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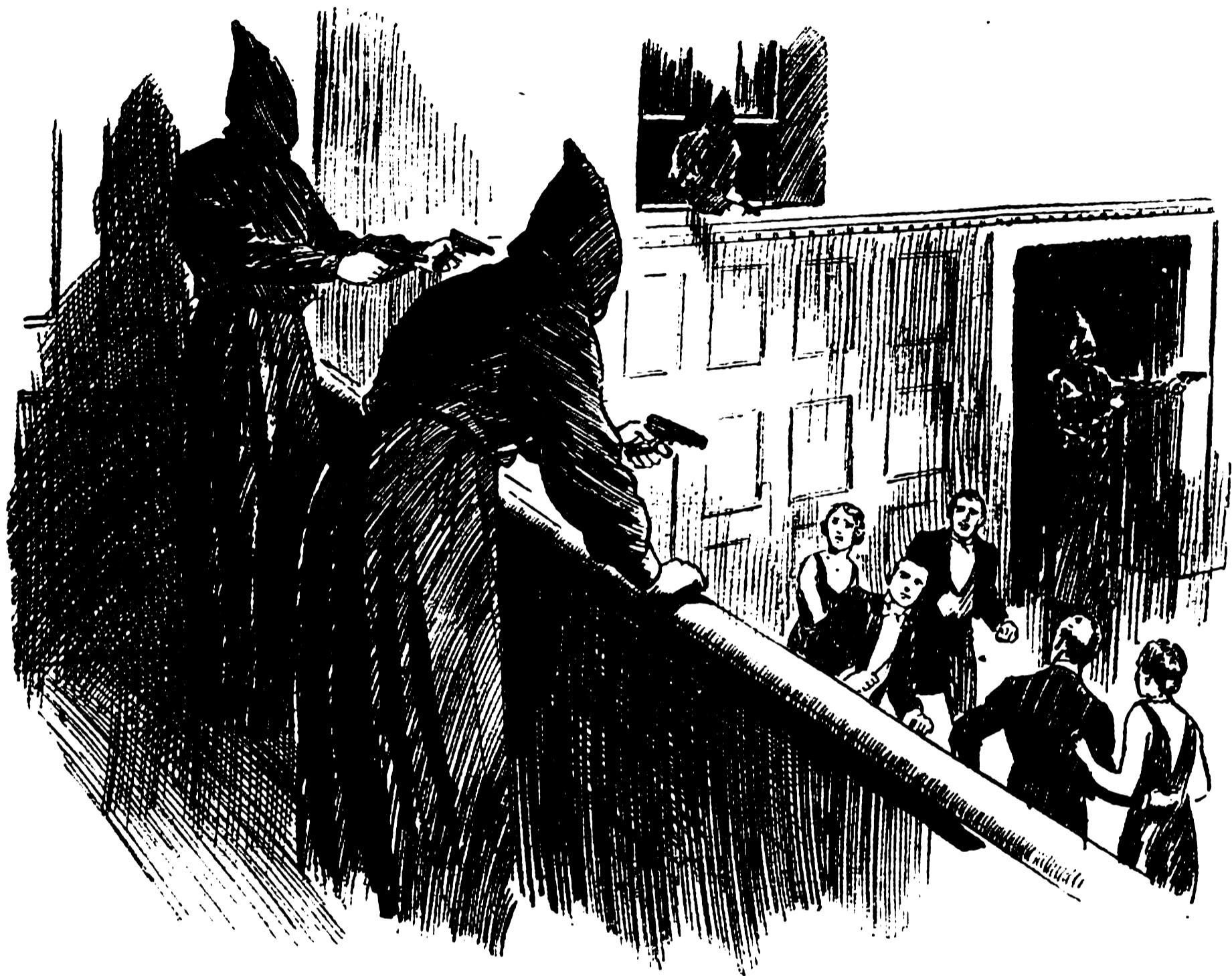
**THE
CROOK
HEADMASTER**

Now Series No. 120.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

May 7th, 1932.

THE CROOK



The man-hunters of Scotland Yard are combing the countryside for Professor Zingrave, master-crook and fugitive from justice. Never once do they look towards St. Frank's for their quarry. But it is here that Zingrave, in the daring rôle of "Dr. Ponsonby," the new headmaster, finds a safe hiding-place from the attentions of the hounds of the law!

CHAPTER 1.

The Man of the Moment!

WHIZZ!

The football sailed accurately from Edward Oswald Handforth's foot, and everything would have been all right if a sudden gust of wind hadn't come round the angle of the Ancient House.

The kick was reckless, of course; but Handforth was always reckless. Punting a football about in the Triangle wasn't very risky, but to take a hefty kick like that—

Cra-a-a-sh!

That gust of wind caused the leather to take a sudden swerve, and, to Handforth's dismay, it just failed to clear the corner of the building, and it went through the end window, shattering the glass to fragments.

"Crums!" ejaculated Handforth, horrified.

"You—you howling idiot!" panted Church. "Mac and I told you what would happen!"

"He never takes any notice of us!" said McClure disgustedly.

—Gripping New Complete Detective-Thriller Starring Nelson Lee!

HEADMASTER!



Wilson, of the Sixth, came dashing out into the bright sunshine of the May afternoon. As ill luck would have it, the prefect had been in the lobby.

"What was that crash?" he demanded suspiciously.

"Crash?" repeated Handforth, pulling himself together with an effort. "Did we hear any crash, you chaps?"

"Did we?" asked Church and McClure, in one voice.

But Wilson had been using his eyes, and he had seen the shattered window.

"Oh! So you young sweeps have been kicking a football about, have you?" he said warmly. "I suppose you did that, Handforth?" He pointed to the window. "Come on—own up!"

"Why pick on me?" asked Handforth truculently.

"Because there's nobody else out here with so little brain!" retorted the prefect. "Only

a brainless chump like you would kick a football near all these windows."

"Oh, go easy, Wilson!" protested Handforth. "It was an accident. The football was going all right until the gust of wind made it swerve. I couldn't help that, could I?"

"You'll come indoors with me," said Wilson sternly.

"But I tell you it was an accident —"

"Shut up! Come with me!"

"Just one moment, please," said another voice. "You really mustn't be so hasty, Wilson. You did not witness the occurrence — whilst I did."

Dr. Howard Ponsonby, the new headmaster of St. Frank's, had approached from the direction of Big Arch without the boys noticing. They now doffed their caps and stood at attention.

Dr. Ponsonby was a soldierly man with grizzled hair and a big white moustache. His dignified gown and his mortar-board suited him admirably.

"This boy kicked a football through one of the windows, sir——" began Wilson.

"I know—I saw the whole thing," said the Head, adjusting his glasses, and looking at Handforth with smiling kindness. "It was, certainly, a rash thing to do, but the ball would have gone safely beyond the end of the House but for the gust of wind. I can assure you, Wilson, that the smashing of the window was quite an accident."

"Thanks awfully, sir," said Handforth, with a gulp.

"But, sir——" began Wilson.

"What is the name of this boy?" inquired the Head.

"He's Handforth, sir—of the Remove."

"Well, Handforth, I shan't punish you for this mishap, but when you kick a football again, please be more careful," said Dr. Ponsonby. "That is all!"

He nodded to Handforth, and passed on.

"By George! What a brick!" breathed Handforth. "I say, he's a stunner, you know!"

"Rather!" agreed Church and McClure.

Wilson was so indignant that he could find no words; and he stamped indoors again. He did not approve of headmasters who pandered to Removites.

But there wasn't a doubt that Dr. Howard Ponsonby was immensely popular—not only in the Remove, but in the entire school.

He had only been in power for nine or ten days, and already St. Frank's had got over the depression which the tragic death of Mr. Nelson Lee, the former headmaster, had created.

At least, the school believed—and practically the whole world believed—that Nelson Lee was dead, murdered by the ruthless agents of the League of the Green Triangle. The famous detective had been "put on the spot" in Bannington, and he had fallen, apparently shot through the heart.

Dr. Ponsonby had immediately popularised himself by instituting drastic new rules. He was, he said, a believer in liberty. It was his policy to trust his boys—to put them on their honour.

That great bugbear of the Junior School—prep.—had been abolished, and great was the joy. The supper hour had been fixed an hour later, leaving the school a much longer evening—and a free evening.

Many of the old restrictions had been done away with. Bounds, for example, were abolished, and the boys were allowed to go just where they pleased. It was now possible to go into Bannington, for the pictures, any evening, without a special pass. Throughout the length and breadth of the school there was a greater freedom.

Some of the fellows, of course, took advantage of this liberty—such specimens as Bernard Forrest, Gore-Pearce, Merrell, Grayson, Shaw, and similar birds of the same feather. But the great majority of the boys revelled in their liberties and did not abuse them.

Dr. Ponsonby was universally liked. He was always appearing amongst the boys, giving them little extra privileges here and there.

In the short space of ten days he had changed St. Frank's considerably. And he had almost made the school forget Nelson Lee. In the general animation and delight of the

changed order of things, St. Frank's had little time to think of other matters.

Certainly, St. Frank's could not fathom Dr. Howard Ponsonby's secret—that, beneath his masterly make-up, he was none other than Professor Cyrus Zingrave, escaped convict and master criminal!

CHAPTER 2.

The Servant of the Green Triangle!

ZINGRAVE—Headmaster!

That was the extraordinary state of affairs at St. Frank's. By brilliant strategy, by cunning plotting, the crooked scientist had usurped Nelson Lee's place.

Having got Lee out of the way, once and for all, Professor Zingrave was now proceeding with his Great Plan. And in order to achieve his ultimate purpose, it was essential that he should make himself popular. He had succeeded astonishingly. Such was the cleverness of his acting that he had been accepted without question by boys and masters alike: he had assumed the responsibility of conducting this great school with a facility which was little short of genius.

There were visitors at the school on this particular afternoon.

While the boys were at lessons, a handsome limousine, driven by a liveried chauffeur, rolled through the deserted Triangle, crossed Inner Court, and pulled up outside the Head's house.

From it emerged Mr. Marshall Bond, the big financier, and Mr. Ivor Hayes, the lawyer. Both men were prominent figures in the city. But it was certainly not known that they were both members of the Inner Council of the League of the Green Triangle!

They were two of Zingrave's ablest lieutenants.

They came openly, boldly, ostensibly to conduct an ordinary matter of business with Dr. Howard Ponsonby.

After they had been ushered into the Head's study, and the door was closed, they looked at their host in some bewilderment. Mr. Bond was a big, florid man; Mr. Hayes was skinny, round-shouldered, and vulture-like.

"Is it safe to talk here?" asked Bond, in a low voice.

"Perfectly safe, gentlemen," said Zingrave, smiling.

"Amazing!" muttered Mr. Hayes. "I wouldn't have believed it, chief! I've been worried all day about coming down here—but I'm not worried any longer. I've never seen anything more astounding in all my life. Even now I can scarcely believe that you are —"

"I am Dr. Howard Ponsonby," said the professor gently. "Always remember that, gentlemen."

"How are things going?" asked Bond.

"Remarkably well," replied Zingrave. "And why shouldn't they be going well? Was I not recommended to this responsible post by Sir John Brent himself? And is not Sir John Brent the chairman of the St. Frank's board of governors? It was he who personally introduced me to the school."

"You engineered it brilliantly," said Hayes, with open admiration. "And what of Sir John? I understand that he was to be here this afternoon?"

"He is due now," replied the crook headmaster. "We may expect him at any minute."

He had every reason to speak confidently. To all intents and purposes, Professor Cyrus Zingrave had vanished, and Scotland Yard, and the police of the country generally, were baffled.

Nelson Lee was the only man Zingrave had really feared; and Nelson Lee was—

"A car has just driven up," said Mr. Bond, glancing through the window.

It was another limousine with a liveried chauffeur. And presently Sir John Brent, tired-looking and lined of face, was shown in.

"It was good of you to come, Sir John," said Zingrave, as they shook hands.

"Good of me?" repeated Sir John bitterly.

He glanced at the others, and he was introduced.

"These gentlemen are fully aware of the position," said Zingrave. "They know all the facts, and you may speak freely in front of them."

"I see," said Sir John, inwardly staggered by the apparent respectability of these criminals. "You tell me that it was good of me to come. Was there any alternative? Am I not a servant—to obey orders?"

"Come, come, Sir John, you are putting it rather harshly," said Zingrave. "Since we came to our—er—arrangement, I don't think I have been particularly arbitrary. This is, in fact, the first summons of any importance."

"Why have you brought me here?" asked Sir John tensely. "What do you want me to do? What infernal roguery—"

"That will do!" cut in Zingrave sharply. "Remember, Sir John, that I have previously warned you against raising your voice."

Sir John sank into a chair without a word. He was hopelessly in the hands of these criminals. Zingrave's hold was of immense power, for he was keeping Sir John's son a prisoner, and if Sir John jibbed in the slightest way—if he betrayed this conspiracy to the police—his son would die.

With that terrible threat overhanging him, the baronet's hand had been forced.

Alf, of the Remove, had been captured by

the Green Triangle agents; even now he was being held in captivity. But Sir John had not the faintest idea where his son's prison was situated.

As a double string to his bow, Zingrave had brought Lady Brent to death's door by the secret administration of a drug; later, he had partially restored the unfortunate lady, and although her health was now good, her mind remained like that of a child. And unless Sir John obeyed the dictates of the Green Triangle, his wife would remain in that helpless condition.

Small wonder that the unhappy man had obeyed every order—that he had introduced "Dr. Ponsonby" to the school as its new Head.

The life of his son—the sanity of his wife! Knowing "Dr. Ponsonby's" real identity, he had been compelled to appoint him to the headmastership.

At first he had expected all manner of unnamed developments, and he had been surprised—and relieved—to learn that Zingrave was conducting the school admirably—if unconventionally. Yet he had the constant fear that some terrible move was being prepared.

"Let me ask one thing!" he said, looking across at Zingrave. "How is my son?"

"He is well—and will remain well just so long as you remain reasonable," replied Zingrave. "And now, gentlemen, let us get to business."

CHAPTER 3.

Ambitious Plans!

SIR JOHN BRENT looked up sharply. At last! He was to know why Zingrave had forced himself upon St. Frank's as its headmaster.

"I have certain matters to discuss with you two gentlemen later," said Zingrave, glancing across at Bond and Hayes. "But now that Sir John is here we will deal with the ball."

"Ball?" repeated Sir John, in bewilderment.

"Since taking over my responsibilities, I have endeavoured to bring a little more life—a little more gaiety, shall we say?—into the lives of the boys," went on Zingrave. "I have given them more liberty, and I now intend to follow up those initial steps by making St. Frank's the scene of the greatest social event the county has ever known."

"But—but I don't understand!" protested Sir John, amazed. "I am aware of the new liberties you have granted to the boys, and I must utter a protest—"

"Save your breath," interrupted Zingrave. "I am in command here."

Sir John paled.

"For the moment, I forgot myself," he said quietly. "I am in no position to protest. What is this social event of which you speak?"

"Next week a great ball will be held at St. Frank's," replied Zingrave smoothly. "I intend to break all traditions by holding this sumptuous reception. It will be something new—something quite startling. The Press, of course, will be informed well in advance, and there will be the greatest publicity."

"But it is so astounding," said Sir John. "A ball at St. Frank's! But a school is no place——"

"You, Sir John, as chairman of the board of governors, will send out the invitations," continued Zingrave carefully. "That is why you are here now—to receive your instructions. You will invite the Big People—the great county families, the influential parents of the richest boys. Mark that well—the richest. This ball must be so great, so phenomenal, that it will be the outstanding social event of the season. We are to have more and more gaiety in this old school, my friends. You may be sure that the boys will be delighted when they hear the news; for they will be granted a whole holiday on that great day. Big Hall will be converted into a ball-room for the occasion. A few of the senior boys, perhaps, will be privileged to attend the ball. The other boys will amuse themselves at the fête which will be held in the grounds. There will be firework displays for their edification, and so forth. But, as I have said, the ball will be the *piece de resistance*."

"But—but I cannot countenance this!" said Sir John breathlessly. "In heaven's name, man, what is your object? I won't send out these invitations——"

He checked, for Zingrave was looking at him intently, almost hypnotically.

"You will do as you are told, Sir John," said the professor, his voice very soft.

Zingrave's confidence, these days, was supreme. With Nelson Lee dead and buried, he had nothing to fear. He had not felt so free for years.

How was he to know that Nelson Lee lived—that Nelson Lee was watching, waiting?

For on that eventful day, when Lee had been shot, he had known full well that he was being put "on the spot." He had worn bullet-proof armour beneath his ordinary clothes, to say nothing of a bag of red dye. He had fallen very realistically, and life had been pronounced extinct. Lee had been removed to the mortuary, and there had been general mourning.

It had been very well engineered. Zingrave was clever—but Nelson Lee was cleverer.

"At least you will tell me why you are holding this grand ball?" asked Sir John, with some spirit. "Such a thing is absolutely unprecedented."

"And for that reason its success will be all the greater," nodded Zingrave. "With your name at the back of it, Sir John, the best people will come. You have nothing to do but obey orders. The wording of the invitation will be given you; in fact, the invitations are already printed, and your task will be nothing more difficult than sending those invitations, each with a personal letter, signed by yourself, to the people we shall select."

"But why? Why?" asked Sir John, almost harshly. "I know you well enough to be quite certain that you do not do things without a definite object. What is the object of this ball? What can you hope to gain from it?"

"Must I remind you yet again, Sir John, that you are here to obey orders—and not to ask questions?" said Zingrave curtly.

"You—you infernal——"

"And remember—control your voice!"

Seething with anger, Sir John turned aside. He was helpless; he was in a net of steel. To argue with this man was but to invite abuse.

"Even I cannot understand the meaning of this amazing move," said Mr. Marshall Bond bluntly. "You'll get plenty of publicity, of course—but surely that's the last thing you desire?"

"It is the first thing I desire," retorted Zingrave. "The more publicity, the better. Audacity, gentlemen, always pays. Do you think the police will turn their eyes towards St. Frank's for even a single moment? The more St. Frank's is talked about, the safer I shall be."

CHAPTER 4.

An Invitation to Tea!

HAVING sprung his surprise, Professor Zingrave proceeded to enlarge upon his plans.

He went into details regarding the elaborate preparations which were to be made; there were all sorts of points to be discussed. And Sir John Brent was a very necessary party at this conference.

He was a startled man. Expecting some daring criminal plot, he was dumbfounded by the extraordinary nature of Zingrave's suggestion. It seemed so pointless—unless, indeed, Zingrave, in his vanity, was merely out for show. Perhaps that was it. Perhaps the man, intoxicated by his new importance as "Dr. Howard Ponsonby," was bent upon a vainglorious exhibition of his own power.

Weary with the discussions, baffled by the riddle of it all, Sir John was at last released. He had been invited to partake of tea with Zingrave and the other two men; but he had declined.

"Thank you, no—I would prefer a walk through the grounds," he said. "I may call upon Mr. and Mrs. Wilkes for a cup of tea."



Soon after midnight, while St. Frank's slept, six mysterious men slipped like sinister shadows into the Head's house. They were gangsters of the infamous Green Triangle League!

"You will return here later, Sir John—so that we can settle the final details," said Zingrave. "It is hardly necessary for me to again remind you that an incautious word—"

"Might result in the untimely death of my son?" interrupted Sir John bitterly. "Have no fear. I am in your hands completely, as, heaven help me, I know to my cost."

He went out into the sunshine, and it was good to feel the mild breeze fanning his face. There was a purity in the air which brought a new sparkle to his eyes. To get out of the presence of those men was an untold relief.

As he went into the Triangle he saw that the boys were out of the class-rooms. Handforth & Co., Vivian Travers, Jimmy Potts, Nipper, Tregellis-West, and Watson, approached him in a body, respectfully raising their caps.

"Glad to see you here, Sir John," said Nipper quietly.

"How are you bearing up, my boy?" asked Sir John, placing a kindly hand on Nipper's shoulder.

"I find it better, sir, not to talk about it," replied Nipper.

The others were silent. Nipper had been away from St. Frank's for some days—in fact, he had only returned yesterday. And he had been intensely relieved to find the old school going along in very much the same way; he had been even more relieved when the boys had spared him their condolences.

The fellows knew what a terrible blow Nelson Lee's loss must have meant to Nipper; and they rather wondered at his outward calm.

"I am very pleased with you, young man," said Sir John. "Things are—different. We must show a bold front, eh?"

"One day, Sir John, those Green Triangle people are going to pay!" said Nipper deliberately.

"By heaven, yes!" exclaimed Sir John, his voice vibrating.

"How's Alf, sir?" put in Handforth, deeming it the right moment to change the conversation.

Sir John started.

"Alf?" he repeated. "Oh, yes! To be sure! You mean my son, Alfred?"

"We thought he would have been back before this, sir" went on Handforth. "Now that Lady Brent is so much better there's no reason why your son should remain in London, is there?"

"I—er—I don't think Alfred will be coming back just yet," said Sir John, anxious to escape, for this conversation was becoming intolerable. "Perhaps some of you boys will be good enough to direct me to my son's study? I would like to have a little talk with young Glenthorne. He is Alfred's study-mate, is he not—his friend?"

"We're all Alf's friends, sir," said Travers. "We were wondering if you would honour us by coming indoors for tea?"

"By George, rather!" said Handforth eagerly. "We can give you a ripping spread, Sir John—sardines, tinned salmon, bloater paste, chocolate eclairs, pork pies——"

"Ahem! Thank you very much!" said Sir John hastily. "But, really, I don't think I am in quite the mood for such a meal as you suggest. A cup of tea is what I really need—and Alfred has always told me that young Glenthorne has the best tea in St. Frank's."

"That's true, too, sir," said Nipper, with a smile. "We other chaps just potter along in our own studies, and I'm afraid the quality of the tea can't always be guaranteed. But Archie Glenthorne is different; he has his own valet, and what Phipps doesn't know about making tea isn't worth learning."

"Yes, to be sure," said Sir John. "Phipps. That's the man. A champion tea-maker, I believe? I'm quite curious to sample Phipps' tea—and I would really like a quiet half-hour with Alfred's friend. You don't mind, boys, do you?"

They thought they understood. And, of course, they were in no way offended. It was Nipper who escorted Sir John to Study E, in the Remove passage.

The one and only Archibald Winston Derek Glenthorne was displayed to advantage on the big lounge. But he knew his manners. He sprang to his feet at once as Sir John came in.

