fortune, he had been in hiding. He had successfully eluded the police—and Scotland Yard, in fact, believed that he had escaped abroad.

He had eluded capture cleverly, and had apparently escaped the country in a motor-boat. Actually, the motor-boat had crossed the Channel minus Professor Zingrave; for he had slipped ashore whilst the craft had still been in the River Stowe. Under cover of darkness the wily crook-scientist had come to this humble cottage, some miles beyond the town of Bannington. And for weeks he had been lying low—waiting for the hue and cry to settle down—waiting, too, for Nelson Lee to return to St. Frank's.

This cottage was merely another of Zingrave's "precautions." He had prepared it months ago. A harmless-looking man, known to the country round about as Mr. Simpson Lorne, had rented the cottage and, living the simple life, had pottered about the district openly, accompanied always with his paint-box, canvas, and easel.

None could guess that this man was a member of the League of the Green Triangle—and that his pose as an artist was all part of Professor Zingrave's scheme. He had many such "hide-outs" in as many different counties.

On this particular night, with the mildness of spring in the air, Zingrave had called a meeting of the Inner Council. Secretly, silently, the men had come to the cottage. They would separate just as secretly, and just as silently.

"I am tired of inaction, gentlemen," said Zingrave, rising to his feet. "I am naturally charmed to accept the hospitality of our friend, Mr. Lorne, but he, I am sure, will be only too glad to get rid of such an inconvenient visitor—a visitor who cannot show himself at any window, and who must for ever remain in the background."

Lorne, the supposed artist, laughed shortly.

"That's just your way of putting it, chief," he said. "You can stay here as long as it pleases you. That's what I'm here for."

"As you gentleman doubtless know," continued Zingrave, "Nelson Lee has been absent from St. Frank's for some weeks. That, in a way, has been fortunate, since I have been compelled to take this rest. But now I am impatient for renewed action. Lee is back; and that is the signal for us to move."

One of the councillors nodded.

"I can understand your determination to get rid of Lee," he said. "He is a very

real menace—not only to you, but to all of us."

The others murmured their agreement.

"Lee is a glutton for punishment," continued the councillor. "He is the most difficult man in the world to catch un-awares. I'd sooner handle a rattlesnake than handle Nelson Lee!"

"He's poison!" grunted one of the others.

"With all of which I agree, gentlemen," said Zingrave, in his silky voice. "And, Lee being poison, we must eliminate him."

"We have tried to eliminate him before—and with what result?" asked another councillor impatiently. "Far better to leave the man alone! He's too dangerous! Ten to one, if you attempt any such thing, it will recoil on your own head."

"Not this time," said Professor Zingrave. "I repeat—within a week he will be dead, and I will be headmaster of St. Frank's."

"But what object can you have in such a fantastic plan?" demanded the councillor who had spoken first. "Don't you think it's carrying audacity too far? We came here, Zingrave, to discuss ways and means of getting you safely out of the country."

"There will be no such discussion," said Zingrave curtly. "I do not intend to get out of the country."

"But if you succeed in this amazing scheme, what good will it do you?" asked one man. "What can you hope to gain by becoming headmaster of a public school? Such a position would be utterly useless—to yourself, and to the League."

"Yet I am fully qualified for the post," said Zingrave smoothly. "I would remind you, gentlemen, that I am a man of considerable learning. I hold degrees—"

"We are not disputing that," interrupted a councillor. "Certainly you are well capable of undertaking the duties of a schoolmaster. But what good will it do you?"

Professor Zingrave leaned forward, and his serious, learned face was distorted with sudden rage.

"I have waited!" he said tensely. "You cannot realise, gentlemen, how galling this month of inactivity has been to me. There are many of those St. Frank's boys who have helped Nelson Lee to frustrate my plans. Do you hear me? Boys—mere schoolboys! Do you think I am going to let them triumph over me?"

The councillors were aghast.

"You are scheming to become headmaster of St. Frank's so that you can revenge yourself upon some schoolboys?" asked one of the men in amazement.

"That is merely a minor reason—I have another plan," replied Zingrave curtly. "At St. Frank's, in another identity, I shall be able to live openly, instead of skulking here, in hiding. Do you think the police will suspect the headmaster of a great public school? I assure you, gentlemen, that this plan of mine is absolutely sound. Moreover, I shall secure vast funds for the League's new programme."

"From a school?" asked one of the men in a sceptical voice.

"Listen to me, gentleman—and I will explain," said Zingrave. "In passing, let me remark that I have recently been reading the newspapers, and I note that certain Harley Street specialists are having a very busy time."

"I don't understand you," said one man.

"No?" retorted Zingrave. "Well, perhaps it sounds cryptic—but soon you will understand."

Thereafter he talked—and the Inner Council of the Green Triangle listened with growing wonder.

CHAPTER 2.

Many Sympathisers!

"**F**OUL, laddies, absolutely foul!" said Archie Glenthorne sadly.

The elegant dandy of the Remove was standing on the Ancient House steps at St. Frank's, and a number of other Remove fellows were gather round him.

"Boiled or roast?" asked Fatty Little eagerly, emerging from the open doorway behind.

"Eh? Really, you dashed fat blighter

"You were talking about a fowl, weren't you?" asked the stout junior. "I'll bet you've bought it specially for tea, Archie, old man! If you'd like to invite me——"

"You frightful hunk of gluttony!" interrupted Archie indignantly, as he swung round and, jamming his monocle into his eye, bestowed a basilisk glare upon Fatty. "You human sea lion! Can't you ever think of anything else but your beastly frightful equatorial zone?"

"Here, I say!" protested the fat boy. "I don't see that you're called upon to call my tummy an equatorial zone. What does 'equatorial zone' mean, anyhow?" he added suspiciously.

"Never mind!" was Archie's cold retort. "I was talking about my dear old pal, Alf."

"You said something about a fowl——"

"I was saying that it was frightfully foul that poor old Alf should be so down

in the dumps over his mater," exclaimed Archie frigidly.

"Oh!"

"So you can trickle off, laddie; this discussion won't interest you in the least."

"I don't see why it shouldn't" protested Fatty. "I'm sorry for Alf Brent, too. I wondered what was the matter with him. In class-room this morning he looked like a Welsh rarebit that's been allowed to get cold!"

"Poor old Alf is poisonously worried about his mater," said Archie gruffly. "I don't wonder at it. I mean to say, any chappie would be reeling about in despair if he knew that his mater was suffering from some blighting brain malady that defied the best specialists."

"It's so sudden, too," put in Vivian Travers, of Study H. "A couple of days ago, I understand, Lady Brent was in ordinary health. Then she was suddenly stricken with this mysterious disease."

"Poor old Alf," said Jimmy Potts. "I know what it's like. My mother was dangerously ill once, and I couldn't settle to anything until the crisis was over."

There were any amount of sympathisers for Alf Brent, the sturdy, cheery junior who shared Study E with Archie Glenthorne.

Alf had the distinction of having a father, Sir John Brent, who was the chairman of the St. Frank's Board of Governors.

He had been very worried since he had heard of the sudden and dramatic illness which had stricken Lady Brent down. That very morning, hoping for better news, he had learned, to his deep concern, that his mother was very much worse.

It was tea time now, and Alf had been expecting a further message all day. So far, none had come.

"Cheer up, old man," said Nipper, the popular Remove skipper, as he encountered Alf in the Triangle. "Things may not be so bad as you imagine."

Alf was looking haggard and anxious.

"I don't get any news," he muttered.

"Well, they say that no news is good news, old son," replied Nipper. "You must hope for the best. If your father thought there was any danger he would have sent for you before now."

"Yes, that's true, Brent," said Church. "Your mater will be all right. Brain trouble is serious enough, but Lady Brent is strong and healthy, and——"

"That's what I can't understand," interrupted Alf wretchedly. "My mother has never had brain fever, or anything like that. She isn't neurotic, or nervous, or highly strung. She's an open-air woman

—she rides to hounds, and all that sort of thing. She drives her own car. She hasn't had any worries or anxieties— It's so—so mysterious!"

"You'd better come in to tea, laddie," said Archie Glen-thorne firmly. "I mean to say, Phipps has appeared in the doorway no less than three times, and he has made sundry signals to the young master which can be interpreted in only one way. A cup of the good old amber juice will percolate into the innermost cockles and you will live anew."

"Yes, better go in to tea, Brent," said Nipper gently. "Archie's right. It'll do you good!"

"Good!" echoed Archie with fine scorn. "I mean to say, tea is the most priceless restorative—"

He broke off, his monocle dropping from his eye. For at that moment a blue-uniformed figure, on a red bicycle, had appeared in the gateway. Alf swung round at once, and his face blanched.

"A telegram!" he muttered hoarsely.

Something told him that the wire was for him—and a dread fear clutched at his heart.

CHAPTER 3. Grave News!

"WHY, yes, Master Brent, the telegram's for you," said the messenger in surprise. "Funny thing how you knew!"

"Let me have it!" muttered Alf. "Quick—quick!"

He tore it open as the other juniors collected round in a breathless circle. Alf's hands were shaking as he opened the



The master-crook pointed to the figure of the schoolboy lashed helpless to the iron rings in the mystery room. "Unless you swear to join the League," he snarled, "your son will suffer—there"—

pink form. An expression of unutterable relief came into his eyes but only for a moment.

"I thought—I thought—" He stopped, nearly choking. "Thank heaven, it's not as bad as that!"

"May we see it?" asked Handforth eagerly. "Is your mater worse?"

Alf handed the telegram over, and Handforth and the others read the message:

"Your mother about the same. Doctors say no immediate danger, but I am coming to fetch you this evening. Will arrive by car about seven-thirty. Be ready to leave by eight.--FATHER."



—In the grip of the hooded men, Sir John Brent tore at the hands that held him. "You shall pay for this ——!" he cried.

Handforth slapped his leg.

"Why, that's fine!" he said boisterously. "Your mater's in no immediate danger——"

"Shut up, ass!" muttered Church.

"Eh? Look here——"

But Handforth was silenced. All the other juniors had sense enough to realise that this latest development was of the utmost gravity. Sir John would not come to St. Frank's to fetch his son unless Lady Brent's condition was critical. The very fact that the boy was required at home hinted that all hope had gone.

Alf knew it, too, and he was looking

more haggard than ever. Archie and the other juniors thoughtfully refrained from sympathising with him—realising that such sympathy would only aggravate the hurt. Alf did not go in for tea.

A little later Mr. Wilkes, his house-master, sent for him; he was given permission to forego his prep., and to pack a few things ready for the coming trip.

It seemed ages and ages to the anxious Alf before his father arrived. But at last the big limousine rolled through the gateway, in the gathering dusk. Alf, who was waiting, ran forward and jumped upon the footboard.

"Dad!" he exclaimed gladly.

Sir John signalled to the chauffeur, and the car stopped.

"You'll have to pluck up your courage, Alfred, my boy," he said quietly.

"Oh, dad! You—you don't mean——"

"No, no," said Sir John, pained by the dread fear in his son's eyes. "Your mother is very ill, indeed. We had been hoping for some signs of improvement to-day, but as none has manifested itself, I think it right that you should come home."

"But what is it, dad?" asked Alf. "I mean——"

"I know no more than you do, lad," interrupted Sir John, shaking his head. "The greatest specialists of Harley Street have examined your mother, and they have been in consultation, but they are baffled. She is unconscious——"

"Oh, dad!"

"But I am assured that there is no immediate danger," continued Sir John. "Otherwise, of course, I could not have come personally to fetch you. But I felt, Alfred, that the journey up alone would have been a very great ordeal."

"Thank you, dad—it's—it's awfully good of you."

"I am told that your mother is sinking," went on Sir John gently. "Now, Alfred, you must be brave. There is a distinct hope that your mother will recover consciousness for an hour or two—perhaps to-night. And you must be there."

He said no more—but Alf, with a dreadful choking sensation in his throat, knew exactly what his father had meant. His mother was dying!

They went to the headmaster's house together, and Nelson Lee himself came to the door and ushered them into his cosy study.

The limousine stood outside on the gravel, and the chauffeur did not even leave his seat—for he knew that the return journey would be made practically at once.

But he was grateful when a man in a green apron, obviously one of the servants, came out of the dusk and suggested that he should "hop round to the side door for a hot cup of tea."

"I don't know whether I ought," said the chauffeur. "Sir John might want to be going——"

"Oh, you've got a couple of minutes," said the man in the green apron.

The chauffeur went with him, and no sooner had he passed beyond a thick clump of evergreen bushes than a heavy wool muffler was flung suddenly over his face and drawn tight. In the same second two figures leapt upon him from either side; a knee was rammed into the small of his back, and he thudded helplessly to the ground.

His senses reeled; there was a choking sensation in his throat; lights danced before his eyes. He felt that he was floating, a loud drumming sounded in his ears—and then came oblivion.

Deftly, nimble fingers stripped him of his heavy uniform coat. Less than a minute later a man, dressed in that same coat, and wearing the chauffeur's cap, took his place coolly at the driver's seat of the limousine.

The change had been effected so quickly, so efficiently, that several seniors who were strolling across Inner Court in the dusk, had seen or heard nothing unusual.

But the fact remained that Sir John Brent's chauffeur, unconscious, was now lying hidden in an empty cucumber frame, covered with old sacks. And the man at the wheel of Sir John's car was an agent of the League of the Green Triangle!

CHAPTER 4.

The Hold Up!

AT Nelson Lee's own doorstep—within the very earshot of the world's greatest detective—the Green Triangle agents had planted one of their own men at the wheel of Sir John's car!

When Sir John emerged with Alf, five minutes later, the dusk was deeper. Sir John was shaking hands with Nelson Lee, and the baronet had no reason to even look at the man who sat at the wheel. Even if he had looked he would have noticed nothing suspicious.

"I am hoping with all my heart, Sir John, that Lady Brent will make a speedy recovery," Nelson Lee was saying. "You must not be too concerned by the gravity of the specialists. They are baffled—but that does not mean that there is no hope."

"Good of you to try to cheer me up, Mr. Lee," said Sir John gruffly. "Well, good-bye! You'll forgive me for hurrying away, won't you?"

The car was soon off, and it only made another brief pause in the Triangle, where Archie Glenthorpe and Nipper and Handforth and Travers and a crowd of other fellows bade Alf Brent good-bye. Their concern and sympathy was genuine, and Sir John was deeply touched.

"Good lads, those, Alf," he said huskily, when the car was on its way.

"By jingo, yes, dad," muttered Alf. "They're true blue, all of them"; but he dismissed his schoolfellows on the instant. "We haven't had much time to talk about mother, dad. We can talk about her now, can't we?"

"If it will relieve you, yes."

"When did it first happen, dad? I mean, how was mother first affected?"

"It was on Monday evening, after she had been to a theatre," replied Sir John slowly. "When she went, she was her own cheerful, healthy self. I had been too busy to accompany her, but I was sitting up, reading. When she came in I noticed that she was not quite looking herself, but she only complained of a headache."

"Yes, dad. What happened then?"

"It was while we were talking in the library," said Sir John. "She was telling me about the play, in fact, and suddenly, without warning, she collapsed in a heap on the floor."

"Oh!"

"I thought it was merely a faint—although, as you know, your mother is not subject to fainting fits," continued Sir John. "I carried her upstairs, and immediately sent for Dr. Knowles. Your mother was unconscious then, and the doctor could make nothing of her. The next morning she was just the same. We called in a Harley Street man, and he was just as puzzled. All they know is that it is some mysterious affection of the brain, and although they hope that she may recover consciousness, they cannot give me any definite information."

It was natural that Alf should be gravely interested; he wanted to know every little detail. And thus they talked as the car glided smoothly on its way—through Belton, and then onwards through the brightly-lighted streets of Bannington.

On again, taking the main London road and maintaining a smooth, rapid speed.

But quite unexpectedly the big limousine slowed down, and now, to Sir John's

astonishment, the car turned into a narrow side road.

"What on earth is the man doing?" asked Sir John angrily. "He knows the road better than this! Walter!" he added loudly, bending forward. "Why are you driving down this lane, Walter?"

The chauffeur took no notice; he drove straight on.

"The fellow must be out of his mind," said Sir John angrily, as he rose from the seat and hammered upon the glass partition. "Walter!" he shouted. "Do you hear me?"

At that moment a faint green light flickered in the road, just ahead. But it was gone in a flash. The chauffeur applied the brakes, and now, for the first time, he turned his head.

And it so happened that at that moment Sir John switched on the interior lights, and he saw the man's face.

"Good heavens!" he ejaculated, startled. "This man isn't Walter! What on earth——"

The car jerked to a standstill, and at the same moment both rear doors were flung open. Father and son caught a momentary glimpse of hooded men. Then, before they could move a muscle, heavy rugs were flung over their heads.

"Better take it easy, Sir John!" said a calm, grim voice.

No less than four men entered the car, and one of them snapped off the lights. Sir John, startled, infuriated and alarmed, struggled hard; but in the grip of two powerful men, and with that heavy rug enveloping his head and shoulders, he was at a hopeless disadvantage.

Alf struggled, too, but he had even less chance than his father.

The whole astounding incident took only a few seconds. And then the car was gliding onwards again.

"The more you struggle, the tighter we'll pull this rug!" said the gruff voice. "Better be sensible, Sir John! It's a long journey, and you don't want it to be too uncomfortable, do you?"

"What do you want with me, you infernal rogues?" came Sir John's muffled voice.

"That you will find out for yourself—later," said the other. "Will you give me your word that you'll keep quiet if we loosen this rug a bit?"

"No, you scoundrel, I won't!"

"All right, then—you'll have a rough time of it."

The minutes seemed like hours. Even Sir John, after his first fury had gone, became limp, and he offered no further resistance. He was, in fact, feeling more than half suffocated. His captors loosened

the rug, so that he could breathe freely, but it was not removed. Alf, during this time, was suffering in the same way.

And so the journey continued—the car now running at high speed.

It seemed to the captive pair that at least two hours must have elapsed before the car slowed down. Actually the journey had only taken forty minutes. The car came to a halt.

"We're getting out here," said the voice. "If you try any tricks we'll cosh you!"

They had no opportunity of trying any tricks. They were

held tightly as they were forced out of the car and carried across what appeared to be fields.

How could he or Alf guess that they were not more than two miles from the spot where the car had been originally held up, and were now being carried up the garden path of a little cottage?

They found themselves being taken into an interior of some kind. They were aware of dim voices.

Then a heavy door slammed, and suddenly the rugs were whisked away.

CHAPTER 5.

Professor Zingrave's Threat!

BLACKNESS—blackness on all sides—but above came a faint glow. Overhead gleamed a single electric lamp, and draped from it, on all sides, were pitch-black cloth hangings.

PROFESSOR ZINGRAVE APPOINTED HEADMASTER OF ST. FRANK'S!

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They reached to the floor, and they were absolutely unbroken. There was no doorway to be seen—no window—not even a flap in the draperies themselves. Underfoot there was that same black cloth. Thus the apartment was absolutely unidentifiable.

To add to the astounding mystery, six men were standing at regular intervals round the two prisoners, their backs close against the inky draperies. At first, indeed, the captives did not see these men. For they were clothed in black, just like the room itself; from head to foot they were covered. Not even their shoes were to be seen. Their hands were covered—and their faces. They looked out through small slits in their hoods.

"Dad!" panted Alf, startled and horrified.

Sir John pulled himself together with effort; he felt that it was up to him to show his son a good example.

"Who are you?" he demanded, turning from one motionless figure to the other. "You infernal scoundrels! What is the meaning of this mummery? If you think that you have frightened me by all this theatrical nonsense, you have made a very big mistake!"

