

NO. 36.—MAGNIFICENT DETECTIVE TALE.—1^D. *Week ending Feb. 12, 1916.*

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PROLOGUE.

FROM the snow-clad peaks and ice-carpeted slopes of the great Himalayas came down the blizzard in all its force, blotting out the plains in the lowlands, choking up the valleys of the foothills, and ripping across the thunder-filled gorges of the mighty rivers with a beating and lashing and shrieking pandemonium which drowned even the roar of the rivers themselves.

All Tibet, that high tableland which men call "the roof of the world," lay beaten and obscured under the storms which crept down from the mountains to north and south and east and west.

Even the sacredness of Lhasa—the Mecca of Lamaism—the holy city of the Chinese and the Tibetans, the squalor-filled city where the bejewelled and begoldened temple of the Dalai Lama sits, was immune from the blast. Swept with the same fierceness which tore about the nomad shepherds of the bleak plains, the blizzard howled and shrieked and deluged all earth.

In the city men hied them to their mud-brick houses, and shivered in the dirt and squalor of the interiors; on the plains and across the barren foothills the nomads crept into their tents and sat in huddled heaps clinging to one another for warmth.

Peering through the terrific exhibition of Nature across towards the place where one knew the giant peaks to be, it was difficult to believe that man might exist up there where the howling clouds of destruction had their genesis.

Yet it was so. High up—up where the slopes of the mountains were more barren than tundra, up where the ice carpet rested always, up where the destroying glaciers had their source, up in the very heart of the greatest peak of all, there was a cave cut from the granite bosom of the mountain, when and how none might say.

Still, it was there, and had some of the slant-eyed denizens of the lower slopes and plains cared to talk they could have told that this cave was sacred, had been sacred from time immemorial—was the residence of a holy man, a hermit who had lived there always.

Neither illness nor death did he know, neither heat nor cold, neither hunger nor thirst. There he lived, there he had always lived, there he always would live. Not so holy was he as the great Dalai Lama, but he was

more feared, and not even the boldest man of Tibet would have approached within hail of the place where the cave was known to be.

Was there life in that cave? Did a holy man—a hermit—live there? Was he super-man, as the denizens below seemed to think? Through the teeth of the storm come on the wings of the storm king and peer within the cave—or caves would be more correct.

Into the very heart of the mountain the great opening seemed to lead. A low vaulted opening it was, which formed a narrow, natural passage, cutting the granite slope for a dozen feet or more. There it broke off abruptly to right and left, revealing the form of the cave within. A circular chamber, it was vaulted overhead, bare of all but a rough heap of skins at one side, and lit up by a rudely-fashioned rush-light which swung near the entrance.

Almost directly opposite the opening was another passage over which hung the hide of a yak. This inner passage wound in a series of short and abrupt turns for twenty yards or more until it came to a huge inner cave—a vast chamber in direct contrast to the outer cave.

It, too, was circular in form and vaulted of roof, but there its resemblance to the other cave ended. The walls were hung with rich, heavy curtains which effectually concealed the grey stone beneath. The floor was piled thick with the skins of tigers and deer and leopards.

Suspended from the roof above were several great copper braziers which lit up the place with a glow of soft radiance. About the walls were divans heaped up with cushions.

In the centre of the apartment was a large table piled high with books. Bookcases all about were filled with other tomes, and in an artificial alcove were still more ponderous volumes.

Another short passage leading from here gave into a small adjoining cave, and there, when the skin rug over the entrance was thrust aside, one gazed upon the most completely equipped laboratory it would be possible to conceive.

Crucibles, retorts, chemicals, great cases of vials filled with every coloured liquid, furnaces and blast furnaces, glass-topped tables, tubes, bottles, rubber and glass appliances, patent burners and what not. It was a veritable home of research.

Against one wall stood a peculiar mass of bright steel which shone dully under the lights of the cave, and those lights, curiously enough, were emanating from long, thin tubes of crystal which stretched overhead.

To this same mass of steel they were connected, and as one approached it—had one been able to do so—one would have found that from the steel mass there also came a soft glow of heat.

It was the engine of light and heat which supplied the caves with those elements. The lights were far more brilliant than electric lights, far whiter, more chaste, almost as virginal white and as stupendously blinding as sunlight.

And the holy man—the hermit? What of him? He was there.

Standing at a huge glass-topped experimenting table, gazing with deep concentration at a ruby-coloured tube in his hands, stood a man—and surely there never lived a more extraordinary-looking individual.

In height he could have been no more than four feet ten or eleven; his body, small and elfin-like, was clad in loose yellow trousers and jacket. His feet were encased in leather sandals which made scarcely a sound on the stone floor—in here the stone had been left bare—as he moved.

But his head was the most remarkable thing about him. Large enough for a giant, it loomed heavily above the pinched, narrow shoulders, seeming ridiculously heavy for such a tiny body to support.

The dome was guileless of hair, and gleamed shinily yellow beneath the light. The forehead was extraordinarily high—higher than one ever sees—while the eyes were deep-sunken and tense of expression. Only when one met the full glare of the orbs did one see that they were twin globes of colourless steel. The pigment was absent from them; they were uncanny eyes, and in them seemed to lie a menace which might have been brother to the witch-brood of old.

The nose was of the Chinese type, the mouth small and austere, the chin broad and deep. All in all, it was the head of super-intellect; yet also it was the head of a something which man does not understand, a head to inspire fear, a head of mystery.

The cheeks, leathery and yellow, were bare of hair; the lips and chin as barren of hirsute growth as the cheeks. It was a ghastly dome on a more ghastly body, and the mind whose temple it was must, forsooth, have been of an extraordinary type.

It was Genghis, the holy man of the cave, the hermit of the mountain—the Mystery Man of Tibet.

Who he was, whence he had come, none knew. In the plains they whispered among themselves that he had always been there—that he had never been born, nor would he ever die.

For generation after generation had the legend come down of the hermit in the cave, and be sure it lost nothing in the telling. That he had always been there was not so, neither was it so that he would never die.

The cave had had its lone tenant, however, for untold thousands of years, and of the present generation Genghis was the tenant. He stood staring at the ruby-coloured liquid, his eyes impassive as dead coals in a nomad fire. One could not tell whether he was pleased or displeased by what he saw there. One might not know if that chemical experiment had been a success or failure. Yet there was a decisiveness in his way of setting down the tube, and with a queer little hopping step he crossed to the far side of the cave where were piled half a dozen great tomes.

Lifting the two top volumes, he drew out the third, and carried it across to a small glass-topped table which had been placed beside the larger one. He laid it down there, and, opening it at a page about halfway through, revealed the fact that the sheets were of thin, but very tough, skin.

Then he took up a quill-handled brush, and, daubing it in a large stone jar of ink, began to paint odd-looking characters. Genghis was writing in the oldest and most complicated of the written Chinese characters.

He worked away steadily for several minutes until he had almost filled two sheets, then he threw a heap of sand across the page to dry it. That done, he closed the book and returned it to the pile against the wall.

Now he hopped back to the experimenting table, and, once more taking up the test-tube filled with the ruby-coloured liquid, placed it carefully in a little rack. He next donned a pair of rubber gloves, and from the shelves over his head took down a small glass-stoppered phial.

Removing the stopper, he picked up the test-tube, and, holding it well away from his face, poured the contents carefully into the phial. With a quick motion he threw the test-tube against the stone floor, smashing it to fragments, then he stoppered the phial and locked it away in a cupboard to the right of the shelves.

Now he turned, and, hopping across the apartment, paused before a huge yak-skin which hung there. At first one would not have suspected that the skin hid an apartment, so huge was it, and so effectually did it cover the opening. Yet so it was, for as he stood in front of it Genghis made a peculiar clucking sound with his lips.

Instantly there sounded the rattle of a chain, and the skin was thrust

aside to permit the entry of what was certainly one of the most weird-looking creatures one could gaze upon.

As he came shuffling into the light, his movements halting and uncertain, and hampered by the long chain which clinked and jangled behind him, he cringed before the dwarf, though his eyes, feverish with an unnatural brightness, were steady enough.

His hair was long and thick and tangled about his shoulders. His beard was heavy upon his chest, whilst his moustache blended with the beard as part of it. Little more than his eyes was visible above that hirsute protuberance. A rough skin covered his body, and girdling the waist was a heavy steel band welded about him, and from which the chain which tethered him dangled. His feet were bare, his arms bare also, and his hands brown with the grime of untold days.

He looked like the caricature of a man, like some man-beast, like a haggard and fever-maddened faun. Genghis, the gaoler, eyed him in silence for a few minutes, then he made a curt motion, and the enchained creature shuffled across the room to a small square stone which was set against the wall of the cave.

He squatted there, jerking the long chain to one side as he did so, and Genghis, going to the cupboard where he had placed the phial, unlocked it. From a shelf within he took two small white objects, which looked like nothing more than squares of white cardboard, being about three inches long by as many wide, and half an inch or so in thickness.

One of these he handed to the man who sat on the stone; the other he kept himself. Then, from a leathern sack which hung from a wooden peg in a crevice of the wall, he poured two leathern mugs of water, handing one to his companion. Listlessly the enchained creature took it, and then, at a sign from Genghis, he set his teeth into the white, cardboard-looking object. Slowly, and with much chewing, he demolished the white stuff, then drank copiously of the water.

Genghis did likewise, and when he had finished took back the mug from the man on the stone, and, with his own, tossed it on to the table.

A curious meal was this which those two odd-looking creatures had just eaten, for meal it was. What went to make up the composition of those two white sheets which they had eaten, only Genghis himself knew.