"Greetings, old thing! That is to say, frightfully welcome, Sir John!" he exclaimed cordially. "You're just in ripe time for the good old brew. Phipps will be trotting along in a couple of jiffs with considerable quantities of the invigorating juice."

"If, by that, you mean that tea is nearly ready, I am pleased to hear it," said Sir John. "Thank you, Nipper. I shall be quite all right now; this apartment is very restful."

"Good gad! Just a minute, sir!" said Archie. "I absolutely insist upon Nipper remaining for the feast. I mean, in the circle, his presence is rather necessary, what?"

"I'd like to stay, Sir John," said Nipper.

He closed the door, and Sir John appeared to remember something. His whole attitude had now changed; even the haggard look had gone out of his face, and his eyes were glowing with some great inward emotion.

"Splendid—splendid!" he said, in a low voice. "You managed that admirably, Nipper. The other boys cannot possibly have any inkling."

"It's all most frightfully exciting!" said Archie breathlessly.

"Hush!"

A tap had sounded on the door, and then the door opened to admit the sedate Phipps, pushing before him the loaded tea-waggon.

CHAPTER 5.

The Disclosure!

"SO here we are, what?" said Archie, beaming. "We shall need another cup, Phipps, old thing, and some more hot muffins."

"I have taken the liberty, Master Archibald, of providing an extra cup," said Phipps imperturbably. "Good afternoon, Sir John."

"Good afternoon, Phipps," said Sir John, in a curiously strained voice.

"Bally marvellous—that's what it is!" said Archie, adjusting his monocle, and staring at Phipps in awe. "Good gad! I mean to say, even now I can't believe it!"

Nipper saw that the door was tightly closed, and he turned to Sir John.

"It's quite all right, sir," he said cagerly. "You may talk freely now."

"You mean that Phipps is——"

"One of us, sir," said Nipper, smiling.

"I am very glad to hear it," said Sir John. "Alfred always told me that you were a man of admirable discretion, Phipps. But I cannot quite understand the position. I was led to believe that Mr. Lee would be here."

"Mr. Lee is here, Sir John," said Nipper.

"But, really——"

"I find it necessary to take very strict precautions," said Phipps, in a changed voice. "As Glenthorne's valet, I am under no suspicion."

Sir John fairly jumped.

"You!" he ejaculated. "Good heavens! I would never have known!"

"Dashed uncanny, that's what it is, sir," said Archie. "I didn't believe it at first. I mean to say, two peas, what?"

Sir John recovered himself after a moment, and he strode across, and gripped "Phipps'" hand.

"Mr. Lee!" he muttered. "I have always known that you were a past master in the art of impersonation; but this achievement is quite bewildering."

The disguised Nelson Lee laughed.

"It was not difficult to arrange," he explained. "Phipps is a very good fellow—and thoroughly trustworthy. I took him into my confidence, spent two or three hours converting myself into his double, and he was smuggled away quietly, and is now enjoying a brief holiday—in seclusion."

Sir John was looking at him closely, searchingly.

"There is no trace of your own personality left," he said, in wonder. "If it wasn't for the voice —"

"It so happens that Phipps and I are of almost exactly the same build," said Lee. "It was not so difficult as you imagine, Sir John. By assuming this disguise, I am right on the spot, and able to keep my eyes upon Zingrave. For as soon as I knew that Zingrave had plotted to become the headmaster of St. Frank's, I knew that he was preparing some big Green Triangle stunt. To have established myself on the premises as a newly engaged servant would have been risky. But to step into the shoes of an old-established servant was quite a different matter. I must tell you that Nipper and Glenthorne are the only two persons in the whole of St. Frank's who know that I am here—that I am playing this part."

"It's been going on for days, Sir John," said Archie. "And when Mr. Lee comes gliding into the old apartment I can't believe my dashed eyes. I mean to say, he's Phipps all over again! What's more, he makes the same kind of priceless tea, and he looks after my neckties and shirts, and so forth. I never realised, until now, that Mr. Lee was so frightfully clever."

"I am afraid you are flattering me, Glenthorne," said Nelson Lee gravely.

"Absolutely not sir!" vowed Archie. "I mean, look at the crease in these trousers——"

"Never mind your bags, Archie," interrupted Nipper, "By Jove, gov'nor, it's good

to have ten minutes together, so that we can talk freely! I managed to get Sir John in here without any of the other chaps smelling a rat."

"Yes, it all seems very easy," agreed Nelson Lee. "You may think, Sir John, that we are unduly cautious, but I can assure you that we must go very, very warily."

Nelson Lee had disclosed himself to Sir John some days earlier; and, indeed, but for the knowledge that Lee was working secretly on the case, Sir John might have cracked up under the strain. Lee had arranged a code, which was to be used when he wrote to Sir John, or when Sir John wrote to Nipper. As the great detective had said, it was impossible to be too careful, even in the matter of correspondence.

"When you wrote and said that you had been summoned to St. Frank's for to-day Sir John," went on Lee, "I dropped you a line, in code, suggesting that you should have tea with young Glenthorne. I told you that we should meet. And here we are."

"But I never dreamed that you would appear as Phipps," said Sir John. "I—I take it that we are quite safe here? There are so many boys near us——"

"So many, in fact, that we can talk with the utmost freedom," interrupted Lee. "There is a considerable noise going on in the adjoining studies—and in the corridor, too. Phipps was in the habit of remaining with Glenthorne, attending to his wants.

We have at least ten minutes—and we must make the best of them."

CHAPTER 6.

Nelson Lee's Council!

FOR the sake of appearances, Sir John Brent accepted a cup of tea and a buttered muffin. But he did not feel like eating, or drinking, either. Nipper and Archie joined in, too.

"I want you to tell me, Sir John, why Zingrave summoned you to St. Frank's to-day," said Lee briefly.



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"If you are expecting anything sensational, you will be disappointed," replied Sir John. "As far as I can gather, Zingrave requires me to send out a great many invitations to a grand ball."

"A ball?" repeated Lee sharply.

"To be held at St. Frank's next week."

"Odds shocks and surprises!" ejaculated Archie Glenthorne. "I mean to say, what are we coming to next?"

"I can only assume that Zingrave has become so puffed up with his own importance as headmaster of St. Franks' that he desires to make an impression on the county," said Sir John, with some warmth. "What other reason could he have?"

"Zingrave never does things without an object, Sir John," replied Nelson Lee slowly. "A grand ball, you say? And all the best people are to be invited? Rich people, I take it?"

"Why, yes—Zingrave especially stressed that point."

"It is very significant," said Lee, and his voice was grim. "There was no other subject discussed? Only the ball?"

"Nothing else whatever?"

"I see." Nelson Lee paced up and down.

"Well, we have plenty of time. On which day is the ball to be held?"

"Wednesday."

"A great deal may happen between now and next Wednesday," said Lee. "Yet I hope it won't. Far better to let things drift on, and thus Zingrave will feel more secure than ever. I shall remain here in the character of Phipps, and I shall do Phipps' ordinary duties. You will return home, Sir John, and you will obey all orders to the letter, without question. Our only hope of making a big capture is to keep these criminals unsuspecting."

Sir John, who was only making a pretence of drinking, set his cup down shakily.

"But why?" he asked, with hoarse anxiety. "Why wait, Mr. Lee? Why can't you act at once—this very evening?"

"If you gave the matter more careful thought, Sir John, you would not ask these questions."

"But I have given the matter careful thought!" insisted Sir John. "You know that this 'Dr. Ponsonby' is Zingrave. You know where he is—you can lay your hands on him at any second you like. Why don't you disclose your real identity and arrest the infernal rogue?"

"It seems the obvious thing to do, doesn't it?" replied Nelson Lee. "If I knew where they were holding your son, I might take immediate action."

"My son?" muttered Sir John, with a start.

"His whereabouts is the one stumbling block," continued Lee. "Surely, Sir John, you can see the difficulties? If I disclosed

myself now, and arrested Zingrave, what do you suppose would happen to your son? Remember, he is in the hands of Zingrave's agents. Do you think they would spare his life?"

Sir John groaned.

"You are right, of course!" he muttered.

"I was a fool not to have thought of that!"

"I know this period of waiting is irksome, but you must continue to be patient," said Lee. "You may be sure that your son is in no danger, for if they harmed him, their hold over you would be weakened. They will keep Alfred safe and well as much for their own sakes as for yours."

"Yes, I see—I see," said the other. "But my wife? Cannot you restore her, Mr. Lee? You have told me that you know of an antidote to the drug——"

"Lady Brent is in perfect bodily health," interrupted Nelson Lee. "She is in no danger. It is better that she should be left in her present condition—for the Green Triangle have agents where we least expect. If Lady Brent were to suddenly recover Zingrave would know that an antidote had been administered, and he would at once become suspicious. No, Sir John; we must wait."

"Have you not suggested to the police that they should search for my son?" inquired Sir John. "There are certain police-officers who know that you are alive, Mr. Lee, and——"

"And any widespread search for your son's prison would become known to Zingrave," put in Lee grimly. "And then what would be the result? Zingrave would suspect that you had betrayed him."

"Good heavens, yes!"

"Nobody but you is supposed to know that Alfred has been kidnapped by the Green Triangle agents," said Lee. "And you have been sworn to silence—under pain of your son's death. We cannot search for him. But as I have said, a great deal might happen between now and next Wednesday. You may be quite certain that I will keep my eyes and my ears open. If I can stumble across your son's prison, I will go to his aid."

"You are right, Mr. Lee; you have been right from the first," admitted Sir John. "We can do nothing but exercise our patience."

"In the meantime you need not be too deeply concerned about the affairs of St. Frank's," said Nelson Lee. "Zingrave is undoubtedly a criminal, but he is a brilliant man, and fully qualified for the headmastership. He will not do anything to injure the name of the school. He is merely using his position as a means to an end, and St. Frank's, or the fair fame of St. Frank's, is in no danger."

"You bring me comfort, sir—very great comfort," said Sir John gratefully. "I feel,

indeed, that I am not guilty of any great betrayal."

The disguised detective smiled.

"Make no mistake, Sir John, we'll have these rascals in a net before long," he said confidently. "All the advantage of the situation is with us. For we are on our guard, and when the time comes for springing surprises—well, our surprise will be much greater than theirs."

Two minutes later "Phipps" glided discreetly out of Archie's study, and in due course Sir John Brent returned to the Head's house—to receive further instructions from his masters.

But were they the masters? Professor Cyrus Zingrave was a dangerous man—but St. Frank's held another man who was a hundred times more dangerous!

CHAPTER 7.

The Dismissed Servants!

PROFESSOR ZINGRAVE was thoroughly enjoying this new game of his.

It was so totally different from anything else he had ever undertaken. It was novel. It appealed to his vanity.

Here he was, an escaped convict, a wanted criminal, boldly and openly conducting a great public school! And, what was more, he was using that school to supply him with rich funds. The forthcoming ball was not to be quite so innocent as it sounded.

Zingrave was firmly entrenched now, and with Sir John Brent so completely in his power, he could not see how any hitch could occur.

He had already got himself talked about in the school, and in the district. As "Dr. Ponsonby" he was popular. He had not confined his generosity to the boys. He had given the staff greater liberties, too. He had made a habit of driving into the village and getting friendly with the shopkeepers. He had dined at the Vicarage, and the vicar—innocent man—was thoroughly charmed with the new Head.

One inevitable result of Zingrave's slackening of discipline was that the more sporty element of the staff should take unfair advantages. Zingrave had reckoned upon this, and it is eloquent testimony of his cunning that he relied upon it to further his own ends.

Just as Forrest & Co., Grayson, Shaw, and the other "blades" of the school went off openly to race meetings, abusing their new liberties, so certain servants indulged their own peculiar weaknesses.

Three of the under-gardeners, two under-porters, and an indoor man had soon found that it wasn't so necessary to stick to their

work. They slipped off at odd times of the day, to congregate together in one of the garages.

Here they would loiter and smoke, or perhaps indulge in a mild gamble with cards. A little "pontoon" or "banker" did not come amiss to while away a quarter of an hour, whilst they smoked their pipes or cigarettes.

And Zingrave, apparently seeing nothing, saw all.

He had anticipated that something like this would happen—and at the right moment he struck.

It was on the Saturday morning, when all the preparations for the forthcoming ball were going well, that he unexpectedly appeared at the doors of the garage—the rendezvous where the men servants were indulging in their harmless little "flutter" while they smoked.

There were six of them, and they were laughing so heartily over a joke which one of them had made that they did not see "Dr. Ponsonby" for some moments. In fact, it was his cough which caused one of the under-gardeners to glance round.

"Look out!" he muttered hastily. "The guv'nor!"

Zingrave walked into the garage, and he was looking upset.

"Really, men, this is too bad!" he said, without heat. "Why are you playing cards in this garage, instead of attending to your duties?"

They were silent, startled by his unexpected appearance.

"It is a pity that you cannot accept the little privileges I have granted you without abusing them," continued Zingrave, his voice becoming stern. "This won't do at all."

"We're sorry, sir——" began one of the men.

"It's too late to be sorry," interrupted Zingrave. "You are all discharged."

"Discharged?" echoed the six, aghast.

"Idling whilst you should be working is serious enough—but I have caught you gambling," said Zingrave. "There can be no excuse for such conduct."

"But we were only having a round of nap, sir!" exclaimed one of the gardeners frantically. "There wasn't any money on it——"

"You will not improve matters by lying," interrupted Zingrave angrily. "What do you mean by telling me there was no money on the game?" He pointed to some coppers, and a few sixpences, on the upturned box which the men had been using as a table. "Don't you call that money?"

"We're sorry, sir!" said one of the men. "If you'll give us another chance——"

"Oh, no! I do not give people a second chance!" said Professor Zingrave. "You are all summarily dismissed. Come to me after you have packed your things, and I will give

you each a month's wages in lieu of notice. That is all."

The harshness of the dismissal—coming abruptly on top of the new headmaster's laxity—was staggering. All these men were old servants of St. Frank's; they had been employed at the school for years. And their offence, in any case, was trivial, and worthy, at most, of a reprimand. To be discharged like this was a knockout blow.

"Dr Ponsonby!" panted one of the men. "I wasn't even playing cards; I hadn't been here more than a minute——"

"I shall accept no excuses," said Zingrave. "Pack your things, and be ready to leave the school in an hour."

He walked away, leaving the men dumbfounded. Zingrave did not fear what these men would say amongst the other servants. After they had gone he would go round and he would give hints that he had deliberately made an example of these six men. Under no circumstances would he countenance hole-in-the-corner gambling.

He had his way. Less than two hours later those six unfortunate men left the school—and Zingrave had already telephoned to an imaginary agency in London to send six new men down to the school.

The fact of the matter was Zingrave needed some of his own agents under his immediate command. As things were at present he was entirely alone.

Many times, during the past week, he had required the assistance of men he could trust—men who were members of the League of the Green Triangle. And in this simple way he was installing six of his most trusted servants under the school roof—and they had come in a perfectly natural manner, replacing those men who had been discharged.

CHAPTER 8.

Recognition!

THE school heard about the dismissals through various channels, but thought little of the matter. Some of the fellows commented upon Dr. Ponsonby's harshness, but it was generally concluded that the dismissed servants must have been caught red-handed at some very reprehensible occupation.

"The Head's all right," said Handforth firmly. "Look at the liberties he's given us. If he sacked those men, you can bet they deserved to be sacked."

The school was far too occupied in talking about the forthcoming ball to concern itself over discharged servants. Everybody was getting worked up about the big news.

For it was generally known by now that next Wednesday was to be a gala day. There would be a grand fête, a feast, and a general sort of celebration—winding up at night with

the ball. It was such an unusual programme that all the boys, juniors and seniors alike, were filled with eager anticipation.

So the matter of the sacked servants received scant attention.

That same evening six respectable-looking men arrived—three gardeners, two porters, and an indoor man.

They arrived carrying suitcases, and when they made their identity known to Josh Cuttle, the head porter, he directed them to the Head's house. For he had had orders to send these men straight on when they arrived.

Thus, soon afterwards, they were marshalled into the Head's study, where they stood shuffling their feet and fingering their headgear.

"Bond has done well," said Zingrave gently, as he inspected the new arrivals. "I entrusted Mr. Bond with selecting you fellows. You are fully aware, of course, that you have been selected for special duty?"

"Yes, sir," chorused the men.

They had had, in fact, very full instructions. They were not ordinary members of the League—but highly-specialised agents. They knew that "Dr. Ponsonby" was their chief; and they were now regarding him with open admiration and respect. Every one of them knew Professor Zingrave by sight; and they marvelled at the changes in his appearance.

"Three of you, I believe, have a good working knowledge of gardening," continued Zingrave. "You will report yourselves to Markham. He is the head gardener. He will instruct you as to your accommodation and sleeping quarters."

"Yes, sir," said the three.

"Which of you others are the porters?" asked Zingrave.

Two of the men stepped forward.

"Very well, you will report, one to Mr. Wilkes, of the Ancient House, and one to Mr. Stockdale, of the Modern House," continued Zingrave. "You will become under-porters in those Houses."

He turned to the last man.

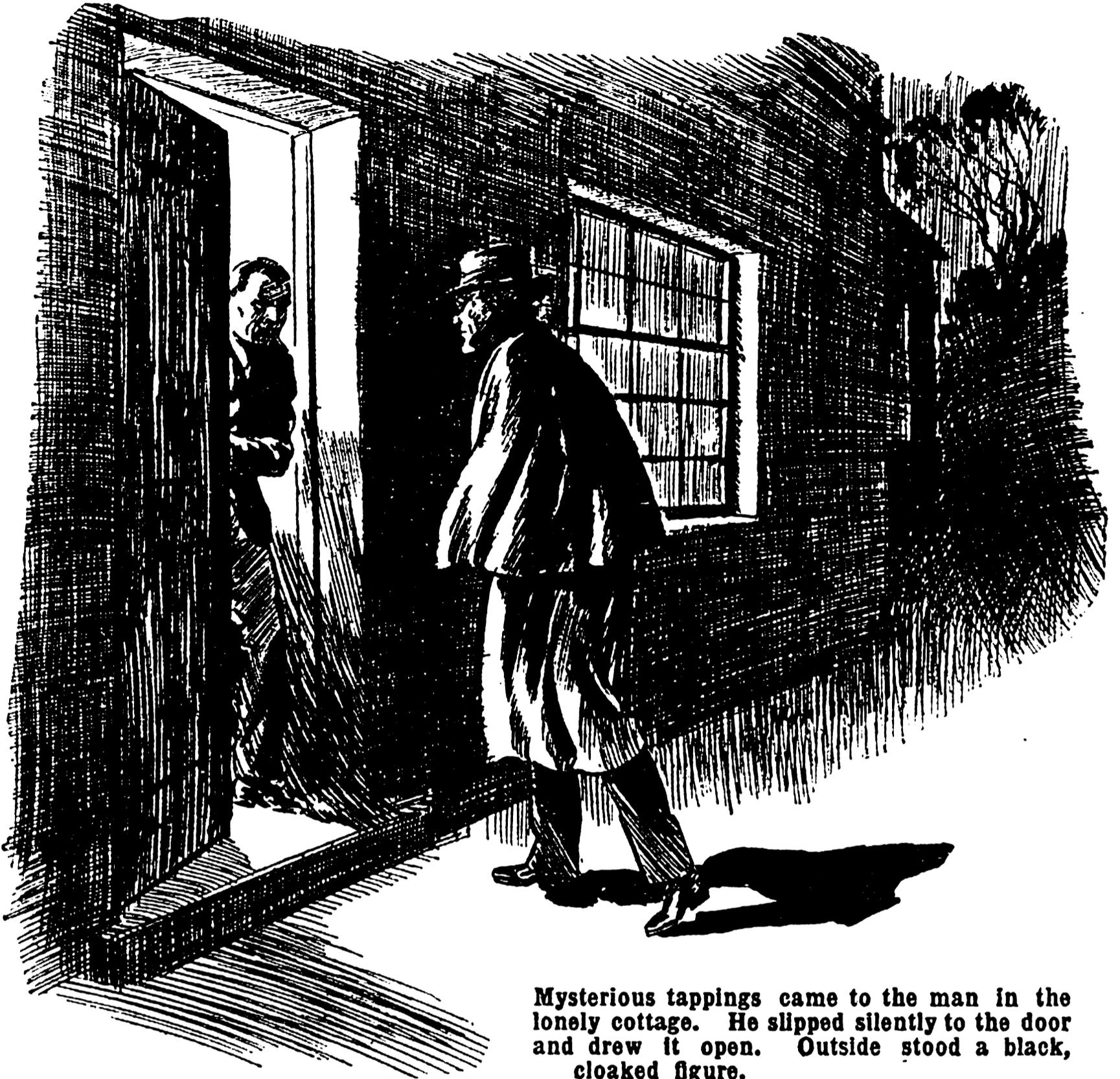
"And you are an indoor servant, I think?" he said. "You will report to Mr. Wilkes, of the Ancient House, too. Now, you will let me know your names, your qualifications—and now I mean your real qualifications."

He took down all the particulars.

"Excellent!" he said at length. "Now listen carefully, men. It is quite possible that you will not be required for any special duty. On the other hand, I may want one of you, or two of you, at any moment. You must hold yourselves ready. You, Mitchell"—he pointed to one of the men—"you will indulge in a half-hour's walk before going to bed every night. It is the habit of years, you understand? Wet or fine, you will go for your half-hour's walk."

"Yes, sir," said Mitchell.

"During the course of that walk you will meet me in the lane," proceeded Zingrave. "That will be to-night—at ten o'clock—for



Mysterious tapings came to the man in the lonely cottage. He slipped silently to the door and drew it open. Outside stood a black, cloaked figure.

I shall be taking a constitutional, too. I shall then show you a secret hiding-place in a roadside tree. After to-night you will always go to that hiding-place to see if there is any message, with particular instructions. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir," said Mitchell. "But it seems a roundabout way of doing things, doesn't it, sir?"

"Let me impress upon you all that we cannot take risks," said Zingrave. "You are here as servants—and you must fill your jobs worthily. Not one of your fellow-servants must receive the slightest inkling. Next week, of course, there will be some very important work for you—but I will tell you of that later. Go now and report as I have told you."