The figures remained uncannily silent.

"Allow me to explain, Sir John!" said a soft, silky voice.

The two captives spun round. Without a sound, another man had come into that room. He had evidently passed through a fold in the draperies, but no such fold was in evidence. Sir John and Alf stared at the newcomer—and they were astonished to see that he was quietly dressed in perfectly-fitting evening clothes. His white shirt-front gleamed dazzlingly amid all that blackness; a large diamond glinted and sparkled under the single electric light.

"Upon my soul!" ejaculated Sir John.

He was more startled than ever by the sight of this immaculately-attired stranger. The newcomer wore no mask; he had the face of a man of learning; his brow was high and domed. He wore big spectacles.

"Dad!" panted Alf, clutching at his father's arm. "Don't—don't you recognise him? He's Zingrave!"

"Good heavens!" shouted Sir John, aghast.

"I see that your son has a good memory for faces, Sir John," said the man in evening dress. "So there is really no need for me to introduce myself. However, let us be formal. I am Professor Cyrus Zin-

grave, and whilst regretting the enforced nature of your visit to my curious abode —"

"Do you think this is a time for mock pleasantries?" interrupted Sir John hoarsely. "Yes, I recognise you now. You are Zingrave—the man who escaped from the police some weeks ago. You are the leader of that infamous criminal confederation, the League of the Green Triangle!"

"And you, Sir John Brent, are a servant of that same infamous League of the Green Triangle from this minute onwards," said Zingrave smoothly.

"Are you mad?" ejaculated Sir John.

"You will be mad unless you agree to my proposals," retorted the professor silkily. "I repeat, Sir John, that henceforward you must be a servant of the Green Triangle; you must obey every order without question. No, please do not advance upon me; my assistants will get very rough with you if you do."

Sir John, seething with rage, maddened by this delay in his journey to London—such a fateful journey, too!—glared into the professor's eyes.

"If you want money, tell me!" he said hoarsely. "How much?"

"But I do not require money, Sir John," replied Zingrave. "I require—you! In order to execute certain schemes I have in mind, your co-operation is vitally necessary. Therefore, you will co-operate."

"I shall do no such thing——"

"Refusal will mean the death of your son."

Sir John suddenly became icily calm; the hot flush died out of his face.

"My—my son?" he stammered.

"I am grieved to give you this shock, knowing, as I do, that you are so deeply concerned over the health of your wife," continued Zingrave. "But I have a reputation, Sir John, for being ruthless. You are necessary to me—and if you do not agree to obey me in all things, your son will certainly die."

"He's bluffing, dad," panted Alf, clutching his father's arm. "Don't take any notice of him!"

"You are mad!" said Sir John, glaring at Zingrave. "Do you think for one second that I will consent to associate myself with you and your villainous enterprises? Never! Do you hear me, you hound? Never!"

Zingrave half-turned.

"Seize the boy!" he said, and his voice held a world of sinister meaning.

CHAPTER 6.**The Slave of the Green Triangle!**

SIR JOHN started forward.

"Leave that boy alone!" he shouted hoarsely. "You devils——"

Two of the black-clothed figures came up to him from behind, and held him. And Alf, at the same moment, was seized. In the strong hands of those men he was helpless. Coat, waistcoat, shirt and vest were stripped from his back—until it was bare. He was forced to one of those black walls, and his hands, bound, were fixed to a projecting hook. Another man roped his feet, and fastened them to clamps in the black floor. Sir John watched all this with horrified eyes.

"Now!" said Zingrave gently.

One of those black figures suddenly produced a heavy, brutal-looking whip. He stood ready.

The master-crook pointed to the figure of the schoolboy lashed helpless to the iron rings in the mystery room. "Unless you swear to join the League," he snarled, "your son will suffer— Here!"

In the grip of the hooded men, Sir John tore at the hands that held him.

"You shall pay for this——"

"You are hardly in a position, my dear sir, to threaten me," interrupted Zingrave. "I merely wish to tell you that your son will be whipped until you agree to what I have proposed. The longer you remain silent, the longer your son will suffer. There have been cases of people dying under the lash."

He turned abruptly and raised his hand.

"Strike!" he commanded sharply.

The whip rose, and with a crackling slash it fell upon Alf's bare back.

"Don't promise anything, dad!" gasped Alf between his teeth. "They're only bluffing!"

But his father could not bear this.

"Stop!" he panted. "You—you fiends! Stop, I tell you! I—I will do as you say."

Professor Zingrave smiled. He had known, from the first, that a little exhibition of theatrical brutality would bring Sir John to his senses.

"I am glad that you have changed your mind, Sir John," said the professor. "Your son will be kept here, and he will be in no way harmed—just so long as you obey orders."

"I—I don't understand," muttered the wretched baronet.

"You will be set at liberty at once," continued Zingrave. "You will resume your ordinary life—but you will know that the boy is in my hands; you will know, further, that if you make any attempt to

approach the police, or betray me, your son will die."

"You cannot do this!" panted Sir John in agony. "Great heavens, man, let me appeal to your humanity! The circumstances are not normal. I am taking my son to London—to see his dying mother."

"Dad!" panted Alf.

"Yes, my poor boy, I mean it!" groaned Sir John. "I believe that your mother is dying. You—Zingrave!" he went on hoarsely. "If you persist in this hideous plan, my boy may never see his mother alive again!"

Professor Zingrave tightened his lips until they showed in a thin line.

"I am sorry," he said coldly. "But I am no sentimentalist, Sir John. It is necessary for my plan that your son shall be held a prisoner."

"But I tell you, his mother——"

"The subject is closed," snapped Zingrave.

"Are you a man—or are you a devil?" panted Sir John.

"I am a man who is determined to succeed!" retorted Professor Zingrave. "Now, Sir John, you will listen to your instructions. They are simple. You will soon find yourself back in your own car, and you will drive straight to London. To-morrow a stranger will present himself at your London home. You will remain at home in readiness to receive him. This man, Dr. Howard Ponsonby, is to be appointed headmaster of St. Frank's, and he is to take up his duties immediately."

"You—you cannot be serious!" ejaculated Sir John, aghast.

"I was never more serious in my life," replied Zingrave. "You will dismiss Mr. Lee from his post. You will appoint Dr. Howard Ponsonby in his stead. Those are the only instructions you will receive now. And remember this—if you attempt to go to the police, if you fail me in any way, within six hours you will learn of this boy's death."

Sir John passed a hand over his brow.

"You cannot mean this," he muttered.

"Let me repeat the instructions," said Zingrave inexorably. "You will remain at home all to-morrow. A man named Dr. Howard Ponsonby will call upon you, and you will appoint him headmaster of St. Frank's College. You, as chairman of the governors, are in a position to do this on your own authority. That is all. Take him away!"

The figures in black sprang forward, and the rug was once again thrust over Sir John's head. He heard frantic shouts from Alf, but they were soon silenced.

Then, once again, he found himself being carried across fields.

Then he was in his car again, the door slammed, the gears were engaged, and the car glided away.

CHAPTER 7.

The Fateful Card!

AFTER an interminable drive the car suddenly halted. Sir John Brent heard a few whispered words. He felt a rope passed round him, so that the rug was secured to his middle. Then one of the doors softly closed. And after that—silence.

It was some moments before Sir John commenced to struggle to gain his freedom. It was not a very difficult task, for the rope had not been bound tightly. Yet some five or six minutes had elapsed before Sir John flung the rug aside.

Breathless, perspiring, he looked about him. Yes, he was in his own car. Nobody else was with him— But who was that sitting at the wheel? He staggered out, and he was bewildered to find his own chauffeur sitting at the wheel—bound to the wheel, in fact, and gagged!

"Walter!" ejaculated Sir John hoarsely. He noticed that the car was standing on

the grass verge of a main road. Nobody was in sight, nor any other vehicle.

With shaking fingers, Sir John unfastened the gag from about the chauffeur's face.

"Thank you, sir!" panted the man drunkenly. "Funny, but I can't seem to remember——"

"Have you been drinking, Walter?" demanded Sir John, with sudden suspicion. "No, no, of course not. I'd forgotten. You never drink, do you?"

He gave his attention to the ropes which bound Walter to the wheel; and when, presently, the man was freed, he almost fell to the ground, and rolled about dazedly.

Sir John's own mind was in a state of chaos. How was it that his own chauffeur was back with the car? Zingrave's agents, of course, had melted away into the darkness of the night.

"You'd better pull yourself together, Walter," said the baronet huskily. "If you can tell me where we are——"

"That's—that's what I was going to ask you, Sir John?" muttered the man. "The last thing I remember was being at the school, waiting outside the Head's front door. Yes, that's it, sir!" he went on,



Jokes from readers wanted for this feature! If you know a good rib-tickler, send it along now. Pocket wallets and penknives are offered as prizes for the best jokes. Address your jokes to "Smilers," Nelson Lee Library, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4.

Visitor: "Look, there's a spider on your father's head."

Sonny: "No; that's an imitation one he keeps there to frighten the flies away."

(A. Park, 30, Sibsey Street, Lancsater—a grand book.)

Customer: "You said if the gloves I bought here did not last a year, you would give me a new pair."

Shopkeeper: "Yes, I did."

Customer: "Well, I lost them."

(E. Chalcraft, 62, Marian Road, Streatham, S.W.16—a penknife.)

Sambo had joined the debating society, and the day after his first meeting he was being questioned by his friends.

"What was de subject of de debate Sambo?"

"De subject were, 'What is de most benefit to mankind, de sun or de moon,'" replied Sambo.

"And which side did you uphold?"

"De moons. I jes' argued dat de sun shines by day when we doan' need de light, but de moon shines by night when dat light most certainly am needed. An' dey couldn't answer dat!"

(A. Bentley, 2, Park Avenue, Council Estate, Grimethorpe, Nr. Barnsley, Yorks—a pocket wallet.)

A candidate for the local council was never shy about telling the voters why they should elect him. "I'm a practical farmer," he said boastfully at one meeting. "I can plough, reap and sow, milk cows, shoe a horse—in fact, I should like you to tell me one thing about a farm which I cannot do."

Then in an impressive silence, a voice asked: "Can you lay an egg?"

(G. P. Vallance, 73, Richmond Park Road, East Sheen, S.W. 14—a grand book.)

An English surgeon, travelling in India, was asked to treat a baby elephant, which had had its leg badly torn. He did so: the patient recovered, and the incident passed from the surgeon's mind.

Years afterwards he was watching a "turn" of performing elephants in a circus at home.

his brain becoming clearer. "A man came up and suggested I should have a cup of tea. I went with him, and I seem to remember somebody springing on me. But after that——"

"I think I understand, Walter," said Sir John, nodding. "You were attacked and rendered senseless. Some drug, I suppose, which kept you unconscious until a few minutes ago."

"But how did the car get here, sir?" asked the bewildered man.

"Another chauffeur took your place, and it was not until we were well on the journey that I knew of the substitution," replied Sir John. "But I can't explain further, Walter. You wouldn't understand, anyhow. Do you think that you are fit to drive?"

"Why, yes, sir, I can manage it," said Walter. "I'm a bit shaky, but I dare say——"

"Then drive, man," broke in Sir John. "Don't take any risks, but get me to London as quickly as you can."

As the chauffeur was climbing into his seat, he half-turned

"Isn't Master Alfred here, sir?" he asked.

The inquiry sent a stab into Sir John's heart.

"No," he replied. "My son has—has found it necessary to go elsewhere."

He did not trust himself to say any more. Not until the car was moving, and Sir John was sitting back in his seat, could he restore his thoughts to anything like order.

And one thing was certain; he must not tell his chauffeur what had happened. The man would think him mad. He was half-stunned by the knowledge that he had left Alf in the hands of those crooks. But he had had no option.

And if he did not obey the dictates of the League of the Green Triangle, Alf would die!

It was a fantastic, incredible situation. If only he could locate the spot where that interview had taken place! He remembered that the car had driven a long way—both there and back. He found himself thinking hard.

That room, draped in black! He was appalled at the cunning of the whole programme. The crooks hadn't left a single loophole. They had Alf in their power, and he might be ten miles away—twenty miles away—thirty. He might be somewhere north, south, east, or west. It was impossible for Sir John to attempt even a random guess. Such precautions had been taken that he was entirely in the dark.

when to his surprise and consternation, one of the great beasts left its place in the centre of the ring, wrapped its trunk gently but firmly round him, and lifting him from his place in the half-crown seats, deposited him in an excellent position among the seven-and-sixpennies.

(*B. Duffin, 53, Openview, Earlsfield, S.W. 18—a pocket wallet.*)

Smith: "They say that the Spaniards did a thousand miles on a galleon."

Jones: "You can't believe all you hear about these foreign cars."

(*A. Riches, 9, Grosvenor Terrace, St. Helier, Jersey, C.I.—a grand prize.*)

Sergeant: "Where are you going?"

Private: "To fetch water."

Sergeant: "What, in those disreputable trousers?"

Private: "No fear, in this 'ere pair."

(*T. Clarke, 38, Hafton Road, Lower Kersal, Salford, Manchester—a pocket wallet.*)

An American was walking down a country lane when he came upon an old man.

"Say, you must be an old man."

"Seventy-one years," said the yokel.

"You must be one of the oldest," remarked the American.

"No, I've got me father!"

"Your father," said the American. "I'd like to see him."

"If you wait a minute I'll tell him," replied the yokel. "He's upstairs putting grand-father to bed!"

(*A. Weymouth, 51, Howard Road, Stoke Newington, N.16—a penknife.*)

When the donkey saw the Zebra

He began to switch his tail;

"Well, I never," said the Donkey,

"That's a mule that's been in jail!"

(*F. Smith, 112, New Hall St., Burnley, Lancs—a grand book.*)

Brown: "What kind of a fellow is Blinks?"

Thomas: "Well, he's one of those fellows who always grabs the stool when there is a piano to be moved!"

(*F. Kendall, 4, Talbot Road, Penworthan, nr. Preston, Lancs.—a pocket wallet.*)

Teacher: "What is silence?"

Tommy: "Silence is what you hear when you listen and you can't hear anything."

(*D. Robertson, 101, Dulwich Road, Herne Hill, S.E.24—a penknife.*)

Teacher: "Why haven't you put down the answers to these sums?"

Willy: "Because I always get that part wrong."

(*R. Gavin, 81, Dagenham Road, Romford, Essex—a grand book.*)

His thoughts were disturbed by the sight of street lamps; and soon the car was gliding through even more brilliantly-lighted streets. He tapped on the glass which divided him from the chauffeur.

"What town is this, Walter? he asked. "Do you know?"

"Yes, sir—Helmford."

"Then we were actually on the London road?"

"Yes, sir."

A sudden resolve came into Sir John Brent's mind. The thought of his son in the hands of those Green Triangle crooks maddened him. By heaven! He would not be intimidated! It would be cowardly to leave the unfortunate boy to his fate. There was only one thing to be done in a situation like this. He must be firm—courageous. If he allowed himself to become a slave of the Green Triangle, it would be but the beginning of a hideous tyranny. Once involved, he might never be able to extricate himself. Yes, he must be firm!

"Walter!" he shouted abruptly. "Drive to the police station!"

The chauffeur, who was now feeling so much better that he could drive with confidence, was not surprised. He knew that something drastic had happened to him; and he guessed that Sir John himself had been through an unnerving experience. The disappearance of Alf, too, was disquieting.

It was not a difficult matter to find the police station in a big town like Helmford. But Walter noticed the lighted entrance just a moment too late, and when he drew in against the kerb, and stopped the car, they had overrun the police station by fifty yards.

"This will do," said Sir John, opening the door and getting out. "Wait for me here."

His manner was so strange that Walter was freshly worried. Sir John even broke into a run as he approached the steps leading into the police station. It was as though he feared that he would not have sufficient strength of will to carry out his purpose. He went to the building before he could change his mind.

A rough-looking man lurched out of the shadows, and, as though by accident, he bumped into Sir John.

"Sorry, gov'nor!" he muttered.

He passed on into the gloom, and it was not until Sir John was half-way up the police station steps that he suddenly found a little white card in one of his hands.

He paused, puzzled, for the card had not been there a moment ago. He turned it over in his fingers—and his startled eyes

beheld the vividly-printed sign of the Green Triangle!

CHAPTER 8.

The Sinister Signs!

"GREAT heavens!" panted Sir John Brent in horror.

Agitated as he was, he knew just how that card had got into his hand. He spun round, but the man who had bumped into him had vanished. That man had been an agent of the Green Triangle!

They were watching him—following him!

That card could mean only one thing. If he went into this police station and gave his information Professor Zingrave would carry out his threat!

He reeled, rather than walked, back to the car. Walter was on the pavement, and he had the door open ready.

"You didn't go in, sir," said the man.

"No, no—I changed my mind," muttered Sir John. "Thank you, Walter."

He sank back into the seat, and he was so pale and haggard that Walter was alarmed.

"You're not looking well, Sir John," he said. "Shall I drive to a doctor's—"

"No—drive nowhere," interrupted the baronet. "Wait, Walter. Wait here. I will tell you when to drive on. I want to think."

The man had sense enough to leave him alone. And Sir John strove hard to bring order to his chaotic mind.

It was all very well to be bold and courageous—but could he take the risk? What satisfaction would he get if he informed the police, only to learn of Alf's death? The blood of his own son would be on his hands!

He grew a little calmer. It would be different if he could give the police any worth-while information. What, indeed, could he tell them? Merely that his car had been held up, and that he had been driven—Driven where? He could not even tell them that! As for that room with the black hangings—

"No, no," muttered Sir John. "I daren't! Those demons are watching all my movements. And Zingrave is ruthless—he'll carry out his threat."

And then another idea came to him.

Risky as it was to go to the police, there was no reason why he should not take another man into his confidence. Unless he told somebody of this terrifying experience, he would go out of his mind. A name flashed into his mind.

Nelson Lee—of course! Lee was the man! He could tell Lee without any danger. And Lee knew more about Professor Cyrus Zingrave than any other man living!

At first Sir John thought of driving straight back to St. Frank's. Then he remembered Lady Brent. He could not possibly delay his return to London any longer.

"Walter!" he called abruptly.

"Sir!" said the chauffeur, who was standing ready.

"Drive me to a public telephone," said Sir John, his voice harsh with anxiety. "You'll probably find one outside the main post office."

In a moment they were on their way.

"No, no!" panted Sir John tremulously.

It was too incredible for belief. And then he recalled that a man had left the telephone-box just as the car had been pulling up—yes, and he had ridden away on a motor-cycle!

A Green Triangle spy—a man who had divined Sir John's thoughts! But there was a more commonplace explanation, perhaps! The fellow might have heard Sir John's instructions to the chauffeur.

Whatever the solution, Sir John was left in no doubt as to the grim meaning of that card. If he used the telephone it would be assumed that he had played the traitor—and Alf would die!

Sir John really thought he was going mad when he glanced at the card again.

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Sir John was feeling astonishingly better. The very thought of Nelson Lee somehow restored his confidence. Lee would know what to do! Why hadn't he thought of him before?

A few words with him on the telephone, and then he would continue his journey to London. Lee would leave St. Frank's at once, and arrive at Sir John's home soon after Sir John himself. Yes, that was the way. There would be practically no delay like that. And in the privacy of his own home, beyond reach of any possible Green Triangle spies, Sir John could tell Nelson Lee the whole amazing story.

The car came to a smooth standstill. It had stopped just outside the post office, and Sir John saw a big concrete public telephone booth.