From chemicals had he made the food, putting into it all the needs of the human body, and the fact that, unkempt though they both were, they looked well nourished enough, proved that the food served the purpose. And therein, too, lay part of that which tended to increase the mystery of the cave hermit. No man ever saw food going to the cave; no man knew how the cave hermit might live. Nor did any man who might slink about the plains below know that there were two men in the cave. That was the secret of Genghis, the Mystery Man, and of others.

For the first time the dwarf spoke, using a strange tongue which was like Chinese, yet was not Chinese. It was a tongue known to but few, and those few guarded it closely.

"Know you," he said, eyeing the creature who still squatted on the stone—"know you that the day approaches when your period of preparation will be ended. To-day has seen the completion of another step in the long road which we travel. For forty years—even from the day when I finished my period of preparation—have I toiled within the cave. For forty years have I worked to advance another step in the work started by those who have gone before me.

"Forty years ago the Genghis who lived in the cave began the distillation of a certain element of which you will hear more anon. For forty years have I, too, worked at that same task, and to-night I have two ounces of the

precious liquid to show for my work. It is, as I said, another step. Soon I shall make preparations to take still another step. One more achievement and we shall be ready to go out into the world. For six thousand years has a Genghis lived in this cave working, working, working. In those six thousand years the world has grown—new races have sprung up, nations have been born, have lived, have died. Where there were wastes and deserts there are now teeming millions. Where there were cities and peoples there are now ruins and desolation.

“As the world has gone on so have we remained here working. Much have we done. Into the great secret of life have we probed deeply—how deeply you will one day know. Through the work of those who have gone before, I possess powers which no man may understand. To the Genghis has it been given to study and to understand the scheme of Nature, and no others may understand it. You, I picked to succeed me. You, have I kept in the cave, preparing you for the day when you will take up my work and carry on what must be carried on.

“One more step and we are ready. Should fortune favour me—should the knowledge I have gained enable me to complete that other step soon, I myself shall take up the work outside and you shall be my helper. Should I receive summons to depart to the Great Beyond before I have finished it, then you must carry it on. You must go into the world and do the work.

“You must also pick a successor, and prepare him for the work even as I have prepared you. Soon you will be released. Now get you back to your place. To-night I send my soul on a long journey, for I would imbibe wisdom and knowledge for my work.”

He ended by making the peculiar clucking noise with his lips, and, rising without a word, the enchained creature shuffled across to the skin from behind which he had emerged. Lifting it, he disappeared on the other side, and when the clanking of the chain had died away Genghis turned and approached the peculiar steel affair which stood against one wall.

Lifting his hand, he placed it on the steel nob and turned. Immediately the brilliant lights which shone in the long tubes began to fade, dying down until but a tiny glimmer of light was left in each—a light which was ruby in tone and which lit up the cave with a dull red glow.

With his old hopping, mincing step, Genghis made his way from the cave to the richly-furnished apartment outside—the main cave. There he paused for a moment, gazing at the braziers which hung overhead. He appeared to be lost in meditation, a meditation from which he dragged himself slowly. Then he crossed to one of the divans, and, casting himself down, closed his eyes.

Five minutes passed—ten—fifteen. Perhaps half an hour went by, during which not a sound broke the stillness of the cave. Terrific though the storm outside was the noise of its howling did not penetrate to the inner cave. It was as tranquil there as though it were buried in the bowels of the earth, which indeed it was. But at the end of half an hour the body of the dwarf could have been seen to stiffen, until the thin, scrawny limbs lay straight and rigid, until the face went grey and cold, until the lips blued and pinched with rigor, until the whole body seemed as the corpse of one who had died. Then from between the lips there issued a peculiar long-drawn sigh, which deepened and deepened in falling cadence until it died away so low, so low. Then with the body of the dwarf lying stiff as before, silence once more descended upon the cave.

II.

The Prisoner in the Cave—After Five Years—The Dash Through the Storm—Who Was He?

WHILE the body of Genghis, the Mystery Man, lay rigid as in death—while his soul “went upon its long journey to seek wisdom—what of the enchained creature who had disappeared behind the skin in the laboratory? Let us lift the yak-hide which hid the place and gaze upon him.

A small bare alcove we see, with stone floor and a heap of skins against the wall. Into the wall, untold thousands of years ago—before the races of the earth as we have the history of them knew the use of iron—there had been placed a huge ring of this metal. Though mankind in general might not know the use of iron and had depended on stone and flint, the Genghis men of the cave had known it for thousands of years, and had used it. From this ring depended the long, heavy iron chain, the other end of which had been affixed to the steel belt which encircled the man's waist.

For five years had he been the prisoner of that chain. For five years had he lived as an animal in that cave. For five years had he endured the austere life which was part of the training of the Genghis. It might last one year, it might last twenty, that stern preparation. In the case of the previous Genghis it had lasted twelve years; in the case of the present one, sixteen years. Only when the definite task of the presiding Genghis was finished did the novitiate receive initiation into the mysteries of the cult.

And a mysterious cult it was, to be sure. Yet the creature in the cave was not a willing novitiate. By force had he been taken, by force was he being prepared for the life he had been elected to lead. Many strange types of men had lived in that cave during the past six thousand years—men from the wastes of Siberia, men from the mountains of Mongolia and Manchuria, men from Tartary, men from Turkestan, men from all Asia—men of all breeds. Yet never before had a European been dragged there to carry on the work of the cult.

Five years before, Dick Featherstone had been at Oxford. The son of an English doctor in Rangoon, he had gone home as a youngster to be educated. Always something of a mystic by nature, he had been saved from the life of a dreamer by a thorough course of general science, and when he had returned to Rangoon it had been with the intention of joining his father in research work. He had elected not to take up medicine. But before settling down he had started out to realise an ambition of his youth—nothing less than to follow up the great Irawadi River to its source somewhere in Tibet.

It was when he had penetrated into the region of that closely-guarded country that one night while in camp he had been forcibly seized and carried off.

For days he had been conveyed across the wastes of Tibet, until finally he had been cast down in the cave where he still remained a prisoner. Little did he know that the Genghis had heard of the presence of a white man in the country long before Featherstone had crossed the boundary of South-east Tibet. Little had he known his every footstep had been dogged. How could he know that the Genghis of the cave knew who he was—knew that he already had a deep grounding in science? How could he know that he had been selected to become the next Genghis when he had not even heard of the Genghis?

And so for five years he had remained prisoner in that cave, being forced to drag out his austere days and awful nights at the end of a chain, listening by day to the complicated lectures of the Genghis, studying the

little-known language which the Genghis employed, preparing himself—as the Genghis put it—to take up the exalted position of Genghis in that rare cult which had its heart and soul and being in a cave in the Himalayas.

Not that the obstinacy of the novice had been overcome. The Genghis serenely went on his way, confident that the chosen would in time yield to the appeal of the cult and of his own free will dedicate his life to it.

To save himself from madness Dick Featherstone had studied hard, drinking in all that the Genghis had to say, and in that five years enlarging his scientific knowledge to a marvellous degree.

It had taken him only a very short time to realise that the Genghis had a knowledge of chemistry of which the cleverest and most learned chemists of Europe did not even dream. Hundreds of years before the Genghis had solved problems with which the European chemists were still struggling. He himself had gained a vast knowledge of the subject, and in Europe would have ranked as a marvel in the research laboratory.

He had learned much, had Dick Featherstone. He had learned too much. He had learned sufficient to make him fear as he never thought he would fear aught on earth.

Nor during all that five years had he for a single day relaxed his determination to get free. For five solid years he had worked steadily and secretly at the only plan which presented itself to him. And on this night, while the Genghis lay on the divan in the main cave, he was still working away.

On the heap of skins he lay, holding the great chain in his hands. Less than a month after he had been taken prisoner had he begun to saw one of the thick links against another, filing it crudely.

For months there had been scarcely a sign that the constant friction was telling, but one day he had seen distinct evidence that the links were thinning, and he had redoubled his energies. Thick as they were, five years of steady work had thinned and thinned them, until on the night when the Genghis announced the completion of still another step in the mysterious work of the cult, Dick Featherstone had frictioned the links until they were very thin indeed.

It had been his constant fear that the Genghis would discover the work on which he was engaged, but by cautious movement and unflagging vigilance he had managed so far to conceal his secret.

And now as he realised that soon, very soon, he might be forced into still farther depths of the cult, he redoubled his energies, sawing away one link upon another, and using all his strength for the purpose. Though for five years he had lived on the chemical "cake" prepared by the Genghis, he had not lost his strength. As a food for the human the "cake" was ideally composed, and on it and nothing else had he existed. That he had no cravings of any sort was evidence of its worth.

So he worked, peering down through the gloom at the thin inner end of the links and noting with an exultant upheaval of his feelings that the iron was very, very thin.

Still he sawed away at it until but a thin sheet of iron lay between him and freedom. Then holding the chain carefully in his hands, he crept towards the yak-hide, which shut him off from the outer cave, and peered out. Only the dull red gleam of the tubes overhead lit up the place, so creeping back to his pile of skins Dick Featherstone stood upright. That there was nothing in the laboratory to help him with his work he knew only too well. One sound there and he would have had the Genghis in upon him in a moment. He must trust entirely to his own strength.

Bending a little, he placed both feet over the chain; then settling the steel band about his waist, he began to strain upwards. How many times

had he tried that Samson trick before? Always had the strength of the chain defied his efforts, but he had persevered. If he failed this night he would strive again the next night. He must break that chain as soon as his strength would serve.

Up, up, up against the steel band Dick strained, the cords standing out on his forehead as the effort of body and will surged through him. From shoulder to thighs there went a dragging pain as his body protested, and then, when he felt that he must once again postpone his effort, there came a sudden crack of the iron. So suddenly did it part that the strength of his straining threw him backwards in a heap, and the chain dropped to the stone floor with a loud clamour.