And so, in this way, the wily professor already had six of his trusted men introduced into the school. So respectable did they look that none of the masters, or boys, or servants could guess that they were Green Triangle agents.

Mitchell was the man who was to take on indoor work in the Ancient House; and he

made quite a good impression with the other servants when he presented himself.

And it so happened that Phipps, Archie's valet, met Mitchell in one of the corridors. Phipps was carrying some of Archie's clothes, and he was looking as immobile as ever.

"Ah, yes," said Phipps, looking steadily at the new arrival. "You're the new man, aren't you? I hope you'll be comfortable here. My own name is Phipps, and I am not a member of the ordinary staff. I am valet to one of the young gentlemen."

"You're lucky," said Mitchell, grinning. "I've always hankered after a job like that. My name's Mitchell. Hope we'll get on well together."

"There's no reason why we shouldn't," said Phipps. "Come to my room when you like; you'll soon find out where it is."

"Thanks," said Mitchell. "I like people to be friendly."

As he looked at the supposed valet he could not guess that he had been recognised—neither could he guess that he was really looking at Nelson Lee, the greatest enemy

the League of the Green Triangle had ever known.

"Had to come down rather sudden like," said Mitchell. "The old boy seems to be a decent sort."

"You'd better go easy on gambling, though," warned Lee, with a smile. "That's what got the other fellows the sack."

"Thanks—I'll take your tip," said Mitchell. "A bit nutty on gambling, is he?"

"Oh, he wouldn't interfere ordinarily," replied Lee. "But he doesn't like the servants to do that sort of thing in working hours. Don't forget to come to my room, Mitchell."

"I won't," promised the other.

And when Nelson Lee went on his way he was thoughtful—and just a little grim.

For he had instantly recognised this man—although the recognition had certainly not been mutual. He knew Mitchell for what he was—a Green Triangle agent. And Lee was just as certain that all the other new servants were Green Triangle agents.

CHAPTER 9.

Zingrave Gives Instructions!

NIPPER looked casually into Archie Glenthorne's study an hour before supper. "Phipps" was tidying up, and he glanced round respectfully.

"I think Master Archie is upstairs, sir," he said.

"All right, Phipps," replied Nipper. "Don't bother about me—I only want to look for a book. Archie won't mind."

He closed the door and his manner changed.

"Anything fresh, guv'nor?" he asked eagerly.

They had made this arrangement earlier; Archie was to be upstairs, and Lee was to be in Archie's study. Lee had definitely impressed it upon Nipper that he was never to whisper to him in any of the corridors. These "chance" meetings in Archie's study were arranged for various times of the day or evening. Lee generally managed to get a word with Nipper now and again.

"Yes, young 'un, there's something on the move," replied Lee, in a low voice.

"You mean the new servants?" asked Nipper. "I'll bet they're Green Triangle men!"

"Every one of them—and, what is more, I believe they are gunmen," replied Lee. "Picked killers, all."

"Great Scott!"

"Yet, to look at them, one would never guess," continued Lee. "We shall probably know later on just why they have been brought here. I think I can guess already. But we won't talk about that now, Nipper. There's a little job for you, if you'd care to take it."

"Just tell me what it is, sir," said Nipper breathlessly.

"Twenty minutes ago a man dressed as an A.A. scout went to the Head's house," said Lee. "Do you think you could shadow him when he leaves? You might take young Glenthorne with you. The A.A. man is on an ordinary push-bike, and you can use push-bikes, too. A couple of schoolboys would not be suspected—even by the Green Triangle spies. This man may be a genuine A.A. scout—on the other hand, he may be a Triangle messenger. We cannot be sure of anybody nowadays, Nipper; therefore, we must suspect all."

"But, guv'nor, we're wasting time, aren't we?" asked Nipper anxiously. "Twenty minutes ago, you say? He'll have seen Zingrave by now—and left."

"I think not," replied Lee. "Zingrave, at the moment, is delivering a lecture to the Sixth Form, and it won't be over for ten minutes. The A.A. scout, meanwhile, is sitting in the hall of the Head's house, waiting."

"Oh, I see," said Nipper. "All right, guv'nor—I'll buzz up and tell Archie, and we'll get our jiggers out."

"You must be very careful—you must take no risks," warned Nelson Lee. "This man may be in touch with Alf Brent's hiding-place. That's what I'm after, Nipper. If only I can find young Brent, the hold which Zingrave has over Sir John will be gone. Follow this man, find out just where he goes, and report to me later. But remember—take no risks. If you have any reason to believe that the man suspects you of shadowing him, drop it."

"There's no danger, really, guv'nor—and you know it," said Nipper shrewdly. "Zingrave or these Green Triangle agents wouldn't dare to hurt any St. Frank's fellows. It would be too risky. There'd be too much publicity. Zingrave doesn't want Scotland Yard men down at St. Frank's."

"All the same—be careful," said Lee. "Now I must hustle you out. You don't want to run it too fine."

At that very moment Zingrave had gone into his study, the lecture being over. He was feeling very pleased with himself. He had entertained the Sixth, and the Sixth had shown its appreciation in unmistakable terms. Zingrave welcomed these opportunities of displaying his great learning.

"Well, what are you doing here?" he demanded, looking at the man in the A.A. scout's uniform. "You have come ostensibly to persuade me to join the Association, eh? Well, that gag is good enough. But what is your real object?"

"Mr. Lorne sent me, sir," said the man.

"Lorne!" replied Zingrave sharply. "Is anything wrong?"

Nelson Lee's guess had been correct—for Mr. Simpson Lorne, a supposed impecunious artist, occupied a humble cottage in the countryside beyond Bannington. And in the

cellars of that cottage Alf Brent was kept a prisoner.

"The boy's ill, sir," said the fake A.A. man.

"Ill? How do you mean—ill?" demanded Zingrave, with some anxiety. "Cannot you be specific? Has he contracted influenza, or measles, or something?"

"Mr. Lorne doesn't know, sir—that's why he sent me for instructions," replied the messenger. "The kid's feverish—might be sickening for anything. Mr. Lorne is no doctor, and he's worried."

"Go back at once and tell Lorne that I will send over a man to-night," said Zingrave. "I will send two, in fact—and if the boy is really bad I will have him removed. And tell Lorne that he took an unnecessary risk in sending you. I'm not at all pleased with him. All right—that's all."

The messenger immediately left—and Professor Zingrave was disturbed. If anything serious happened to Alf Brent there would be a lamentable kink in his elaborate plot. Sir John Brent's help was vital—and in order to ensure Sir John's help, the boy had to be kept a prisoner. And Zingrave had promised Sir John that he would allow Alf to write occasionally; if those brief notes came to a stop, Sir John would suspect.

"Curse the boy!" muttered Zingrave. "Why does he want to get ill just now? I shall have to do something about this."

Meanwhile, Nipper and Archie Glenthorne were doing something about the false A.A. man!

CHAPTER 10.

The Trail That Led Nowhere!

RIDING leisurely, the A.A. scout passed through Bellton Village. He evidently had no idea that there were shadowers on his trail, for he never once glanced behind him.

Even if he had done so, he would not have been suspicious of the two schoolboys who were cycling some distance behind.

He took the Bannington road, and Nipper and Archie followed.

"The real shadowing will begin after we've passed through Bannington," murmured Nipper. "We shall have to go jolly easy then, Archie."

"Oh, rather!" agreed Archie. "I mean to say, if these blighters suspect that we're 'tailing'—that's the right word, isn't it?—one of their men they'll absolutely push us off!"

"You mean bump us off," grinned Nipper. "Absolutely," murmured Archie. "They might even take us for a drive."

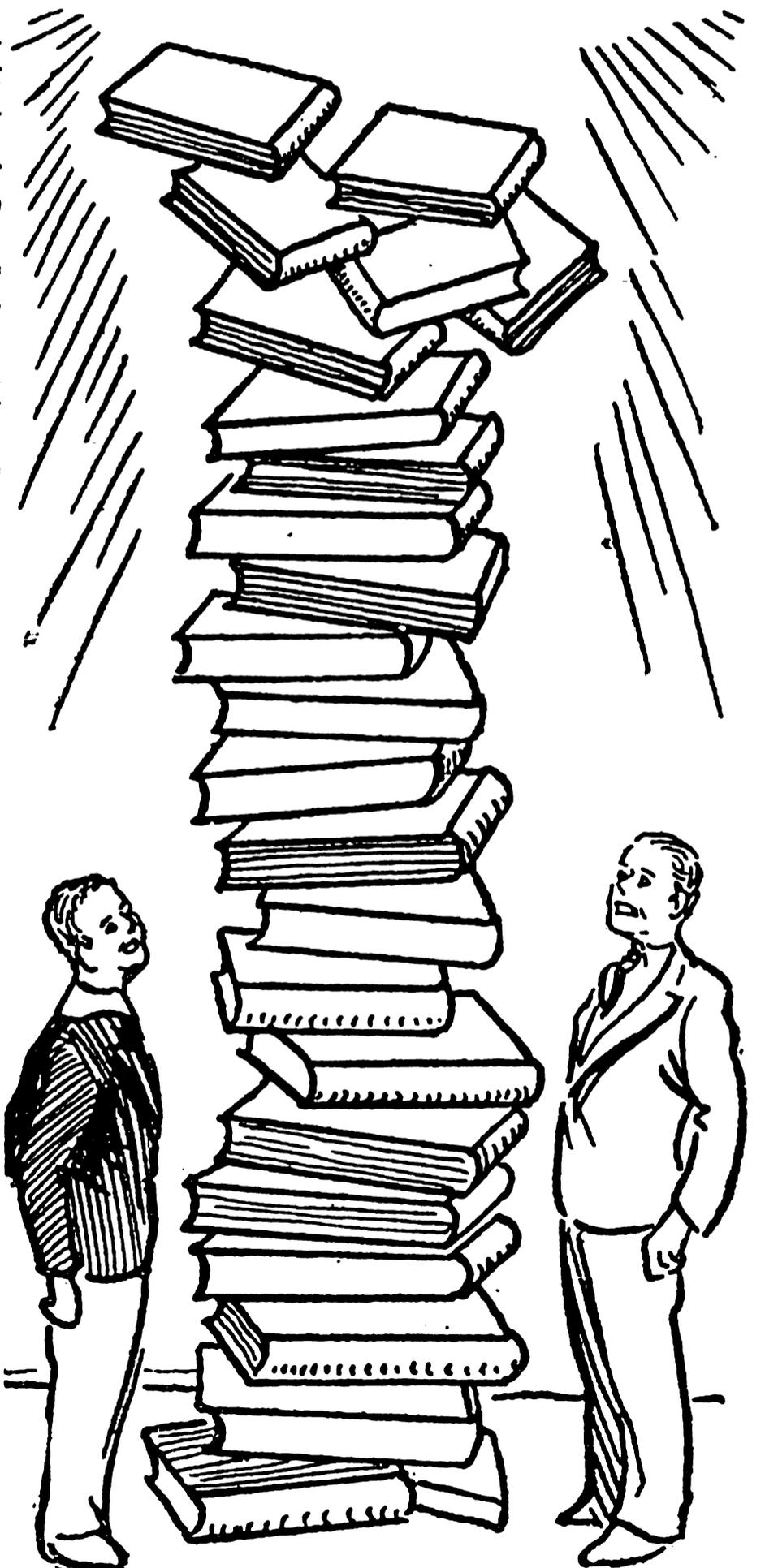
"Take us for a ride!" corrected Nipper. "Or put us on the place!"

"The spot, ass!" "Good gad! You can't expect me to remember all the right words, can you?" protested Archie. "As long as you gather

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the good old trend— Hallo! What's all this?"

"Go easy!" warned Nipper. "Be ready to do the disappearing act, Archie."

They had turned a bend of the road, and, some distance ahead, they could see a motor-car. It was stationary by the side of the road, and the A.A. scout was in the act of dismounting. It instantly occurred to Nipper that this was a rendezvous; an apparently chance meeting between a disabled motorist and an authentic A.A. scout. The scout would pretend to tinker with the engine whilst actually passing a secret message. The motorist would then proceed on his way.

However, this charming little theory, ingenious as it was, proved to be wrong.

"Couldn't have come along at a better time!" came a familiar voice. "Oh, it's you, Watkins?"

"Yes, sir," came the voice of the A.A. scout.

Nipper and Archie had immediately recognised Dr. Brett—and Dr. Brett was quite above suspicion, for he was the school doctor. And, in fact, he was one of the few men who knew Nelson Lee's secret.

At a word from Nipper, Archie had switched off his electric cycle lamp—and Nipper had done the same. They now left their machines against the hedge and they crept through a gap. Silently approaching on the other side of the hedge, they could hear all that was being said between Dr. Brett and the A.A. man.

"It's this infernal carburetter," the doctor was saying. "There must be something wrong with the needle, I think."

"I'll soon have it fixed, sir," said the other. "You're the gentleman I helped a couple of days ago, aren't you? I know just what's wrong."

He had the bonnet of the car up, and whilst Dr. Brett held an electric torch, the A.A. man made some adjustments.

"She'll be all right now, sir," came the voice. "If I were you I'd have this carburetter properly adjusted. She's liable to stick at any time. You're the school doctor, aren't you, sir?" he added.

"Yes."

"Just come from St. Frank's," went on the man conversationally. "Went to see your headmaster, Mr. Ponsonby. Quite a nice gent—but obstinate."

"Oh!" smiled Dr. Brett. "How is he obstinate?"

"Can't get him to join the association," replied Watkins, shaking his head. "I noticed his car the other day and I saw that it wasn't carrying our badge. But he won't join."

"You'll have to have another go at him," said Dr. Brett. "Well, thanks, Watkins—you're a Good Samaritan."

"Thank you, sir," said the man. "Thanks very much, sir."

His tone told the listening boys that he had received a liberal tip. A minute later Dr.



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

Master: "How far can you swim, Jones. A length?"

Jones: "No, sir."

Master: "A width?"

Jones: "No, sir."

Master: "How far then?"

Jones: "A depth, sir."

(A Hind, Hearsley Avenue, Tarleton, Preston, a penknife.)

Barber: "How is the razor, sir?"

Customer: "I didn't know I was being shaved."

Barber: "Very glad, I'm sure, sir."

Customer (grimly): "I thought I was being sandpapered!"

(S. Muller, 55, Blackman Lane, Leeds. A pocket wallet.)

Small boy: "Mummy, I dreamt I was in a boat and fell into the sea—need I wash this morning?"

(D. M. Foley, 166, Botanic Rd., Glasnevin, Dublin. A Grand Prize.)

Employer (to office boy asking for afternoon off): "Isn't it rather strange that your grand-father should be seriously ill every time there's a big cricket match on?"

Boy: "Yessir. I sometimes wonder if he's shammin'!"

(A. S. Cox, 95, Ansell Rd, Upper Tooting, S.W. 17. A penknife.)

Lights-out had long been sounded.

"Put that light out!" yelled the sergeant. No reply.

"Put that light out!" he yelled again.

Then a recruit answered for the first time.

"Please, sergeant, it's the moon."

"Never mind what it is," yelled the sergeant. "Put it out!"

(W. Grant, 2, Vine Villas, Cork, Ireland. A grand prize.)

Teacher: "Name a poisonous liquid, Tommy."

Tommy: "Aviation, sir."

Teacher: "What do you mean, my boy?"

Tommy: "One drop will kill!"

(E. Price, 46, Newtown, Dudley Wood Fields, Cradley Heath, Staffs. A pocket wallet.)

Brett drove off, and the A.A. man remounted his bicycle and rode on towards Bannington.

Nipper and Archie slipped back to their own machines, and soon they were on the trail again. But it proved to be a trail that led nowhere—at least, nowhere sensational.

For Watkins dismounted at the A.A. headquarters in Bannington, and as Nipper and Archie cycled slowly past, they saw him talking to one of the association officers on the doorstep.

"No good, sir," Watkins was saying. "I saw him, but he wouldn't join."

The boys cycled on for some little distance, and then they turned back.

"A frost," grunted Nipper, in some disgust. "The guv'nor was wrong for once, Archie. That man is a genuine A.A. scout, and he only went to see the Head on legitimate business."

Arriving back at St. Frank's, Nipper and Archie went straight to Study E. Luckily, Nelson Lee was there. He heard the report and nodded.

"Well, we know now," he said. "I told you at the beginning, Nipper, that there might be nothing in it."

Even Lee was fooled.

That A.A. man was actually a Green Triangle agent, and he had come to St. Frank's with a message directly concerning Alf Brent. If Nipper and Archie had troubled to wait outside the A.A. headquarters they would have seen Watkins emerge, minus his uniform—off duty. And they would have

seen him cycle "home"—and they would have seen him meet Mr. Simpson Lorne, the artist.

It was a striking testimony of Professor Zingrave's thoroughness. Watkins genuinely belonged to the association; by the use of forged references, he had secured the job—for the A.A. is very strict regarding the honesty and integrity of its members. Only men of absolute trustworthiness are employed.

Nipper could not be blamed for letting that trail run "cold." The Green Triangle's thoroughness had misled him.

CHAPTER 11.

The Real Game!

AT ten o'clock the headmaster of St. Frank's, taking advantage of the gloriously fine night, went out for a short constitutional. By a strange coincidence, Mitchell, the new indoor man in the Ancient House, went out for a walk, too.

The meeting took place, as arranged, in Bellton Lane.

Even if there had been casual watchers, nothing suspicious would have been seen. For it was natural enough that the Head, meeting one of the servants, should pause to exchange a few words with him. The secret receptacle in the tree was pointed out to Mitchell and he carefully memorised the spot.

Squire: "Did you enjoy your 'bus ride on Saturday afternoon, George?"

George: "No, sir. Every 'bus that reached the village was packed full of these 'ero hikers sir."

(*J. Lewis, Barrel Inn, Church St, Willenhall, nr. Wolverhampton. A penknife.*)

Lady: "I want to buy a mousetrap, and will you be good enough to hurry up, as I want to catch a 'bus."

Shopkeeper: "Sorry, lady, but we haven't any mousetraps as big as that!"

(*T. Lang, 86, London Rd, South Stefford, Essex. A pocket wallet.*)

Manager: "I say, my lad, if you can't do better than that, I'll have to get another boy."

Office boy: "Thank you, sir, I can do with a little help."

(*H. Baugh, 38, Homer St., Marylebone, N.W.1. A penknife.*)

Urchin (to boy scout passing): "Done yer good deed fer ter-day?"

Scout: "No, not yet."

Urchin: "Well, yer might knock us down an apple wiv yer broom 'andle!"

(*P. Murdock, 50, Preston Rd. Hospital, North Shield, Northumberland. A grand book.*)



Guide: "You will have to wait if you want to see the galleries. Smoking isn't allowed."

Visitors: "But we are not smoking."

Guide: "No, but I am!"

(*J. Casey, 45, St. James St, Bedford Row, W.C.1. A pocket wallet.*)

Tommy: "Pa, I'm a great gun at school, now."

Pa: "Oh! Then why don't I hear better reports?"

(*H. Gibbins, 10, Charles St., Brampton, Chesterfield. A penknife.*)

The inspector was testing the general knowledge of the class. Slapping a half-crown on the desk, he asked sharply:

"What's that?"

Instantly there was a voice from the back row:

"Hoads, sir!"

(*E. R. Catchpole, Longborough, Moreton-on-Moore, Glos. A pocket wallet.*)

First Scot: "Well, Sandy, was it a good game?"

Second Scot: "Yes, it was great."

First Scot: "Big gate?"

Second Scot: "Aye, t'was the biggest gate I ever climbed over!"

(*L. Jillians, 36, Martin's Road, Shortlands, Kent. A pocket wallet.*)

"Since seeing you last, Mitchell, I have come to another decision," said Zingrave, in a low voice. "Something has happened which has caused me to change my mind. I shall want you for special work to-night—after midnight."

"Very good, sir," said the man, who was never surprised at any orders he received.

"And I want you to pass the word round to the others, too," continued Zingrave. "I have something to tell you all. Come to my house, in absolute secrecy, at exactly twelve-thirty. I will admit you. The ordinary staff will be sound asleep by that time, and there will be practically no risk."

They parted soon afterwards, Zingrave continuing his walk to the village, Mitchell returning to the school.

And at 12.30, exactly, whilst St. Frank's slept, six men slipped like shadows into the Head's house. They were admitted to the study, where the shutters were tightly closed, so that no chink of light could get out into the night.

There was more evidence of Zingrave's thoroughness here. He had casually let it be known, amongst his servants, that he often sat up in his study, working late. He had had a dictaphone installed; thus, if any wakeful servant happened to hear voices after midnight, he would assume that the Head was busily dictating into the machine.

"Now, men, I have decided to tell you what the game is," said Zingrave, sitting at his desk, and looking at the six steadily. "It is better that you should know at once. You are the vanguard, so to speak. Preparations are being made for a great many other agents to be here next Wednesday evening."

"That's the night of the ball, isn't it, chief?" asked Mitchell. "We've all heard about the ball; everybody's talking about it."

"The more they talk, the better," nodded Zingrave. "Yes, Wednesday is to be a gala day at St. Frank's. Invitations have been sent out to the great county families, and I am convinced that the ball will be a great success. Practically all of these invitations have been accepted.

"There will be lords and ladies here on Wednesday evening—millionaires and their wives and daughters. It will be one of the grandest gatherings ever held under one roof in the south of England."

He paused, and his eyes were glowing.

"I think you will realise just what this means," he went on, in that silky voice of his. "The ladies, as befits the occasion, will be wearing their costliest jewels; the gentlemen, we may be sure, will be carrying well-filled wallets. But it is the jewels we are after, my friends. At a ball of such magnificence, the spoils should be worth hundreds of thousands. There will be scores of society

HOW'S the RADIO?

Going well—everything all right—no trouble?
That's how it *should* be. No wasting time
tiddling knobs and investigating connections;
no blaming of batteries which are doing their
jobs and doing them well. Just perfect
reception without any bother at all. That
means a perfect set, of course. And why
shouldn't yours be perfect? No reason at all
if you read POPULAR WIRELESS! "P.W."
is more than a weekly paper. It's a dozen
experts, and all at your service—for threepence
a week. Worth it? Well, try it!

Every
Thursday

3d.

POPULAR WIRELESS

ladies present—and you know what ladies are when it comes to a county ball. Their vanity urges them to wear their best.”

“Gosh, chief! It’s a daring plan!” said Mitchell admiringly.

