

The NELSON LEE

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THE
DESTRUCTION
OF
ST. FRANK'S!

ONE OF THE MANY AMAZING SCENES IN

"ROGUES OF THE
GREEN TRIANGLE!"

MYSTERY—ADVENTURE—THRILLS!

ROGUES of the GREEN TRIANGLE

By

EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

"To-night," said Professor Cyrus Zingrave in his soft, silky voice, "the new League of the Green Triangle commences operations. Success, then, to the League of—Terror!"



CHAPTER I.

The Man in the Shrubbery!

THE boomerang left Jerry Dodd's hand with skilful cunning, and went winging on its flight across the Triangle at St. Frank's. It curved away near the shrubbery, dipped, and then came shooting back towards the thrower. He caught it deftly.

"Bravo!" said Nipper. "Jolly good, Jerry!"

The Australian junior smiled.

"You haven't seen anything yet," he said cheerfully. "Watch this one!"

"Hold on!" interrupted Edward Oswald Handforth, of Study D. "Let's have a go, Jerry!"

"Think you can do it?" asked Jerry Dodd.

"Of course I can do it!" said Handforth promptly. "Haven't I seen you doing it? There's nothing in it."

"No?" murmured Jerry. "It's not quite so easy as it looks, Handy, old man. Boomerang throwing requires a certain amount of practice."

"You'd better not try it, Handy," put in Nipper. "You'll only go and break half the windows in the West House. Unless you give that thing the right send-off, it'll swerve and twist—"

"Rats!" said Handforth. "Let's have a shot, anyway."

It was a calm, wintry afternoon—and a half-holiday—and a number of fellows were idling about in the Triangle. It was getting near to tea-time, and the dusk was already gathering.

Nelson Lee, the famous schoolmaster-detective, emerging from the Ancient House, was just in time to see Handforth's throw. The boomerang went flying giddily into the air, swerving and dipping erratically. It curved in Nelson Lee's direction, hovered uncertainly, and then dropped to the gravel with a thud.

"Well I'm jiggered!" said Handforth, staring. "What's happened to it?"

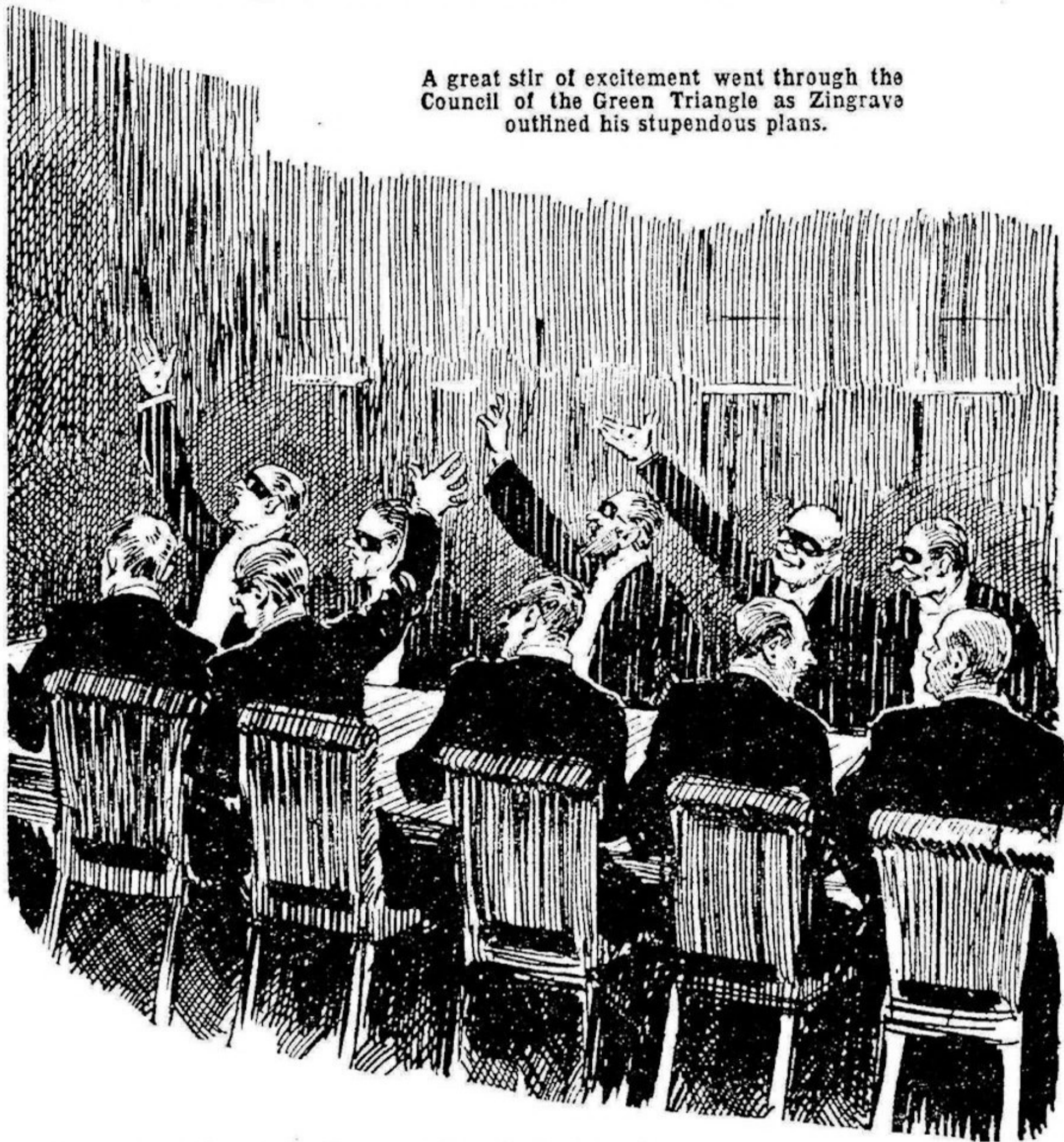
"Isn't that where you meant it to go?" asked Jerry innocently.

"Of course it isn't!" snorted Handforth. "I meant it to come back into my hand!"

"You haven't trained it properly," replied the Australian junior solemnly. "These boomerangs need a lot of training, Handy."

Nelson Lee picked up the curiously-shaped piece of wood, and strolled over towards the group. He joined Nipper, and there was a smile on his face.

A great stir of excitement went through the Council of the Green Triangle as Zingrave outlined his stupendous plans.



"Somebody trying to brain me?" he asked pleasantly.

"Sorry, sir—it went wrong," said Handforth. "I shall have to watch again. Jerry, old son, give us another throw."

Jerry Dodd took the boomerang, and they all watched. Nelson Lee stood with Nipper, just apart, and Jerry prepared for the next demonstration. The boomerang left his hand, and, as before, went winging in the direction of the shrubbery. It seemed for all the world that it was bound to crash into the trees, but at the last second it veered off, shooting uncannily sideways, taking a fresh direction altogether. Then—

Cra-a-a-sh!

Without warning there was a violent, ear-splitting explosion in the centre of the shrubbery. Nelson Lee and the boys had a momentary glimpse of the trees writhing about as though in agony; branches and twigs and leaves went hurtling skywards. In the same second a terrific blast of air came out, and everybody was flung flat to the ground.

Many windows of the West House, near by, were shattered to fragments, and there was a terrific splintering of glass in the gymnasium. Before the startled boys could pick themselves up there came a rush from the Ancient House, from the West House, and, in fact, from everywhere. Crowds came swarming out, startled and scared by that explosion.

Nelson Lee was the first on his feet, and Nipper was up a few seconds later.. Their ears were drumming painfully, and they were aware of a sharp, acrid odour in the air. A mass of pungent smoke hovered menacingly over the shrubbery.

"What—what was it, guv'nor?" panted Nipper.

His voice sounded far away to his own ears, and Nelson Lee hardly heard the words. He took no notice of the seniors and juniors who came running up. He made straight for the shrubbery.

As it afterwards turned out, the explosion had seemed infinitely more violent from a distance than it had seemed to those comparatively near spectators. Indoors, the whole school had positively rocked on its foundations. Even as far away as the Head's house—beyond Inner Court—the shock of the explosion had been terrific.

"Keep back, boys—keep back!" ordered Nelson Lee sharply.

He had reached the shrubbery, and Nipper and Handforth and crowds of the others were pressing round. At Nelson Lee's feet lay the huddled, still figure of a man.

He was an absolute stranger. Nelson Lee gently turned him over, and he compressed his lips tightly. There was an ugly, jagged tear through the stranger's coat and waistcoat—and blood was welling up from a wound which was undoubtedly fatal. The man's face was ashen, and he was only breathing faintly.

"Who is he, sir?" whispered Nipper.

Nelson Lee did not reply. He took no notice of the tremendous clamour that was now breaking out from every side. In one quick glance he had taken in the entire situation. The explosion had occurred some yards from the spot where this man was lying. The trees of the shrubbery were shattered and broken in utter confusion.

"Is he dead?" asked Handforth hoarsely.

"Keep back, you chaps!" urged Nipper. "If he isn't dead, he's in a bad way. Quick! Some of you chaps dash off and bring a stretcher. We'd better carry the man indoors."

"Yes!" ordered Nelson Lee. "A stretcher—as quickly as you can fetch it, boys!"

Some of them went off, excited and flurried.

"What does it mean, guv'nor?" asked Nipper, staring. "Why should this man come into our shrubbery to commit suicide? And to kill himself in such a way, too! It's—it's horrible!"

Nelson Lee picked up something from the ground.

"Suicide, Nipper?" he said, a hard note in his voice. "I fancy not!"

Nipper looked at the object in Lee's hand. It was a metal triangle of some kind—a crude thing, and painted green. There was a number of others lying about on the ground. They were scattered in all directions.

"Great Scott!" breathed Nipper, with a catch in his voice. "A green triangle! You—you don't think—"

He paused, hardly able to put his thoughts into words.

"These metal green triangles are significant, young 'un," said Lee. "That bomb was intended for me—perhaps for you, too."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Something must have gone wrong—perhaps the safety catch of the bomb was jammed," continued Lee. "At all events, this man was unable to take his throw, and in a panic he threw the bomb at random, and it struck a tree and fell close by."

Nipper felt all shaky.

"You—you mean that he's an agent of the Green Triangle—and that he was sent here to throw that bomb at us?" he asked huskily. "By Jove, sir! Perhaps the fellow saw that boomerang coming towards the shrubbery, and perhaps he thought that it was going to hit him. It did look that way, didn't it?"

"I am afraid we shall never know the actual truth," replied Lee. "This man is dying. See, Nipper! One of these green triangles has torn clean through his clothing, and has penetrated his chest."

"Horrible!" muttered Nipper.

THERE was a grim, hard light in Nelson Lee's eyes. He had no sympathy for this man who had accidentally done himself to death. For that man's obvious intention had been to hurl that bomb, and if his aim had been true he would have killed not only Nelson Lee and Nipper, but many of those innocent Removites and Fourth-Formers, too.

It was no great shock for Nelson Lee to know that the League of the Green Triangle was once again in existence. That grim, relentless criminal organisation, headed by Professor Cyrus Zingrave, had been dormant for some time, but there had been many indications of late that Zingrave was once again preparing to startle the world. It seemed as though things were beginning to move at last.

St. Frank's was in a complete turmoil.

Prefects and masters were shouting in the Triangle, attempting to restore some kind of order. That explosion, so unexpected and so dramatic, had caused the biggest sensation of the term.

Those queer little green triangles had been found over a wide area; the bomb must have contained hundreds of them, and they had been scattered far and wide. But for the pro-

fection of the thick shrubbery, many of those metal scraps would certainly have flown like bullets into the crowd of schoolboys.

The injured man was carried indoors on a stretcher. He was taken to Nelson Lee's study, and Nipper took care to be there. He felt that he had a right to be there. For his life, as well as Nelson Lee's, had been menaced by this unknown agent of the Green Triangle.

Dr. Brett came hurrying over from the sanatorium, and after a brief examination he shook his head.

"This man is dying," he said gravely. "I doubt if he will live for another half-hour. We can do practically nothing."

"I'd better run through his pockets," said Lee. "The police will be here soon, and they'll naturally want to identify the man. H'm! Nothing much here."

There was nothing on this stranger to give any indication of his name or calling or place of abode. His pockets were completely empty, except for a little metal badge which he carried in his watch-pocket. On the badge there was an enamelled green triangle.

"Hallo!" said the doctor suddenly. "He's coming round, by the look of it."

A movement had come from the patient. Nelson Lee and Nipper, who were the only other occupants of the room, stared down at the man with sudden interest. His eyelids were flickering, and a tiny spot of colour had come into his cheeks. It was an unnatural flush—an ugly, suggestive flush.

"Steady—steady!" said the doctor sharply.

The man was attempting to raise himself on his elbow, and a painful, gurgling groan escaped from his lips. He opened his eyes, and looked round wildly. His eyes were unnaturally bright—afire with a dreadful gleam.

"What am I doing here?" he asked, panting hard. "Who are you? What is the time?"

"Never mind," said the doctor gently. "You mustn't talk like this—"

"Let me go!" gasped the dying man. "Do you hear me? Hang you, let me go! I must go! My orders—my orders—"

His voice trailed away, and he sank back—only partially to revive with another outburst.

"Six o'clock!" he ejaculated desperately. "I've got to report to the man in the yellow Bentley at six o'clock! Don't you understand, confound you? Outside Bannington station! I've got to obey orders! If I don't—"

He broke off, catching sight of the little metal badge which was still in Nelson Lee's hand.

"Give me that!" he shouted wildly. "It's mine—mine! I must have it! I've got to identify myself— Urrrrrrgh!"

His voice trailed away into a low, gurgling sigh. He fell back limply, the colour draining from his cheeks as dramatically as it had come.

"Bannington—station—six o'clock," came a fluttering murmur from the unfortunate man's mouth. "Must report—must be there—"

Again his voice trailed away, and this time he remained silent. He breathed with hard, laboured intensity, his chest heaving up and down to the accompaniment of a loud gurgle in his throat.

Suddenly there came a curious kind of sound from that shattered chest, and it ceased its heavings. Then followed complete silence.

"He's dead!" said Dr. Brett, in a low voice. "Poor devil!"

CHAPTER 2.

Nelson Lee's Decision!

NIPPER caught in his breath.

"Dead!" he muttered. "It's awful, guv'nor!"

"The man had no chance—none whatever," said Nelson Lee quietly.

"Do you really think that bomb was intended for you, Lee?" asked the doctor, as he pulled a rug over the dead man.

"Not a doubt of it," replied the famous detective. "And the whole business looks ugly, Brett. Without any shadow of doubt, the League of the Green Triangle is about to recommence operations."

"And the murder of Nipper and yourself was the first move, eh?"

"So it seems."

"Well, you've been saved by a miracle, by the look of it," said Dr. Brett. "This fellow must have had a mishap with that bomb—and he succeeded in killing himself instead of you. A ghastly affair altogether. What are you going to do about it?"

"Do?" repeated Nelson Lee, with a hard gleam in his eyes. "I'm going to accept this challenge."



"What do you mean, gov'nor?" asked Nipper tensely.

"I take it as a great compliment that the League should decide to get rid of me as a first move in their new game," replied Nelson Lee. "But what is their new game?"

"Something big and spectacular, I'll be bound," said Brett.

"Exactly," nodded Lee, with a light of battle in his eyes. "You'd better go away for the present, Nipper."

"But, gov'nor—"

"I've got much to think of—much to do," interrupted Lee, "and there is very little time at my disposal. If I want you, young 'un, I will send for you."

It was a dismissal, and Nipper did not argue. He knew that grim, imperative note in Nelson Lee's voice.

The famous detective was no longer a schoolmaster; that cloak had dropped from him as though by magic. He was now the man of action—the relentless man-hunter. The change in him, indeed, was so remarkable that Nipper felt almost frightened.

"WELL?" asked Handforth eagerly.

Nipper had gone out, and in the Ancient House lobby he was surrounded by an excited, breathless crowd of juniors.

"The man's dead," said Nipper shortly.

"Dead?" echoed a dozen voices.

"He died while I was in the room," continued Nipper.

"Pretty frightfully ghastly, what?" commented Archie Glenthorne, jamming his monocle into his eye, and regarding Nipper with some anxiety. "Good gad! And that blighter meant that bomb for you, old boy! For you and Mr. Lee!"

"Well, it looks like it," admitted Nipper. "You chaps have heard of the League of the Green Triangle, haven't you?"

"Of course we have," said Handforth. "Wasn't Professor Zingrave mixed up in that affair of the Blue Crusaders, some months ago? But why should he send one of his men here—to murder you and Mr. Lee?"

"There's only one explanation," said Nipper quietly. "I don't suppose I come into it, though. That bomb was meant for the gov'nor. Those rotten Green Triangle people are afraid of him—they know how he smashed them up before. It's pretty certain that the League is going to start operations again."

"And they're trying to kill Mr. Lee as a sort of preliminary, eh?" asked Vivian Travers. "Well, well! We're getting a bit of excitement this term, dear old fellows."

"I don't think Mr. Lee ought to remain in the school—or Nipper, either," said Forrest bluntly.

All eyes were turned upon him.

"What did you say?" asked Handforth.

Bernard Forrest looked Nipper straight in the eye.

"If you and Mr. Lee are going to bring danger on the school, you'd better both clear out," he said bluntly. "That bomb might have killed dozens of us."

"Shut up, you rotter!"

"Go and eat coke, Forrest!"

"Don't shout at him like that—he's right," said Nipper.

"What!"

"He's right," repeated Nipper. "If these Green Triangle men are going to take drastic action like this, the gov'nor and I are better out of the way. It isn't fair that we should bring such danger upon all you other fellows. These Green Triangle hounds are ruthless. They don't care how many innocent victims suffer so long as they get the man they're after."

Travers patted him on the shoulder.

"You mustn't lose your sense of proportion, dear old fellow," he said gently. "You're a bit worried. This affair may not be so big as you imagine. The police will be here soon, and if you and Mr. Lee are in any further danger, you'll be protected."

Nipper shook his head.

"You don't quite realise the power of the League, Travers," he replied.

"You're speaking of the League as it originally existed," said Travers. "But what evidence is there that the League is powerful again? This man may have been a mere fanatic—an ex-crook, perhaps, who had a grudge against your gov'nor. Those green triangles may mean nothing."

Nipper hardly heard. He was irritated by these other fellows. He wanted to be alone, so that he could think. He could not forget those significant words that the dying man had uttered. There wasn't much doubt that there was a grim, elaborate plot afoot.

A man in a yellow Bentley car would be waiting outside Bannington station at six o'clock—positive evidence that this affair had been no haphazard job.

AND while Nipper was with the other Removites, Nelson Lee was making some swift, significant preparations. His first move had been to obtain his make-up box. It was in the cupboard in his study—close at hand. He took it out, opened it, and placed it on the desk in front of him. Then he rapidly removed his coat, waistcoat, collar and tie, Dr. Brett watching him in astonishment.



Cra-a-ash! There came a violent, ear-splitting explosion in the centre of the shrubbery, and Nelson Lee and the St. Frank's juniors found themselves flung to the ground.