Dick Featherstone lay on the heap of skins panting and stilling the beating of his heart. His ears throbbed so terribly that for some minutes he could not hear; then, as the roaring in them subsided, as the throbbing of his jugular grew quiet, he crept across to the yak-hide, and, lifting it stealthily aside, listened.

Not a sound broke the stillness. Standing upright, he took hold of the short end of the chain, which still dangled from the steel band about him, and wrapped it carefully about his waist, winding it in and out with a torn-off strip of hide to keep it from jangling. Then with a last look back into the alcove from which he had come, he tiptoed out into the laboratory. Straight to the cabinet he went, and, cautiously opening the door, took out a dozen of the odd-looking white cakes which meant food to him.

Thrusting these within the loose hide which he wore, he crept along to the opening leading into the main cave. He gently drew aside the hide curtain there, and peered into the apartment. For five years he had not set eyes on it, yet he remembered its details perfectly. In those five years he had seen so little to spoil the picture which his mind had formed of it. On the divan he saw the rigid body of the Genghis.

Closely Dick Featherstone examined it. There was nothing of the relaxation of sleep there. Too well, alas! did he know of the self-caused trance which the Genghis could wield, and as he gazed upon that stiffened body, he knew that, though the flesh might be there, the spirit was elsewhere.

The Genghis himself had said that his spirit would make a long journey to seek wisdom. The trance might last all night—it might last but an hour. Dick Featherstone could take no chances.

For a single moment, while he stood there gazing upon the body of the man who had caused him such intense suffering during the years which had gone, a great hatred welled up in him, and his hands clenched with fierce desire to strangle the Genghis as he lay.

Five years of the torture through which he had gone will do much to blunt the creed and morals of the strongest. Violent death would be little enough to repay what the Genghis had caused him to endure.

Could he bring himself to do it?

With glittering eyes he crept across the softly carpeted apartment towards the divan on which the Genghis lay. Five years of domination by the Genghis made him nervous, even though he knew himself to be physically the stronger.

The Genghis had powers at his command which Dick Featherstone knew to exist, at the suggestion of which the average European would have laughed in amused disbelief.

Yet Dick Featherstone had seen those powers in action. He had felt them to the core of his soul. He knew, as he knew that it was all some hyper-development of the human brain, some super-understanding and realisation of the soul, that he could do nothing to combat those powers should the Genghis be roused.

Yet he knew, too—or, at least, he had a faint inkling of the ultimate purpose of the Genghis, and he knew that if he killed him there as he lay he would be doing the greatest service to mankind that one could do—a service which of its very obscurity must go for ever unknown.

Dick Featherstone battled with himself there in that cave as he had never battled before.

Should he kill the Genghis? Should he let him live?

When he had been in England, he had gone to a theatre, and there had seen the exhibition of a man whose powers defied all the locks which could be fashioned. He had seen this man—a Russian—actually woven into a great hamper, and the hamper then tied with ropes.

Five minutes after the man had been on the stage with the weaving of the basket undisturbed and the ropes exactly as they had been. He had seen that same man locked in the innermost cell of one of the strongest prisons in the world, and inside half an hour he had passed through thirteen locked and barred cells, leaving some small article of clothing in each one as he passed to prove that he had been there.

Much theorising had been done as to how he accomplished it, but it had gone unexplained.

Yet, clever as that Russian was, he was crude compared to the Genghis. Featherstone knew that no bonds he could devise would keep the Genghis prisoner. He knew that he would slip from out the most intricate.

To tie him and leave him was therefore out of the question. To hope to escape and return to the cave to capture him was equally out of the question.

He was in the heart of the most mysterious and most closely guarded country in the world.

A ring of mountains shut him off from civilisation. Scarcely a white man had ever penetrated there. He was alone in a savage land, where the hand of every man would be against him. It was the country of the Dalai Lama. It was the lair of Genghis, the Mystery Man.

The most ignorant nomad of the plains, the most cultured priest of Lhasa, would alike do their best to drive him back to the Mystery Man did they know of his escape.

Yet bring himself to kill the Genghis he could not.

He could not commit murder, no matter how he might think himself justified. But he could pit his strength against that of the Genghis, even though he knew of the powers of the other. So, bending over the Genghis, he laid his hand on his shoulder and shook him.

A shock went through him as his fingers encountered the cold, rigid flesh of the Genghis.

Heavens! Had the man died there, even as he lay on the divan? Had his soul in truth leaped across the gorge of time into the Great Beyond?

Slowly and methodically Dick Featherstone examined the body before him. Every test that he as a scientist knew did he apply to the business, and at the end of half an hour's hard work he straightened up with a sigh of thankful relief.

As far as he could tell, the Genghis had died. Then it was for him to get as far away from the accursed spot as he might! Feverishly now he moved, seeking this, seeking that for the journey he had in mind.

Then, when he had swung his bundle on his back, he made his way along the twisting passage to the outer cave, and thence into the teeth of the storm.

Instinct more than knowledge led Dick Featherstone that night. Caution bade him wait until morning, but a haunting fear of the cave drove him on, and, as though an omen of victory, like a sweet emblem of hope there shone out through a break in the clouds a bright, cold star.

Others followed, and, quietened by a greater Hand than that which man knows, the storm slunk back to the lair from which it had come.

Beneath a coldly brilliant sky, Featherstone took his way down the mountain to the plain beneath, and, reaching there, struck off to the south-east, where he vaguely knew the Irawadi to be.

And even as the burning disc of day swept up and found him, did the rigid figure of the Genghis stir on the divan back in the cave, and into the lifeless limbs once more throbbed the heat of life. Dick Featherstone had been mistaken.

The Genghis was not dead.

It had been a trance such as only the Genghis could enter. Truth, indeed, his soul had been on a long journey.

Five months later there staggered into Mandalay, the up-country heart of Upper Burma, a haggard, gaunt-looking figure, whose long, ill-kempt beard all but hid the features of his face. No man looking at him would have guessed for a single moment that he was a white man.

Rough hide garments hid the whiteness of his body, and those parts which were exposed had been so stained by the sun and winds, mountain and plain and jungle, that they were deep as mahogany.

Five months it had been of terrific hardship, of ghastly suffering such as man may seldom know and live.

All down the deeply-gorged Irawadi had Dick Featherstone made his way, haunted at night by the mystical appearance of the Genghis and harried by day by the roaming nomads, who seemed to have a particular purpose in killing him.

He knew in some way that the Genghis still lived.

He knew that every power of the Mystery Man was being put forth to head him off and recapture him before he crossed into Burma. Well he knew that the savage tribes through which he was compelled to fight his way to safety were the creatures of some command of the Genghis.

Yet in the face of it all had he won through to Mandalay—Mandalay, where the Union Jack floated in proud regency over the buildings which the British Government used as its executive quarters.

Yet not even then did Dick Featherstone tell his tale. Instead, he made his way as a pilgrim of old down country until he struck the lowlands and thence on to Rangoon, where, with a suffocating sense of anticipation, he sought his father.

His father, a man who knew the mysterious East as few men knew it, would be the first recipient of his confidence.

His father would hear the whole tale from the son he must have thought long dead. His father would tell him what to do. His father would understand the menace of the Genghis, and advise what steps must be taken to stop it.

And then, when the cup of suffering from which he had drunk for five long years seemed that it must be drained, he reached the bungalow in Rangoon—to discover that his father had been dead for two years.

It was almost the last straw which broke the strength of his resolve. He seemed utterly and absolutely alone. He was a grain of dust, whipping helplessly across the highway that men call Life.

He was on the brink of a chasm, into whose depths he looked and grew afraid. For sheer weariness of soul, he could have lain him down and followed into the peace of the Great Beyond. Then, from the depths of his nature, beginning with a faint, sweet throb and rising, ever rising, in spreading waves of soul-music into a crashing crescendo of imperative command there rose that which caught up the flowing strands of his resolve and

seemed to whisper to him: "Go thou on, though the way be hard!" And gazing up into the studded sweep of the cosmos, his heart leaped in response, and the sweet music of his soul died down into a low murmur of utter content.

CHAPTER I.

Nelson Lee Attends a Seance—What the Crystal Revealed.

NELSON LEE walked up the steps of a certain house in Regent's Park with a tolerant and sceptical smile on his lips. It was not the type of house one would ordinarily think of approaching with such a smile.

It was a great, dignified pile, which sat well back from the sweep of the park drive, and reposed in lofty dignity behind the high walls which surrounded it.

It was such a house as one could only think of as the abode of a very favoured mortal—a house which certainly must be a treasure-house of rare paintings and sculptures and bibelots—a house which could exact much of this world's wealth, but which, in truth, would give a noble response.

Nor did its past history belie the impression one received from the outside. Until very recently it had been the town house of a certain well-known peer whose sporting proclivities had been more extensive than his purse, and who had met with the inevitable Waterloo which such a combination of circumstances must lead to.

By the time the bankruptcy proceedings were finished, the broken peer had disappeared abroad, and the noble house had passed into the hands of creditors. A period of quiescence—strangely silent days and gloomy nights—succeeded, nights which must have seemed like the waft of death after the hectic hours the house had known.

Then an eccentric Brazilian millionaire had bought the place, and those few to whom this strange personality became known whispered that Senor Rantolado was a man who had delved deeply into certain physical and psychical laws, and a man who had put the result of his investigations into a monograph which was decidedly interesting.

In a purely formal way Lee had met the Brazilian, and when he had received a card asking him to "form one of a small committee of scientific men to test the claims of a certain woman, who claimed not only to be clairvoyante but also mediumistic," it had been his first inclination to refuse.

But when the names of the half-dozen eminent men who had accepted became known to him, he decided to attend the gathering. And so it was that, on a certain night in late January, he dined early at the Venetia, and then taxied on to Regent's Park for the test, which was to take place between ten and eleven.