"Wait for me, Walter," he said. "I shan't be long."

He crossed the pavement, opened the door of the telephone-box, and an electric light overhead sprang into being. Sir John closed the door, and reached for the receiver. And as he did so he saw, propped on the instrument, a little white card, and in the centre of it a vividly-printed green triangle. More, a word had been scrawled in pencil over that sinister design and the word was "Remember!"

For the green triangle had vanished—and so had the scrawled word! The card, on both sides, was blank!

"Anything wrong, Sir John?"

It was Walter, and Walter was at the door, looking deeply concerned. Sir John looked at him like a man in a dream.

"No, Walter, no!" he muttered. "I—I've changed my mind. Drive me home. Yes, straight home!"

CHAPTER 9.

Nelson Lee is Puzzled!

SIR JOHN BRENT did not know it, but he was not the only recipient of those mysterious Green Triangle signs that evening!

The town of Bannington was agog with wild excitement.

And a party of St. Frank's juniors, including Nipper, Handforth, and Travers, found itself unexpectedly in the midst of all the commotion. They had gone over to Bannington immediately after Sir John Brent's car had left the school. It was rather late, but there was a very special lecture at the Grammar School, and Mr. Wilkes had given them late passes for the occasion.

They were feeling relieved as they went into Bannington, for Alf Brent's troubles had rather weighed upon them during the day. They were very sorry for Alf, of course, but, after all, they had other interests in life. And they were determined to enjoy this jaunt to the Grammar School.

As it happened they never reached their destination.

They first noticed something unusual as they were passing one of the banks in the High Street; for there were a number of police officers stationed outside, obviously on guard.

"What's the matter?" asked Handforth, as he slackened the speed of his Morris Minor. "Are they expecting a raid?"

"Don't stop you, ass," said Church. "It's none of our business."

But Handforth did stop a moment later, for Nipper and Travers and Jimmy Potts, who were on their motor-cycles, had pulled up and were now off their machines and staring into the sky.

"What's up?" asked Handforth, jumping out of his little car.

Nipper pointed.

"Haven't we seen something like that before?" he asked grimly.

Handforth's jaw dropped. Far overhead, in the night sky, a gleaming, shimmering triangle of fire hovered—in green! Crowds of people were staring up at it, many were shouting, and the excitement increased.

"A rocket—that's what it was!" the boys heard one man excitedly saying. "I saw the blamed thing go up—heard it, too! Funny time of the year to send rockets up, ain't it?"

Handforth remembered. Weeks earlier, when the League of the Green Triangle had been active at St. Frank's—when, in fact, Nelson Lee's life had been attempted—a great rocket had soared up above the old school, and had burst to reveal a dazzling green triangle.

"By Jove!" ejaculated Nipper tensely. "There must be some connection, you chaps!"

"Eh?" said Handforth. "Connection between what and which?"

"You remember those policemen we saw outside the bank, a little way back?" said Nipper quickly.

"My only sainted aunt!"

"The Green Triangle's active again," went on Nipper. "Those rogues are planning to make some kind of spectacular raid."

"Let's chuck the giddy lecture and hang about here," suggested Handforth

eagerly. "By George! There might be something worth seeing!"

A tall, broad-shouldered man was striding along the pavement, near by, and Nipper instantly recognised him.

"Why, hallo, Mr. Lennard!" he exclaimed, leaving his machine and running across to the man.

"Well, bless me if it isn't young Nipper!" said Chief Detective-inspector Lennard, of the C.I.D. "Thought you were in bed and asleep by now, young 'un."

"I say, have you seen that rocket?"

"I've seen it!"

"What do you make of it, sir?" asked Handforth, who had joined them with the others.

"Hanged if I know what to make of it," replied the Scotland Yard man gruffly, as he stared skywards. "It's fading away now. Haven't you youngsters heard?"

"Heard what?"

"That's not the only Green Triangle sign that's been seen in Bannington today," replied Lennard grimly. "Why do you suppose I'm down here? As early as seven o'clock a paper bearing a green triangle sign and pinned to the door by a knife was found on the closed door of the Southern Counties Bank by the police. The local people didn't like the look of it, so they sent for me."

"Think there's going to be a raid on the bank, Mr. Lennard?" asked Nipper.

"It looks as if there might be—but I doubt it," replied the Yard man. "After the precautions we've taken, there's not much chance of a raid being successful. Other things have happened, too."

"What other things?"

"My dear kids, I haven't time to answer your questions now," said the chief inspector good-humouredly. "I'm busy. I might be seeing you again later, Nipper. Your guv'nor has promised to come over, and I'm meeting him soon. If I'm lucky, he'll invite me over to St. Frank's for supper. It's cheaper than a hotel, too."

He walked on, and it wasn't long before the juniors knew of those other happenings to which the inspector had referred.

Three men, it seemed—all of them local townspeople—had been found in different parts of the town that evening, unconscious by the roadside. They had been stunned and their pockets emptied. On each man a white card, bearing a green triangle, had been found.

And this was not all.



Sir John Brent was about to enter the police station when he found himself staring at a small card which had been thrust into his hand. On it was a green triangle sign—a grim warning!

Several prominent citizens, in great alarm, had reported to the police that letters had reached them by the evening post—plain envelopes containing plain cards with the simple green triangle design printed upon them. But the very receipt of such cards had sent these good people into a panic.

"It might be a hoax, of course," said Chief-inspector Lennard, when he met Nelson Lee in the town some time later. "A gang of enterprising roughs, taking advantage of that Green Triangle business some weeks ago, may have knocked a few harmless members of the populace down, robbing them, and then using those green

triangle signs. Still, there's that rocket —"

"I don't think it's a hoax, Lennard," said Nelson Lee. "There are many indications that this whole affair has been organised by the genuine Green Triangle gang."

"But for what purpose—just to scare the town?" asked Lennard. "Do you think they're going to spring something really big?"

"It is difficult to form any opinion," replied Nelson Lee slowly. "Have any of those unfortunate people recovered?"

"All of them," replied Lennard. "They weren't badly hurt. They all tell the

same story; they were suddenly sprung upon from behind, and not one of them saw his assailants. We haven't been able to find any witnesses who saw the assaults, either."

It was small wonder that the town was in a state of nervous tension. The St. Frank's fellows, much to their disappointment, were sent back to the school as soon as Nelson Lee found that they were in the town. Lee was taking no chances with the boys.

But the hours passed, and, except for those three assaults, nothing happened.

Both Nelson Lee and Inspector Lennard were puzzled. The display of so many Green Triangle signs seemed pointless.

But Nelson Lee, who knew Professor Zingrave's methods so well, waited expectantly.

CHAPTER 10.

Sir John Brent's Ordeal!

IT was fortunate that Sir John Brent was a man of robust health and strong will-power, otherwise he would have collapsed under the dreadful strain of that eventful evening.

By the time his car reached London, he had partially composed himself. He had come to the conclusion, in fact, that the hounds of the Green Triangle were on his trail, and that to escape from them was out of the question.

His only course was to wait—to play for time.

As long as he obeyed the Green Triangle dictates, his son was safe. After all, he was required to do nothing until the morrow. By then, perhaps, a solution might present itself to him. Yes, Alf was

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safe for the time being. It would be sheer madness to precipitate any drastic action with regard to the boy.

To-night he had to think of his wife. He had been away from home too long as it was.

No sooner had he entered his West End house than Reade, his butler, hastened forward to take his overcoat and hat. And the butler was shocked by Sir John's changed appearance. He had been looking haggard all day; but now his appearance was positively alarming. He had seemed to grow thinner, and his eyes were sunken.

"You're looking ill, Sir John," said the old butler concernedly.

"I'm all right, Reade—I'm all right," said Sir John. "I mustn't be ill. Do you hear? I can't afford to be ill!"

He spoke so fiercely, so strangely, that Reade looked at him almost in fear.

"Didn't you bring Master Alfred, sir?" he faltered.

Sir John winced.

"No. I—— Master Alfred came part of the way with me, but I decided in the end not to bring him," said Sir John vaguely.

"There's a gentleman waiting in the library, sir——"

"A gentleman!" said Sir John sharply. "A stranger, Reade? Do you know him?"

"No, Sir John; he gave the name of Mr. Smith, but he assured me that he had come by appointment, and that you would welcome him. He said that some sort of arrangement was made earlier this evening——"

"Good heavens!" muttered Sir John, passing a hand over his brow.

The Green Triangle again! Already Zingrave had sent one of his infernal emissaries—and actually to Sir John's own house.

But the baronet's attention was distracted at that moment by the sight of two gentlemen who were descending the wide stairs. He recognised them at once. They were Harley Street specialists—Sir Malcolm Dunne-Cannon and Dr. James Royston. Their gravity was such that Sir John had a sensation as though a cold hand had clutched at his heart.

"Is there any—news?" he asked hoarsely, advancing to meet them.

Reade discreetly withdrew.

"We expected you back earlier, Sir John," said Dr. Royston quietly. "Sir Malcolm and I have been waiting for you. I am afraid you must prepare yourself——"

"No!" panted the unhappy man. "You are not telling me that Lady Brent is—dead?"

"It would be cruel to keep the truth from you," said Sir Malcolm Dunne-Cannon, as he took the baronet by the arm. "I am afraid we can give you no hope. Lady Brent is dying, and it is doubtful if she will live throughout the night."

"And I didn't bring my son," muttered Sir John tremulously.

"We are not pretending that we understand this case," said Dr. Royston frankly. "We are absolutely baffled, Sir John; we only know that Lady Brent is in a state of coma, that her pulse is weak, and growing still weaker. The brain appears to be paralysed, and as the brain is directly associated with the heart——"

"Dying," almost whispered Sir John. "Tell me—is there any hope that she will recover consciousness before the—the end?"

"None at all, I should say," replied Sir Malcolm.

"Thank Heaven!"

"What!" ejaculated Dr. Royston. "What did you say, Sir John?"

"I—I am thinking of my son," said Sir John, with an effort. "Even if he had come, he would not have been able to speak with his mother. Perhaps it is for the best. I must force myself to think so. If I don't, I shall go mad."

"Come, come, this won't do," said Sir Malcolm almost sharply. "Has something else happened?"

"No, no—nothing that I can tell you of," said Sir John. "Gentlemen, I beg of you to leave me. I—I must be alone. I think you will understand——"

He could say no more, and the two specialists, deeply worried, took their departure. They shared the opinion that they would have another patient on their hands in a very short time. But they realised that they would do more harm than good by remaining now.

They were disappointed, too. They had expected Sir John to bear the blow more bravely. Yet he was obviously on the point of collapse. How could they know of the dread agony which tortured Sir John?

His wife dying, and his son threatened with murder unless he—Sir John—became the slave of a criminal gang!

Few men have been called upon to suffer such an ordeal as Sir John Brent was now suffering.

He went to the library, walking like an enfeebled old man. He must have brandy. It would give him new strength—a false, temporary strength, perhaps, but——

In the library doorway he came to a sudden halt, every thought shattered. For

there, standing with his back to the cheerful fire, was Professor Cyrus Zingrave!

CHAPTER 11.

An Offer of Help!

"YOU!" exclaimed Sir John, and his voice was a croak.

"I am sorry, Sir John, if I have given you a little shock," came Professor Zingrave's silky voice. "Dear me! You are showing the strain rather badly—and I feared as much. I am glad I came, for I may be able to help you."

Sir John could scarcely believe the evidence of his eyes and ears. The whole library seemed to be whirling round. But he managed to close the door, and he advanced with a sudden new strength.

"So you are the visitor—the man who called himself Mr. Smith!" he said thickly. "You scoundrel! You infernal hound! How dare you come to my house? Have you not tortured me sufficiently——"

"Come, come!" Zingrave's voice was sharp. "You mustn't let yourself go like that, Sir John."

"Do you realise that I have but to shout, and call the servants, and you will be handed over to the police?" panted Sir John. "You are wanted by the police, my friend! They will be only too glad to lay their hands on you! By Heaven! You have committed an act of insane folly by coming here——"

"One moment!" interrupted the professor. "If anything happens to prevent my free departure from this house, your son will die. Surely you do not think that I neglected that simple precaution? I left very precise instructions with my—er—assistants."

Sir John sank into a chair, his fury burnt out by its very intensity.

"So you have come to torture me," he muttered. "Upstairs, my wife is dying. Somewhere you have my son, and he, too, is threatened with death."

"Your son will come to no harm so long as you obey my instructions," replied Zingrave. "Let me assure you, Sir John, that I have not come here this evening—and at great risk, I may add—to torture you, but to help you."

"You?" Sir John looked at him with burning eyes. "You have come here to help me! Do you expect me to believe——"

"I know of your great trouble," interrupted Zingrave gently. "There has been quite a lot in the newspapers concerning Lady Brent's mysterious brain malady,

and I am given to understand that the specialists are baffled. Perhaps I shall not be baffled."

Sir John looked at him as though he were a ghost.

"What—what do you mean?" he panted.

"I mean that I am a specialist, too," replied Zingrave. "For many years—before I was unfortunate enough to come under the notice of the police—I enjoyed a great reputation as a scientist. I have made a careful study of brain disorders. There is not another man in London—in England—who knows as much as I do about the human brain."

"Great heavens, man, what are you suggesting?" asked Sir John, with mingled fury and amazement. "Do you suppose for one moment that I will allow you——"

"Let me repeat, my friend, that I have come here to help you," said Zingrave deliberately. "You have already agreed to work for the League of the Green Triangle, and as an earnest of my appreciation, I will endeavour to save the life of your wife."

"You!" muttered Sir John. "No! Any man but you!"

"Is your loathing of me so great that you will refuse my offer—that you will send me away from this house, knowing that I am perhaps the only man who can restore your wife to health?" asked Zingrave. "Listen to me, Sir John! I am convinced that I can save Lady Brent! She is dying, and without the correct treatment she will be dead before morning! You fool! I tell you I have come here to help you."

There was such an intensity in his voice that Sir John was strangely impressed. He was in that condition, too, when he was ready to clutch at a straw.

"You think—you really think that you can do something?" he whispered, staggering to his feet. "Heaven forbid that I should leave any stone unturned——"

"Then go upstairs and dismiss the nurse who is by your wife's bedside," said Zingrave firmly. "You will understand, Sir John, that whatever I do will be done in absolute secret. Not a soul must know—not even the nurse. Come! I will go upstairs with you, and I will wait in an empty room while you get rid of the nurse. Then you will admit me."

There was a note of command in his voice, and, like a man in a dream, Sir John went to the door. He assured himself—at Zingrave's suggestion—that the staircase was empty. Then, quickly, they mounted. It was easy enough for Zingrave to slip into the empty room Sir

(Continued on page 24.)

Another Dose of Fun-Mixture to Cure Your Blues!



HANDFORTH'S Weekly

No. 53. Vol. 2.

EDITORIAL STAFF.

April 30th, 1932.

**WATSON
WARBLES ON
SPRING**

Editor-in-Chief	E. O. Handforth
Editor	E. O. Handforth
Chief Sub-Editor	E. O. Handforth
Literary Editor	E. O. Handforth
Art Editor	E. O. Handforth
Rest of Staff	E. O. Handforth

**BITS FROM
BOOKS**

Cut out by Reggie Pitt

WITH the exception of summer, autumn and winter, there is no season in the whole year so pleasant as Spring. It is the season when buds begin, and centre-forwards cease shooting. We know that cricket is near; that fine old game which was described by Reggie Pitt in his mock dictionary as "a game in which funks are often bowled."

For some reason Spring is always associated with lambs. Some people, whenever they see a lamb, immediately think of Spring. Others, like Fatty Little, think of mint-sauce.

In Spring, Clarence is a very happy Fellowe. Most poets get a little potty at this time of the year—those at least, that are not potty at all times of the year.

Have you ever thought why Spring is so favoured by the poets? If you haven't, I'll let you into the great secret. It is because Spring is the only season to provide any decent rhymes.

Think of the scope of a Spring poet! Sing, wing, thing, fling, ling (common heather), sting (in reference to bees and wasps), swing, cling, bring—Oh, dozens of them. But consider Winter, consider Summer! Splinter, squinter, pepperminter—or glummer, drummer, rummer and hummer. No decent rhymes for any season but Spring. As for Autumn, that ass de Valerie, with his sonnet beginning:

"Chills, and the men who've caught 'em,
Are signs that we're in Autumn,"

is the only poet who has even mentioned it.

I loathe Spring Poets. It shows a feeble mind, I think, to want to write bilge every time the sun shines or a bird sings.

But, though I do not hold with writing poetry about the Spring, one sometimes gets a fine idea which cannot be expressed except in poetry. Thinking about the buttercups the other day, an idea struck me, and I put it into a little verse, which I think neat. This is it:—
(No, it isn't. Spring poets are barred. Savvy?
—E. O. H.)

"MANY people have actually accused Stevenson of being untrue to life in his fable of the imp in the bottle."—
Absurd! Why even our own porter, Josh Cuttle Esq., keeps a little spirit in a bottle. It is a spirit known as a Djinn.

"The Marseillaise" was written by Rouget de Lisle to encourage the soldiers through a campaign which he, like them, went through unflinchingly.—Nevertheless, he made a song about it.

"There are still many little mysteries connected with wild flowers."—Yes, and the biggest mystery of the lot is: What makes 'em wild?

"They sneaked into the woodshed to smoke their cigarettes, but they were too early, for the odd job man was still there."—As usual, it's the early worm that gets the bird.

"The head and front of my offending has this extent."—How many offenders have also been called out to the front by the Head?

"A Toucan is a bird with a very large bill."—I suppose Toucan is another name for Tailor, then.

"He led her gently up the garden."—Tut, tut!

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The Latest Handforthian Masterpiece.**TRACKETT GRIM'S SACRIFICE!**

Splendid Incomplete Detective Story by

E. O. HANDFORTH

IT was purely by chance that Trackett Grim happened on the case which was to involve such a sacrifice for him. He was walking through the country town of Knowe Hope one evening about eleven pip emma. He had been to a racecourse—not to back the wayward geegee, but to search for and arrest a gang of pickpockets.

He had seen nothing of the pickpockets, but, when he started to go back home, he made the unfortunate discovery that his own pocket had been picked, and he had been cleared out of every scrape of dough, together with his return ticket, two pen-nibs, a map of the Underworld and a lock of Splinter's hair. There was nothing for it but to walk back to London. So he plodded a lonely hoof through the countryside, and promised the pickpockets certain inconveniences when he caught them.



It was while he was passing the door of a bank that he made a sudden discovery. To any ordinary person everything would have seemed all right; but Trackett Grim's marvellous perception saw at once that something was wrong. No sooner had he caught sight of the gagged and bound watchman, the burglars' tools and cylinder of oxygen on the steps of the bank, than his mind flashed to the wild surmise that there had been, or was being, a burglary.

Improbable as this was, it turned out to be correct. Even as Grim stood there the burglar came out, stuffing tenners and tanners into his pocket.

The burglar was a man about six-feet ten, or possibly seven feet. He had a chest like a gasworks, and muscles like great hawsers. His face was an unpleasant piece of work altogether, and the look he gave Trackett Grim was very far from affectionate.

He sauntered slowly and heavily down the road, weighed down by notes and coins.

Trackett Grim blinked at him.

"Dash it all!" exclaimed the famous detective peevishly. "He's got clean away."

However, though Grim feared no foe in shining armour, he had decided, after careful thought, not to rush after the burglar and choke him on the spot. He thought it much better to follow the man, find out his lair, and then send somebody in to arrest him.