"What on earth are you doing, Lee?" he asked bluntly.

"You'll soon see, doctor."

"But the police?" asked Brett. "They'll be here soon."

"If they come, you must admit them at once," replied Nelson Lee. "But there is no reason why I should not be taking advantage of this wait. Rather a gruesome business, Brett, but this is no time to be squeamish. Would it be possible to prop the dead man up a trifle, so that I can obtain a better view of his face?"

Dr. Brett stared.

"Man alive!" he ejaculated. "You don't mean——"

"It's got to be done, Brett," interrupted Lee. "There is a chance here that might not occur again. This man in his moment of delirium before death supplied me with certain definite information. I should be a fool if I neglected to take advantage of that information."

"You're going to report to the man in the car, outside Bannington station, at six o'clock?"

"What else?" retorted Lee. "Here is the Green Triangle badge—and that man in the Bentley car will be waiting. Don't you understand, doctor? It's a chance for me to carry the fight into the enemy's camp. It's a chance for me to discover what game is afoot."

"But the risk!" protested Dr. Brett, aghast. "They've already tried to murder you, Lee! If you go into the hornets' nest like that, you won't stand a dog's chance! You'll be done to death—"

"Save your breath, Brett," broke in Lee impatiently. "This job must be done. I don't think I shall have much difficulty in impersonating this man. As for the rest—well, I'm not unaccustomed to a little risk."

"A little!" echoed Dr. Brett. "I don't like it, Lee! You can't do this! It's too dangerous—too risky altogether!"

An angry retort sprang to Nelson Lee's lips, but he checked himself. Then he smiled, walked over, and laid a hand on Dr. Brett's shoulder.

"It's just got to be done, Brett," he said quietly. "Put yourself in my place, old friend. These Green Triangle demons have tried to murder me—and in a particularly devilish way, since the lives of many schoolboys were involved in the same risk. How can I remain here, idle and impassive? My blood's up, Brett. Don't you understand?"

"I think I do," nodded the doctor quietly.

"When I get to the stage when I no longer feel inclined to accept a challenge of this kind, I shall retire to a small country cottage and grow cabbages," continued Lee dryly. "No, Brett. For some weeks I have suspected that the League of the Green Triangle is preparing to recommence operations. This is my first chance to take action—and an extraordinarily fine chance, too."

"Well, let me come with you," said the doctor, a gleam in his eyes.

"No, no! That's impossible," replied the detective. "This is a lone job, Brett. I shall report to that man outside Bannington station in the guise of this man, here. There is a distinct chance that I shall meet with some success. But I must be alone. I appreciate your offer, but I cannot accept."

TWENTY minutes later there was a startling change in Nelson Lee's appearance. Deftly, skilfully, cunningly, he had used his pigments and his other make-up materials. Gradually his own identity had vanished, and, as though by magic, he was converting himself into a replica of the dead man. Dr. Brett was so fascinated that he could only sit there and stare.

A tap sounded on the door.

"The police, I expect," said Lee, glancing up. "Let them in, Brett."

Dr. Brett went to the door and opened it. It wasn't the police, but Nipper.

"I couldn't rest, doctor," said Nipper. "I'm worrying about the gov'nor, and— Oh!"

He had half entered the room, and he now stopped, a long, startled ejaculation escaping his lips. He was staring in open-eyed amazement at Nelson Lee, who was sitting at the desk.

"Shut the door, Brett," said Lee. "You shouldn't have come back, Nipper. I distinctly told you—"

"Gov'nor!" gasped Nipper. "I—I thought for a moment that— Oh, my hat! It's— it's uncanny, sir! I thought that man had come to life again! What are you doing, sir?" he added, with a sudden sharp note of inquiry in his voice. "Gov'nor! You're going to meet that other Green Triangle man, aren't you?"

"What of it?"

"Let me come, too, sir!" urged Nipper, clutching at the desk. "Oh, gov'nor! You can't leave me out of this!"

"Unfortunately, Nipper, the whole object of my plan would be ruined if I took you with me," said Nelson Lee. "I am supposed to be this unfortunate man here, who died in the execution of his job. Perhaps he is not so much to blame. He had his orders, and he had to obey. You know as well as I do that the League of the Green Triangle is swift and drastic with those who fail to carry out its orders."

"Yes, I know, sir," said Nipper impatiently. "But what about me?"

"You must remain here during my absence—and, furthermore, you must keep indoors."

Nipper clenched his fists.

"I've got to stay here, cooling my heels, while you go on this desperate mission!" he said bitterly. "It's not fair, gov'nor!"



"It's no good arguing with him, Nipper—he won't even let me go with him," said Dr. Brett. "And perhaps he is right. It is essentially a one-man job."

"What if they spot you, sir?" asked Nipper anxiously.

"My dear young ass!" smiled Lee. "Is this the first dangerous mission I have undertaken? Adjust your focus, Nipper! It's really high time that I got into harness again—and, to be quite frank, I am looking forward with some eagerness to this adventure. Can't you trust me to take care of myself?"

"I suppose so, sir," said Nipper reluctantly.

"You suppose so?" repeated Nelson Lee. "Thanks, young 'un."

"I—I mean——"

"You'd better run along," interrupted Lee. "Upon my word! The time is getting short! I shall only just be able to get to Bannington by six o'clock!"

CHAPTER 3.

The Man in the Yellow Bentley!

BANNINGTON station was fairly busy a few minutes before six o'clock. An express from London was due in shortly after six, and there was generally an odd assortment of cars waiting outside in the big station yard. The platforms, too, were busy and bustling, and there was a constant passing to and fro of people. The big, brilliantly-lit bookstall was busy.

There were several cars in the station yard already. One of them was a powerful Bentley, with a yellow sports body. At the wheel lounged a man in a heavy overcoat and a leather crash helmet. He was smoking a cigarette, and occasionally he would glance at the station clock. He was perhaps forty years of age, clean-shaven, well-built, and powerful.

The clock was pointing to the exact hour when a man paused near the car, tapping a cigarette on his thumb-nail.

"Got a light, sir?" he asked casually.

The man in the Bentley looked at him closely.

"Yes," he said, after a second's hesitation.

He handed over a box of matches, and the newcomer struck one. As the blaze flared out he cupped his hands so that the flame should be protected from the wind. And lying in one palm was a little metal disc, clearly revealing the green enamelled triangle. The man lit his cigarette, and then passed the matches back.

"Thanks," he said briefly.

"Good man! You'd better jump in," said the man in the Bentley. "What's your number?"

"175."

"Right—mine's 43. Anything to report?"

"Not much," said Nelson Lee, as he opened the door of the car and climbed in. "I did the job. That's all."

"All!" echoed No. 43. "I call it a good deal. You were quite—successful?"

"Oh, yes—quite."

No. 43 seemed satisfied, and he proceeded to climb out of the car.

"Wait here a minute," he said briefly. "I shan't be long."

He went, leaving Nelson Lee in sole possession of the big Bentley. Lee was glad that this initial test was over. He was satisfied that No. 43 was a perfect stranger to the dead No. 175. Still, it was just as well that Lee had made himself up as a replica of that dead No. 175, whose blundering had cost him his life.

Lee was aware of a tingling sensation. He was "on his toes." This move of his was risky, for a snag might be encountered at any moment. However, this very element of danger added a spice to the whole adventure—and it was the kind of spice that Lee enjoyed.

Evidently No. 43 had been posted here on purpose to pick up No. 175. All sorts of possibilities were indicated. Where was the big Bentley going? What was the next move in the game to be? Nelson Lee was ready for anything. He had accepted the Green Triangle's challenge, and he was determined to discover as much as possible while this opportunity lasted.

Already he had made a startling beginning. He was in the shoes of No. 175! This indicated surely enough that the League was being launched on a big scale. There was something condescending and indeed authoritative about No. 43's tone. He seemed to be in a position of responsibility.

WHILE Nelson Lee waited in the car, the other man had gone into the station, and was using a telephone. He put a call through to a London number.

The connection was soon made, and a voice came over the wires.

"No. 43 at this end," said the big man. "Put me through to No. 1."

"Is your business urgent?"

"My business is the business of Mars," said No. 43, speaking deliberately.

"Mars is red," came the voice.

"And Saturn has rings," replied No. 43.

These words were evidently a kind of sign and countersign. A chuckle sounded over the wires.

"All right, No. 43," said the voice. "I'll put you through."

There was a moment's pause, and another voice came. It was soft and silky, cultured and refined.

"Well, who is it?" said this voice.

"No. 43, Chief," said the man in the telephone-box. "It's No. 1, isn't it?"

"I am No. 1."

"No. 175 has been successful, Chief," said No. 43. "That's all."

"It is sufficient," said No. 1, and the telephone became dead.

NELSON LEE had thought of slipping into the station to find out what No. 43 was doing; but he had decided otherwise. For all he knew there were other Green Triangle agents on the watch. And if he acted in any way suspiciously he would probably be unmasked. He easily guessed, however, that No. 43 was busy with the telephone.

The big man in the heavy overcoat and the crash helmet came out after only a short delay, and he climbed into the driving-seat of the Bentley.

"Well, that's that," he said, as he started the engine. "We're off on the big job now, my friend."

"I'm ready," said Lee, wondering what bigger job there could be afoot.

It was a curious situation—and one that was not without its grim humour. For here, sitting beside No. 43, was the very man who had supposedly been blown to bits. And No. 43 was driving off on the next job, totally unaware that the first job had been an utter failure.

"No need to be quite so formal now, my friend," said the big man, as they purred along the open road towards Helmsford. "What's your name?"

"Is it allowable for me to say?" asked Lee.

"Don't be funny!" retorted the other. "I'm Dawson—and you know it. Who are you?"

"My name's Robbins," said Lee glibly.

"Well, Robbins, you're a lucky man," said No. 43. "Frankly, I didn't expect you to turn up. After doing a job like that you were pretty fortunate to get away."

"I'm a fatalist," said Lee. "When my time comes, it'll come. Nothing that I can do will prevent it."

"That's the best way to look at things," said Dawson, nodding. "This job to-night, for instance. Looks like being tricky—dangerous, too. You know your work all right, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes."

"Ever dealt with those kind of engines before?"

"I can't say that I have, exactly," said Lee cautiously.

"Thought you hadn't," said No. 43. "Well, they're very much like any other kind of engines—only bigger and more delicate. Not that you'll have much trouble. Looks like being an ideal night," he added, with a glance skywards.

Nelson Lee was intrigued. What was this big move that the Green Triangle was planning? Something to do with engines—something to do with the fineness of the night! And he—Lee—was to look after one of those engines! This one-sided kind of conversation was tricky. Dawson evidently knew exactly what was to be done—and Robbins was supposed to know, too. Nelson Lee's predicament was not easy. Yet he managed to give his answers so promptly and so smoothly that No. 43 never had the slightest suspicion.

If it came to that, neither Lee nor his companion knew anything about the small Austin Seven car which was steadily purring along some three or four hundred yards in their rear. Even Lee took no notice of other cars on the road. If he had seen that Austin he might have assumed that it held another League member.

As a matter of fact, Nipper was at the wheel, and Handforth was sitting beside him!

This was an unusual state of affairs. For this little Austin was Handforth's own property, and never before had he allowed any other junior to take the wheel. But Nipper had insisted—and Handforth, recognising that the matter was urgent, had given way. Not without a struggle, however.

Nipper was not content to remain at St. Frank's—idle—whilst his beloved gov'nor went off into unknown danger. Perhaps it was rash on Nipper's part to follow in this way, but it was at least adventurous. And Handforth, being the fellow he was, naturally entered into the spirit of the thing with wholehearted enthusiasm.

Nipper had put it to him point-blank. He wanted Handforth's car—and he wanted to drive. If Handforth couldn't agree to that, then Nipper would use his motor-cycle. The car would be better, however, since it would be less noticeable.

They had been waiting outside the Bannington station at six o'clock. They had seen the yellow Bentley come out, and their one fear had been that the powerful car would outstrip them. Without any question, the Bentley could have left that little Austin practically standing still. But Nipper had relied upon the chance that the big car would not travel at any excessive speed.

He was right. The Bentley was just purring along at a comfortable thirty-five; and the Austin Seven, valiantly enough, was keeping pace some distance in the rear. She was doing splendidly.

"We're going to be in this, Handy!" said Nipper, as he bent over the wheel. "They're not going too fast! We're keeping 'em in sight."

"I wonder where the dickens we're making for?" asked Handforth eagerly.

"No good wondering like that—we shall find out, sooner or later, if we can manage to keep on their trail," said Nipper. "Thank goodness we got away from St. Frank's! I couldn't have existed there—knowing what the gov'nor was doing. Now ye're in the thing, Handy—in it up to our necks!"

"Good egg!" said Edward Oswald. "The more of it, the better! By George! I've always longed for something like this!"

IN the Bentley, Nelson Lee was comfortably sitting back in the seat, listening to No. 43's talk. Nelson Lee had sense enough to keep his own tongue still—except when he was compelled to make some sort of reply.

"The Chief's O.K.," said Dawson, after a while. "We can't do better than stick to the crowd, Robbins. Nothing like it. Perfect safety—and if we do happen to get caught, there's a darned good chance of being rescued. The League is ready for everything."

"We're operating on a big scale this time," said Lee.

"Bigger than ever," declared No. 43 tensely. "The Chief's fixed everything—and we're going to surprise the world! Take it from me, my friend—to-night's going to be the biggest night for many years!"

There was a gloating note in Dawson's voice, and Nelson Lee did not doubt that the man was a moderately high official in this criminal organisation. Perhaps he was in command of a certain zone. It was impossible to know exactly, for Lee could not ask any questions.

But he felt that he had adopted the right attitude in making himself out to be a mere unit in the League. He was not supposed to know very much—and by No. 43's very attitude, it was evident that Lee had hit the right note.

"There's no particular hurry," said Dawson, after another pause. "We don't want to get there too soon. Hungry?"

"Fairly."

"Right! We'll stop somewhere and get a bite to eat. No reason for us to get to the scene of action until the crowd is there."

"I hope everything goes off all right," said Lee.

The crowd! What was the nature of this big job which was to be put in hand to-night—and which was to be the biggest thing for years?



CHAPTER 4.

The Council Meets!

AT about this same period a remarkable meeting was taking place in the heart of the West End of London.

It was not quite six o'clock, and there were twelve masked men seated round a mahogany table. All these men were scrupulously attired in evening dress. They were smoking and chatting, and, by all outward appearances, they were good, honest, representative citizens.

One or two were grey-haired; one or two were partially bald; one or two were young and active and brisk. All were criminals.

Not ordinary criminals—not the type of crook that Scotland Yard commonly deals with. These men were representative of almost every walk of life—lawyers, doctors, journalists, merchants, financiers. Each man was honoured in his profession; yet each man was secretly dishonouring his profession. For each man was black with guilt.

This beautifully appointed apartment, with its comfortable chairs, its rich pile carpet, its beautiful fittings—this apartment was the Council Chamber of the League of the Green Triangle. It was situated far underground, somewhere below the restless, teeming West End traffic.

A curious feature of the Council Chamber was that there was no door—no window. On every side there were the richly-panelled walls, with little sprays of electric light at

regular intervals. Suddenly one spray of light changed from yellow to green, and those twelve men immediately became alert and attentive.

"No. 11" muttered somebody.

A curious thing happened.

It was noticeable that the twelve men sat on either side of the table—six to a side. The head and foot of the table were empty. There were not even any chairs in these positions. But now a section of the carpeted floor, at the head and foot of the table, slid away. Two chairs rose out of the depths, and in these chairs were seated two more men. They appeared at their places, at the head and foot of the table, as though by magic. Perhaps this was the reason for the green warning light—to make sure that the head and foot of the table would be clear before the floor slid away.

"Gentlemen," said No. 1, "I bid you good-evening."

There was a magic change in the Council Chamber. The very presence of No. 1 brought an extraordinary difference. His personality was magnetic—so magnetic, indeed, that every other man felt the influence of it as though the room had become charged with some unknown force.

Professor Cyrus Zingrave was, in all truth, a singular personality.

His figure was rather slight, and his shoulders drooped a little. But upon those shoulders was set one of the most remarkable heads imaginable. The brow was high and massive—the brow of a genius. The professor's skin was delicate, almost dead-white, and not a spot of colour relieved his cheeks. His eyes were black and piercing and commanding. One glance from those eyes told of the strength and will-power of that evil brain behind them.

Professor Zingrave was a brilliant scientist; in his earlier days he had been honoured throughout the world for his genius. When Nelson Lee had exposed the League of the Green Triangle, however, he had been known as a crook—an astoundingly clever man with a kink.

This, then, was No. 1—the supreme leader of the League. During the past months he had been working secretly, assiduously. He had been getting everything in trim for the launching of his new campaign. There were many members of the old League who were ready enough to rally to his banner. There was new blood in the organisation this time—and only the members of the Council knew exactly how far-flung were the ramifications of the new League. They knew, for instance, that the whole country was divided into zones, and that each zone had its own officers and men. The Chief knew exactly how many men he could rely upon in any sudden moment.

At the foot of the Council Chamber table sat No. 2. He was Professor Zingrave's first lieutenant. No. 2 was Superintendent John Cartwright, of Scotland Yard. A traitor to his calling—a snake in the grass. Years earlier, when he had been a detective-sergeant, he had accepted a bribe; and from that moment he had been a traitor. He was a man of singular energy and enterprise, and while rising in his profession he had actually sunk deeper and deeper into the depths of infamy. But so clever was he, so careful, that nobody in authority suspected his double game.

The Chief Commissioner had known for some time that there was a leakage—that there was a traitor—but Superintendent Cartwright was the last man to suspect. Yet Superintendent Cartwright could have explained how it was that gang leaders and murderers and crooks of all kinds were warned and protected.

"GENTLEMEN, this is a big occasion," said Professor Zingrave, in his soft, silky voice. "To-night is a night that will go down in history! For to-night the new League of the Green Triangle will commence its operations. Success, then, to the League of—Terror!"

The fourteen men rose to their feet, flushed and eager.

"Success to the League of Terror!" they echoed.

"To-night our campaign will open dramatically—spectacularly," continued No. 1. "To-morrow London and the whole of the world will be talking of nothing else. Some of you have said that it is a mistake to invite so much publicity. But publicity, gentlemen, is what we need. Our mission is to terrorise society. The world shall live in fear of the Green Triangle sign!"

A shadow came over Professor Zingrave's face.

"There is one man, however, whom we must get rid of before we move a finger in this new game," he continued. "That man, as you know, is Nelson Lee. Before we begin our operations we must know that Lee is dead. In the past it was he who frustrated our plans—he who brought disaster upon us. He is to have no second chance."

"Don't you over-rate the abilities of this detective?" asked No. 8. "Isn't it a sign of weakness, Chief, to acknowledge that this man is so greatly to be feared?"

"Perhaps I am superstitious," said Professor Zingrave softly. "Perhaps I am old-fashioned. While Nelson Lee lives, the Green Triangle cannot succeed. That is my conviction. Therefore, Nelson Lee must die. His death sentence has already been passed, and even now that sentence may have been executed. We shall soon know."

