

THE GREATEST THRILL STORY OF THE WEEK—INSIDE!

The NELSON LEE

2d



The
TRIANGLE
of
DEATH!

An enthralling long complete yarn of sensational mystery and adventure featuring Nelson Lee, the world-famous detective, and his schoolboy assistants.

New Series No. 2.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY

February 1st, 1930.

STARTS WITH A BANG—SENSATION AFTER SENSATION—



The Triangle of Death

Another episode in the grim battle between Nelson Lee and his cub detectives, and the League of the Green Triangle!

A magnificent long complete yarn
by
**EDWY
SEARLES BROOKS.**

CHAPTER I.

Murder!

MORSE RODWAY, alias the Scorpion, worked with a speed and precision which was almost uncanny.

A minute earlier he had walked down the long, carpeted second-floor corridor in the Piccadilly Palace Hotel, and now he had halted outside the door of Room No. 205. In a flash he inserted a key, tried it, and then put it aside. He tried another—and another. The fifth attempt was successful. The wards in the lock turned, and the door opened.

All this within a space of about seven seconds.

Morse Rodway closed the door, and stood for a moment or two in the dark. He put the skeleton keys back in his pocket, and smiled to himself. He had never held a very high opinion of hotel door locks, anyway.

He now switched on the light, looked keenly at the window, and saw that the curtains were drawn. The Scorpion was utterly unlike the accepted type of professional burglar. He was a man of medium size, clean-shaven, keen, immaculately attired, gentlemanly. His lounge suit fitted him to perfection, his shoes gleamed, and his spats were irreproachable. This man had won an international fame for his cleverness in robberies of daring. He was known to carry a gun, and more than once, when cornered, he had used it with deadly effect. This ferocity of his, indeed, had earned him the name of the Scorpion.

His eyes gleamed as he located a small modern safe against the further wall of the hotel apartment. He moved nearer, drawing a close-fitting pair of gloves on to his hands as he did so. There was an almost contemptuous light in his eyes as he surveyed the safe.

"Within ten minutes, baby, you'll be ripped wide open," he said pleasantly.

OUTSIDE, a fog was creeping over London. It was a raw winter's evening, and, after a fine day, the atmosphere of the Metropolis had become murky. Piccadilly Circus, not a stone's throw from the big hotel, was a place of half-hidden lights and slow-moving traffic. A taxicab wormed its way out of the run of the traffic and came to a standstill outside the imposing entrance of the Piccadilly Palace Hotel. Mr. Isaac Lowenstein, short, double-chinned and portly, alighted. He was carrying a stout leather satchel, and he entered the big foyer of the hotel with brisk footsteps.

"No. 205," he said, as he went to the desk for his key.

Mr. Lowenstein went upstairs leisurely. The lift was not handy at the moment. Arriving at Room No. 205 he inserted the key in the lock.

Within the room, the Scorpion acted like lightning.

He had had a brief warning as he heard the approaching footsteps. When the key rattled in the lock he knew that there was no time to be lost. Almost with one movement he switched off the light and then slid noiselessly behind the window curtains.

—THRILL AFTER THRILL—FINISHES WITH A SMASHING CLIMAX!



Handforth and Archie Glenthorne were taken unawares as the man dropped into the room from the trapdoor above.

Mr. Lowenstein, entering, had no indication that there was an intruder in his room. He pressed the light switch, closed the door, and placed his satchel on the table. After taking off his overcoat and hat, he then unlocked the leather satchel.

Behind the curtain the Scorpion deftly and silently slipped a black silken mask over the top of his face. Through a chink in the curtains he was able to watch all Mr. Isaac Lowenstein's movements. And as Mr. Lowenstein had his back to those curtains, the intruder had all the advantage of the situation.

Mr. Lowenstein opened the satchel, and removed two small leather bags. He weighed them in his hand reflectively, and then opened one of the leather bags. It contained a large number of smallish, dull-looking stones. Any expert in such matters, however, would have known at the first glance that these stones were uncut diamonds. Diamonds, moreover, of remarkable quality.

It is true that Mr. Lowenstein had only recently arrived from South Africa, where diamonds are mined; but Mr. Lowenstein was the accredited agent of the Cape Fruit Marketing Company, Limited, and his business in England was ostensibly in connection with fruit.

He pulled the strings of the soft leather bag, and closed it. Then he took both the bags, rose to his feet, and moved over towards the safe. There was nothing here to show him that the

safe had already been tampered with. Mr. Morse Rodway, interrupted in his task, had left no signs.

The safe wasn't so small, after all. When Mr. Lowenstein opened it, the interior proved to be fairly spacious. There were no shelves or compartments.

As Mr. Lowenstein was about to put the two little leather bags in the safe, he glanced round quickly. There had been no audible sound, but perhaps he sensed that he was not alone. He was just in time to see the Scorpion springing at him—a lithe figure with a masked face.

Thud!

Before Mr. Lowenstein could make any outcry—in fact, while he was drawing his breath in with a sharp, hissing intake—the butt of the Scorpion's automatic pistol came down with grim effect upon the stout little man's head. He crumpled up without a sound, falling to his knees, and half-pitching into the open safe.

"Quite neat," commented the Scorpion. "But if you will come back before you're expected, you must suffer the consequences."

As cool as ice, and in no way disconcerted by what had just happened, he picked up the two leather bags, placed them on the table, and then bundled the unfortunate Mr. Isaac Lowenstein completely into the safe. He shut the door with a soft metallic thud, and locked it.

There was something dreadfully cool and efficient about Morse Rodway's mode of procedure. He had dismissed Mr. Lowenstein almost contemptuously. And now he stood by the table, opening the leather bags and looking into them eagerly.

"You're worth all the trouble, my pretties," he murmured complacently. "Very obliging of old man Lowenstein to turn up in this way and save me so much trouble."

He put the bags carefully into his pockets, and then he slowly took his gloves off. He gave a searching glance round the room, as though to satisfy himself that he had left no clue to his identity.

He was convinced that he was perfectly safe. He had played his game carefully. All the way from South Africa he had followed Mr. Lowenstein, and he had only made one slight miscalculation.

Waiting until Mr. Lowenstein had gone out, he had believed that the diamonds would be in Mr. Lowenstein's apartment. But what did it matter? The unfortunate gentleman had obligingly returned, and had saved the Scorpion a deal of unnecessary work.

The intruder was about to remove his mask, when his attention suddenly became fixed. He stared at the door which communicated with Mr. Lowenstein's bedroom. There were two apartments in this suite—a sitting-room and a bedroom. The communicating door was slightly ajar.

The Scorpion knew perfectly well that it had not been ajar a minute earlier; and when he had first made his entry he had satisfied himself that the bedroom was empty. Nobody had come in but himself and Mr. Lowenstein. There was another door in the bedroom, however, leading out into the same corridor. Had one of the hotel servants entered?

The Scorpion gripped his automatic, and prepared to tiptoe towards the bedroom door. But before he could move, the bedroom door was suddenly flung wide open, and a man stood there with a small nickel-plated revolver in his grasp.

"Hands up!" he said tensely.

Thud!

It wasn't an explosion. It was more like the sound given by an efficient airgun. A cloud of smoke came from the barrel of the Scorpion's automatic, and the man in the doorway uttered a loud, piercing scream, and toppled over.

The Scorpion had taken no chances!

In that one split second he had assumed that the detectives were on his track, and with him it had been a question of who should fire first. It was a habit of Morse Rodway's never to hesitate—and he had pulled his trigger on the instant.

This other man's surprising appearance had unnerved the Scorpion, however. He had not blundered in the sudden emergency—he had fired first—but his usually cool nerve was shattered.

There was no chance of anybody having heard that dull report from the silenced automatic; but that awful scream had been appallingly audible. Anybody passing along the corridor might have heard it. There would be inquiries—the hotel people would come—

The Scorpion realised, with a momentary sense of panic, that he might be trapped. Striding to the door, he switched off the light, seized the door handle, and quickly passed out into the corridor. A frightened-looking maid, in the neat uniform of the hotel, was standing there. Obviously, she had heard that scream, and she was scared and puzzled. Now she gave one look at Morse Rodway, and every atom of colour fled from her pretty face. She ran down the corridor, shrieking wildly.

And such was the Scorpion's disturbed state of mind that he did not even know why the maid was so terrified. Morse Rodway, in a word, had completely forgotten that he was still wearing his black silk mask!

CHAPTER 2.

The Cub Detectives I

NELSON LEE, the famous criminologist, paced across his comfortable, well-lit consulting-room, and halted in front of Sir Meredith's chair.

"We are only at the beginning," he declared grimly. "You tell me that Scotland Yard has made little or no headway. I am not surprised, Sir Meredith. Professor

Zingrave is one of the cleverest criminals of the age. He possesses a master brain. He is a man of absolute genius. His organising ability is little short of amazing."

"Do you really think that Zingrave is so dangerous?"

"I don't think—I know," retorted Nelson Lee. "I have met Zingrave; I have talked with him on more occasions than one. His personality is gripping—magnetic—even hypnotic. He gets men to obey his will with little or no difficulty. Professor Zingrave is a very real menace to society, and his present activities are startling."

Sir Meredith Foster, K.C.B., of the Home Office, shook his head in a troubled way.

"I believe you, Mr. Lee," he said quietly. "The whole thing is disturbing—disquieting in the extreme. But what can we do? The League of the Green Triangle, so far as we can discover, is more or less of a myth. During the past few weeks the Yard men have kept a close watch on all the known habitual criminals. None of them appear to be in any way associated with this infernal League. Whichever way we turn, we draw a blank."

Nelson Lee did not reply for some moments. He was thinking. Outside, the rumble of the traffic in Gray's Inn Road was audible through the gathering fog of the winter's evening. Within the consulting-room all was cheerful. The lights were bright, the fire flickered and crackled.

"The League has made no move since that startling affair of the airship R202, some weeks ago," said Lee, at length. "But make no mistake, Sir Meredith—the League will spring another surprise before long. Professor Zingrave has been checked, but I venture to suggest that the check will only be temporary."

"You mean that the airship stunt went wrong?"

"Certainly it went wrong," said Lee. "Zingrave received a very nasty shock that night. It was his intention to take the R 202 over London. It was to be the beginning of his terrorist campaign. But, as you know, there was an accident; the airship caught on fire in mid-air, and Zingrave and his chief lieutenants only barely escaped with their lives."

"And you were on that airship at the time, Mr. Lee," said Sir Meredith gravely. "Your own escape was far more remarkable than Zingrave's. He descended by parachute before there was any real danger—and he succeeded in getting clear. But you came down in the burning airship."

"A tragic affair altogether," commented Nelson Lee. "Zingrave's original idea, after he found me on board, was to drop me to my death on St. Frank's College. And, by a cruel caprice of fate, the burning airship fell on St. Frank's, with the result that the entire school was destroyed."

"Wasn't that sufficiently sensational for Zingrave's purpose?"

"It wasn't what Zingrave intended," said Lee. "It was sensational, I'll admit—but Zingrave's idea was to cruise over London and to terrorise the population by the dropping of noisy, but non-destructive bombs. That programme went wrong, and I dare say it has taken Zingrave some weeks to reorganise. At any-hour now, Sir Meredith, we may look out for the next move. And when it does come, it will be spectacular—and drastic."

"The newspapers are getting nasty," said Sir Meredith, with a frown. "They are asking awkward questions—they are making caustic comments. And, so far, we have been unable to do anything of material use. It is a very unsatisfactory state of affairs. I sometimes wonder if the League of the Green Triangle is, indeed, as powerful and as elaborately organised as you believe."

"Time will show," said Lee. "My own life has been threatened, and at any moment the League may attempt to murder me. I am not afraid. If I am to die, I shall die. But while I live I shall never cease to pit my wits and my energies against those of Professor Zingrave."

"Talking of the destruction of St. Frank's reminds me of something," said Sir Meredith. "The Home Secretary expressly instructed me to convey his warmest approval of your newly-formed Academy."

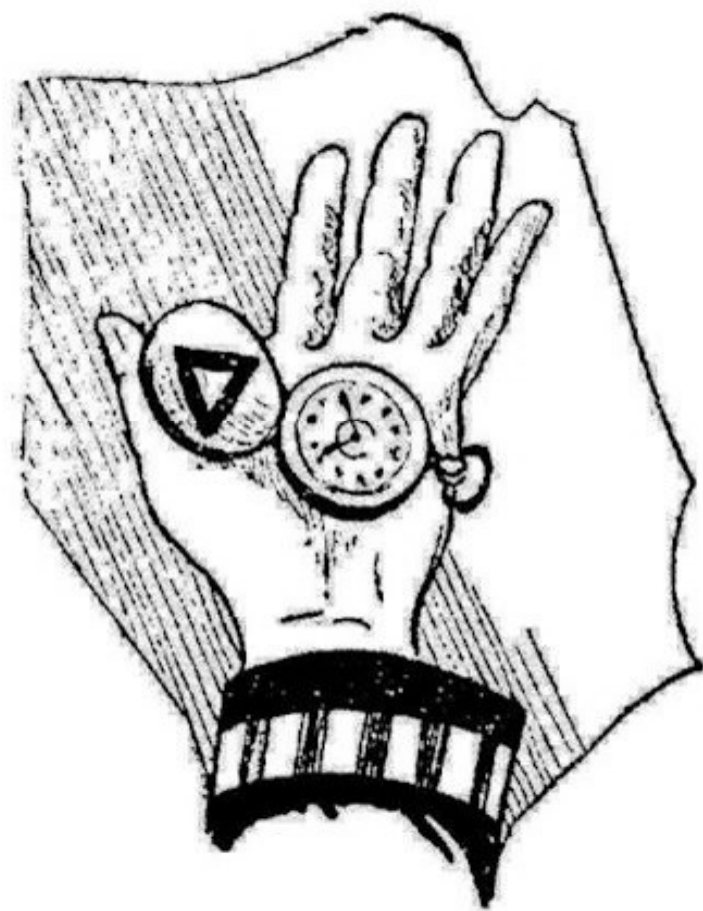
Nelson Lee smiled.

"It is really a subsidiary of St. Frank's, as we might say," he remarked. "All the boys of the school have been distributed. They have been sent to other big schools in the south of England. But twenty or thirty boys are under my own care. They are here in this academy of mine. As a former Housemaster of St. Frank's, I felt that it was my duty——"

"Quite so," interrupted the Home Office official. "But your interest now is not really with St. Frank's, Mr. Lee. And this Detective Academy of yours is something special—something different. Your object, I believe, is to train these boys in the art of crime detection."

"That is so."

"The Home Secretary is enthusiastic about the idea—and, for that matter, so am I," said Sir Meredith. "At this very moment the Chief Commissioner of Police is surrounding himself with young men fresh from the Universities—young men with brains and ability. They will, I believe, form the future Flying Squad—the future personnel of the C.I.D. The Home Secretary would like you to run this Detective Academy of yours in a semi-official way, if you know what I mean."



"I think I do," replied Lee. "The boys who graduate from my detective school are to be drafted, as they are required, into the C.I.D., and into the Flying Squad?"

"Exactly," said the other. "That is the Home Secretary's idea—and the Chief Commissioner is in full agreement. Boys who are trained by you, Mr. Lee—and who graduate from your academy—will be the very type of young fellow we require."

Nelson Lee smiled.

"I think I may promise you, then, Sir Meredith, that there is a number of budding C.I.D. and Flying Squad men under my care," he said dryly.

AFTER Sir Meredith Foster had gone, Nelson Lee went to his desk and lifted the receiver of a small private telephone.

Edgar Fenton, late captain of St. Frank's, answered.

"Any orders, sir?" he asked eagerly.

"Nothing much, Fenton," said Lee. "I want you to get all the boys together in the Common Room. I shall be there within five minutes."

"O.K., Chief," said Fenton promptly.

It had been Handforth who had started the "O.K., Chief" habit. He had heard it somewhere in an American talking film, and it had struck him as being short and crisp and snappy. "O.K., Chief" was now the usual answer when any of the boys took orders from Nelson Lee.

Fenton went out of his comfortable little study and found himself in a short, wide corridor.

The Detective Academy was situated next door to Nelson Lee's famous chambers in Gray's Inn Road. Outwardly, there was nothing whatever to show that this rather drab, commonplace building was, in reality, an establishment of extraordinary interest.

It housed between twenty and thirty boys—of ages ranging from about thirteen to eighteen—who were directly under Nelson Lee's control. All the boys had come from St. Frank's. A few of them were seniors, but the majority had belonged to the Remove or Fourth. One or two were even fags. In this new school of theirs, however, they were all of equal status—with the exceptions of Fenton, Morrow, and Biggleswade, lately of the St. Frank's Sixth. These three had certain privileges, but they seldom exercised them.

There were no ordinary lessons, as at St. Frank's. Most of the school work was done in the privacy of the various studies. The comfortable class-room was used, generally, for instruction in detective work. The boys were more or less placed on their honour to go ahead with their ordinary school studies, and, so far, they had done exceedingly well.

This school was a self-contained establishment. The boys worked here, slept here, and had their leisure here. There were no restrictions as to hours; there was no question of breaking bounds; there was no fixed time for going to bed, or rising. But never once had Nelson Lee found it necessary to admonish any of his pupils for late rising, or for taking any kind of advantage of their freedom. They were on their honour, and they were staunch. In fact, every boy was so keen on "making good" in the wide field of crime detection that there was no time for frivolity. They were held together by a bond of good-fellowship, and their loyalty to Nelson Lee was absolute.

The Detective Academy was very much like a club, and the various members were ever ready, at a moment's notice, to go out "on the job." Unfortunately, there had been no real jobs as yet. This novel school had really only just started, and Nelson Lee had found no occasion to use any of his youthful assistants.

The boys felt that they still belonged to St. Frank's. There were no strangers amongst them—they were all old Saints. Their housekeeper, too, was Mrs. Poulter—who had recently been in command of things in the Ancient House at St. Frank's. Even the page-boy had been imported. Tubbs was very proud of his new appointment. Josh Cuttle, who had been the head porter at St. Frank's, was now the general factotum of the Detective Academy.

FENTON put his head into various studies and briefly told the occupants that they were to collect at once in the Common Room. These studies were lettered in the same style as at St. Frank's. Study A, for example, was occupied by Bernard Forrest and Gulliver and Bell; Study C by Nipper and Tregellis-West and Watson; Study D by Handforth and Church and McClure; and so on.

The boys collected at once, eager and bubbling with anticipation. None of them was dressed in Etons now; they were mostly attired in blue serge or tweed lounge suits. And somehow they looked older.

"Anything doing, Fenton?" asked Fullwood eagerly.

"Don't know yet," replied Fenton. "The Chief wants us here, so it looks pretty hopeful."

"Absolutely," murmured Archie Glenthorne, as he sank into one of the easy-chairs. "Good gad! A spot of work, what?"

The Common Room was big, airy, and comfortable. It was like a great clubroom. There were easy-chairs dotted about everywhere—big bookshelves filled with volumes. Magazines and newspapers were strewn on the tables. Shaded electric lights glowed here and there. A bright fire blazed in the grate. There was nothing to indicate that this place was, after all, the Common Room of a school.

Nelson Lee came in with a brisk step. He looked round at the eager faces, and smiled.

"No good calling for volunteers, I suppose—because you'd all volunteer in a body," he said dryly. "As a matter of fact, I want to try a little experiment this evening. There's a fog coming over London, and the opportunity is a good one."



The man at the safe turned just in time to see a masked figure leaping at him with upraised revolver.

"Anything really important, gov'nor?" asked Nipper.

"I'm afraid it's not a case, if that's what you mean," replied Nelson Lee. "No: merely a lesson. I want to give some of you youngsters some practice in shadowing."

He looked round again, and nodded.

"You, Nipper, you, Glenthorne, you, Handforth, and you, Willy," he said. "Four of you will be sufficient for this particular demonstration. There'll be nothing hard in this game."

"Game?" repeated Handforth, disappointed. "Then we're not going to shadow a real crook?"

"Unfortunately, real crooks are disobliging people, and they won't appear conveniently when we require them," replied Nelson Lee solemnly. "No, Handforth; you are to shadow me."

"What ho!" murmured Archie, getting to his feet. "Something in the good old detective line?"