An elderly and dark-skinned butler admitted him, and, in halting English, requested him to follow to the cloak-room.

The man's eyes lit up with pleasure when Lee answered him in Spanish, and in a warm desire to respond he himself took Lee along instead of turning him over to an underservant as he would otherwise have done.

Somewhat to his surprise Lee noted as he went along that the place seemed filled with a perfect jam of people.

He had had no idea when he came that there might have been any more there than the few scientists who were to take part in the test.

It seemed, however, that he was mistaken, and when a few minutes later he made his way from the cloak-room to the main hall and thence to the

drawing-room on the right to greet his host, he saw the rich gowns of many women and the sober black and white of as many men.

Senor Rantolado met him just as he was entering the room, and after greeting him warmly took his arm to conduct him across to a merry group which Lee soon found to be gathered round the wife of his host—a small, dark, vivacious South American beauty, with a perfect figure and compelling manner.

Lee chatted in Spanish to her for a little, then spying out Professor Merton, who was perhaps doing more towards mapping the surface of the moon than any other man living, he excused himself to his hostess and strolled across to where the professor stood.

The professor seemed wrapped in thought as Lee approached, but at the sound of Lee's voice he looked up quickly, and a smile of pleasure showed on his bearded countenance.

"So you are one of the elect," he said as they shook hands. "Rantolado told me you were coming."

"I am here," replied Lee; "but, frankly, professor, I do not know why. I am in ignorance as to the real purpose of this gathering. Who is the woman whose claims we are supposed to test? Is she but one of the numerous charlatans who have been shown up repeatedly during the past few years?"

Merton shook his head.

"I know little about her, Lee. Rantolado proposed this test to me some time ago, but I would hear nothing of it then. He was, however, so persistent that I reluctantly consented on the understanding that he was able to get together a truly representative gathering of scientists. As to who or what the woman is I can tell you little. Rantolado, as you know, has gone more deeply into psychic phenomena than almost any other man living.

"He has achieved more success than any other man because he has tackled the problem with a purely open mind. He has not jeered at the whole thing as the narrow-minded and ignorant do—he has not been swept away by seemingly supernatural facts.

"He has, in a way, laid the foundations of a new science, and I believe that when it has grown along these lines it will be accepted as such. But, as I was saying, I know little about the woman. She is a subject whom Rantolado has been studying for nearly five years. She is a South American and claims direct descent from the ancient Incas who, as you know, lived and flourished in Peru before the Spanish conquerors came.

"She claims to be the only person living who knows the true history of the Incas. Of course, there has been a good many theories as to how such a cultured race happened to be in South America, and for the matter of that there has been the same mystery about the Aztecs in Mexico.

"At any rate, this woman claims to be an Incan princess who has come down in direct descent, and through the medium of an Incan priesthood and nunnery which has flourished ever since the old days in the depths of the Equador jungle.

"Be that as it may, she certainly lays claim to other things of even greater importance. She claims to be able to overcome the natural wall surrounding the strongest personality, and to cause such personality to undergo a species of self-hypnosis which, by the way, she accomplishes by the ancient form of crystal gazing.

"She claims, also, to be a medium and to be able to give direct communication with certain planes of the spirit world. That, my dear fellow, is what we staid individuals are here to-night to investigate.

"Rantolado has said nothing either endorsing the truth of her claims or casting any aspersions upon them. He is leaving it all to us. Therefore—

but I see him approaching us, and it is possible that we shall soon know what we shall know."

Lee looked up as Senor Rantolado came across towards them.

"It approaches the time, gentlemen," he said in Spanish, for he knew that both the professor and Lee understood the language perfectly; "it approaches the time for the test. It is possible that you are surprised at such a large gathering here, but as we go along I will explain the reason for it. This test is, as you know, a little out of the ordinary. I have no desire that it shall get to the ears of the press and that we shall be discussed through that medium.

"At the same time, there was always the possibility of it leaking out, so I conceived the idea of this little reception, and to amuse the guests I have engaged a well-known palmist to tell the fortunes of any of the guests who care to go into that little tent at the end of the room."

Lee had noticed the little tent before, and had been a good deal puzzled as to its purpose. Also, he had seen several of the guests going in and out, and had for a moment thought it must hide the doorway of an adjoining room. The little Brazilian chuckled with amusement.

"If anything does get out, the papers will simply have it that a palmist was engaged for the amusement of the guests, and nothing will be thought of it. As a matter of fact, it has been a huge success. But under cover of that we shall have an opportunity to make the investigation which is the real purpose of your coming. I have already collected your fellow scientists, who are now waiting for us."

All this time they had been passing through a large suite of rooms. The laughter and chatter of the guests had died away behind them, and now Lee saw that they were coming into a small room which was a mass of oriental draperies and Eastern colour.

It was lit up by a single great light in the centre of the room, which shone with a medley of deep orange and topaz through a thick shade of those colours. At the very end of the room was a small silken tent, whose folds were of red and blue and orange and purple.

Standing close to this were five men—the rest of the committee which Rantolado had selected to test the medium whose claims he himself had been studying for so long. The medium herself was not visible.

Lee nodded to one or two of the men, and then turned back to his host as the latter began to speak.

"Gentlemen," he was saying, speaking now in faultless English, "you all know, to some extent, why you are gathered here to-night. You know that you are here to test the mediumistic claims of one Senorita Yanquori, who claims—and, I am convinced, rightfully—to be the true descendant of the ancient Incas of Peru and a princess of those people.

"Those of you who have done me the honour to read my monograph on the subject of physical research, and those who have also done me the honour to read of comparisons between the richness of the psychic knowledge of the ancients and the poverty of our psychic knowledge of to-day, will also know that I am the only man who has ever penetrated the depths of the Caqueta jungle, which lies at the junction of Colombia, Peru and Ecuador.

"It was while I was in the depths of that jungle that I came upon a great stone building in the very heart of the unknown country. My first amazement was increased when on examining the exterior I discovered it to be composed of great hewn blocks so fitted together that cement was unnecessary.

"But that amazement, gentlemen, was nothing to compare with what I felt when I discovered the building to be inhabited—not by the savage

tribes I had so far encountered, but by a white race of seemingly cultured people.

"Gentlemen, what happened during the three months I abode in that building has nothing of immediate importance to do with the matter in hand. Sufficient is it to say that during those three months I was treated with the utmost kindness, and it seemed as though some unseen power must have led me there. The study of psychic phenomena was the work to which I had dedicated my life. I was ambitious to raise it up to a recognised science, which I truly feel it to be.

"I knew from my researches that the ancients had possessed a deep knowledge of this science—a knowledge which died out with them, and which we have not yet been able to equal. But there in that strange building, among a priesthood and a religious sisterhood, which I discovered to have come down from Incan times, I came upon a knowledge of psychic phenomena which my deepest researches had not even touched.

"The sequence of custom had never been broken with these people since the heyday of the Incas. I came upon their life in all its purity as the Spanish conquerors must have come upon it over four hundred years ago.

"Well, gentlemen, the upshot was that for three months I remained in that building in the jungle studying their religion, which, as you know, was the Sun Worship; their scientific attainments, and their knowledge of psychic phenomena. At the end of that time I persuaded the head of the order to permit me to bring out into our civilisation—I deliberately say our civilisation—a young man and young woman from the order.

"The young man was being trained for sacerdotal purposes, and also to carry on the system of transcribing the history of the order. Each generation of the order had six young men trained for this purpose alone. The young woman was one of the twelve maidens who showed exceptional mediumistic gifts, and who was being trained in that path.

"I shall not now tell you of the things I heard and saw there. I shall not now tell you of the profound mysteries which I witnessed.

"You shall see them for yourselves.

"The young woman who came from that ancient religious building in the Caqueta jungle is here to-night. The young man unfortunately died on the way out to civilisation. The young woman ordinarily speaks no English, gentlemen. She speaks a very little Spanish, which she has learned since she has been under the protection of my wife. The language of the ancient Incas she speaks fluently—the language known as Quichua.

"Now, gentlemen, she sits within this little silken tent awaiting our pleasure. I have decided first that you shall test her powers of controlling an outside consciousness by means of the ancient crystal with which we are all familiar. I do not think it will be necessary for each one of you to make the test, but I would suggest that three of your number be chosen for the purpose.

"In order to do that I think the best plan will be to draw lots. You are seven in number. I have prepared seven strips of paper all of different lengths. I would further suggest that the three who draw the shortest strips be chosen to make the test. Does that suggestion meet with your approval, gentlemen?"

A low murmur of acquiescence sounded from the assembled scientists, and, with a little bow, Senor Rantolado crossed to a low divan and took up several strips of paper which lay there. He also took up a book, and standing with his back to his guests, placed the strips of paper between the leaves of the book so that the projecting ends for each were exactly even. Then he closed the book and walked back to the group.

"Now, gentlemen," he said with a smile, "who will draw first?"

The scientists, with a little well-bred chaffing, each took a strip, which he

held behind his back. When the last had been drawn they compared them, and it was discovered that Professor James, the noted astronomer, Dr. Field, doyen of archæologists, and Nelson Lee, the famous criminologist, were the three to be chosen.

After a little more quiet argument Doctor Field was elected to be the first to enter the little tent, and when the silken curtains had dropped behind him, those who waited sought the divans which were placed about the room, and accepting the Eastern cigarettes which their host offered them, smoked in silence until Field should re-appear.

Five minutes—ten minutes went, with only a faint murmur coming from the direction of the tent, then the sound stopped as suddenly as it had begun, and the next moment the curtains were thrust aside and the scientist came out.

Despite the scepticism of those hard-headed men gathered there, every eye eagerly sought the countenance of the doctor as he appeared.