A soft buzzer sounded from somewhere, and a hush fell. Professor Zingrave touched something under the edge of the table, and instantly a telephone sprang upwards out of the polished mahogany.

"Excuse me, gentlemen," said No. 1.



Nipper clutched at the edge of the doorway, and at that moment an evil face appeared above—the face of a member of the Green Triangle!

He placed the receiver to his ear, and listened.

"Well? Who is it?" he asked, after a short pause.

The man at the other end evidently gave the necessary information.

"I am No. 1," said Zingrave.

There was another brief pause.

"It is sufficient," said the professor, hanging up the receiver.

He touched the button, and the telephone vanished.

HE found thirteen pairs of eager eyes gazing at him. He smiled gently. "Gentlemen, there is good news," he said. "Member No. 175 successfully accomplished his mission. Nelson Lee is dead."

"It is a good start," said No. 2 bluntly.

"Make a note of it, Cartwright," said Professor Zingrave. "No. 175 must be promoted at the earliest opportunity. He shall have his reward for this excellent piece of work. You may think that I am weak, gentlemen, but I will confess that this item of news has brought me untold relief. The League's greatest enemy is dead. Already the country will be humming with the news of the tragedy—the first act of the new Green Triangle!"

AND yet at that very moment the supposedly dead Nelson Lee, in the guise of No. 175, was riding with No. 43 in the big Bentley!

And Zingrave, because he thought that that first coup had been successfully brought off, broadcast his orders for the second move in the game to be started.

Nelson Lee thought, at first, that London was No. 43's objective. But after the Bentley had passed through Guildford the car went across country in the direction of Windsor. At Windsor there was a pause, whilst the pair entered a restaurant and partook

of a hearty meal. No. 43 appeared to be in no hurry.

"We don't need to be there before ten o'clock, at the earliest," he said.

Where "there" was, Nelson Lee had no means of knowing, and it was impossible for him to ask. Obviously, he was supposed to be in full possession of the plan. And so far he had succeeded in bluffing No. 43 completely; the man had not the slightest suspicion that he was talking to an impostor.

When the pair emerged from the restaurant, they climbed back into their Bentley and drove off. There was nothing to show them that the little Austin Seven, some distance down the street, was occupied by two St. Frank's juniors—two juniors, moreover, who knew the real identity of No. 175, and who were determined to see this thing through to the bitter end.

"St. Albans next, I suppose," said No. 43, as they left Windsor behind. "Infernal nuisance, trailing through these by-roads. I hate going across country like this. But it can't be helped."

When they reached St. Albans they continued onwards, and went straight through Luton. And now No. 43 kept his eye on the clock on the dashboard. He was perceptibly becoming excited.

"We shall have to be on the look-out now," he declared. "Might meet the guards anywhere along this road. Hardington isn't far."

Hardington!

Nelson Lee compressed his lips. Hardington—where the great airship station was situated! And No. 43 had spoken of delicate engines, and of going into the air! Was it possible that the League of the Green Triangle was planning to seize the great new British airship, R 202?

Nelson Lee was startled at the thought. The R 202 was the latest and greatest airship that the world had constructed. It was the last word in that particular type of aircraft—a massive, stupendous craft. Already she had gone through her trials, and she had proved herself to be an amazing vessel.

Nelson Lee knew that the R 202 was due to go out on another long flight at dawn, on the morrow. Therefore, she was either stationed at the mooring mast, or tucked in her great shed. Her fuel tanks were full, and everything was in readiness for immediate departure. And No. 43 was bound for Hardington—the spot where the big coup was to take place!

"Pretty quiet, aren't you?" asked No. 43 abruptly.

Nelson Lee glanced round and smiled.

"There's some ticklish work ahead," he replied. "It makes a fellow think, you know. I'm a bit worried about my own job. Those engines——"

"You'll find no trouble," said No. 43 easily. "We don't take any part in the attack. We just hang about until the job is done. Then we climb aboard. We're skilled men, don't forget, Robbins. Engineers. The dangerous work—the horse-work—is done by the rank and file."

"What if they fail?"

"They won't fail," said No. 43 sharply. "If they do—well, we're safe enough. Ordinary motorists passing by. That's why we're so safe."

Nelson Lee nodded, and inwardly he gripped himself. This thing was even bigger than he had first supposed.

CHAPTER 5.

The Coup!

THE countryside was dark and deserted. Luton had been left a long way behind, and the Bentley, for some little time, had wandered along by-roads and narrow country lanes.

The country now was flat. A light showed here and there from some isolated dwelling or farmhouse. No. 43 caught his breath in sharply when he saw, three or four hundred yards along the straight road, a momentary flash of green.

"That's it!" he said softly.

Instantly he switched the Bentley's lights off, and the car glided along cautiously and slowly. Two men stood in the road, and they were dressed like road-scouts. No. 43 came to a standstill, looking at the nearest man inquiringly.

"Your lights are out, sir," said the scout.

"By orders of No. 1," replied Dawson promptly.

"Right!" said the scout. "May I see your badgo?"

No. 43 produced his metal badge, with the green triangle engraved upon it. Nelson Lee produced his, too. The scout showed his own, and made a motion with his arm.

"Straight through for about a mile," he said. "Better leave the car on the grass, beside the road. Things will be moving soon."

The Bentley drove on, and Nelson Lee was impressed by the elaborate precautions that were being taken. Any non-Triangle car that came along would doubtless be turned back, with some plausible story of a blocked road, or something like that.

An immense structure, black and bulky, was beginning to take shape across the open ground on Lee's left. He recognised the immense hangars of Hardington—hangars that were used for the housing of airships.

"This'll be the spot," said No. 43, driving the car on to the grassy side of the road, and stopping the engine. "We'd better walk the rest of the way, my friend. And here, I think, our ways part."

"Each of us to do our respective jobs," said Nelson Lee, nodding.

"Yours, in its way, is just as important as mine," said Dawson, a grave note coming into his voice. "Everything depends upon the first ten minutes, Robbins. Once we've got the ship into the air, everything will go smoothly."

"Perhaps I shall see something of you later?" asked Lee.

"I don't think so," replied No. 43. "I shall be in the control-car, and you'll be in the rear starboard power-car. They're a good way apart, eh? Well, you never know. I dare say we shall meet later on, when we come down. Good luck, Robbins."

No. 43 went off into the darkness, leaving Nelson Lee alone. And the detective was quivering with intense inward excitement. So far he had aroused no suspicions—partially on account of the fact that he had been under the wing, as it were, of No. 43.

Now he was alone.

But he had the satisfaction of knowing—at last—what his own particular job was supposed to be. He was to control the engine in the rear starboard power-car! That was why he had been brought here. It was a fact that the R 202 was to be seized by these Green Triangle men!

Nelson Lee walked cautiously towards the big hangars, and it wasn't long before a dark figure loomed up from the darkness and confronted him.

"Number!" snapped a low voice—and Lee could see that this man was dressed in the uniform of a police-constable.

"175," replied Lee promptly.

"What's your job?"

"Starboard power-car——"

"No need for you to show yourself yet, then," said the man gruffly. "Better keep out of it. Wait until the ship is outside. Then go to your post."

Nelson Lee walked back, and took up his position near a clump of trees. So far there was nothing to indicate that any big game was afoot. The countryside looked as deserted as ever. The great hangars were still and silent, and scarcely any lights were showing. No doubt there were some men on guard here—perhaps twenty or thirty. But it was obvious that they had received no inkling—yet—of the excitement that was to come.

Lee was beginning to get a clearer insight into his own position. He was supposed to wait—to get into that power-car when the right moment arrived. Other men would seize the ship. Such men as himself—engineers and skilled mechanics—were not to be placed in any position of danger. They were too valuable—their services were needed too urgently. There was very little doubt that No. 43 was a skilled airman of some kind. It was hardly likely that he was to command the airship, but he would probably be in a position of some authority.

But Nelson Lee was not thinking of his own special job in the coming game. He was wondering how he could give the alarm. Surely there would be some way in which he could inform the authorities—some way in which he could give the warning. Even now it might not be too late to prevent the Green Triangle's daring, spectacular coup.

But Lee realised that his position was one of acute peril. If he attempted to get away, he would be stopped—perhaps questioned. And if his true identity became known he would be shot down without compunction. There would be little or no chance of escape—for the whole countryside, without a doubt, was swarming with Green Triangle men.

Yet, if there was any way in which he could prevent this monstrous thing, he would prevent it. The colossal audacity of the game nearly took Lee's breath away. The seizure of R 202—Britain's greatest and finest airship! And after it was seized there could be little uncertainty as to what purpose the Green Triangle would put the vessel. She was to be used to commence the new reign of terror!



NIPPER reached forward and deftly switched off the Austin Seven's lights.

"What's that for?" whispered Handforth tensely.

"The Bentley's lights are out—they went out a second ago," replied Nipper.

"Something fishy going on, Handy. We'd better go easy—or we shall find ourselves in a mess."

Nipper had been suspicious for some time. He believed that the end of the journey was nearly at hand. For some miles the Bentley had been just meandering along, as though the driver had time to kill. And now Nipper could see the great bulk of the airship hangars, over to the left, across the flat country. And Nipper was getting a glimmering of the truth. As yet it was only a vague suspicion, but it was rapidly taking shape.

It had been an anxious time all along. A thousand and one possibilities had flashed through Nipper's mind, and he was dreadfully anxious concerning Nelson Lee's safety. It wasn't that he feared that Lee would be unable to take care of himself; but he knew that Lee was taking a terrible chance. If his identity was discovered he would be ruthlessly killed.

"Where have we got to, anyway?" came a whisper from Handforth.

"Hardington, I think," muttered Nipper. "See the airship sheds over there? I'll bet this job is connected with the R 202, Handy."

"My only Sunday hat!" breathed Handforth.

"Hallo! The Bentley's being stopped!" said Nipper, applying the brakes. "Triangle men, I expect! We'd better go jolly easy."

He pulled up, and stared ahead. The Bentley was still stationary. After a while it went on again, and Nipper caught a vague glimpse of some figures vanishing towards the side of the road.

"What are we going to do now?" asked Edward Oswald eagerly.

"I may be wrong, but I believe that those men who stopped the Bentley are guards," said Nipper. "If we continue along this road, Handy, we shall be stopped, too. Let's get out, and push the Austin on to the grass near a hedge. Then we'll go on on foot."

"Yes, but we shall lose sight of the Bentley!" protested Handforth anxiously.

"Can't be helped—we should never be allowed to pass those guards, anyhow," said Nipper shrewdly. "And I've an idea that this is the end of the trip."

He was uncertain, even now. Caution warned him to stop—but his impulse was to restart the engine and drive on. Just then something happened which brought him a little relief. Faintly on the still air the sounds of the Bentley's engine could be heard; then it suddenly ceased. Nipper's face cleared.

"Thought so!" he whispered. "The Bentley has stopped, Handy! This is the end of the trip! Come on—we'll go on, but we'll leave the Austin behind. Better get over the hedge here, and creep along in the meadow. It'll be safer."

Handforth didn't like leaving the Austin, but there was no help for it. Nipper was in command, and Handforth—for once—realised that he would have to play second fiddle.

"What do you think their game is?" he asked, when they had got on to the other side of the hedge.

"Well, what can it be?" replied Nipper. "Why are they here—at Hardington Aerodrome? I'll bet they're going to seize the R 202!"

"I can't believe it," said Handforth, aghast. "It's too—too big, Nipper! It's too terrific!"

"You don't know the Green Triangle," said Nipper. "Nothing is too big for Professor Zingrave! He's got the audacity of the very devil himself!"

"Why shouldn't we go back?" suggested Handforth. "Let's get in the Austin, and buzz back to the nearest village or town. We can give the alarm if we do that. We might be able to scotch the whole game."

"I've been thinking the same thing," said Nipper, frowning. "We've lost sight of the gov'nor now, so it doesn't matter so much. Perhaps it would be as well— By Jove, look!"

"Eh? Look where?"

"Can't you see those flashing lights?" said Nipper, pointing. "Look! Over there—and there—and there! They're showing on all sides!"

Handforth stared, fascinated. Sure enough, there were little points of light appearing and disappearing over the whole countryside.

"What are they?" asked Handforth, staring.

"Signals, by the look of them," replied Nipper. "My only aunt! Something big is about to begin, Handy!"

NELSON LEE saw those signal lights, too. He had had no time to come to any decision; it had been out of the question for him even to consider the possibility of giving any warning. These signal lights now flashed out, and their meaning was clear. For immediately following those signals there came a soft, gentle thudding on the still night air.

At first Lee was puzzled regarding the cause. Then, as he peered forward in the gloom, he saw. Men were running over the meadows—they were coming from all directions. There were hundreds on this side of the hangars alone—and there could be little doubt that there were similar numbers coming from the other directions. The hangars were completely surrounded—they were being concentrated upon now.

It was the attack!

The raid had started—the Green Triangle men were making the first move. Nelson Lee, standing there, saw crowds of men rush past him; and, in spite of the gloom, he noted that each man carried a pistol.

Then came some confused shouts from the direction of the great hangars—shots were fired—cries of alarm sounded. Lights sprang into being at the hangars, and in less than a minute all was confusion.

"Too late for me to give any warning now," muttered Lee. "Well, I'd better go ahead with my own job! Perhaps I shall have better luck in the air! By Jove! This is a terrible business!"

He was startled more than he would have cared to admit. The whole thing had been so sudden—so dramatic. There were no shots being fired now. What little resistance had been offered had soon been dealt with. The Green Triangle men were swarming into the big hangar which housed the R 202, round it, and that deserted aerodrome had now become a vivid scene of bustling activity.

CHAPTER 6.

In the Thick of It!

"GREAT Scott!" ejaculated Edward Oswald Handforth dazedly. He was staring at that amazing scene of turmoil. Men had appeared as though by magic—hundreds of them. Gleaming lights had sprung into being all round the hangars, and the vast doors of one of the huge sheds were slowly rolling back. The great, imposing nose of R 202 was already coming into sight.

"You're right, Nipper!" panted Handforth. "They're going to pinch the airship! Can't we do something? Let's dash back to the Austin——"

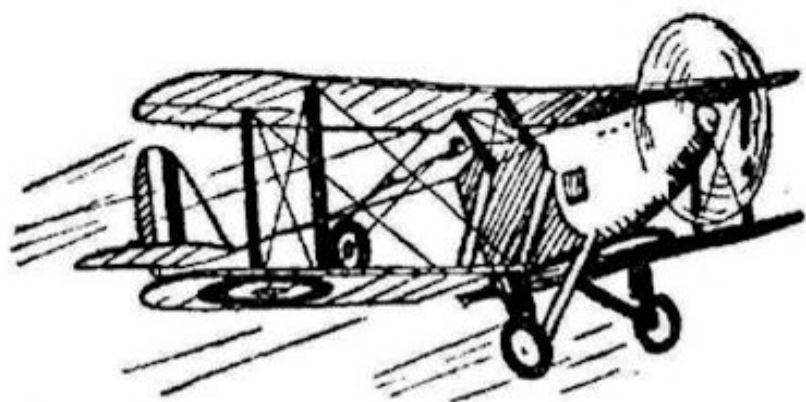
"No good, old man—there isn't time," said Nipper. "We can't get through, either. Look!"

Handforth nodded. The countryside was thick with men. If the two juniors tried to get through they would be stopped—perhaps ruthlessly killed. They had only got here because of Nipper's quickness in switching off the Austin's lights and abandoning the car. And now that they were here they could only stand by and watch. There were too many against them—the odds were hopeless.

THE battle—if battle it could be called—was swift and deadly. It was over almost before it had begun.

The first rush of men—specially picked agents of the Green Triangle, men who knew how to use guns, and men who were not afraid to use them—took the fight right into the enormous hangar. The structure which housed the great airship was not entirely unguarded. There were perhaps twenty or thirty men, all told, on duty.

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They rushed out at the first sound of alarm, and they were simply overwhelmed. Two or three of them who attempted resistance were shot down. The others were ruthlessly knocked out.

Nelson Lee, who watched from a distance—utterly helpless in this crisis—was astounded at the perfection of the organisation. Everything went as though by clockwork. As soon as the hangar was seized by the storming party, other men ran up—and these men, no doubt, were picked mechanics. They immediately took charge of the airship.

Occasionally, out of the distance, a random shot would be heard. Men were trying to get through the cordon, perhaps. It was impossible to tell. The only definite fact that Nelson Lee knew was that the R 202 was now in the hands of these Green Triangle men.

It was the same with the aerodrome offices, and with the control tower. These premises had been raided at the same moment as the hangar, and they were just as quickly in the hands of the attackers.

The whole aerodrome, from end to end, was seized.

And now the nose of the aircraft commenced to emerge. With that same uncanny precision, the Green Triangle's mechanics were getting to work. They were bringing the airship out of the hangar. Ropes were hanging down in myriads, and men were clinging on to them. Slowly but surely the great monster was being pulled out into the open.

It was ticklish work—delicate work—but these men knew what they were doing. Perhaps they did not perform the operation so cleverly as the regular crew; but, on the whole, they were efficient. The airship met with no mishaps as she was pulled out. And at last she came right out into the open—a majestic sight.

This airship was the largest in the world—a big improvement on any other lighter-than-aircraft that had ever been built. The R 202 was a triumph. She was capable of nearly a hundred miles an hour in the air—at cruising speed. She could carry two hundred passengers, and her range, with fully loaded fuel tanks, was something like twelve thousand miles. The passenger accommodation, as in other craft of a similar design, was contained in the body of the ship itself. The only exterior cars were the engine-houses and the control-car. The latter, now gleaming with electric lights, was being entered by hard-faced men. No. 43 was amongst them.

Nelson Lee gripped himself. It was time for him to act. Since he could do no good on the ground, he might as well fulfil his allotted duty—and get on board the airship. Perhaps he would be able to serve some good purpose. The chance was slim, but Lee took it.

He ran forward, and very soon he was right beneath the towering, unbelievable bulk of the airship. She was enormous—stupendous. It was almost impossible to imagine that she could have been constructed by mere pigmy humans, who looked like tiny ants on the ground in proportion. She swung there, held by the men like some monstrous creature from another world.

"Hey! You!" came a sharp voice.

Lee swung round, and found himself confronted by one of the men in road-scouts' uniforms.

"Just going aboard!" said Lee promptly.

"What's your particular job?"

"Engineer—starboard power-car," said Lee.

"Then get on board—and look lively!" said the other. "What's the matter with you? Think we've got all night?"

Lee had no difficulty in finding his own particular power-car. A rope ladder was swinging down from it, and as the great airship swung gently across the aerodrome, she dipped now and again. Lee caught hold of the rope ladder as it came within his reach, and he commenced to climb upwards rapidly. The power-car could also be reached from the interior of the vessel, as he knew, but this way of entry was quicker and better.

He reached the car, and dropped in. Electric lights were gleaming in there. It was an enormous car, at close quarters. From a distance, and looking at the airship as a whole, it appeared to be so small that no human being could possibly find room inside. Actually, it was large enough to accommodate a dozen men, in addition to the great engine which occupied the bulk of the space.