"I am about to set forth on a walk in the gathering fog," said Lee. "You will shadow me, Nipper, Glenthorne will shadow you, Handforth will shadow Glenthorne, and Willy will shadow

Handforth. Is that clear? You are to try to keep in touch continually, and I shall do my utmost to elude you. I want to see how you youngsters get on at this particular kind of work."

"Good egg!" said Handforth breathlessly. "Let's get started, sir."

William Napoleon Browne sighed.

"Am I to take it, Brother, that I do not appear in this particular act?" he asked sadly.

"I am afraid so, Browne," smiled Nelson Lee. "This shadowing lesson is for the younger boys. Your turn will come some other time."

"Let us hope that when it does come it will be a genuine job, and not make-believe," said Browne. "I am champing at the bit."

"You will give me fifty yards start, Nipper, and then you must attempt to keep me in sight," said Lee. "The others must give you fifty yards start, and so on. In case of failure, you are

WONDERFUL FREE GIFTS COMING SOON—

all to report outside the Piccadilly Palace Hotel at nine o'clock. That will be an excellent

rendezvous, because it is brilliantly lighted and there is ample space on the pavement. You understand? Good! Then I'll be getting along."

THE "game" proved to be exciting and interesting to the juniors. It was novel and exhilarating.

Nipper's task was not so hard, for he was well versed in the art of shadowing. Archie and Handforth and Willy, however, had all their work cut out to keep in touch.

The fog was thicker now, and at this particular hour of the evening the City streets were filled with home-going City workers.

Nelson Lee took a roundabout route. He turned into Holborn, branched off into Kingsway, reached the Strand, then up Bedford Street, doubling back towards Long Acre, and so into the labyrinth of streets in the neighbourhood of the West End.

He used every subterfuge in order to throw Nipper off the trail—and Nipper, in turn, did the same. Archie Glenthorne and the others required all their wits—they had to be on the alert every second. They concentrated cleverly, too. In spite of the fog, and the wiles of Lee, they stuck to their men.

It was only chance that took Lee past the Piccadilly Palace Hotel. He had reached Piccadilly Circus and was going up Regent Street, intending to double back before long in an endeavour to shake off his shadower. He had a private idea that long before nine o'clock came the various juniors would be hopelessly at sea, wandering about in the fog. It would be interesting to hear their stories later.

But owing to Lee's chance move in passing the Piccadilly Palace Hotel, the shadowers made a mistake. There was a misunderstanding. All four boys jumped to the same conclusion.

They believed that Lee had decided to end the lesson earlier. He had arrived at the rendezvous, and would now wait for developments. And the boys felt that there was no reason for them to keep their distances. Nipper hurried forward, glowing with satisfaction. Archie Glenthorne was close on his heels—and the two Handforths, thinking also that the hunt was ended, closed in, too.

Thus they all witnessed the startling incident which took place at the time of their arrival.

A man came dashing out of the main entrance of the Piccadilly Palace Hotel. He was masked and hatless, and a tremendous outcry sounded in his rear. At full speed, the masked man ran out of the hotel, crossed the pavement, and dashed into the roadway.

Nelson Lee was crossing the road at the same moment, and he acted with precision and speed. He barred the Scorpion's way—for this masked man was, indeed, Morse Rodway.

CHAPTER 3

Enter The Green Triangle!

THE Scorpion had blundered.

That shooting incident in Room No. 205 had unnerved him, and the screaming of the maid in the corridor had completed the work of demoralisation. For once in his lifetime Morse Rodway lost his head. Instead of whipping the mask from his face and

acting in a rational manner, he dashed head-long down the

—FULL DETAILS NEXT WEDNESDAY, CHUMS!

wide hotel stairs and charged out into the fog. Somewhere in the back of his mind he had an idea that he would soon be able to get free from his pursuers in the murk.

But he was only half-way across the road when he found Nelson Lee preparing to seize him.

Nipper and Archie Glenthorne and the Handforth brothers saw everything. The most surprising thing they saw, however, was the swift approach of an unknown man—who hooked his foot round Nelson Lee's ankle and sent the detective sprawling. And before Lee could get up the Scorpion was off like the wind, making for one of the narrow streets close at hand.

Nipper's brain acted like lightning. He knew that Lee was in no danger—for Lee was picking himself up even at that moment, assisted by the hotel commissionaire and two or three other men who had run up. Nipper felt that his own energies and the energies of his chums could be employed to good advantage elsewhere.

"Listen, you chaps!" he hissed. "Something fishy about this! Archie, you and I will shadow that man who came out with the mask. Handy, you and Willy keep your eye on that other chap—the rotter who tripped up the gov'nor. Understand?"

"Yes," they replied, in one voice.

"Good! Get to it!" said Nipper crisply.

THEY got to it. Nipper had no time to say anything else. He sped off, and just managed to keep the Scorpion in sight as the latter dodged round into a narrow alley. Archie Glenthorne, his heart beating rapidly, shadowed Nipper. Whether Handforth and his minor were keeping the other man in sight would not be known until later.

Nipper's promptness of action was commendable. He had done the right thing at the right moment. This shadowing game had now become something real—something genuinely thrilling.

WHEN Nelson Lee found himself on his feet, the Scorpion had gone, and Lee did not even know that the boys had been near the scene. They had gone, too. There was a deal of confusion and shouting and running about. A few people had seen the Scorpion dash off, but they had taken no action. Now it was too late. The fog had enveloped the fugitive.

Police whistles were blowing, and one or two constables were striding up, bent upon inquiring what all the commotion was about. Nelson Lee found himself in the big foyer of the hotel, where men and women were standing in excited groups, some looking scared.

"Is there anything seriously wrong in here?" asked Nelson Lee, speaking to a man who looked like the under-manager. "I happened to be passing at the moment, and my attempt to detain the masked man was frustrated by a stranger, who tripped me. The stranger was an accomplice, I suspect. My name is Lee, and if I can be of any assistance—"

"Lee!" said the other. "Mr. Nelson Lee?"

"Yes."

"It's very fortunate that you are here, Mr. Lee," said the manager, who was considerably flustered. "I don't know what's happened. That masked man came running downstairs, and he dashed out. There has been some screaming upstairs—"

"Perhaps we had better go upstairs, then," said Lee. "We can do very little here, amid all this confusion."

They went upstairs. Lee had no time to think about the shadowing game that had thus been dramatically abandoned. In any case, the boys had probably lost touch with him. They would report at nine o'clock—and, curiously enough, they would be on this very spot. There was some real work for Lee to do here. He only allowed these thoughts to drift swiftly through his mind.

On the great carpeted lounge, at the head of the first flight of stairs, two waiters were attempting to get some sense out of the maid who had been so badly frightened.

"Let me come," said the manager sharply. "What's wrong here, my girl?"

Before the girl could answer, two policemen arrived, also having come upstairs. They saluted Lee, recognising him at once.

"Know anything about this, sir?" asked one of the officers.

"Not yet," replied Lee. "I've only just arrived. I saw the masked man escaping, but I was prevented from holding him. Somebody tripped me, and by the time I got up the fellow had vanished into the fog. It was no earthly use trying to find him then."

They concentrated their attention upon the maid—who, at the sight of the uniforms, calmed down considerably.

"You saw this masked man come out of Room No. 205?" said the manager, after the girl had falteringly told her story. "H'm! That's not particularly sensational. A commonplace sneak-thief probably. Do you know who occupies Room 205?" he asked, glancing at one of the waiters.

"Mr. Lowenstein, sir," said the man.

"We'd better go along to his room," said one of the policemen.

They went. The door was closed, and there was no reply when they knocked. The manager took a master-key from his pocket, inserted it in the lock, and turned it. They entered. The room was in darkness. As they stood there for a moment they heard a faint, mysterious thudding sound, which appeared to come from the other side of the room. It was so indistinct and so muffled that its character could not be determined.

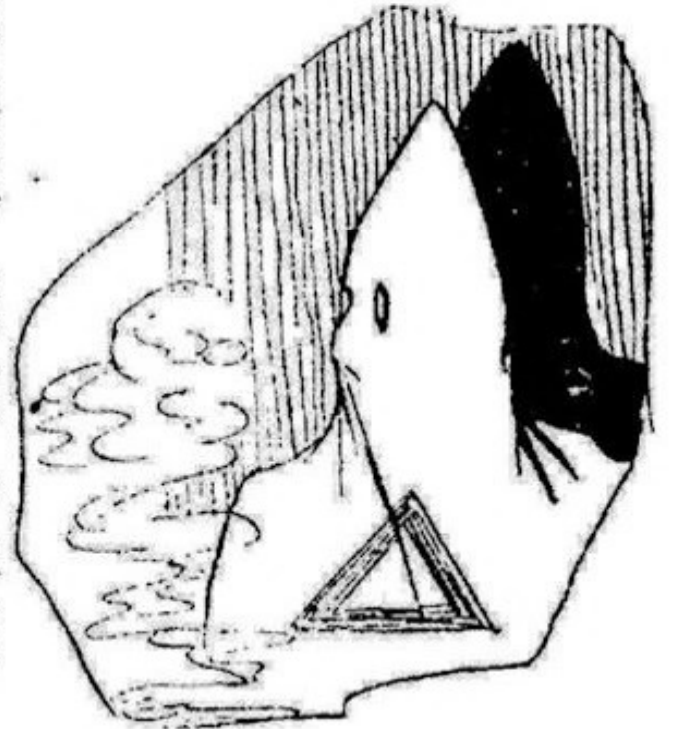
The light was switched on, and the manager uttered a startled, horrified ejaculation.

"Look!" he said, pointing.

On the floor was the still, huddled form of a man. There was no disorder in the room, however—no sign of any struggle. Nelson Lee was keenly sniffing the air.

"Cordite fumes," he said grimly. "This man has evidently been shot."

He crossed over rapidly to the figure. There was blood on the carpet. Lee knelt down and turned the man face upwards.



"Dead," he said quietly. "Shot through the heart. Must have died within ten seconds, I imagine."

"Good heavens!" muttered the manager. "This is awful! We mustn't let the papers get hold of this."

"Never mind the papers, sir," said one of the policemen. "Where's a telephone? I'd better ring up for help. The girl said she heard a choking sort of scream from this room, didn't she? Must have been this poor fellow's dying cry."

"Just a minute," said Lee sharply.

He had noticed the safe, and he went over to it and assured himself that it was locked. He placed his ear close to the cold metal of the door.

"There's something in here—a man, by the sound of it," he said, looking up. "I can hear faint groans. Do you know if Mr. Lowenstein was in his room?"

"I believe he was," said the manager, flustered and distracted. "Here's the key on the table. Nobody else would have had it but Mr. Lowenstein himself. You don't think——"

"There is every indication that Mr. Lowenstein was bundled into his own safe," interrupted Lee. "He is in great danger. The safe is a comparatively small one, and practically airtight. We must have this door opened without a moment's delay."

He went to the telephone, and was in communication with Scotland Yard within three seconds. Experts were required—men who could tackle that safe.

THE Scotland Yard men were prompt. Within seven minutes they arrived. Chief Detective-Inspector Lennard came in person.

"Funny you should be here first, Lee," he remarked, as they shook hands.

"I happened to be passing when the murderer bolted from the hotel," said Nelson Lee. "Seems to be an ugly business, Lennard. An infernal pity I was tripped."

He gave a brief account of what had happened, and the Yard man nodded.

"Evidently work of a gang," he commented. "That fellow who tripped you was an accomplice. Waiting outside to be useful, if necessary. No doubt we shall know more after we've got Lowenstein out of the safe. Hope he's still alive."

Experts were soon on the job. They tackled the safe resolutely. In the meantime, the Chief Inspector began a systematic search of the dead man's clothing. It wasn't a pleasant job, and Lennard was assisted by two of his special men. The result was not particularly satisfactory.

"H'm! A half-empty packet of cigarettes, a box of matches, a cheap watch, some loose silver—and nothing else. Not very promising—eh, Lee?"

"You may get something out of them," replied Nelson Lee. "I'm trying to reconstruct what happened. Why was this man murdered?"

"Quarrel, I should think," replied the Chief Inspector. "They grabbed Lowenstein, pushed him into the safe, and then quarrelled over the spoils—whatever they were."

"It would have to be a very serious quarrel before one man would shoot the other down like this," said Lee, frowning.

"What is Mr. Lowenstein in business? Is anything known about him?"

The under-manager, who was hovering about, anxious and worried, was able to give some information.

"Mr. Isaac Lowenstein only recently arrived from South Africa," he explained. "As far as I know, he had nothing valuable in his room. He is the agent of the Cape Fruit Marketing Company, Limited, and I understood that he was here for the purpose of opening up new markets for his company's produce."

"Fruit, eh?" said Lennard with a grunt. "I don't disbelieve it—but other things, more precious than fruit, are sent out from South Africa."

He was examining the watch which had been taken from the dead man's waistcoat pocket. He unfastened the back—and his jaw sagged.

"Lee!" he ejaculated, startled. "By the Lord Harry! Look at this!"

Nelson Lee looked.

"Very interesting," he said.

Neatly fitted into the inside of the watch back was a little circular card. On it was printed a bold green triangle, and in the centre was the number "182."

"Do you believe it?" asked Lennard sceptically.

"Do I believe that this man belonged to the League of the Green Triangle?" repeated Nelson Lee. "Yes, I do."

"And you think he was murdered by another Triangle man?"

"It looks like it, doesn't it?" said Lee. "You may not think that the Green Triangle is such a powerful organisation, Lennard, but it is. I believe it's more powerful than ever it was in the old days. And cases like this will be continually cropping up. You'll find that the League has its fingers in most criminal pies."

The Chief Inspector scratched his head.



"Well, it's an infernally queer business," he said, frowning. "Unsatisfactory, too. I wish they'd hurry up with that safe," he went on, glancing round. "We can't do much until we've heard Lowenstein's story."

IT was startling to find that this murdered man was one of Professor Cyrus Zingrave's henchmen. There could be little doubt that something had gone wrong with the plan, otherwise this man would not have been murdered.

The safe was soon forced open—and only just in time. When the unfortunate fruit merchant was carried out into the open his face was nearly purple. The air in that confined space had become intensely vitiated—and poisonous.

Mr. Lowenstein was laid on the couch, and Nelson Lee nodded grimly as he felt the ugly bump on the unhappy man's head.

"Knocked out—probably by the butt end of a revolver," commented Lee. "I don't think it's very serious, Lennard. A little more of that brandy, and he'll soon begin to remember what happened."

Mr. Lowenstein was able to talk within ten minutes. And the first words he uttered were enlightening.

"My diamonds!" he said wildly. "Where are they? Where are my little leather bags? My satchel? What has become of the diamonds?"

"I'm afraid they have been stolen, Mr. Lowenstein," said the Chief Inspector. "I had an idea that there were some diamonds at the bottom of this business. You'd better give us all the particulars. Don't strain too much——"

"They have stolen my diamonds!" shouted Mr. Lowenstein. "This is terrible! They were worth twelve thousand pounds!"

"Perhaps you'll explain, Mr. Lowenstein, why these diamonds were in your possession?" asked Lennard. "I understand that you are the representative of a big fruit——"

"A blind—only a blind!" interrupted the other, now rapidly recovering. "I represent no fruit firm—but it is as well to be cautious. I am in touch with some of the biggest diamond interests in South Africa. Go to Hatton Garden! Ask the merchants if they know Isaac Lowenstein! I am the accredited agent——"

"Don't excite yourself, Mr. Lowenstein—I'm not doubting your word," broke in the inspector. "And it won't do any good to get flustered like this. Somebody must have known that you were carrying these diamonds."

"They couldn't have known!" panted Mr. Lowenstein. "I have only just arrived in England. There has never been a breath of my real business——"

"It is fairly obvious that you have been closely watched—ever since you left South Africa, perhaps," said Nelson Lee. "No doubt these criminals followed you—tracked you all the way. Perhaps you will tell us exactly what happened in this room?"

Mr. Lowenstein did so, not that the story was very helpful. He could only say that he had caught a momentary glimpse of the masked man, and then unconsciousness had descended upon him. He had awakened in the safe, half-suffocated, and had believed that his last hour had come. He knew nothing whatever of the murder, and was horrified when he learned of it.

Either the murderer and his victim were rival crooks, or they were men who had both been working together, and had quarrelled.

There seemed very little hope that there would be any rapid developments; but Nelson Lee did not know that his "cub" detectives were very hot on the trail!

CHAPTER 4.

The Fight In The Fog.

"**D**ID you twig that, Archie?" breathed Nipper.

"Absolutely, old boy!"

"Well, we've done something, anyhow," continued Nipper. "By Jove! What a game, Archie! I wonder who the chap is, and why he came out of the Piccadilly Palace Hotel wearing a mask? Something pretty big must have happened there."

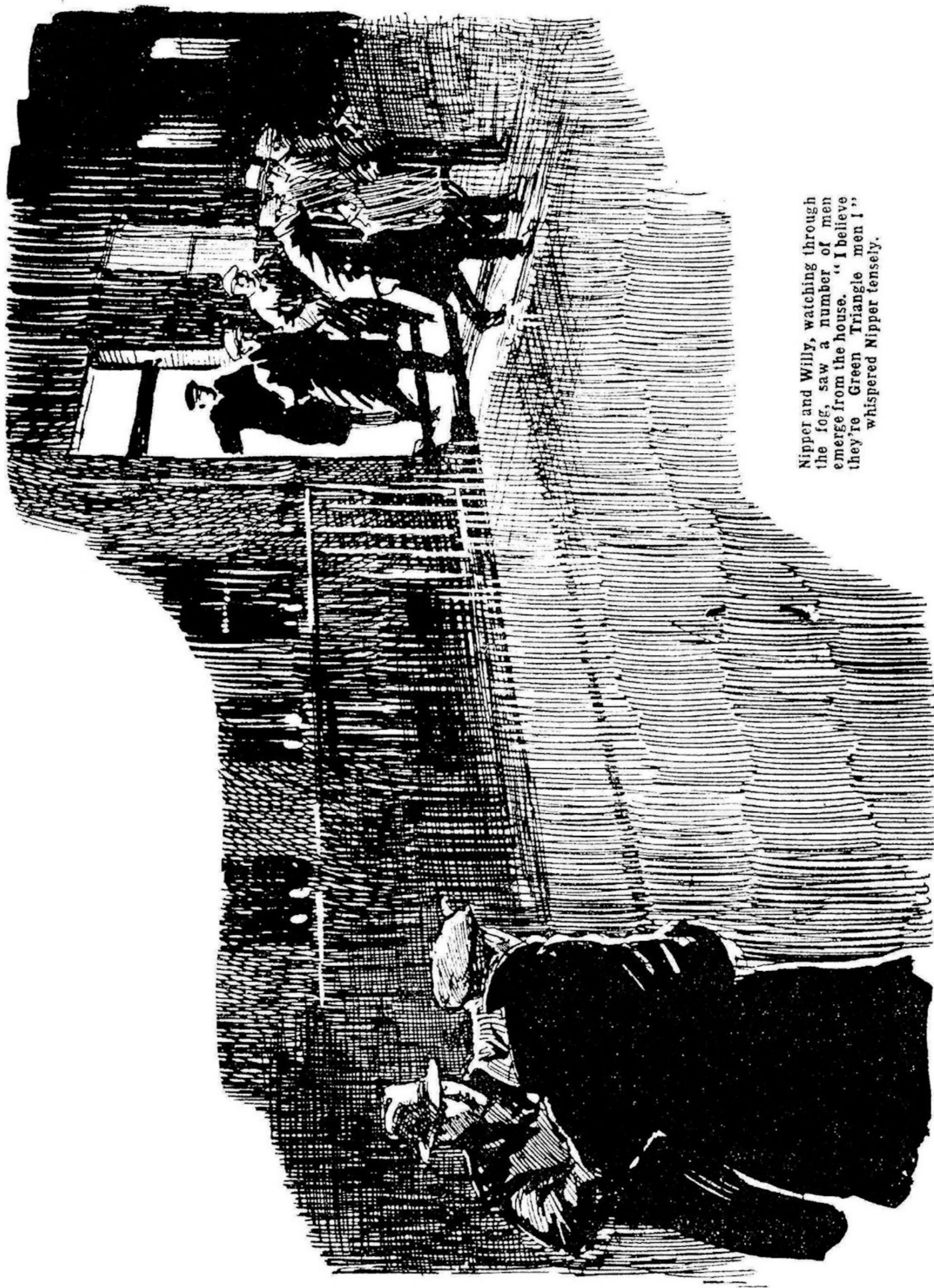
"One of those hotel robbers, what?" asked Archie.