He did so immediately. Stalking the man so carefully that his suspicion was aroused immediately, he tracked him all the way to London. The burglar, pausing only to shake hands with a bluebottle on point duty, entered a house quite near to Grim's own flat.

Grim was standing outside, wondering whether to call a policeman, when who should come along but his faithful assistant Splinter. The two embraced each other affectionately.

"Guv'nor!" gasped the lad joyfully. "As you didn't return, I wondered if anything had happened to you. I've just been to the police-station about you."

"Never mind that, Splinter," rapped out Grim forcibly. "I want you to do me a favour. You see that house over there."

"Yes," answered Splinter, who was nearly as keensighted as Grim himself. "I can see it distinctly."

"I want you to go in there at once. Take these darbies with you. You will see a man in there. Arrest him. Put the bracelets on him. Knock him down if he struggles."

"Right-ho, Guv'nor."

"You can't mistake the man. You'll know him at once. He has that kind of face. Go along, my lad. Stay," he added quickly. "Let us shake hands before you go."

Somewhat surprised, Splinter shook his "guv'nor's" hand, and then marched into the house, jingling his gyves.

Trackett Grim signalled to a taxi-cab near-by.

"Wait here a moment," said the great detective huskily. "I shall probably want you to drive to the nearest hospital in a moment or two."

"Certainly, sir!"

They waited in silence. Trackett Grim's eyes were moist with tears, and he wasn't ashamed of it, either.

Presently Splinter came out.

(Continued at foot of column 4.)

**THE CHAFFINCH**By **CECIL**

HE sat by the
A chaffinch
which
And the

rang

Through the fog
seem bright-
We gave up our
With Ulysses ve
And listened v

"Whee—hoppo

"Whee-hoppo
Was surely the
That sunshine wa
To the meado
King;

So we couldn't s
A smile at each o
As the chaffinc

"Whee—hoppo

"Whee-hoppo
Crowell cast a
And his voice ce

Said, "What sta
Perhaps I should
I want your atten
The chaffinch st

"Whee—hoppo

"Whee-hoppo
place

Of a frown, we
A smile stealing
And a look of

He said, keenly p
"What's that I
The chaffinch

"Whee—hoppo

The words were
tongue,
For Crowell,
blame,

Had picked up a
It at him, with

But still from the
With noble per

We heard
exclaim:

"Whee—hoppo

CROWELL

AND

HOT WATER!

By **VIVIAN TRAVERS**

NOW that the warmer season is coming, may we appeal to the St. Franks' authorities to do something with our hot-water system. It has given us a very lively time this winter. Its circulation is nearly as bad as that of the local paper.

The thing first began with noises in the water pipes. These noises were thought, at first, to be either the end of the world or an earthquake. A few bolder fellows investigated them, and traced them to the hot-water radiators.

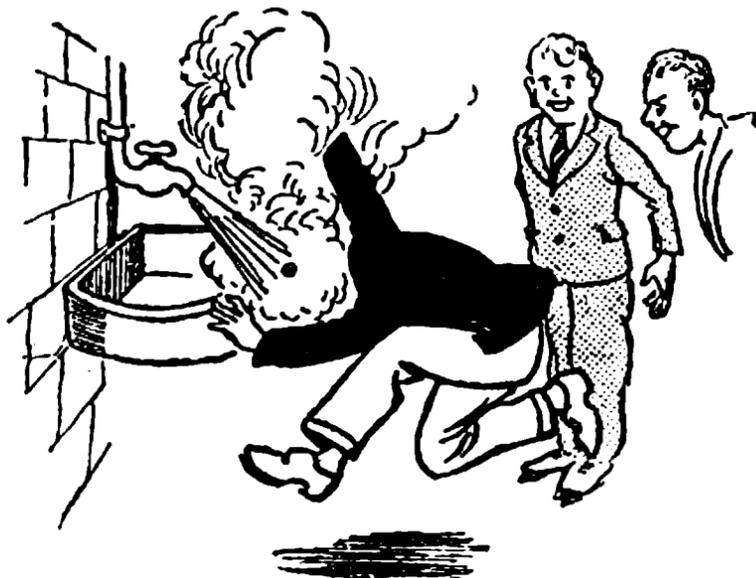
Josh Cuttle, being sent for, stated that the noises were caused by (a) the Government; (b) the weather and (c), ghosts. Neither of these explanations appealed to Mr. Wilkes, who sent for an expert. It was then revealed that there was air in the pipes. All we had to do, to stop the noises, was to turn on the tap and let the hot water run out.

This was all right up to a point, but the noises happened every evening for weeks. Passages and rooms were filled with the steam of the escaping hot water.

Then, suddenly, the noises ceased of their own accord. We hailed the situation gladly, until we discovered that it was due to a stoppage of the inflow, which prohibited the water from reaching the pipes at all. This was discovered just in time to prevent St. Frank's being removed to Mars. By the Head's orders, the fires were raked out, and the whole school marched off in an orderly fashion to a distance of one mile, and sat down to wait for something to happen.

Fortunately it didn't happen, and we returned. Josh Cuttle, working like a Trojan, put things right, and the hot-water system actually went well for three weeks. Then it developed the wobbles again.

Handy discovered it first. He went to the basin to wash, and turned on the hot water faucet. Nothing happened. He gave the tap a shake, and still nothing in the nature of heated H₂O made its appearance. So he did the Handyish



trick of stooping down and squinting up inside the tap.

No sooner had he done so than a stream of boiling hot water leaped out and got him squarely in the optic. That was what the water had been waiting for, of course. Handy was led, in a state of indignation and dampness, to the sanny, and he went about with his eye in a plaster for over a week.

This sort of thing won't do. I wouldn't have minded so much, but I got caught in nearly the same way. A scalded wrist was my little reward, which is, perhaps, a little better than a scalded eye.

If the hot water system isn't regulated by next winter, I can predict that somebody will be in very hot water indeed.

V. T.

SIGNS OF SPRING

- "Keep Off the Grass."
- "No Bathing Allowed."
- "Cornets or Wafers."
- "No Hawkers, No Circulars."

MORE POETRY

"Why is it, little dicky-bird
That thou art such an acrobat?
Why is your voice so seldom heard?
Tell me that?"

"I'll tell thee, thou poetical
Young idiot, the reason's that
I ain't a dicky-bird at all;
I'm a bat."

ANSWER TO A READER

Walter Mellon writes: "Can you tell me where I can find a collection of good stories?"

Yes. In any New York skyscraper.

Trackett Grim's Sacrifice!

(Continued from column 2.)

He hit the ground twice on his way to the opposite side of the road, where he slid into the gutter in a heap. Grim and the driver picked him up and put him in the cab.

"Now step on it!" ordered Grim, fiercely.

(To be continued.)

(What is Trackett Grim's sacrifice? What, if anything, will happen to the big, bold, bad bandit? Make sure you don't miss the conclusion of this unbelievable story **NEXT WEEK.**)



VALERIE.

Window and sang;
Of red, black and

And of his melody

Room, and made it

restles

With keenest delight:

"Pop—pooeeyu!"

"The refrain
Message of spring
Coming again

Where Cricket is

Other

Continued to sing:

"Pop—pooeeyu!"

"With a turn
Frown at the tree,
Ponderingly stern,
Of things do I see?
Attention

on!"

"Listen to me!"

"Pop—pooeeyu!"

"And in

Could clearly descry
His face

Light in his eye;

ing,

"hearing?"

Self made reply:

It short from his

to felt much to

er and flung
bellent aim;

dance

small chaffinch

"Pop—pooeeyu!"

SHADOWS OF DOOM!

(Continued from page 20.)

John indicated. Sir John himself quietly entered the sick-room.

Lady Brent was lying unconscious—pale with the pallor of death itself. So feebly was she breathing that Sir John feared, as he bent over her, that life had already departed.

"She is very weak, sir," whispered the nurse, her voice full of compassion.

"Yes, yes—leave me," said Sir John, waving a hand.

"But Dr. Royston gave me strict instructions not to go away——"

"Leave me!" repeated Sir John harshly. "Go downstairs, nurse—wait there until I send for you. Do you understand? You are not to come up again until I send for you."

The nurse, quite frightened, tip-toed out. And a minute later Professor Zingrave crept in.

"Well?" panted Sir John.

Zingrave bent over the patient, and he nodded.

"She is near to death," he whispered. "Perhaps I have come too late. But I will do my best, Sir John. Give me half an hour—alone!"

"Alone!" ejaculated Sir John. "No, I cannot——"

"Then you would prefer to see her die," said Zingrave, pointing to the door. "This is the only chance."

Sir John Brent went.

CHAPTER 12.

The Miracle!

THE door of the sick-room softly opened. Sir John was sitting on a lounge, out on the landing. He had lost all count of time. His brain was dulled. It seemed to him that hours had elapsed, and more than once during that dread period of waiting he had been seized by a desire to rush into the sick-room, seize Zingrave, and throw him bodily out of the house. But always he had been stopped by one thought. Perhaps there was a chance!

"Sir John!" came a soft whisper.

The baronet rose unsteadily to his feet. Zingrave took his arm, and they entered the sick-room. The door was softly closed.

"You must keep calm," came the professor's gentle voice. "There must be no outcry, Sir John. Bear that in mind. And remember, too, you must not breathe a word of what I have done. See!"

They went across to the bed, where soft, shaded lights were glowing. And Sir John Brent, who was prepared for he knew not what, only just succeeded in stifling the startled shout which arose in his throat. For the change in

Lady Brent was so astounding that it seemed impossible.

Half an hour ago he had left her with the waxen pallor of death on her face now that same face glowed with colour. The haggard lines had gone, and there was a peaceful expression.

"But—but this is unbelievable!" panted Sir John, almost choking.

Bending over the bed, he saw that his wife's breathing was strong and regular. More amazing still, she slowly opened her eyes, and a gentle, childlike smile appeared on her face. It was only for a fleeting moment, and then the eyes closed again, and Lady Brent uttered a peaceful, contented sigh.

"Do not disturb her," came Zingrave's whisper. "She needs sleep—and she is, indeed, sleeping now. Her pulse is quite normal, and except for one little feature, which I will presently tell you of, she is restored to complete health."

"But—but this is a miracle!" exclaimed Sir John, his own face flushing with joy. "They told me that my wife was dying! And—and now——"

"I am cleverer than the men of Harley Street," murmured Zingrave. "Your wife lives—and she will continue to live."

Sir John suddenly turned upon him, and he clasped Zingrave's hand in a firm, fervent grip.

"I wronged you," he said huskily. "I thought you were my enemy, and——"

Trembling with emotion, he stopped, for no further words would come. In the excess of his joy, he failed to remember that this man was a relentless schemer—a fiend in human form.

"Do not thank me—yet," said Zingrave, and there was a strange, grim note in his voice.

"What—what do you mean?" asked Sir John, with a start.

"It is fair that you should know the truth," continued the professor. "I have only given Lady Brent half the treatment."

"But—but——"

"You see her restored to almost normal health," continued Zingrave. "But it is only—almost. In the morning she will awaken, but her mind will be like that of a six-months-old baby."

"I—don't—understand!"

"Lady Brent will remain in that condition—until I complete the cure," explained Zingrave with deadly calmness. "And I shall not complete the cure, Sir John, until you have obeyed all the dictates of the Green Triangle."

Sir John started back, for now, in a flood, he realised the dreadful situation.

"I would remind you that I am the only man who can apply this treatment to Lady Brent," continued Zingrave. "I think you are thoroughly satisfied on that point now. You have every cause to be grateful to me. Sir John, for, at least, I have saved your wife's life. And I will restore her to you, in full possession of her normal wits, when you have served my ends. And let me remind you once again that if you refuse to obey, not only will your son die, but your wife will for ever remain in her present condition."

Yet Sir John did not fully understand. But what he did realise was that now Professor Zingrave had a double hold on him; he was held as if in a steel net.

CHAPTER 13.

The Impossible!

SIR JOHN gazed at his enemy with strangely mixed feelings—gratitude for his wife's safety, fear of this demon's threats.

"No, don't talk of that!" he muttered unsteadily. "To-morrow, perhaps, I shall begin to understand what all this means. In heaven's name, man, how did you do this? By what magic——"

"There was no magic, Sir John," interrupted Zingrave. "My knowledge of the human brain is extensive. By applying certain forms of massage I achieved what you see. Later—if you serve me well—I will complete the cure. For the moment, *au revoir!*"

He refused to discuss the matter any more; escorted by Sir John he quietly descended the stairs and a moment later he passed out into the night. Coming back from the front door, Sir John met the nurse.

"I beg your pardon, sir," she said. "I thought I heard——"

She broke off, gazing at Sir John in wonder. He looked a different man. His face was flushed; many of the haggard lines had gone; and his eyes were glowing almost feverishly.

"Go up, nurse—go up!" said Sir John, pointing to the stairs. "I will join you soon."

She half believed that Lady Brent had died—and that Sir John's strange manner was caused by the shock.

He went straight to the library, and he rang up Sir Malcolm Dunne-Cannon and requested him to come round immediately, bringing with him, if possible, Dr. Royston. The specialist wanted to know the reason for this abrupt summons, but Sir John did not satisfy him.

He hurried upstairs, and entered the sick-room. The nurse turned away from the bed, her face glowing with wonder and happiness.

"What has happened, Sir John?" she asked breathlessly.

"I am as much in the dark as you," replied Sir John, with full truth. "I can only thank heaven that Lady Brent has taken such a turn for the better."

"I have never seen anything like it," declared the nurse, gazing down upon that peaceful face. "An hour ago I would have said that Lady Brent was sinking so rapidly——" She broke off, and looked at Sir John again—curiously. "But don't you know how it happened?" she asked.

"I? No, how could I?"

"But you were here—with her."

Sir John started.

"Yes, yes, of course," he said vaguely. "But I cannot tell you anything, nurse, I—I only know that my wife changed. I could not believe it myself. It is all so mysterious—and yet so wonderful."

Even in that relieved mood which had seized him, he realised that he was tasting the first fruits of his dread "compact" with Professor Cyrus Zingrave.

Zingrave had warned him to say nothing of the real truth. Without that warning, Sir John would have been in a dilemma.

One result, however, as Zingrave had cunningly foreseen—was that Sir John was no longer infuriated. He accepted his position in a much calmer spirit. Zingrave had done him a service! How, then, could he maintain his former enraged attitude?

He was glad of one thing. Before Zingrave had gone, he—Sir John—had scrawled a few words on one of his cards; a brief note to Alf. Sir John had not forgotten the boy.

From somewhere in the house came the shrill of an electric bell. Soon afterwards, soft footsteps on the stairs.

"They are here," said Sir John briefly. "Let them in, nurse."

"They?" repeated the surprised nurse.

"Dr. Royston and Sir Malcolm. I 'phoned."

The nurse went to the door, and on the landing she came face to face with the grave-looking specialists.

"She is—dead?" murmured Sir Malcolm.

"Tell me, Sir Malcolm, please!" urged the nurse. "Did you, or Dr. Royston, give the patient any special treatment before you left?"

"Why, no—nothing," said Sir Malcolm, astonished by the nurse's expression. "Has anything happened?"

"Will you come in, please?" said the girl softly.

They went in, and neither man could repress the exclamation of amazement which rose to his lips. Each, individually, had given up Lady Brent for dead. Their first glance at her, now, staggered them.

"This is amazing!" said Dr. Royston, aghast. "I cannot understand—— What do you think has happened, Sir Malcolm?"

"A miracle, I think," said the other specialist quietly.

Sir John stood by—nervous, excited, and anxious.

"I cannot explain this unbelievable change," he said, forestalling their questions. "I don't know what happened, gentlemen. I—I found my wife like this. She—she suddenly took a turn for the better."

"Were you actually by the bedside when this turn came?"

"Yes, Sir Malcolm," put in the nurse. "I should have been here, but Sir John sent me away."

"Indeed!" said the specialist. "Why did you send the nurse away, Sir John?"

"I thought my wife was dying—you gave me full warning—and I wanted to be alone," muttered Sir John. "Good heavens, man, is this a time to ask me questions? I want you to examine my wife—to assure me that there is no danger of a sudden relapse."

The specialists thought they understood. Without delay they examined the patient. As a result, their stupefaction was greater than ever. For Lady Brent's pulse was normal; her breathing was as regular and peaceful as that

of a child. There was no trace of temperature. She was, in fact, sleeping the sleep of perfect health.

CHAPTER 14.

The Cunning of Zingrave!

THE truth of that "miracle" was so simple as to be ridiculous, had those two learned Harley Street specialists only known.

For Zingrave had tricked them neatly.

The wily professor, after leaving the house, walked only to the corner of the quiet, residential street. Here he turned into another thoroughfare. A moment later he was seated in a small saloon car and was being driven rapidly out of London.

At the wheel sat Mr. Simpson Lorne, the supposed artist.

It was characteristic of Zingrave's daring that he should have come openly to London in this way—he an ex-convict, a man for whom the police of the entire country were searching!

He chuckled as he sat back amongst the cushions of the car; he chuckled over the success of his scheming.

The "cure" had been effected in a matter of seconds—and Professor Zingrave was no magic worker, either. His story of massage was pure invention. He had restored Lady Brent by the simplest of operations.

And Zingrave was the one man who could perform that operation—since he knew the precise nature of the unfortunate lady's malady!

He had every reason to know, for one of the Green Triangle agents, earlier, had secretly administered the drug which had so affected Lady Brent's health.

It was all so easy!

Lady Brent had had no cause to suspect the French maid who had entered her employ some weeks earlier. The woman was exemplary in her conduct; she was, in fact, one of the smartest maids Lady Brent had ever employed.

This woman, however, was a Green Triangle agent! And on that fateful night, before Lady Brent had gone to the theatre, her maid, in arranging her hair, had "accidentally" pricked her neck. So trivial had it been that Lady Brent had thought nothing of the matter, had forgotten it within five minutes.

Yet that apparently innocent prick had introduced the toxin into her blood—an almost unknown toxin which had the effect of paralyzing and, indeed, poisoning the brain.

The specialists had been baffled because such a case had never before come within their province. They knew of no known remedy; and all their efforts to revive the patient had been in vain.

Zingrave, knowing exactly what was happening—for he had engineered everything. His one object was to get Sir John Brent into his power, and he had certainly succeeded.

Left alone with the patient, Zingrave had done nothing except inject a partial dose of the necessary anti-toxin into Lady Heath's blood. So tiny was the puncture—just beneath Lady Brent's left ear—that scarcely any sign of it remained.

But within half an hour the antidote had done its marvellous work. But it would require another dose before Lady Brent recovered the normal use of her brain, which was still partially paralysed. She was now in no danger, but Zingrave's hold over Sir John was greater than ever.

Months earlier Zingrave had used a drug known as the "G. S. Fluid" on a number of St. Frank's boys; he had utilised it to deaden their brains and to turn them into automatons.

This other drug was a mere variation of that same "G. S. Fluid"—an improvement. During Zingrave's weeks of idleness he had made many intricate experiments; and he was, for all his villainy, one of the cleverest scientists the world had ever known. His knowledge of chemistry, of drugs, of poisons, was profound.

He could afford to laugh as he was driven southwards. Sir John Brent credited him with marvellous powers as a physician; but, in all truth, he was nothing but a cheat. But what did this matter? He had achieved his object. He had earned Sir John's gratitude, and there wasn't the slightest doubt that the baronet would now be a very amenable "servant."

The car arrived openly at the country cottage. It did not matter in the slightest if any of the local inhabitants saw it, for the harmless Mr. Lorne, who owned the car, was always driving about in it.