“Every plan I conceive is daring,” retorted Zingrave. “But let me explain the particular brilliance of this plan. At the height of the ball you will attend to various duties. You will each have your own particular job. One of you will cut off the lights, another will create a diversion here, another a diversion there. At the right moment masked men—the agents I referred to—will appear on the scene with guns. The entire party will be held up and robbed. Who will suspect the headmaster and the chairman of the board of governors of having engineered this ball for the very purpose of robbing the guests?”

“I shall be robbed with the others—Sir John Brent will be robbed, too. Sir John, of course, will immediately guess the truth, but we need not bother ourselves about him. He will not dare to open his mouth. There will be a great deal of excitement, the police will come, and the whole affair will be a great sensation.”

“The police are certain to come, chief,” said Mitchell dubiously. “Won’t that be risky?”

“Not at all,” replied Zingrave. “By the time the police come, I shall be in bed, suffering from the shock—far too ill to be questioned. As for you fellows, you will be carrying on with your ordinary duties. None will suspect you. Not one of you has a police record—that is why you were selected. It will be assumed that that terrible gang, the Green Triangle, took advantage of the ball to raid it. We shall have gained an immense haul, and my position as headmaster of St. Frank’s will remain as secure as ever.”

He frowned suddenly, and changed the subject.

“Secure just so long as I can hold Sir John Brent in my power,” he went on. “And that depends upon his son. I have learned that the boy is ill. Two of you must go and see him to-night.”

He referred to the particulars he had taken down, earlier.

“I understand, Mitchell, that you have some knowledge of medicine?” he asked, looking up.

“Yes, sir,” said the man. “I am, in fact, a qualified chemist, and was working with a firm of wholesale chemists before I came down here.”

“Good! You must go and see this boy, and give him a thorough examination,” said Zingrave. “It may be his captivity which has caused his illness. On the other hand, he may have contracted some real complaint. You must find out.”

“I don’t know where the boy is,” said Mitchell.

“But Brill does,” replied Zingrave, looking at one of the other men. “You helped to get hold of the boy in the first place, didn’t you, Brill?”

“Yes, sir,” said Brill, one of the under-gardeners.

“You two will set out at once,” ordered Zingrave. “You had better use ordinary bicycles, and, if possible, avoid passing directly through Bannington. The distance is not great, and you should be back here by two o’clock. Get off at once, because I am worried about the boy.”

“Yes, sir,” said Mitchell and Brill, in one voice.

They went—and out in the darkness Mitchell allowed a glow of intense satisfaction to come into his eyes.

For it so happened that Mitchell was not Mitchell at all—but Nelson Lee!

CHAPTER 12.

The Opportunity!

IT was another brilliant triumph of impersonation.

Only a few hours before, Nelson Lee had been Phipps. Now he was Mitchell—and, what was more, he had had the cool, daring nerve to present himself in Zingrave’s study, standing under the strong lights. Lee was giving Professor Zingrave his own medicine; he was answering audacity by more audacity.

It had not been such a difficult task as it appeared to be on the surface. For Lee, in recognising the Green Triangle man, had remembered something else. It was for that reason that he had invited Mitchell to go to his room.

For he knew that Mitchell had been going straight for some years. Mitchell was a man who, in the past, had been drawn into the Green Triangle net. And once a member, always a member. There was no backing out—every Green Triangle man was compelled, under pain of death, to obey orders without question—and without hesitation.

Mitchell was a chemist by trade; he had been working diligently and honestly for some time past. Lee knew this; and he knew, moreover, that the man had only obeyed this summons because he had not dared to do anything else.

So the detective had taken the bull by the horns; he had risked everything by revealing himself to the man.

He had guaranteed Mitchell his safety if he would agree to the substitution. And after the school had gone to bed that night, Lee had ceased to be Phipps; carefully, painstakingly, he had made himself up as Mitchell. It was not a difficult task for such a master of make-up as Lee. Mitchell was an ideal subject. He was of Lee’s own height, and he had a straggling moustache and bushy eyebrows. Moreover, Zingrave had only seen the man once, and for a very brief period.

Phipps, secretly wired for, had just as secretly arrived. He would carry on with his duties from the point where Lee left off. Mitchell—the real Mitchell—was smuggled

away, with orders to lie low until he received further instructions from Lee.

Thus the situation at St. Frank's apparently remained unaltered. Both Phipps and Mitchell were on the spot, as before.

Yet here was a vast difference!

It was the opportunity for which Nelson Lee had long awaited. He was now right "in" with Zingrave. And he had not been in the least surprised when he had heard of the forthcoming raid. He had guessed, from the first, that wholesale robbery was the real object of the grand ball.

And the professor was quite right. At such a gathering, the jewellery of the ladies would be well worth the taking. It would be an immense haul, worth anything from a quarter to half a million. Lee knew for a fact that one great lady, alone, would be wearing pearls and emeralds worth fifty thousand or more. And there would be scores of great ladies!

Yet Lee dismissed this aspect of the matter with scarcely a thought. It was this other thing which thrilled him. He was being sent, with Brill as a guide, to Alf Brent's secret prison! It was the one link in the chain that he wished to complete. For, once he had found Alf, the rest would be easy—the going would be straightforward.

Sir John had been able to give him no clue regarding the boy's whereabouts. And, as Lee had told Sir John, any search for Alf was out of the question. Yet now, owing to the detective's daring, he was being taken straight to the boy's side!

They cycled through the night, and very little was said. The real Mitchell was a stranger to Brill, and this made Lee's task all the easier.

By keeping to the country lanes they avoided Bannington. Lee memorised every inch of the way. He had always suspected that Alf was being kept a prisoner in some quiet rural retreat, and that was Mr. Simpson Lorne's humble country cottage.

They arrived to find the little dwelling in complete darkness. But when Brill gave a peculiar tap on the door it was immediately opened. Lorne himself, a harmless-looking man, was waiting.

"Yes?" he asked sleepily. "Who is it?"

"It's all right, Lorne—I'm Brill," said the other. "I've brought somebody to have a look at the kid."

They were admitted and taken to a comfortable sitting-room.

"I'm getting jumpy," said Lorne, as he looked at the disguised Lee. "I'm getting suspicious of everybody—and keeping this kid here is getting on my nerves. I can't help feeling that the chief is going too far in this game."

"Let him do the worrying," said Brill. "Well, how's the kid? This is Mitchell—he's something of a doctor, although he's not qualified. The chief is darned anxious."

"You'd better come straight down and see him," said Lorne. "He's not quite so feverish now—but he's worrying me stiff. I don't know anything about diseases or illness. He might have scarlet fever or small-pox, for all

I know. And then where should I be? It's so confoundedly awkward; can't call a doctor in, or anything."

"All right," said Lee briefly. "I shall be able to tell what's wrong with the boy."

Taking an electric torch, Lorne led the way down a little passage. He shot the bolt of the cellar door, and they all passed down into a very ordinary-looking cottage cellar.

There was a pile of firewood in one corner, and some coal in another. But when Lorne pulled on an iron stake which projected from the solid-looking brick wall, a narrow portion of the wall swung open.

There was an inner compartment beyond—the prison of Alf Brent.

CHAPTER 13.

A Surprise Visit!

"THE secret chamber of the old moated grange, eh?" remarked Nelson Lee dryly. "Not a bad fake, this. I'd never have known the wall wasn't solid."

"One of the chief's own hide-outs," said Brill. "He's got several of these places in different parts of the country. There aren't any flies on that bird! If ever he has to do the disappearing act, he'll do it thoroughly."

Lorne was justifiably impatient.

"Are you going to stand here talking about the chief's cleverness—or are you going to look at the boy?" he demanded irritably.

"All right, brother—don't get sore," said Lee, with a laugh.

He had caused this delay deliberately, so that he could take a closer look at the secret door, and the stake which operated it, without appearing to do so. The disguised detective was not surprised to find this evidence of Professor Zingrave's thoroughness, and he realised how fortune had played into his hands. Alf Brent might have remained a prisoner for months, and the police of the entire country could never have found him. Even if this cottage had been under suspicion, a search would have revealed nothing.

Even Lee himself might have explored the cellar and gone away none the wiser.

He passed through the inner cellar, and it proved to be surprisingly comfortable.

There was a carpet on the floor, and the concrete walls were distempered. A candle burned in an enamel candlestick on the table, next to which stood a chair. There was a comfortable-looking bed, and against one of the walls, on the opposite side, a bookcase filled with books. The ventilation was good, for the air was not at all stuffy.

Alf Brent had risen upon his elbow, curious to discover the meaning of the unfamiliar voices. He was looking flushed, and his eyes were burning unhealthily.

"It's all right, kid," said Lorne, not unkindly. "I've brought somebody to see you—a doctor. He'll soon find out what's wrong

(Continued on page 24.)

You'll Forget Your Pains, Aches and Blues After You've Read—



HANDFORTH'S Weekly

No. 54. Vol. 2.

THE EDITOR'S CHIN-WAG

By the Deputy-Vice-Sub-
Editor, Walter Church.

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

May 7th. 1932.

MAKING IT RIGHT

A COLD REPLY TO AN
"ICY" LETTER.

HANDY has asked me to write a few words for him this week, you fellows. He asks me to tell you that he is so frightfully busy that he hasn't a moment to spare for writing. He IS busy doing nothing. He does it jolly well.

When this mag. first came out, Handy wrote it entirely by himself. He soon got fed up with it. When the novelty had worn off, he saw that writing several articles per week was just a bit like hard work. So he encouraged the other fellows to contribute.

He himself wrote the Editorials, articles and Trackett Grim stories—for a time. Gradually, however, he has been passing more and more of the donkey-work on to Mac and me. I am the chump who has to scoot up and down the Remove, begging and praying for copy. I'm the lemon who corrects the proofs. I'm the idiot who has to fill up blank corners with jokes and what-not.

All Handy does now is to look through the corrected proofs and nod in a lordly fashion—unless he is feeling peevish, when he promptly blue-pencils everything I've put in. On top of this, he usually wrote a brief Chin-wag.

But now that he is getting too lazy even to do this, Mac and I are going on strike. If I'm going to edit this mag. all off my own bat, it's going to be called CHURCH'S WEEKLY, and that's flat.

Perhaps, when Handy sees how I've explained things to you, he'll wake up and take an Editor's interest in his WEEKLY. I hope so, at all events.

Yours resignedly; WALTER CHURCH.

A "LONG" POEM

When Teddy was downed
By a ball to the ground,
He gave his proboscis a "cosh,"
Which raised a large bump
And gave Teddy the hump,
For there's now a bit extra to wash.
(T. W.—Remove.)

WE have received the following letter from a certain Mr. Macaronio Spagetti, who controls a travelling ice-cream business, and is often on duty at the corner of Bannington Lane. Several fags who had bought ices from Mr. Spagetti were taken ill, and our Medical Officer (Dr. Harry Gresham) promptly analysed a sample of this ice cream, and found that it was composed of whitewash and castor oil. We accordingly announced in the WEEKLY that Mr. Spagetti's ices were not fit for pigs to eat.

Thus writes Mr. Spagetti:

"Gentlemen, honored sirs,—You hava writ in yore paper things of my ices doesn't it, and saya dat da ice it is not for da pig to eat, yes. Sapristi caramba avabanana di alma mata, wat then didn't you mean, wasn't it, by dissa remarc? Da ice is of the pure, so help me Bob, and if you do not one time write in yore paper dat you are of the sorry for yore fowl lies, it gives a summons at da Polis Court, and that joli quick.

Ya! Mangi blita!

"MACARONIO SPAGETTI."

We have given this letter to our Lord High Interpreter (Professor Alec Duncan), who has duly construed it for us, and has told us that Mr. Spagetti wants us to deny that his ices are not fit for pigs to eat.

If this is the case, we shall be glad to do so at once. And we therefore have much pleasure in stating, with great sincerity, that Mr. Spagetti's ices ARE fit for pigs to eat. We hope that the gentleman will be satisfied with this correction, and will pardon our former error.

CAN YOU

sit down after you have
bent over?

If not, use

PONGO PLASTERS

"Makes Punishment a Pleasure."

(Advt.)

FATTY, or "LITTLE" by LITTLE



I'VE just tried to weigh myself on the scales at the Bannington Stores. Great doughnuts! I no sooner stood on the machine than there was a loud

explosion, and springs shot out from its interior and caught me a fearful wallop in the eye.

The shopman told me that the machine could only weigh up to a ton, and I ought not to have stood on it. I said I didn't weigh a ton, or anything like it. He said I did—probably two tons. Which is sheer rot. An ounce or two over fourteen stone is my weight, and a very good weight, too.

The shopman said I'd have to pay for the machine as I had broken it. He said it was a very useful affair. The ships from Caistowe always brought their anchors to that machine to weigh them. He said the weights from the machine were the original weights which were sent round the town at Christmas time, and there would be no carols next Christmas unless I forked up.

I could see he was pulling my leg. Something seemed to tell me that. So I drew myself up proudly and said I would pay for it with pleasure.

But I added that he would have to weight a long while for it.

THE OLD COUNTRYMAN

A Sentimental Ballad by
STANLEY HULBERT
(Fifth Form).

On this old seat beneath this tree
I've sat for twenty year or so,
And everyone who comes to me
The same old question wants to know:
"Say, where's the Church?" they ask,
"and throw
The same old look of keen delight
As I say, very calm and slow,
'Way up the 'ill and round the right.'

A famous writing man, you see,
Was buried many years ago
At that there Church; and they say that he
Helped England beat a forrin foe;
So that's why folk comes to and fro
From far away to see the sight;
("Beg pardon, sir! The Churchyard?
Oh,
Way up the 'ill and round the right.")

They tell me in this world there be
A row for every man to hoe,
And as a cove of ninety-three
Is past his time to reap and mow,
I still tries to be useful, though,
Perraps you'll say my use is slight,
Saying, with voice that's cracked and
low;
'Way up the 'ill and round the right.'

L'Envoy.

I'm minded then, the way to show
To all who asks of me polite,
Till that day comes when I must go
Way up the 'ill and round the right.

WARNING

I think Reggie Pitt has gone a little potty. I'm dashed if I can understand what he means by the advert he has put in this issue.

Of course, directly I received the advert, I dashed off to his study, gave the password, held out my right hand, and said: "I would like a pound note." Pitt promptly shook my hand, and said: "So would I." After that he sniggered and walked out. There was a lot of West House rotters in the passage, and they sniggered, too.

I'm blessed if I can see where the joke comes in—if it is a joke. The whole thing is a mystery. Why is he offering to give away pound notes? I know he jolly well hasn't any notes, and, if he had, he wouldn't dish them out like that. I simply can't understand it.

I advise my readers not to answer this advert. I can assure them they won't miss much.

E. O. HANDFORTH

NOTICE

If any junior would like a POUND NOTE, quite free of all obligations, will he please come to Study O, give the password, "Cuckoo," and, holding out his right hand, say, "I would like a pound note."

Reggie Pitt.

(See WARNING above—Ed.)

BITS BOO

Cut out by RE

"He could no lo
cheerful heart." In
stances, perhaps it r
well to have tried a

"I'm feared, one o
laugh myself into
Sammy."—But we
plexed to know how

"His third sha
bounds, and he saw
into the well."—W

"In those days,
sixpence the pound
three guineas."—D

"The quiet min
crown."—Quite tru
I'd feel easier in my
only half-a-crown.

"Some people gr
twenty years."—E
have even heard of
"old in one."

"Now who will st
and keep the bri
(Horatius).—Fancy
display at a seri
that!

"Did you see Mr.
"I could not."
"How's that?"
"He was out."
batsman, with bow
to the pavilion.

THE PROE LIMEE

Our Long-Winded
kindly written us
little Limerick:
There was once a
indeed, good-looki
the Mediterranean

Who happened, on
a bull chasing a
when it had nearly

Raising his hat, wit
cough,

He soon managed to
off,

And subsequently ha
satisfaction of leadi
fair maiden to the

FROM
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GIE PITT.

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And the poor
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SSOR'S

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sir maiden, and
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CONCLUSION OF

TRACKETT GRIM'S SACRIFICE!

Marvellous Tale of Detective Adventure by E. O. HANDFORTH.

WHAT HAS ALREADY BEEN TOLD.

Trackett Grim, having tracked a huge, great burglar to his beastly lair, sends in Splinter to arrest him. But the burglar hands Splinter a slap on the dome and puts him in hospital, leaving Trackett Grim assistantless.

WHAT HASN'T YET BEEN TOLD:

Having taken Splinter to the hospital, and gone out by the back door to avoid paying the taxi-driver, Trackett Grim retraced his steps to the road where the burglar dwelt.

For a moment he almost decided to try to tackle the burglar himself, but as he remembered how extremely odd Splinter had looked while sliding across the road on his neck, he shook his head. Dearly as he would have loved to go in and smash the burglar to powder, he restrained himself with a great effort. He was determined not to take the credit for arresting the man. He nobly resolved to let somebody else grab the kudos. It was very thoughtful of the great detective to do this.

He wandered wearily towards his breakfast, and as he wandered he wondered What was he to do? As if in answer to this question, his eye lit upon a great circus poster.

"THE STRONGEST MAN IN THE WORLD."

MUNKI FEECHARZ,

the great Russian strong man.

On Show Daily.

Grim jumped into the nearest telephone box, and rang up the hall where the circus was being held.

"I want to speak to Mr. Feecharz," he gasped eagerly. "Tell me—is he very strong? Is he very big?"

"Yes. Yes. Hold the line," replied the attendant, and presently the bull-like tones of Mr. Munki Feecharz floated over the wire.

"'Ullo! Yus! Wottisit?" he asked.

The great detective told him breathlessly about his adventures, and his desire for somebody to knock a burglar on the head for him.

"I shadowed this great egg to 13, Pork Street," cried Grim. "He's an immense man, with muscles like suet puddings all over him. But I'm sure you could whop him for me. Will you hit him for a quid?"

"You want me to arrest a bloke too big for you to tackle?"

"Exisely."

"A bloke who lives at 13, Pork Street?"

"Prezactly."

"Come and see me at the circus, guv'nor," said Mr. Feecharz cordially.

"We'll just talk it over, shall us?"

Grim lost no time. Summoning a taxi, he made his way to the circus, and, managing to jump out of the cab just before it arrived there, he was again successful in avoiding payment.

He sought out the tent occupied by the strong man, opened the flap, and toolled in. Mr. Feecharz was within, and, as he saw him, Grim jumped clear of the floor.

Horror of horrors! It was the burglar himself. The burglar himself was the World's Strongest Man.



The great brute grinned, and closed his fists.

"I—I—I've called for the water rates," stuttered Grim in a disguised voice.

"Come orf it!" grinned the burglar. "Didn't I see you foller me all the way 'ome?"

With that he gave Grim a bang on the boko, and the great detective saw—

* * * *

(these are meant to be stars.)

An hour later Grim woke up—in hospital. He heard a feeble voice coming from the next bed.

"Guv'nor! How—how did you get here?" It was Splinter.

Grim groaned.

"I couldn't bear to be separated from you, Splinter," he gasped truthfully, "so I persuaded someone to hand me a wallop on the smeller and send me in here with you. I have sacrificed everything Splinter, to be with you."

"Guv'nor!" sobbed the lad, in unspeakable gratitude. He held out his hand.

Grim grabbed it.

Then they both turned over and went to sleep.

THE END.

(Of this fine story.)

THE CROOK HEADMASTER!

(Continued from page 20.)

with you, and to-morrow you'll have some medicine."

Alf fell back on to the pillow again.

"To-morrow," he muttered. "Day or night doesn't mean anything to me. I don't even know whether it's midday or midnight! How much longer are you going to keep me in this awful place?"

"Come now," protested Lorne. "It's not so bad as all that."

"Leave him to me," said Nelson Lee quietly.

He sat down on the edge of the bed, and at the first glance he could tell that the young prisoner was feverish. Alf looked at him with unfriendly eyes; yet, in spite of himself, the boy felt mysteriously drawn towards the newcomer. He experienced no "negative" influence as he had felt towards the others.

"Are you really a doctor?" he asked.

"Of course," replied Nelson Lee, with perfect truth.

For it was a fact that he held medical degrees. The two other men thought that he was lying, and it seemed natural to them. They rather admired "Mitchell's" bedside manner.

He used his clinical thermometer in the approved fashion; he took the boy's pulse professionally.

"H'm! There's nothing much wrong with you, sonny," said Lee at length. "Temperature's a bit up, perhaps, but you'll soon be all right after a few doses of medicine. You're fretting—that's what's the matter with you. Fretting and worrying—and that's silly."

"What else do you expect me to do?" asked Alf Brent fiercely. "Do you think I don't know why you crooks have got me here? So that you can force my father to do as you tell him! And my mother's ill, and——"

"Steady—steady!" said Lee. "Exciting yourself like this won't do any good. Even if I tell you that your mother is well on the road to recovery, you won't believe me."

"I don't believe anything!" panted Alf. "You're a lot of fiends—and you're worse fiends because you look so harmless."

Lee motioned to the others, and they all went out. The secret door was closed.

"Well?" asked Simpson Lorne anxiously.

"The kid's bad," replied Lee.

"What do you mean—bad?"

"He's pining, and this close confinement is having a serious effect," replied Lee. "I don't like the look of him at all. I made light of it, of course, in his hearing—but unless something's done he'll become dangerously ill."

"That's pleasant for me," groaned Lorne. "What am I to do?"

"Nothing," replied Lee. "I'll report to the chief—and you can rely on the chief doing everything that's necessary. Come on, Brill—we'd better be getting back."

They went upstairs to the living-room.

"I shouldn't sleep too soundly if I were you, Lorne," said Lee. "Better not get undressed, even. If I know anything of the chief, he'll be along later."

"I hope he comes," said the worried Lorne. "I'm fed-up to the teeth with being nursemaid!"

Nelson Lee and Brill cycled back to St. Frank's by the route they had followed in coming. They arrived almost on the stroke of two, as Zingrave had anticipated.

"You can go to your quarters, Brill," said Zingrave, after they had reported. "Well, Mitchell? What's your verdict?"

"That boy is in a bad way," said Nelson Lee, glad that Brill had gone. "He's feverish, and unless something is done——"

"Do you mean that he is sickening for some specific disease?"

"No, chief," replied Lee. "Not that. It's the imprisonment that's got him down. I'm not much of a doctor, you know, and that kid worries me. I think you ought to go over and see him."