"Looks like it," said Nipper. "I think we'd better stay here for a bit, old son, and keep our eyes on this house. The fellow may come out again."

They were standing back in a deep doorway, practically concealed. The other side of the dark, nearly-deserted road was only just visible.

It was a quiet backwater in the neighbourhood of Bloomsbury. Nipper, keen as mustard, had very easily shadowed the Scorpion. That gentleman, having got clear away from the Piccadilly Palace Hotel, had evidently believed that he had escaped the hue and cry. Once or twice he had looked back, certainly, but he had never caught the slightest glimpse of his slim, agile follower. Nipper had given no indication of his close proximity. Archie's task had not been so hard; he had merely kept Nipper in sight—and Archie, of course, had been quite invisible to the Scorpion owing to the fog.

Morse Rodway had doubled back down narrow side streets, and he had crossed big open squares and had hurried down many unfrequented thoroughfares. Finally, by a very roundabout route, he had arrived at this Bloomsbury address.



Nipper and Willy, watching through the fog, saw a number of men emerge from the house. "I believe they're Green Triangle men!" whispered Nipper tensely.

Nipper and Archie had done their work well, and now they were rather at a loose end. They hardly knew what to do next.

"It's a lodging-house, Archie, anyway," said Nipper.

"Oh, rather," agreed Archie. "I spotted the 'Apartments' card in the front window, what? I must say that this dashed detective business trains a chappie to use his eyesight to some purpose."

"And when the front door was opened by that rather slovenly-looking maid, the man pushed right past," said Nipper. "So it's pretty clear that he lives here. He's not just visiting somebody. Perhaps we'd better make a note of the address, and then go back to Headquarters?"

Among the boys, the Detective Academy was always referred to as "Headquarters." It was simple and easy.

"Supposing you dash back to Headquarters, old thing, and leave me here?" suggested Archie. "Or what about trotting along to the good old hotel? Mr. Lee might still be there—— Whoa! Good gad!"

Archie uttered the ejaculation in a startled tone. Fortunately, he kept it low. A man was walking past the lodging-house on the other side of the road; and as he did so he took a keen, searching look at the front door. He walked straight on without pausing.

"What's the matter?" whispered Nipper.

"I may be mistaken, old boy, but I'd swear that that's the blighter who tripped up Mr. Lee," said Archie, jamming his monocle into his eye and gazing through the fog at the dim, receding figure of the man. "I say, what about it now?"

Before they could come to any decision, another figure hove in sight. And this one was easily recognisable. It was the burly figure of Edward Oswald Handforth! And only just behind him, stealthy and as silent as a shadow, came Willy, his minor.

"You were right, Archie," breathed Nipper. "That's the man, sure enough! And Handy and Willy have done well to stick to him like this."

"Isn't it a bit rummy that they should come past here?" murmured Archie. "I mean something of a coincidence, old dear. A bit too thick, what?"

"It can't be a coincidence, Archie," said Nipper quickly. "That fellow must have been shadowing our own particular man, too."

"Odds mysteries and intrigues! In that case, laddie, he must have been shadowing us!"

"Of course," said Nipper. "He saw that we were on the other chap's trail, and it's obvious that the two must be connected in some way. He tacked himself on behind. That's about the size of it. This affair is growing interesting."

"And what shall we do?"

"Follow!" replied Nipper promptly. "There's nothing more we can do here."

HANDFORTH was bubbling with suppressed excitement.

He had taken no great interest in the earlier "game"—which, after all, had been merely training. This present business, however, was the genuine thing. Handforth was really shadowing a man who was unconscious of his attentions.

Handforth had always fancied himself as a detective; and he would not have been flattered if he had known that Nelson Lee regarded him as a very dubious pupil. Handforth was a fine fellow in a scrap, but he had very little finesse.



In this shadowing business he had done well. He had obeyed instructions to the letter, and had taken care to remain at a safe distance in the rear, dodging back into any kind of cover if ever his quarry happened to pause, or glance round.

But Handforth, being an impatient fellow, was anxious for some action. This "Follow My Leader" stuff—as he called it to himself—was not exciting enough. He wanted to know who this man was, and why he had taken such an extraordinarily roundabout route. Even Handforth, who was not particularly familiar with London streets, knew that the man must have gone a good deal out of his way. But it did not occur to Edward Oswald that the man was shadowing somebody else, still further ahead.

"He's a fishy rotter, anyhow," declared Handforth. "If he wasn't, he wouldn't have tripped Mr. Lee up like that. Jiggered if I can understand what it all means. I'd like to get a look at his face."

When they went past that lodging-house in Bloomsbury, Handforth suspected that the man was particularly interested in the establishment. The man had halted for some little time just before this, and now he hurried on at an increased pace. It was almost as though he had come to some sudden decision.

Handforth hurried, too—and perhaps he hurried too much. He was very close on the heels of his quarry. The fog, just here, was not so murky. It was a patchy kind of fog, being much worse in some districts than in others. The shadowy figure of the quarry vanished round a corner, and Handforth, increasing his pace, followed without any attempt at caution.

"What's the idea?" grated a harsh voice.

Handforth gave a gulp. He had just turned the corner, and the voice had sounded right in his ear. A grip was fastened upon his arm which felt like that of a steel vice.

"Eh?" panted Handforth. "I—I don't know! I mean—Confound you, let me go!"

"What are you following me for, you whelp?" snarled the man.

"Following you?" ejaculated Handforth. "You don't know what you're talking about! Can't I walk along the street if I like—"

"That's enough!" interrupted the other. "I know your game! You've been following me for some time. Who are you? Who put you on this job? Better answer me, young 'un! And don't yelp, either!"

He pulled something out of his pocket, and Handforth, with a quickening of his pulse, saw that the object was a thin-bladed dagger. It was held close to his side by the stranger.

"See it?" muttered the man. "Any shout from you, kid, and you'll feel the length of this blade in your carcase. Understand? And you'd better come across clean! Who are you, and—Thunder!"

He suddenly broke off, and stared at Handforth with a ferocity which was startling.

"I know!" he went on thickly. "I've got you, sonny! You saw me trip Lee, didn't you? You're one of Lee's cubs! One of his precious schoolboy detectives, eh?"



Just as Nelson Lee made to dash forward and stop the fleeing masked figure his feet were hooked from under him, and he crashed to the ground.

Handforth threw caution to the winds.

"Yes, I am!" he said hotly. "And I've been on your track ever since we left Piccadilly Circus, you rotter! You needn't think you can fool me——"

"That's enough!" broke in the other. "I'll give Lee something to think about!"

With a sudden vicious jab, he pressed the wicked dagger hard into Handforth's side.

There was a metallic kind of grating noise, however, and the dagger refused to penetrate. Handforth gave a gurgling gulp.

"You murderous brute!" he gasped. "By George! Take that!"

Crash!

Handforth was thoroughly aroused. He lashed out with his left, and his clenched fist caught the man a hard, painful blow on the side of the face. He lurched away, and recovered almost on the instant. That dagger of his flashed dully in the yellowish light from a street lamp on the other side of the quiet road.

"Yes, I'm one of Mr. Lee's boys!" shouted Handforth recklessly. "Come on, you cur! Fight fair—fight with your fists!"

The man said nothing. He simply hurled himself upon Handforth, raising the dagger. And then, at that moment, a human thunderbolt hurtled out of the fog. It was Willy, and Willy was taking no chances with this desperate crook. He hurled himself straight at the man's legs, and the result was highly satisfactory. The fellow pitched clean forward on his face, and fell to the pavement with a fearful crash. The knife went clattering away into the gutter. Willy himself was sent flying owing to the force of his rush, but he was satisfied now that he had saved his major from that dastardly attack. The man, dazed and hurt, was picking himself up.

"Thanks, Willy!" gasped Handforth. "Come on! We'll jump on this rotter, and—— Hi! Hold him!"

"All right, Handy—we're here!" came a crisp voice.

Nipper and Archie dashed out of the gloom. They were just in time to see the man leaping across the road. He only just avoided a lumbering lorry which came along, and by the time the vehicle had passed the man's figure had vanished into the fog.

"We'll never find him," said Nipper, with regret. "He's given us the slip."

CHAPTER 5.

The Green Owl.

WILLY HANDFORTH breathed hard.

"You fathead!" he said feelingly. "You hopeless chump, Ted! You—you dud detective!"

"Eh?" gasped Handforth.

"A fat lot of good putting you on a shadowing job!" continued Willy, his voice bitter. "What the dickens made you press so close? You were all right at first—and then you ruined everything! You've got about as much sense as a half-boiled jellyfish!"

Handforth went hot, and he instinctively clenched his fists.

"Why, you young—you—you——"

He paused. He remembered how Willy had dived at the stranger's legs, and how that swift action of Willy's had affected the fight.

"I can't give you a hiding, you young rotter," said Handforth thickly. "You saved my life a minute ago, so you've got me in a corner."

"Never mind that," said Willy. "All I know is that if you hadn't pressed so closely that man wouldn't have known that you were shadowing him. Now he's got away. What are we going to do? A nice thing to go back and report that we've failed, isn't it?"

Handforth was silent.

"Never mind," said Nipper. "Perhaps it's not so important, after all. By Jove! Did that man really try to knife you, Handy?"

"If it hadn't been for my electric lamp he would have knifed me," growled Handforth. "The murderous rotter! Then he came for me again, and it was Willy who saved me."

"Pretty clear, then, that we were justified in following these men," said Nipper grimly. "The first chap went into a lodging-house, not far away. We've noted the address, and I fancy that two of us had better go back there and keep watch. The other two must report."

"But who are these men, and what's their game?" asked Handforth wonderingly.

"How do we know?" said Nipper. "The fellow we followed was the one who ran out of the hotel wearing a mask. I fancy the other man must have been on our track; perhaps that's what gave him a clue to you two chaps. He was on the alert, and he thought he'd make sure. Anyway, it's no good crying over spilt milk. He's gone, and we can't find him now."

"By George!" said Handforth. "We're getting some excitement, anyway!"

EVENTS were moving swiftly.

The man who had lately attacked Handforth was in a savage temper when he had finally satisfied himself that he had shaken off his youthful shadowers. His pride was hurt. Those boys had bosted him! The thing was ridiculous—outrageous!

He had the satisfaction, however, of knowing the address to which the Scorpion had gone. It was a vitally important piece of information. For the Scorpion, without doubt, had been up to mischief in the Piccadilly Palace Hotel.

This man had absolutely no hint as to the Scorpion's identity, or why he had come running out of the hotel with that silken mask on his face. The man only knew that something must have gone radically wrong. And it was necessary, therefore, for him to make a prompt report.

Having shaken off his schoolboy pursuers, he got into one of the main thoroughfares and boarded a motor-bus which drifted up out of the murk. He got off the bus in the neighbourhood of Tottenham Court Road, and he was soon striding quickly down Shaftesbury Avenue. A minute's walk from the main thoroughfare he went down a back street and arrived at a queer little doorway. Over this doorway there was an electric lamp, and painted on the shade of the lamp there was a crude owl, in green.

People who habitually patronise such disreputable establishments knew this place to be the Green Owl Night Club. It had an unsavoury reputation.

The man sounded an electric bell, and the door was immediately opened. A huge uniformed man stood there, and he nodded at once.

"Right you are, Mr. Sefton," he said. "Come inside, sir. Pretty bad night."

"Rotten," said Sefton.

He passed in, and went down a long flight of carpeted stairs. At the bottom he found himself in a strange atmosphere. The place was bright with gay decorations, and there were many shaded electric lights. Little tables were dotted here and there, with ornamental chairs round them. There was a sort of dance floor in the middle, and at one end there was an alcove for the orchestra. Waiters were moving about, and one or two people were sitting at the tables. But the real business of the night had not yet commenced; scarcely any of the regular clients had turned up. The hour was far too early.



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A short, stoutish man came out of a doorway as Sefton appeared. He was a shifty-eyed, greasy-looking individual—although he was scrupulously attired, and he bore himself well. He was obviously a foreigner.

"Better come into the office," he said to Sefton.

They went in. Paolo Rossi, the manager of the Green Owl—in fact, the proprietor—was an important man in his own way. He was one of the big "noises" of London's night life. This was not the only night club under his control.

"Well, what happened?" he asked, when he and Sefton were in the little office. "You can speak freely here. What happened to No. 182?"

"I don't know," said Sefton. "I was waiting outside, as arranged, but something must have gone wrong. A fellow in a mask came running out——"

"You don't know!" said Rossi sharply. "You don't know that No. 182 was murdered?"

"Murdered!" ejaculated Sefton, aghast. "Sam Payne murdered! Why, Sam and I have worked together for years! You don't mean it, Mr. Rossi!"

"I do mean it!" snapped the other. "I tell you that No. 182 has been murdered. The information came through on the private wire."

Sefton seemed stunned. But only for a minute or two. A scowl came over his face—a vicious, wicked light entered his eyes.

"Who's done this?" he asked fiercely. "Who's killed Sam? Not a Triangle man, I'll swear! There's somebody working against us, Mr. Rossi! Not the police—they don't murder people. How do you know, anyhow?" he added tensely.

"Don't be foolish," said the Italian impatiently. "Everybody knows! The police are there—the Scotland Yard men. No. 182 was murdered by a man in a silk mask. He was seen to leave the room where our man was murdered."

"Then I know where we can lay hands on him!" said Sefton quickly. "I followed him. That's why I'm here—I thought I'd better report."

"You know where this man is to be found?" asked Rossi sharply.

"Yes—I've got the address of his lodgings."

"Wait here!" said Rossi. "No: wait outside, at one of the tables. Order drinks. Wait—until I come back. Go!"

He fairly hustled Sefton out of the room, and then closed the door and locked it. There were things that even Sefton could not see—although these two men both belonged to the League of the Green Triangle. But Sefton did not know that Paolo Rossi was a member of the Action Committee.

ROSSI went to the other side of his little office, and pressed a secret button. Part of the wall slid back, revealing a tiny cavity. Rossi squeezed himself in, and the panel closed again.

Another button was pressed, and Rossi commenced to descend slowly. This was no ordinary cavity—but a tiny lift! It went down, down—far below, although the night club itself was nothing but a cellar.

The lift came to a halt. Rossi opened a door and found himself in a long electrically-lit passage. It was of concrete, and it proved to be a surprising tunnel. For at the end there was nothing but a concrete wall. There was no exit of any kind.

Rossi paused about twelve yards from the end, and he took out one of the electric lamps from its socket, and then replaced it. This was evidently a kind of signal, for after a short pause the concrete wall at the end of the tunnel moved solidly back. Rossi passed through, and the wall immediately thudded back into place. He now found himself in a sort of lobby.

This was very different from the tunnel. The walls were decorated, and there was carpet on the floor. Double doors slowly opened, revealing a beautifully appointed apartment, with a great mahogany table in the centre. Round it there were comfortable chairs, and on the floor there was a rich pile carpet. There were beautiful fittings everywhere, and the whole place glowed with shaded lights. In a word, this was the secret Council Chamber of the League of the Green Triangle.

The Council consisted of twelve men—Nos. 1 to 12 were all special officers of the League. Nos. 13 to 50 were sub-officers. The ordinary members were numbered after the 100 mark had been passed.

"Come in, No. 32," said a soft, silky voice.

Paolo Rossi entered. The Council Chamber was empty except for one man. And what a man! No. 1 himself! Professor Cyrus Zingrave, the Supreme Chief of the criminal league. *

"You have something to tell me?" he asked, as Rossi advanced.

Professor Zingrave sat at the head of the mahogany table. He was not a big man, but he was extraordinarily impressive. His figure was, if anything, slight, and his shoulders drooped. His head was remarkable, for the brow was massive and high. It was the brow of a genius. The professor's skin was delicate, almost dead-white, and there was no colour in his cheeks to relieve that pallor. His eyes were black and piercing; and, in some vague way, his whole personality was magnetic.

"I have information, Chief, regarding the man who murdered No. 182," said Rossi. "It is known where this man can be found."

"Are you certain of this?"

"One of our members is in the Club now," said Rossi. "He followed the murderer to his lodgings. He thought it as well to report without delay."

"Who is this member?"

"A man named Sefton—No. 147."

"No. 147 is smart," said the professor, nodding. "He shall be rewarded for making his report so promptly."

"He is the man who went with No. 182 to the Piccadilly Palace Hotel to do this particular job," said Rossi. "While No. 182 went inside to do the actual job, No. 147 remained on the watch in the street."

"And the unknown man—the man who dared to shoot one of our members?"

"We don't know who it is, Chief," replied Rossi, shrugging his shoulders. "Our only information has been supplied by No. 147. We know where this man can be found."

Professor Zingrave pointed.

"Go!" he said, his eyes burning. "Fetch this man without delay. He has taken the Lowenstein diamonds, and he has murdered one of our men. Bring him!"

Rossi stared.

"Bring him—here?" he asked.

"Here!" said No. 1 briefly.

CHAPTER 6.

The Scorpion Receives Visitors.

NELSON LEE came out of the Piccadilly Palace Hotel in a thoughtful mood.

The affair was puzzling. The murdered man was undoubtedly a member of the League of the Green Triangle. But who was the murderer? Who was that man who had run out of the hotel wearing a mask?

"Here we are, sir," said a brisk voice.

Lee looked up. Edward Oswald Handforth and Archie Glenthorne were standing before him, both eager-eyed and alert.

"Oh, yes, of course," said Nelson Lee, nodding. "I must confess, boys, that for the moment I had forgotten you. Well, how did you get on?"

"We've had a priceless time, sir," said Archie. "Shadowing chappies this way and that, as it were. Hounding them down, and so forth!"

"Ah, yes, the shadowing game, eh?" said Lee. "Well, I'm afraid there's something more important——"

"We've located that chap in the mask, sir," said Handforth. "We know where he lives, and Nipper and my minor are watching the place now. We came back to report—and we thought we might as well come to the hotel first. Lucky we met you as you came out."

Lee looked at the boys very hard.

"What do you mean, Handforth?" he asked. "What do you know of this man in the mask?"

"Why, we know everything, sir," said Handforth. "We saw him rush out of the hotel—and we saw that chap trip you up. We've been shadowing both of them——"

"You've been shadowing them?" broke in Lee. "The man in the mask? The murderer?"

"Murderer!" gasped Handforth. "Do you mean to say that he murdered somebody in this hotel?"

"He did—he murdered a member of the Green Triangle," said Lee. "Upon my soul! What have you boys been doing? You'd better let me have the whole story, Handforth—and make it as brief as possible."

Handforth eagerly told the story, with an occasional scrap of help from Archie. Nelson Lee listened with great interest. When he had heard all he looked at the two boys with approval.

"Well done!" he said warmly.

And Handforth and Archie needed no other words of praise.

"This alters the whole outlook," continued Lee. "Come! We will go straight to this lodging-house in Bloomsbury. I fancy there will be some more excitement before the evening is out."

"Good egg!" said Handforth breathlessly.

NIPPER and Willy, at this time, were keeping a close watch on the lodging-house. They were concealed in a deep doorway on the other side of the road. Ordinarily they might have been seen in such a place, but the mist was so thick that there was very little chance of them being spotted. And this road was a backwater. At occasional intervals a pedestrian would pass along, one way or the other. Once or twice the heavy tread of a constable sounded, and coming through the fog, from a distance, was the continual subdued rumble of the busy traffic.

"Wonder how long we shall stick here?" murmured Willy.

"Not long, I fancy," said Nipper. "Your major and Archie will have found the gov'nor by this time, and there's bound to be some pretty quick action."



"Hallo! Look at this!" said Willy keenly. "What's happening?"

Suddenly, out of the fog, a number of figures had appeared, and they were concentrating on the lodging-house opposite. There were at least six men, and without hesitation they had turned into the gateway, and were now hammering on the door of the house.

"They can't be detectives," muttered Nipper, frowning. "Handy and Archie haven't had time to report to the gov'nor yet. They don't look like detectives, either."