He took the precaution to drive straight into the little garage which adjoined the cottage, and he closed the doors. Not until the headlights were extinguished did Professor Zingrave get out. There was an inner door, communicating direct with the house, and he used this. Simpson Lorne followed him. They found themselves in a comfortable sitting-room, where a soft lamp was burning. A cheerful fire was glowing in the grate, too, for the spring night was chilly.

Supper was already laid on the table, and Zingrave rubbed his soft hands together as he surveyed the appetising-looking viands.

"You are an excellent caterer, my good Lorne," he said approvingly. "The weeks I have spent under your roof have been as comfortable as they could possibly be, in the circumstances. I think I was wise in my choice."

"Glad to hear it," said Lorne, smiling. "If you'll sit down, and make a start, I'll have the coffee ready in a couple of jiffies."

"I understand that two men were left here during our absence?" said Zingrave. "They had better go now."

Lorne nodded, and went out. He soon returned to report that the men had gone.

"The boy hasn't caused any trouble," he added. "He seems a bit stunned by all that has happened."

"Ah yes, the boy," nodded Zingrave. "I think perhaps, I had better see him before supper."

He went out of the room, passed along a little passage, and shot the commonplace bolt of a commonplace door. He passed down into the kind of cellar that such a cottage as this would be expected to possess.

There was a pile of coal in one corner, and some firewood in another. Zingrave went across to the ordinary-looking brick wall and pulled hard on an iron stake which projected. In-

stantly, a narrow portion of the wall, like a door, swung open, revealing an inner compartment.

He passed through, closing the door after him. He now found himself within a second cellar, the existence of which nobody could guess at. But it didn't look much like a cellar.

There was a carpet on the floor, the walls were dry and distempered. There was a comfortable single bed, a table, a chair, and a little book-case filled with books. A candle was burning on the table. Alf Brent lay in bed, but now he hoisted himself up quickly, and he stared at Zingrave with feverish anger and anxiety.

his father, felt an overwhelming sense of relief and joy.

His imprisonment had suddenly lost half its terrors.

CHAPTER 15.

Good News!

ARCHIE GLENTHORNE came downstairs early the next morning.

He surprised the natives considerably and he fairly astounded Phipps, his valet, by accepting Phipps' choice of necktie



It was early in the morning that the police found, pinned to the door of the bank, the dreaded warning. What did it mean?

"What have you done to my father?" he panted.

"Come, come, young man, there's no need for you to bark at me," said Zingrave gently. "Your father is at home, unhampered in any way. And I am glad to tell you that your mother has taken such a splendid turn for the better that she is quite out of danger."

It sounded too good to be true.

"You're lying to me!" said Alf hoarsely. "You're a fiend! You're only telling me this—"

"Your father was thoughtful enough to write you a few words," interrupted Zingrave, handing Alf the card. "Don't be foolish, boy! Why should I lie to you? Your mother is quite out of danger."

And Alf, reading those few words, scrawled by

without question, and by hurrying over his toilet at a speed which equalled that of Handforth himself.

"What ho! What ho!" sang out Archie, as he dashed downstairs, in the Ancient House, to find a number of Removites in the lobby. "Morning, and all that, what? Dash it all, I thought I was going to be first! Any letter from dear old Alf?"

Nipper and Handforth, who were amongst those present, shook their heads—and Archie was rather surprised to see that they were looking unusually genial and happy.

"Not a line, Archie," replied Nipper. "We thought that Alf might have written——"

"Good gad! You don't suppose that he'd write to anybody but me?" put in Archie. "I mean to say, I'm his pal——"

"There's not a letter for you, either, Archie; I've already looked in the rack," said Nipper.

"But if you'll glance at this newspaper——"

"Dash the newspaper!" said Archie dismally. "Bother the blighting newspaper! Odds tragedies and disasters! This looks frightfully foul, laddies! Alf's failure to write can only mean that his poor old mater——"

"Before you waste a lot of sympathy on Alf, look at this newspaper, you chump!" said Handforth loudly. "Alf's all right. No need to worry about him at all."

Archie took the newspaper impatiently—and then he jumped. On the front page there was a prominent headline: "Harley Street Specialists Baffled by 'Miracle' Recovery."

"It is an open secret," began the report, "that all hope of saving Lady Brent's life was abandoned last night. As reported in this paper yesterday, Lady Brent was suddenly stricken with a dread brain malady, and two famous specialists were baffled. Late last night Lady Brent took a sudden and dramatic turn for the better. The specialists, however, are quite at a loss to explain——"

"Good gad!" ejaculated Archie, his eyes sparkling. "I mean to say, dashed good gad! This is most toppingly priceless material, laddies! Alf's mater well on the road to recovery, what?"

"We're all pleased, of course," said Nipper. "When poor old Alf went away last night, we thought that his mother was dying. The rummy thing is that even the specialists don't know what was the matter with her."

"I haven't much faith in these giddy specialists," said Handforth disparagingly. "I was taken to see one myself once. Something wrong with my tonsils, or something. The chap took one look down my throat, said that an operation wasn't necessary, and out came his hand for three guineas! Plain highway robbery! I could have told the fathead that I didn't want my tonsils carved out!"

Everybody, of course, was delighted with the news; that is to say, everybody who was on friendly, intimate terms with Alf Brent. The great bulk of the school took little or no notice of the newspaper reports.

Nipper happened to meet Mr. Wilkes, his housemaster, after breakfast, and "Old Wilkey" was looking very bucked.

"Excellent news about Brent, eh, young fellow?" he said genially. "Excellent news! I felt dreadfully sorry for him last night, when he went away. His mother seems to have startled the whole medical world."

"I expect he'll be coming back to-day, sir," said Nipper.

"No, I think not," replied the housemaster. "I had a letter from Sir John this morning. He has asked me to excuse his son for some days—perhaps as long as a fortnight. In the circumstances, of course, I can't insist upon a quick return. Perhaps it's better that Brent should remain at home."

Little did Mr. Wilkes suspect that Sir John had written that letter to the dictation of the League of the Green Triangle! Sir John knew that Alf could not return yet—and it was necessary for him to make some sort of explanation. So he had written to Mr. Wilkes, briefly

asking for permission to keep Alf at home for a while.

Thus, not a soul at St. Frank's guessed what had happened to the unfortunate Alf.

CHAPTER 16.

An Urgent Call

THE principal topic of conversation at St. Frank's that morning was not the remarkable recovery of Lady Brent, but the exciting happenings of yesterday in Bannington.

The school was a bit disappointed to learn that nothing spectacular had happened during the night. There had been no daring attack on the bank, there had been no hold-ups, or robberies of any kind. Those Green Triangle warnings, in fact, had more or less fizzled out.

As soon as lessons were over, in the afternoon, Nipper went along to the headmaster's house to have a chat with his "guv'nor." For Nipper was keen upon getting hold of some inside information. Nelson Lee, of all people, would know of any fresh development.

"Is it safe to go into Bannington, guv'nor?" asked Nipper cheerfully. "Some of the chaps thought about running over, and they were wondering if it would be safe."

"Quite safe," smiled Nelson Lee. "Mr. Lennard rang me up this morning to say that nothing further had developed."

"Seems to be a bit of a wash-out, sir."

"Yes, it seems to be."

"But you don't think it is?" asked Nipper, struck by a certain note in Lee's voice.

"Those Green Triangle people don't do things without a reason, Nipper," said the detective. "I will admit that I am puzzled—but I have my suspicions. There was some definite reason for all those Green Triangle scares last night. I have been expecting something to happen to-day—but, so far, all has been quiet!"

Zing-zing—zing-zing!

The twin bells of the telephone purred musically, and Nelson Lee lifted the receiver off the instrument.

"This is the headmaster of St. Frank's speaking," he said.

"That you, Lee?" came Inspector Lennard's familiar voice. "Glad I've caught you. Can you come straight over?"

"Yes; if it's important," replied Lee.

He placed a hand over the mouthpiece, and glanced at Nipper.

"It's happened!" he murmured, and there was a world of grimness in his voice.

"Yes, a new development," went on the chief inspector, as though in verification of what Lee had just said to Nipper. "I can't tell you about it on the 'phone—too risky. But I must see you at once."

"All right—I'll come."

"And look here, Lee; I want you to meet me under the town hall clock," went on Lennard earnestly. "Don't ask me why—I'll tell you that when I see you. But it isn't just a fad of mine. I've a very particular reason."

"My dear Lennard, you are becoming quite mysterious!" said Nelson Lee, with a chuckle.

"I expect it sounds pretty funny to you," admitted the inspector. "But there's a very particular reason why I don't want you to come to the police-station. Don't forget, old man—under the town hall clock, as soon as you can make it."

"Expect me in about fifteen minutes," said Lee, crisply.

He hung up, and his eyes were glowing.

"What did Mr. Lennard say, gov'nor?" asked Nipper eagerly.

"It isn't what he said, young 'un—it's what he implied!" replied Lee. "Yes, there's something doing!"

NIPPER put a hustle on immediately after he had left Lee's study. He got hold of Handforth & Co. and Tommy Watson and Tregellis-West and Travers and a few others, and in next to no time they were speeding off towards Bannington.

Nipper did not tell them much—for, as a matter of fact, he did not know much himself.

"It's just as well that we should be there, though!" said Handforth eagerly. "Jolly good idea of yours, Nipper. If Mr. Lee's meeting Inspector Lennard in this rummy way there must be something white-hot in the wind."

"We don't want to anticipate too much," said Nipper. "I don't suppose we shall be allowed to join in the affair, anyhow—whatever it is."

Meanwhile, Nelson Lee had got out his own car, and he was looking thoughtful and grim as he drove into the town.

He had made a few preparations before leaving the school. He was wearing no overcoat, for the afternoon was warm; but in his right-hand jacket pocket he carried a small, serviceable automatic. There was no telling what this trip would lead to.

Bannington was looking particularly bright on this sunny spring afternoon. There were plenty of shoppers on the pavements of the High Street, and if the town had been scared the previous evening, it had rapidly got over it.

As Nelson Lee drove up to the town hall, he kept his eyes sharply open. There was a wide pavement here, and close by, some ornamental gardens, with a war memorial near at hand.

Lee stopped his car, leapt out, and looked up and down. Evidently he was first, for there was no sign of Chief Detective-inspector Lennard. "H'm!" grunted Lee.

He glanced at the town hall clock, and compared it with his watch. Then he walked slowly along the wide pavement, immediately under the clock tower, glancing with a puzzled frown up and down.

Then came the tragedy.

Suddenly a large saloon car came tearing down the middle of the road. A man peered out of the window.

With lightning-like speed he whipped a heavy, long-barrelled automatic out.

Thud-thud-thud!

Three shots, in rapid succession, rang out, and they had been fired point-blank—into Nelson Lee's chest.

CHAPTER 17.

On the Spot!

NELSON LEE crumpled up in a curiously slow way; as his knees sagged beneath him, a thick, choking gurgle sounded in his throat. He dropped sideways, struck the flagstones, and rolled over on to his face. And he remained ominously still!

The car sped on like a rocket along the London road—and its number-plates were dusty. So dusty, in fact, that two or three people who tried to read that number, failed.

It all happened so suddenly, so unexpectedly, that nobody quite realised what it meant—at first.

Nipper and Handforth and Travers and the others were some distance away—almost opposite the Palladium, in fact. But Nipper, at least, had heard the unmistakable thuds of the silenced automatic. He had seen, too, his beloved gov'nor falling—and he had seen the tell-tale puff of smoke hovering and drifting in the warm air.

"They've got him!" gasped Travers. "By Samson! They've got Mr. Lee."

"You—you mean that the Green Triangle put him on the spot?" panted Handforth, in horror.

"Oh!" muttered Nipper, aghast. "The gov'nor—on the spot!"

Other people had heard that American expression uttered by the boys. It went round like wildfire. "On the spot!" Somebody had been murdered—shot dead in broad daylight—right in front of the Town Hall!

Amid all the confusion that immediately followed, there came the whining roar of other cars—police were speeding away in chase. Even the most disgruntled townspeople of Bannington—men who had always complained about the inefficiency of the police—were compelled to admit that on this occasion, at least, the police were amazingly prompt. Those cars which went in chase had done so without loss of a moment.

Police whistles were blowing. A constable arrived at Nelson Lee's side just before Nipper and the other boys got there. A few other people had gathered round, pale-faced, awe-stricken.

"Gov'nor!" panted Nipper desperately.

"Look!" muttered Handforth, nearly choking.

On the white paving stones, near Nelson Lee's inert body, two little rivulets were running, and forming into a pool. They glistened and gleamed in the sunshine. And they were red—deep, deep red!

"Keep back, you boys—keep back, everybody!" commanded the constable sternly.

"You can't keep me away!" interrupted Nipper. "That man is Mr. Lee—Mr. Nelson Lee! Oh, don't you understand? He was shot at! And the people who did it must have been Green Triangle agents!"

"Why, you're Master Nipper, aren't you?" said the policeman quickly. "By gum, young 'un, I'm sorry! Yes, you can stay here. Now, let's have a look——"

Fortunately two other constables came up just then, and they helped to keep the morbid, curious crowd back. With every moment that passed, the throng was getting thicker and thicker. And then, fortunately, a tall, youthful looking man came pushing his way through the crowd, and he had an authoritative air with him.

"Let me pass—let me pass!" he said sharply. "I'm a doctor."

The boys, who were watching with thudding hearts, were glad that it was Dr. Brett, who was the first medical man to reach Nelson Lee's side. For Dr Brett was the St. Frank's doctor. He was looking grave as he knelt on the pavement. Slowly, gently, he turned Lee over. And there, on the detective's tweed jacket, which was buttoned up, an ugly red stain was showing.

With doft fingers the doctor unbuttoned the coat and the waistcoat, exposing the luridly stained shirt. The shirt was opened, too, and Dr. Brett's examination was all too significantly brief.

"Well, sir?" asked the constable, who was trembling.

"It's no good sending him to the hospital—so that ambulance which has just come up will not be needed," said Dr. Brett, in a strained voice. "He's dead—shot through the heart."

"Dead?" panted Nipper, clutching at the

doctor's shoulder. "No, no! You can't mean——"

"Keep a stiff upper lip, lad!" said the doctor, shaking his head. "I tell you it's hopeless. He's dead! He was shot at point-blank range—and three bullets have gone clean through his heart."

"Oh, gov'nor," muttered Nipper dully.

And he stood transfixed, like a fellow in a trance.

CHAPTER 18.

The Man Who Telephoned!

THOSE words of Dr. Brett's were heard by many people in the dread hush. Hand-forth and Travers and the other St. Frank's fellows heard them—and they were dumbfounded, horrified.

A tall, harmless-looking man in the forefront of the crowd heard them, too. This man was Mr. Simpson Lorne, the artist, and under one arm he carried a much-used portfolio.

"Let me get out of this crowd," he muttered tremulously.

"You heard what the doctor said, then?" asked a man near him.

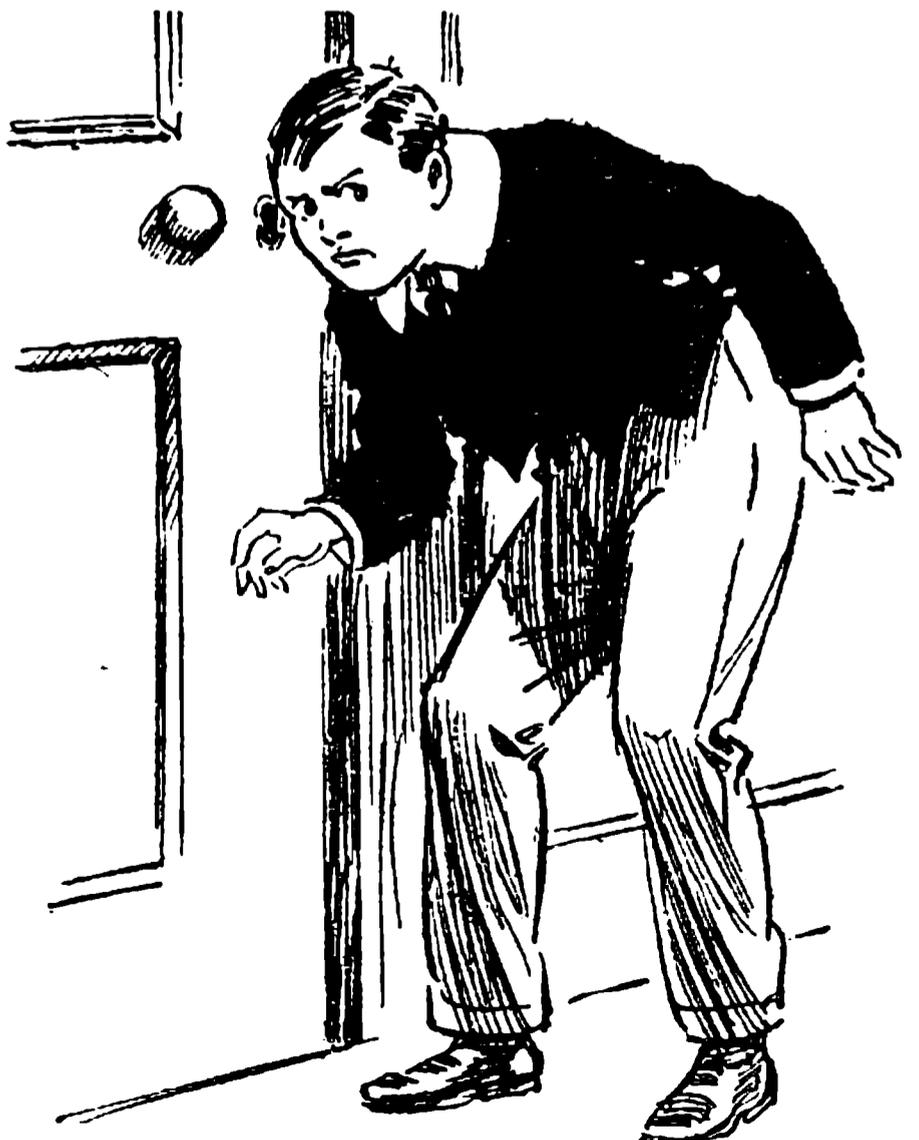
"Shot clean through the heart, eh? I'll bet it was them blamed Green Triangle devils!"

"Yes, they've got him at last," said Mr Lorne. "Those crooks have always threatened to put Nelson Lee on the spot, haven't they? They've done it! Oh, it's horrible—horrible! Here,

"Mellish the Mischief Maker!"

This is Mellish, a "nasty piece of work," as you can see. He's a bit of an outcast, for not many fellows at St. Jim's will have anything to do with him. He's always out to make trouble if he can, and he certainly knows how to do it. This week he causes the most awful ructions at St. Jim's and nearly brings about a split between the famous pals known as the Terrible Three! If you want to know all about it, and what happened to Mellish, just get a copy of this week's GEM and read "Mellish the Mischief Maker!" It's one of the finest school yarns that Martin Clifford has written, so don't miss it!

The
GEM - - 2d.
Every Wednesday



in broad daylight, with scores of people about! Nobody's safe nowadays!"

"Lumme, you're right, sir," said the other man.

Mr. Lorne managed to get out of the crowd, and nobody took any notice of him as he walked along towards the post office. Crook though he was, he had a startled, almost frightened expression in his eyes as he entered the concrete public telephone box which stood outside the post office.

He had seen the whole dreadful happening—he had seen Nelson Lee fall—and he had taken good care to be amongst the first spectators to gather round. So he had heard the doctor's verdict—he had seen the body at close quarters—and the dread crimson pool.