"Certainly not," said Zingrave impatiently. "I think you're making a fuss over nothing, Mitchell. Feverish, you say? He'll be all right in a few days."

"Well, it's up to you, chief, of course," said Lee, with a shrug. "But don't blame me if the kid snuffs out."

"Snuffs out!" ejaculated the professor.

"Now, you *are* a real doctor," continued Lee. "You'd soon know just what's wrong. Lorne is scared stiff—and between you and me, sir, I wouldn't be too certain of him. He might do something silly unless you go along and ease his mind."

"It's a confounded nuisance, but I suppose I shall have to go," muttered Zingrave. "All right, Mitchell—you can go to bed. Be careful. Don't let anybody hear you."

"I won't, sir," replied Lee. "I'm sorry about that boy; I didn't want to put you to the trouble——"

"That's all right," broke in Zingrave. "But I hate being robbed of my sleep. Unless I'm up at the correct time in the morning there will be a lot of talk. I shall be lucky if I get three hours in bed to-night. Well, go on—you needn't stay."

"You won't want me any more to-night, chief?"

"Of course not," replied Zingrave. "You need your sleep, too, don't you?"

SCARCELY more than half an hour later, Mr. Simpson Lorne, nodding in the easy-chair of his sitting-room, heard the quiet purring of a car outside in the lane. He was instantly wakeful.

The throbbing of the engine ceased, and then came a knock on the door. Two sharp raps—pause—three sharp raps—pause—one rap.

Lorne went to the door, and opened it a cautious inch or so.

"Yes?" he asked, with feigned sleepiness.

"Don't be a fool, Lorne," came Zingrave's impatient voice. "You know my knock by this time, don't you?"

Lorne opened the door wide.

"You told me to be always careful, chief," he said resentfully.

"Being careful is one thing—being foolish is another," said the new arrival, passing in. "I've had Mitchell's report; I've come to see the boy. How is he now?"

"I haven't seen him since Mitchell left, sir," replied Lorne.

"You're alone, I suppose?"

"Of course I am, sir," said Lorne, as he walked towards the living-room. "Who else do you think would be here?"

"I just wanted to be certain, that's all," replied the newcomer, as he jabbed something hard into the centre of Lorne's back. "Walk straight on, my friend, and keep your hands about your head."

Mr. Simpson Lorne shrieked aloud, and he shuddered from head to foot. For the voice of his companion was no longer the voice of Professor Cyrus Zingrave—but that of Nelson Lee! And Lorne thought that Nelson Lee was dead!

CHAPTER 14.

Nelson Lee's Bold Move.

WITH one swift movement, the newcomer relieved Lorne of the small automatic which he had carried in his hip-pocket. They were in the sitting-room now, in the light of the lamp.

And Lorne, as pale as death, and shaking from head to foot, looked round.

"You!" he ejaculated hoarsely. "What's your name—Mitchell, isn't it? You infernal fool! What do you think you're playing at?"

He was badly shaken. Hearing the voice of a supposedly dead man in that dark passage had jarred him to the marrow. For Lorne it was who had seen Nelson Lee fall—Lorne who had telephoned a report to Professor Zingrave that Lee was dead. He had seen the whole thing with his own eyes.

He now found himself facing Mitchell—but, somehow, a different Mitchell. A more determined Mitchell. Nelson Lee had not found it necessary to change his make-up. In order to deceive Lorne, he had only mimicked Professor Zingrave's voice.

"Think you're clever, I suppose?" went on Lorne angrily. "First you make yourself sound like the chief, and then like Lee, and—Here! What the——"

Click-click!

The man gazed in bewilderment at the shining steel handcuffs which Nelson Lee, with a lightning-like movement, had snapped over his wrists.

"I'm in rather a hurry, my friend," said Lee steadily. "There's not a moment to waste—for Zingrave himself will be here soon, unless I am very much mistaken."

Lorne was staring at him with undisguised horror.

"That voice!" he croaked. "Lee's voice! You fool! What are you trying to do with me?"

"Listen to me, Lorne—I'm not Mitchell," said the detective curtly. "I'm Lee. Do you understand? I'm just as much alive as you are. The game's up as far as you are concerned. For you this is finis. You're the first on my list."

"You are Lee!" croaked Simpson Lorne, backing away. "Oh, I must be going mad!"

"No, my friend, you're not going mad," said Lee. "But I can tell you where you are going—into a nice, airy cell! Is this a specimen of your handwriting?" he added sharply.

He indicated a half-written letter, which lay on the table.

"Yes!" muttered Lorne, never taking his gaze from Nelson Lee's face.

"Splendid! An order for some oil colours, I see," remarked Lee. "I fancy that your handwriting is far better than your painting, Lorne. You won't have much time for painting where you're going."

"I can't believe it," whispered Lorne. "You're fooling me, somehow——"

"Sit down here," ordered Lee. "Yes, here, at the table."

Lorne sat down, trembling. A minute later he was strapped securely to the chair—one strap being passed round his body and the back of the chair, and another strap round his legs.

"I think you'll be all right until I come back," said Lee briefly.

He hurried to the cellar. There was need for haste—but not undue haste. There was very little chance that Zingrave would be here just yet. Lee reckoned that he had a clear twenty minutes.

Down in the cellar he operated the stake, the secret door swung open, and he passed within. Alf Brent had fallen into a disturbed slumber. But he awoke now.

Deliberately, Nelson Lee concealed his face, so that the boy could not see it.

"Brent!" he said softly.

Alf Brent sat up, trembling.

"Who—who's that?" he panted.

"Take it easily, lad—it's I, Lee," said the detective, placing a kindly hand on the boy's arm. "I've come here to rescue you—to take you away."

Alf recognised that voice in a flash.

"Oh, Mr. Lee!" he breathed. "I knew you'd come, sir—I was certain——"

"I've come to take you home, Brent," interrupted Lee. "Yes, you're going straight to London—to your father and mother."

"Oh!" whispered Alf, nearly choking.

"Get into your clothes as quickly as you can—never mind about how you look. I'll come down for you in three minutes."

Lee managed to get out without Alf seeing his face—and the very effect of his visit was like magic upon the youngster. It was better than a hundred doses of medicine.

True to his word, Lee returned a few minutes later, and he found Alf ready.

"Don't take any notice of my appearance, young 'un," murmured Lee, now showing himself. "Yes, I came here once before to—"

night—but then I couldn't reveal myself to you. No, you needn't look suspicious."

Alf was staring at him with sudden doubt; he could hardly believe that this stranger was really Nelson Lee.

But the voice reassured him. They went out of the cellar together. Lorne was still strapped to the chair, and at a word from Lee, Alf took the straps away.

"Now, my friend, outside!" commanded Lee. "Yes, Brent, bring those straps—we shall need them."

Lorne gave no trouble—he was far too weak from fright. He was escorted to the car, and here Nelson Lee took the precaution of strapping him up.

"Sit with him, Brent—I'll be back in a minute," promised Lee.

He returned to the cottage, took a last look round, extinguished the lamp, and then softly closed the door.

A minute later he was in the driving-seat of the car, and the car went purring off into the night—headed for London.

Nelson Lee had struck the first decisive blow.

CHAPTER 15.

A Shock for Professor Zingrave!

FOR fifteen minutes the cottage stood silent; not a living soul came near. The breeze stirred the trees near-by, and the only sounds came from the night creatures of the neighbouring countryside.

Then from afar came the gentle purring of a motor-car engine. It came nearer and nearer; headlights appeared in the lane. The car came to a stop outside the gate. The engine was switched off, and only the side lights were left glowing.

Professor Cyrus Zingrave walked up the short garden path. He was not in the best of moods. He resented the necessity of this visit, for he was taking a risk.

Only a very slight one, it was true. As headmaster of St. Frank's, he had a perfect right to be motoring in the middle of the night if he wanted to—and just as much right to pay a visit to a harmless landscape artist. All the same, Zingrave did not want to get himself talked about, even innocently.

But "Mitchell's" words had worried him. Alf Brent was of vital importance. Alf represented Zingrave's hold over Sir John.

The professor did not knock at the cottage door; he opened it with a key. Lorne, of course, should have realised the peculiarity of the supposed Zingrave knocking; but he had been so startled to hear his chief's voice that he had forgotten the point.

After the report he had received, Zingrave fully expected to find Lorne wakeful—in fact, sitting up for him. But when he entered the sitting-room it was dark and empty.

"So the fool's gone to bed, has he?" muttered the professor. "I'll have something to say to him presently."

He went into the passage, unbolted the cellar door, and passed down, lighting his way with the beam from a powerful electric torch.

He was half-way across the cellar when he checked, scarcely able to credit the evidence of his eyes.

For that secret door, leading into the inner cellar, stood wide open!

"What in the name of——"

Zingrave broke off and leapt forward. One look into the inner compartment confirmed his fears. Alf Brent was not there. The bed was in disorder; the boy's clothing and shoes were missing.

"Gone!" almost croaked Zingrave.

The thing robbed him of his breath. It was staggering. The young prisoner had gone! But how had he got away? Who had rescued him? Was it possible that Lorne had double-crossed——

His mind beset with dread fears, Zingrave raced up the cellar steps. He dashed through the sitting-room, hurried up the staircase, and burst into Lorne's bed-room.

"Lorne!" he exclaimed sharply. "Are you here?"

The question was unnecessary. The first flash from his light revealed Simpson Lorne's bed—empty and undisturbed.

The man hadn't even been in bed that night! A quick search of the cottage confirmed Zingrave's worst fears. Both Lorne and the boy had gone. The cottage was empty.

It was incredible—unthinkable.

Lorne, for some reason of his own, had cleared out; he had become a traitor to the League of the Green Triangle——

And then another explanation occurred to Zingrave—an idea which brought him some slight measure of relief. Perhaps the boy had suddenly taken a grave turn for the worse, and Lorne, in panic, had removed him. But after a moment's thought, Zingrave dismissed this theory. Where could Lorne have taken the boy? Not to a doctor, for that would have been fatal.

Yet——

Zingrave, thinking of Mitchell's report, suddenly caught sight of a sheet of notepaper which was propped against an inkstand in the centre of the sitting-room table. The professor seized it and flashed his light upon it.

Yes, it was a message, written by Lorne. And as Zingrave read the words his eyes burned with increasing fury. Yet they also contained a light of relief. The situation was not as bad as he had feared.

"Chief," ran the note, "I thought I'd better leave this, in case you come. Brill and Mitchell told me you might be anxious about the boy and run over. I've had to take him away. Can't stop to write much, but soon after Brill and Mitchell left I heard queer sounds outside, and when I had a look round I saw a strange man prowling about.

"I think he's a 'busy.' After a bit he cleared off. But I think it's better to take the kid away, so as to be on the safe side. I

know a place where he'll be all right, and I'll smuggle him there and lie low for a bit—perhaps three or four days. I'll let you know later where I am. But the boy's all right, and you can trust me to look after him O.K.
"S. L."

Zingrave's hand shook as he held that precious document.

"The fool—the cursed dunderhead!" he grated helplessly. "Taking risks like that! He must have been in an absolute panic to have done such a mad act of folly."

fear that a "busy"—a police officer—had been prowling round the cottage was fantastic. No doubt the man had seen a passing tramp, and in his nervous condition he had jumped to foolish conclusions.

"I'll make him pay for this!" muttered Zingrave savagely, as he left the cottage. "When I get in touch with him I'll give him such a lesson that he won't forget it for the rest of his life!"

But it wasn't likely that Professor Zingrave would again get in touch with Mr. Simpson Lorne—for that disconsolate gentleman at

Lee led the way out of the secret cellar and up the stone steps. In the room above the bound gangster watched their approach with fear-stricken eyes!



Taking the boy away was insane enough, but to leave this note openly on the table was sheer lunacy. And Lorne had not even indicated where he had taken the boy—

Well, perhaps that was sensible. Even if that note had got into the wrong hands, there was nothing to say who the boy was—nothing to say whom the note had been really addressed to.

As Zingrave calmed down he saw that Lorne's action was not so reprehensible as he had at first thought.

Alf Brent was still a prisoner—still guarded by Lorne. Later on, no doubt, the man would report. Zingrave was no longer alarmed; he was merely furious at his agent's impudence in acting without orders. Lorne's

that very moment was sitting on a hard bed in a cheerless cell!

Nelson Lee's trick in leaving that note was a piece of brilliant strategy; for the detective had rescued Alf Brent, and yet Professor Zingrave was utterly unsuspecting of the truth.

CHAPTER 16.

The Reunion!

"FEELING better, young 'un, eh?" asked Nelson Lee dryly.
"Never felt fitter in my life, sir," replied Alf Brent. "It's like a miracle! Not much more than an hour ago

I was feverish and—and groggy generally. Now I'm myself again."

"Feverish in another way, I think," said Lee. "Well it won't be long now—you'll soon be seeing your father and mother. But don't forget, Alf, you'll have to be a prisoner for some days."

"A prisoner!" echoed Alf, with a laugh. "You mean a prisoner in my own home? What's that—after what I've been through?"

They had got rid of their unwelcome passenger. Nelson Lee, in fact, had driven straight to Scotland Yard, and Lorne's new home was a cell in Cannon Row police-station.

Lee had been assured that Lorne would be kept under lock and key until he—Lee—gave the "All clear." In other words, Lorne was not to be brought before a magistrate. This may not have been in accordance with strict police regulations; but the circumstances were peculiar, and this was one of the exceptions which proved the rule.

At Scotland Yard, too, Lee had telephoned to Sir John Brent—getting him out of bed, in fact.

And when the car pulled up outside Sir John's West End house, the door was instantly opened. Sir John himself, fully dressed, stood in the doorway, and, hovering behind, was Reade, the butler.

"Dad!" panted Alf, leaping up the steps and flinging himself at his father.

"My boy—my boy!" said Sir John huskily. "Thank heaven you're safe—and home!"

"Amen to that, Sir John," murmured Reade.

The old butler was strangely affected. He and the other servants in the house had been admitted into the secret—at Nelson Lee's suggestion. This was necessary, if Alf was to remain here in secret.

It had been Lee's suggestion, too, that Sir John should dismiss every servant in his house whom he could not be absolutely certain of. A footman who had been in his employ only a month had been discharged—also a scullery-maid and Lady Brent's own personal maid. They had been given three months' wages, so they had been treated fairly.

Every other servant had been in Sir John's employ for years—they could be trusted implicitly. They had known Alf since he had been a little child. There wasn't one chance in a million—in fact, no chance at all—that any of these retainers could be connected with the League of the Green Triangle.

"It's good to see you back, Master Alfred," said Reade, his voice shaking slightly.

"It's Mr. Lee's doing," said Alf breathlessly. "He rescued me, and——"

"Why, good gracious!" ejaculated Sir John, staring at Lee. "I—I thought—— But this is astounding!"

"You mustn't take any notice of my appearance, Sir John," laughed Nelson Lee. "I don't look quite myself, do I? But this make-up is useful. I shall need it again in the early morning, so it wasn't worth while removing it. But you need have no doubt as to my real identity"

They went into the library.

"I am so much in your debt, Mr. Lee, that I shall never be able to repay you," said Sir John gratefully. "I cannot even think of the matter in terms of money. You have brought my son back to me; you have saved my very soul. For whilst Alfred was in the hands of those rogues I was their very slave. Heavens! What a release! If only I could express my gratitude——"

"My dear Sir John, I wish you wouldn't try," broke in Lee uncomfortably. "Luck played a great part in to-night's affairs. The opportunity presented itself—and I seized it. Now your son is here. I want you to keep him under this roof—keep him away from all windows, too. Green Triangle spies may be watching. They must not see the boy."

"Have no fear—Alfred will be quite safe," said Sir John. "To have him here is sufficient. After the torture we have both been through——"

"And Lady Brent?" broke in Lee, anxious to change the subject. "She is—the same?"

"Oh, do let me go and see mother!" pleaded Alf.

"Not yet," said Lee gently. "Have I your permission, Sir John, to go up to Lady Brent?"

Sir John looked at him with wild hope.

"You—you mean——" he began.

"Yes," replied Lee quietly. "There is now no reason why your wife should not be fully restored. It is quite a simple operation, and the effect will be almost immediate."

"Come—come at once!" exclaimed Sir John. "Alfred, my dear boy, I want you to remain here. Not for long. I will come down for you soon. You must be hungry—Reade will get you something; and then, later, you will come up and see your mother."

Sir John was feverish with excitement. He knew that his wife was still suffering from the brain-paralysing drug which Professor Zingrave had administered—or, rather, which an agent of Zingrave's had administered. Zingrave himself had given her ladyship a partial antidote, leaving her with the mind of a child.

It was Nelson Lee's present task to complete the cure. A simple enough matter; a slight injection, which took rapid effect.

So it came about that, scarcely half an hour later, Alf was allowed to go up to see his mother; and he found her healthy in body and mind. It seemed impossible that when he had started his journey from St. Frank's—to be kidnapped and imprisoned by the Green Triangle agents—he had been on his way to the bedside of a dying woman!

"I am just helpless, Mr. Lee; I cannot even begin to tell you how deeply grateful I am," said Sir John huskily, later, in the library. "You have liberated me from that dread bondage. No longer can that infernal scoundrel dictate to me!"

"Yet I want you to allow yourself to be dictated to," said Lee smoothly.

"Good heavens! What do you mean?"

"Your wife and your son are safe, Sir John, but the time is not quite yet ripe for me to take the final step."

"But you must take it," protested Sir John. "Zingrave will know that Alfred has been rescued—"

"No; I have so arranged it that Zingrave will not even guess that the boy is free," interrupted Lee. "And I have a trap of my own to set, Sir John. I want you to carry on; the great ball must take place next Wednesday. You will be there, of course—and I think I can promise you some excitement."

CHAPTER 17.

No Suspicion!

NIPPER was down before any of the other Removites in the morning. He had arranged, with Nelson Lee, to "casually" drop into Archie's study. He would find Phipps there, dusting. This would give Nipper a chance of exchanging a few words with his "guv'nor" on the quiet, and to receive instructions, in case he was required for any little job.

But something had apparently gone wrong.

For when Nipper strolled into Study E he found a man in a green apron industriously cleaning the window.

"Morning, young gent," said the man respectfully, as he glanced round.

"Oh—er—good morning," said Nipper, momentarily nonplussed. "I thought Glen-thorne was here."

"Not down yet, sir," said the man.

"All right—it doesn't matter," said Nipper.

"Do you know if Phipps is anywhere about?"

The man did not answer, and Nipper watched him warily. For this fellow was one of the newly-engaged servants—and that meant that he was a Green Triangle man!

"You're young Nipper, aren't you?" asked the man familiarly.

He went to the door, closed it, and put his back against it.

"Look here——" began Nipper.

"Just a minute, young feller, me lad!" said the other. "My name's Mitchell. You know that, don't you? We've met before, haven't we?"

"No, not that I know of," said Nipper, his heart racing.

"Look at me again—look closely," said the man, coming nearer, and lowering his voice.

"Well, Nipper? Do I pass muster?"

Nipper gulped, for the voice had changed. But the lad's innate caution prevented him from betraying himself.

"Look here, what's the game?" he demanded. "Trying to trick me, or something?"

"Well done, young 'un," said Lee softly. "I was just putting you to the test—that's all."

Suddenly he smiled, and through the make-up Nipper recognised that smile.

"Guv'nor!" he panted, aghast.

"A surprising little change since last night, eh?" asked Nelson Lee. "I thought it as well to be on hand, young 'un—so that I could give you the tip. Phipps is back, of course. I want you to get hold of Archie as soon as he comes down, and prepare him."

"But—but what does it mean, guv'nor?" asked Nipper, bewildered. "I say, you're jolly mean, you know! You might have let me in on this earlier!"

"It couldn't be done," replied Lee.

And, briefly, he told Nipper just why he was impersonating Mitchell; he told him, also, all that had happened.

"So, you see, I've had rather a busy night," concluded the detective. "I managed to snatch a couple of hours sleep, and I can easily make up for lost time during the next day or two. I don't think there'll be much doing. I'm waiting, young 'un—waiting until Wednesday."

"And then, guv'nor?" asked Nipper eagerly.

"Then we shall see quite a few fireworks," replied Lee, and there was a note in his voice which caused a little thrill to pass up and down Nipper's spine.

PROFESSOR ZINGRAVE was a worried man that morning.

He was irritable, too, because he had had practically no sleep. Not a word had come from the missing Simpson Lorne; but, to offset this, it was equally true that no startling reports concerning Alf Brent had reached Zingrave's ears. Clearly, the boy had not escaped, or he would have gone to the police, or found his way home. And by this time Sir John would have taken some sort of action.

No, Lorne had smuggled the boy off to some other hiding-place; and Zingrave had some particularly ugly ideas with regard to Lorne's punishment, for thus acting on his own initiative.

During the morning, whilst the school was at lessons, Zingrave "chanced" to come in contact with Mitchell, in the Ancient House.

Zingrave led the way into the cloak-room, ostensibly to point out some minor repairs that needed attention.

Nelson Lee could guess what was coming.

"You told me last night, Mitchell, that you weren't very impressed with Lorne," said Zingrave bluntly. "You said that you thought he might do something silly."

"Well, he seemed scared, sir," replied Lee. "Did you go and see the boy?"

The professor ignored the question.

"Did Lorne say anything to you about some plans of his own?" he asked.

"No, sir."

"Did you tell him that I should be coming to see the boy?"

"I couldn't tell him that, sir, because I didn't know," replied Lee. "I said I'd ask you to go over, and that seemed to relieve him a bit. That boy was in a very bad way," he added, shaking his head. "Not in a dangerous condition, of course, but he needs

taking out of that cellar. Almost any sort of change will help him. If I were you, sir, I'd find a different——"

"I am not asking you, Mitchell, for advice," interrupted Zingrave coldly.

"Beg pardon, sir."

"Do you happen to know if Lorne has any other address? Did he mention another cottage, or——"

"I don't know anything about it, sir," said Lec. "Why, what's happened? You don't mean to say that Lorne's bolted, leaving that kid unattended?"

"It doesn't matter, Mitchell," said Zingrave. "Everything was all right when you were there, eh? Well, I suppose everything's all right now."

He went off and Lee smiled grimly to himself. The detective knew full well that Professor Zingrave was worried—but he also knew that Zingrave had no suspicion of the true state of affairs.

CHAPTER 18.