"Mightn't they be C.I.D. men?"

"They might be—but I don't think they are," whispered Nippy. "No, there's something rummy about this, Willy. It's a jolly good thing we stayed here."

MR. MORSE RODWAY breathed hard.

He had seen many uncut diamonds during the course of his professional career, but seldom had he seen such a promising group as this. He turned them over in his hands, after having lifted them from the little leather bags.

The Scorpion was sitting at the table in the private room which he had rented in the lodging-house. It was a bed-sitting-room. A typical lodging-house apartment, with drab carpet, dingy, old-fashioned furniture, hideous wallpaper, and bad lighting.

He had completely recovered his composure by now. Owing to the friendly fog he had eluded any pursuers, and although there would be a hue and cry after him, there was very little chance that he would be tracked down. He had left no traces—no finger-prints, no tell-tale clues. Even if the police did locate him, he would be ready with an alibi. It could be easily arranged.

Morse Rodway continued to examine the diamonds, and his satisfaction grew. It was a first-class prize—and he knew how to dispose of those stones, too. During the next five minutes he pondered over his immediate plans. Then came a timid knock at the door. He looked up sharply.

"Who is it?" he asked. "Don't bother me now. I don't want any supper."

Tap-tap!

The knock came again, and the Scorpion, with thoughts of the timid little maid in his mind, went to the door and flung it open.

"Hands up!" said a quiet, resolute voice.

In a flash the Scorpion's hand went round toward his hip-pocket.

"Up with 'em!" said the other, driving the barrel of his automatic right into Rodway's ribs. "You fool! Do you want to be drilled? Stick 'em up!"

The Scorpion gulped, and his hands went hastily aloft. He was forced into the room. There were six men altogether, and they silently entered, and the door was closed and locked. The



Jokes from readers wanted for this feature. If you know of a good rib tickler send it along now—and win a prize! A handsome watch will be awarded each week to the sender of the best joke; all other readers whose efforts are published will receive a pocket wallet or a penknife. Address your jokes to: "Smilers," Nelson Lee Library, Tallis House, Tallis Street, London, E.C.4.

Mixed Up!

With a view to letting nothing escape her vigilance, Mrs. Muggins cross-examined the prospective housemaid.

"You have to answer the door to visitors, wait at table, and——"

"Oh, yus, mum," said Mary Jane. "I'm quite sure I shall know how to do that."

Mrs. Muggins was on the point of turning away, when a thought struck her.

"Oh, by the way, do you know your way to announce?" she said.

"Well," replied Mary Jane innocently, "I'm not sure about that, but I think I know my weight to a pound or two!"

You Win, Tommy!

When Tom was taking his father's dinner he stopped for a moment to watch a workman who was digging up the road.

"That," remarked Tommy, interestedly, "is the hole my brother lost a shilling down."

The workman's eyes lit up.

"Well, young man," he said, with a show of carelessness, "you'd better get along with that dinner before it gets cold."

In about half an hour Tommy returned to find the man still at the same hole.

"Are you quite sure it was this hole the shilling was lost in?" said the workman, as Tom paused again.

"Certain of it," replied Thomas. "I saw my father get it out with a shovel!"

And he passed on again with a happy smile.

His Misfortune!

A young man wearing a worried look made his way into the motor manufacturer's private office.

"Is it true," he asked, "that you've really turned



six men stood round the Scorpion in a semi-circle, and every man held an automatic. They were pointed to Morse Rodway's body in a half circle of menacing death.

One man stepped behind him, quickly felt him all over, and removed his weapons. The man who had first spoken breathed a little more freely, but he did not put his own automatic pistol away.

"Sit down, my friend," he said, indicating a chair. "We want a little chat with you."

"Oh?" said the Scorpion, between his teeth. "Who do you think you are? What's this funny game, anyway?"

"We represent the League of the Green Triangle," said the spokesman. "I am No. 38, and I have received orders to get you."

The Scorpion's face had gone pale.

"The Green Triangle!" he ejaculated, startled. "You're mad! You can't fool me——"

"We're not trying to fool you," interrupted No. 38. "At the Piccadilly Palace Hotel this evening you murdered a member of the Green Triangle. You've got to answer for that."

"He—he was a Green Triangle man?" panted Morse Rodway, aghast.

"He was," said No. 38. "But it is not my business to question you, or to waste time. The Chief wants you. And before we leave you'll hand over the diamonds."

The Scorpion's eyes narrowed.

"Diamonds?" he said. "What diamonds?"

"Don't try any games," said No. 38 harshly. "You know what diamonds."

"You're mad," said the Scorpion, playing for time. "I only went into Lowenstein's rooms hoping to lay my hands on his wallet. I didn't find anything. Then, when that fellow came in from the bedroom, I lost my head. I shot him. I've got nothing, I tell you."

No. 38 glanced at his men.

"Search the room," he ordered. "Search every inch of it—and search this fellow to begin with."

"I tell you——" began the Scorpion.

"The less you can say, the better—unless you want to come straight," said No. 38 curtly.

The Scorpion was startled—almost bewildered. Ten minutes earlier he had been telling himself that he was safe. And now this dramatic development had come! Rodway was a man who had faced dangers in every corner of the world; he was an international crook who had always lived a life of precarious adventure. But never before had he met with anything quite so startling as this.

out a motor-car in seven minutes thirty-five seconds, sir?"

"Yes," said the great man, blowing a cloud of smoke into the air from his Corona, "that's our record; and, let me tell you, we're proud of it!"

"I'm not, though," the youth retorted. "I've got the car!"

Flummoxed!

"Any complaints, orderly?" asked the commanding-officer.

"None, sir," replied the former, "except the men would like some rhubarb."

"Very well, give it to them."

"'Ere, corporal," said the orderly a few minutes later to the man in charge of the commissariat, "C.O. says as 'ow we can 'ave rhubarb."

"Right-ho!" said the corporal, and he proceeded to write it down.

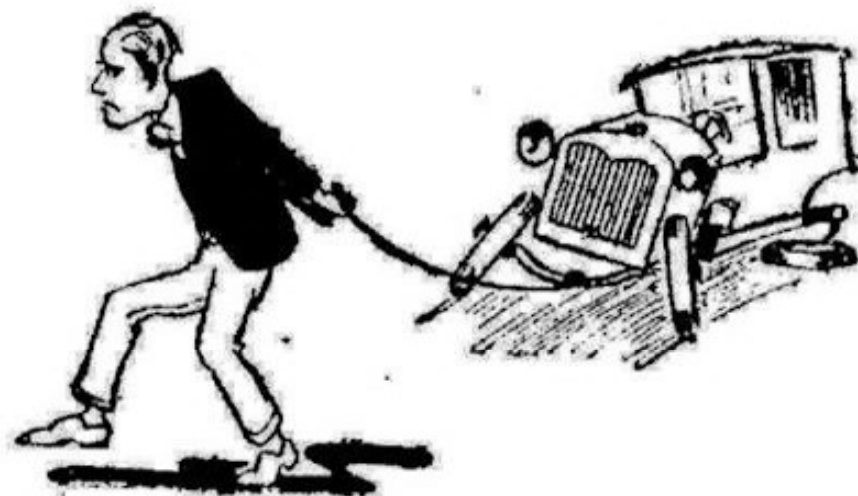
"R-u—" he spelt audibly; then he rubbed it out. "R-e-u—" he went on, and hastily abandoned that. "R-h-e-u—" he wrote, in desperation. "'Ere, dash it," he said, "you'll 'ave to 'ave cabbage!"

Unkind!

The lady singer at the local concert had not proved a very great success, and the two young fellows were discussing her as they went homeward.

Finding they could not agree, and not wishing to quarrel about her, one tried to explain to the other the quality of her singing.

"You see, John," he said kindly, "she sings by ear."



John's face cleared.

"Ay," he cried, "that explains it! I thought she couldn't make all that noise with her mouth!"

He Deserved It!

A cyclist was riding down a country lane when his hat suddenly blew off. A passing countryman picked it up and handed it to the cyclist as he circled round, saving him the trouble of getting off his machine.

"I weally must get some stwing to keep this confounded hat on," muttered the cyclist, as he wheeled off without a word of thanks.

The other's reply was short, but expressive. "Don't bother, guv'nor," he cried. "Get a nail!"

Generous!

Professional Faster: "I should like to undertake a fast of four weeks in this show of yours. How much will you pay me?"

Showman: "I can't give you any salary, but I'll pay for your keep!"

He had felt inclined to ridicule the newspaper stories of the League of the Green Triangle. He was beginning to change his mind now.

In a way, he was relieved. These men, at least, were fellows of his own kidney. They were not police officers. Yet they were just as much his enemies as the police. Inwardly, the Scorpion began to quake when he realised the ticklishness of his position. He had murdered a Green Triangle member; and these six Green Triangle men had come to take him.

Take him—where? What was going to happen?

The diamonds were his. He had risked everything to obtain them, and he meant to stick to them. He was glad that there was a fire in the room, for he had been able to burn those little chamois-leather bags. They had long since been reduced to ashes in the flames. And he had disposed of the diamonds.

As a safeguard, in case of a surprise visit from the police, he had concealed the precious stones. He had done so only a minute before these Green Triangle men had appeared on the scene.

The Scorpion was searched. He was practically stripped. Every inch of his clothing was carefully felt—the pockets, the linings, everything. And after this search proved futile, he was pushed aside.

The Green Triangle men then searched the apartment. Every article of furniture in the room was investigated. Drawers were turned out, ornaments upturned, but the result was disappointing. The diamonds were nowhere to be found.

"You got rid of them before you came to this lodging-house, eh?" said No. 38, exasperated.

"It was quick work, my friend."

"Very quick, considering that I've never seen any diamonds," sneered the Scorpion.

"We shall discover how you got rid of them. You're going to have your eyes opened. You don't believe that the Green Triangle is very powerful, do you? But it is! So powerful that one life, more or less, makes little difference. Take my advice, and tell me——"

"I'll tell you nothing!" snapped Rodway. "You infernal fool! How many more times must I say that I've never seen any diamonds? You're wasting your time here."

No. 38 compressed his lips.

"Get your overcoat and hat," he said briefly.

"What for?"

"Never mind what for—get them!" said No. 38. "Put them on."

The Scorpion did so, with exasperating slowness.

"Well?" he said, at length. "What's the idea? Are we going for a little stroll?"

"We are—and I shall be right by your side all the time," said No. 38. "One of these other men will be on your other side. And if you make any false move you'll be shot dead."

"That's very cheerful," said the Scorpion. "Well, I'm a peaceful sort of fellow. I don't want any bother. Let's go."

CHAPTER 7.

Handforth Disobeys Orders.

"HERE they come!" whispered Nipper keenly.

Through the fog they could just see the doorway of the lodging-house. The front door had opened, and a number of men were coming out into the night. There were seven men altogether, and the first three kept very close together. They were practically arm-in-arm,

"This looks significant, Willy," murmured Nipper. "See those three men in front?"

"Yes."

"That fellow in the middle is different from the others," continued Nipper. "He's the chap we followed originally—the chap who wore a silk mask. These other men are taking him away."

"Green Triangle men," said Willy.

"I believe you've hit it," said Nipper, nodding. "They're not detectives, anyway. We thought they were Green Triangle men at the first; and this seems to prove it. We'll follow 'em."

"Best thing we could do."

"I'll go first, and you'd better trail me," said Nipper. "And keep your eyes skinned, Willy. There may be other Green Triangle men about. Be ready for trouble. And if you find yourself in any danger—yell."

They started off. Nipper had no difficulty in keeping the group of men in sight. They strolled along leisurely, chatting in amiable tones. There was certainly nothing to indicate that there was something very grim and sinister about that walk.

Nipper had been afraid that the men would get into a car, and that it would be hard to keep on the trail. But there was no car. The men walked down towards one of the main thoroughfares, and they were soon in Shaftesbury Avenue.

The walk, indeed, was quite a short one.

Just off Shaftesbury Avenue they entered a doorway where there was a curious little lamp hanging overhead. Nipper kept on the other side of the street, and it was not until several minutes had elapsed that he joined Willy Handforth.

"We're done, old man," said Nipper regretfully.

"We haven't lost them, have we?"

"No; they went into the Green Owl," said Nipper.

"The which?"

"The Green Owl Night Club," said Nipper, nodding across the road. "Night clubs are twelve-a-penny round this district, Willy. The Green Owl is one of the worst, I believe. No good us trying to get in; they wouldn't admit us, anyway."

"Then what are we going to do?"

"Wait here until something else happens, I suppose," said Nipper. "At least, we'll wait here for a little while. If nothing has happened by then, one of us had better stay on guard while the other goes off to report."

WHEN Handforth and Archie, piloting Nelson Lee, arrived outside the lodging-house in Bloomsbury, they found the quiet street empty and deserted. The fog was thicker, and it was difficult to see more than ten or twelve yards in any direction.

"They're here, sir," said Handforth confidently. "We left 'em on the watch."

"You are sure that this is the house?" asked the detective.

"Quite sure!" replied Handforth. "We left them in a little doorway on the other side of the road. They'll be able to tell us exactly what has happened since we left."

But when they got to the doorway, it was empty.

They marched up and down for some little time, but in the end they were compelled to acknowledge that they had drawn a blank. Nipper and Willy had completely vanished.

"They're a fine pair to leave on guard!" said Handforth disgustedly. "Fancy deserting their post like this!"

"I don't think they've deserted their post, young 'un," said Lee. "It is far more likely that the man came out of his lodgings, and that Nipper and Willy have followed him."

"By George! I hadn't thought of that!"

"Therefore, there is very little that we can do," continued Lee. "The man might come back—and, if so, his young shadowers will be on his trail. On the other hand, he might be away for hours, and perhaps Nipper and Willy will report to Headquarters."

"Then what can we do, sir?" asked Handforth.

"Nothing."

"You mean that we'll just stick here and wait?"

"I shall remain here; but you boys will return home."

"But look here, sir——"

"Really, old boy, is it quite the thing to argue with our Chief?" protested Archie severely. "Dash it, orders are orders. I mean, what the Chief says, goes."

"Well said, Archie," commented Lee dryly. "In detective work, especially, there must be no hesitation or delay. When an order is given, it must be obeyed. Handforth, don't spoil your evening's good work by rebelling against orders."

"All right, sir," muttered Handforth. "Sorry, sir."

ARCHIE dragged Handforth off into the fog, and at first it seemed that Edward Oswald was ready to accept his dismissal. But the very thought of returning to Grays Inn Road filled him with a strong sense of rebellion.

"Let go my arm, Archie, you ass!" he growled, as he came to a halt.

"We've got to get back to Headquarters, laddie," said Archie.

"Not yet!"

"Good gad! You're a dashed difficult chappie to get on with," protested Archie. "The Chief has given us his orders."

"Well, we've gone, haven't we?" interrupted Handforth. "We can get back to Headquarters, but there's no reason why we shouldn't do a bit of investigating on our own first, is there!"

"A dashed good reason," retorted Archie. "Mr. Lee has told us to go straight home."

"Yes, but if we can find those diamonds we shall cover ourselves with glory," murmured Handforth tensely. "Think of it, Archie! I'll bet those diamonds are in that rotter's room, in this lodging-house! Why shouldn't we have a shot at bagging them?"

"You frightful ass! Mr. Lee is watching the house. How can we get in without being seen?"

"We shan't be seen if we enter by the back of the house."

Archie felt really alarmed. Handforth was a good fellow, but he was ram-headed. He was obstinate and self-willed. And his idea of detective work seemed to be that one only needed to barge into a place to make any amount of startling discoveries.

Archie was in a dilemma. If he obeyed orders and went back to Grays Inn Road alone, he would feel that he had left Handforth in the lurch. If he remained with Handforth, he would probably get into serious trouble. And if he argued much longer, Handforth would certainly "set about" him.

"Come on!" said Edward Oswald briskly.

"One moment, old boy——"

"No fear! We've wasted enough time already," interrupted Handforth. "Leave this to me, Archie. I'm going to surprise you."

Archie sighed.

"Nothing that you do, old thing, will surprise me," he said resignedly.

THEY found themselves at the rear of the lodging-house. Handforth had discovered a narrow alley, and, by jumping over a wall, the two boys easily got into the back yard of the house. There were one or two lights showing in the lower windows, but there was no sign of life out of doors. Archie had half-expected to hear a dog barking, but there was no such luck. The way was clear for the two intruders to approach the house.

It was even easier than Handforth himself had expected. There was a rusty old fire-escape fixed to the back wall of the lodging-house, and Handforth soon climbed up this, with Archie close behind. They went right to the top, and they found that there was a window up there which easily succumbed to a little persuasion.

Handforth used his big pen-knife, and the catch was slipped back. He gently raised the window, and the pair of them clambered through. They found themselves on the upper landing of the lodging-house. Everything was dark, and, looking over the banisters, Handforth could see a glimmer of light from the next landing, below. Up the well of the staircase came an odour of stale cooking.

"Good gad!" groaned Archie. "We shall be run in, old tulip! I mean, burglary, what?"

"Rats! Detectives are allowed to break into houses like this," breathed Handforth. "We've only got to locate that man's room—— Sssssh!"

"Absolutely!" breathed Archie.

A door had opened somewhere below, and footsteps were heard on the stairs. A woman was coming up, and presently she reached the landing just below Archie and Handforth. They could catch a glimpse of her as they looked down the well of the stairs. She was tapping on one of the doors.

Another door opened, and somebody spoke.

"He's gone out, Mrs. Burrows," said a voice. "Went out about twenty minutes ago, with some men."

"He's a queer one," said Mrs. Burrows. "Told me he was in for the evening, and wasn't going out again. Ordered supper, and it's been ready for the last quarter of an hour—spoiling and getting cold. He might have told me he was going out again."

"There's something queer about that man, if you ask me," said the voice—which obviously belonged to another lodger. "I believe he had a quarrel with those men who came. There were high voices in that room, anyhow—and it seemed to me that all the furniture was being turned upside down."

"I'll have a word with him when he comes in," said the landlady grimly. "Emily told me that those men didn't look up to much. Pity I was out when they came. I only went round the corner, too."

She entered the room, and looked round. Then she came out again.

"There doesn't seem to be anything wrong," she said, as she closed the door.

She went off downstairs, treading heavily. The other lodger's door closed, and a minute later a thud sounded from far below. Silence reigned.

"My only hat!" whispered Handforth. "Did you hear that, Archie?"

"Not being deaf, old cheese, I did."

"That's his room," said Handforth, gripping Archie's arm. "The door's unlocked, too! Come on—now's our chance!"

They crept down the upper stairs like shadows, and a moment later they found themselves in the bed-sitting-room of the mysterious lodger. They were in the Scorpion's quarters!



CHAPTER 8.

In the Hands of The Green Triangle!

MORSE RODWAY, alias The Scorpion, wondered where he was being taken to when he was led down the stairs into the Green Owl. He was not unacquainted with such places, and he was in no way impressed with this particular night club. It was a poor specimen of its type.

"We'll have a drink," said No. 38.

He sat down in a little alcove near the manager's office. It was a secluded alcove. The other Green Triangle men ranged themselves round the Scorpion, so that there could be no possibility of his getting away. The orchestra was playing a foxtrot, and a few couples were dancing on the central floor. Other people were sitting round at the tables, eating or drinking.

"Mine's a——" began Rodway mockingly.

"Remember, my friend, that you must keep your tongue still," cut in No. 38, as he pressed something hard against the Scorpion's side. "If you make any disturbance, or attempt to escape, you'll be dead before you can take a second breath."

"Bunk!" said the Scorpion contemptuously, as he leaned back in his seat. "You can't frighten me with that apple-sauce!"

Paolo Rossi drifted up, fat, greasy, but immaculate.

"You wish for something, gentlemen?" he said, leaning over the table.

His broad, bulky back screened Morse Rodway from everybody else in the night club. There was a sudden sharp hiss as Rossi pressed a kind of bulb in his hand. A fine spray clouded into the Scorpion's face. That gentleman was in the act of opening his mouth to speak, and for a second a surprised, startled look came into his eyes. Then he sagged forward. Not a sound had he uttered.

"Very well," said Rossi, as though nothing unusual had happened. "I am sorry to see that your friend is so unwell, gentlemen. A little water, perhaps? Come! You may bring him into my office."