Below, on the ground, the men were now having a little trouble. There was a breeze blowing, and the airship was not so easy to handle as it had at first seemed. She would rise gently, swinging to one side, pulling the men along in scores.

The regular crew would not have had this trouble—since the regular crew knew exactly what to do—but these men, efficient though they were, were more or less new to the job. In addition, the whole operation was being put through with tremendous haste.

Consequently, there were one or two mishaps.

A gust of wind came, and the R 202 veered off and went swinging sideways across the aerodrome. The men shouted wildly, and some stern orders came from the control-car. There was confusion and wild excitement. In the middle of it all two slight figures were not noticed.

THOSE figures were Nipper and Handforth.

"We've got to get on board, Handy!" panted Nipper. "Where the gov'nor goes, I go!"

"But how do you know he's on board?" asked Handforth breathlessly. "Oh, my hat! This—this is getting a bit too thick, you know!"

They were near the great airship now, almost overwhelmed by the enormity of the occasion. Nipper was much cooler than Handforth. The reckless leader of Study D would have given himself away long before this but for Nipper's controlling influence. Handforth wanted to punch every nose that came within reach; but if he had done anything rash like that he would certainly have been drastically dealt with. Both the juniors were wearing overcoats and caps, and their youth was unnoticed in the general excitement.

"Grab this, Handy!" panted Nipper.

They were right under the tail of the airship as it swung round. Men were on all sides of them. Nipper, seizing one of the long trailing ropes, hung on to it firmly, and Handforth followed his example. There was less likelihood of them being stopped or questioned.

One thought was throbbing through Nipper's brain.

Nelson Lee was on this airship—for it was obvious that he had been brought here for a definite purpose. Nipper shrewdly reasoned it all out. They would not have brought the supposed Green Triangle man to help in this raid. There were heaps of men there already. No; Lee, in his disguise, was evidently looked upon as a skilled man. He had a special job. And where could that special job be, except on the airship?

There would be no danger in getting on board. All these Green Triangle men—many of them high officials—would not get on the airship if there was any possibility of it meeting with disaster. And the authorities, of course, would not take any drastic action. They did not want to see this costly craft destroyed.

Nipper came to the conclusion, indeed, that he and Handforth would be far safer in the air. It was only by pure luck that they had escaped detection so far, but after the vessel had gone there was every chance that the pair would be spotted and held. Then there would be trouble. These desperate crooks would not hesitate to wipe out a couple of schoolboys. If Nipper's true identity was discovered, his death was absolutely certain. So, on the whole, it would be better if they could get on board the great aircraft.

Their chance came almost at once. For as the R 202 swung round, momentarily out of control, something struck Nipper with tremendous force. It was a rope ladder, and he was nearly sent flying. The aircraft had dipped, and Nipper could see that this rope ladder was hanging down from a trapdoor-like opening in the vast body of the airship.

"Grab hold, Handy!" gasped Nipper, again.

He went climbing up, and, glancing down, he was relieved to see that Handforth had seized the ladder, too. Handforth was climbing up after him. And now the airship had swung higher—sixty or seventy feet from the ground.

"Oh, my only sainted aunt!" gasped Handforth.

He was nearly at the end of the rope ladder—and the ground was now forty feet or so away from him. He held on like grim death. A fall would mean disaster.

"Stand away!" came a loud shout. "Stand clear, there!"

"Let go the ropes!"

Orders were being flung out from the control-car. Water-ballast went spraying down, and the airship rose higher. Her engines were beginning to hum—to throb—to roar.

The rope ladder hung down from the very centre of the great craft, where there was a kind of trapdoor opening, leading, no doubt, directly into the great corridor which ran from one end of the ship to the other. Nipper, clinging to the ladder, was nearly level with one of the rear power-cars. Another rope ladder was dangling from this. Little did Nipper realise that Nelson Lee had only just recently climbed it—that Nelson Lee was even now in that very power-car, in charge of the enormous engine.

The din was terrific. The engines were livening up, and they were creating a deep-throated, tremendous roar. There was the swishing and whistling of the propellers, too.

With the throwing out of the water-ballast, the airship began to rise rapidly. She soared up, swinging round and only narrowly missing collision with the great mooring-mast. Then she went higher and higher, moving forward at the same time, and more and more completely under control.

The raid had been a success!

The R 202 was in the hands of the League of the Green Triangle!

And there, amidst all these desperate men, Nipper and Handforth were clinging to that frail rope ladder. Handforth hadn't moved—he was still near the end, with the ground



now seven or eight hundred feet below him. He was fascinated—almost paralysed by the perilous nature of his position. One slip, and instant death would be the result. The cold night wind was whistling round him, and, staring up, he could see Nipper clawing his way up the ladder towards that trap-door in the airship's body.

Nipper was nearly there—he had almost reached the top. Handforth began cautiously to ascend, swinging precariously. His heart was thumping madly, and he clutched at the rope ladder as a dying man will clutch at a straw.

He stared down, horrified. Already the figures of the men on the ground were looking like ants. The great hangar itself looked not much bigger than an ordinary aeroplane shed. The R 202 was rising higher and higher, and swinging off in the direction of Luton.

Nipper clutched at the edge of the doorway. And at that moment an evil face appeared above. There, crouching over that doorway, was a Green Triangle man!

CHAPTER 7.

Nelson Lee's Desperate Move!

GIVE me your hand—quick!" The voice hissed down to Nipper, and he heard the words above the whistle and roar of the propellers and engines. There was something in the quality of that voice which gave Nipper a start. He stared up, gazing breathlessly at the Green Triangle man, who crouched ready to seize him.

"Guv'nor!" he panted.

"Don't waste time, young 'un—give me your hand!" urged Nelson Lee. "Good heavens! Are you boys mad? You might have been killed!"

Such a flood of relief came over Nipper that he almost felt faint. That man above was not an enemy—but a friend! His own beloved guv'nor! At first he had not recognised Leo through the latter's disguise.

"That's better!" muttered the detective, as he hauled Nipper up beside him. "Careful, Handforth—take it easily, young 'un!"

Handforth was climbing up, and now that he had heard Nelson Lee's voice he was reckless. Swinging there, eight or nine hundred feet from the ground, he swarmed up that rope ladder, utterly regardless of the fact that a slip would have meant certain death.

Nelson Lee was startled. The presence of these two boys alarmed him considerably.



Good jokes wanted from readers for this feature! Each week the sender of the best rib tickler will receive a handsome watch; senders of all other jokes published will be awarded a useful pocket wallet or a pen-knife. Efforts should be addressed to: "Smilers," Nelson Lee Library, Tallis House, Tallis Street, London, E.C.4.

A Running Commentary!

Magistrate: "The constable who captured you informs me that you are an exceptionally good runner. Have you taken any prizes?"

Prisoner: "Yes, sir. The 'Undred Yards' Championship Cup."

Magistrate: "And where was that?"

Prisoner: "Off the table, sir!"

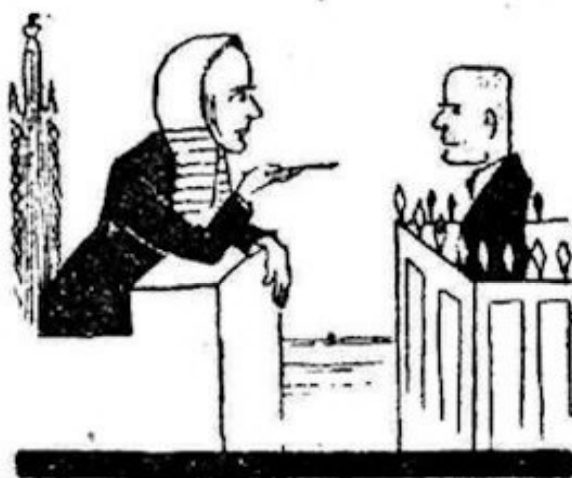
Misunderstood!

Boss (to very tall applicant for a post): "And how long were you in your last job?"

Youth: "Oh, jest the same 'eight as I am now, sir!"

Who was Unlucky?

Host: "By Jove! There are thirteen at table!"



Guest: "Surely you're not so superstitious as all that?"

Host: "N-n-no; but there's only food enough for twelve!"

A Weighty Problem!

Stout Old Lady (to chemist's boy): "Boy, d'ye keep a preparation for reducing weight?"

Boy: "Yes'm."

Stout Old Lady: "Well, I really don't know how much I ought to get."

Boy (diagnosingly): "Better take all we've got, ma'am. Nothing like bein' on the safe side, is there?"

Wise Wee Willie!

"Well, my little man," said the grocer to the youngster in front of the counter, "and what can I get for you?"

"Two-penn'orth of treacle."

The grocer, after ladling out the necessary amount, handed the pitcher over to the youngster.

"Now, where's the money?"

"In the jug," answered the youngster. "I put it there so as to be sure not to lose it!"

Proof Positive!

"See here, I thought you said this horse you sold me last week had no fear of steam-rollers!"

"No, more he hasn't."

"When I was out riding

Until a few minutes ago he had had no inkling that Nipper and Handforth had followed, and had been comparatively near him ever since he had left Bannington.

After getting his own particular engine going, Lee had glanced out of the window and he had seen the two figures dangling on that other rope ladder from the middle of the great airship. And he had recognised Nipper and Handforth.

Quickly he had climbed up the ladder which led direct from the power-car into the body of the vessel. Thus he had been waiting for Nipper. Now he was filled with anxiety and concern. He must get back to his power-car, or there might be serious trouble. Yet, at the same time, he wanted to make sure that these two boys would be safe.

"Why did you come, Nipper?" he asked, half-angrily. "It was foolish of you—reckless! I distinctly gave you my orders——"

"I couldn't help it, guv'nor," interrupted Nipper. "I knew that you were going into danger, and I wanted to share it with you! Handy came because I used his Austin Seven."

"Never mind," interrupted Lee. "The harm is done now, and I doubt if it can be undone. You boys had better conceal yourselves. Here! Go along this interior gangway. It leads the whole length of the ship. Get into any crevice or corner that you can find—squeeze between two of the gasbags, if you can find nowhere else to go."

"But you, guv'nor? What about you?" asked Nipper.

"I am in control of one of the starboard engines—I cannot stop," replied Lee. "It is impossible to guess how this trip will end—but they will make short work of me if they learn my identity."

The airship was divided up into compartments. There were gasbags all along on either side of the central gangway, and some far above the central gangway, too.

It was difficult for Nipper and Handforth to realise that they were in the air at all. This great gangway went right away into the distance—apparently an endless tunnel. Here and there were gleaming electric lights. It was incredible that this vast thing could be afloat in the air. There were great metal girders at intervals, and the whole structure was quivering and throbbing with the pulsating rhythm of the engines.

Nelson Lee considered himself lucky in getting back into the starboard power-car. He had expected to be challenged. And now, as he attended to the engine, he was filled with new doubts and worries.

On his own, he had been carefree and confident. But the knowledge that Nipper and Handforth were aboard the ship robbed him of much of his confidence. At the same time it filled him with an admiration for the sterling pluck of those two youngsters. Much as he deplored their presence on the R 202, he thoroughly approved of their courage.



yesterday afternoon he began to cut up when he saw a steam-roller approaching and tried to dash right into it."

"Well, if a horse was afraid of a steam-roller he wouldn't want to run into it, would he? He'd try to run away from it!"

The Martyr!

"You are all block-heads," thundered the schoolmaster; "but there must be one among you who excels in something, if only in ignorance. Let that boy stand up!"

The invitation was more in the nature of a bluff than anything else, but, to the teacher's surprise, one lad rose to his feet.

"Oh," said the teacher, "I am glad to see that one has the honesty to admit ignorance!"

"It's not that, sir," said the lad, "but I hadn't the heart to see you standing there by yourself!"

Just Fancy!

"Look here, Minnie, how many more times have I to tell you about those cobwebs? I've just had to sweep one off the bedrails and put it in the fire myself!"

"Good gracious, sir!" cried the maid. "That's the missus' fancy dress for the ball!"

Would You Believe It?

Mrs. Green met Mrs. Brown in the street the other day. Said Mrs. Green:

"I hear you have a lot of children, Mrs. Brown?"

"Yes," answered Mrs. Brown; "an' what's more, all of their names begin with a haitch. There's 'Enery and 'Arry, then 'Ilda and 'Arriet, 'Orace, 'Erbert, 'Ector, and 'Arold. They're all haitches except the baby, and we christened her Hagatha!"

Snappy!

The railway manager of an electric railway company complained to one of his subordinates, Finnegin by name, that his reports of trouble on the line were too long—too wordy. "Cut 'em short!" said the busy manager.

The subordinate's next report of a train off the line satisfied all hands. It was: "Offagin! Onagin! Awayagin! Finnegin!"

What a Watch!

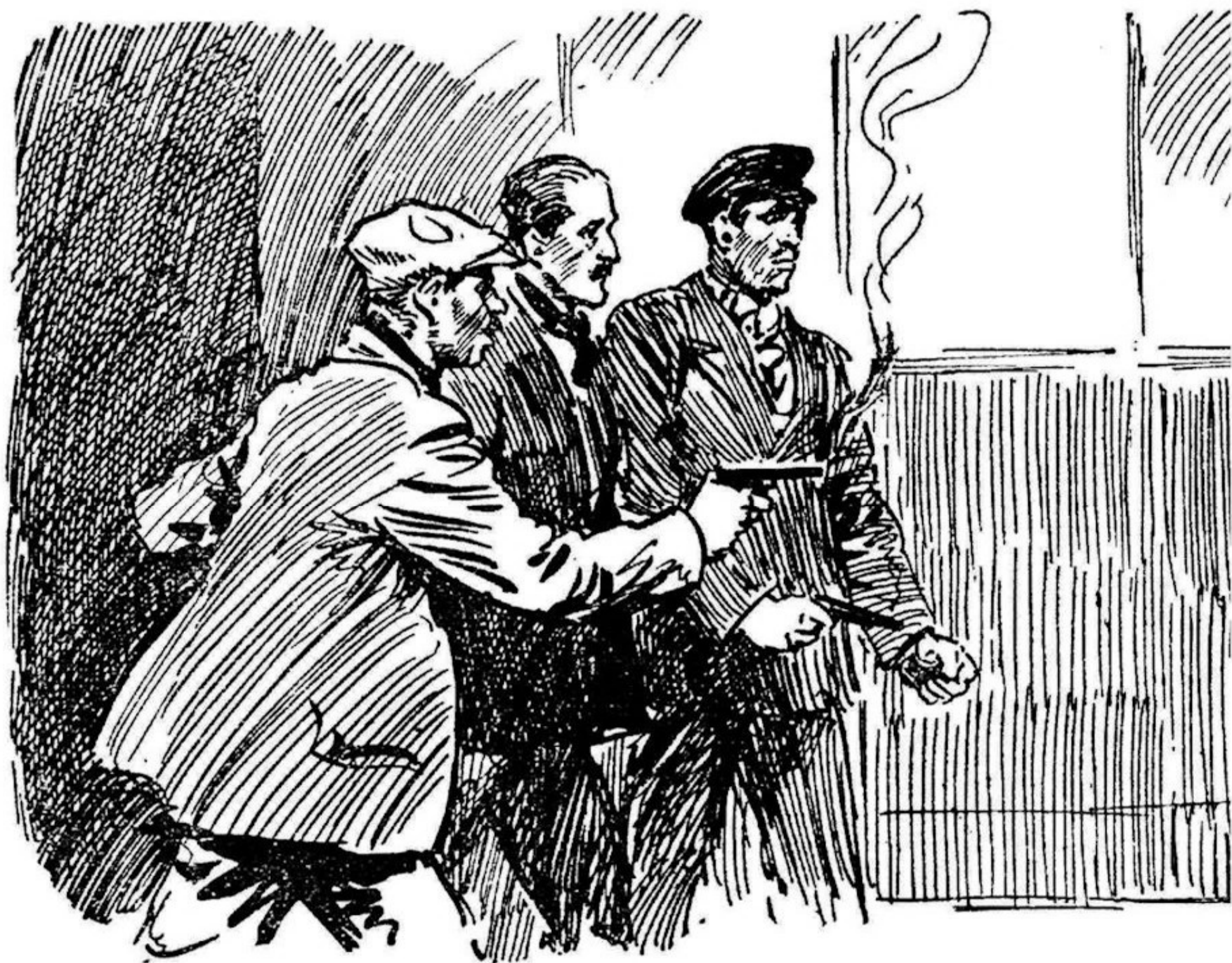
Pat had just compared his watch with the famous clock at St. Paul's Cathedral, and now he burst into a fit of laughter.

"An' what are ye laughing at?" asked his companion, a Londoner.

"How kin I help it?" said Pat. "Here's my little watch made in Oireland by Mike O'Flaherty, which cost me three pounds, an' it's beat yer big London clock by an hour since yisterday mornin'!"



As Handforth made a wild rush at Professor Zingrave, one of the armed men fired. Handforth pulled up short and staggered back, grasping his arm.



As Handforth made a wild rush at Professor Zingrave, one of the armed men fired. Handforth pulled up short and staggered back, grasping his arm.

BY now the great airship was well away from Hardington. She was making southwards, towards London. And all along her route people were staring upwards, astonished. This trip of hers was a surprise one; nobody had expected her to turn out until the morrow. Back at the big aerodrome the military authorities were in possession; they had come up in strong force after rumours had leaked through that something was seriously amiss.

Not many captures were made.

For as soon as the R 202 had got into the air the hundreds of Green Triangle men dashed away for hidden motor-cars and motor-cycles. They were off into the night, in all directions, within five minutes of the airship's departure. And the majority of them would never be traced. Once clear of the district, they became normal citizens—harmless motorists. There was nothing whatever to connect them with the startling event which had recently taken place.

From the point of view of the infamous League, the coup had been a complete success.

IN the spacious control-car Professor Cyrus Zingrave was in supreme command. He was no engineer, and so he had other men there to control the ship. But he was the commander. At the last moment he had climbed on board—when it had been definitely known that the R 202 was captured. Zingrave had taken no chances.

One of those men in the control-car was No. 43. He was a skilled engineer—an aeronaut of much experience. There was another man, too—No. 16. This man, tall, resolute, with iron-grey hair, was the controlling brain of the ship. Professor Zingrave merely gave the orders, and No. 16 saw that they were carried out.

"She's going well, Chief," said No. 16, after a while. "Ninety miles an hour now, and rising all the time. How high do you want us to be when we get over London?"

"Ten thousand feet to begin with," replied Professor Zingrave. "We will allow the good inhabitants of London to get a fair view of us. We will let them think that we are



perfectly innocent and harmless." He chuckled. "Then," he added, "we will come lower—we will fly just over the house-tops. And not until then shall we reveal ourselves in our true colours."

"Everything is ready, Chief," said one of the other men, looking round.

"Splendid!" said the professor gently. "We will drop leaflets, my friends, announcing the campaign of the League of Terror. This diversion, too, will be useful. Our men will have a chance to operate with success. Oh, yes! We shall keep the police very busy in London to-night!"

He conferred with No. 16. They had a map of London spread out in front of them, and they plotted the route that the airship would follow. She would traverse the entire metropolis, and from end to end of London the populace would be terrorised.