He gave a number, inserted two pennies, and waited. Soon, a voice sounded at the other end—when the connection had been made.

"It's Lorne!" he said, and his voice was unsteady.

"Oh, yes, about those watercolours," said the voice over the wire. "Have you anything to report, Lorne?"

"Yes," said the man. "Success."

He distinctly heard the quick intake of breath.

"You are sure?" came the inquiry.

"Yes—complete success," said Lorne. "I thought you'd be pleased to hear."

"Very pleased indeed," said the voice. "But I'm not particularly surprised—I expected that everything would be all right."

Lorne rang off. If anybody had been listening in to that conversation, it would have sounded very innocent. Certainly, nobody could have possibly guessed that Lorne was a Green Triangle agent—a man who had been posted near the Town Hall with one definite object—to ring up Professor Zingrave, and deliver the verdict.

Lorne did not go back to the Town Hall; he entered his own small saloon, and drove away. His nerves were badly shaken.

The crowd was thicker than ever, and more police had come upon the scene. Two of them were wheeling a hand ambulance; and it was while Nelson Lee was being lifted into the ambulance, that Chief Detective-inspector Lennard arrived upon the scene.

"What is it?" he asked breathlessly. "What has happened?"

Handforth clutched at him.

"Don't you know, sir?" he ejaculated. "Mr. Lee's been shot!"

"Good Heavens!"

"He's dead, sir—shot dead!"

"I can't believe it," said the Yard man, in horror.

"But why weren't you here, sir?" asked Handforth, an accusing note in his voice. "Nipper says that you arranged to meet Mr. Lee under the Town Hall clock——"

"I?" ejaculated Lennard. "I don't know what you're talking about! Confound it, boy, don't keep me here——"

"He's right, Mr. Lennard," put in Nipper, his voice dull and flat. "The—the gov'nor told me. You rang him up, and arranged the appointment."

"But I didn't!" almost shouted the inspector. "Ye gods and little fishes! I'm beginning to understand! That telephone call was a fake—it was a Green Triangle man who 'phoned up."

The inspector seemed dumbfounded for a moment; and a little knot of people, gathering round, listened eagerly to his words. For they knew who he was—they knew that he was one of the Big Men from Scotland Yard.

"By glory! Now we can understand those infernal green triangle signs last night!" said the inspector grimly. "They seemed so purposeless at the time. But the whole thing was a ruse—just to get me down from the Yard."

"But—but how do you mean, sir?" asked Travers, staring.

"Isn't it obvious?" snapped the chief inspector. "An alert man like Mr. Lee wouldn't have 'fallen' for a fake call ordinarily. But he knew I was in Bannington, I rang him up this morning. So, when he got another call this afternoon, and heard my voice, how could he suspect? The fiends! They got up that scare yesterday, so that I should be here—and this is the result. Poor Lee!"

He spoke huskily, and he made no objection when Nipper walked by his side. They followed the two policemen who were wheeling the ambulance.

Nipper was silent as he walked by Inspector Lennard's side. He could scarcely keep his eyes from that still form beneath the covers, on the ambulance. Dr. Brett walked on the other side.

Thus, at length, having turned down a quiet side road, they came, presently, to the town mortuary.

It was a little brick building, tucked away, amid trees, and iron gates had to be unlocked before the ambulance was wheeled down the short pathway, and into the building.

"Yes, you can come in, lad," said Lennard gruffly.

He took hold of the ambulance himself, instructing the two policemen to remain on duty outside, for a great many morbid sightseers had followed.

The only ones who entered the mortuary were the inspector, Dr. Brett, and Nipper. It was a sombre interior, with a great stone slab occupying the centre space.

Lennard closed the door with a thud, and at the same moment Nipper relaxed his expression, and now his eyes were filled with wild excitement.

"All clear!" said the chief inspector bluntly.

The covers of the ambulance moved, and Nelson Lee sat up, slipped easily to the floor, and smiled.

"Very well engineered, Lennard," he said approvingly. "My congratulations, old man."

CHAPTER 19.

The Truth!

"GUV'NOR!" exclaimed Nipper breathlessly. "Oh, my goodness! It—it was all so realistic that for half a minute I thought you really were dead!"

"I thought so, too," admitted Dr. Brett, taking a deep breath. "You shouldn't give us these shocks, Mr. Lee. Although I knew everything from the start, I just couldn't believe my own eyes. Fortunately, I managed to give Nipper a nudge, to assure him that everything was O.K. Otherwise, I believe, he would have had a fit."

"You were splendid, Brett—many thanks," said Nelson Lee cheerfully. "Well, Lennard, I think the Green Triangle people will be quite satisfied as to my 'death,' eh?"

"If they had any of their spies in that crowd—and there's not much doubt of that—they not only had an eyeful, but an earful as well!" replied the inspector. "Oh, yes. You're officially dead, all right!"

"If you hadn't given me the tip, guv'nor, before we left St. Frank's, I should have gone dotty," said Nipper. "But even now I can't understand. How did you know that you were going to be put on the spot?"

"I didn't know."

"Well, you had a pretty good hunch!"

"That's exactly the right word, young 'un—hunch," said Lee, nodding. "When nothing transpired, after last night's scare—after all those Green Triangle signs—I knew that the climax was reserved for to-day. Furthermore, knowing that Zingrave has attempted to kill me on other occasions, I suspected that I was the real objective."

"I don't get it," admitted Lennard, scratching his head. "Do you think it was just an act of revenge?"

"Partly—and partly something else," replied Lee. "I'm convinced that the Green Triangle is planning a new move—a big move of some kind. And I take it as a compliment that I was 'dealt with' as a preliminary."

"I'm glad the boggars don't pay me any such compliments," said the chief inspector fervently.

"I'm afraid you were used merely as a means to an end, old man," chuckled Nelson Lee. "That scare, last night, was designed to bring you down from Scotland Yard—so that when Zingrave rang me up, using your voice, I shouldn't be suspicious."

"You think it was Zingrave?"

"Yes; I don't think he would trust such a task to one of his underlings."

"That means that he must be somewhere in this district."

"It looks very much like it," said Lee. "But we can be quite certain that he is in safe hiding."

"It's all a giddy puzzle to me," said Nipper, with a helpless shrug. "Zingrave must have been mad to think that he could imitate Mr. Lennard's voice, and fool you, guv'nor."

"On the contrary, young 'un, the voice was so exactly like Mr. Lennard's that I don't think I could have detected the fraud."

"Then how did you know?"

"Mr. Lennard and I had a little working arrangement," explained Lee. "It costs nothing to take precautions and it occurred to me that our genial enemies might try some such ruse. So, last night, the inspector and I decided upon a code word. If he had occasion to ring me up, that code word was to be used in the first spoken sentence. If I rang him up,

the same applied. The word we decided upon was an uncommon one—for coincidence is a peculiar thing, and we couldn't take any chances. So we fixed on 'jiggery pokery.' Well, when that call came through for me this afternoon, supposedly from the inspector, there was no mention of 'jiggery pokery.'"

"There was some jiggery pokery about the 'phone call, though," grinned the inspector.

"As for the rest, it was obvious," continued Lee. "I was to meet Mr. Lennard underneath the Town Hall clock. A nice, wide open space, within easy reach of the road—and a waiting car. An ideal spot, in fact, for the job of 'bumping me off.'"

"And you actually went through with it!" said Dr. Brett admiringly. "By Jove! What a nerve! You took an awful chance, Lee!"

"I took a chance—but you must remember that I was well on the alert," said Nelson Lee. "It was any odds that the attempt would be made with a silenced automatic. The crooks would hardly take the risk of using a bomb—or a machine-gun. They assumed that I would be unsuspecting, and therefore at a disadvantage. I considered all the pros and cons before I decided to risk the adventure. And, as events have turned out, I was justified in taking the chance."

"The boggars rang me up, too—using your voice!" said Lennard. "Their idea, of course, was to get me out of the way—so that if you got suspicious and rang up the police-station, I shouldn't be there. Oh, yes, they thought of everything."

"And Mr. Lee had them beaten at every turn," said Dr. Brett. "Don't you understand, Nipper? Mr. Lee arranged with me to be there—so that I should be the first doctor on the spot. My job was to make a quick examination, and to pronounce, in a loud, tragic voice, that the victim was dead—shot through the heart. If any other doctor had happened to get there first, he would have known the truth in a moment—and, of course, he would have given the game away."

"Phew! It was smartly worked, guv'nor," said Nipper breathlessly. "Of course, by Dr. Brett saying that, the Green Triangle agent, or agents, must have been perfectly satisfied that you were killed."

"The real risk was in making yourself the target," said the inspector. "Supposing they had fired at your head, Lee? Man alive! You would have been bumped off in real earnest!"

"You think so?" asked Lee grimly. "Let me remind you, Lennard, that I had an automatic in my own pocket—and my finger was on the trigger. I was ready for that killer the instant he appeared, and I saw just where he was aiming—for my heart. If he had shifted his gun upwards, towards my head, the first bullet would have been mine—not his."

"But he *did* fire at you, guv'nor!" said Nipper, staring.

"Of course," nodded Lee. "But how do you expect any bullets to get through—this!"

And, as he spoke, he unbuttoned his waistcoat wide.

CHAPTER 20.

Nelson Lee's Suspicions!

THE explanation was simple.

Nelson Lee was wearing an armour of light steel, and it was positively bullet-proof. It encased his body, back and front, and the steel was lined with thick felt.

"Did you feel any shock, guv'nor?" asked Nipper.

"I felt scarcely anything," admitted Lee. "The sensation was rather like that of being dealt a heavy blow, which tended to put me off

Lennard. You'll have reporters after you—and I can trust you to tell them a good story."

"I'll do my best," said the Yard man obligingly.

"As for you, Nipper, I think you had better go straight to London," went on Lee. "I happen to know that Lord Dorrimore is in town just now, and you can spend a quiet, unobtrusive holiday with him."

"But why, guv'nor?" asked Nipper, in surprise. "Wouldn't it be better if I went back to the school——"



The black-coated figure glided noiselessly down the steps of the cellar and stopped at the wall. A hand moved over the brickwork, and the secret door swung silently out. In the room beyond the schoolboy figure started fearfully from the bed!

my balance. But there was no actual shock. My chest is not even bruised—thanks to the armour plating and the felt lining."

"That blood was realistic," said the doctor.

"Merely a carefully prepared indiarubber bag of red dye, carried in a special pocket over my heart," explained Lee. "The bullets, of course, penetrated the bag at once—and in that way the 'bleeding' looked absolutely natural."

He turned to the inspector.

"Well, Lennard, so far, so good," he went on, a crisp note coming into his voice. "You'd better be getting out here soon—and I hope you'll all look appropriately mournful. Everything is in the cupboard here, as I asked?"

"Everything."

"Then, in my solitude, I shall effect a change in my appearance," said Nelson Lee. "When darkness comes it will be easy enough for me to get away. I'm leaving everything else to you,

"It would not!" broke in Lee, and there was a sharp note in his voice. "These Green Triangle curs may attempt to get you next—and I don't want you to run any risks. Quite apart from that, you would find the situation intolerable. You couldn't take any other boys into your confidence, and the strain of keeping up the pretence of mourning would be a severe trial."

"But I did it once before, guv'nor," said Nipper. "Don't you remember—at Christmas-time? You were supposed to be dead, then——"

"But the circumstances were different," interrupted Lee. "You were not called upon to pretend. On that occasion I had merely disappeared—and you told all your chums that you were convinced that I still lived. You couldn't do anything of that sort in this case. No, it will be far better if you don't go back to St. Frank's at all—at least, until this case is cleared up."

"I think Mr. Lee is right, young 'un," said the doctor kindly. "You'll find it an awful strain. I'll explain to Watson and Tregellis-West and Handforth and the others—I'll tell them that Mr. Lennard insisted upon you going to London under police escort."

"And I may want you in London, young 'un," added Lee quietly.

Nipper jumped.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, his eyes gleaming. "That's different! By Jove! I hadn't thought of that, sir!"

And so the arrangements were made.

When Nipper left the mortuary, with Inspector Lennard and Dr. Brett, he was looking appropriately tragic. A police car was waiting, and Nipper and the inspector got straight into it, and it drove off. Nipper had a guilty feeling that he was playing a dirty trick on his school chums, but there was no help for it. Later on they would understand.

Left alone in the mortuary, Nelson Lee sat for a full hour, thinking hard.

There were some features of this affair which intrigued him. He found himself continuously thinking of Sir John Brent's visit to the school the previous evening. Was it coincidence—or was there some connection?

Lee was struck, too, by the fact that his "death" meant that St. Frank's was now without a headmaster. Had Professor Zingrave a double motive in getting rid of him?

This led to another train of thought—Lady Brent. Nelson Lee was unusually suspicious just now. Lady Brent's mysterious ailment had attracted his attention; and the report, that morning, that she had made a miraculous recovery interested him still more.

And Sir John Brent was the chairman of the St. Frank's board of governors—the man who had the power, without consulting others, to appoint a new headmaster!

Nelson Lee confessed to himself that he was more or less groping in the dark; he was making random guesses. But were they quite random?

Another point struck him. Why had Alf Brent remained in London if his mother was so much better? Could there be a direct connecting link between Sir John Brent's affairs and this cold-blooded murder plot?

Before Nelson Lee commenced transforming his appearance, so that he should venture out into the world as another man, he had definitely made up his mind as to his immediate course of action.

CHAPTER 21.

A Shock for St. Frank's!

"NOT coming back?" said Tommy Watson incredulously.

"Oh, but that's frightful!" said Sir Montie Tregellis-West. "It is, really!"

Nipper's two study chums, standing in Bannington High Street, were looking pale and worried, and even tragic.

"My dear chaps, what could you expect?" asked Dr. Brett kindly. "After what happened this afternoon—well, Nipper is just about knocked out."

"I can't understand him going off to London

—without even seeing us," said Tommy dismally. "We wanted to tell him how sorry we are——"

"Yes, and make things harder for him than they already are," interrupted the doctor. "You mean well. I know, but it's far better that he has gone. When he comes back to the school——" He broke off and shrugged. "Well, things will be different, then."

He realised that unless he was careful he would find himself involved in a morass of untruth, and although he was willing enough to help Nelson Lee, he didn't want to carry things too far.

The doctor was glad enough to escape at last. Tregellis-West and Watson were miserable; they resented the excitement of the populace. It seemed to them that the Bannington people were treating the whole affair as a sort of picnic. Groups were standing about in the streets, eagerly and excitedly discussing the "murder." Nobody seemed to be at all sorry about it.

Both Handforth and Travers and such fellows shared the gloom of Nipper's own chums. They all went back to St. Frank's half-stunned by what had happened.

They were somewhat disgusted to find the school seething with the same kind of excitement as Bannington.

"I say, Handy, is it true that you saw the whole murder?" asked Hubbard, of the Remove.

"What if I did?" retorted Handforth, glaring.

"You lucky bounder!"

"Lucky!" roared Handforth.

"Chuck it!" protested Hubbard. "What are you looking so fierce about? Of course, it's pretty rotten. I mean, Mr. Lee being shot like that."

"Oh, so you've had the decency to express a word of regret," growled Handforth. "You rotters! You can only think of the sensational part of it. Mr. Lee was one of the best—true blue from head to foot. And he's gone. Killed by those Green Triangle brutes. By George! It makes me go all hot and cold!"

"And there's poor old Nipper, too," said Church. "What of him? Mr. Lee was his guardian—as good as a father."

"I don't see that there's any reason to get sloppily sentimental about it," remarked Gore-Pearce, with a sniff. "The wonder is that Mr. Lee wasn't murdered ages ago. It didn't surprise me in the least when I heard the news."

"Mr. Lee has been asking for it for weeks—months," said Bernard Forrest. "I'm not going to say I'm glad, but it's about time we had a real Headmaster at St. Frank's."

"You—you callous rotter!" said Handforth fiercely.

"Rats!" retorted Forrest. "Why can't we be practical? We're without a Head now, aren't we? It was a dotty idea all along to have a man like Lee."

And Nipper's circle of immediate friends soon found that the bulk of the school shared Forrest's opinion. The fellows were genuinely sorry to hear of Nelson Lee's tragic end: for Lee had been a very popular Headmaster. But, at the same time, nothing could alter the fact that he had been "marked down" for some time by the League of the Green Triangle.

Well, the Green Triangle had won. After this, perhaps, St. Frank's would be left alone.

The evening papers came out with glaring headlines; their front pages were emblazoned with the sensational news. "Nelson Lee Put on the Spot," "Famous Detective Murdered," "Green Triangle's Latest Victim," "Tragic End of Brilliant Sleuth," and so forth.

It really seemed unbelievable. Nelson Lee dead. But it was only such fellows as Tommy Watson, Tregellis-West, Handforth & Co., Travers, and Jimmy Potts, who felt half-stunned. Nipper's abrupt departure had something to do with this.

Naturally, all sorts of questions were being asked as to how the school should carry on. Mr. Alington Wilkes, as the senior Housemaster, was in nominal charge of the school. Lots of fellows believed that "Old Wilkey" would be promoted to the Head-mastership.

Then, later in the evening, it leaked out that Mr. Wilkes had received a telegram from Sir John Brent, the chairman of the governors. Some of the prefects had even seen it. And that telegram said that Sir John was coming down personally on the morrow—to introduce Nelson Lee's successor.

There seemed to be something indecent in this hasty appointment of a new Head; but then, St. Frank's had not the faintest idea of Sir John Brent's unenviable position.

CHAPTER 22.

Dr. Howard Ponsonby!

SIR JOHN BRENT sat in his library, staring unseeingly out of the window into the sunlight.

It was the next day, and Sir John was waiting. Outside, his limousine was ready. He was expecting a visitor.

That same visitor had been to him the previous day, in accordance with Professor Zingrave's arrangement. But at that time Sir John had not known of Nelson Lee's cold-blooded murder. Since he had read the news in the evening papers he had been bowed down with the shock of it.

Nelson Lee killed—murdered! And on that fateful night when Alf had been captured, Zingrave had said that St. Frank's was to have a new Head master. Zingrave had known, then, that Lee was to die! It was because Lee had been sentenced to death that St. Frank's was to have a new Head.

Sir John shuddered. He was mixed up in all this. He was actually appointing that new Head Master—at the dictates of Zingrave. And that new Head-master was, indeed—

A tap sounded on the door, and Sir John hastily pulled himself together.

"Yes? Come in!" he said, trying to speak steadily.

Read, the butler, entered.

"Dr. Howard Ponsonby to see you, Sir John," he announced.

"Yes, yes; show him in," said the baronet, with an effort.

The one thought which gave him strength in this time of trial was that Lady Brent,

upstairs, continued to improve. She was, in fact, in normal health—except for an unaccountable loss of memory. As Zingrave had said, she was almost like a child. But Zingrave had it in his power to restore her completely.

"Ah, Sir John! Lovely day—lovely day!" exclaimed a breezy, likeable voice. "Real spring at last, oh? We couldn't have better weather for our drive; and I must say that it is extraordinarily good of you to motor me down to the school."

Dr. Howard Ponsonby was as breezy as his voice. He came into the library like a gust of wind; a brisk, upright, military-looking man, with grizzled hair and a big white moustache. His hand was extended as he advanced into the room, and Sir John took it mechanically.

"You are prompt to time, Dr. Ponsonby," he said, forcing a smile. "All right, Read—tell Walter that we shall be out in five minutes."

"Very good, Sir John," said the butler, retiring, and closing the door.