"Might be a good idea," said No. 38.

They had no difficulty in getting their victim into the little office—for the doorway was right close at hand. If any of the other night club habitués noticed the incident, they thought nothing. Once in the office, Paolo Rossi allowed a gleam of satisfaction to come into his beady eyes.

"You have done well! It is enough!" he said, glancing at the unconscious man. "Now you go."



Nipper and Willy, watching through the fog, saw a number of men emerge from the house. "I believe they're Green Triangle men!" whispered Nipper tensely.

"And this fellow?" asked No. 38.

"Leave him to me," replied Rossi.

The Green Triangle men went out of the office, and the proprietor closed the door. He locked it. Then he went to that secret lift at the other side of the room, and he soon bundled the unconscious Scorpion into it.

They went down together.

Below, in the concrete tunnel, two other men were waiting. Very little was said. The Scorpion was seized, and dragged along.

FIVE minutes later Morse Rodway recovered consciousness.

That drug-spray was of a peculiar nature. It had caused instantaneous unconsciousness; and as soon as the effect wore off it caused instantaneous recovery. One minute the Scorpion was apparently dead to the world, and the next minute he was as alert and as wide-awake as ever. The only after-effect of the drug was a painful headache, but this rapidly passed off.

The Scorpion stared about him in blank amazement.

He was not a man who could be easily surprised, or a man who could be frightened, but his adventure this evening had certainly startled him. His weapons had been taken from him, and he felt helpless without them. The Scorpion had always been "quick on the draw." Now, as he looked about him, he experienced a sense of amazement, bewilderment—and even fear.

He saw that he was in a superbly-appointed apartment. He was sitting on a little raised platform, on a hard chair. Before him, in the body of the room, there was a great polished mahogany table. Sitting round it were twelve men. It was quite impossible to know the age or character of these men, for they all wore bright green cowls, with little eye-slits in them. Morse Rodway was a stranger, and so the Council of the League of the Green Triangle was masked.

The Scorpion was by nature a cool, quick-witted man. He soon recovered from his first shock of surprise.

"Very pretty," he said, with a touch of contempt in his voice. "But if you think I'm scared——"

"Stand up, Morse Rodway," came a silky voice from the man at the head of the table.

The Scorpion started.

"You know me, then?" he asked.

"Stand up!"

"All right, we won't have an argument about it," said the crook, standing up. "How did you know my name?"

"The Green Triangle has its own ways of learning things," said Professor Zingrave. "For once the Scorpion has lost his sting. His fangs are harmless."

"Get down to it," said the Scorpion impatiently. "What's the idea of all this theatrical bunk? I'm not impressed in the least."

"You are on trial, Morse Rodway," said Zingrave. "You have murdered one of our members, and you must give an account of yourself. If you can satisfactorily explain the death of No. 182, the Council may consider that no punishment shall be inflicted."

The Scorpion was beginning to feel more confident.

"I mistook your man for a detective," he said. "He suddenly appeared in the doorway and I fired."

"After you had placed Mr. Lowenstein in the safe?"

"Yes."

"You saw our man appear in the doorway, and you fired at him, believing him to be a detective?"

"Yes."

"In that case, the Council may be disposed to regard the regrettable death of No. 182 as an accident," continued Zingrave, in his silky tones. "Now, Rodway, we know that you went into Lowenstein's apartment for the purpose of securing diamonds. You did secure those diamonds. They have not yet been recovered. Where are they?"

"I don't know," said the Scorpion. "I never saw any diamonds——"

"Lying will be dangerous!" cut in No. 1. "You took those diamonds, Rodway, and you have hidden them. Denial is absolutely useless."

"In that case, I'll say nothing more."

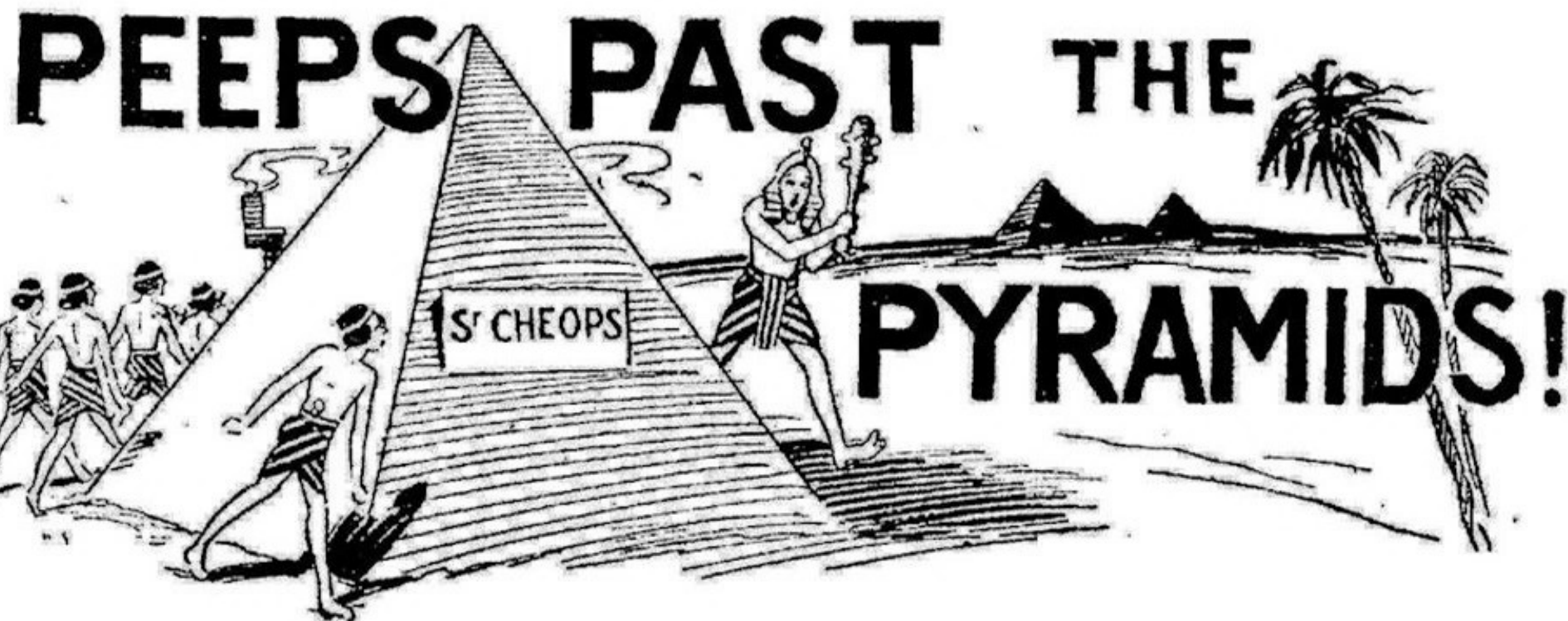
"You will say a good deal more, my friend," said the Professor. "The Lowenstein diamonds belong to the League. The League planned to obtain them, and the League does not allow an outsider to interfere with its plans. The League must not be thwarted."

"I know nothing about the League," said the Scorpion. "I went into the Piccadilly Palace Hotel to do a certain job. I won't argue with you about the diamonds. But if I had gone after them, I should maintain my right to do so. I do not belong to this League, and I have no intention of belonging to it."

"We shall see, my friend," replied No. 1 softly. "You are the kind of man we can find work for. You have an excellent reputation; you are a man who gets what he goes after. We can do with you in the League."

"Is this an invitation?"

"It is a command!"



THE time being morning, the boys of the Fourth were gathered in the classroom at St. Cheop's; each and every one of the boys sat him in his appointed place in the room shaped like after an inverted pyramid.

And the master, Dr. Potiphar, surveyed the Form with looks that were sour, for he had overslept and felt of a grumpiness more than was his usual wont. He said unto the Form:

"O Form," said he, "I have taught thee all that I know myself, and yet, it seems, thou knowest naught, neither canst thou answer any simple question which I do put to thee."

And the boys trembled in their sandals, and said softly:

"Of a truth, old Potty hath risen from his couch the wrong side this morning. We must mind our step, lest he fall upon us."

And it being the fashion in those days to speak in riddles and conundrums, one of the boys sought to divert the master with a question of intrigue. Therefore said Rik me-Neck, the mathematician, to the doctor:

"O master who knowest many things, hast heard this one?"

And the master answered with gruffness:

"I have not heard it. What is it?"

Then said Rik me-Neck:

"Tell me, I pray thee, the answer to this problem. A chicken, yea, even one of my father's barndoor fowls, stood on the bank of a river. And, behold! the river was in much flood. How, then, did the chicken cross to the other bank?"

And Dr. Potiphar thought much, so that his brow was furrowed; but the explanation eluded him and he could not answer. Yea! He was stamped—but showed it not.

"A very good and proper conundrum, O Rik me-Neck," said Dr. Potiphar. "I will expound the answer—presently. Now, the lesson to-day will be on Khemiks." And he pushed the sleeves of his robe back and

*Being fragmentary records of
School Days in the time of the
Ancient Egyptians as collected by*

VIVIAN TRAVERS,

of the St. Frank's Remove.

grasped him a retort. "I will show thee marvels, O Form, that will make thee goggle at the eyes."

Then spake up Kuth-Burt, the son of Knutt, saying:

"Can I not, O master, be exempt from

this goggling?" For he was vain of his appearance, and wished not to enlarge his eyes overmuch.

"If I command ye to goggle," replied Dr. Potiphar, "then goggle ye shall. Art sure, O Rik me-Nek, that there was no bridge near thy chicken?"

And Rik me-Nek answered:

"There was no bridge, O master!"

"Hum!" muttered the master, gnawing his lip—but not hard. "Here is some H₂O," he went on, the while he lifted a pitcher of liquid. "Knowest thou, O Form, H₂O, what it is?"

And the son of Bhonzo, the rich, made answer.

"H₂O, O master, meaneth two horse-power plus one oxen, and is the strength of my father's new chariot."

"Then may thy father's new chariot rust its ball bearings," replied the doctor, "for thou art wrong. Next!"

"H₂O soundeth in my ears like the telephone number of my shirtmaker," said Kuth-Burt hesitatingly.

"Thy shirtmaker!" mimicked the master. "Dash my blithering wig! This is a lesson on Khemiks—not on the clothing of asses. Next!"

"O master," spake Gho Bang, the son of Busst, "H₂O is what thy chicken is up against."

"Yea!" muttered Dr. Potiphar. "Art sure, O Rik me-Nek, that the chicken of which thou spakest was not a duck?"

"It was not a duck, O master."

"Then may it moult!" exclaimed the doctor, under his breath. But aloud, he said: "I will even pour some H₂O into this retort and light the small furnace beneath, so that the water may be distilled into this tube."

(Continued on page 44.)

THE TRIANGLE OF DEATH!

(Continued from page 24.)

"Nothing doing," said the Scorpion, shaking his head. "I have always worked alone, and I shall continue to work alone."

"Others—equally as rash—have said that," replied Professor Zingrave. "They have ceased to work alone, because they have ceased to exist. You have your choice, Morse Rodway. You will either join the League of the Green Triangle, and receive twenty-five per cent. commission on everything you hand in, or you will vanish for ever. There is no other alternative."

"You're threatening to kill me, eh?"

"It is a threat that can very quickly be put into effect," said Zingrave. "If you work for the League, you work in safety. You have no trouble whatever in the disposal of your booty. If you come into conflict with the police, the League is ready to render you every assistance. If, on the other hand, you continue to work alone, you are unprotected. The League permits of no rivals, my friend. You either work for us, or you work not at all. Those men who defy the League—die!"

"I'm not afraid of you," said the Scorpion hotly. "I'll continue to play my own game. I've always worked alone——"

"You said that before," interrupted No. 1. "It is a bad habit, my friend, to repeat yourself. If you are wise, you will lose no time in handing the Lowenstein diamonds——"

"I tell you I don't know anything about the Lowenstein diamonds!" shouted the Scorpion.

"As you will," purred Zingrave. Let us have no argument on this point. You will be allowed twenty-four hours in which to arrive at your decision."

"I've arrived at it already."

"It is fair that you should be fully warned, however," continued the Professor. "This period of grace is to be regarded as a truce. You must take no action whatsoever during the next twenty-four hours. If you attempt to dispose of the diamonds, you will meet with death. You will be watched wherever you go."

"If you put your infernal men on to me——"

"Enough," interrupted No. 1. "Think it over, Mr. Rodway. Every move that you make will be known to the Green Triangle. And if you take one false step, if you try to escape, if you attempt to dispose of the diamonds—you will die! Far better for you to join the League and thus secure immunity. At this time to-morrow night, you will be brought here again."

The lights suddenly went out, and the darkness was impenetrable. The Scorpion half-started to his feet. He again became aware of that strange, pungent odour. He tried to cry out, but his legs sagged and his throat became paralysed.

HE awoke in that corner alcove of the Green Owl Night Club.

On the table before him stood a glass containing some liquid. The orchestra was playing, and people were dancing. The Scorpion shook himself. He wondered if he had been dreaming.

CHAPTER 9.

The Alarm.

PAOLO ROSSI smiled down at the Scorpion as the latter idly fingered his glass.

"You find everything to your satisfaction, sir?" asked the proprietor smoothly.

Morse Rodway stared.

"What's been happening here?" he demanded. "What do you know about it?"

Rossi shrugged his shoulders.

"Happening?" he repeated. "Nothing has been happening."

He walked away, and the Scorpion shook himself. Had he really been dreaming? Or was it a fact that he had recently been in that imposing Council Chamber? He experienced that same painful headache, and he was convinced that he had been drugged. He looked at his watch. About an hour had elapsed.

"Queer!" he muttered. "Infernally queer!"

He left the drink untouched. He was suspicious of everything in this night club. Nobody hindered him as he made his way towards the exit, and soon afterwards he was out in the open street. The Scorpion drifted off into Shaftesbury Avenue.

He was too worried, too deeply concerned, to pay much attention to his surroundings. He knew that the fog was as thick as ever, but he paid no attention. And so he knew nothing of the two figures who trailed on behind him.

Nipper and Willy had remained on the watch, and now they were rewarded. Their man had come out of the night club alone. There was no mistaking him. He was the man who had been in the centre of that group, earlier. There was no evidence of the others; but, after all, they did not matter. This was the man who had escaped from the Piccadilly Palace Hotel, and he was therefore the quarry.

Nipper was not particularly surprised when the Scorpion walked straight back towards Bloomsbury. He entered the lodging-house, slammed the door, and then everything became silent.

Willy came sidling up out of the fog.

"Well, that's that," said Willy. "Not particularly exciting, but we know where he is, don't we?"

"There's something queer about all this," said Nipper, frowning. "That Green Owl Club, for instance. I believe it's a rendezvous of the Green Triangle men."

Another figure came out of the gloom.

"What are you boys doing here?" it asked.

"Guv'nor!" said Nipper eagerly. "I was just going to look for you; I half expected to find you here. Did Handforth and Archie report?"

"Yes," replied Lee. "I came here at once. Where have you been?"

Nipper explained, and when he had finished Nelson Lee nodded.

"Undoubtedly the man was forced into the Green Owl Club by Green Triangle members," he said. "We don't know what happened there—but I dare say we can find out. The fellow is now back in his lodgings."

"I'm afraid we haven't done very much, sir," said Nipper.

"You have done very well indeed," replied Lee. "Handforth and Glenthorne have gone back to Grays Inn Road. I sent them off some time ago, and they should be there by now. You had better follow them."

Neither Nipper nor Willy argued. Nelson Lee had given his orders, and they obeyed. They reached Gray's Inn Road without incident.

Nipper and Willy went in and hung up their overcoats and caps. The studies were mostly on the first floor, so they climbed the stairs and opened the door of Study D as a beginning.

"Hallo!" said Church, jumping up. "My only hat! It's about time you chaps got back!"

"What have you been doing?" asked McClure, who was also in the room.

"Hasn't Handy told you?" said Nipper.

"Handy! Isn't he with you?"

"Of course he's not," said Nipper. "He came home long before us."

"He hasn't been here," said Church, shaking his head.

Nipper experienced a sensation of vague alarm.

"Has Archie turned up?" he asked.

"No."

"How long have you chaps been in this study?"

"About an hour."

"Then perhaps Handy and Archie are in the Common Room," said Nipper, hurrying off. "They must be home—unless something has happened."

He went into the big, cosy, well-lit Common Room and looked round. William Napoleon Browne was lounging back in an easy-chair, deeply immersed in a volume on criminology. Fullwood and Waldo and Reggie Pitt and a few other "cubs" were gathered round the fireplace, talking. All eyes were turned upon Nipper as he entered.

"Isn't Handforth in here?" asked Nipper, before anybody could speak. "Or Archie?"

"Haven't seen either of them," said Pitt. "What's the matter? I thought you fellows were out on a bit of practice work?"

"They got lost in the fog, I suppose," said Forrest, with a grin. "Our budding detectives have met with dire failure at their first attempt. How very sad!"

"You can keep your sneers to yourself, Forrest," said Nipper sharply. "We didn't get lost. Something has happened this evening—something in connection with the Green Triangle, too."

"What!" shouted all the others.

"Kindly oblige us with an earful, Brother Nipper," said Browne, laying his book aside. "I confess that I am vastly intrigued. So the Green Triangle is moving again?"

"Yes, it looks like it," said Nipper.

"We have been expecting a bomb to drop down the chimney, but so far all is well," continued Browne. "No lurking miscreant has pushed poison gas through our key-hole, neither has there been any sinister message dropped through our letter-box."

"Dry up, Browne," said Nipper anxiously. "This is serious. Handy and Archie ought to have been back here nearly an hour ago. The guv'nor told them to come back—and they have either been collared by the crooks, or else they've disobeyed orders."

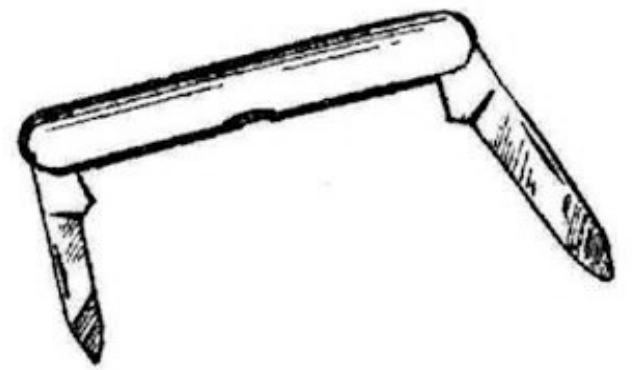
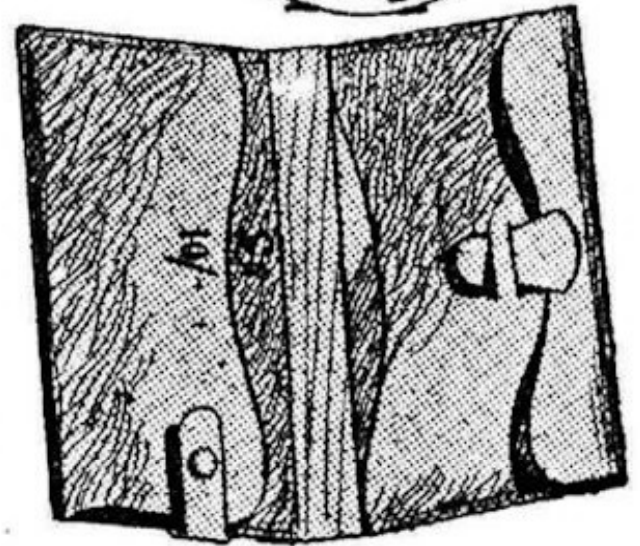
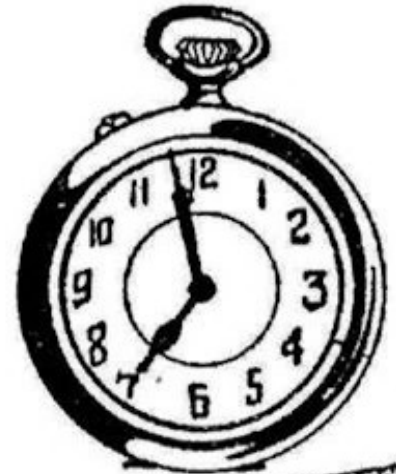
"Knowing Brother Handy as I do, I can readily come to the conclusion that he has disobeyed orders," said Browne.