Professor Cyrus Zingrave had not forgotten the Great War; neither had he forgotten the moral effect of the air raids. In war-time an air raid is startling enough. In peace-time an air raid is vastly more terrifying, since the populace believes itself to be immune from any such atrocity.

Bombs had been placed on board the R 202—hundreds of them. They were, however, comparatively harmless bombs. Zingrave's only object was to strike terror. He was not so ruthless and so wanton as to desire needless destruction.

The bombs were small, insignificant, indeed; but they were calculated to make a terrific amount of noise when they exploded. They were hardly any more dangerous than big fireworks, but when they started exploding all over London—throughout the suburbs as the airship made its cruise—there would be something approaching a panic.

Oh, yes! There would be startling news for the world on the morrow!

A SUDDEN sound caused Professor Zingrave to glance round. There was a metal ladder just behind him, running upwards and communicating with the chart-room. Behind the chart-room were the corridors and lounges and dining-saloons of the passenger accommodation. The only passengers on this trip were the specially picked men whose job it was to drop the bombs.

The sound from the chart-room was strange. A gurgling kind of cry, followed by a thud. Then silence—except for the distant hum of the powerful motors.

“What is wrong there?” shouted No. 16 sharply.

He had left a man on duty in the chart-room, but there was no reply. A pair of legs appeared above, and somebody commenced descending the ladder. He came right down, turned, and Professor Zingrave and the others regarded him with sudden suspicion. He was not the man who had been left on watch.

“Well?” demanded Zingrave curtly.

“I must trouble you, gentlemen, to put up your hands!” said a clear, decisive voice. “If there is any resistance, I shall fire. Quickly, please!”

An automatic pistol gleamed in the stranger’s hand. Zingrave caught his breath in sharply, and the others stared open-mouthed. There came a click from the automatic, and all hands were raised in considerable haste.

“So!” said Zingrave, his voice as silky as ever. “We have a traitor aboard!”

“There are many traitors aboard, Professor Zingrave, but I do not place myself in that category. You will give orders for this airship to be steered back to Hardington without any delay.”

No. 43 muttered a hoarse cry.

“Have you gone mad, Robbins?” he shouted. “I think the excitement must have turned his brain, Chief! This man is No. 175.”

Zingrave nodded.

“No. 175,” he repeated. “The man who fulfilled the little commission at St. Frank’s College. Come, 175! You must control yourself.”

“Get back to your engine!” shouted No. 43 harshly.

No. 175 shook his head.

“I am neither mad nor intimidated,” he said coolly. “I have given my orders, and I expect them to be obeyed. Turn back to Hardington! I will give you one minute only! Fail to obey me, and I will shoot you as you stand, No. 1!”

Perhaps it was something in his voice—perhaps the strong electric light served to give Professor Zingrave a clue. For suddenly the professor caught in his breath. His singular calmness deserted him. His cheeks became even more pale than usual.

“Lee!” he whispered, bending forward. “Nelson Lee!”

“Since you will kill me in any case if you get the chance, there is no object in keeping my identity a secret,” replied Nelson Lee. “Yes, Professor Zingrave, No. 175 was not quite so successful.”

No. 43 staggered.

“But—but I don’t understand!” he protested. “I thought that—”

“Silence!” broke in Zingrave evilly. “You fool! You blundering dunderhead! Men do not make more than one mistake in the League!”

No. 43 went as white as a sheet.

“But, Chief, I didn’t know!” he said hoarsely. “This man represented himself—”

“This man is Nelson Lee, and he bluffed you!” said Zingrave, his voice becoming positively harsh. “Have I not warned you that Nelson Lee is different from other men?”

Lee eyed his enemies closely. He was expecting a move at any second. And he was ready to fire. If he lost his advantage now he would be put to death. Of that there was not the slightest doubt. He was risking everything in this one big throw.

“Remember, gentlemen, I am in earnest,” he said grimly. “It is not my usual practice to indulge in gun-play, but for once I shall not hesitate if I am driven to it! Turn this ship back to Hardington!”

Zingrave stood there, speechless. He could see his whole plan being wrecked at the outset. And there was a chance, too, that he himself would be captured. Captured before this new campaign of the League of the Green Triangle was fairly under way!

And Nelson Lee—again—was the cause of this disaster! His old enemy—the man who had wrecked the original League! Professor Zingrave felt that his brain was bursting. The evil in his eyes was awful to see. Yet in face of that menacing automatic pistol he was helpless.

The situation was acute.

(Continued on page 27.)

The THRILL CLUB!



*You want thrills?
This is where you get
'em! Each week one of the
club members relates his
most thrilling experience.*

No. 1. The Vault of The Greyvilles!

A HUSH fell upon the half-hundred hard-bitten adventurers who formed the membership of the famous "Thrill Club," as the chairman, who had presided over their weekly meeting, rose to his feet and tapped his mallet.

"Gentlemen," he began, "you all know our custom that, once a week, one of our members should tell us of the greatest thrill he has ever experienced in his life. This evening I have pleasure in calling upon Detective-inspector Someston, of Scotland Yard."

A ripple of excitement ran around the members as Someston rose to his feet. His keen eyes ranged around the assembly, and his thin lips hardly seemed to move as in clear, concise tones, he outlined what he termed the greatest thrill of his career.

SOME of you may, perhaps, remember the Greyville Case, of twenty years ago, but the true facts of the case never leaked out to the public, and I propose to make them known to you to-night.

Sir Ronald Greyville, the baronet, was a poet of rather eccentric habits. He lived in Greyville Castle—one of the gloomiest old buildings it has ever been my lot to visit. He was wealthy, yet, for all that he was a hermit and a miser. He was the last of his line, and when he died, his estates would pass to a cousin—a strange, sinister sort of man who had spent most of his life out in the East.

This cousin, Claude Bereton, returned to England, and persuaded Sir Ronald to allow him to live at Greyville Castle. So far as we know, the two lived on amicable terms. But the fact remains that Claude Bereton had not been long at the Castle before Sir

Ronald died. Two doctors both proclaimed the cause of death to be due to heart failure, and Sir Ronald was buried, in due course, in the family vaults—grim, dungeon-like, subterranean places situated underneath the private chapel of Greyville Castle.

Claude Bereton took over the property, and might have been in possession to-day had not a whisper reached Scotland Yard that all was not well, and I was sent down to investigate.

I alighted at the little country station that was situated over two miles from the castle. There was no conveyance to take me to the castle, and I had to set out through a storm that raged like fury over the countryside.

I was chilled to the bone, and soaking wet ere I reached the castle. It was wrapped in darkness, and it was with difficulty that I staggered through the gloom and reached the front door.

An ancient bell-pull hung there, and, as I tugged at it, the cracked bell tolled as though it was presaging death and destruction. A pall seemed to hang about the place—an air of impending evil!

I waited. There was no reply. Again I rang the bell. Again its hollow note reverberated throughout the empty corridors and dust-laden chambers of the castle. And then there came footsteps—shifty, hesitating footsteps. The door opened a few inches, and I saw a man holding a lantern. His hair was lank and matted, his face was so deathly white that it might have been the face of a corpse. His eyes were hollows of madness, and when he spoke he spoke in a cracked, high-pitched voice that did not seem to be of this world.

He asked my business, and I told him that

I had come with reference to the demise of his cousin—for I knew that the man to whom I spoke was Claude Bereton. He gave a croaking laugh, and stood aside, opening the door for me to enter.

“SO you have come to see my cousin, eh?” asked Claude Bereton suddenly, with a mirthless cackle of laughter.

“Your cousin is dead and buried,” I said. “I have simply come to ask you a few questions.”

“Nevertheless, you shall see him,” he said, and gave another croaking laugh as he crossed to a corner of the hall. “Look!” He held up a spade and a pick. “I am going to the vault. I was about to go when you arrived. You will come with me and see him for yourself!”

I was more than ever convinced that he was mad, although I gave no sign that I realised that, I agreed to accompany him to the vault, and we started off.

When we reached the vault a thrill went through me. All around were ranged the coffins which held the last remains of generations of Greyvilles. The place was musty and reeked of death and desolation. Imagine, if you can, that sarcophagus of death, filled with piles of coffins which ranged from the great stone affairs of the middle ages to the hideously grim and rotting black wooden ones of a later age. In the centre of the vault, on a stone table, stood the coffin of the late Sir Ronald, and, as I looked at it, I saw that the lid had been unscrewed, and was only placed loosely over the coffin.

The madman saw my glance, and then whipped off the lid of the coffin.

“Look at him!” he said. “Gaze upon the last of the long line of Greyville’s!”

Fascinated, I gazed at the deathly face of the still figure in the coffin. In the course of my duties I have often gazed upon the dead, but there was something curious about the corpse of Sir Ronald that almost robbed me of breath. I stood there as though rooted to the spot—and then, suddenly, I heard a sound. I wheeled around at once.

The madman was crouching in a corner, and he held the pick clasped firm in his hands. Even as I turned, he sprang towards me, and I realised why he had brought me down to the vault. He intended to kill me there, and leave my body down in the darkness of the tomb!

I sprang aside, and the whirling pick missed me. He dropped it and sprang upon me, and his hands closed around my throat. I fought desperately, but madness had lent him strength, and I found my senses reeling. I gasped for breath, but I knew that I was powerless in his grip, and unless someone came to my aid I was finished.

And there was none to come to my aid! The few villagers who lived in the neighbourhood shunned the castle like the plague. There was no hope for me!

A sudden flash of lightning darted through the vault, coming from the opening into the

chapel above. Then a terrible burst of thunder crashed out, and my senses reeled. This, I knew, must be the end!

Then, suddenly, the madman’s grasp relaxed, and I tore myself away, reeling against a pile of coffins that were stacked up against the wall of the vault. The madman gave a gasp and crumpled on the floor, and, collecting my scattered senses, I looked around to see from where my aid had come.

I might have been forgiven for the cry that came to my lips!

For, standing over the madman, and dressed in his grave clothes, stood the corpse of Sir Ronald Greyville!

THE detective ceased speaking, and took a drink of water. The assembled members of the “Thrill Club” sat, spell-bound, gazing at him, unable to move while he placed down the glass from which he had drunk, and continued:



The door opened, and there appeared a man in whose eyes blazed the light of madness!

Sir Ronald Greyville lives to-day! He had been alive when he had been buried in the vault. His cousin—the madman—had given him an Eastern poison that produced a trance similar to death by heart-failure. But, gentlemen, had I not called at Greyville Castle that night, there is no doubt that Claude Bereton would have finished off his work, and Sir Ronald would have died.

Since then I have experienced many another thrill—but none so great as that when Sir Ronald Greyville, awaked by the terrible clap of thunder from his trance, came, so opportunely, to my aid, when I fought for life in the vault of the Greyvilles!

“ROGUES OF THE GREEN TRIANGLE!”

(Continued from page 24.)

Obviously, Nelson Lee had dealt with that man in the chart-room—had probably stunned him. Nobody else would come to the control chamber. Strict orders had been given to that effect. Nelson Lee had the “drop.”

“No. 16, you will obey the order,” said Professor Zingrave, between his teeth. “Turn the airship about. We return to Hardington.”

“Are we to be intimidated by this one man?” shouted No. 16.

“You heard what I said!” panted No. 1, in a terrible voice.

It was No. 43 who suddenly whirled the spokes of the wheel, which was very much like the wheel of a ship. In No. 43’s eyes there was a wild gleam of hope, and his face was now deeply flushed.

Instantly, in answer to his move, the airship swerved, heeling over giddily. That violent and unexpected whirling of the wheel had had its effect. The vessel was travelling at a hundred miles an hour, and when the great steering-pin was moved so abruptly the result was dramatic.

The R 202 heeled over violently, and the control-room floor assumed an angle of forty-five degrees. From above came the creaking and groaning of metal as the vast body of the vessel took the strain.

Something else happened, too.

Nelson Lee, ready as he was for any emergency, found it impossible to keep his feet. He slithered helplessly on the suddenly-tilted floor. He went off his balance, and in the same second No. 43 leapt on him. For No. 43 had expected that sudden swerve, and had been ready.

“Quick!” he gasped. “We’ve got him!”

With a savage kick, he knocked the automatic pistol out of Nelson Lee’s hand. The other men came to his help, and in less than twenty seconds Nelson Lee was held.

“A clever move of yours, No. 43,” said Professor Zingrave, his voice as silky as ever. “You blundered before, but you have atoned for that. Your blunder shall be forgotten.”

“Thank you, Chief!” muttered No. 43 hoarsely.

His face had gone pale again. For he knew—better than anybody else—the kind of punishment that would be meted out to him. The League of the Green Triangle did not allow failures to live.

“A spectacular piece of work, my dear Lee, but you have failed,” said Professor Zingrave, turning to the prisoner. “I should be interested to know how you escaped in the first instance, but I doubt if you will enlighten me. Not that it matters. You will no longer be alive when this voyage is over!”

There was a startling light in No. 1’s eyes. All his devilish spleen blazed out. He turned to No. 16.

“Fly straight on—miss London!” he ordered curtly. “Before flying over London we will pay a visit to St. Frank’s College.”

“It is a long detour, Chief,” protested No. 16.

“Tut! Twenty minutes at the most at this speed,” replied the professor. “When we get over St. Frank’s you will hover, with engines throttled down. You will hover at a height of ten thousand feet. I desire to return Mr. Nelson Lee to his own roof!”

There was something deadly significant in the professor’s words, and in his tone. For his meaning was obvious. He was determined to drop Nelson Lee from the airship, from a height of ten thousand feet, clean through the roof of St. Frank’s!

CHAPTER 8.

Disaster!

“THIS is awful, Handy!” muttered Nipper.

“Awful isn’t the word,” said Handforth, in a thick voice. “What’s the good of us staying here? Might as well not have come on board! Can’t we do something?”

They were nearly amidships, concealing themselves, as Nelson Lee had suggested. They had managed to get off the central gangway, and this was all to the good, for men were constantly passing to and fro. They had climbed one of the girders, and had got into a little opening close against one of the big fuel tanks. Behind this tank they were comparatively safe. But what was the use? What could they do, skulking here like this? And what was happening to Nelson Lee?

“I can’t help feeling that something’s gone wrong,” said Nipper tensely. “The guv’nor went along this gangway ten minutes ago, towards the nose of the airship. Where did he go? What’s he doing?”

“Let’s hope he’s diddling these Green Triangle men,” said Handforth fervently.

They had both seen Nelson Lee pass along the gangway, but they had had no time to disclose themselves to him. And Lee, for his part, had something better to think of than these two juniors.

"We can't do anything, Handy," said Nipper gruffly. "If we venture out we'll only be spotted and collared, and that would mess things up, probably. We might spoil all the gov'nor's plans."

"What plans?"

"I don't know, but I'll bet he's got some," said Nipper grimly. "The gov'nor's a man of action, Handy, and he's a man who never knows when he's beaten. By Jove, what a game! We didn't think we should be mixed up in an affair of this sort when we left St. Frank's, did we?"

"My only hat, no!" said Handforth. "Even now I can hardly believe it's true. It's like a giddy nightmare! Where's the airship going, anyway? If we could only do something—"

At that second the craft gave a wild, giddy lurch. She swerved violently, and the girders all round the two schoolboys creaked and groaned in anguish. For one dreadful second Nipper thought that the great fuel tank was going to be torn completely adrift from its fastenings. Not that he gave much attention to the matter, for Handforth, unprepared for that swerve, had been flung sideways, and he toppled between two of the girders and fell with a heavy crash to the gangway.

"Great Scott!" gasped Nipper, gripping one of the girders and steadying himself.

There was only that one swerving lurch. After that the airship righted herself, and was now flying again on an even keel as serenely as ever. Handforth was lying on the gangway, motionless.

"Handy!" ejaculated Nipper, staring. "Somebody might spot you there—"

He broke off, realising the peril. In a moment he was down, bending over the other Removite. There was an ugly graze on Handforth's forehead, but the burly junior did not seem to be particularly hurt. He sat up after a moment or two, dazed and bewildered.

"What happened?" he asked wildly. "Somebody slobbered me on the head."

"You fell—that's all," said Nipper. "The ship gave a sudden swerve. Come on! We've got to get back—"

He broke off with a gasp, for he beheld two men not ten yards away, hurrying down the corridor.

"Quick!" muttered Nipper.

He helped Handforth to his feet, but the men were already upon them, and in that confined space it was almost impossible to put up a fight. The two juniors were soon overwhelmed.

"Boys—schoolboys!" said one of the men, in amazement. "What are they doing aboard? How did they get on here?"

"Stowaways by the look of 'em," said the other man. "We'd better take 'em along to the main cabin, an' lock 'em in one of the empty berths."

Handforth could have cried. Normally, he was ready for any hearty scrap, but he was still so dazed from his fall that he felt weak and dizzy. He was unable to fight. And Nipper had sense enough to know that any resistance would be futile. For by now another man—evidently an officer—had come along the gangway.

"What's this?" he asked sharply. "What are you men doing here?"

"Two schoolboys, sir," said one of the others. "Found 'em on the gangway just now."

"Bring them along to the Chief!" said the officer angrily. "Infernal young idiots! How did they get aboard?"

Lee seized Nipper and Handforth one after the other, and pushed them down through the gap in the metal floor of the blazing airship



PROFESSOR ZINGRAVE lit a cigar.

"You will join me, Mr. Nelson Lee?" he asked silkily as he proffered his case. "You have, roughly, fifteen minutes to live. Won't you indulge in a final smoke?"

"I would prefer a cigarette if you don't mind," replied Nelson Lee steadily.

They were in the smoking-room—a comfortable lounge, with a metal floor. Just outside

the door there was the wonderful observation balcony. From here one could lean over the rail and look down through the great windows at the passing panorama.

"This airship travels very rapidly, Mr. Lee," continued the professor. "We have already passed Helmford, and we shall be hovering over St. Frank's within a very few minutes. It is my intention to drop one or two harmless little bombs as a preliminary, for I fear that the school will have gone to bed, and I am most anxious that your swift

descent from the clouds should be witnessed by your faithful boys."

There was a mocking note in the Chief's voice, and Nelson Lee knew that there was no bluff about this threat.

A loud knock sounded on the door, and No. 43 looked in, his face flushed and excited.

"Two prisoners, Chief," he announced. "Two schoolboys."

Nelson Lee half started to his feet, an expression of agony passing over his face. Two men who were stationed near him gripped their pistols more tightly.

"Two schoolboys?" repeated Professor Zingrave. "Bring them in. Let us see them."

A suspicion had crossed his mind. And when, a moment later, Nipper and Handforth were thrust into the smoking-room, Zingrave uttered a low cry of satisfaction. His evil eyes were now filled with gloating triumph.

"Nipper!" he said silkily. "The other boy I do not know. His identity does not interest me. This is really splendid, Mr. Lee! You shall be honoured with two companions on your downward trip."

"You wouldn't dare!" said Lee fiercely. "I know that you intend to murder me, Zingrave, but you wouldn't dare to murder these two boys also!"

"Guv'nor," said Nipper wretchedly, "we didn't mean to mess things up like this—"

"Tut-tut!" said Zingrave. "Let these boys come forward, No. 43. Quite sturdy examples of British boyhood, eh? A pity that they should be compelled to end their youthful existence so abruptly."