Lee, who was sitting close to the tent, glanced up sharply at the other as he came out, and to him, with his faculty of reading the human countenance as the ordinary man reads his newspaper, it seemed that the eyes of the doctor were drawn and heavy—they held a something in their depths which had not been there when he entered the tent.

But to the chafing questions of the group he only shook his head, summoning a smile for the purpose.

“Remember, we are not to discuss what we see,” he admonished them. “Each man is to draw his own conclusions and make his own notes.”

Professor James was already on his way to the tent, Lee having indicated that he should go next, and for another ten minutes the group smoked in silence.

When the professor finally appeared, Lee at least noted that he seemed to walk with a firmer step than when he entered, and his eyes sparkled with a deep pleasure. If Doctor Field had received a shock within that tent, Professor James had certainly seen something to give him pleasure.

Now it was Lee's turn, and dropping the end of his cigarette into a deep brass vase which stood on the floor by the divan he rose. With a little smile at the others he lifted the silken hangings of the tent, and entered.

It was almost in darkness, being only lit by the deep glow of the great light outside, which was able to filter in through the silken curtain. Just before dropping the curtain he was able to see that a small table had been placed in the tent, and that on this was a black cushion, on which reposed a great crystal globe, fully a foot in diameter.

Seated before the table and facing the entrance to the tent was a figure. Lee could see none of the details of the figure, for the drapings were in black. All he could make out was two white arms which rested beside the cushion. On his side of the table was a chair, and he sensed that he was to sit in it.

As he did so, he saw for the first time that a single shaft of light from outside came through and rested on the curved surface of the crystal sphere.

Now, as his eyes grew accustomed to the gloom, Lee could see the white face of the figure across from him, and though it was but a vague featured fragment gleaming palely in the gloom, he knew somehow that the girl who sat there was very beautiful.

Her eyes caught a little of the light reflected from the crystal, and threw back the shaft like twin pools of ink. Lee gazed into them for a moment, then, though he felt that he ought to withdraw his gaze—that he should withdraw his gaze—that he must withdraw his gaze, he found it impossible to do so.

These twin pools of inky blackness with the single star of light playing in each held him with an all-compelling power, and after the first few moments of will struggle, he found he did not want to look away.

He was content just to sit there and to allow himself to sink, sink, sink into the soft promise of those gleaming orbs.

Do not think he was in the state ordinarily known as hypnotism. He was not. He was perfectly conscious that he was sitting in that little silken tent, and that there was a girl across from him. He knew that the great crystal globe was on the table between them. He knew that he was there to make a test.

And now he reminded himself that he must not be carried away by any combination of attraction between the play of light on the sphere and the reflection of the same light from the deep orbs of the girl. Even as this thought came to him the two white arms of the girl slowly rose from the table, and Lee felt a thrill pass through him as her hands closed gently over his wrists.

Not a word had been spoken so far, but now a soft murmur came from the girl's lips as she bent closer. Lee, too, inclined his body forward, and as he did so, a delightfully soft and insinuating perfume seemed to come from the girl's hair, stealing into his senses and delighting them.

Steadily the girl held his wrists—steadily she gazed deep into his eyes. Then a sudden desire swept over Lee to look into that sphere and to see what was there.

He told himself it was much better to sit as he was—that the music of the girl's voice and the perfume of her being were too seductive and too alluring to bother about a crystal sphere that could never be more than cold and inanimate crystal, but the same willing that had dragged his eyes to hers now sent his gaze downwards towards the globe, and in the next moment the girl—the tent—ay, the very present existence itself had passed from his consciousness, and he only knew that he was watching a mystery kaleidoscope which filled him and thrilled him as never before.

At first the globe seemed to light up with self illumination—an illumination which filled the globe to its uttermost limits of circumference, but strangely enough did not pass beyond them. It looked like a vast shining lake which rose and fell, and twisted beneath his eyes like a sentient being, like a soul in torment.

Then the white interior expanse of the globe became clouded.

A grey mist was diffused throughout it, and the heaving of the white sea stopped. Slowly, ever so slowly, the grey mist seemed to contract, and contract with the light clinging to it until here and there Lee saw a tiny cloud of grey thrown off from it. He realised then that the cloud was revolving at a terrific pace—at such a pace that the human eye could not follow the revolutions.

The the cloud contracted still more until it seemed to form a solid; a heavy red tinged it throughout—a red which changed rapidly to yellow and then to green.

Now in the very centre of the green, the colour changed to grey again, and then to snowy white, and suddenly Lee realised that he was gazing down upon a jagged mountain range. He bent closer in an agony lest he should miss anything.

Suddenly, as he looked, the range seemed to grow and grow, and to loom up until it filled the whole vista before him. Now he could distinguish fine details—he could see gushing mountain torrents, he could make out the glistening boundaries of high glaciers—he could see here and there a bounding sheep which leaped from crag to crag with sure-footed ease.

Far down at the foot of the mountains he saw a great plain, and then, as

time passed, he saw horsemen appear and go galloping hither and thither about the plain. From a grey patch on the left a town suddenly showed, growing so rapidly from a tiny collection of hide tents to a large collection of buildings.

He saw, too, a great building spring up as something endowed with a marvellous life—he saw other and greater buildings leap up, then his eyes went back to the mountains, and he found himself gazing into the mouth of an open cave. A man was standing at the opening to the cave, a big bearded man, who had a single skin thrown about him.

Suddenly the light seemed to go out, yet strangely enough, Lee could still see perfectly what the man in the cave entrance was doing. Lee himself seemed to be standing beside the man, and looking upwards he saw the stars overhead. Clear and cold he felt the night to be, and the stars gleamed brighter than he had ever seen them.

Then, even as he gazed upon them, he noticed with amazement that some of the more prominent stars were not where they had always been, to his knowledge. They were almost in the same position, it is true, but here and there he noted a slight difference—and he wondered.

Then the man at the cave entrance walked out to a small platform, and went through a curious pantomime, which consisted chiefly in turning first in one direction, then in another. Suddenly he was swept from view, and Lee found himself gazing into the interior of the cave.

He saw a heap of skins on the floor; he peered into an inner cave with eyes which took in every detail. He saw a great round cave hung with barbaric skins and weapons.

Then into an inner cave he peered, and there he seemed to rest. An old man was standing before a rude bench—an old man whose white beard hung almost to the floor. He appeared to be mixing some ingredients in a large stone bowl, yet even as Lee watched him, he was swept away and another took his place.

This time it was a young man—a man whose skin was of a reddish tinge, and whose eyes were deep and luminous. With a lightning rapidity he aged before Lee's gaze, and gave place to another. So it went on until Lee thought the procession would never end, and all the time he was conscious that the appearance of the cave was changing to; that the rude and barbaric simplicity of its fittings were giving place to a more finished arrangement.

Then after what seemed an eternal procession of men, there appeared one whose odd shape and bearing arrested his attention. He saw a tiny pinched body with a thin, fragile looking neck supporting a huge head which seemed many sizes too large for the body.

He gazed closer at the grotesque figure, and saw that the head was the head of an intellectual, the high broad brow and intelligent eyes were proof enough of that.

Then, while he watched the strange being work away at what he could now see was an ultra-modern laboratory table, a skin over the entrance was thrust aside, and three savage-looking creatures entered, dragging with them a fourth.

The three captors Lee recognised at once as of a Tartar type, but the fourth—the captive—he saw, to his amazement, was a white man. He watched while the captors dragged their prisoner across the cave to another skin which hung down, and thrusting that aside passed beyond it. He could see them drag forth a heavy chain, which was attached to a steel band. The band they put about the waist of the prisoner, and then he watched while the grotesque being entered, and with a few touches of an instrument welded the steel band together.

Then the three Tartars departed after dropping flat to the stone floor of

the cave in rank obeisance to the grotesque oen. Now the scene shifted, and Lee saw the outer cave again. He saw that it was now hung with fine silken hangings, and while he gazed at it, the dwarfed one entered and threw himself down on a divan.

Lee gazed in puzzlement at the scene until he saw the skin which hid the entrance to the inner cave thrust aside, and the white man whom he had seen enter peered forth.

But what a change! When he had been dragged into the cave, Lee had seen that his face was white and smooth as that of a boy. Now it was dirty and bearded and drawn with pain.

Lee watched in a fever of impatience, while the man crept across towards the prostrate figure on the divan, noting as he did so that the steel band and a short length of chain were still about his waist. He saw the man stand over the dwarf, and then bend down lower, lower, lower, with murder in his eyes. But he did not strike, though the arm was uplifted.

He hesitated, then Lee saw him lift the lids of the dwarf and gaze into the eyes. After that Lee watched while the white man made a prolonged examination of the body of the dwarf, which would have done credit to the first surgeon of Europe. Then the man rose and hurried back to the inner cave. He emerged soon carrying a bundle, and with a last look at the prostrate body of the dwarf, crept from the cave. As he went out Lee felt a fierce desire creep over him to draw the fugitive back, and whisper to him that, though the dwarf seemed dead, he really was not dead.

Lee seemed to know it in some way. But then the scene shifted again, and he was out on the plain at the foot of the mountain. It was broad daylight now, and far ahead, just entering a deep gorge which cut into the greater gorge where flowed a great river, he saw the bearded fugitive.

Then there followed a succession of pictures which changed from deep gorges filled with rushing torrents of waters to mountains, and stone scattered plains—to bare expanses with no bit of life on them, to deep jungles full of fever and danger from man and beast.

Always ahead of him flitted the ragged figure of the fugitive, and somehow Lee sensed that behind somewhere the grotesque dwarf was in pursuit. Then suddenly a city appeared, and he gazed in deep wonder as he recognised Mandalay, where he himself had been less than two years previously. He saw the ragged figure of the fugitive creep into the city, and then, with great rapidity, the scene changed to Rangoon. He recognised the golden summit of the great Buddhist temple there, and then he seemed to be on board ship.