"Tell us what's been happening!" exclaimed Tommy Watson eagerly. "It won't take you long, Nipper. Let's have the details."

"Begad, rather!" said Tregellis-West.

And Nipper, thus urged, briefly gave an account of what had happened.

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Turn to **"SMILERS"**—Page 18.

"Handforth and Archie ought to have come straight home," he concluded. "They're not here—and you haven't had any telephone message. We know that these Green Triangle men were lurking about near that lodging-house in Bloomsbury. I think we'd better go back."

"So do I," said Willy, nodding. "Something must have happened to my major. Perhaps Mr. Lee will still be on the watch—and if so we can tell him."

"Let's all go!" said Reggie Pitt eagerly.

"Hear, hear!"

"An excellent idea, brothers," said Browne, stretching himself. "I really think that the moment has arrived when the entire Detective Academy should tighten up its girdle and sally forth into the fray."

CHAPTER 10.

Faced with a Terrible Fate!

EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH took a deep, deep breath.

"Nothing!" he muttered in exasperation. "Goodness knows we've searched thoroughly enough, but there's no sign of anything here!"

"In that case, old boy, don't you think we'd better trickle away?" asked Archie. "I mean, that blighter might come back at any moment. Dashed awkward for us to be discovered in his room like this."

"We'll have to chance that," said Handforth. "Rats! I thought we were going to make some discoveries, too!"

The pair were standing in the middle of Morse Rodway's room, and they had just finished a thorough, systematic search. The room, in fact, looked very much as though a cyclone had struck it. Handforth had not taken any particular care over his task, and he had emptied drawers and cupboards and left everything in heaps on the floor.

Archie felt that this was not quite the right way of doing things—not the way in which Nelson Lee himself would have done them—and he had more than once murmured a protest. But Handforth had always silenced him. The main thing, in Handforth's view, was to find the diamonds. What did it matter about a little litter?

"It wouldn't have been so bad if we had found something else," said Handforth gruffly. "Of course, we're really after the diamonds, but there's absolutely nothing here! Not even a letter or a visiting-card to prove who that man really is! Not even a jemmy or a burglar's kit, or anything!"

"Frightfully tough," said Archie sympathetically. "I mean, we haven't even found a bagful of forged bank-notes, have we?"

"Eh?"

"Or a plant for making counterfeit coins."

"You silly ass——"

"I rather thought you were expecting to find a few things like that, old scream," said Archie mildly. "And all we've found is to-day's newspaper, a packet of cigarettes, a few soiled collars and——"

"No need to tell me what we've found, fathead!" broke in Handforth. "I know that, don't I? Where are the diamonds? That's the point! If they're not here, where are they?"

"I should have thought it would have been pretty obvious, laddie, that that blighter took them away with him," said Archie.

"I don't believe it," said Handforth, frowning, "although, of course, there is that possibility—— Let's have a look at the floor," he added suddenly. "There may be a loose board, or something."

He picked up a big electric torch from the table—one that had been there when the boys arrived—and he switched it on.

"This is a pretty rotten light," he said, as it flickered and faltered. "Something wrong with the battery, by the look of it. Rats! I need this torch, too."

"Haven't you got one of your own, old boy?"

"Yes."

"Then why not use it?"

"It won't work," growled Handforth. "That chap who tried to knife me did it in. Oh well, I suppose we'll have to make do with this one."

MORSE RODWAY came upstairs quietly.

He had found the door on the latch—much to his satisfaction. He did not want the landlady or the maid to know that he had just come in. He was still deep in thought regarding the extraordinary adventure that had so recently befallen him. And he was beginning to realise, for the first time, that the menace of the League of the Green Triangle was very real.

Perhaps it would be better, after all, to join the League? Better to be on the side of that great organisation than to have it against him. He bitterly realised that the League secured most of its members in this way. The Scorpion failed to understand, however, that most crooks were only too eager to join. Even at this moment there were hundreds of third-rate men who were doing their best to obtain admission. For to be a League member was to secure a big advantage.

The Scorpion had always played a lone hand, however, and he was reluctant to alter his ways. He arrived on the landing, frowning heavily, and he prepared to enter his room. Then, just as he was about to lay his fingers on the door handle, he paused.

Voices!

He stood there, tense. A murmur of voices sounded within his room. Instantly he remembered Professor Zingrave's threat. The Green Triangle men would be with him always—until he came to his decision. Some of them were even now in his room!

And, with a start, he remembered something else.

The diamonds!

He had been congratulating himself on the clever way in which he had concealed them. But during his absence the League men had come—and were making another search.

He stood there, thinking hard—thinking quickly.



The car dashed up and scattered Nelson Lee and the boy detectives. At the same moment something exploded in the roadway, and dense volumes of blinding vapour filled the air.

He glanced up the stairs which led to the upper floor, and in a moment he came to a decision. He ran lightly up the stairs. He opened a door and entered a dark attic. It wasn't really a room, but a kind of space in the rafters.

The Scorpion was a thorough man. When he had engaged this room he had lost no time in providing himself with an emergency route of escape. He had quietly looked round, and had found that there was an exit through this attic. He had already seen a sort of trap-door in the ceiling of his room—and he had been curious to find out where it led.

It was a satisfactory discovery. In the event of sudden emergency he would be able to leap up to that trap-door—after standing on the table—get through, and make his escape. He could easily do that while the door was being broken down. The Scorpion was a man who believed in preparing for sudden action.

His thoroughness was now rewarded.

Squeezing his way along the rafters, he reached the trap-door, and with gentle, delicate fingers he lifted the trap. He moved it aside slightly and gazed down.

He drew in his breath so sharply that he almost gave himself away. Two figures were standing near the table in the room below. One of them was trying to unfasten the Scorpion's own electric torch, which had been left on the table.

THERE'S A GRAND SURPRISE AWAITING YOU NEXT WEEK, CHUMS—

Handforth was dissatisfied with the light. It was quite bright at times, and then it would completely fade away. There was some little thing wrong inside. And Handforth had a mania for investigating.

The sight of the boy unscrewing the end of the torch had a remarkable effect upon Morse Rodway. His face went positively pale with fury. He slid the trap-door completely aside and gathered himself up. He badly missed his silenced automatic just then. And it was lucky indeed for Handforth that the Scorpion had been disarmed. For the man was in such a rage that he would certainly have fired point-blank. As it was, he lifted his feet through the opening, hovered for a moment, and then dropped.

Crash!

The Scorpion landed in the very middle of the table, and the table was unable to stand the strain. One leg broke and the whole thing collapsed. Handforth went flying, and Archie, who had staggered back just in time, gazed at the scene in amazement.

"Good gad!" he ejaculated, aghast.

The unfastened torch was jerked from Handforth's grip; it crashed against the wall and fell to the floor. The "battery" broke open, and a litter of curious-looking stones rolled all over the floor.

"Odds surprises and starts!" breathed Archie. "The diamonds!"

The diamonds—in the torch battery! But for the fact that the battery had fallen so violently this discovery might not have been made. It was a cunning hiding-place. The Green Triangle men had removed that battery from the torch, and had replaced it—never dreaming that the Scorpion had a special battery of his own; one that looked quite normal, but one which contained a fairly-big receptacle.

"No, you don't!" panted Rodway, as he swung round upon Handforth. "You young whelp! So you thought you'd double-cross me, did you?"

"The diamonds!" gasped Handforth. "In that torch all the time! You rotter—you murderer! Archie! Yell for Mr. Lee!"

"What ho!" said Archie, leaping towards the window.

"No, you don't!" snarled the Scorpion again.

He swung round like lightning, his left foot jerked out, and the toe of his boot caught the unfortunate Archie in the pit of the stomach. Archie gave a hollow grunt and collapsed, utterly and absolutely knocked out.

"You cur!" panted Handforth, flinging himself upon the Scorpion.

But for once the valiant Edward Oswald found that his fighting abilities were useless. The Scorpion was desperate. He knew a thing or two about ju-jitsu, too. With one movement he swept Handforth off his feet, whirled him round, and pinned him to the floor. His hands were at Edward Oswald's throat.

"Any sound from you, sonny, and I'll throttle you!" he said grimly. "So you'll signal to Mr. Lee, will you? You're not members of the Green Triangle then?"

"Only crooks like you belong to the Triangle!" panted Handforth, speaking with difficulty. "You rotter! Let me go!"

"Not just yet," said Morse Rodway. "You two youngsters know a bit too much for me to be comfortable. I am going to make certain that you keep silent."

His fingers tightened on Handforth's throat as a knocking sounded on the door. He turned his head sharply, his eyes full of alarm. He didn't know whether the door was locked or not. It was a critical moment.

"Well?" he asked, forcing himself to speak calmly.

"Is anything the matter in there, sir?" came the landlady's voice.

"The matter? Of course not!" said the Scorpion. "What do you mean?"

"We heard a sort of crash, sir—we thought you had had an accident——"

"Oh, go away, woman!" interrupted Rodway. "It's nothing. I tripped over a chair, that's all. What about my supper?"

"It's all ready, sir."

"All right—I shan't want it for another half-hour," said the Scorpion. "Don't disturb me, please. I'm very busy."

"All right, sir," came the landlady's voice.

Handforth had been trying to gurgle out something, but he had failed. The Scorpion's fingers were so tightly round his throat that Handforth was nearly choked already. And Archie Glenthorne was still writhing on the floor in agony. He had been winded on the football field on many an occasion, but never had he been so completely "outed" as this.

"Now," said the Scorpion.

It is doubtful if he had realised anything significant in Handforth's reference to "Mr. Lee." He had too much on his mind. His one aim now was to place these two boys so that they should not hinder him, and to get away. He had satisfactorily dealt with the landlady—and that was one good point.

Within ten minutes he could be out of the house—away into the fog.

He dragged the cloth off the fallen and broken table, and with deft fingers he wrapped it round Handforth's face. Edward Oswald managed to get out one loud gurgle, but after that he was silenced. The Scorpion then took a scarf and bound it round Handforth's wrists. The rest was easy. He lifted Handforth in his arms, and carried him over to the bed, on the other side of the room. Ruthlessly, he tore one of the sheets into strips. He bound Handforth's ankles, and then he turned his attention to Archie Glenthorne.

Within three minutes Archie was as helpless as Handforth. Not one blow had Archie been able to get in. Even now he was pale and sick from the effects of that cowardly kick. He was placed on the bed, side by side with Handforth, and there was nothing that they could do. Bound and gagged, they were helpless.

Handforth's thoughts were bitter. He had blundered! Nelson Lee had ordered him to go home—and he had insisted upon coming into this lodging-house. And now—this was the result! He had dragged Archie into a trap. But even Handforth had no suspicion in his mind as to the appalling plan that the Scorpion had in mind.

"You'll tell no stories," said Morse Rodway, as he pulled one of the blankets completely over his victims. "That'll do nicely! I'm afraid you'll have an uncomfortable time of it."

He turned away from the bed, breathing hard. His next task was to pick up the fallen diamonds. It was not a hard job, for they had fallen all in one place. The Scorpion placed them in his tobacco-pouch.

His impulse was to escape straight from the building. But as he moved towards the door he paused and looked back at the bed, indecision written on his face.

For a moment the Scorpion's eyes rested on an old-fashioned oil-stove, tucked away in a corner of the room. He strode over to it, and took out the container. The container was more than half-full of paraffin.

"Why not?" he muttered half aloud.

He deliberately spilled the paraffin on to the carpet. Then, with his back to the door, he struck a match, and threw the lighted wood on to the oil-soaked patch. There was a burst of flame and the Scorpion hastily backed away. Within a few moments the room was burning fiercely.

The Scorpion opened the door, passed quickly out, and locked the door on the outside. Then, with cat-like tread, he descended the stairs.

CHAPTER 11.

Peril!

NELSON LEE uttered an exclamation of annoyance.

"What on earth are you boys doing here?" he demanded angrily.

Out of the fog a number of figures had suddenly materialised. Nelson Lee was still on the watch outside the lodging-house. He keenly suspected, too, that everything was not as it should be. From his place of concealment he had noticed one or two men moving

—WONDERFUL FREE GIFTS COMING—SEE PAGE 33!

about. They appeared like shadows out of the fog, only to drift away again. More than this; Lee had become aware of the fact that a car had come to a standstill just a little further down that quiet road. Was this car in any way connected with the Triangle agents?

And now, when Lee was half-expecting something dramatic to develop, a number of familiar figures had loomed up out of the murk. It seemed to Lee that all the members of the Detective Academy had arrived; and he wasn't far wrong.

"Have you seen them, guv'nor?" asked Nipper anxiously.

"Seen them? Seen whom?"

"Handforth and Archie."

"They are not here, if that is what you mean."

"We got back home, sir, and we naturally expected to find Handy and Archie there," said Nipper quickly. "But they weren't. I'm afraid that something has happened to them."

Lee forgot his annoyance.

"Handforth and Glenthorne have not returned?" he muttered. "That's bad, young 'un. Either they were followed, and captured by the Triangle agents—which, somehow, I doubt—or Handforth has disobeyed orders."

"But where can he be, sir?" asked Willy. "What could he have been doing all this time? If anything has happened to my major——"

"Great Scott!" gasped Church, pointing. "Look! Over there, you chaps! Look at that window!"

Through the fog they could see a lighted window of the lodging-house. It had suddenly become tremendously brilliant. The blind was a light-coloured one, and a moment earlier the light behind it had been ordinary. Now it was intense and lurid. It seemed to flicker, too.

"What is it—a fire?" asked Nipper breathlessly.

"Yes, by gad!" said Forrest. "Look! The blind's catching alight! Or the curtains! That room's on fire!"

It was remarkable, standing there in the fog. There had been no alarm—no shouting. There was not even any sound of crackling or burning. Just that flaring window, indicating the drama.

And at the same moment the front door quietly opened, and a figure slid out into the fog.

"That's him!" breathed Nipper. "That's the man—the murderer!"

"Come, boys!" said Lee quickly. "We've got to detain this man!"

He had already sent a message through to Scotland Yard, and he was expecting the arrival of the Flying Squad cars at any moment.

THE members of the Detective Academy needed no urging.

They had been told to detain this man—and they jumped to it. With one rush, they tore across the road.

The Scorpion, just as he reached the pavement, halted. He heard the sounds of running feet. Instinctively his hand went to his hip-pocket, and he cursed. He prepared to run, but it was too late. The schoolboy detectives were on him. He was swept clean off his feet in that first rush, and Nelson Lee was amongst the foremost attackers. The Scorpion had absolutely no chance to use any weapon—supposing that he had had one.

"That'll do, boys," said Lee, as the Scorpion was dragged to his feet. "Form yourselves into a sort of bodyguard. We'll take him straight to the nearest police station."

"What the devil do you think you're doing?" panted Morse Rodway. "Who are you? What do you mean by jumping on a harmless——"

"Hold him while I slip these handcuffs on," interrupted Lee. "One of you go and give the alarm in that house. There's a fire of some kind——"

But at this moment another startling development took place.

As Nelson Lee had suspected, that motor-car which had been standing just down the road was directly connected with the League of the Green Triangle. There were two men in it, and these two men were now acting in a strange manner.

Quick as lightning—after seeing that the Scorpion had been captured—they pulled strange-looking gas-masks over their heads. The driver started up his engine with a roar, and the car plunged full tilt into the crowd of boys. There were yells of warning, and the boys scattered.

Crash!

Something exploded in the road, and dense volumes of acrid vapour arose, spreading out in all directions.

"Back—back!" shouted Lee urgently. "Keep out of this, boys!"

He clapped his hand to his mouth and nostrils, and at the same moment he was nearly blinded. It was a kind of tear-gas, and the water welled into Nelson Lee's eyes as he staggered away. He felt that he was choking.

On all sides the boys were similarly affected. The Scorpion was dropped as though he had become red-hot, and he was left there. The next moment he was seized by the two men in the gas-masks, who had leapt out of the car.

"In with him!" shouted one, in a muffled voice.

The Scorpion was grabbed, hurled bodily into the rear of the car, and the men leapt back into the front seat. The engine roared, and the car drove off into the fog. The whole incident, from first to last, had not occupied more than one single minute.

NELSON LEE saw the car disappearing into the fog. He knew that it would be utterly useless to give chase. And it was necessary, too, for the boys and himself to get out of this stupefying atmosphere. The fumes were hanging in the fog, and were slowly spreading. One or two people, attracted by the commotion, had come up—only to reel away, choking and gasping. The alarm was beginning to spread.

And now a window was flung open—a window of the lodging-house.

"Fire—fire!" screamed a voice.

Nelson Lee glanced round. He was recovering from the effects of that tear gas now, and he could see that flames were roaring out from one of the windows in dense, flickering masses.

"Quick, boys—indoors!" he shouted. "There's more work for us to do!"

"But that man—he's gone!" gurgled Nipper.

"Never mind the man—I have a dreadful suspicion that there is something horribly wrong in that burning room," yelled Lee. "Quick—come indoors!"

(Continued on page 34)

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He led the way, and when he arrived at the front door he charged at it recklessly. It burst open under the force of his thrust, and he went running upstairs. The landlady, at the same moment, appeared from the basement region. She was hot and frightened.

"Fire—fire!"

The cry was going up, and was being echoed and re-echoed.

Nelson Lee, reaching the landing, glanced at the doors. There could be only one door leading into that blazing room. He tried the handle. The door was locked. Standing back, Lee charged, and he went plunging through into the inferno. The room was choking with thick smoke and the lurid glare of the flames gave the whole place an awe-inspiring appearance.

At the first glance Lee could see that matters were not so bad as they had seemed from outside. The blazing curtains had given a false impression. The room itself was not completely in flames. There was a great patch on the floor, blackened and charred. The remains of the table burned fiercely. There was a bed at the far side, and as yet it had not been touched, although the flames were spreading towards it.

Lee's eyes were smarting so much from the combined effects of the tear-gas and the smoke that he could hardly see at all now; but he realised what had happened. The fire had been started by some petrol, or paraffin. This had blazed up with terrific intensity, causing the curtains to catch fire. That blaze had been short-lived, however, and now that it had died down the extent of the fire was not really serious.

At that moment he caught sight of a movement on the bed. Something under the blanket had shifted! He strode over, flung the blanket aside, and caught his breath in sharply. There were two figures lying on the bed—bound hand and foot—gagged.

"Boys!" shouted Lee. "Here—quickly!"

Nipper and Watson and Church and a number of others came plunging in, regardless of the choking fumes.

"My major!" gasped Willy, as he ran to the bed.

"Carry them out—release them afterwards," ordered Lee.

THE Scorpion remembered nothing after he had been bundled into the car. When he awoke he found himself in the Council Chamber of the League of the Green Triangle once more. He was sitting in the same chair—but now he was begrimed, untidy, dishevelled. His throat felt as though acid had been poured down it.

"You are here again, Morse Rodway," came Professor Zingrave's smooth voice. "You were seized because you were attempting to escape. My agents believed that you were carrying the Lowenstein diamonds."

The Scorpion clapped a hand to his pocket.

"You've got them!" he shouted, with sudden fury.

"We have not got the diamonds," said the professor. "You have been searched, and——"

"But I had them on me—in my tobacco-pouch!" burst out Morse Rodway. "Your infernal men must have robbed me!"

No. 1 nodded his cowed head to the other members of the League Council.

"Gentlemen, we have been beaten again—by Nelson Lee!" he said, his voice quivering with intensity.

"By Nelson Lee!" went up several shouts.

"Rodway was seized by Lee and those boys of his," said Zingrave. "He was only held for a few moments before our own men got hold of him. Those diamonds were not on him afterwards. Is it not obvious, therefore, that Lee had been first?"

"Lee!" muttered the Scorpion. "Those boys said something about Lee! You mean Nelson Lee—the detective! I didn't realise—I didn't——"

He broke off, and he stood up, his eyes blazing with hatred.

"I'll join your Green Triangle!" he said thickly. "Let me join now—this minute! And let my first job be the settling of accounts with Nelson Lee!"

HANDFORTH and Archie, mercifully, were hardly scorched. When they found themselves at home, in Grays Inn Road, they were dazed and bewildered and weak—but they were not seriously harmed. All the boys of the Detective Academy were feeling relieved. It had been an exciting adventure, but it had ended satisfactorily.