"Zingrave, if you kill these two boys you will commit a crime of untold horror," said Lee tensely. "Wreak your vengeance upon me, if you choose, but these boys—"

"These boys shall be flung down from ten thousand feet upon the roof of their school!" interrupted Zingrave. "They shall go with you, my dear Lee. They came with you, and they shall return with you. Why not? The League of Terror is not a bluff!"

"You—you fiend!" panted Handforth, white with horror. "You're Zingrave, aren't you? You're the Chief of the League! You inhuman rotter!"

And, with all his usual recklessness, Handforth suddenly wrenched himself away from No. 43 and made a wild rush at Professor Zingrave.

Crack!



One of the armed men fired on the instant. Handforth pulled up short and staggered back, grasping his arm. He seemed dazed. The bullet had only grazed him, and he was more surprised than hurt. It had felt as though somebody had dealt him a hard blow on the arm.

"Fool!" ejaculated Zingrave, swinging round upon the man with the automatic.

"I only aimed to hurt him, sir——"

"Have you no more sense than to fire here—in this cabin?" grated Zingrave. "Have I none but fools aboard this ship?"

None of them had noticed the tiny puffing sound which had come from just above. It had been effectually smothered in the droning hum caused by the engines. The bullet had passed through the thin metal ceiling, after glancing against Handforth's arm, and ricocheting from one of the girders. It had all happened within a second.

And now, abruptly, there came another sound—the sound of running footsteps. A man flung the door open, and his face was ashen.

"Fire!" he shouted hoarsely. "Fire!"

Everybody seemed to become riveted to the spot where he stood. Fire! Aboard an airship containing millions of cubic feet of hydrogen! No more dreadful word could have been uttered.

"You are mad!" said Zingrave.

But even as he uttered the words a livid curtain of flame came down from above, just outside the door.

"Good heavens!" muttered Nelson Lee, horrified.

The R 202 was on fire, and nothing but a miracle could now save her from total destruction!

CHAPTER 9.

Panic at St. Frank's!

"FIRE!"

It was a cry that was echoed up and down the great airship. It was a cry that was calculated to paralyse every man aboard.

No. 43, without a second's hesitation, grasped one of the patent fire-extinguishers, but he might have saved himself the trouble.

"Fool!" shouted Zingrave. "That is useless! The fire is above—in one of the gas compartments! Where are the parachutes? We must drop!"

Professor Zingrave was the only one who kept his head in this crisis—the only one, that is, except Nelson Lee. The great detective found himself left severely alone now. He and Nipper and Handforth stood in a group, and the others went rushing out through the narrow doorway, blindly, panic-stricken, madly. In this dire emergency they had no respect whatsoever for Professor Cyrus Zingrave.

"Boys—boys," muttered Lee, "this is a bad business."

"It's my fault, sir—all my fault!" groaned Handforth. "I made that chap fire his revolver, and—and——"

"It was fate, Handforth," interrupted Nelson Lee quietly. "The fault was not yours. A thousand shots might have been fired with no ill effect. By some mischance this particular bullet caused a spark, and the spark ignited the gas."

"Can't we do something, gov'nor?" asked Nipper. "They were talking about parachutes! Can't we save ourselves?"

"They will save themselves first, you may be sure," replied Lee. "If we attempt to interfere they will shoot us down without compunction. No, my boy, we must wait, for by waiting there is a chance that we might escape; but by taking action we shall do nothing but court certain death."

HE was undoubtedly right.

The panic was now sweeping throughout the length and breadth of the R 202 like a livid flame. Men were rushing up from the power-cars. The engines were all shut off, and the airship was now drifting silently. As yet she had not lost height; she was floating serenely, for the fire was making but slow headway.

Hydrogen does not explode with violence; it burns. The gas in the fatal envelope was burning now, but so far it had not spread to the other envelopes. The R 202 was drifting majestically, and the flames were just beginning to make an appearance through the outer envelope on the starboard side.

Nelson Lee, Nipper, and Handforth went outside to the observation balcony. They could look right down upon the moonlit countryside. Suddenly Nipper pointed.

"Look, gov'nor!" he ejaculated. "There's Bannington! We're leaving Bannington behind us!"

"And there's St. Frank's ahead!" ejaculated Handforth, catching his breath. "Oh, my hat! St. Frank's! We're drifting right over the old school!"

Wild shouts and horrified screams could be heard, vaguely and distantly. Men were hurling themselves from the doomed airship. They were seizing parachutes

(Continued on page 32.)

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"ROGUES OF THE GREEN TRIANGLE!"

(Continued from page 30.)

and jumping. Professor Zingrave had been one of the first to leave, and No. 16, No. 43, and others quickly followed.

But there were not enough parachutes for all. At least eight of the Green Triangle men were left to share the fate of Nelson Lee and the boys. One of them came running madly on to the observation balcony, his face charged with horror.

"Parachutes! Parachutes!" he croaked. "Are there any here? They've used them all! They've left us here to burn to death!"

He went blundering on, nearly insane with fear, while the two juniors gripped themselves hard and clung tightly to the handrail.

"No more parachutes!" muttered Handforth. "That's pretty lively, isn't it?"

"Wait here, boys," said Lee. "Don't move! Promise me that you won't move from here!"

"We promise, sir. But what if the fire breaks through?" asked Nipper.

"There is no fear of that yet," replied Lee. "We are towards the nose of the airship, and she is still drifting. The fire will tend to spread rearwards—rearwards and upwards. We are safe for some little time yet."

He went off, his object being, no doubt, to search for parachutes. He was thinking of the boys far more than of himself. But when he returned, some minutes later, his face was haggard.

"It is useless," he said quietly. "The gangway is already an inferno, and we are trapped in this part of the airship. There are no parachutes here, boys. You must be brave."

Nipper and Handforth said nothing. They were stunned.

AND down below, in the Ancient House of St. Frank's, there were at least four boys who were wide awake. They were Tregellis-West and Watson, and Church and McClure.

It was long after bedtime, but none of these juniors could sleep. Nipper and Handforth were their own particular chums, and they were alarmed by the non-return of the pair. Nipper and Handforth had gone off in the Austin Seven, and since then there had been no sign of them. Not a word had come.

Fenton of the Sixth was waiting up for them. The captain of St. Frank's was in no gentle mood either. He promised himself that he would make it hot for the truants when they finally arrived. It was pretty obvious that they had gone off because of that attempt upon Nelson Lee's life, but this gave them no excuse for remaining away from the school for so long.

It was Tregellis-West who noticed the strange glow in the sky first. He was sitting up in bed, talking with Tommy Watson. They were uneasy regarding Nipper, and they were wondering what could be done. And Tregellis-West, looking out of the window into the moonlit night, saw something unusual. It was something which glowed reddish and lurid in the night sky.

"Begad!" he ejaculated, jumping out of bed.

"What's wrong?" asked Watson.

"Come here, old boy! Come here!" urged Tregellis-West. "There's something in the sky—"

"Something burning!" yelled Watson. "Look! Can't you see a big sort of shape— Yes! It's an airship! An airship, Montie—and it's on fire!"

"Begad!" said Montie, aghast.

They went rushing out, shouting at the top of their voices. Travers and Church and McClure and Potts and De Valeric, and many of the other juniors, came pouring out of the dormitories. Fifth-Formers arrived on the scene—fags and others.

"An airship—coming over from Bannington!" yelled somebody. "It's on fire!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"The R 202!" shouted somebody else.

"Great Scott!"

Lots of the fellows refused to believe the terrible news at first. Some of them half dressed, others went rushing out wearing only their pyjamas and dressing-gowns. They collected out in the Triangle, and some even went hurrying on to the playing-fields, so that they could get a better view.

The sight was awe-inspiring, dreadful and appalling. The great airship was sinking lower and lower, and now the flames were spreading so rapidly that there was not merely a red glow in the sky, but a fierce yellow flare.

Prefects were going about shouting orders. Masters were doing the same. Confusion reigned supreme at first.

"This looks pretty rotten, you fellows," said Vivian Travers, who was one of the few to keep his head. "I don't like to be pessimistic, but it seems to me that this thing is drifting right over the school!"

"She's coming straight for us!" said Stevens of the Fifth.

"Getting lower all the time, brother," agreed William Napoleon Browne. "Alas! I have always been renowned for my judgment, and I have no hesitation in saying that this airship will strike the ground in the immediate vicinity of St. Frank's—if not on the top of St. Frank's itself. A murky outlook, brother Horace."

Stevens gasped.

"But—but can't something be done?" he shouted hoarsely. "The school will catch fire—"

"Look! She's dropping on St. Frank's!" went up a yell.

The cry was echoed and re-echoed. The thing was obvious. The biggest fool in the school could see it. The airship was no higher than a thousand feet now, and dropping with a dreadful persistence which was appalling to see. She was coming down in a long slant, and unless a miracle happened—unless a gust of wind caught her and veered her off—she would unquestionably settle down on some of the school buildings.

It was a ghastly development.

Dr. Morrison Nicholls, the headmaster, was calm and clear-headed. He gave his orders quickly. Masters and prefects were running into every House, and in less than three minutes every boy—every human being, in fact—was ordered outside. More than that—they were ordered well clear of the school—right out of the path of danger.

IN the big central cabin, still clutching to the bar near the big windows, Nelson Lee and Nipper and Handforth were standing.

They were gazing down, horrified. The ground and the school buildings seemed to be leaping up to meet them now. They could hear the dreadful roar of the flames. Mercifully, these flames were blowing away from them, so that practically no heat had yet penetrated to the cabin—which was on the other side of the airship and therefore protected. Fumes, however, were coming into the cabin in choking quantities, and the trio were feeling dazed and half-suffocated.

"It can't last much longer, boys," said Lee, his eyes gleaming with a new hope. "And perhaps there is a chance for us, after all. The crash won't be so violent. If only we could get out during the first few moments—"

"Don't, gov'nor," urged Nipper. "It's too much to hope for! Look! We're dropping right on St. Frank's! It's awful! Can't something be done?"

But even as he asked the question he knew how pointless and futile it was. What could be done? How could any human power control this burning, drifting mass?

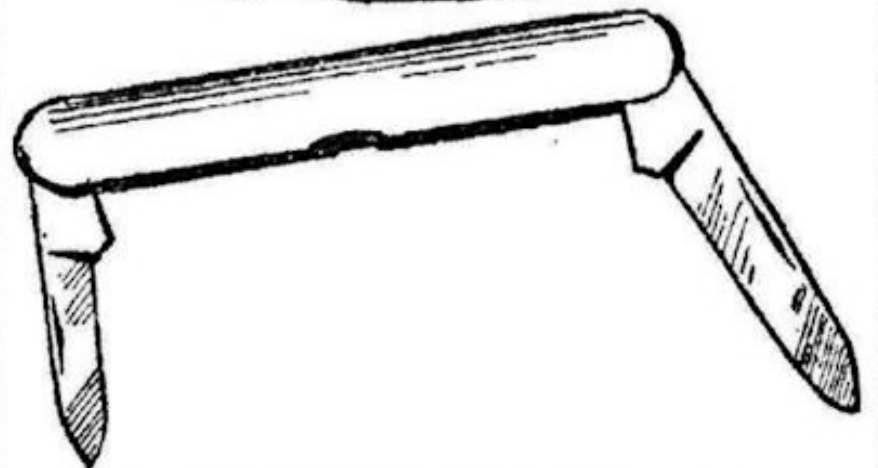
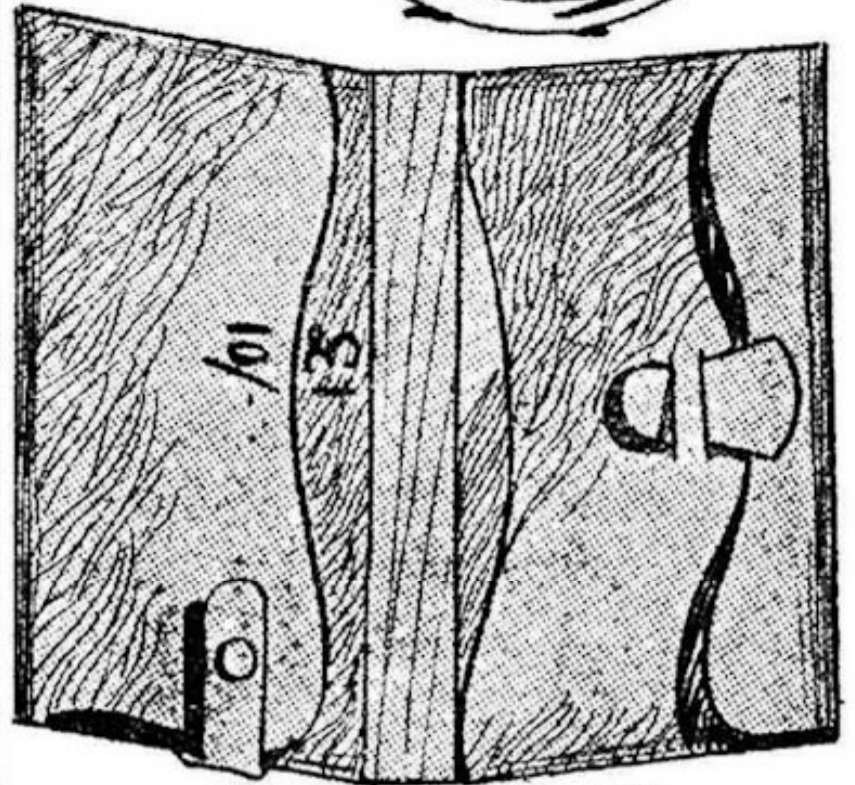
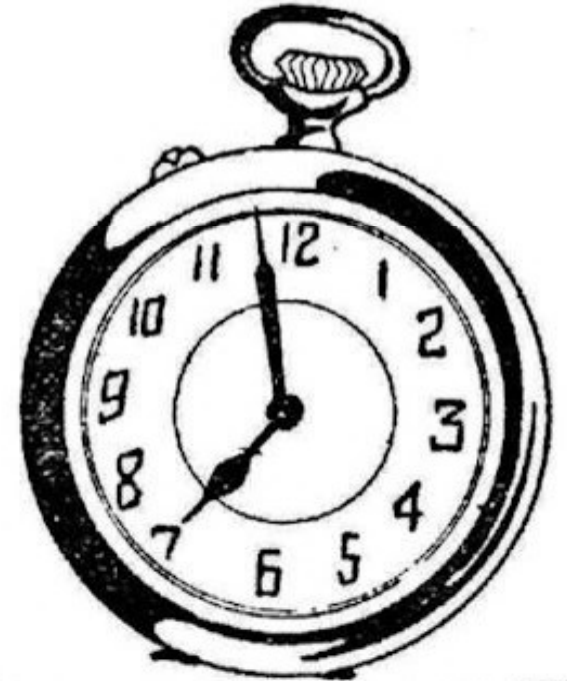
From those observation windows they could see the school buildings—not by moonlight, but by the flickering, lurid glare from the burning airship. The roofs of the school were lit up in a startling way. They could see the big clock-tower and the towers of the other Houses; they could even see the fountain in the middle of the Triangle.

"It is a matter of seconds only now, boys," said Lee.

ST. FRANK'S, horrified and stunned, watched. The whole sky was filled with that burning monster. At least, so it seemed. Actually, the great airship was not yet one-eighth burnt. Only the central gasbags had blazed up, but now the fire was spreading with an intensity that was overwhelming in its horror.

And those first guesses had been right.

YOU can Win one of these Splendid Prizes!



Turn to "**SMILERS**"—Page 20!

The airship was coming down more swiftly now, at the same dreadful slant. She was over St. Frank's—drifting clean across the school buildings.

Would she clear?

"Look!" shrieked somebody.

The nose of the ship caught against the top of the School House Tower. The rest happened like a flash. The great bulk of the dirigible swung round as though on a pivot. Then she dropped vertically. There was something fiendishly deliberate about that movement.

That vast thing of metal girders and gasbags straddled right across the whole range of the school buildings—she crashed down on the roofs of the East Tower and the West Tower, straddling the entire Triangle. An enormous portion of the ship had broken off completely, and this was resting on the School House itself. And it had all happened in a flash.

The flames leapt upwards with wild, triumphant ferocity. And the school could only stand there, on the playing fields and the meadows, too stunned to realise what all this could mean.

The central cabin of the airship, sagging from the main body, was held for a brief spell suspended over the Triangle. The shock of striking had been great, and Nelson Lee and Nipper and Handforth had been flung headlong to the floor. But there had been no actual crash. That was the uncanny part about the whole thing. The airship had just settled on the top of St. Frank's like some vile creature with a brain. It had all seemed so deliberate.

Nelson Lee was the first upon his feet. The heat was appalling. He could see that the flooring just near by was gaping open. There was a great rent there. And the ground was only eight or nine feet below. A great wave of heat came in, suffocating, deadening. The roar of the flames was ghastly to hear.

"Nipper—Handforth!" shouted Lee hoarsely. "Quick—this way!"

He seized them one after the other, and sent them hurtling down through that gap in the metal flooring. They tumbled to the ground, bruised and battered and still dazed. Nelson Lee dropped after them, struck the ground, rolled over, and was up in a flash.

With one hand he grasped Nipper, and with the other hand he seized Handforth. With the strength of desperation he half-dragged, half-hurled them along with him.

It was touch and go.

The Ancient House door was within ten yards, but the heat from above was so frightful that Lee suspected, even in that moment when their lives had seemed spared, that they would be too late.

As they ran they heard a grinding, shattering crash behind them. The central part of the airship had collapsed, burying the cabin in a hopeless, tangled smother. Only in the nick of time had they got out! And to run into the open would have been to get scorched to death.

Their only chance was to fly indoors—where they would be protected from the terrific heat.

Somehow or other they got in. And Lee forced his companions along the passage.

On they went, through the length of the Ancient House—and out through the rear door. It was their only chance.

Here, again, the heat was terrific—for that great monster overhead was sending down its fiery blaze with terrific intensity.

By this time Nipper and Handforth had partially recovered, and they ran without aid towards the open ground—and they succeeded.

Although death had seemed absolutely certain, they had escaped.

CHAPTER 10.

What the Morning Brought!

"MR. LEE!" said Dr. Nicholls hoarsely.

"Never mind me, Doctor," said Nelson Lee. "These boys have been through an awful experience. By merciful Providence they are saved—"

"You went through the same experience, gov'nor," said Nipper. "We were all in it. Oh, this is terrible! Look at St. Frank's! What can we do?"

This disaster to the old school had made Nipper and Handforth forget their recent peril. Or, if they did not forget it, they at least had this other tragedy to distract their attention. And that was all to the good.

Dr. Nicholls stared in amazement.

"You mean—that you were aboard the airship, Mr. Lee?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Lee. "These two boys and myself. We were captured by the League; Professor Zingrave intended to throw us to our deaths upon St. Frank's. But disaster overtook the vessel, and that saved our lives."

The headmaster compressed his lips.

"In that case, Mr. Lee, my horror at seeing the old school burned is greatly tempered," he said quietly. "If this disaster to the airship had not happened, you would have been killed. Far better for the school to be burnt to the very ground!"