"Now, sir!" said Sir John fiercely. "By heaven! If you expect me to go through with this infernal farce—"

"Come, come," said Dr. Howard Ponsonby. "What's the matter? You were quite resigned yesterday, and you assured me—"

"Yesterday I did not know that Mr. Nelson Lee was to be killed—foully murdered," panted Sir John. "Having got him out of the way, you intend to go to St. Frank's in this—this masquerade!"

Dr. Ponsonby's manner changed as he took a step nearer to Sir John.

"It is a very foolish thing to talk so loudly, Sir John!" he said sulkily. "Yesterday, when I kept my appointment with you, I allowed you to know my real identity. I thought it better that you should be told. We are going through with this. Do you understand? What happened to Lee is neither here nor there."

Professor Zingrave's impersonation was startling in its perfection. The members of his own villainous Inner Council would not have recognised him. In the character of "Dr. Howard Ponsonby" he was like another man altogether. He even seemed taller. As a piece of acting it was akin to genius.

"I have planned this for weeks," he went on, speaking in low, deliberate tones. "I hold you here, Sir John," he added, holding out a hand and closing his fingers. "As soon as you fail me your son will die—and your wife will remain a semi-imbecile."

"No, no!" panted Sir John.

"Brutal words—but this is no time for politeness," continued Zingrave. "Is it your wish, Sir John, that Lady Brent should remain for ever in her present mental condition? Carry this programme through for me, and both your wife and your son will be restored to you."

Sir John clutched at the desk for support.

"You have made me your accomplice," he muttered. "Mr. Lee's blood is on my hands—"

"Rubbish!" said Zingrave. "If it will relieve your mind in any way, I will tell you that Lee was to have been executed quite independent of this other plan. He has been

marked down for weeks. Nothing could have saved him."

"You mean—he would have died irrespective of your design to become headmaster of St. Frank's?"

"Of course. Leo's death was not at all necessary for this plan," said the professor. "You could have demanded his resignation in the ordinary way. Leo died because he is too dangerous. Come! We must be going."

Later, as the big limousine glided through the fair, sunlit countryside towards the old school, Sir John felt calmer. Yet he could not shake off that dread fear that he was a party to Nelson Lee's murder. Whether he was or not, he was unquestionably associating himself with Lee's murderers. His hand was being forced—he felt that he was being swept along by a current which could never be stemmed.

Throughout the journey Zingrave kept up a breezy conversation—he was acting his new character without a fault.

They arrived at St. Frank's in the early evening, and they were received by Mr. Wilkes, who had tea ready for them.

"A terrible affair, Mr. Wilkes—positively terrible!" said Sir John. "I was so deeply distressed to learn of Mr. Leo's sudden death that I was gravely concerned for the welfare of the school. Dr. Ponsonby was good enough to step into the breach, and I thought it better, all round that he should commence his duties immediately."

"Of course—of course," said Old Wilkey politely.

"The tragedy is bad for the boys," continued Sir John. "Dr. Ponsonby is a man of original ideas; he will very quickly establish himself here, and the school will forget."

"Dr. Ponsonby" made some suitable remarks, but Mr. Wilkes hardly heard them. He was thinking that it would be a long time before the school forgot Nelson Lee. He was puzzled, too, by Sir John's callous attitude. It was so unlike the kindly baronet.

Later, the other housemasters came over and were introduced; meanwhile the school had been called together in Big Hall, and, amid a deep hush, the new headmaster was introduced.

CHAPTER 23.

In Full Command!

THE school's first impression was undoubtedly favourable.

Dr. Howard Ponsonby, with his ready smile, his breezy manner, impressed the boys.

"Tragedy broods over this great school, and it will be my task, my duty, to soften the blow as much as possible," said Zingrave earnestly. "I realise, of course, that I cannot at once fill the place of the fine, noble gentleman who has gone. But I can assure you all that I will do everything in my power to brighten your school life, and to worthily carry on the work which Mr. Nelson Lee was so tragically compelled to relinquish."

As Sir John listened, his bitterness increased. Zingrave was so brilliantly clever that Sir John was frightened. Already this cunning criminal was making a favourable impression.

The school was listening to him intently. Zingrave, by his genius, was making himself liked.

And it came like an agonising stab to Sir John as he realised that he was countenancing this appalling mockery. He was allowing a master-criminal, a murderer, to take control of St. Frank's!

And for the life of him he could not understand what Zingrave's object could be. What could he hope to gain by this move? What profit could he wrest from the school?

Sir John was looking haggard and ill after Zingrave had made his brief but telling speech.

The school dispersed quietly, and there were no further murmurings of discontent. The boys were not so shocked at the quick appointment of the new Head. For they had found that Dr. Howard Ponsonby was a man of personality—a man who would quickly make his mark.

Back in the study, Sir John could contain himself no longer.

"This is madness, Zingrave!" he said huskily.

Zingrave, who was in the act of lighting a cigar, fixed his hypnotic eyes upon the baronet.

"Must I warn you again?" he asked, in a low, tense voice. "My name is Ponsonby! Do you understand that? Ponsonby—Ponsonby! If you dare to use that other name—"

"I—I forgot!" muttered Sir John, startled by his companion's vehemence.

"It will be healthier for you if you do not forget again!" said Zingrave. "We are alone—but walls have ears."

He lit his cigar, and instantly became the breezy Dr. Ponsonby again.

"Everything has gone well," he said. "I have been introduced to the school by the chairman of the governors, and I am now firmly established. You have done your part well, Sir John. You are at liberty to go as soon as you please."

"And leave you here?" whispered Sir John. "In heaven's name, man, what is your idea in being here? Why have you done this? Tell me at least, what your intentions are."

"I shall tell you nothing."

"But, man alive, if you besmirch the fair name of this school—"

"You talk like a child!" interrupted Zingrave contemptuously. "What advantage would it be to me to injure the name of the school? If I did anything like that I should irrevocably foul my own nest. You need have no fear, Sir John. The finest traditions of St. Frank's will be maintained."

"I see—I see!" muttered Sir John. "So that's your object!"

He believed he had the solution. Zingrave, hunted by the police—an escaped convict—was masquerading here as the headmaster of St. Frank's because he could not be in any safer place. Here he could live openly, freely, and the police would never dream of suspecting him. Sir John was partially right; but Zingrave had other plans, too, plans which he had no intention of divulging.

"Sir John, you have done well, so far," said the professor. "Must I again remind you that

you have only to obey orders? It is not for you to ask questions."

Sir John winced under the cold contempt of Zingrave's voice.

"I don't wonder that you scorn me," he muttered. "In your eyes I must be less than a thing that crawls. For have I not weakly given in to your infamous demands?"

"Not weakly, Sir John—you wrong yourself," replied Zingrave. "Even the welfare of St. Frank's is not so dear to you as the life of your son—and the health of your wife."

"At least, you will tell me how long this—this masquerade is to continue?"

"I shall not even tell you that," replied Zingrave, sitting down at the desk. "I may be here a fortnight—a month—perhaps three months. It all depends."

"And you intend to keep my boy a prisoner week after week, month after month—and my wife——"

"That will do," interrupted Zingrave curtly. "This interview has gone far enough, Sir John. You will oblige me by going."

"But——"

"At once," said the professor. "Your car is waiting, and in view of your wife's ill-health, the other masters of the school will think nothing of your hasty departure. You have served my ends—and you are at liberty to resume your normal life—until I may need your services again. That is all."

Sir John Brent left St. Frank's a hopeless man—a man in desperate need of help.

Every fibre of his being rebelled against this vile tyranny. With the knowledge that Nelson Lee had been murdered, his last hope had died.

To whom could he turn now?

His thoughts were chaotic as he drove Londonwards in the darkness of the spring night. Lee was dead, and Zingrave was headmaster of St. Frank's. Sir John felt that his brain would burst under this awful strain. His son was Zingrave's captive, and he himself was entangled in a hopeless net of villainy.

CHAPTER 24.

Hope!

IT was when the big limousine was gliding along a quiet, open stretch of road that Sir John became aware of the fact that the car was slowing down. Presently it stopped, and Walter got out of his seat, and opened the rear door.

"Beg pardon, Sir John," said the man.

"Eh? What is it, Walter?" asked the baronet with a start. "Is there anything the matter?"

"No, sir—not with me," replied the chauffeur hesitatingly. "But it struck me that you don't seem so well, sir."

Sir John sighed.

"I'm all right, Walter," he replied. "Good of you to be so concerned about me. The fact

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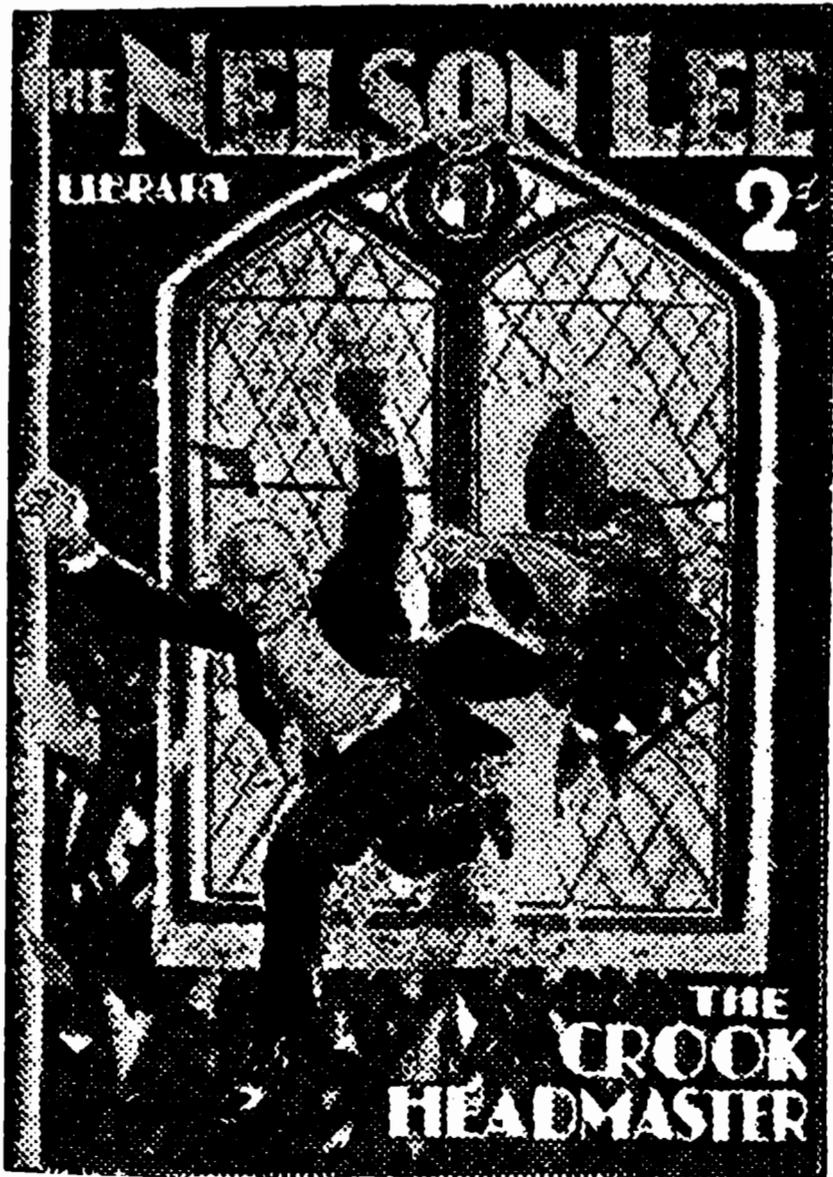
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is, I—I am a bit worried about—about things. You had better drive on.”

“I thought you might like to come and sit in front, sir,” suggested Walter. “That’s really why I stopped. There’s more air, and it might make you feel better.”

“Perhaps you are right,” said Sir John, realising the need for getting a grip of himself. “Yes, Walter—thanks. I’ll do as you say.”

And soon they were driving Londonwards again, Sir John now sitting next to the chauffeur.

“About the thing that’s worrying you, Sir John,” said Walter. “Seems to me it might relieve you a lot if you got it off your mind.”

There was a change in his voice, and Sir John looked at him sharply. He could see the man dimly in the reflection from the headlights; he could see his untidy sandy moustache and his rather long hair.

“It’s very good of you, Walter——” began Sir John.

“I’ve kept it up until now because I believe in being on the safe side,” said the chauffeur.

“And it’s best that I should be near you when you got the shock, Sir John. I hope you won’t——”

“Your voice!” ejaculated Sir John thickly. “Good heavens, man! What’s happened to your voice? It—it reminds me—— No, no! I must be going mad!”

“I’m doing my best to break it gently,” said the man at the wheel. “That’s why I’m doing it in this way. I’m not Walter—although I look like him. I’ve practiced a little deception on you, Sir John, and I think you’ll forgive me when I explain——”

“Your voice!” panted the other. “It’s the voice of Nelson Lee! But Lee is dead——”

“Lee is very much alive—and sitting at the wheel of this car,” interrupted the great detective crisply. “Well, Sir John, have I broken it gently enough? Steady, man! You mustn’t clutch at the wheel like that, or you’ll have us in the ditch.”

“Lee—alive!” exclaimed the baronet, with almost a sob in his voice. “Either I’m dreaming, or——”

“The Green Triangle people tried to put me on the spot—but I fooled them,” said Nelson Lee rapidly. “I let the reports go out that I had been killed. That’s all, Sir John. I had a suspicion that you were somehow mixed up in Zingrave’s plot—and earlier to-day I kept a watch on your house. I also made a few discreet inquiries and learned of Dr. Ponsonby’s visit yesterday.”

“Thank heaven you’re alive, Mr. Lee!” said the baronet fervently. “But you amaze me—you bewilder me. I don’t even begin to understand.”

“I arranged this little deception with Walter, your chauffeur—but only after promising him that I would reveal myself to you to-night,” said Nelson Lee. “He’s a good fellow; he didn’t like the idea at all at first: but when I assured him that you were in danger, and that I was doing it to help you, he agreed.”

“But—but why?” asked Sir John. “Why have you done this, Mr. Lee?”

“Because you need my help.”

Sir John was almost fighting for breath. Heaven knew that he needed Nelson Lee’s help! But dare he speak? He was still hunted by the dread fear that his son would die if he breathed a word. And his wife, too! So completely had Professor Zingrave terrorised the baronet that he hesitated to speak, even when this golden opportunity presented itself.

“You need my help, Sir John, as much as any man needed help in his life,” said Nelson Lee quietly, as they drove along. “I am thinking of your introduction of Dr. Howard Ponsonby to the school as its new headmaster.”

“He—he is a brilliant man——” began Sir John.

“His make-up was excellent, too.”

“What!”

“I consider myself good at penetrating disguises—but I had to look twice before I recognised our mutual friend, Zingrave.”

“Then—then you know?” gasped Sir John, amazed at Nelson Lee’s statement. “What can you think of me? You know that I took Zingrave to St. Frank’s——”

“And I know that he has a terrible hold over you,” broke in Nelson Lee. “Otherwise he could never have induced you to help him. Come, come, Sir John. I not only want to be of service to you, but I want to unmask Zingrave. Let’s have the whole story.”

And Sir John Brent, his heart bursting with relief, poured it out.

He told everything—in full detail.

“What else could I do, Mr. Lee?” he ended up. “They have my son in their clutches—they threatened him with death unless I served them! And my wife——”

“Your wife was drugged by one of Zingrave’s agents—and all Zingrave did was to administer an antidote,” snapped Nelson Lee. “You must let me see Lady Brent—I think I can restore her to full health in a very short time. As for your son, I don’t think he is in any danger—so long as you obey orders.”

“Is that what you want me to do—obey orders?”

“Yes—for, if you don’t, I shall not be able to set my trap,” replied Lee.

Sir John was like a new man already; he felt that he could place his full trust in Nelson Lee.

And they drove onwards towards London—with the situation so changed that the baronet could have shouted aloud with joy.

Professor Cyrus Zingrave’s sojourn at St. Frank’s as headmaster was not to be quite so smooth as he fondly believed!

THE END.

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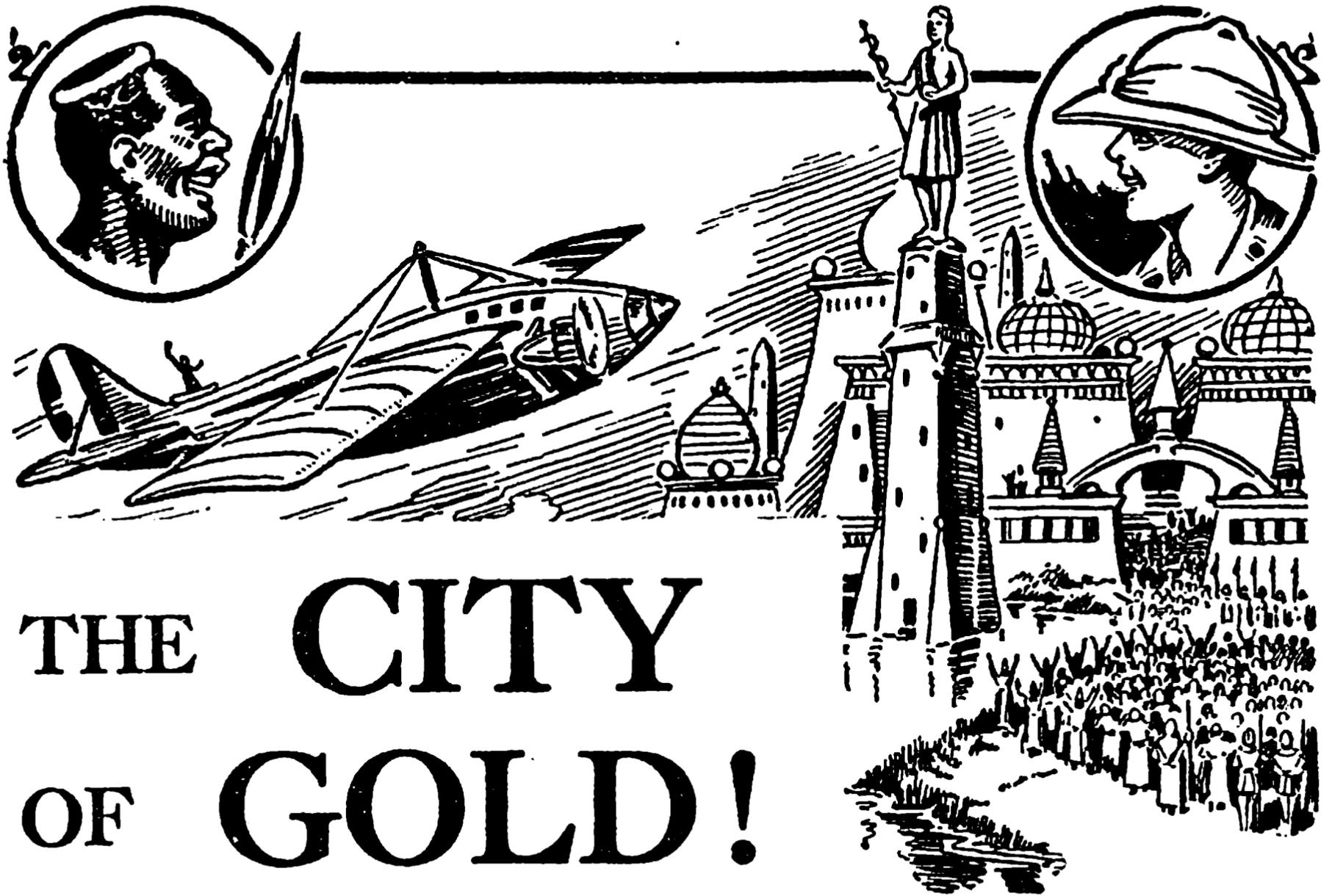
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White Magic!