And at the same time Nelson Lee was at Scotland Yard—handing over the diamonds to the delighted and relieved Mr. Isaac Lowenstein. Lee had secured the Scorpion's pouch during those tense moments in the fog-ridden roadway.

Later, Lee returned to Grays Inn Road, and he found the boys still up. He congratulated them on their first real taste of action.

"But we must be prepared for squalls now," he declared gravely. "The League of the Green Triangle will be more bitter against us than ever. By the look of things, young 'uns, this adventure is only to be the first of many."

"The more the merrier, sir!" said Handforth. "Down with the Green Triangle!"

Nelson Lee could not help smiling.

"That's the spirit!" he said approvingly.

THE END.

"Down with the Green Triangle!" that's the war cry of Nelson Lee and his "cub" detectives. Next week the fight continues—grim, relentless. "The Man Who Vanished!" is packed with thrills and excitement—don't miss this magnificent yarn, chums!

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. 2. Horror in The Air!

ANDREW FERGUSON!" The Chairman of the Thrill Club glanced at the quiet man with the iron-grey hair. Without preamble the grim Scotsman started his story—the story of his most thrilling experience.

"The name of Professor Vining," Andrew Ferguson began, "though perhaps little known here, is one to conjure with among scientists who have worked in the strange regions of the Upper Amazon. It was Vining who penetrated along the River of Doubt long before Roosevelt and Rondon in 1914. I was one of his party when he settled down in a clearing with some native servants, a few Germans and Italians, and an observation balloon, to study the Wapisiana people.

"We were taking the balloon out of the hangar one morning. I had hold of a handling-guy at the rear. Vining's last words to me were: 'Hang on, Ferguson old chap, or she'll get away.' I hung on, as you will hear.

"The man on the rope that paired with mine was a massive German named Gartz, with red hair and a ferocious smile. He was a vain fellow, proud of his strength. He slung the rope round his waist and pulled as though he alone would hold down the balloon. I foolishly followed suit. Neither of us noticed that the cable had not been hitched to the metal V, and neither of us noticed the others leave go their hold of the ropes as the balloon tugged defiantly in the wind. We heard their warning cries, but too late. The balloon rose in the air like a rocket, with Gartz and myself dangling on the ends of the ninety-foot ropes.

"The balloon had not been sand-bagged; there was no one in the basket. We were hanging in space, and being rushed helplessly into the clouds. I remember to this moment the dizzy nausea that seized me when I realised our awful position. My hands clutched frantically at the rope while I endeavoured to twist it in my feet and legs.

"My wrenched sinews cried to me to let go, yet something impelled me to hang on. I swung sickeningly. Involuntarily I uttered a despairing cry, and my cry was answered by a laugh, harsh and hideous, from the German on the other rope. Gartz, whose strength was abnormal, had managed to climb some distance up the handling-guy, and now he swung above me, leering insanely. He looked more frenzied at that moment than I have seen any man look, even in the wildest delirium of tropical fever.

"I summoned up all my powers and tried to climb as well. Something in the desperation of my soul must have given me strength, for I managed to climb level with the yelling lunatic on the other rope. My intention was to get into the basket, which I could do at a desperate hazard by swinging on the rope, or, if my strength lasted, by clambering into the rigging. The balloon, I knew, would deflate if the valve-line had been set correctly, and once in the basket I might stand a chance of landing by using the rip-cord in a favourable spot.

"I had little nerve left to look about me, but when my eyes turned to the diminishing forests beneath, I saw to my consternation that we were drifting rapidly towards the snow-capped Andes. I proceeded to hoist

myself painfully up the rope. The distance still to be traversed seemed interminable as I looked upwards, and above me, on the other rope, still swung the great bulk of the German Gartz. He had taken out the knife from his belt and was brandishing it ferociously.

"I watched him with my heart pounding in my throat. His mirthless laughter cracked across the void: 'Himmel!' he screamed. 'Up! Up! Up!' As I climbed he swung towards me, screeching hysterically and lunging at me with the gleaming blade. I was convinced then that the man was mad, and that I was dangling in space with a homicidal maniac.

"We rushed upward, and the vapours of a cloud strata enveloped us. I saw my chance.



"... we were being attacked by a horde of Giant Vampires ..."

Straining every sinew in my body, I climbed thirty more feet of the rope. We shot out of the clouds, and I found myself within leaping distance of the basket. I swung like a human pendulum with clenched teeth while the silence was shattered by the German's blood-curdling yells. I swung, leapt, and landed in the basket of the balloon.

"For several moments I lay a crumpled heap, but I was galvanised to action by the menacing cries of the red-haired giant above me. With his prodigious strength and agility he had climbed the rope into the rigging, and was coming down on me with the liveness of a panther. His eyes were bulging and the whites were flecked with blood. He gripped the gleaming knife between his strong teeth. I drew out my own knife from my belt. I braced myself. I prayed.

"I was no match for Gartz normally. Now I was exhausted, and he was mad, which made my chances desperate. I was beginning, too, to feel the extreme cold. Gartz dropped into the basket. He fixed on me his glassy, blood-shot eyes, and took the knife from between his teeth. He began to scream at me in German, gesticulate, and laugh with a dry, horrible cachinnation. I remember that at this juncture I shivered dreadfully.

"Gartz was pressing his knife against his own throat. A tiny pin-point of blood bubbled from the skin. He muttered gutturally, and brandished his knife. Any moment I expected the lunatic to rush at me. But instead he shrank back suddenly into the corner of the basket, and began to gibber with a saliva-flecked mouth. He stared into space with protruding eyes. I turned.

"Sweeping towards us through the air was a mass of black and forbidding shapes. Vultures, I thought, until I saw the great bat-like wings, the large raw ears, the lidless eyes, the long, curved teeth bared under withered skin. Then I knew that we were being attacked by a horde of Giant Vampires, the dreadful denizens of the dark, untracked forests of South America. One, with a spread of bat's wing half as wide as the length of our balloon, was sweeping on ahead. Its claws clutched the air frightfully. Gartz was whimpering now against my leg.

"I crouched instinctively as the hideous thing, neither bird nor beast, but monster, ghoulish relic of the equatorial slimes, rushed to the basket and perched against me. I watched the red, lidless eyes fascinated, unable to move. They seemed to be staring at the tiny bubble of blood on the German's neck. Gartz, in his insanity, seemed to have some consciousness of what was going to happen, for his hands flew to his throat, as if to cover the bead of blood. He shrieked and screamed my name many times in that great stillness. Then he fell back, gibbering. The Vampire Bat pounced upon him and the basket swayed. I saw the yellow talons on the quivering, prostrate body. I saw the vulpine teeth swoop down on the thick-veined throat. I heard a cry more awful than any sound I have heard from human lips. I saw the madman's hands clutch weakly at the air; I saw his great body quiver and sag. I could do nothing.

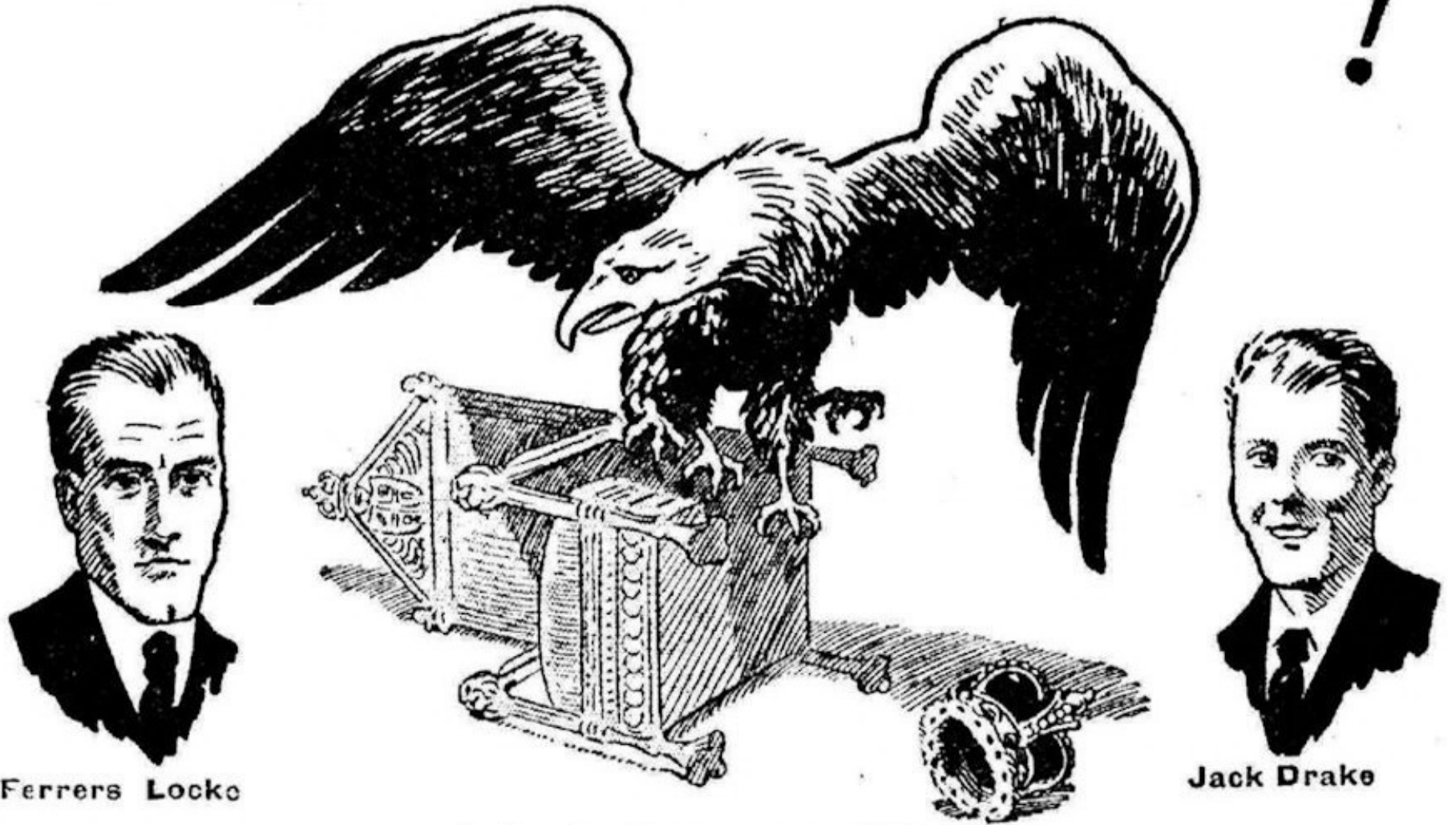
"At last something seemed to re-vitalise me. I looked down. The great open pampa was beneath me, and the balloon was dropping swiftly but safely to earth. I lifted up my bowie-knife and hurled myself on the loathsome, half-feathered carcase of the blood-sucking vampire. I plunged my knife blindly again and again into its body.

"When I awoke I was on a paliasse in a native hut. Some of you, no doubt, will say that all this was the delirium of semi-consciousness at a high altitude. Well, when I came to, beside my couch was my knife, stained with blood and covered with feathers.

"It was proof. What I had seen, I had seen."

A RACE FOR A THRONE! Ferrers Locke speeding King Ferdinand to Abronia, closely pursued by Prince Carlos. Far-reaching consequences depend upon who gets there first!

The FOUR-LEGGED EAGLE!



Ferrers Locke

Jack Drake

(Introduction on page 38.)

Fast and Furious!

JACK shifted slightly in his seat, and was suddenly conscious of the fact that close beside him on the seat lay a heavy wrench.

In a flash he dropped one hand to the seat beside him, and he thrilled at the feel of the cold metal as he grabbed the wrench. Fiercely he seized it and hurled it at the duke, then grabbed the wheel of the car as she began to slither from the camber of the road. He brought her back and kept her straight.

But he knew that the duke had fallen. He had thrown first, and accurately. The wrench had crashed full in the duke's face, and it had toppled the man over, the knife falling from his nerveless fingers.

The duke screamed with pain, and went sprawling over the man at the steering-wheel. Perilla cursed him fluently, but the damage was done. The rebels' car lurched wildly, and the men in the tonneau were thrown about helplessly. Prince Carlos nearly went over the hood. The huge bulk of Major Patens jolted into him, and the prince slid to the floor of the tonneau.

But King Ferdinand had the presence of mind to cling to the hood. Somehow he remained on his feet, and Ferrers Locke cried out triumphantly:

"Hit her up, Jack!"

Jack pressed his foot more on the accelerator, and the car drew slightly forward. Locke leaned precariously over the side, shouting to the king.

"Quickly! Now!"

There was hardly any need to shout, for the king had guessed what Locke's intentions were, and he met him half-way. He clambered up on to the seat, his arms extended before him. Locke seized his hands, and the king leapt, with Locke's assistance, from one car into the other.

"Let her go!" cried Locke. "He's here, Jack!"

Jack responded, and the vehicle slithered away from the rebels' car and shot ahead.

The Duke of Silene, half unconscious, lay heavily against the Grand Seigneur of Perilla, and as both rear tyres were punctured, Perilla was forced to stop the car.

Consequently the traitors were soon left behind as Locke's car sped up towards the mountains that towered on the horizon. They rounded a bend, and Prince Carlos and his confederates were lost to sight.

Jack kept up a good speed, for Locke realised that even if the rebels' car was crippled Prince Carlos was not the sort to give up the chase until it had definitely ended.

"Keep her at it, Jack," he said.

Jack nodded and settled down behind the wheel again. The principal excitement of the ride was over, even if the need for speed was as great as ever. Jack drove calmly now, although he kept the powerful car all out.

Soon they began to drop down a dangerous hill towards a valley. They had to cross the valley, towards which they sped, and climb the gloomy mountains on the other side, and then they would be on the frontier of Abronia. It was as near as that to the end of the adventure.

Locke lit his pipe and relaxed in the tonneau beside the king. Neither of them spoke.

The car seemed to shoot down towards the valley, and the green fields and pleasant pastures, the clustered cottages, and an age-old church seemed to be rushing up to meet them. Jack had to throttle down to take that steep hill with safety. But even then their speed was terrific.

They got down to the valley in safety and thundered through a sleepy village. The inhabitants fled to their houses, the one and only gendarme seemed petrified at his post outside the one and only auberge; chickens and ducks scattered and hid beneath the hedges. Then the car was out in the open again.

Jack put her at top speed at the straight, and the car seemed glad to have the levels to deal with. The road was comparatively good, and Jack made the most of it.

Suddenly from behind him came an ear-splitting report. The car lurched sickeningly and swung round. Locke ducked as the off-side mudguard smashed a wooden gate to smithereens.

Jack wrenched at the wheel, and somehow he got the car back on to the road and brought her to a standstill. Quite calmly he leant over the side and stared at the off-side rear wheel.

"Thought so!" he said, disgruntled. "Puncture! Just our luck, that is, gov'nor!"

Locke was already out of the car.

"We've got a spare wheel," he said crisply.

Jack leapt out and set to work. King Ferdinand also lent a hand. It was not a very difficult job, but with the sun pouring down on them relentlessly they perspired profusely, for they hurried, knowing that Prince Carlos would not give up that chase unless forced to. He might be a long way behind, and he might not.

They fixed the spare wheel in position, and sighed with relief as Locke tightened the last nut. King Ferdinand stowed the tools away in the tool-box hurriedly. Jack sat down for a rest on the running-board, while Locke lighted his pipe. The king, oil and grease on his hands, smiled with satisfaction.

"That," he said, "is the dirtiest and hardest piece of manual work I have ever done in my life that I can remember, and I rather enjoyed it!"

Locke wasn't listening to the king; another noise interested him, and a grim expression came over his face. A car was approaching at a good speed. The bends in the road and the rows of trees made it impossible to see what sort of car it was, but by the sound of the engine Locke knew that someone was in a tremendous hurry. He took no risks.

"All aboard," he snapped.

Round the bend a quarter of a mile away came the car. It was not the one they had last seen Prince Carlos in, but there was no doubt that Prince Carlos and his confederates were in this approaching vehicle, for a revolver cracked spitefully.

Jack leapt into the tonneau of the car, and with a bound Locke took his seat at the steering-wheel. King Ferdinand clambered aboard even as the car began to move—and once more the chase was on!

A Ticklish Position!

PRINCE CARLOS had obviously commandeered another and more powerful car. And the chase, which until a few minutes before had been in favour of Ferrers Locke & Co., now assumed a different aspect. Ahead of them loomed the mountains of Abronia. If only they could reach the frontier Prince Carlos and his fellow-traitors would be beaten; but could they? That puncture was likely to make all the difference, for now the rebels were close on the heels of their objectives.

Locke performed wonders at the wheel. In an incredibly short space of time he got the car travelling at top speed; but it was touch and go. The pursuing car was barely a

HOW THE STORY STARTED.

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

JACK DRAKE, have been engaged to rescue

KING FERDINAND OF ABRONIA, who has been kidnapped by

PRINCE CARLOS. The prince and his fellow-conspirators are racing the king to Abronia in a high-powered motor-car, and Locke and Jack are in full pursuit. The latter succeed in catching up with their rivals, and then Locke decides upon a daring plan. The only chance of rescuing the king is to transfer him from one car to another while travelling at full speed! They draw alongside. Jack is driving. Locke stands up in the tonneau of the car and is just about to grab Ferdinand when Jack, to his horror, sees that one of the Abronians has a knife in his hand and is aiming to hurl it at the detective!

(Now read on.)



Only a few yards separated the two cars now, and Major Patens was blazing away with his revolver at the vehicle which contained Ferrars Locke.

hundred yards in the rear, and the burly Major Patens was blazing away with his revolver, trying to repeat Locke's former trick of bursting their rear tyres.

Locke guessed what his game was and steered an erratic course, an extremely dangerous dodge on that winding road. But it worked. Major Patens never had one hit to his credit. Both Jack and King Ferdinand kept well below the hood, and the bullets whined over them or sang alongside the speeding car.

The chase was now developing into a race—a race to the Abronian border. And far-reaching results depended upon the result; upon which car first crossed the frontier.

If King Ferdinand reached Abronia before Prince Carlos he would hold the whip-hand, because then the rebel prince would not be able to spread sedition against him. But if Prince Carlos arrived first he would immediately broadcast the fact that the king was not in his palace as the populace supposed, and he would be present in person to lead the revolt.

One hour would be enough for his purpose. And as the king had so far escaped from his clutches, he would not hesitate to start a civil war that would be far-reaching in its effects, possibly involving the whole of Europe.

All this flashed through Ferrars Locke's keen brain and steeled him to further efforts. He coaxed every ounce of speed the car was capable of producing, and gradually he increased the distance between the two cars.

A quarter of a mile separated them now; half a mile, and soon the pursuers had disappeared completely from sight. But still the detective kept his foot down hard on the accelerator.

They began to leave the valley behind them and to climb towards the sombre peaks of the Abronian mountains. The road was steep and difficult now. And then, just when it seemed that everything was going smoothly—when success was looming within the realms of possibility—then came the disaster.

During the last few minutes Ferrars Locke had noticed that the car was not running so sweetly as beforehand. His efforts to coax more speed were unavailing. Then suddenly the engine began to splutter. King Ferdinand leaned forward, an anxious expression on his face.

"Mr. Locke," he said, "what's that noise mean? Surely the car is not going to fail us at this stage—"

The Baker Street detective, his own face bearing a worried look, smiled grimly.

"I'm afraid that is what is going to happen, your Majesty," he replied. "We're running out of petrol. Perhaps we shall be able to last out a little longer—"

He broke off. The speed of the car was slackening perceptibly. Ahead of them loomed a long, tortuous, steep incline. Locke stamped his foot hard on the accelerator, and the engine tackled the task valiantly—but only for a short distance. The detective changed into second gear; then into low gear. Up, up went the car, getting ever slower and slower, the spluttering noise increasing. The crest of the hill crept into sight; they were nearly there—and then, with a jarring and a jolting, the vehicle came to a stop. Locke tried to get her going again, but the engine was lifeless.

Jack leaped out and raised the bonnet. He studied the petrol gauge and shrugged his shoulders.

"That's torn it, guv'nor—no more petrol!" he said.