NOTHING could be done.

It was utterly impossible to use the school fire-fighting apparatus. Nobody could get anywhere near the buildings. The Head's private residence was the only house that was really out of the danger zone. St. Frank's itself was completely involved.

The boys, for the most part, stood there staring dazedly, dully. They had been very excited at first, but the enormity of this catastrophe robbed them of movement almost. It was too great—too stupendous—to be fully realised at the time.

Not merely one House—but every House of the old school! The Ancient House, the West House, the Modern House, and the East House! All going up in flames! It was incredible—unbelievable—yet it was happening before their very eyes!

The firemen arrived from Bannington, of course—and from Caistowe, too. But they could do nothing. The fire had gained too great a hold by then. The airship, straddling over the whole school, itself a white-hot, molten mass of raging fire, had sealed the doom of St. Frank's.

The fact which rendered any salvage impossible was that the fire had started in every House at the same moment. Portions of the airship had broken off during the first five minutes, and had fallen against the walls of the school. The flames had simply torn their way through all the windows, leaping into the dormitories and studies and dining-halls and school-rooms. And once a fire of that ferocity gets a hold, no power on earth can smother it.

Dr. Nicholls kept his head in this great trial. His first task was to order his limousine. He insisted upon Nelson Lee getting inside, with Nipper and Handforth. They were driven at once to the River House School, and within half an hour they were all in bed. Even Nelson Lee made no objections to this. He needed sleep as much as the juniors.

The River House School was soon packed to overflowing. Scores of other boys had been accommodated there. Emergency action was taken in various other directions. Crowds of fellows were shifted to Bannington Grammar School—others to the various hotels in the town. Everybody was accommodated long before the night was out.

The whole countryside was aroused, of course. Thousands of people stood round watching the gigantic conflagration. Motor-cars had come in their hundreds from every direction. The roads were jammed and blocked. Never before had this part of Sussex known such a sensation.

“I CAN'T believe it!” said Handforth huskily. “Oh, my hat! Look! Poor old St. Frank's!”

It was the next morning—a fine, sunny winter's morning—and Handforth was standing on the St. Frank's playing fields with Nipper and a crowd of other fellows. Further progress was barred by ropes and barriers which had been erected by the firemen and by the other salvage men.

St. Frank's was no more.

True, the blackened walls of the buildings were still standing, for the most part. They stood stark and bare and gaunt. Each building was a mere shell. Roofless, windowless—empty. Not a single scrap of any interior remained. Just the bare walls, many of them cracked and tottering.

And over everything sprawled the twisted metal framework of the burnt-out airship. Fantastically shaped girders, twisted metal, a spidery thing of shapeless, blackened metal.

“They say that five or six bodies were found in the debris,” said Nipper sombrely.

“Poor devils!” muttered Handforth.

“Green Triangle men, of course—men who couldn't jump for it when the crash came,” nodded Travers. “By Samson! You chaps were lucky, you know—and so was Mr. Lee! It's almost impossible to believe that you three were in that airship when it was coming down in flames.”

“Better not speak of it, old thing,” said Archie Glenthorne gently. “I mean, rather a matter best forgotten, what?”

“Nipper and I will never forget it,” said Handforth, taking a deep breath.

When they got back to the River House School, after that mournful pilgrimage, there was some more startling news. Word had come through that a series of burglaries, of unexampled daring, had taken place in London during the night.

One and all were the work of the Green Triangle.

Handforth was aroused from his misery concerning St. Frank's when he heard that his own father had been one of the victims. Sir Edward Handforth's town house had been burgled, and not only had Lady Handforth's jewels been stolen, but many valuable bonds and other documents had been taken from Sir Edward's safe. The sign of the Green Triangle had been left behind.

“The rotters!” gasped Handforth. “In one night they try to kill me—and they burgle my pater and mater!”

It soon leaked out that the fathers of William Napoleon Browne, Archie Glenthorne, Vivian Travers, the Hon. Douglas Singleton, and others were also among the victims of those daring burglaries. It almost seemed, at first, that the Green Triangle men had made a dead set against the fathers of St. Frank's fellows. Yet perhaps this was only a

coincidence. For all these men were rich and prominent, and among such a vast number of burglaries it was natural, perhaps, that they should be included.

CHAPTER 11. The Great Ideal

PROFESSOR CYRUS ZINGRAVE had apparently vanished.

He and his lieutenants—No. 16, No. 43, and others—had all succeeded, it seemed, in parachuting safely to the ground. And in the hours of the night they had vanished. It was easy to understand how they had escaped.

They had dropped to earth in the St. Frank's district, and the whole neighbourhood had soon been in a turmoil. Nobody had had time to take any notice of the escaping rogues. No doubt they had got back to London long before dawn. As for the affair at Hardington, only twenty or thirty men were arrested. The others all succeeded in eluding capture.

Zingrave's spectacular flight over London had been foiled—but he had gained a sensation that was, perhaps, just as effective. For the whole country—the entire world—was ringing with the startling news that day.

The destruction of the R 202 was sensation enough—but the complete demolition of St. Frank's added greatly to the strength of the sensation.

WORD came during the morning that every boy belonging to St. Frank's was to collect at Bannington Town Hall. Dr. Nicholls was looking haggard and worn and aged when he came upon the platform.

Everybody was there. The masters, the prefects, the seniors, and the juniors. They had all turned up, to a man.

"There is no need for me to dwell upon the tragedy of last night," said the headmaster gravely. "I have called you all together so that I can tell you something of the arrangements that have been tentatively made. Special trains have been chartered, and the entire school will be sent home at once—this very afternoon."

The Head paused, and the school was silent.

"If there can be any consolation in this terrible affair, it is the fact that the school was fully insured," continued the Head, amid a few murmurs of applause. "As for reconstruction, I can say nothing at the moment. But there can be little doubt that the Governors will give the matter their immediate consideration. At the best, however, it will be a matter of months—perhaps a year or more—before our school can be reopened."

"What are we going to do in the meantime, sir?" asked somebody.

"You will all be sent home—and, as quickly as possible, further arrangements will be made," said Dr. Nicholls. "I'm afraid that St. Frank's, as a whole, is no more. You will be sent off to various other schools throughout England. That is all I can say now."

It was a shock to most of the fellows. They were to be disbanded—distributed here, there, and everywhere.

THERE were animated scenes on the platform at Bannington Station that afternoon. Batches of fellows went off in the different trains; and nearly all the River House boys and the Moor View girls were there—having been granted a special holiday on this dramatic occasion. Misery was the chief emotion. It was, indeed, a sorrowful, tragic afternoon.

Nelson Lee and Nipper found themselves together on their way up to London. Rather to Nipper's surprise, Nelson Lee was not sharing the general sorrow. There was a gleam in his eye—a grim set to his jaw—a rigid, determined squaring of his shoulders.

"I can't realise it yet, gov'nor," said Nipper, for the twentieth time. "St. Frank's gone—smashed—destroyed! I just can't believe it."

"The destruction of St. Frank's is a minor matter compared with the menace of the Green Triangle, Nipper," said Nelson Lee quietly.

"A minor matter, gov'nor!"

"The Green Triangle is setting out on a new campaign—and that is of infinitely more importance," replied Nelson Lee. "These brutes intend to terrorise the country. I am in harness again, Nipper! It's going to be a fight—a fight to the finish!"

Nipper's eyes sparkled.

"I am with you, gov'nor!" he said eagerly. "But do you think Zingrave will allow it? You're a marked man, sir. They'll get you—"

"They may get me—but I'm not afraid of them," interrupted Lee grimly. "And while I live, Nipper, I will fight. As for you, Nipper, I am not so sure. You'll have to go back to school—"

"Oh, I say, gov'nor!" protested Nipper. "If you're in harness, I'm in harness!"

"Your schooling must be thought of," said Lee. "I am afraid, young 'un, that you'll have to go to one of the schools that the St. Frank's Governors decide upon."

"Why can't you start a school of your own, sir?" growled Nipper disconsolately. "Weren't you telling me, the other day, that there's a big empty place next to our old

chambers in Gray's Inn Road? A place that used to be a school of music, or something? And now it's for sale, isn't it?"

"I fancy so," said Lee dryly.

"Why couldn't you start a school there?" demanded Nipper. "Make it a sort of detective academy, eh? We'll have Handy and Archie and Travers and some of the other chaps with us. Do our schooling, and get training as detectives at the same time! How's that for an idea?"

Nelson Lee stroked his chin.

"Not at all bad, young un," he replied slowly.

Nipper stared.

"Eh?" he ejaculated. "I—I was only kidding, gov'nor!"

"Many a great idea has been suggested in jest," said Lee thoughtfully. "And this idea of yours, Nipper, deserves further consideration. I will think of it."

"But—but you mean it, sir?" exclaimed Nipper breathlessly. "You mean—a detective academy?"

"Why not?" returned Nelson Lee. "I can imagine that quite a number of boys will be eager to join—especially the sons of those gentlemen who have been victimised by the League of the Green Triangle!"

"By Jove, rather, sir!"

"There is, as you say, a big building for sale right next to our old chambers in Gray's Inn Road," continued Nelson Lee musingly. "It could be soon knocked into shape—within a couple of weeks, I imagine. All the St. Frank's masters are to be sent to various schools, in charge of different batches of boys. It is only right, I suppose, that I should have my own batch."

"But you said that you were going to keep in harness now, sir—to fight the Green Triangle!"

"So I am—and that may be an excellent way of fighting," said Lee. "Not long ago, Nipper, you were telling me that the Green Triangle would not permit me to live. If I make it appear that I am more interested in schoolmastering than in detective work, the Green Triangle may lose interest in me. Don't you understand?"

"By Jove!" breathed Nipper.

"And the idea of a detective academy is a sound one," continued Lee thoughtfully. "The high authorities at Scotland Yard are collecting University men about them nowadays, so why not Public School boys? Public School boys, trained in detective work, would be half-way towards the desired goal even before they entered the precincts of Scotland Yard. Training is everything, Nipper. It would not take long to weed out those boys who would never shine as detectives; the others could remain. From time to time, perhaps, there would be new boys—new pupils for this novel academy."

"Just like a real school, sir!" said Nipper, with breathless interest.

"Just like a real school," nodded Nelson Lee. "Your ordinary education would be attended to, and you would have special training to fit you for the detective force, too. Young man, you have suggested a really brilliant idea."

EVEN then Nipper could hardly believe that Nelson Lee was in earnest.

But out of that more or less facetious suggestion, the detective academy became an established fact.

There was a great deal of activity in Gray's Inn Road during the next week or two.

Much to the relief of the populace, the Green Triangle faded out. After that melodramatic initial opening, nothing further was heard. The police were very busy—according to the newspapers—and arrests were always imminent. Yet, strangely enough, no arrests were made.

Every one of those daring burglaries had been a success; not a single trace had been left behind. And the League, obviously, was satisfied for the time being. In fact, the League remained more or less a myth. Nobody knew who the members were, where they were, or the identity of the leaders. Professor Zingrave was known to be the supreme chief, of course, but Professor Zingrave's whereabouts were as much a mystery as ever.

Nelson Lee was in no way molested. As he had half expected, the Green Triangle leaders were as stunned as anybody by that tragic airship affair. It was taking them some weeks to get over it. And it was in accordance with the practice of all such gangs that they should lie low after bringing off such a successful series of coups.

And during this lull the detective academy came into being.

It was not a large affair. Not many of the boys' parents were ready to admit their sons to such an establishment, but there were notable exceptions.

And Nipper was gratified when he learned from Lee that all his special friends of St. Frank's were included.

There were between twenty and thirty pupils with which to start the academy. Fenton of the Sixth was one. Morrow was another. Biggleswade, too. There were Browne and Stevens of the Fifth, and the Removites included Nipper, Tregellis-West, Watson, Handforth, Church, McClure, Archie Glenthorpe, Fullwood, Travers, Pitt, Waldo, Jimmy Onions, Nick Trotwood, and even Bernard Forrest and Gulliver and Bell. These latter three had never expected to gain admittance, and Gulliver and Bell had only joined because Forrest insisted. Forrest rather liked the idea of living in London, right in the heart of

things. Whether he would ever become a good detective or not, remained to be seen.

It was surprising, perhaps, that Nelson Lee should have allowed these three boys to join. He felt, perhaps, that he would be able to reform them by keeping them under his own eye; perhaps he would be able to make something decent of them. At all events, they were included.

And Willy Handforth and Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon were on the list, too. On the whole, the personnel of the detective academy looked interesting.

IT was a quiet, drab-fronted building which housed the academy. It was right next to Nelson Lee's own chambers in Gray's Inn Road, and there was nothing outwardly to show that any school existed there. Yet inside a great change had taken place during these past two or three weeks.

There was a big class-room, where ordinary lessons would be indulged in; there were comfortable dormitories, private studies for the boys. And most of them were lettered, too, in exactly the same fashion as at St. Frank's. Somehow the boys felt more at home to have things like that.

There was a gymnasium, a big Common-room, a library, a laboratory—everything that the heart of a schoolboy could desire.

It was a very real school here, with Nelson Lee as the sole chief.

The great day came when the boys moved in, when the first day of term, as it were, opened. There were no Etons now. All the boys were attired in ordinary lounge suits. There were not even any special colours, and tweed caps and soft hats were the order. There were no badges—nothing to show that these boys belonged to any kind of academy.

Edgar Fenton, late captain of St. Frank's, had been promoted, for here, in the detective academy, he had the status of assistant master. Morrow and Biggleswade, who were of a similar age, came within the same category. Yet, normally, they would not perform these duties. They would only be called upon on special occasions.

It was a fine wintry morning when the school collected in the big, comfortable class-room, where a cheerful fire blazed in the huge grate. Outside, Gray's Inn Road was bustling with activity, as usual. The nine days' wonder was over. The League of the Green Triangle was already being forgotten by the short-memory public.

"Well, here we are in our new quarters," said Nelson Lee cheerfully. "There's very little I've got to say, young 'uns. I hope this venture will be a success, and whether it is a success largely depends upon you yourselves. You must throw yourselves wholeheartedly into your work. It will not be the same kind of work as at St. Frank's. It will be new—novel; in fact, revolutionary."

"Three cheers for the detective academy!" shouted Handforth eagerly.

"Hurrah!"

"Three cheers for Mr. Lee——"

Crash!

There was a loud splintering of glass, which effectually silenced the cheers. Nelson Lee went swiftly to the broken window and gazed out upon Gray's Inn Road, but there was nothing to arouse his suspicions. He picked up a heavy stone from the floor, and a smile played round the corners of his mouth. Attached to the stone there was a folded paper, held in position by rubber bands.

"One moment, young 'uns," said Nelson Lee. "This may be interesting."

He unfolded the paper, and the first thing he saw was a big green triangle at the top.

"You are being watched," read the passage, written in green printed characters.

"The League is aware of all your movements, and you and your cub detectives will never be allowed to take any action. Keep out of our way, and you will be safe. Interfere with us, and it will mean death!"

Nelson Lee looked up.

"It is only fair that you should hear this," he said gravely. "Listen!"

He read out the message, and there was a deep hush.

"If any of you desire to resign from this academy, you may do so," said Lee. "There is danger ahead, perhaps, and——"

"We're not going to resign, sir!" shouted everybody, in one voice.

"No fear!"

"Down with the Green Triangle!"

"Hurrah!"

"Three cheers for the detective academy!"

"Hurrah!"

And the cheers were given with greater gusto than ever.

"Splendid!" said Nelson Lee, his eyes agleam. "That's the spirit I like! Boys, things have begun to move! The fight is on!"

"The fight is on!" Never has Nelson Lee spoken a truer word. Next week finds the famous detective and his schoolboy assistants in the thick of things. The battle against the League of the Green Triangle wages fast and furious. Look out for the next stunning yarn in this enthralling series; it's entitled "The Triangle of Death!"

MORE ENTHRALLING CHAPTERS of our EXCITING DETECTIVE SERIAL!

THE FOUR-LEGGED EAGLE!



*Opening chapters
retold on page 41.*

Revolution in Abronia if King is not rescued! Ferrers Locke in chase of rebel Kidnappers!

Over the Frontier!

FERRERS LOCKE stood at the window in the private sanctum of Monsieur Flaneau, staring down at the busy streets of Paris. Monsieur Flaneau was one of the most astute detectives employed by the Sûreté, which is the C.I.D. of France.

Jack sat close by the window, fidgeting impatiently. If Locke was impatient, he did not show it; he just stood there, waiting. Monsieur Flaneau was at his desk, with numerous switches and telephones before him. At intervals a bell would ring, or a messenger-boy would come bustling in with a telegram. Monsieur Flaneau would tell Locke the latest message in a voice that had not the slightest emotion in it, and Locke would make no sign that he had heard.

"Not at Havre," said Monsieur Flaneau; "no such car has been seen at Cherbourg or at Calais. What's this?"

The telephone rang, and he began to talk to someone.

"No news at Basle. Here's another. Bordeaux knows nothing. It will be in the south-east, monsieur. What is this? Listen, m'sieur! Four sets of gendarmes' clothes found by the roadside two miles from Lyons!"

Locke spun round sharply.

"We're on the track at last," he said. "Lyons, you said? They are heading for Abronia. Can you close the frontier to them?"

"I will do my best, but they will be in disguise now. That is to say, m'sieur, they will not be masquerading as gendarmes. I can warn the frontier guards to stop all cars answering to our description, but without a definite warrant how can I arrest them?"

"Stop them pending inquiries—delay them!" cried Locke. "That will be enough for my purpose. I know which way they are heading, and I will go after them. I can always 'phone you for more news."

"I am at your service, m'sieur," said Flaneau.

Locke and Jack left the Sûreté, bursting with energy and renewed zeal. They were not acting blindly now, for they had something to go on. Prince Carlos was heading for Abronia!

Locke and Jack boarded their high-powered car, armed with all sorts of permits from the Sûreté, which washed out all speed limits and restrictions for them, and they sped out of Paris en route for the Italian frontier.

Prince Carlos had a good start, but his drive across France could not possibly be so fast as Locke's, because he would never have dared to make himself so conspicuous. Publicity was what he avoided all the time, whereas Locke had no fears of being pulled up by local gendarmes, because Monsieur Flaneau had armed him with permits and full authority to pursue Prince Carlos how and when and where he liked.

Prince Carlos had been forced to make a detour from Boulogne to Lyons in order to miss Paris and its environs. He must have lost time when discarding the gendarme costumes and donning ordinary clothes. And now Locke did not doubt that he was catching up with his quarry, who dared not take the risks that Locke took.

At Lyons, Locke halted long enough to make inquiries about the discarded gendarmes' costumes. What he was told proved that he was on the trail. He 'phoned Flaneau, who confirmed it. The car of Prince Carlos had been reported all along the route towards the Italian frontier.

Locke set out once more, and the risks he took were enough to make a dirt track rider shudder with anticipation. Only one thing mattered: they had to catch up with Prince Carlos.

Lines of gaunt poplars sped backwards as the car sped on. They darted through towns and villages, leaving the people staring after them, open-mouthed. Notified from Lyons, the gendarmes cleared the road for them, and there again they had a distinct advantage over Prince Carlos and his confederates.