There was a soft tropic sea all about them, and canvas hangings had been let down to keep the rays of the sun at bay. Sitting in two steamer chairs were a young man and a girl. He recognised the young man as the fugitive he had watched from the cave to Rangoon.

He was much changed now. The long matted beard had been shaved off, and he was dressed in white ducks. His face was fuller and his bearing less furtive. But still it was the same man.

Then Lee looked at the girl, and his heart leaped suddenly within him as he recognised Mademoiselle Miton, the Black Wolf. Swiftly the scene changed to night. The man and the girl still dressed in white were leaning over the rail of the ship, while the silver moon beat down upon the placid water.

Lee could see the young fellow talking very earnestly to the girl. A momentary glimpse he had of her eyes—eyes that were lit up with a tense interest which, for the moment, he could not fathom, then suddenly there was a wild pitching of the water, the silver moon disappeared—the ship, the man, and the girl all were swept away. The purple sea changed to grey, and

the grey to a milky white, and then even while he gazed upon it the white churned up madly and faded from view.

Panting, and with pulses leaping, Lee watched while the inside of the globe leaped with a thousand fires, then, as the light became annihilated, he suddenly found himself back in the tent with the girl's soft hands still firmly clasping his wrists.

He became conscious that the low murmur was still falling from her lips, and as it droned away something urged him to his feet. The girl's hands dropped as though reluctantly from his wrists, and somehow Lee found himself outside. Scarcely had his eyes become accustomed to the light there—scarcely did it sweep in upon him that he was there in that eastern room, in a house in Regent's Park, London—scarcely could he drag himself back to the realisation of his surroundings, when a face loomed up before him, and he experienced a severe shock.

It was the same face which he had seen on the young man in the vision of the globe.

CHAPTER II.

The Seance—Nelson Lee Experiences Another Strange Experience.

FOR a moment Lee thought he must be fitting the visioned face of the crystal to the flesh and blood body of one of the scientists. He passed a hand over his eyes, became aware that some of the group were eyeing him curiously, then, with a strong effort of will gathered himself together. He glanced once more at the man he had first seen on emerging from the tent.

No. It was no figment of the imagination. It was stern reality. The face opposite him was the face of one of the group. Now Lee remembered that it was a young man who had been standing somewhat apart as though shy of thrusting himself too much in evidence while in the presence of such a distinguished company.

He, too, must be a scientist, Lee thought. Yet he was certain that something which he could not explain had happened to him, that the face of the young man in the vision was the same face as that upon which he now looked.

He asked himself if he had visualised the man in the vision with that face, because, perchance, the memory of the young scientist was with him when he entered the tent. But search back in his mind though he might, he could not place the explanation upon that basis.

He turned as he heard Senor Rantolado's voice at his elbow.

"Well, Senor Lee," he said softly, "the senorita did not keep you long."

"Er—not long," exclaimed Lee vacuously. "Why, er—I didn't realise, senor. How long have I been?"

"Just nine minutes altogether, Senor Lee," replied the Brazilian.

Lee gazed at him in stupefaction.

Nine minutes!

Yet he seemed to have gone through an eternity of events since he had entered the silken tent. He was more himself now, though he could quite appreciate why the manner of Doctor Field and Professor James had seemed a little out of the ordinary when they had emerged from the tent.

He felt a strong desire to talk to the young scientist whose face had been so strangely revealed to him in the crystal, and to that end asked his host to introduce him.

"Certainly, senor," replied the Brazilian readily. "I will introduce you now. There will be little time for conversation, as we shall go at once to the other room for the mediumistic test. But afterwards you will have an opportunity to talk with him. He is young, but he is a man who has already made his mark in science. It is Featherstone—Professor Richard Featherstone, who has been lecturing privately on Oriental Philosophy."

Lee remembered hearing about a scientist whose lectures on Oriental Philosophy had set the scientific world by the ears, and had also heard that the offer of a university chair was to be made to the scientist. He knew little more about him then, nor did he dream the part the other was to play in his immediate future.

Had he been able to visualise the future as he had visualised that strange passage of events in the crystal, he might even then have drawn back—or, at least, he might have done so had he been a man of less courage.

But he knew nought of the future, and so he took the firm hand of the young man to whom he was being introduced and gazed deeply and steadily into a pair of grey eyes which seemed strangely old for a face so young.

"I have heard of you, Mr. Lee," said a clear pleasant voice, which issued from between the lips of the young scientist. "I have studied some of your cases with a great deal of interest, and I am very pleased indeed to meet you."

"And I to meet you," responded Lee. "I have heard of your lectures, Professor Featherstone, but so far I have not had the pleasure of attending them. Er—you are recently home from the East?"

For a moment the other did not answer, and Lee saw that his eyes closed for a little. Then he opened them and nodded.

"Yes," he said in a low tone, looking furtively about him; "yes, Mr. Lee, I am recently home. I have been in England less than three months."

At this point in their conversation Senor Rantolado came up.

"All ready, senors," he said. "We will, if you please, go into the next room which has been prepared for the seance. I wish you all, please, to examine it with every care to see that no appliances of any description have been placed in it."

They all trooped into the next room, which Lee saw to all intents and purposes was furnished with only a large table and nine chairs. The floor, the walls, the ceiling, were entirely bare and had been whitewashed. There were no cabinets such as one sees in the room of the ordinary clairvoyante and medium, nor was there any sign of curtained recess. It was a chill, bare room—as naked as it could be made. In company with the other scientists, Lee moved about the room, tapping the walls here and there, examining the floor, and scrutinising the ceiling.

When the investigators were one and all satisfied that there were no secret traps of any description, and that there were no concealed wire connections leading from the table out of the room—they lifted the table up bodily to settle that point—they arranged themselves about the table.

Now Rantolado turned out all the lights, but left the door open which led into the eastern room. When they were all settled he called out in a low, penetrating voice, and almost at once the watchers at the table saw a slim veiled form silhouetted against the oblong of light which marked the doorway.

Only the light from the other room lit up the place, and they could not see the features or finer details of the girl's form, but Lee knew that it was the same who had sat opposite him in the little tent. She came slowly towards them, walking with lissome dignity until she reached the head of the table where a chair had been left vacant for her.

Lee, who happened to be sitting next to her, thrust out his hand to pull

out the chair, but encountered the arm of Professor Featherstone busy with the same purpose.

When the girl had seated herself, Rantolado asked one of the circle to light a match. Someone down the table did so, and by its light he shut the door and locked it, returning to his seat before the flame of the match had died out.

Then, with the sputtering out of the flame, they were left in total darkness. A few moments of rustling while each settled in his place, then the voice of the Brazilian sounded.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I do not know in what way the mediumistic powers of Senorita Yanquori may exhibit themselves. You may witness some of her finest powers as I myself have done, or, on the other hand, it may be a complete failure. It all depends on her control. But in order to give her every opportunity I will ask you all to join hands. Those on either side of Senorita Yanquori will please give her a hand. That will establish the complete circuit about the table, and incidentally will prevent her from using her hands in any way which you may not know of."

Lee thrust out his hands one on either side of him, finding his right grasped by a large firm hand, and his left gripped by the same soft pressure which he had felt in the tent. There were a few moments of confusion while the hand clasping was being arranged, but the moment the complete circuit was established, Lee felt a sharp electric thrill run through him.

Afterwards he discovered that every man at the table had experienced that same thrill. Then a deep silence fell over them while they waited for the medium to get her proper plane of control.

The minutes went by slowly, and still that same dead silence enwrapped them. One or two men shifted nervously, and the scraping of their feet as they did so sounded harsh and grating in the room.

Somewhere down the table Lee heard a deep sigh. He thought it might have come from Doctor Field. The man next to him bent near as though to whisper, but a quick pressure from Lee's hand bade him be silent.

Then, from the head of the table where Senorita Yanquori sat, there came a low murmur much like the murmur which Lee had heard in the silken tent.

Now every man at the table was tense with anticipation.

Every pair of ears was being strained to catch the drift of the murmuring voice. Every eye was strained through the darkness to see—what?

Fuller and fuller became the volume of sound issuing from the lips of the girl—rich and sweet in tone like a soft rippling of sound from Nature's finest chords. It rose and fell and thrilled about them, its soft cadences filling their ears and probing into the very marrow of their beings. Then the tone of the murmur changed to a low whimpering protest which gripped the listening men, despite their control.

Up and down went the new tone until it broke off suddenly with a sharp rasp, and then every man at the table gave a sharp gasp as a light sprang out before them—a light which shone in mid-air, where there was nothing—a light which changed from a long wavering line to the form of letters of fire.

And gazing there upon it, Nelson Lee read the letters: "G E N G H I S." For one long moment those letters of fire—letters of fire, though in truth they did not illumine their surroundings—wavered before them, then a great cry rang out in the room, and with the leaping to their feet of the men about the table the circle of contact was broken.

The next instant the lights flashed up. Rantolado was standing by the switch gazing about him with a look of intense interest in his eyes.

Lee gave one glance in his direction, then his gaze sought the chair on

the right of the girl, for Professor Featherstone had been sitting there, and Lee knew it had been his voice which had uttered the cry.

He was lying back in his chair with eyes closed and his face pinched and white to the rims of the lips.

The girl was also lying back in a dead faint, and as Rantolado ran to her, Lee made his way round to Featherstone. All was confusion now.

The scientists were one and all asking each other what had happened.

How had the letters of fire appeared? Who had cried out? Why was one of their number lying back in his chair in an unconscious state? And why had the girl fainted? No one attempted to answer the questions. One or two gathered about Rantolado, clumsily offering their assistance, but the Brazilian waved them back.