“**W**HAT the dickens are they up to?” muttered Tom to himself still standing smiling at the people. He did not know just what kind of counter-plot his cousin and Lulu had devised, but he had heard a lot of whispering and laughing together whilst they were up in the air, and it was evident that the Zulu had arranged some little scheme with Al which had immensely tickled both their fancies.

Then the stentorian voice of Lulu came peeling out of the lips of the idol whilst the great head turned once again towards where the priests were standing in wonderstruck amazement. Hitherto “Tomkuk the Great” had behaved in a docile and obedient fashion, speaking the carefully rehearsed words as arranged by their high priest, to which they would respond as required. They didn’t know, of course, that Lulu was doing all the speaking inside the giant idol.

“Where is Gobo; my high priest Gobo?” demanded the angry voice of the “god.”

“He is sick, mighty Tomkuk, else he would be here to do your bidding!” quavered one of the priests, with a frightened look towards the priest who had previously told the same story and was now nursing a very swollen jaw from the effect of a sideways blow Tomkuk had dealt him. “He is sick—or—or so we are told!” he added prudently, thinking he saw the great hand quiver preparatory to fetching him another clump.

“Gr-r-r-r-r-r-h-h-h!” growled Lulu, who was thoroughly enjoying himself. “It is well for you, oh priest, that you are but a tool, a thing without brains who can but obey the orders of the high one above you. But know that I am Tomkuk, Highest of All; that I can read men’s hearts and minds and sift the truth from the lies. Sick? Gobo my high priest is SICK, is he? Ha! Ha! Ha! Gobo—sick man—will be sicker presently. Gobo, servant of Tomkuk—STAND FORTH!”

Round swung the great left hand of the idol, pointing direct at the spot behind which Gobo was concealed, waiting with ferocious joy to see his soldier slave, Lesardu, smite down the white lad with the idol's crushing right. But instead, half a dozen of the priests had been knocked endways and the idol was behaving in a crazy fashion. He muttered vows under his breath of what he would do to Lesardu when he got hold of him again—

"Let 'er rip, baas Al!" boomed Lulu, then let out such a thundering roar through the megaphone contrivance that the very faint report of the compressed air gun was drowned. There was a flash as the frail container hit the panelling and burst, letting the corrosive liquid Al had described as "aqua ferocio" escape and drip down the woodwork. The effect was miraculous. A slight smoke arose, and wherever the liquid had touched the wood melted like ice before a fire. In a few seconds a jagged hole was in the woodwork, revealing the scared and wrathful face of the old high priest, chattering like an enraged baboon and scowling up at the face of the "god" which he knew to be a fake.

"Come forth, Gobo, sick man!" bellowed Lulu. "Ho, ho, ho! Tomkuk can cure the sick! Stand here, beneath me, that all men may see ye. It is fitting that my high priest should crown the living Tomkuk. Come, attend to your office, Gobo, High Priest!"

There was no help for it. Gobo was compelled to prostrate himself before the fake idol as he had done so many times with his tongue in his cheek.

He glanced up at the ferocious face whose brilliant eyes seemed to have found an added light, and whose grim but beautiful features looked more "alive" than usual. This was possibly due to the fact that Ben Bold, with his instinct for stage effect, had focussed a "spotlight" direct on the great face and another on Tom's classic features and golden hair. Seen together thus the resemblance between the living lad and the painted effigy of his ancestor was even more striking, and it is no wonder that the people were impressed and thoroughly convinced that the "Tomkuk," who had been hitherto but a legend, had indeed returned to his people in the flesh.

Old Gobo felt something of this thrill of awe and superstition. Had he been making a mistake after all; was there indeed a Tomkuk in very truth? He knew that the idol was a fake, because his father before him had had the interior "works" constructed by cunning workmen trained for the purpose and afterwards slain that they might reveal no secrets. But the great marble statue had always been there in the river, and that a "Tomkuk" had once actually existed was historical fact. He would have to walk warily and watch points, he thought as he flopped down on his creaking marrow bones and touched the stones with his forehead.

The people followed the example of the high priest and again the cry peeled out fervently:

"Great is Tomkuk, great is his power for he never dies!"

Out of the corner of his eye Tom saw the big priest drop another handful of the powder into the grating beneath which a secret fire burned that the people knew nothing of. As the smoke rose he shuffled back a few paces, and as he moved he saw the deep sunk eyes of the old priest shift to glance at him malevolently.

"Hallo, what are you up to, and just how much do you know?" Tom muttered to himself.

"What are your orders, great Tomkuk?" the old priest quavered, shooting another glance at Tom. He could see that the fair-skinned lad was standing alone. He knew that he was but mortal, a white lad who bore a chance resemblance to Tomkuk, and that a well-aimed dagger thrust—he gave a glance towards the executioner priest who had been knocked down by the idol and bent forward to hiss an order.

"Whaugh-haugh-hoo-hoo-waw-OW!"

Al Vandeck might have been reading his thoughts as he played a little voluntary selection on the syren. As a matter of fact, he had thought it about time that the Flying Fish should take a hand in things, and it certainly had the desired effect.

Old Gobo jumped about a foot in the air. For the moment, in his rage and bewilderment, he had forgotten this uncanny thing which had brought the white lad; this monster with the fearsome voice which could glide on the water, fly in the air and, as it now proved, could move as easily on land.

He was a wily old humbug, but Gobo also had a certain amount of superstition behind his shrewd commonsense. He knew nothing of modern inventions, for this hidden country was completely cut off from civilisation as if it were upon another planet. But he had a good idea that the white people were a good deal farther advanced than his own people, and could probably give them points in a matter of "magic," as all his people regarded anything out of the ordinary. Gobo was so accustomed to working "fakes" himself that he had few illusions, and looked for the trick behind any happening out of the way.

No, it would do him no good to tempt Providence. These white intruders held all the aces at present, and he must give in without making any open move against this new Tomkuk. After all, he might be able to worm his way into the white youth's good graces by showing him where the polished pebbles were hoarded that these fools of white men set such store by; he might mould him into his own ways and use him as the kings of the Golden City had been used by the priests for generations past, letting him be the mouthpiece for his own wishes and commands.

Yes, safety first.

The New King!

"GREAT Tomkuk, what are your commands?" quavered old Gobo.

"Ho, there, attention, priest, my slave!" boomed the terrific voice, as if the man within could read his thoughts. "Fetch hither the golden crown with which to crown my son Tomkuk, that all men may know

him as king of the Golden City. Fetch also the Golden Serpent with the glittering eyes, the sceptre of the king. And, hark ye, hasten, Gobo, loiter not with thy evil thoughts or from afar I will smite ye with the breath that withers. Begone and do your duty. The jewels should have been here awaiting your king as aforesaid. Hasten, and repair your error."

The syren blared again, and suddenly the spotlight went out, and there was total darkness but for the smoky torches of the priests.

"I go, I go!" quavered the high priest. "Your wishes shall be obeyed, great Tomkuk. Give me but a moment and crown and sceptre shall be here, and I will myself crown your son."

"Hasten!" blared Tomkuk.

Gobo needed no second telling. With shivering glances over his shoulder, with trembling fingers he scratched at a ring set in the paving and opened a secret trap door in that hidden chamber.

A spotlight shone out and focussed on his every movement. Tom could see exactly the spot where he had got the crown and sceptre from, which was doubtless the hiding-place for other treasures.

Gobo slammed down the trap door and stumbled back towards the great idol.

"Here are the crown and sceptre, Great Tomkuk," he stuttered. "What is your wish?"

"This!" thundered the giant voice, and once again that great hand swept down, brushing the skinny old form off the steps to fall with a bump down into the body of the temple. But ere he fell crown and sceptre had been snatched from him, and by the time he got to his feet they were balanced on the outstretched hand of the idol.

That puzzled him, for he knew there was no mechanism within that could have made that gigantic fist grasp the jewels in the immovable fingers. But the great voice pealed forth.

"Behold, oh, people, Tomkuk, my son, your ruler!"

Jerkily the hand came down and Tom reached up, placed the crown on his own head, and took the sceptre in his hand as the lights focussed him once more, then the royal salute came again:

"Baihete, Tomkuk the Great! Baihete!"

"All clear!"

The call came in English from the idol, and as the headlights flashed once over the great face and then were turned off. Tom rushed for the Flying Fish and climbed aboard, then the flying boat backed with syren blaring and made for the open market place, rising above the heads of the gaping people.

Suddenly Ben gave out a yell, and drawing his revolver, aimed it at a golden armoured giant who seemed to appear from space.

"Look out, baas, here's a stowaway!" he yelped, then burst into a loud guffaw as he saw the genial, grinning face of the Zulu under the raised vizor. "Gee-whiz, it's ol' Blacky-topper! Yuh must have moved mighty slippy, l'il one?"

"You speak truth, little man," said Lulu, taking a huge pinch of snuff. "The old priest

was making hot foot for the back of the idol, so I ran. He will be somewhat puzzled when he finds the idol dumb—for evermore."

"Dumb? How d'yer mean?"

"Ha! I plugged the pipe of the mouth-piece and broke the works," chuckled Lulu. "Tomkuk has done enough prophesying for a while; if he said more he might spoil it."

"What's the next move?" Al inquired of Tom, who had ducked down into the cockpit and concealed himself from the view of the excited people.

Tom stared straight before him as if he had scarcely heard his cousin's words.

It was suddenly borne in upon him that a great power had been thrust into his hands. That Fate had given him an enormous power for good; had placed in his young hands the destinies of a nation; unknown to civilisation, perhaps, but still a nation of simple, good-hearted men, women and children, that had, up to now, been driven, misled and cheated by the wretched, self-seeking priests of the Gobo class.

And then and there he made up his mind to cleanse the land of ghastly rites and do his bit to give them a decent ruler.

"Al, we'll make for the palace," he said quietly. "Old man, I've got a hunch that we were sent here for a purpose, and it's up to us to carry it out. I don't know what Tomkuk is supposed to do, but whatever it is I'm goin' to do it to the best of my ability. I reckon my ancestor wore this crown and held this sceptre—well. I'm goin' to do the same and give these people a fair deal. They have hailed me as king, and it's up to me to make a good 'un, and—and I'd be jolly grateful if you fellers 'ud back me up."

"Great! We're all with yuh, an' if it means fur flyin', why the old Flying Fish can show these niggers one or two new stunts yet, an' we'll make ol' Gobo an' his moth-eaten priests look like two cents. Attaboy!"

Revolt!

"GEEWHIZ, but this looks like the World's Show! Is this where yuh goin' to live, Tom Cook?" gasped Al, as the Fish circled the great white marble palace with its shining gold minarets and domes, the entrance approached by a series of wide marble steps with a great portico at the top, under which was a white throne, around which was gathered a crowd of purple-robed men of dignified appearance, all gazing anxiously up into the sky as the Fish circled above. "Say, I guess that marble square'll make just a dandy landin' place for your royal nibs!"

With a blare of the syren the Fish whirled round the great marble floored square in front of the palace, then Al stopped the engines and set the helicopter working so that the craft sank down as gently as a leaf and settled down in the exact centre opposite the steps.

Tom stepped out of the cockpit and lifted his sceptre in salute to the old, dignified men who stood at the head of the steps, they all bowed double and raised the salute:

"Baihete, Tomkuk the Great! Baihete!"

"Say, yuh'd best take this yer l'il stowaway with yuh; he knows all about the way they do things here an'll be mighty useful, I guess!" whispered Al, as he hauled the slender form of Olaf Jan out of the cockpit and stuck him down beside Tom.

"How the dickens did you get here?" asked Tom in astonishment. "I thought you were back there in the forest with your old mammy nurse?"

"Lord, I could not leave you!" whispered the boy in the soft language so much like Bantu. "You saved my life and I am your slave. Perchance I may be able to tell even the great Tomkuk somewhat that will be of use to him. I entreat you, let me remain, lord!"

Tom grinned at him and held out his hand.

"All right, you can stay; but you'd better hang on to Lulu here. I may want my hands empty."

Lulu solved any difficulty by lifting the boy and perching him on his shoulder like a bird. He sat there contentedly and waved his hand to one or two of the counsellors whom he recognised.

Now and again he whispered in Lulu's ear, and the Zulu passed on the information for Tom's benefit.

"Metla, chief o' council," he whispered as a tall, long white-bearded, very dignified looking old chap came down the stairs and bowed low. "Friend of last king who die, and a good man. How long ago, Olaf?"

"Haff score mensa longa," replied the boy, meaning ten months ago, in his curious half English, half Bantu speech. "He queek in night, sick heem stomach. Gobo work magic, but no save heem. Mebbe heem not want save, since king die. Gobo beeg man. Metla he good fella, but plenty fright Gobo magic!"

Tom took a good look at the wrinkled and kindly old face of the councillor and decided that he looked a decent old sort. He could follow what the old chap was saying, as the man spoke slowly and distinctly, and seemed to speak a purer language than the majority.

"Welcome, Tomkuk the Great," he intoned. "You are indeed a welcome sight to these old eyes, for it is many years since a king has reigned over the Golden City who was worthy the name, and to see Tomkuk in the flesh gladdens our hearts."

Evidently it was "taboo" for the common people to enter the palace gates, for a regiment of guards was drawn across the entrance with locked spears, keeping the people back.

"I say, Lulu, I'm getting mighty peckish. Find out if there's any grub going, and Al and I will have a—— Hello!"

He heard the scream of the syren behind him and then the beat of the auto-gyro as the machine lifted and scudded away over the roof of the palace out of sight. At five hundred feet it was invisible owing to the paint used on her hull, and she seemed to absolutely disappear into the blue.

"Now, what's that cunnin' old blighter up to?" muttered Tom, for he realised that his cousin would never leave him like that unless he had something up his sleeve. "He's up to some crazy trick, I'll bet!"

But he had to give all his attention to receiving the old councillors. Taking them all in all, they were not a bad looking lot, though one or two had sly, treacherous faces, and, curiously enough, these were the very ones that Olaf gave whispered warning of as being Gobo's friends.

Tom noticed one or two stealthy glances, anything but friendly, and surprised a covert, sarcastic smile on at least two of their faces as they addressed him as "Mighty Tomkuk."

"I reckon they've tumbled, or Gobo's put 'em wise to something," he thought. "I'll have to go mighty careful with some of these guys or I'll get tripped up. Lulu, what about that grub? I could eat a hippo steak with a couple o' ostrich eggs on top!"

"Baas Tom, you not forget you are supposed to be a god!" murmured the Zulu anxiously. "You must not ask for anything you fancy as do the common folk."

"Here, if you think I'm goin' to starve or live on angel cake an' air balls just because I'm Tomkuk you've got another guess coming!" spluttered Tom angrily. "Just you tell these fellers that whilst Tomkuk's here he wishes to live as ordinary fellers do, and that they are to forget he is not an ordinary mortal. Get off that chest and look slick! Oh, and you might ask 'em to come along an' take a bite with us. Maybe some o' these old boys'll open out a bit over a bit o' dinner. Ask the entire bunch o' aldermen, see?"

"Ja, baas, but you must keep up your dignity. These niggers—they think a vast deal of dignification."

Considering that he was blacker than ninety per cent of the Golden Citizens, Lulu had a great opinion of himself. All the same, he certainly knew how to go to work with coloured races, and he shook his spear aloft and addressed the old men in haughty tones.

"Listen, wise men of Tomkuk's council!" he shouted, his eyes rolling fiercely from one to another of the group. "Know my lord's will. Tomkuk is he, Tomkuk who never dies. Ye have seen that he has put off his semblance of god for a space and has come amongst ye as a young man to be your king and ruler. Now know that he would live as mortal man and direct his kingdom as a king should do, even taking counsel with ye old ones, wise in the law of the land and cunning, no doubt. Now he would rest awhile, toying meantime with rich meats and wines, such as ye have. See to it quickly. I, his mouthpiece and servant, The Elephant, have spoken."

He threw out his mighty chest and brought the haft of the late Lesardu's spear crashing down on the marble steps, looking round with a glare in his bloodshot eye.

"My lord Inkoboo, proud are we that Tomkuk the Great honours us thus. Within the palace a feast is spread in honour of his coming, but little did we think that he would deign to partake."

"Partake? Lead me to it," groaned Tom, as he sniffed smells of roasted meats coming through the entrance doors. "If we stop here jawing much longer I shall disgrace myself by raidin' the kit——" Sufferin' crows, what's happenin'?"

For a mighty yell had come from the mob outside, and he turned to see that every man had his neck craned and was staring upwards. There came a popping sound from the sky, and into view there gently floated a golden figure against which the sun's rays flashed dazzlingly. From it came flashes of light, of different colours, which he recognised as signal rockets.

For a moment the peculiar shape puzzled him, then he realised that it was like a huge umbrella, painted and gilded, and that from beneath it dangled a figure also glittering brightly with gold.

"Th' crazy jackass!" he muttered. "A parachute! Clee, what'll that dude get up to next?"

But Al certainly had a good idea how to make an effective entrance, and he had judged the distance and direction to a nicety. Just over the palace he let loose a perfect shower of rockets, and thus descended gently earthwards in a halo of sparks.

Tom hid a grin as he saw that a spare flying suit had been daubed with gold paint, and glittered like a golden figure as the airman alighted. He left the parachute lying on the grass and skipped across towards Tom like a ballet dancer. Gracefully he sank on one knee, and handed Tom his automatic and cartridge belt.

"Hart, off-king; thy servant from the skies has come to bear thee company; likewise at the same time to tell you that you are a mutt of the first water for leavin' your shootin' iron behind. Mel'be yuh think a crown an' sceptre is goin' to be any use to you in a scrap? Say, bo, how whs that for a dandy entrance for Ariel, the servant of the Great Tomkuk, straight from the skies by special cuté? If that don't put a scare up these coloured gents call me a woozer."

"What on earth did you go off for?" asked Tom, half angrily. "I wondered what the dickens was up."

"Waal, mebbe there is," was the response, gravely for Al. "I went up to take a reconnoitre and it's just as well I did, p'raps. Unless I'm much mistaken, there's goin' to be some sticky work around pretty soon, tho, I don't quite know what it is. I got Ben to drop me over here so's I could put yuh wise, and he's gone off to make certain. He'll be back any time inside an hour."

Old Motla led them inside a spacious banqueting hall and they sat down at a long table which was fairly loaded with food.

"We ain't goin' to starve here, anyway. Gee, but this buffalo hump is all to the merry," whispered Al, with his mouth full.

"Sure! All the same, angel guest, you ought to be eatin' manna and snowflakes, not makin' a noise like a pig at a trough," said Tom.

"An' you, bein' more or less a celestial bein', ought to be content to sit on a cloud and think bee-yutiful thoughts 'stead of beatin' world's records for stufin' duck in yer innards. For shame, Massa— Hallo! What in—"

There came a shouting from outside and Ben's diminutive figure pushed its way through the guards.

"Tom, Tom!" he cried, "Ol' Daddy Gobo has done his magic all hunky. He's opened up a hole in the mountains, and that's about ten million o' them hairy dwarfs pilin' thru. He was thiar to meet 'em with half a regmint of his gold-plated guards, an' they're marchin' straight for this yer city."

(The luck is against Tom Cook and Co. A new and terrible peril is bearing swiftly down upon them. Don't miss a single line of next week's enthralling chapters.)

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