The Day of—Fête!

THERE was no doubt about the immense popularity of the new Head.

During the next day or two the preparations for the grand ball went on apace. "Dr. Ponsonby" made several references to the ball in Big Hall; he impressed upon the school that Wednesday was to be a day of joy, of carnival, of pleasure.

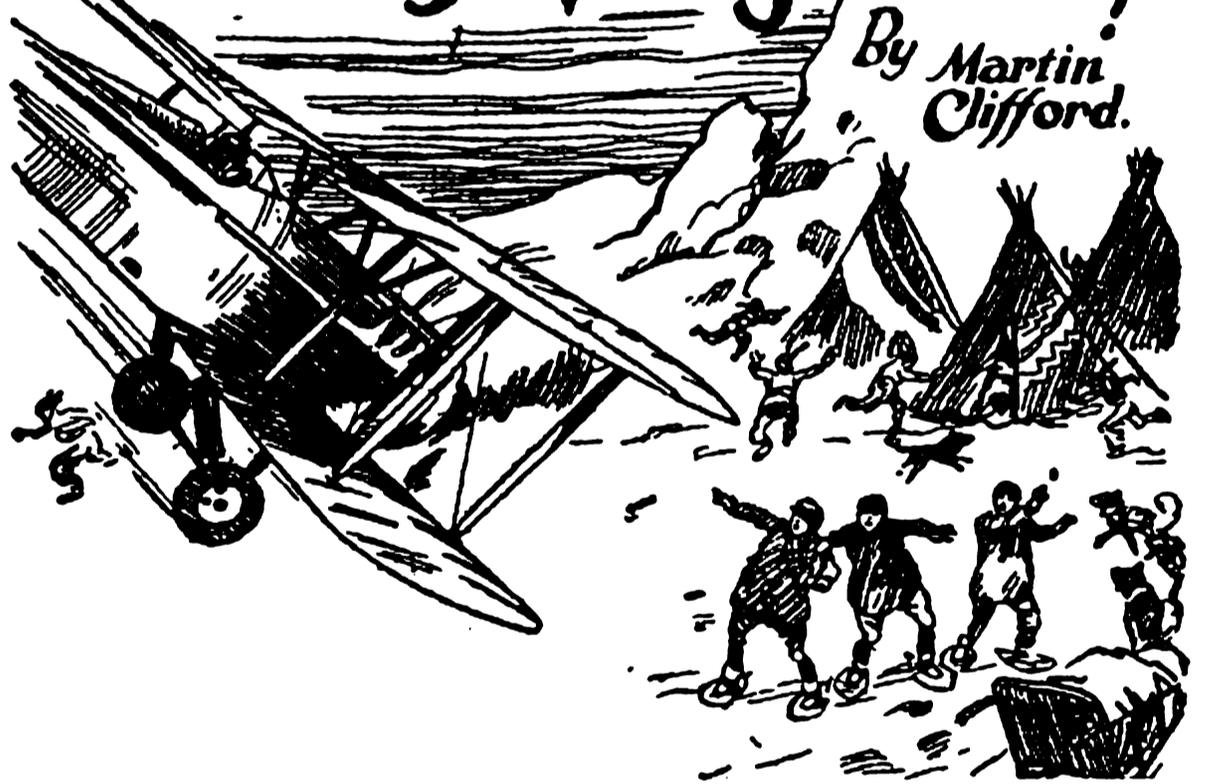
And the school, who regarded the whole affair as an extra-special treat, was ready enough to share the Head's enthusiasm.

Nipper, knowing the inner facts, was sorely tempted to take his chums into his confidence—fellows like Tommy Watson, Tregellis-West Vivian Travers, Handforth, and a few more. He marvelled that they, like the rest of the school, accepted "Dr. Ponsonby" as a great man and a good fellow.

But here Nipper rather did Professor Zingrave an injustice. Seldom had the wily crook been so brilliant; and when Nipper

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remembered that Sir John Brent himself had announced the great ball, that Sir John was actively engaged in the preparations, he saw how easily the school had been hoodwinked.

It was cunning of Zingrave to include the schoolboys in the jollification—clever of him to grant a whole holiday. The boys could not attend the ball, for they would only be in the way; therefore they were provided with other amusements.

Wednesday morning dawned fine, and by now immense marquees had been erected on the playing fields; hosts of workmen had been busy for two or three days. The Head, as he openly stated, meant this day to be one which would live for many years in the memory of the boys.

He was breaking fresh ground; he was teaching his boys how to enjoy themselves. And he seemed so happy about it all that St. Frank's caught the fever.

Excitement ran high that great day.

There were no lessons that morning; everybody could do exactly as he pleased. There were extra treats for breakfast, and in Big Hall, after prayers, Zingrave said a few words to the school, cheery, light-hearted words—and he told the boys to go ahead and have a great time. No restrictions to-day—no discipline. Everybody was free to join in the revelry.

"By George! He's what I call a real head-master!" said Handforth enthusiastically.

"Rather!"

"Good old Ponsonby!"

The school duly gave itself up to pleasure. And Zingrave, in his own quarters, rubbed his hands gently together and he smiled contentedly.

He wasn't so worried about Alf Brent now.

Sir John had been down more than once since that anxious night, and Sir John's very attitude—to say nothing of the agony in his eyes—proved that he knew nothing of his son's whereabouts. Furthermore, Zingrave had received a brief note from Lorne, saying that he had the boy safe, but that he dared not venture out. The note had been posted in Helmford, and although Lorne hinted that he was lying low in some isolated farmhouse, or cottage, he gave no clue as to the address. Nelson Lee, of course, had caused this letter to be sent.

It served its purpose—for it lulled any suspicions that Zingrave might have had.

The day was packed with excitement. Newspaper reporters were early on hand; press photographers were active. Even representatives of the big news reels came down, bringing large amounts of apparatus with them so that special films could be taken of the celebrities as they arrived. Zingrave had seen to it that this novel ball had received great publicity.

And the school, delighted at this radical change from the humdrum everyday routine, voted that "Dr. Ponsonby" was a man in a thousand.

"Heard the latest?" asked Handforth eagerly, as he came across Nipper on the

Ancient House steps. "The Head's hired a concert party and a picture show—real talkies—for this evening."

"There's one thing I like about Ponsonby," said Nipper. "He's thorough. No half-measures with him."

"He said he was going to give us a treat—and he meant it," agreed Handforth. "While the ball is in progress, we chaps are going to enjoy ourselves in the marquees. A picture show for the Junior School, and a concert party for the seniors. Then we're going to change about, and we'll have the concert party and the seniors will have the picture show. By George, It's going to be good!"

"Yes; there'll be some excitement this evening," said Nipper meaningly. "In fact, Handy, it's quite likely there'll be a surprise item on the programme."

But Handforth did not even remotely guess what Nipper meant.

And so the day passed, the boys growing more and more thrilled. In the early part of the evening great crowds collected in the Triangle—to watch the pageant.

A constant stream of luxury cars came up the lane and through the gateway; lords and ladies and nobilities of all kinds were arriving every minute; cameras were clicking.

All the best people were coming; the great county families and hosts of the boys' parents. For these good people were as much intrigued by the novelty of the occasion as the school itself.

Without a doubt, the St. Frank's ball was to be a great success.

CHAPTER 19.

The Figures in the Darkness!

NELSON LEE had his own special duty to perform. Attired in livery for the occasion, he was one of the servants who had been told off to announce the guests as they arrived. Lee had acted many strange parts in the course of his career; but surely his present rôle was the most novel.

He had had other instructions, too—but the real business of the ball would not commence until after dark—until the evening was well advanced.

Such was the perfection of Zingrave's organisation that everything went with delightful smoothness, as though on piled wheels. As dusk descended, fairy lights twinkled in their myriads—but Nipper, at least, noticed that these fairy lights were very cunningly placed. They were festooned round about the various Houses of the school and they penetrated to the playing fields. But in all other directions the darkness, when it descended, would be complete—and all the more impenetrable because of those very fairy lights in the other directions.

The picture show which had been provided for the juniors was of excellent quality; and the concert party hired to entertain the

seniors was a famous one. And while the school thus enjoyed itself, Big Hall presented a gay and wonderful spectacle.

One of London's best dance bands occupied the raised platform; the decorations were elaborate, and special soft lighting had been installed. That usually sombre hall had been converted, as though by magic, into a very wonderful ball-room.

The gathering was even more magnificent than Zingrave had anticipated.

He was a prominent figure as he moved amongst his guests. Sir John Brent was there, too, and Sir John spent a great deal of his time introducing "Dr. Ponsoby" to the guests.

And Zingrave, as he moved from group to group, as he watched the dancers, mentally computed the value of the jewels. He was highly gratified. Wonderful diamond necklaces, rings of glory and beauty. There was a haul here such as he had often dreamed of. The jewels which these ladies were wearing were worth hundreds of thousands.

What a racket!

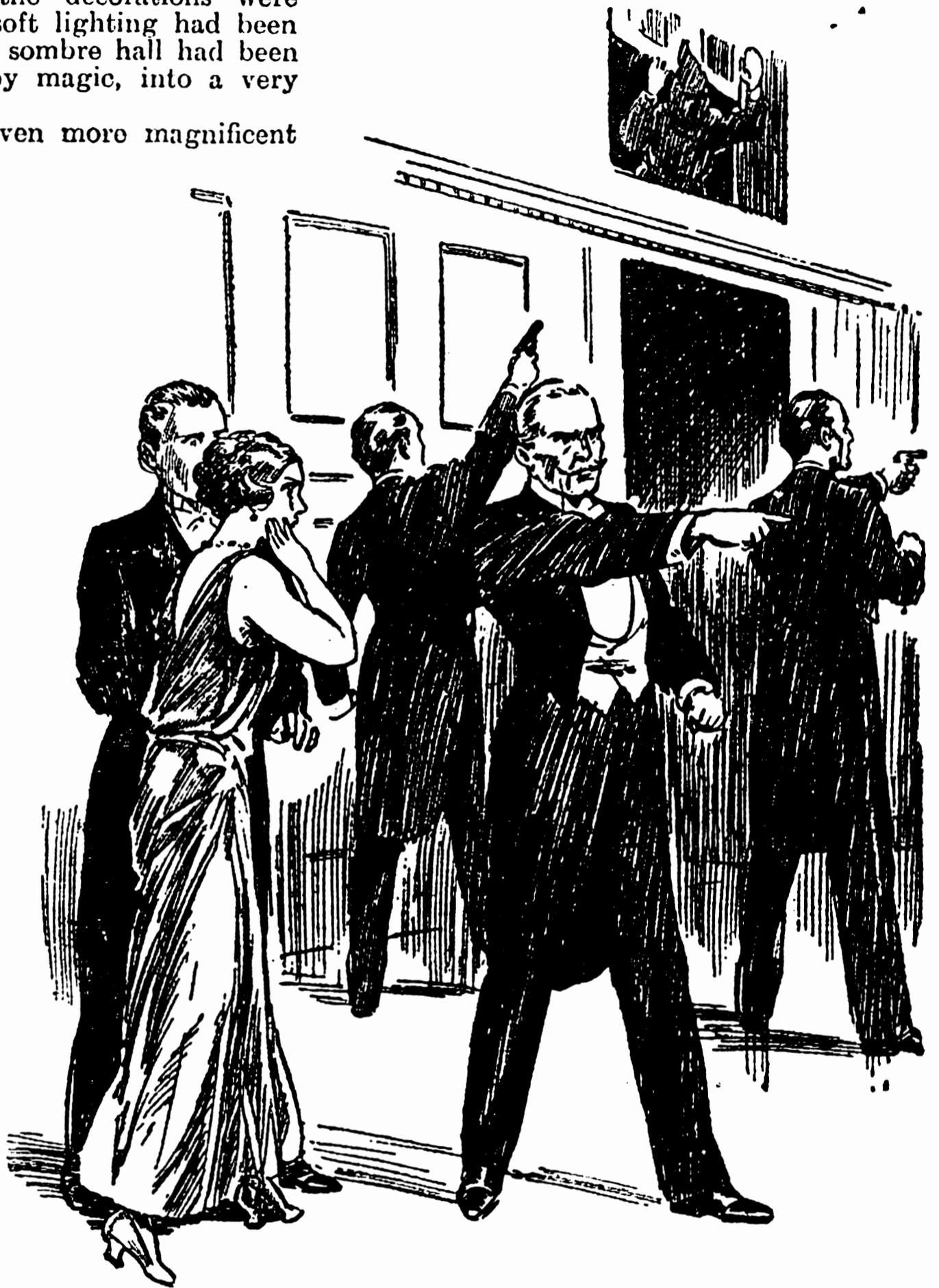
After darkness had completely fallen, the Junior School noisily emerged from the picture show. There was a hectic hour now whilst an alfresco supper was partaken. A few specially favoured seniors were permitted to attend the ball. The rest of the school was not even allowed near Big Hall—the plan ostensibly being to keep the ball select, and free from schoolboy noises.

Then, later, the juniors crowded into the marquee to be entertained by the concert party; and the seniors settled down to enjoy the picture show.

This meant that now, with the evening far advanced, the grounds became deserted. The school, busy with its entertainment, would know nothing of the actual raid. That was Professor Zingrave's plan.

He had thought it out with infinite care. Far better to act now—than to spring the raid after the boys had gone to their dormitories. For in that case they would almost certainly have been wakeful, and a great many of them, taking advantage of the laxity of the occasion, would have been out and about.

As it was, however, they were all in those great marquees. The raid itself would be swift, dramatic—and if all went well, there would be very little noise or commotion. The



boys, in their marquees, would know nothing of it until it was all over.

The night was particularly favourable, for there was no moon, and the sky was obscured by heavy clouds. The darkness was intense.

Nobody took the slightest notice of various cars which drove up the lane, empty. If any people saw them, the obvious assumption was that these cars had come so that they could be ready for the use of the guests.

They were placed in the lane, and at the wheel of each car sat a chauffeur. Every engine was left silently ticking over.

Silent, shadowy figures, coming as though from nowhere, began to collect round the school—in the shrubbery, behind the monastery ruins, in the cover of the hedges, amongst the bushes of the Head's garden.

They were everywhere. And each man had his appointed place—each man was ready to act when the signal came.

Yet not one of those Green Triangle agents—for they were Zingrave's creatures—carried a weapon. Zingrave was clever. He did not allow the ordinary members of the League to carry firearms—until the moment for action arrived.

Thus, in the unlikely event of any of these

five minutes—and everything was ready for the gunmen to make a quick get-away. They would be distributed in a dozen different directions in next to no time. And there would be considerable delay in informing the police; for every telephone at St. Frank's would be out of action.

And so, with the school enjoying itself, and the ball at its height, the fateful moment approached.



Whilst the disguised detectives held up the hooded men, Nelson Lee gripped the arm of the master-crook, "The game's up," he said. "You'd better come quietly!"

men being challenged by an extra alert police officer, no harm would be done. The men were just sightseers, drawn to the school to watch the gay doings.

So far as Professor Zingrave could see, there wasn't a single flaw in his preparations. Everything, of course, would depend upon the speed of the raid. He reckoned, from start to finish, that it would be all over within

CHAPTER 20.

Zero Hour!

NELSON LEE was not unmindful of what was going on.

The great detective had never been so much on the alert as now. He had been relieved of his special duty, for there were other tasks for him—secret tasks.

In the character of Mitchell, he had to do his own particular part in the raid.

And Lee was keeping his eyes very wide open; he meant to make no mistake. He had waited deliberately. He could have brought about Zingrave's arrest some days earlier; but he wanted not only Zingrave, but every one of Zingrave's gunmen! The great detective was determined to smash the new Green Triangle organisation for ever.

If Zingrave was daring, so was Nelson Lee. Yet, for all his daring, how could he, single-handed, defeat this incredible criminal conspiracy?

Outside, in the darkness, something was happening.

The strains of music sounded dreamily from the open windows of Big Hall; laughter came floating from the great marquees on the playing fields. Chauffeurs and servants, standing about under the fairy lights, were discussing the ball. Everything was very peaceful.

Yet, in the dark shadows, lurked the waiting Green Triangle men. And another—a specially elected agent, a responsible man, went round in absolute silence.

He went from man to man, and as he did so, he handed out automatic pistols.

The moment for action was near at hand—and the gunmen were receiving their arms. They would be in possession of these weapons for the brief period of the raid; after which the automatics would be taken away. The wily professor's organisation was as perfect as it could be.

At last the distribution was complete; the special agent had been round, and every man was armed. Now, too, every man had drawn on a black hood and cloak.

And then—the signal.

It was a simple signal, but an exceedingly effective one—and it served a double purpose.

Suddenly all the fairy lights went out, to say nothing of every other light in the school—with the exception of those in Big Hall.

St. Frank's was plunged into inky darkness. The staffs of the various Houses thought little of it. Just a temporary failure. And in that darkness the raiders left their hiding-places, and advanced upon the School House.

Here, in Big Hall, a soft waltz was being played. The lights had been undisturbed.

“A BRILLIANT occasion, Sir John.”

One of the guests—Sir John Brent did not know him from Adam—was beaming upon him. Sir John was jumpy, anxious. He knew that something might happen at any moment.

“Yes, to be sure,” he said. “Quite a novelty for a public school—”

“And an excellent novelty, too,” said the other enthusiastically. “I have already congratulated Dr. Ponsonby—but I think I must congratulate you, too, Sir John. This ball was as much your idea as his.”

“It was entirely Sir John's idea,” said “Dr. Ponsonby” gently, as he joined them.

“Yes, yes—of course,” muttered Sir John, compressing his lips.

“I claim no credit whatsoever,” went on Zingrave, smiling. “I must confess, however, to having carried out Sir John's plans.”

“And, if I may say so, Dr. Ponsonby, you have carried them out to perfection,” said one of the other guests, joining the little group. “I do not think I can ever remember a more brilliant occasion than this. An extraordinary fine success.”

“A charming waltz, this,” commented Zingrave, swaying gently to the lilt of the music.

He looked benignly at the dancers. It was, indeed, a perfect scene.

But perfect for only one moment longer.

Then, dramatically, sensationally, the incredible thing happened.

In every doorway, in every window space, grotesque figures appeared—figures of terror and menace.

“Oh, look!” screamed one of the ladies.

Others saw those hooded figures, too; some of the dancers stopped dancing. Expressions of bewilderment were general.

“Good heavens!” ejaculated Sir John Brent, aghast.

“Some kind of joke, perhaps,” said Zingrave, smiling.

“Ladies and gentlemen!” The voice rang out loudly and clearly. “Do not be alarmed. Do exactly as you are told, and not one of you will be hurt.”

The music stopped abruptly, and the hooded men advanced into the ball-room, and every man displayed his grim-looking pistol.

“There is no need for panic!” went on the spokesman. “You will all raise your hands above your heads. The first man or woman to make a false move will be shot dead. The League of the Green Triangle is here.”

So calm, so matter-of-fact, was the voice, that panic was averted. One or two of the ladies were inclined to swoon, but the great majority stood perfectly still, bewildered, their chief emotion being incredulous amazement.

Even now, many of the people thought it was some ill-conceived practical joke.

“The gentlemen will congregate on this side of the hall—the ladies on the other,” continued the spokesman. “You will all move quickly—and you will keep your hands above your heads.”

Zingrave moved forward.

“You infernal scoundrel!” he shouted hotly. “Good heavens! Are you actually in earnest? Help! Help! Sir John! Ladies and gentlemen—”

“Another squawk out of you, and we'll fill you with lead!” snarled one of the gunmen.

Zingrave staggered back, acting his part well. In his immaculate evening dress, he was the typical schoolmaster, the man of learning, at the mercy of desperate criminals.

“But—but this is an outrage!” he protested feebly. “My guests—”

“Your guests will come to no harm—if they are sensible,” said the Green Triangle man.

“The ladies will remove their jewels, and have them ready. We're not figuring to waste any time.”

One of the gentlemen guests, his face grim, his eyes burning, suddenly strode out from amongst the others.

"This has gone far enough!" he shouted, and his voice had a note of authority. "Are you ready, men? Let them have it!"

And, like conjurers, half those immaculate gentlemen guests whipped out guns of their own!

CHAPTER 21.

The Surprise!

"LADIES, don't be alarmed at what happens!" shouted the man who had given the order. "I am Colonel Grant, of Scotland Yard!"

"Oh!" went up a general murmur.

"We're quite ready for these rascals—but there may be some shooting," went on Colonel Grant. "If so, don't be too frightened. Nobody will be hurt."

The masked men were dumbfounded—staggered. This surprise had come like a bomb-shell. During those first tense moments the raiders did not know how to act.

The scene was an amazing one.

At the doors and windows, and, in fact, almost encircling the guests, were the hooded men. And in the big body of Big Hall stood the men in evening dress—holding their guns in a manner which proved that they knew how to use them.

"Not quite as you expected, my friend!" said Sir John Brent softly.

Professor Zingrave drew in his breath with a sharp hiss.

"I don't understand!" he muttered, and never had he spoken truer words.

Nelson Lee was there—on the platform now, amongst the musicians. He was watching carefully. He was waiting for the big moment.

It had been Lee's idea to have a couple of dozen special Scotland Yard officers on the scene. They had been there from the first—each man immaculately attired, each man using a famous name. They were not ordinary detectives, or Zingrave would have known them.

"I think we can settle this matter without any gunplay," said Colonel Grant grimly. "Listen to me, you men in hoods. We've got you covered. Drop your guns in front of you—"

"Let them have it, boys!" shouted one of the Green Triangle men shrilly.

Crack-crack-crack-crack-crack-crack!

Half a dozen automatics spat viciously.

"Keep your heads, please!" shouted Colonel Grant. "Nobody's going to get hurt."

It seemed an idiotic statement; yet, during those moments, magic words, with the speed of lightning, had been passed round the guests. Thus a panic was averted.

Crack-crack-crack-crack!

The gunmen were firing again—firing point-blank at the Scotland Yard officers. But the Scotland Yard officers stood their ground, and not a man was so much as scratched.

"Am—am I going insane?" whispered Zingrave to himself.

After all his preparations—after all his cunningly-devised plans!

"Our Green Triangle friends are in no way dangerous," came a cool, calm voice from the platform. "Their pistols are loaded with blank cartridges."

"Blank!" gasped Zingrave.

And he knew that those words were truth. Yet he was more baffled than ever. He had entrusted the task of distributing the guns to Mitchell. Mitchell was one of his best men.