Picking the girl up in his arms, he carried her from the room, and with her going Featherstone stirred and opened his eyes.

Lee, who was bending over him, gazed into them while the cloud of confusion still lingered there. In them he read a terrible nameless dread—a haunting something which spoke of a soul agony which was consuming the man. Then with a shiver the young professor sat up. Lee placed a hand under his shoulder and said kindly:

“Lean on me, professor. Try to get up. I think you will feel better in the next room. Doctor Field, would you be so good as to get a glass of champagne from the buffet?”

Doctor Field nodded and hurried away, and with his arm supporting Featherstone, Lee led the way to the eastern room, followed by the others. As they reached it Senor Rantolado entered, looking harassed and worn.

“I have placed Senorita Yanquori in the care of my wife, gentlemen,” he said as he closed the door after him. “The rest of the guests have now departed, so nothing of this will get out. But I wish to ask you to say nothing of what has occurred here. I suppose, like myself, you all saw the letters of fire which formed over us?”

A low murmur of assent greeted the question.

“I myself do not know what they mean,” went on Rantolado, “nor do I know who called out, though I imagine it was Professor Featherstone.”

Lee nodded, and the Brazilian went on:

“As far as a test is concerned, gentlemen, we can only put it down to a failure, though I think you will all agree with me that there were some strange features during the few minutes it lasted. I have already questioned Senorita Yanquori about it, and all she can say is that just when she felt herself getting into touch with the control, a power stronger than her own rose up and stopped her. Her power fought against it, but she was conquered. She was waved back as it were by some strength which she could not overcome, and it must have been at that same moment that we saw the letters of fire above us. Can you enlighten us, Professor Featherstone?”

The young professor shook his head.

“Not now, senor,” he replied huskily. “It is true that I saw the letters of fire, and I am probably the only man here who knows what they mean. But believe me, I can say nothing yet. This evening has revealed a new phase of a certain matter to me, and I must have time to ponder—to plan.

“But this I will say, senor. I believe in the mediumistic powers of your subject, and I feel certain that if I had not been one of the circle she would have had no trouble. What developed this evening has a very direct bearing on myself. It is a clear warning of a danger which confronts me, and more than that I cannot say. When it is possible to do so I will. And now, with your permission, senor, I shall take my departure.”

The Brazilian was too polite to press the matter, and the other scientists who were discussing the matter with a degree of interest they would not have believed possible before that evening, saw that the young professor was too distraught to speak further of the matter under such conditions.

Lee, too, was respecting Featherstone's desire for solitude, but the young professor turned to him, and in a low tone said:

"Mr. Lee, I wonder if you would walk part of the way home with me. I feel that I must talk to someone, and you are that one."

"With great pleasure, professor," replied Lee cordially. "I shall go with you at once."

They took leave of their fellow scientists who had elected to remain and discuss the subject for a little, then, in company with their host, they made their way to the front of the house. They found that the other guests had indeed departed, and the same man who had opened the door to Lee brought them their hats and coats.

They stood chatting at the top of the steps for a little, then, bidding their host good-night, they walked slowly down and turned towards Portland Place.

CHAPTER III.

Professor Featherstone's Story—Nelson Lee Gets a Surprise.

NOT until they had emerged from the park and crossed the road into Portland Place did Featherstone speak. Then, with the long wide stretch of that fine thoroughfare ahead of them and scarcely a soul in sight, Featherstone took a cigarette from Lee's proffered case, and when it was lit turned to his companion.

"Mr. Lee," he said slowly, "I do not know why I asked you to walk with me to-night. You are essentially a man whose life is based on material fact. In my study of your different cases I have noticed always that your conclusions are arrived at by pure logic—cold deduction and remorseless analysis."

Lee smiled.

"You are right to a certain extent, professor," he said. "At the same time, I am not quite a machine."

"I know that," rejoined the other quickly. "I have read three of your monographs on chemistry, and a man who has studied chemistry as you have studied it—a man who has dipped into Nature's well of mystery as you have dipped into it, will know that there are truly more things in heaven and earth than man wots of. Am I not right?"

"Decidedly so," said Lee earnestly. "I have come upon many things, professor, which hard material logic will not—cannot explain."

Featherstone was silent for a few moments, then he spoke again.

"Mr. Lee," he said, "a little over five years ago I was just finishing at Oxford. I went in for general science, and when I came down I thought—as many who come down are prone to think—that I was as completely equipped for the line I had chosen in life as a man could be.

"My home is—or was—in Rangoon, where my father was a practising physician. It was my intention—it was his hope—that together we should tackle certain research matters in the East. I went to Rangoon full of zest, and with my whole soul wrapped up in the profession I had chosen. But when I arrived in Rangoon it was decided that I should first take a long projected trip which would give me a deeper knowledge of some things.

than I possessed, and at the same time give me an opportunity to study different phases of the religion of little known tribes. That trip I started out on without much delay.

"I left Rangoon, and from there went to Mandalay. From Mandalay I worked my way up through Upper Burmah until I reached the borderland of Tibet, following the course of the Irawadi as far as possible."

"May I finish the story for you, Professor Featherstone?" asked Lee quietly.

The other glanced sharply at Lee.

"Er—I don't follow you, Mr. Lee," he said haltingly.

"I will make the attempt to fill in the rest of the tale," said Lee. "Listen, professor.

"You got across into Tibet. You crossed a great plain there until you came to the base of the mountains which ring about Lhasa, the sacred city of the Dalai Lama. There you were set upon and captured. You were carried a prisoner across country until you were taken into a cave. In that cave there was a man—a dwarf with an extraordinary large head. Listen, and I will tell you how the cave was furnished.

"In the outer cave there was nothing but a pile of skins. But the main or inner cave was luxuriously furnished with rich hangings and cushions. Off that there was another cave. It was fitted up as a laboratory. Then there was a small alcove cave adjoining that, and into it you were dragged.

"A steel band was welded about your waist—the band had a strong chain attached to it. You were held prisoner as some wild beast would be held. Then a day—or rather night—came when your captor slept. You were able to escape. You stole into the main cave where he lay asleep on a divan. You bent over him.

"There was murder in your heart, but you could not bring yourself to do it. Then you thought he was dead. You made every test known to you to prove it, and when you were sure it was so you made up a pack of necessities and stole out of the cave.

"After a terrible journey, which probably lasted for months, you finally reached Mandalay, and from there made your way to Rangoon. From Rangoon you travelled by steamer to Europe, and here you are."

Lee had ripped out the tale rapidly, biting off his sentences like the patter patter of a machine gun. When he had first started, Featherstone had been staring straight ahead of him, but now he was gazing at Lee as though the latter were some fearful creature from another world.

"For the love of Heaven, man, what do you mean?" he cried. "How do you know all this?"

Lee shrugged.

"Have I related the main facts as they occurred, professor?" he asked.

"Man—man, you have related them as though you had watched them. It is true, every word of it. I was a prisoner in that cave for five years before I was able to make my escape. I—I wanted to talk with you to-night because you are reputed to be a man of understanding, but I never intended telling you a quarter of what you seem to know. Tell me, Mr. Lee, I beg of you, how did you discover this?"

"Will you believe me when I say that I knew nothing whatsoever about it until I went to Senor Rantolado's to-night?" asked Lee.

"But—I don't understand," faltered Featherstone. "No one knows of it. I have kept it to myself, for I am a man who is living in the grip of fear. I knew before I left Rangoon that the Genghis was not dead. I could feel it."

"The Genghis!" exclaimed Lee. "That is the name which we saw written in letters of fire to-night."



Up, up, up against the steel band Dick Featherstone strained, and then, when he felt that he must once again postpone his efforts, there came a sudden crack of the iron. (See page 8.)

"It is," whispered the professor with a shiver. "It was I who cried out."

"And the Genghis—is he the dwarf with the extraordinary head?" asked Lee.

Featherstone nodded.

"Yes. Mr. Lee, you know so much; will you listen to the rest? I fled to Europe with some sort of vague idea that here I might find the means to combat the influence of that man. I who lived with him for five long years tell you that he is the greatest menace which walks the earth. He is the product of an unbroken line of the Genghis' which have come down since time was not. They are descended from the morning of the world, and they know things of which our greatest scientists do not dream.

"Mr. Lee, you are a scientist yourself. You are also a man who believes in a material explanation for all phenomena. Very well. Let me ask you something. How do you explain what happened to-night? How do you know about my life in the cave in Tibet? How do you explain the letters of fire which spelled out the name of the Genghis?"

"I am willing to confess that I can find no explanation of it," said Lee slowly. "I am also prepared to acknowledge that a good many of my cherished ideals have received a severe shock to-night, professor. For instance, I will tell you where I read the history of your imprisonment in the cave in Tibet. It was in the crystal globe which I gazed into. There I saw a strange vision, and you were the central figure of it. There, too, I saw the grotesque figure of the dwarf. But how it was caused I cannot say."

"I will tell you how it was caused, Mr. Lee," said the other. "You are a chemist. You make your experiments with different drugs and chemicals. You dabble with elements. You watch reactions and judge accordingly. Very well. Has it never occurred to you that there might be a chemistry which was far, far deeper than the crude chemical knowledge which we possess? Has it never occurred to you that the subconsciousness of the human being might be nought but a series of chemical reactions? Has it never occurred to you to think that what is known as psychic phenomena is nothing but a chemical change of the conscious being and a lapping over with the subconscious being?"

"In my opinion that is what it is, and nothing else. I have seen enough in that cave in Tibet to make me believe it. If I could explain some of the things which I have seen the Genghis do! If I could but tell you the true purpose of that man! Alas! I do not dare take even you into my confidence. Not yet. But I will say this. He is the greatest menace alive. He lives. He is not dead. He has, I feel sure, come to Europe. I feel that the letters of fire were deposited in that room to-night by a chemical reaction of his subconsciousness that he himself caused them to be there. He is here, he is there, he is in every place. He is preter-human in so far as he possesses a knowledge which the ordinary human brain cannot grasp.