It was an important matter—more important than Jack Drake properly understood. Suppose Prince Carlos did get to Abronia, with King Ferdinand as his prisoner? If the Abronians knew that their king was in the power of the man who coveted the throne, they might rise in rebellion to support the man who held the whip-hand. It was exceedingly doubtful which way the public would take action, if any. But Prince Carlos would make the most of the fact that Queen Zita and the Government had deceived the people by saying that King Ferdinand was ill, when he was really a prisoner in the clutches of the prince.

Probably it would mean civil war. Prince Carlos would not gain so much by civil war as he would if he could have bent the King to his will, but it would undoubtedly give him the chance he wanted of getting his revenge on the people who had thwarted him.

Locke felt as if the peace of Abronia, and perhaps other countries, depended upon him, and he was determined not to be beaten if he could help it. The nearer he approached the frontier, the harder he planted his foot on the accelerator.

The road was rough and tortuous, the gradients were severe, and sharp corners unexpected. The car slithered round bends on two wheels, with a precipice waiting on one side for them to slide over to their deaths if Locke made a miscalculation.

More than once they were within an ace of death. They had their running-board scraped by a large lorry; they skidded once on a bend, and nearly capsized as the car mounted the grassy bank by the side of the road. Jack hurled himself across the tonneau to preserve the balance, and in some mysterious way the car did not overturn.

At a level crossing they just got over the metals as the engine of the train shrieked practically on top of them. It was a nerve-racking ride, but the nerves of the people who saw the incidents were racked far more than the nerves of either Locke or Jack. They knew how much depended upon them, and the risks of that mad ride hardly mattered so long as they escaped disaster.

In the villages people fled in all directions. The car came with a roar, swooping round corners in a cloud of dust, thundered between houses, then hummed away across country, with the long road unfolding before them between the blurred poplars.

Mountains loomed before them, which fact in itself told them that the frontier was not far away. They awakened every echo in rock-bound gorges as they began to climb, and scared the sheep in the deep valleys. Eagles wheeled over them and screamed defiance as they climbed over the passes, clattered over bridges, and sang in low gear up dangerous inclines on the mountain-side.

The frontier came nearer and nearer, and somewhere between them and the border were Prince Carlos and his unscrupulous confederates.

Suddenly, as they rounded a bend on a hill, where they could see down into the valley, Jack started to his feet and cried out in exultation.

"There they are, gov'nor! Look! I'd know that old bus anywhere!"

Locke glanced quickly to where Jack was pointing, and then tried to coax a little more speed out of the car. But he was doubtful whether they would overtake their quarry before they reached the frontier.

Gradually they drew closer to that speeding car, and now they could dimly see the occupants. King Ferdinand was in the tonneau, between Prince Carlos and Major Patens. The Duke of Silene sat in front, beside the Grand Seigneur of Perilla, who was at the wheel. And about a mile ahead was the frontier. The coloured warning-posts stood out sharply against the sombre background of the mountains, but there were no soldiers visible. This puzzled Locke; Flaneau had promised to have the rebels' car stopped.

Frowning, Locke urged his car to even greater speed down the hill towards the frontier post, but he could not hope to catch Prince Carlos before he reached the barrier. The distance between them was too great. But he could see all that happened.

The Abronian rebels did not slacken speed. The blare of their defiant horn was borne to Locke's ears on the clear mountain air. The guard came tumbling out, taken unawares by the tremendous speed of the oncoming car. Men shouted hoarsely, but the vehicle of Prince Carlos refused to stop.

Again and again that horn awoke the echoes, and the car dashed over the frontier. One of the guard was knocked across the road and lay under a bush, in a queer, limp heap. Rifles cracked and spat fire; bullets hummed after the car. But just beyond the frontier post the road twisted and turned in a way that gave a man with a gun very little chance of a hit.

But if Carlos had escaped them, they had no intention of letting the next car go through. They came with a rope from the guard-house, and stopped the road effectually. Locke applied the brakes, and the locked wheels sent up a shower of stones as he came to an abrupt standstill.

"Dolts!" he exclaimed angrily in French. "What will M'sieur Flaneau say to this? You let them through!"

The officer shrugged his shoulders.

"What would you have done?" he said carelessly. "They came at such a speed, they were here before we knew of it. Your permits, m'sieur?"

Monsieur Flaneau had provided Locke with papers that proved to the guard that he was not to be delayed a single moment, and the officer was profuse in his apologies. The rope was drawn aside quickly, and when they got going again Jack had relieved Locke at the steering-wheel.

Once more Prince Carlos had gained on them, but not a lot; and the mere fact that they were so close on his heels proved that their car was superior to his.

Jack let the car rip once more along the winding, tortuous road, now the chase had become more exciting than ever. Any turn might bring the quarry in sight again. The slightest mishap would spell absolute defeat, for they had barely twenty miles to go across that arm of Italian territory in order to reach Abronia.

Jack might not have been quite such an expert driver as Ferrers Locke, but he was clever enough to keep that car going at her greatest speed, and to gain time wherever he could on gradients and curves.

Once more they came to a straight stretch of road across a valley, and the car of Prince Carlos was travelling along only a quarter of a mile ahead of them.

The sight nerved Jack to an extra effort. He coaxed the engine of the car, and got just that extra turn of speed that made all the difference. They overhauled their quarry relentlessly.

But even if they caught up with the car of Prince Carlos, Locke would have three desperate men to handle, and Jack would not be able to help him any more than Perilla would be able to help the Prince. Jack wondered what Locke would do, but he dared not speak or take his attention from the road. Disaster now would be too awful to contemplate.

But Locke knew what to do. Very few circumstances caught him unprepared, and then he was never at a loss for very long. Now he stood and leant forward on the windscreen. He took his revolver from his pocket and levelled it carefully, aiming at the off-side back tyre of Prince Carlos' car.

Jack waited for the report, but it seemed ages in coming. Locke was steadying himself against the swaying and reeling of the racing car. He knew he had to succeed, and he was as cool and calm as if he were taking a photograph in a peaceful English lane.

Jack sensed what Locke wanted, and kept the car on the crown of the road, holding her as rigid and as steady as he could. Then—crack!—Locke's weapon spat fire, and the off-side tyre on the other car suddenly flattened.

The vehicle lurched sickeningly and slithered towards the side of the road, but Perilla brought it straight again, steadied her, and kept on, although the speed of the car was considerably less.

HOW THE STORY STARTED.

FERRERS LOCKE, the world-famous London detective, and his boy assistant,

JACK DRAKE, are travelling on the Underground when they witness the murder of a foreigner. Following investigations, they discover that the deed was committed by the Grand Seigneur, or Count, of Perilla, working on the instructions of

PRINCE CARLOS OF ABRONIA. Carlos' ambition is to become king of Abronia, and already he has kidnapped the reigning monarch, King Ferdinand, and brought him over to England. The murdered man was an emissary of Queen Zita of Abronia, who has followed to rescue her husband; hence the man's removal. Locke is commissioned to restore King Ferdinand to his country. After many exciting adventures, during which they come near to death many times, Locke and Jack succeed in rescuing the king. They all three set out to fly to Abronia, but Carlos gives chase and shoots down their machine. Ferdinand is again captured by the conspirators, and they escape in a motor-car. The detective and his assistant go to the police headquarters at Paris in the hope that the authorities will be able to tell them in which direction Carlos is escaping.

(Now read on.)

Major Patens' angry face appeared over the hood, and he blazed away with his Colt. The bullets sang overhead, for luckily the bumping car in front made it difficult to fire straight.

There was great agitation in the tonneau of the rebels' car. The occupants appeared to be fighting among themselves. Locke grinned at the sight. King Ferdinand knew now how close his rescuers were, and he was trying to help them. He was struggling and fighting, not so much because he hoped to escape, but to keep the traitors so busy that they could not oppose Ferrers Locke so easily.

In the meantime, Locke still leant on the windscreen of his car, taking careful aim with his revolver. Although Major Patens continued to blaze away, Locke stood as firm as a rock, refusing to shoot until he felt reasonably certain of a bullseye. The major was flinging his ammunition away recklessly. He had no chance of registering a hit with his car bumping along wildly.

The speed of the rebels' car had diminished so much now that Jack could have drawn alongside at any time if only the width of the road had permitted it. Perilla, at the wheel, knew that, and steered accordingly.

But Locke was taking careful aim. He fired, and the near-side tyre flattened. Again the car lurched dangerously and slid off the crown of the road. Perilla refused to stop. He kept the car going, but it grated and bumped along alarmingly, and try as he might he could not keep the car on a steady course. He risked an alarming skid, with possibly a crash that would capsize the car, at every bend.

Locke spoke crisply to Jack.

"Take me alongside, and stay alongside till I shout to you to accelerate. You understand?"

Jack nodded grimly, and the car shot forward. Perilla strove to keep his vehicle on to the crown of the road, but the camber was too much for him, and his flattened rear tyres were causing the car to lurch about.

Jack manipulated the wheel with great skill and nerve, and he sent Locke's powerful car shooting forward. The detective was clambering back over the seat into the tonneau. He stood there waiting, swaying in unison with the swaying of the car.

King Ferdinand of Abronia saw him, and fought furiously with the rebels. Locke might have used his revolver, but he meant to rescue the King without risking his life, if possible.

He shouted to Jack:

"Bring her alongside. I'm going to drag him into this car."

Jack drew in his breath. How could Locke, single-handed, drag the King from one car to the other while both were in motion, and while there were three of the rebels to prevent him doing it?

It seemed sheer madness, yet what else could be done? Apparently the King guessed Locke's intentions, for he was still on his feet, and the combined activities of Major Patens, Prince Carlos, and the Duke of Silene could not keep him seated. He fought them madly, gallantly. The coming of Locke's car had fired him to fresh exertions, and he was risking all on this one last attempt to escape from the clutches of Prince Carlos.

The detective shouted at Jack:

"Now, step on it, Jack! Bring her alongside!"

Jack obeyed. The powerful car forged ahead, slithered off the crown of the road, and shot in between the hedge and the rebels' car. They were running side by side, engines roaring. It was now or never!

Greatly daring, Jack glanced sideways, and then his blood ran cold. The Duke of Silene had a knife in his hand, poised ready to hurl at Locke!

* * * * *

NO one had ever paid a deal of attention to the Duke of Silene, for all along he had never been of much account; but now Jack knew that the duke might finish things for Ferrers Locke. One quick throw, and that would be the end of the famous detective—the end of Jack, too, to say nothing of King Ferdinand of Abronia!

Of course, Jack could save the life of Ferrers Locke quite easily by reducing the speed of his car, allowing the car of the traitors to draw ahead again. But Ferrers Locke would not thank Jack for that. There was too much at stake!

It was agony for Jack to hold the powerful car on her course, racing side by side with the car of the rebels, knowing that the Duke of Silene was about to launch that keen knife at Locke's heart.

Jack had all his work to do to keep the cars from colliding. There was barely six inches between the running-boards of them as they sped onwards.

King Ferdinand was still struggling in the tonneau with Prince Carlos and Major Patens. Locke stood erect, preparatory to leaping on the running-board of the kidnappers' car.

Out of the corner of his eye, Jack saw the duke bring his hand back. The rays of the sun glinted on the blade of the knife!

Is Ferrers Locke to be foiled just when success seems to be his? Is he to become a victim of the snaky — There would seem to be no chance for the famous detective. And yet—amazing, startling things happen in next week's gripping instalment of this magnificent serial, chums!

The St. Frank's LEAGUE GOSSIP



THE CHIEF OFFICER CHATS WITH HIS CHUMS

The Chief Officer always welcomes letters from his fellow-members of the St. Frank's League; he is always willing to help and to give advice. Here's his address: The Chief Officer, "The Nelson Lee Library," Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

Your Opinions, Please!

HALLO, fellow League-ites! Here we are again—still going as strong as ever and entirely unruffled by the fact that the Old Paper has this week embarked on a new programme of stories. And just to be in the fashion, I decided that a change in the title of our own little corner would not do any harm. So from now onwards we shall meet in "The St. Frank's League Gossip."

Before going on to discuss this week's League topics I just want to ask you one thing. I want you all—and this includes every reader of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY—to write and tell me your opinion of this issue of the Old Paper; your opinion of the new type of stories featuring Nipper, Handforth and the other favourite St. Frank's characters as schoolboy detectives.

In the meantime, I can promise you that some really corking yarns are on the way. Professor Cyrus Zingrave and his League of the Green Triangle are to prove formidable foes for Nelson Lee and his youthful assistants; their stirring encounters, described in vivid style by popular Edwy Searles Brooks, will thrill readers week by week.

State Your Age!

AND now to business. David Chalmers, of Monkseaton, raises an interesting point in connection with the League. He suggests that readers should state their ages when applying for pen friends through the "Correspondents Wanted" feature. Otherwise a fellow of over twenty may find himself writing to a boy of twelve or so—which is likely to prove somewhat unsatisfactory in many cases. I agree with my Monkseaton chum. There is certainly a lot to be said for his suggestion, so perhaps readers will kindly state their ages when applying for correspondents in future.

He's Lost His Badge!

FRED H. ARNOLD, of Barnsbury, London, is a comparative newcomer in the League ranks. He succeeded in getting three new readers for the Old Paper. Then he lost his badge—and since

then has been unable to obtain any more supporters. So Fred has come to the conclusion that this is due to the loss of his badge. Quite likely, too.

I have made a point of sending Fred a new badge immediately.

A New Club For Ireland!

HERE'S an item of news that will interest Irish readers in particular. I have received a letter from Desmond V. J. McIlroy, Belfast, informing me that he would like to start a correspondence club.

Desmond is bursting with ideas, and he feels confident that his club, once it gets started, will be a great success. One point intrigues me. My chum says that members of his club will have a chance of winning prizes. This certainly sounds attractive. I should like Desmond to write and let me know the details of his scheme. For readers who are interested and would like full particulars, they should write to my chum at 204-206, Donegall Avenue, Belfast, Ulster.

Play Up, St. Frank's!

HERE'S another reader who has lost his St. Frank's League badge. This catastrophe occurred to George Whitton, of Arbroath, while he was playing football. A new badge has already been forwarded to you, George.

I was interested to hear that this reader plays for a club which calls itself St. Frank's. All the players are supporters of the Old Paper; most of them belong to the League.

A Film Fan!

WILLIAM REDFERN, whose address is 26, Coppice Side, Swadlincote, Nr. Burton-on-Trent, is very interested in films. He would like to correspond with readers living in Elstree, London, Los Angeles and New York who could tell him all about the movies.

THE CHIEF OFFICER.

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED

Sydney Cox, 98, Crossing, King's Road, Kirton, near Boston, Lines, wants those interested in stamps to write to him.

W. Griffiths, Drums, S.W. Borders, Victoria Barracks, Portsmouth, wants to hear from Bob Whaitte (Adelaide) and Hugo (Subiaco).

W. A. Taylor, 65, Studland Road, Hanwell, London, W.7, wants N.L.L., Nos. 1-133, old series, also No. 553, 3d. a copy, plus postage.

G. Ratcliffe, 236, Upper Richmond Road, Putney, London, S.W.15, offers N.L.L., new series.

B. M. Howard, 22, High Street, Harpenden, Herts, wants correspondents in America and Australia. He is keen on cycling.

B. Miller, 96, Fourth Street, Dunedin, New Zealand, desires correspondents in South Africa, Australia, and England.

Chas. Sullivan, 17, Patterson Street, Middle Park, S.C.6, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, would like correspondents.

Alan R. Lambourn, The Corner Stores, Shinfield, Reading, Berks, wants correspondents for his club.

Miss Pearl Price, Newlyn, 59, Blandford street, Footscray W.12, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, desires correspondents in Canada and South Africa.

Miss Ida G. Locke, Ferndale, Liss, Hants, wants correspondents in the British Isles, Africa, Brazil, and France.

V. G. B. Hill, "Burrington," King's Road, High Barnet, Herts, wishes to correspond with readers interested in poetry and literature.

Reginald D. Beard, 16, Wilford Terrace, Meadows, Nottingham, wants to correspond with Scouts and those interested in bookkeeping, rambling, photograph collecting, etc.

Raymond Padmore (16), "Carlton," Woodlands Road, Woodlands, Hants, wants correspondents in England and America.

S. Crocker, 33, Pennsylvania Road, Ellacombe, Torquay, wants issues of the N.L.L. containing the "Onions Circus" series, also some copies between Nos. 482 and 540, old series.

Arthur Fitch, 12, Tyndall Road, Leyton, London, E.10, would like stamp-collecting correspondents in U.S.A. and South Africa.

Michael Schultz, 1, Marlborough Avenue, Glebe Point, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia, wants correspondents anywhere, including South America.

Jas. Strachan, 7, High Street, Maybole, Ayrshire, N.B., would like to hear from stamp collectors in Europe and U.S.A.

Albert Simmons, 350, Claremont Road, Rusholme, Manchester, wishes to hear from cyclists, ages 15-16.

Howard J. Panter, 29, Elmfield Road, Balham, London, S.W.12, wants N.L.L., old and new series; would buy or exchange stamps.

Douglas Tanner, 78, Napier Road, East Ham, London, E.6, desires correspondents in Africa and Canada.

Sidney Buckingham, 2, Arlington Road, Ashford, Middlesex, wants to form a stamp club, and will

welcome letters from those interested; age limit 16.

Bert Pountney, 35, King Richard Street, Coventry, wants correspondents, ages 14-21.

Brendan Moran, Shannon View, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim, Ireland, wishes to correspond with readers in England interested in soccer and rugby, ages 17-18. Also wishes to hear from R. T. Stopel.

H. J. Anthony, 10, Bonham Road, Brixton Hill, London, S.W.2, offers N.L.L., new series, 1-180.

James E. Butcher, 102, Portman Buildings, Lisson Grove, Marylebone, London, N.W.1, wants a correspondent in Australia interested in sports, age 13-14.

Chas. A. Boden, 16, Farley Street, Peckham, London, S.E.15, desires correspondents in France and America, ages 17-18.

D. Grogan, 38, Dresden Road, Highgate, London, N.19, offers N.L.L., new series, from No. 110.

W. A. Smith, 91, Church Street, Luton, Beds, wants correspondents in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand.

A. E. Starsmore, Finchley Road, Watworth, London, S.E.17, wishes to hear from those interested in guinea pigs; also from readers eager to join a correspondence club.

R. T. Olsen, 28, Avenue Normandie, Freshaye Estate, Sea Point, Cape Town, South Africa, wants back numbers of the N.L.L.; also correspondents.

Arthur Garcia, 58, Doggett Road, Catford, London, S.E.6, would like to hear from stamp collectors.

Felix Palmer, 45, Spring Street, Preston, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wants to hear from readers interested in school stories, ages 12-14.

Roy Field (15), 52, Bellevue Street, Arncliffe, N.S.W., Australia, wishes to hear from stamp and coin collectors.

R. R. M. Russell, 150b, Union Street, Southwark, London, S.E.1, wants N.L.L., new series, 1-77. Will buy or exchange stamps.

Fred. Knowles, 204, Carlton Hill, Carlton, Notts, wants correspondents.

Write for complete list.



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