Yes, it had been Nelson Lee who had distributed those guns!

But for the dramatic nature of this scene, there would have been a tinge of fine humour here. Nelson Lee, the greatest enemy of the League of the Green Triangle had actually gone round amongst those men, arming them with useless pistols!

But Zingrave was standing like a man petrified. It was Mitchell himself, on the platform, who was speaking. But the voice he used was not Mitchell's—but Nelson Lee's!

"No, no!" almost croaked Zingrave, shuddering.

For once in his life he was shaken to the marrow. Lee's voice! But Lee was dead—Lee had been put "on the spot"—

And then came another surprise.

Men, stalwart, determined-looking men, leapt through the windows. They pushed their way through the doorways. And this time Zingrave recognised them at the first glance. Scotland Yard detectives, all! Inspectors, sergeants, plain-clothes men.

The place was swarming with them. The Green Triangle agents, numerous as they were, were surrounded, hemmed in. Scotland Yard men encircled them, and these other special officers, pistols in hand, menaced them from within the body of the hall.

Even a fight was out of the question.

The Triangle agents had walked into the most deadly trap imaginable.

Zingrave was almost choking. Mitchell! Mitchell was up there, ranging himself on the side of the police officers. So Mitchell had been a traitor all the time; and in that dread moment Zingrave remembered Simpson Lorne; he remembered Alf Brent. Mitchell had gone to that cottage—

Things were happening. There was an extraordinary jingling of metal. With a start, Zingrave realised that man after man—his men—were being handcuffed.

Resistance was out of the question. Their guns useless, outnumbered, the masked gunmen were panic-stricken. Some of them struggled, but they were quickly subdued.

"A word with you, Dr. Ponsonby."

Zingrave whipped round. That voice was mocking—and it was the voice of Nelson Lee! He found Mitchell by his side—and he found

Mitchell's hand on his arm, and the grip of Mitchell's hand was like that of a steel vice.

CHAPTER 22.

Nelson Lee's Triumph!

WITH a supreme effort, Professor Zingrave took a grip on himself.

"Let me go!" he panted. "What do you think you're doing, Mitchell? How dare you?"

"Not Mitchell—but an old friend of yours," said the great detective. "I've been looking forward to this minute very keenly."

With a quick movement he threw back his hood and mask.

"It's Mr. Lee—Mr. Nelson Lee!" shouted Sir John Brent triumphantly.

"Lee!" shrieked Zingrave. "But Lee's dead! Do you hear me—dead!"

So great was the shock that for a moment even his iron control was shattered. Those distinguished guests were amazed at this extraordinary behaviour on the part of the benevolent-looking headmaster.

"You're not looking at a ghost, my friend," said Nelson Lee. "I can assure you that I am very substantial."

"Great Scott!" came a yell from Fenton of the Sixth. "It is Mr. Lee! Mr. Lee's alive all the time!"

Nelson Lee did not shift his gaze from Zingrave.

"The game's up. You'd better come quietly."

"Yes, take him—handcuff him!" burst out Sir John Brent. "This man is no schoolmaster! Thank heavens I can speak at last! He is Zingrave—Professor Zingrave, the criminal!"

As Chief Inspector Lennard and two other officers advanced, Zingrave suddenly gave a mighty wrench and he backed away.

"Stand where you are!" he snarled. "You haven't taken me yet!"

The genuine guests watched, dumbfounded. All "Dr. Ponsonby's" composure had gone; his back was to the wall, and his face was distorted with rage.

As though by magic, an automatic pistol had suddenly appeared in his hand. The detectives hesitated.

"You poor fool!" grated Zingrave, glaring at Sir John Brent. "You have tricked me, but you will never see your son again."

"You are the poor fool—not I!" retorted Sir John contemptuously.

"It will interest you to know, Zingrave, that the boy is safe in his own home," said Nelson Lee, thoroughly enjoying this moment of triumph. "Forgive me if I behave like a braggart, but I cannot resist the temptation to tell you that it was I who took the lad away from that cellar."

"You!" choked Zingrave. "Always you!"

"You will be further interested to learn that Lady Brent has made a complete recovery," went on Lee relentlessly. "Come, Zingrave, you've generally behaved sensibly.

You'll gain nothing by making a scene. You're beaten. I could have handed you over to the police earlier, but I wanted to get your gunmen into the trap, too."

"They'll hang me for this—but you shall die!" panted Zingrave. "And this time there'll be no mistake."

He pressed the trigger of his pistol. A harmless click sounded. He pressed again—wildly, frantically. There were further clicks.

"Oh, that gun?" said Lee coolly. "I don't profess to be much of a conjurer, Zingrave, but I did succeed in relieving you of your gun earlier in the evening—and removing the cartridges. I thought it would be safer."

The cry that came from Professor Zingrave's throat was like that of an animal. With all his strength he flung the useless automatic. But Lee had been expecting it, and he dodged adroitly. Luckily, the weapon shot harmlessly through the air and fell to the floor.

The next moment Inspector Lennard and another officer were at Zingrave's side, and they held him securely.

"No!" shouted the professor, a wild flame in his eyes. "You'll never put me in the dock again!"

And before he could be stopped he flung a pellet into his mouth and swallowed. As he did so his fury left him.

"Now, gentlemen, I am at your service," he said with deadly calmness—in strange contrast to his former rage. "I regret, ladies, that you should witness this distressing—"

He broke off, his body twitching, his face distorted grotesquely.

He swayed, and the Yard men, startled, felt him grow limp in their arms.

"Not—not the police-station," croaked Zingrave. "The mortuary—Gentlemen, I—"

Writhing hideously, he fell to the floor.

"By glory! He's beaten us, after all," said Lennard, in exasperation.

He stood looking down at the crumpled figure on the floor, and he and the other officers, during those tense moments, relaxed their vigilance. But Nelson Lee didn't.

"I wouldn't be too sure, Lennard," muttered the detective warningly. "It may be a trick."

"I think not," said the inspector. "He's dead. I've seen this sort of thing before—"

"Look out!" shouted Lee, leaping forward.

But Professor Zingrave, taking advantage of that momentary respite, acted. With the agility of a rabbit he had suddenly leapt to his feet. Before the Scotland Yard men could close in on him he had reached a long mulioned window near-by.

Crash!

Zingrave hurled himself bodily through the glass, a hurled gun thrown by Lee just missing him. Then he was gone.

Those brief seconds of confusion had given him his chance.

"Get him!" roared Lennard furiously. "By thunder, Lee, I was a fool to—"

He did not finish his sentence. He was running like mad, Nelson Lee by his side.

They got out just in time to see Zingrave leaping into the saddle of a motor-cycle—one of the machines belonging to the police.

Zurrrrrrh!

The engine roared into life, and the motor-cycle shot forward, and the next moment it was hurtling across the Triangle towards the gates.

Luck was certainly with Zingrave.

Until a minute ago those gates had been closed—and guarded. The police cordon had been placed right round St. Frank's, and not a single loophole had been left open.

But now the gates had been opened to allow the first police car to pass out—a car containing a full load of handcuffed prisoners.

A dreadful crash seemed inevitable. There wasn't a chance in a million that Zingrave, on that motor-cycle, would be able to get through—for the police car was actually in the gateway.

But it was neck or nothing for the wily professor. He shot through that tiny space without an inch to spare on either side of the cycle's handlebars. Even Zingrave himself never knew how he got through.

The machine swerved madly in the lane; it shot across to the grass verge, half mounted to the bank, lurched, skidded broadside terrifyingly, and then the desperate rider miraculously regained control.

With wide-open throttle and engine yelling its defiant note, the motor-cycle went hurtling down the lane.

CHAPTER 23.

As You Were!

IMBECILE! Dolt! Dunderhead!" Chief Inspector Lennard did not spare himself. He was furious. "I might have known that Zingrave would pull something like that!" he went on. "If I'd only snapped the bracelets on him——"

"It's no good 'ifing,' old man," interrupted Lee gently. "Zingrave's gone—but he'll be a clever man if he gets away. Your colleagues are already at the telephone, sending out a general warning."

"But that's impossible—the 'phones are dead!"

"Not now," said Lee. "It was my task to disconnect the 'phones—but I have already seen to it that they have been restored."

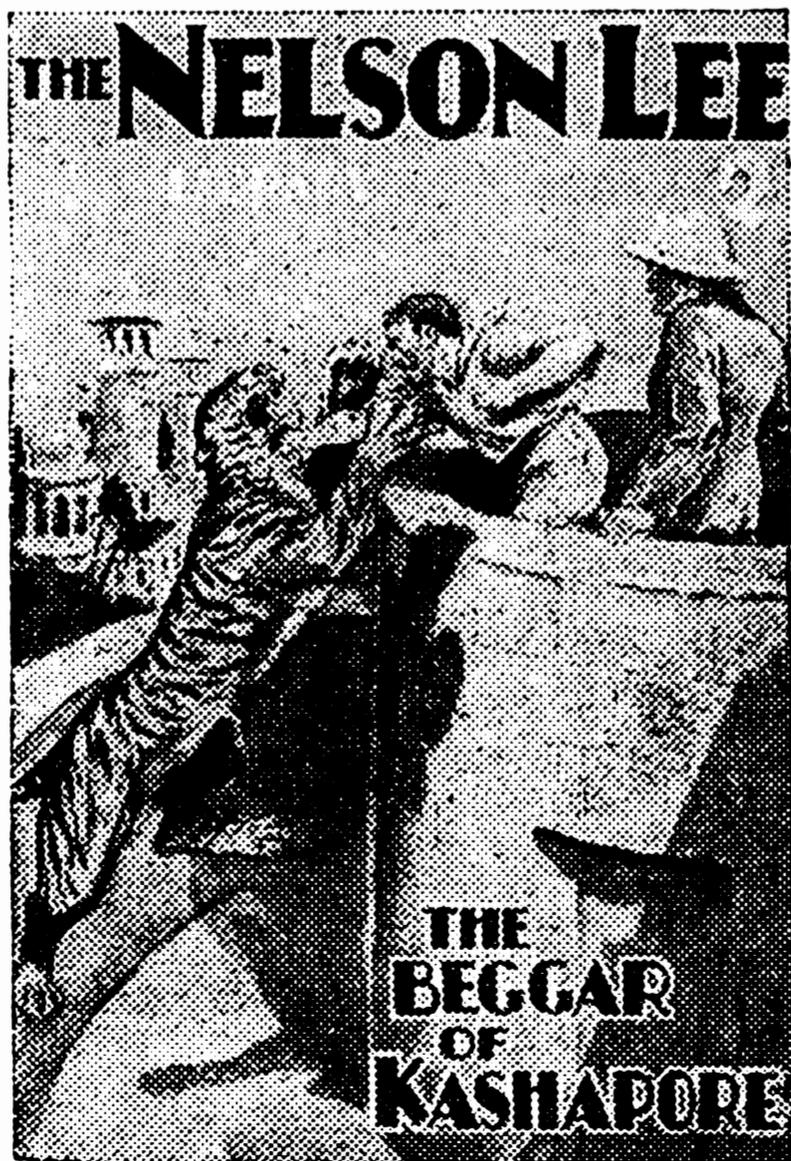
"Jove, you think of everything, don't you?" asked Lennard admiringly. "But Zingrave has so many hiding-places, all prepared, that I'm worried. Hang it! You did your part, Lee—you handed the beggar over to us, and it was we who let him go."

Many figures came dashing up from all sides—most of them, however, from the direction of the playing-fields.

"Guv'nor!" yelled an excited voice.

It was Nipper, and Nipper was overjoyed to see that his ordeal was over. No longer was it necessary for him to act a part.

Next Week's Big Thrill Yarn!



The BEGGAR of KASHAPORE!

Doctor Zenn and Count Otho, two master-crooks, have returned from hiding. On the last occasion these two came up against Nelson Lee, the famous detective succeeded in winning a momentous fight. He did not succeed, however, in putting the two crooks behind iron bars. They escaped—vanished!!—and Lee thought that he was done with them for ever.

But now, in the most strangest manner, Zenn and Otho return as if from the dead, to do battle once more with their old enemy, Nelson Lee.

Next week's Gripping Long Detective-Thriller is one of the finest yarns ever published. Drama and intrigue are staged first in London and then in India, and all through the story Nelson Lee and his boy assistant, Nipper, are seen fighting against overwhelming odds with their usual "bull-dog" spirit.

"Hallo, young 'un!" said Lee kindly. "Well, it's over."

"Look!" gasped Handforth, his eyes nearly starting out of his head. "Oh, my goodness! Am I going dotty? It's—it's Mr. Lee!"

"Impossible!"

"Mr. Lee's dead!"

"Great Samson!"

The fellows came pressing round, bewildered, startled—even a bit frightened. They hadn't known very much about the raid, for they had been enjoying the concert party in the great marquee.

"Listen, you chaps!" shouted Nipper, his eyes glowing. "I can tell you now! My guv'nor's alive—he fooled those Green Triangle crooks, and he's brought off one of the greatest coups in history!"

"Hurrah!"

"Mr. Lee's alive!"

"Thank goodness!"

The seniors were joining in now; everybody seemed to be going mad. Never had the old school had such an hour of hectic excitement.

For right on the top of the revelation that Nelson Lee was alive came the second revelation—just as startling—that "Dr. Howard Ponsonby" had been Professor Zingrave. It was like a thunderbolt for the school. It was a long time before the boys could recover from their stunned bewilderment.

If the fellows had had any doubts, they were dispelled when they saw the swarms of Scotland Yard men and police officers. There were prisoners by the dozen, too—sullen, bewildered men in handcuffs.

It was a complete round-up.

For not only were Zingrave's picked gunmen caught red-handed, but Nelson Lee had seen to it that those new servants—those special Green Triangle agents—were arrested before they could make any break for freedom. And one of Nelson Lee's first tasks upon resuming control of the school would be to reinstate those unfortunate men who had been summarily dismissed.

The great detective managed to escape from the cheering crowds, and he went to Big Hall, where the guests, now recovering, were apparently all talking at once.

The Scotland Yard men had withdrawn.

There was a hush when Nelson Lee climbed upon the platform.

"I owe you a very sincere apology, ladies and gentlemen, for making you participate in the recent amazing scene," said Nelson Lee quietly. "I am particularly sorry that the ladies were subjected to the ordeal. I would like to take this opportunity of congratulating those ladies upon their courage in the face of what appeared to be a desperate situation. But there was never any real danger—or, of course, I would not have arranged the coup as I did."

"It is a pity that you could not have given us a word of warning—so that we should have been prepared," said one of the guests.

"That would have been impossible," replied Nelson Lee. "You must remember that Professor Zingrave was here—to say nothing of some of his trusted agents. They would

have known that something had gone wrong—and the raid would never have taken place. We were compelled to make you participate in the affair so that we could make a clean sweep of the criminals. I am happy to inform you that not one of Zingrave's gunmen got away. Unfortunately, Zingrave himself—as you saw—escaped by means of a clever trick."

"That wasn't your fault, sir," exclaimed Sir John Brent. "In fact, I cannot see that it was anybody's fault. And Zingrave will soon be arrested—and brought to trial for his infamous crimes."

He turned to the enthralled audience.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I want you to know just how much Mr. Nelson Lee has accomplished," he went on. "Not only has he brought about the arrest of dozens of these desperate criminals, but he has saved my son from death—and my wife from death. He has released me, personally, from a hideous nightmare. Practically single-handed, Mr. Lee pitted his wits against this grim criminal organisation—and he won. I ask you, ladies and gentlemen, to forget that you are grown up, and to act as the schoolboys have acted. I want you to give Mr. Lee three hearty cheers."

"Hurrah! Hip, hip, hurrah!"

The cheers were given with tremendous vigour—and they were echoed, too, by crowds of the boys who were at the windows and in the doorways.

"Let me remind you, too, that but for Mr. Lee you would have been robbed of all your jewels and valuables," shouted Sir John. "That was the whole object of this ball—to get you here, so that you could be robbed. It was Mr. Lee who frustrated—"

But he could get no further. The cheering had recommenced—and Nelson Lee spent five of the most uncomfortable minutes of his career.

AND thus Professor Cyrus Zingrave's audacious sojourn at St. Frank's came to a dramatic end.

The affair was a nine days' wonder; the London newspapers, the next morning, were full of the sensational story. The League of the Green Triangle had suffered a knock-down blow—a crushing defeat.

And Nelson Lee, whom the nation had thought to be dead, was very much alive indeed! What was more, he had resumed his old position at St. Frank's. But how long he would remain there was quite another question. He had completed his task, and perhaps another great criminal case would soon be calling him.

As for Zingrave himself—he vanished.

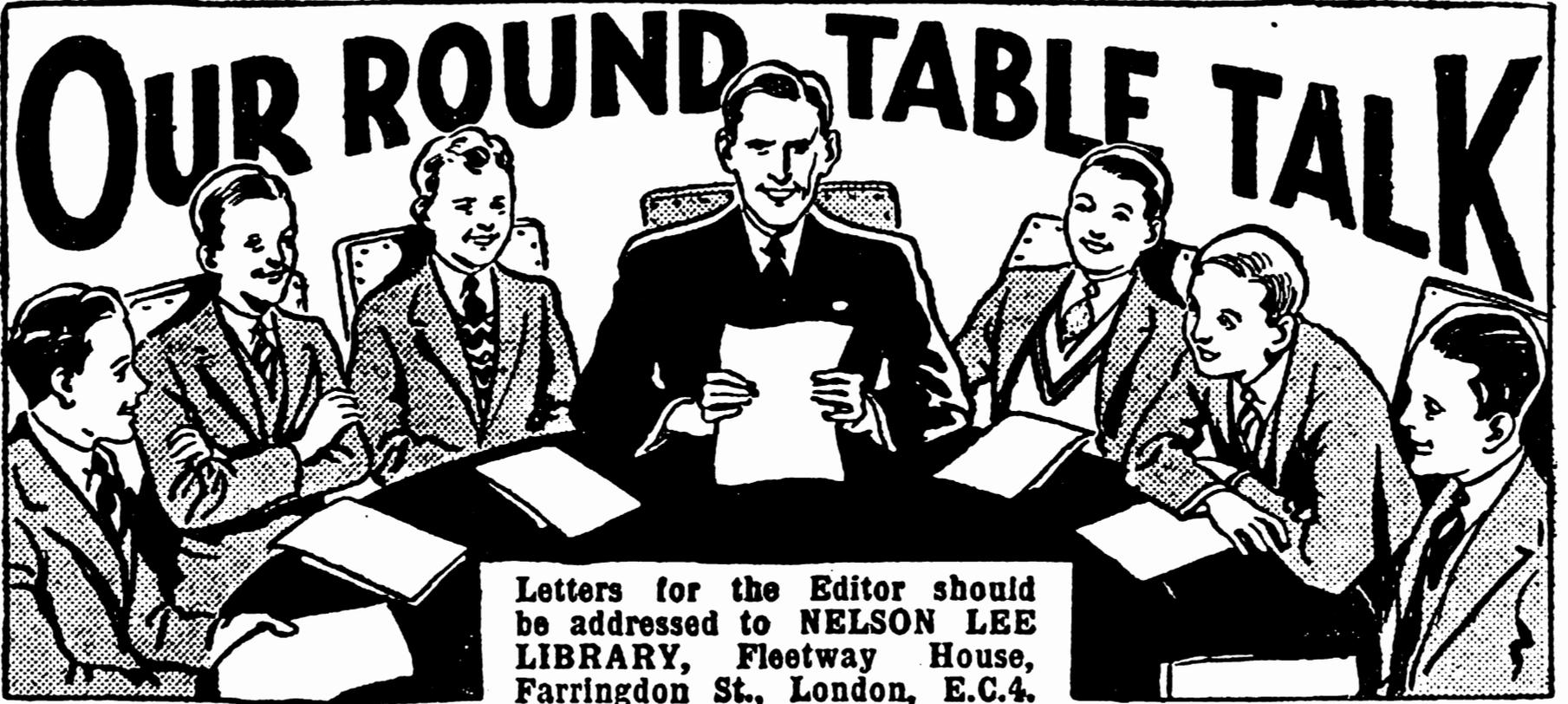
He was at large—skulking somewhere in hiding.

And one day, perhaps, he would again come to grips with Nelson Lee.

THE END.

(*"The Beggar of Kashapore!" is the title of next week's Swift-action and Mystery Yarn featuring Nelson Lee and Nipper!*)

All About the 10,000 Free Gift Plan!



10,000 FREE GIFTS.

I EXPECT you are all very anxious to hear more about the Great 10,000 Free Gift Scheme of which I spoke last week. I don't wonder at it, considering the magnificence of the offer. But trust your Editor to get hold of a good thing for NELSON LEE readers.

The Free Gift Plan starts in next week's issue, and the big idea is this. To try and win one of the valuable 10,000 Free Gifts, all you have to do is to collect the special coupons which are given away in the paper each week.

Nothing more simple, is there. You cut out the coupons each week and save them until you are told to send them in.

10,000 Handsome Gift books will be awarded to the ten thousand readers whose collection of coupons total the highest number of points.

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Not only will you be able to collect prize coupons from issues of the NELSON LEE, but also from several other famous weekly papers

in Our Companion Papers Group. Thus, if you buy "The Ranger," or "Gem," or "Magnet," you will find coupons in these papers, and so enlarge your collection. "The Ranger" is out on Saturdays, price 2d., and has a programme of thrill-packed adventure stories. The "Magnet" also comes out on Saturday, and in this paper you will meet the famous Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars. The "Gem" is published on Wednesdays, and features long, complete stories of Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's.

Get next week's issue of the NELSON LEE for a start, and snip out the special coupons. Don't forget, boys.