Locke nodded.

"That's what I thought," he agreed.

King Ferdinand gave a groan.

"So near and yet so far," he said anxiously. "What is to be done? Carlos cannot be far behind."

"We'll have to cut across country," decided Locke. "They can't follow us by car if we climb the hills."

"Abandon the car?"

"We shall have to. There is nothing else for it, and we must not waste time arguing about it." The famous detective spoke incisively. "Nip up the road, Jack, and see what's round the corner," he added abruptly.

Jack ran like a hare to the next bend, and Locke, watching him, saw him beckon frantically. They left the car and raced up to the lad. All they saw was a cumbrous great cart laden with hay.

"Really," protested the king, "I fail to see——"

"But we can hide in it," said Jack. "If we climb those hills now, guv'nor, that major chap might pot us with his revolver. Let's hide so that they'll go whizzing by——"

"Exactly!" agreed the detective. "I saw your idea at once, Jack. Leave this to me. Come on!"

They ran on until they caught up with the cart. The old peasant who trudged along beside the horse turned sharply and eyed them with misgiving.

"I am a poor man, signors," he said, in Italian. "Have mercy——"

"We are not robbers," replied Ferrers Locke quickly. "We want to conceal ourselves in your hay."

"But why, signors? If I help you against the police——"

"This is nothing to do with the police. We hide, and anyone who asks you about us—well, tell them you have not seen us. You understand?"

"But why?" argued the peasant, scared to death.

Locke gave him a handful of money—more money than the old chap had ever seen before at one time.

"There is no time to explain," said the detective curtly. "Do as you are told. You have not seen us. Remember, I shall be in the hay, listening to you, watching you. And if you betray us——"

He took out his revolver and patted it significantly. The peasant paled beneath his tan.

"Si, signor!" he whimpered quickly. "Who am I to withstand you?"

The roar of a car climbing the gradient was borne to their ears, and Ferrers Locke, Jack, and King Ferdinand tumbled into the hay. The cart started to move again, rolling and rumbling on its laborious way up the hillside.

It was far from comfortable, concealed in the hay. The straw tickled them, and when it wasn't tickling it was scratching. The pollen of the grasses, dried in the sun, got into their nostrils, and they endured agonies of body and mind as they prevented themselves sneezing.

But the roar of the oncoming car reached their ears, muffled though it was by the concealing hay, and the implied threat helped them to control their twitching nostrils. In all probability, if any of them sneezed none of them would live very long to sneeze again. Being so close to the Abronian frontier Prince Carlos would be ruthless if he caught them. He might not actually kill King Ferdinand, but he would not think twice about killing Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake.

The roar of the approaching car grew louder and louder; reached a deafening climax as it dashed past the cart, and then gradually decreased in volume as the car receded in the distance.

The fugitives sighed deeply and with satisfaction. Jack, unable to control himself any longer, sneezed violently several times. Locke poked his head out of the hay and gazed up the road. The car was nowhere in sight, but the roar of its powerful engine was still plain.

The old peasant brandished his grimy hands. He showed plainly that he would be glad to get rid of his strange passengers.

"They have gone, signors," he said.

Impulsively, Jack wriggled out of the hay and half fell from the cart to the road.

"I'm not keen on that sort of travelling," he commented. "I'd sooner try a London bus any day of the week. Come on out, guv'nor; it's all clear."

Locke came out of the hay, closely followed by the king. But as they stood in the roadway the roar of the distant car became louder. At first, the detective thought that, having emerged from the muffling hay, the sound reached his ears more clearly, but even as he listened it grew plainer.

"Quickly!" he cried. "They're coming back!"

He dived into the hay; King Ferdinand followed suit. Jack bounded back across the road, and also tumbled into that odorous cargo.

It was one of those simple things that no one foresees until it happens. The rebels had noticed the abandoned car. No doubt they had also noticed the hay cart, but they had not given that a moment's thought until, having continued on up the road, they had not found the fugitives.

Realising that King Ferdinand and his English friends could not have travelled so far on foot, they turned back, convinced that they had passed their quarry. They came swooping round the corner, and pulled up just beyond the hay cart.

Prince Carlos alighted and faced the old peasant. Locke was peeping out from his hiding-place, very worried. Would the old peasant reveal their whereabouts?

Major Patens stood just behind the prince, his revolver in his hand. That sight did more to unnerve the old peasant than anything else, for it reminded him of another revolver that menaced his back from amongst his own hay. He was trembling violently, a fact that did not escape the keen eyes of Prince Carlos.

"Have you seen two men and a boy on this road?" he asked curtly.

The old peasant shrank away from his questioner, as scared as ever a man could be.

"No, no, signor!" he said. "Two men and a boy, you say, signor? No, no, signor!"

"You lie!" snapped Prince Carlos.

"But—signor," protested the man, "you passed on up this road. If you have not seen them, then how should I—"

But Major Patens knew a better way of extorting the truth than by mere questions. He brushed past the prince and grabbed the old peasant by the wrist, brandishing his revolver under the man's nose.

"Where are they?" he cried furiously. "Tell the truth or I'll shoot. Tell me where they are!"

"I dare not," whimpered the man. "The signor will understand my—my danger—if—"

And suddenly Perilla came leaping from the car.

"Here!" he cried. "I can see—"

He thrust one hand into the hay and seized Jack's left foot. He hauled and Jack came out on to the road with a bump. The rebels had run their quarry to earth—or it seemed so!

* * * *

JACK was feeling surprised and startled as he scrambled to his feet. Behind him was the cart stacked with hay. Beyond the cart was the towering mountain-side, studded with boulders and coarse bushes. Before him were the Abronian conspirators, their car, and behind them a precipitous drop of some fifty feet into an overgrown gully.

"So!" snarled Perilla, in his guttural English. "Having caught the cub the other dogs are not so far away. Yes? Where are those others? Speak, you dog!"

"You mind who you're talking to!" snapped Jack, but he kept a wary eye upon the other. Perilla's hand was already inside his jacket, and might flash into view again at any moment with that murderous knife which the man always seemed to carry.

"But why waste time?" snarled Prince Carlos.

He attacked the hay furiously, and his confederates helped him—all except Perilla, who was holding Jack. They probed and pulled the hay about. Jack watched them, amazed. They did not find Ferrers Locke or the king, despite the fact that they cut long sticks from the low hedge beside the road and poked about in the hay until it seemed as if nothing could have been hidden from them.

But in the distance an owl hooted. At least, it sounded as if it were in the distance. Jack heard it and pricked up his ears. It sounded again.

Major Patens was beginning to look puzzled. Most of the hay had been pulled out of the cart by now and still there was no sign of the king or of Locke. Prince Carlos was scowling. The Duke of Silene poked gingerly, his courage not being his strong suit, and if Ferrers Locke did suddenly jump out of the hay he would not remain to argue. Jack watched in stolid silence. At first he had been just as puzzled as any of them at the non-discovery of the King of Abronia and his gov'nor. The hooting of that owl, however, had given him a clue. He listened intently. For the third time came that hooting from the distance. The Grand Seigneur of Perilla paid no attention to it. He was watching his compatriots tumbling the hay about, and he was so intent that his attention wandered from Jack a trifle—a slip that was his undoing.

For suddenly Jack seemed to crumple up to nothing, then wriggled like an eel. Perilla's grasp on his shoulder was broken and he dodged free. The man growled menacingly as he spun round to the attack.

Jack is undoubtedly in a tight corner. Will he succeed in escaping? You'll know when you read the next—and concluding—instalment of this grand serial. Order your next Wednesday's copy of the Old Paper now, chums!

HOW TO JOIN THE LEAGUE

ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE APPLICATION FORM No. 117.

SECTION A	READER'S APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP. I desire to become enrolled as a Member of THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE, and to qualify for all such benefits and privileges as are offered to Members of the League. I hereby declare that I have introduced "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY" and THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE to one new reader, whose signature to certify this appears on second form attached hereto. Will you, therefore, kindly forward me Certificate of Enrolment with the Membership Number assigned to me, and Membership Badge.
SECTION B	MEMBER'S APPLICATION FOR MEDAL AWARDS. I, Member No..... (give Membership No.), hereby declare that I have introduced one more new reader, whose signature to certify this appears on second form attached hereto. This makes me (state number of introductions up to date) introductions to my credit.
SECTION C	NEW READER'S DECLARATION. I hereby declare that I have been introduced by (give name of introducer) to this issue of "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY."
(FULL NAME).....	
(ADDRESS).....	
.....	

INSTRUCTIONS.

INSTRUCTIONS.—Reader Applying for Membership. Cut out TWO complete Application Forms from Two copies of this week's issue of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY. On one of the forms leave in Section A, crossing out Sections B and C. Then write clearly your full name and address at bottom of form. The second form is for your new reader, who fills in Section C, crosses out Sections A and B, and writes his name and address at bottom of form. Both forms are then pinned together, and sent to the Chief Officer, The St. Frank's League, c/o THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4.

Member Applying for Bronze Medal: It will be necessary for you to obtain six new readers for this award. For each new reader TWO complete forms, bearing the same number, are needed. On one of the forms fill in Section B, crossing out Sections A and C, and write your name and address at bottom of form. The other form is for your new reader, who fills in Section C, crosses out Sections A and B, and writes his

name and address at the bottom of the form. Now pin both forms together and send them to the Chief Officer, as above. One new reader will then be registered against your name, and when six new readers have been registered you will be sent the St. Frank's League bronze medal. There is nothing to prevent you from sending in forms for two or more new readers at once, providing that each pair of forms bears the same date and number.

Bronze medallists wishing to qualify for the silver medals can apply in the same way as for the bronze medal, filling in Section B. Every introduction they make will be credited to them, so that when they have secured the requisite number of readers they can exchange their bronze medal for a silver one.

These Application Forms can be posted for $\frac{1}{2}$ d., providing the envelope is not sealed and no letter is enclosed.

A FEW OF THE ADVANTAGES OF JOINING THE LEAGUE.

You can write to fellow members living at home or in the most distant outposts of the Empire.

You are offered free advice on choosing a trade or calling, and on emigration to the colonies and dependencies.

If you want to form a sports or social club, you can do so amongst local members of the League.

You are offered free hints on holidays, whether walking, biking, or camping.

You can qualify for the various awards by promoting the growth of the League.

If you want help or information on any subject, you will find the Chief Officer ever ready to assist you.

NOTICE.

The St. Frank's League has now attained such proportions that we are compelled to discontinue the offer of gold medals in connection therewith. The silver and bronze medals will still be available, however, as heretofore, to those who qualify for them in accordance with the rules.

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.

No Need To Worry!

HERBERT BARLOW, an enthusiastic Gravesend League-ite, wishes to join the Territorials, but he suffers from a slight deafness; will this affliction bar him?

I do not think my chum need worry on this score. I see no reason why he should not be eligible for the Territorials—in certain grades, at any rate. Anyway, if Herbert wants to set his mind at rest he cannot do better than go to the nearest recruiting office straight away. He'll soon know his fate then.

For Continental Readers!

IHAVE received a communication from Frank Santos Suarez, who is the European secretary of the "Correspondents League of Nations." This used to be the English and Colonial Correspondence Club, and I must confess that I like the club's new name.

My correspondent will welcome inquiries from any Continental readers of THE NELSON LEE; his address is, Graville, Anglet (B-P.), France.

"Alice, Where Art Thou?"

RECENTLY, I had an inquiry from a girl League-ite named Alice Derri-man, who asked me if I could give her a few details as to how she could go about getting a berth on board a liner as a stewardess. This week comes a letter from Yvonne Oslea, of London, who has similar inclinations, and who would like to write to Alice.

If Alice is reading this Gossip, perhaps she will take a note of my other girl chum's address and do the necessary. Here it is: 8, Bradstock Road, S. Hackney, London, E.9.

No Address!

WE all of us are still shivering in the grip of winter, and yet this week I have received a letter from a reader who is making preparations for the summer! Still, there's nothing like being well in advance, is there?

W. Burrows, of Belfast, and his chum intend to go for a cycling tour. At the moment

they are on the look-out for a small ridge tent, and they have asked me to put them in touch with readers who could help them in this direction. I should be only too pleased to assist my Irish chums, but—they've forgotten to give me their addresses!

How about it, W. Burrows? Drop me another line, giving me your full address, and then I will see what I can do for you in the matter.

THE CHIEF OFFICER.

DON'T BE BULLIED!

Send 4
Penny

Stamps for some **SPLENDID LESSONS** in **JUJITSU** and Handsome Photo Plate of Jap Champions. The Wonderful Japanese Self-Defence without weapons. Take care of yourself under all circumstances; fear no man. You can have **Monster Illustrated Portion** for P.O. 3/9. **Send Now to "YAWARA" (Dept. A.P.), 10, Queensway, Hanworth, Feltham, Middx.** Practical Tuition London School Daily.

HEIGHT INCREASED 2 to 5 ins.

The Alan System Cannot Fail. I Guarantee Success within 21 Days or Cash Refunded in Full. **Send P.O. 5/6 NOW**, or stamp for particulars.—**A. K. ALAN**, (Dept. B) 19-21, Oxford Street, London, W.1.

5/6
COM-
PLETE
COURSE

MAGIC TRICKS, etc.—Parcels, 2/6, 5/6. Ventriloquist's Instrument, Invisible, Imitate Birds. Price 6d. each, 4 for 1/-.—**T. W. HARRISON**, 239, Pentonville Road, London, N.1.

BE TALLER!

Increased my own height to 5ft. 3ins. **STAMP** brings **FREE DETAILS**.—**ROSS**, Height Specialist, Scarborough.

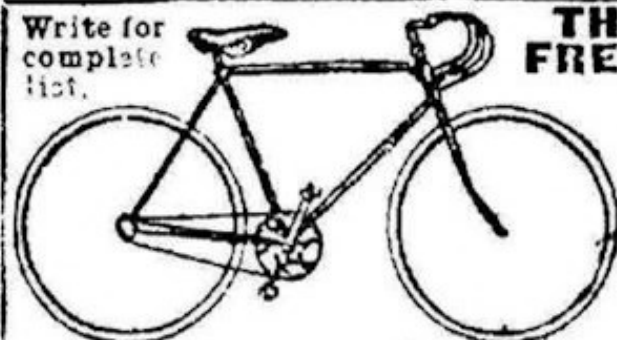
FREE PASSAGES to Ontario, Canada, for approved boy farm learners, age 15 to 19. Apply:—**ONTARIO GOVERNMENT**, 346, STRAND, LONDON.

HEIGHT INCREASED 5/ - Complete Course.

3-5 inches In **ONE MONTH**. Without appliances—drugs—or dieting. **THE FAMOUS CLIVE SYSTEM NEVER FAILS**. Complete Course 5/- P.O. post free, or further partic. stamp.—**P. A. CLIVE**, Harrock House, COLWYN BAY, North Wales



Write for complete list.



THE "SPUR" FRENCH RACER.

Guaranteed forever

55/- Usual retail £4-4-0

Frame enamelled in various colours. **Genuine Clincher Popular Cord** tyres

Deposit 14/- and 12 monthly payments of 4/9. **GEO. ROSE & Co.**, 8, New Bridge St., London, E.C.4.

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED

S. G. Mumford, 23, Tweed Street, West Derby Road, **Liverpool**, desires correspondents anywhere who are interested in aviation.

A. Plimmer, 20, Brough Street, **Derby**, wishes to correspond with readers.

Allan Jackson (18), Mangamutu, via Pahiatau, North Island, **New Zealand**, wants correspondents.

W. Sadler, 56, Albert Street, **Colchester**, would like to correspond with a wireless enthusiast.

Wm. Ritchie, 27, Ganton View, Woodhouse Street, **Leeds**, wants correspondents in Australia interested in sport.

A. R. Acton, 37, Green Road, **Ashbourne**, Derbyshire, desires N.L.L., Nos. 74, 75, 78, new series.

E. J. Faulks, 37, Recreation View, Earl Shilton, near **Leicester**, wants correspondents anywhere.

Jack Bailey, 65, Clifford Street, Whatapoko, Gisborne, **New Zealand**, desires correspondents. He requires N.Z. full face Queen stamps.

Philip W. Evans, 14, Foden Road, **Walsall**, Staffs, wants N.L.L. old series, Nos. 537-541.

Geo. D. Laws, 87, Calton Avenue, Dulwich Village, **London, S.E.21**, would like to hear from match-box collectors.

Harry Browne, Kenilworth, Beaufort Road, **Ashton-under-Lyne**, Lancs, wants correspondents in Europe and U.S.A.

A. Barnard, 5, Collingwood Street, Chelsea, **London, S.W.3**, would like to hear from readers.

R. T. Peacock, 2, Oliver Park, **Hawick**, Roxburghshire, N.B., wants "Fullwood Reformation"

series, and offers 3d. each for "Handy's Round Up" and "The Spooler of St. Frank's."

Miss Jean Plowman, 1107, Maryhill Road, Maryhill, **Glasgow** (age 11½), wants girl correspondents interested in films and autographs, in India, South America, and Africa.

L. Edghill, 29, Maple Avenue, **South Harrow**, Middx., wishes to join a club in his district.

Stanley Harrison, c/o United Indigo & Chemical Co., Ltd., Union Dyeware Mills, Longroyd Bridge, **Huddersfield**, Yorks., desires correspondents in Australia interested in sports.

Kenneth G. Rogers, 45, Hampton Street, Goodwood, Adelaide, **South Australia**, wants correspondents.

S. Hussein-Massaid, c/o Survey Office, **Singapore**, wants to exchange stamps.

Arthur J. H. Baker, 3, College Place, **Brighton**, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere, especially in France, Germany, Japan.

W. Lewis, 27a, North Street, **Ventnor**, Isle of Wight, wants correspondents.

Joe Jackson (aged 16), 13, Murphy Street, Richmond, E.1, Melbourne, Victoria, **Australia**, desires correspondents interested in stamps, cigarette cards, etc.

H. G. Sait, 32, Montpelier Street, **London, S.W.4**, wants a correspondent in Germany, age 15-16.

Fred Greenhalgh, 2, Duckworth Fold, **Bury**, Lancs., desires correspondents interested in show mice and cage birds, also in old books.

S. Hoskinson, School House, Preston Patrick, **Milnthorpe**, Westmorland, offers back numbers of the "N. L. L." from No. 84, new series.

Ronald S. Gallagher, 35, Aylesbury Road, Copnor, **Portsmouth**, wants correspondent.

E. J. Davis, 69, Mildmay Grove, **London, N.1**, offers back numbers of the "N. L. L."

"PEEPS PAST THE PYRAMIDS!"

(Continued from page 25.)

And the boys whispered one to the other:
"Where, then, are the marvels he spake of? We would see them, that our eyes may goggle!"

EVEN as the boys spake, there came a mighty bang! Sheets of flame leapt up from the small furnace and played like lightning about the figure of Dr. Potiphar. And the eyes of the boys goggled thereat; for it was a spectacle of amazement.

And Dr. Potiphar's eyes goggled more than those of any of the Form's, for something had gone astray in the works. Yea! The whole show had even blown up!

And when the flames had died down, Dr. Potiphar spake to the Form.

"O Form," he said, "the lesson on Khemiks hath ended for to-day. I have shown thee how to make a combustion with H₂O by turning it into steam." For he knew not, being distraught, that he had used methylated spirit instead of water, and the spirit had even reached the furnace.

"Thy chicken, O Rik me-Nek," added Dr. Potiphar in desperation, "there were no boats?"

"No boats, O master," replied Rik me-Nek.

"Then how gottest thy chicken to the other bank?"

"It did not get to the other bank, O master. For it could not think of a way over the flooded river, and therefore stayed this side."

"Stayed this side, O gnaf's brain!" said Dr. Potiphar wrathfully.

"Yea, O master! It changed its mind," said Rik me-Nek, getting him ready to bolt.

And the master fumed.

"Am I then to creep into the head of a chicken and watch it change its mind, O fool? Thy conundrum is of no merit, and verily my rodd will change thy mind, before thou askest further questions." And the doctor caught the boy even as he leapt for the highest tier.

"By my beard——" commenced Dr. Potiphar, putting his hand to his face. But no beard was there! For had it not been singed from his countenance by the flames of his furnace?

Yea! It had!