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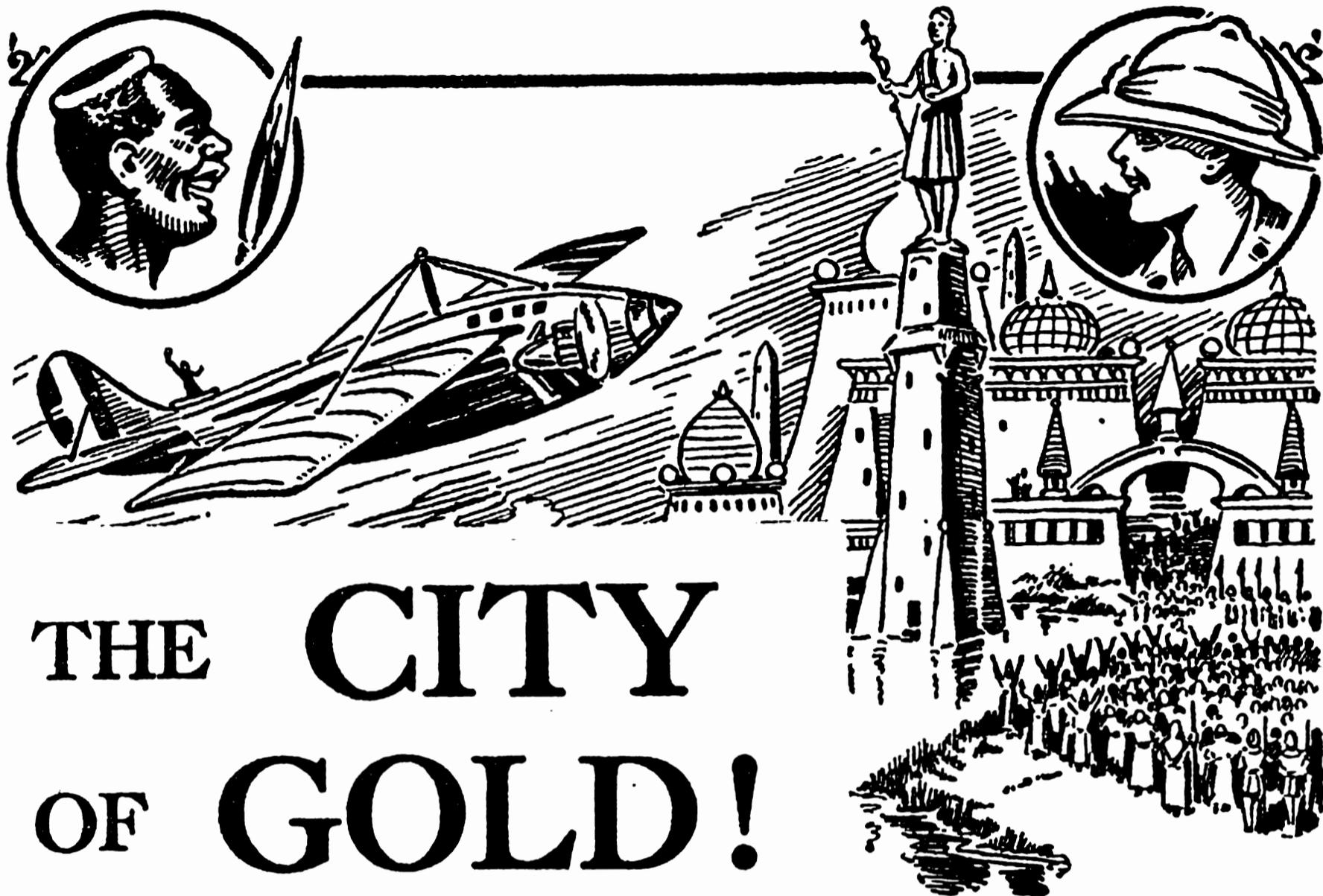
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Tom Cook, White Boy, Crowned King of the Lost City of Gold!



THE CITY OF GOLD!

Tom Cook, together with his cousin Alva Vandeck and two companions, have travelled in their wonder craft, the Flying Fish, to a mysterious African city. Here Tom is proclaimed by the people as their ruler returned from the dead and crowned king. But the ceremonial feast is interrupted by the arrival of news that the treacherous High Priest, Gobo, is advancing on the city with a horde of hairy dwarfs.

The Counter-Attack!

“**C**OME on, Ben, cough it up, and let's have the strength of it, and make it snappy!”

Al Vandeck had waited impatiently whilst his engineer had mopped up a goodly flagon of the native beer and stuffed about half a roast duck in his mouth.

“What mountains are you talking about, and how d'yuh mean Gobo opened up a hole in 'em?” he asked. “He cain't make holes in mountains!”

“He cain't? Beleeve muh, bo, that's jest what he did do, an' I'm not spruicin'!” declared the little American engineer. “Who wuz th' guy in his t'ry thot hit th' rock with his rod an' water gushed out?”

“Aaron, yo' iggorant pusson!” snorted Lulu virtuously.

“Okay! Wa'al, beleeve muh or not, Ol' Gobo was carried at a dead trot cl'ar acrost to them mountains to th' west'ard. How them bearers clambered up th' rocks wi' thot ol' guy hollerin' an' cussin' from inside his pal-an-queen, whatever yuh calls it, I dunno, but

they done it, tho' two dropped out from sun-stroke I reckon. But he had a coupla dozen more as ree-liefs, so he sh'ud worry! He hops out w'en they got to th' top an' dodges amongst th' rocks like a blinkin' centipode until he's outa sight o' his fellers, then he hits th' flat face o' th' solid rock an' take et from muh, ten foot rolled back like it was paper, an' he legged it thru'. I never thought thot ol' geezer c'ud shift like it——”

“Where were yuh so's yuh c'ud see all this?” demanded Al sternly. “Ben Bold, yuh are talkin' thru' your hat. If yuh cu'd see him—how was it he cu'dn't see yuh if yuh were in th' 'bus?”

“Smart, aincher?” sneered Ben. “I landed on the flat top o' what they calls a kopje, then I climbs with intelligent anticipation over th' ridge to whar thot old stiff was makin' for. I had yer dad's telescoop with muh, an', as yuh know, thot has a range of——”

“Aw, awright, I see! Make it snappy!”

“Th' old guy had some way o' signallin' I cudn't see, but in less'n fifteen minutes thar come umpteen thousand dwarfts swarmin'

down from th' forest beyand an' down inter th' canyon what ol' rattlebones was hidden. He gets up on a rock an' starts gassin' to 'em, flourishin' his arms towards this burg an' tellin' 'em th' tale like he wuz preachin'. It wuz like watchin' a guy tub-thumpin' in the park wi'out bein' able to hear what he said."

"Waacht een beetje!" interrupted Lulu; then turned to wondering counsellors who had been listening with all their ears, without, of course, being able to understand one word that the little American was saying.

"Listen, wise man," said Lulu, frowning down at old Metla. "What lies on other side the mountains to the west?"

The old man shrugged his shoulders.

"No man knows, for none has ever crossed them and lived to tell of it. But I have heard it said that from some country beyond come the dwarf races that have plagued the citizens of the Golden God from time beyond time. They deal in magic, and come into this country by stealth; no man knows how or from whence. We have captured some as prisoners, but even torture will not wring a word from them, and they fear not death. So far we have always beaten them off and killed them in thousands, but they multiply like ants, and, like ants, are difficult to slay. Some day they will overrun this country, then we shall be their slaves. Old Gobo has learnt their language, 'tis said, but of that I know not——"

"Yuh can betcher boots he has!" declared Ben, when this was translated. "He wuz tellin' them th' tale like a ballyhoo guy at a fair ground. Speak th' language? I sh'ud smile! He had 'em hangin on his words an' axin' for more!"

"Did they follow him through the hole in the mountains?"

"No, sir, they did not. They pelted back into th' forest an' Gobo beat it back to whar he had left his pal-an-queen an' wuz carried down ag'in to th' brass-polish guards. He gits up in his hind legs ag'in an' harangs them for close on half an hour. They gits all het up an' dances around him wavin' their toastin' forks. Then he's carried in front of 'em an' leads 'em thro' th' gap until they're t'other side th' mountains. I zooms up to have a look an', believe muh, not more'n fifteen miles away thar's a great clearin' thet's dotted with teeny weeny lil' huts, an' that th' dwarfits is a-swarmin'. It wuz like an ant heap had been stirred up wi' a stick th' way they was scurryin' about."

"All right. Lulu, tell the counsellors what he says, and make it brief," said Tom.

The faces of the old men were a study as Lulu retailed the story in his own picturesque language. When he had finished——

"May your servant speak, great Tomkuk?" asked old Metla.

"We would listen to your words, old wise one!"

"For thrice a score mensen (sixty months, or five years)," declaimed the old boy, "we have been free from the menace of these dwarfs. Lousla, our late chief of the army, beat them off, and held them off each time they attacked, but we lost a goodly number of our brave

warriors through the magic these little men use and their poisoned arrows."

"Mostly that!" murmured Tom.

"It is borne in upon me that the reason they have not attacked is that the cunning fox Gobo has found some means of making a treaty with them or bribing them. At your coming, Great Tomkuk, he saw that the power he had wielded had vanished, and in his malice he has let loose this flood of demons, thinking to carry all before him."

"Looks precious like it!" said Tom thoughtfully.

"But you, Great Tomkuk, will not let this happen. With all the power that you wield you will come to the rescue of us, your people. From afar you will slay——"

"Hi, hold up!" cried Tom. "You're takin' too much for granted. I can't—I mean—I'm not goin' to—oh, Lulu, tell 'em what I mean!"

The Zulu took a deep breath and, swelling out his mighty chest, boomed out:

"Counsellors, Tomkuk the Great has indeed come to help his people, but he would not have you lean upon his strength like tottering babes who have but just left their mothers' arms. He bids you fight like true warriors against the foe that threatens your peace and homes, and if so be the day should go against you, then, may be, if you have fought well and bravely, he will put forth the might of his magic and give ye aid that your people be not eaten up by the little men!"

"Very well put, Lulu!" muttered Tom. "Carry on!"

"Ja, baas, I gib 'em de straight goods! Now, the Golden Guards having deserted and joined with this false priest," Lulu sang out, thoroughly enjoying his own speech, "what of your army? How are they armed, and who leads them?"

"The citizens of the Golden God are trained to arms from childhood," replied the old man proudly. "On horse or afoot, with bows and arrows or spears; with throwing knife or weighted rope, they are trained to face man or beast. But alas! since the death of our general, Lousla, through the treachery of Gobo, they are without a leader!"

"Wow, baas, Tom," cried the huge Zulu, his eyes sparkling speaking in his native language, "you know that I have led impis of my Zulus, and am a great commander. Bid me lead these warriors, for I scent the battle from afar, and long to feel spear and throwing knife in my grasp once more. Ho, I am the Elephant; the great Bull who tears and rends his enemies——"

"Cut it short!" grinned Tom. "All right, old 'un, you go scrappin' if you want to. We shall all have to take a hand anyway, I reckon!"

Lulu turned to the counsellors and swelled out his chest until the plates of his golden armour creaked.

"Then has Tomkuk brought with him a general who shall lead your people to victory!" he boasted, slapping himself on the breast-plate. "I know that I, the elephant, Inkoboo, the strong, the wily in battle, shall lead ye. Wow! Sound the assembly that I may review my troops and give them courage!"

"Hop out and get the Fish ready," Tom

whispered to Al; "I'll have a chow with the counsellors and get to know the lay of the land. It's just on the cards that we may be able to put a spoke in Gobo's wheel before he can get the main part of his dwarfs here. We could soak it into the rebel troops easy enough."

Messengers had been sent to all parts of the city immediately and the assembly alarm was sounded. Then they saw the truth of the old counsellor's boast, for practically every man or lad who could carry arms lined up in serried ranks whilst Lulu rode up and down on a huge white stallion he had commandeered from the royal stables

The Zulu was in his element, for it was a fact that he had been a noted warrior in his youth and had commanded a Zulu impi.

Of course there was not a firearm amongst this hidden tribe who had never heard of such a thing. But there were sheafs of arrows, spears, throwing knives, and the deadly "weighted cord" for the horsemen. This was something like the South American bola and was a very deadly weapon at close quarters, having a weight at either end weighing from fourteen to twenty pounds.

Catching a Tartar!

TOM, Al, and Ben Bold clambered into the "Flying Fish" and took off amidst a torrent of cheers from the assembled army. It cheered these simple people to see that this wonder lad with his golden hair and white skin just like their historic god, was going to fight for them.

"What's it like from the other side of that mountain?" Tom asked thoughtfully as he listened again to Ben's story; "does the forest come right up to the mountainside?"

"Naw, not by a hull lot!" replied Bold. "Thar's a sorter plain thet slopes down without a tree on it for about a mile an' a haff. A good five miles wide, I sh'ud think."

"Right, then I think I can see a li'l scheme for makin' the dwarfs sit up if we're there in time," said Tom. "Al, take us up about a thousand feet, will you, and then hover. I want to observe, see?"

The Fish zoomed noiselessly upward on her auto-gyro and sat up in the sky motionless as a hovering hawk. Tom examined the country through the wonderful telescope Ben had spoken of and at last shut it up with a sigh of satisfaction.

"We're in plenty of time," he said. "I reckon Gobo doesn't know that we're wise to his little scheme and he's takin' it easy. See those little spots of fire down there?"

He pointed to where little flashes came from amongst the edge of the forest trees.

"Old Gobo and his golden guard, that's the sun shining on their armour," he whispered, as if he might be overheard. "I wonder if they've spotted us yet? I don't think so?"

"What, at over a thousand feet?" cried Al scornfully. "Have a bit on my old dad's paint! What he doesn't know about visibility and light refraction ain't worth knowin', and this old 'bus 'ud be invisible at five hundred feet and less!"

"Al, that aged blighter holds a mighty good hand and is artful enough to play it for all it's

worth," Tom announced after a pause during which he was scanning the map below as it was spread beneath the hovering 'plane. "He's the only person apparently, bar the dwarfs, who knows of that secret entrance through the mountains. Now, he can hold the city bottled up, so to speak, for Lulu can't attack the dwarfs until they are through as he can't open the entrance or take his troops through. But on t'other hand——"

Al pulled at his sleeve and pointed down to where a little series of moving dots showed just at the edge of the forest where the slope of the plain up to the mountain began.

"Whatever we're goin' to do has got to be done on th' jump, old dear!" he said quietly. "Thar's th' dwarf army comin', and if they get to that entrance—good-night!"

"Yes, we've got to hustle;" agreed Tom. "Look here, turn west till we get over the range of the mountains, keeping this side of 'em, see? Then I want you to get down to the top of 'em quick as you can but without being seen by Gobo or his army——"

"What's the idea?" asked Al, as he obediently swung the wheel round and turned the Fish's nose Westward.

"We've just got to find out the secret of that tunnel or whatever it is thro' the mountains," said Tom rapidly, as he stared down through the glasses and mentally registered every rock and kopje beneath them. He had been so accustomed to this in his hunting expeditions with his father that it was second nature to him, and once he had passed through a country he could return five years after with a map-like knowledge of routes and native paths. Now he could see more than his cousin, and discern tracks that were hidden to the American lad.

"'Twon't be so bloomin' easy to find out," grumbled Al. "Yuh don't reckon to tickle Gobo till he tells, do you?"

Tom grinned.

"Don't you worry; I mean to find out without botherin' about that li'l stinkpot! But if we could get Lulu, with his army horse and foot foot thro' the tunnel to t'other side of the mountains—the dwarfs wouldn't have the chance of a snow cat in a baker's oven. You see there's not the cover for the little brutes, and the cavalry could charge 'em in formation. Old Metla told us they can never face a direct charge, but crumple up and skedaddle!"

"Hope so, in case not!" growled Al, who was feeling pessimistic; "those little beggars are like a swarm o' blinkin' locusts that devour everything they come across. There's too many of 'em, Tom, and the best thing we can do is to beat it——"

"That's just what the dwarfs are doin'!" cried Tom, as to a peculiar rolling sound like distant thunder came from the direction of the forest. "That's their war drums, and in less'n no time they'll have all their forest tribes out in full strength. Look; old Gobo's on th' move—he's goin' to open the tunnel for 'em!"

They could see the glittering array of golden guards form up and see Gobo's palanquin being conveyed back towards the rocks.

"He's bound to do it on his own, for he won't let any of his own people learn the secret which has been the reason for his power. He'll be in

that canyon place on his own—and that's what's going to deliver him into our hands. Shove on the power, Al, and race for all you're worth to the top of the precipice over that tunnel place. We'll sell the aged tinker a pup yet!"

He hastily stripped off his clothes and gave his cousin the golden crown and serpent sceptre to take charge of. Then he dived below and returned with an electric torch, a loaded automatic, and a light steel bar, together with some thing that looked like an outsize umbrella—at sight of which Al let out a squeak of protest.

"Say, yer not goin' to attempt to land near these cliffs, are yer? Why, boyee, yer stark crazy! There's a wind blowin' through that gully ninety miles an hour, and anyway, we're too low for you to drop. It'd never open out in time!"

"Got to be done," responded Tom tersely. "Hover and I'll see to the rest. Here, Ben, come and trail this 'chute out so that it'll open before I drop. Face up wind, Al, and keep her steady. Get as low as you can!"

"Break yer silly neck!" growled Al, but obeyed orders, nevertheless, manœuvring the flying boat down into that canyon through

Then he bumped a rock with his stern, and next second was scrambling about trying to get out of the harness whilst the wind was comparatively still.

He rolled up the apparatus and shoved it behind a rock, then made for the rock entrance at the dwarf's end. As he had feared it was open, and therefore Gobo must have already got through and would be going towards the other end to open that and allow the swarms of dwarfs and his own rebel Golden guard to go through and meet Lulu's army under the most disadvantageous conditions.

"If I only knew how to and could close that entrance," muttered Tom. "But I don't—so the best thing is to jump old Gobo and make him cough up the secret."

He reckoned that nearly an hour must elapse ere the dwarfs could enter the canyon, and meantime the cunning old priest was scrambling through to open up the exit for them towards the city at the psychological moment.

Switching on his electric torch now and again, to see that he was keeping to the right route, Tom hurried through the winding canyon as quickly as possible over the rough surface.

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which the tremendous draught of wind was shrieking until the nose of the Fish was facing dead east, "bucking" the wind and keeping up just enough speed to keep her hull steady.

Tom walked right aft with the harness of the parachute strapped round him, whilst Ben Bold trailed out the silk top and held it in position so that it could not foul.

"Directly I'm gone, make straight back for Lulu and tell him to bring his troops right up to the entrance and he'll find it open for him, see, Al?"

"Okay! What flowers d'yer want, Tom?"

"Hops!" grinned Tom. "S'long. Let 'er rip, Ben!"

As he sprang over the stern, Al shoved on full power, so that the Fish shot away from the daring jumper, and the impetus made the parachute open full out. It was well it did so for, even as it was, the terrific draught caught it and Tom was swept down the canyon at a terrifying speed.

A cross wind took him dashing towards the rocks, but he stuck out his feet and gave a lusty shove as he hit the side of the cliff. Then he dropped like a plummet as he struck a temporary air pocket, and the cliffs seemed to whistle upwards as he plunged down into almost total darkness, for the canyon was very narrow and the cliffs on either side high.

It was eerie work, for he never knew whether old Gobo might not have halted somewhere, in which case he might be pretty sure the wily old priest would have something hot prepared for him!

Then, as he turned a corner, he saw a light ahead of him. It came from a flaming torch the old witch doctor priest was carrying. He was scrambling along at a wonderful pace, muttering and cussing to himself, and stopping every now and again to listen whether his dwarf confederates had entered the tunnel yet.

Tom was on top of him before he knew it and, wrenching the torch from the claw-like fist, he stamped it out to sparks on the rocks.

"Who is it? Unhand me or I smite ye dead where ye stand. Know ye not I am Gobo, the miracle worker?" snarled the old priest.

"Righto! Well, it'll be a miracle if you get out of here alive!" laughed Tom, then added in his halting Bantu: "Know that I am Tomkuk, your king, false priest. Now, forward you go and open that secret entrance in the rocks. Hasten, for if you dally you die, old as you are!"

"Teah, there is no Tomkuk. Tomkuk is a myth, a story to frighten children and fools!"

"You will find him a very healthy myth and a story that you won't live to hear the end of

unless you do as I say! Come, you have got to go, and that quickly!"

He suddenly switched on his torch full in the witch doctor's face and as the brilliant and to him, uncanny light, coming apparently from "Tomkuk's" naked hand, seared into his half-blind eyes, Gobo shrank back with a stifled shriek.

"Ah-h-h-h, do not put out mine eyes, great lord!" he quavered. "I will obey. Do but leave me my sight, 'tis all I have left!"

"Except a cunning' old brain like a weasel's!" muttered Tom. "Hallo, what have you got there?"

For by the light of the torch he had caught the gleam of something in the old priest's hand. Tom's own hand moved like lightning and, clutching the skinny wrist, he twisted it round until the point of the dagger was turned towards the priest's own breast.

Slowly he exerted his strength, driving the point slowly nearer the old humbug. Gobo shrank back in abject terror, shrieking out:

"Mercy, lord, mercy; do not touch me with it. One touch means a horrible death—IT IS THE POISON FOR THE DWARFS!"

TOM laughed loud and long.

"You're a sweet old party, ain't you? A nasty piece of work, taking you all round!" Then in Bantu: "Now, quickly, open that rock by means of the secret spring or—I run this into you!"

He drove the trembling old brute before him but, instead of the dagger, he prodded him in the back now and again with the light steel bar he had brought. This was quite as effective for each time he was prodded Gobo leap up into the air with a yell of mortal fear and doubled

his pace, until he sank down at the rocky barrier panting like a spent pig.

But even though scared out of his wits and with his wind all gone, his cunning brain was still active, and he sought to waste time, in the hope that some of his dwarf allies or the Golden Guards would appear upon the scene and come to his rescue.

"Lord, I am spent, permit me to rest?"

"You'll get a longer rest than you bargain for if you don't hasten," Tom warned him, edging the dagger towards him. "Open!"

But why—why should I? Surely the great Tomkuk, the god who knows everything—knows the secret of the rock" he sneered.

"Well, if I can't, I know how to make you!" retorted Tom, his ear cocked as he thought he heard sounds from the dwarfs, and of the tunnel; "In two breaths I strike—One—Two—"

"Mercy, lord, I'll open!" screeched the old scoundrel and hopped over the rocks with his tormentor close behind him watching like a lynx. He leant up against a pillar of rock with his feet spread apart on two others and pushed. "There 'tis done!"

There came a faint creaking rumble of hidden, age-old mechanism and a huge stone at the end of the tunnel began to slowly sink. Tom watched with fascinated eyes, for as the opening at the top widened he could hear the sound of excited voices from the other side, and then the flash of the clear blue sky above the terrific walls of the canyon and hovering above the unmistakable shape of the "Flying Fish."

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