"It was his stronger will which ordered the medium to-night to return to her consciousness. You remember Rantolado said she had been overcome by a stronger control. I am certain it was nothing but the will of the Genghis being exerted. He knew I was there to-night. The letters of fire were but a warning to me. Don't you see the point I am trying to make?"

"I follow your reasoning regarding the chemistry of the subconscious being," said Lee slowly, "but I must confess that I cannot quite see what you have to fear from this Genghis. Tell me, professor, who is he? What is he? What is his purpose in life?"

"I know much, but too little to answer that," replied the other. "I

only know that he is the last representative of a brotherhood or order which had its inception thousands and thousands of years ago. Without intermission they have followed up one line of research, always refusing to go off into profitless by-paths. That is why they have achieved so much. They have hitched their waggon to one star, and have never faltered in their purpose.

"There still exists in that cave in Tibet the result of their work. The Genghis is the living representative of all that knowledge. It was because he fixed on me as the one who must carry the work on after he passed that I was captured and taken to the cave. I know so much that it is not reasonable to suppose he will permit me to escape and live. I feel to-night that he is very close to me—that even now he may be watching me. I feel that I am a doomed man, and it is because I am afraid that I have sought you."

By this time they had reached the Langham Hotel, and just in front of the great caravanserai Lee came to a halt.

"The subject which you broach is, indeed, a weighty one, professor," he said quietly. "Off hand I hardly know what to say. To-night has been a night of such weird experience that I should like to permit my brain to repose for the night. In the clear light of day I shall be able to approach it more sanely. That there is something in what you say—that the whole thing may be explained by chemical reaction of the subconsciousness, I am prepared to believe.

"Frankly, I had never thought of explaining it in that way. Like a good many other people I have dipped a little into the psychical mysteries, but like most I have given little credence to their scientific weight. The trouble has been that such a subject has given such a wide opening for the operation of cranks and charlatans. But you are a man whose evidence must be taken seriously. I myself wish to give a good deal of thought to what I saw in that crystal to-night.

"I was not hypnotised—I was conscious throughout of my surroundings. I knew nothing whatsoever of your experiences in that cave in Tibet. I did not even know you personally. I had heard of you as a professor of Eastern Philosophy, and that is all. Yet you tell me that I have related correctly your experiences there. But answer me one question, professor, please. Have you told no one about your experiences?"

Featherstone hesitated for only a moment, then he said:

"When I made that statement, Mr. Lee, I did not tell the absolute truth. I told one person, and one only."

"And that person?" asked Lee.

"That person was a girl whom I met on board ship," responded the other. "She was on the steamer which left Rangoon, and we travelled to Europe together. It was while we were in the Mediterranean that I—er—I proposed to her, and in so doing I felt it incumbent upon me to tell her what had happened."

"Do you mind telling me her name?" asked Lee in a curious voice.

"Not at all. Her name was Carlile—Miss Carlile."

"Ah! Please do not think me impertinent, professor," went on Lee, "but, er—did the young lady accept you?"

Featherstone shook his head gloomily.

"She neither refused nor accepted me. She said she would give me my answer later."

"And is she in London?" asked Lee.

"She is—she is staying at the Venetia."

"And what do you propose doing, professor?"

"That is what I do not know, Mr. Lee. I am in the grip of fear. How

can I ask any girl to be my wife when this menace is hanging over me. I feel certain now that the Genghis is in Europe—is in London. I feel equally certain that he has come here to wreak vengeance upon me.

“How can I defend myself against a man who possesses the devilish powers he possesses? It is driving me mad! I sometimes wish I had died in the jungles of Upper Burmah, rather than that I should be racked by this torture!”

“I do not think I would permit myself to take such a hopeless view of the affair,” said Lee soothingly. “Let us both sleep on it. To-morrow let us meet and discuss it in all its bearings. I promise you, professor, that I will do all in my power to help you. My interest in this affair has been roused to no ordinary extent. I am keen to study the chemical aspects of it, and I do not think I have any fear of this man whom you call the Genghis. Come! Meet me at the Venetia for lunch to-morrow, and we will talk matters over. What do you say?”

“I shall do so with pleasure,” replied the other quickly. “I am exceedingly grateful to you for your promise, Mr. Lee, but—er—couldn't we lunch elsewhere? Miss Carlile is there, you know, and she has asked me to give her a week to think things over. We might run into her.”

“Oh, that will be all right!” said Lee. “I shall telephone Varden, the manager, that I want a private room. I shall also give your name, and when you arrive there you will be shown at once to the private room.”

“Thank you! I shall be there.” rejoined Featherstone.

“At what time shall we say? Will one o'clock suit you?”

“Perfectly.”

“Then let it be one. And now, good-night, professor! Try and get some sleep, and do not permit yourself to dwell on this affair until to-morrow.”

“Good-night!”

They parted in front of the Langham, each taking a taxi—Lee to go on to Gray's Inn Road and Professor Featherstone to his chambers in Hall Moon Street.

Lee was scarcely conscious of the journey so wrapt in thought was he, and it was something of a start that he saw the cab draw into the kerb in Gray's Inn Road.

He stepped out, and, paying off the man, walking up the steps. Inserting his key in the lock he turned and stepped into the lighted hall. With brows still knit in concentration he walked quickly down the hall to the door of the consulting-room, and laying his fingers on the handle, turned.

The next moment he had started back with a scarcely smothered gasp of utter amazement. Seated in the easy-chair before the fire, gazing at him with a pair of pigmentless eyes, was the most weird and grotesque human being he had ever seen. And instinctively he knew it was the Genghis, the Mystery Man of Tibet.

CHAPTER IV.

Nelson Lee Faces Death—Nipper Takes a Quick Shot.

TO hear for the first time in one's life of a being to experience strange exhibitions of that being's weird powers, to find a strong and intelligent man filled with fear of that same being, to have your own thoughts pondering on that being, and then to open up the door of one's room and find that same mysterious personage coolly sitting in one's own chair is sufficient to give the steadiest nerves a shock.

And Nelson Lee was not preter-human. He was but a well-ordered, well-regulated specimen of modern scientific attainment, and though he experienced, or rather exhibited less of surprise than a lesser individual might have done, he was at the same time distinctly and unpleasantly amazed to see in the flesh the being who had caused such a series of shocks to his usually well-ordered mental existence.

The Genghis, the Mystery Man of Tibet!

He knew it without asking. Yet what could he be doing there? As he advanced into the room Nelson Lee experienced a feeling of oppressiveness in the atmosphere, and from his neck to the base of his spine a slow and irritating shiver passed.

He shook himself with a feeling of anger, and, eyeing his unwelcome guest evenly, said shortly:

"You are a stranger to me, sir. May I ask what you are doing in my rooms?"

The Genghis stared back at him with unflinching gaze, his repulsive, pigmentless eyes boring into Lee's very soul. Then his lips opened, and from between them issued the strangest voice Lee had ever heard. It issued without effect; it was more an automatic rendering of the vocal chords without the necessity for moving the muscles of the throat.

"Am I, then, a stranger to you?" said the voice tonelessly. "Have you never heard of me before? Have you perhaps never seen me before?"

"What I have heard of you and what I have seen of you have been distinctly unpleasant," replied Lee curtly. "But, however that may be, you are a stranger to me. I will trouble you to explain what you are doing in my rooms."

"All in good time, Mr. Nelson Lee," replied the Genghis—"all in good time." And Lee was compelled to notice how faultless was his rendering of the English language. "We have much to talk of, and I am prepared to wait until you have divested yourself of your cloak."

With a suppressed exclamation of anger, Lee threw off his coat and sat down at the desk, facing his unbidden guest. He was wondering what the Genghis could have visited him for at that hour of the night.

One thing was certain—he was in London, as Featherstone had feared. And another thing Lee admitted to himself—the Genghis exhibited—he radiated an uncanny power which one could not help but feel.

But why had he sought Nelson Lee?

The Genghis was still eyeing Lee with those uncanny, unwinking eyes of his.

"You are going to ask me to tell you my name," he said suddenly. "I will save you the trouble of the question, Mr. Lee. Let us say it is Genghis. Does that mean anything to you?"

"You have sought me out, sir," said Lee coldly. "I have tacitly permitted you to occupy one of my chairs and to assume a rudeness which I rarely permit in my visitors. I am still waiting to hear what you have to say."

"You are arrogant, Mr. Lee," responded the other. "When you know the extent of my power, when you have felt that power, you will speak with due respect to one who is immeasurably your superior."

"When my opinion of you equals your opinion of yourself I shall no doubt adopt the servile tone you wish me to," replied Lee coolly, as he lit a cigarette. "Now then, sir, are you coming to the point, or must I request you to leave my house. It is late, and I am tired."

Slowly, and with a queer twisting motion, the Genghis shifted in his seat. Now the long black cloak which he had been wearing dropped away from him and Lee saw that he was garbed in an odd-looking, long, white

robe. His feet also came into view, and Lee noticed the Eastern sandals upon them.

"You went to a house in this city to-night," remarked the Genghis, after a pause. "I know of what occurred there. You saw and felt and heard things you had never dreamed of. You met one there who is a fugitive from his post of duty. You thought to experience the powers of the girl who professed to be in touch with the mysterious controls of another plane. You would have done so had I not exerted my own power to force her to desist.

"I am the stronger. She is but an echo of that which I dominate. But she interests me not—at present. I speak of the one whom I seek. I speak of the one you call Featherstone—he who has fled from his appointed duty and who must return to it."

Lee leaned forward a little.

"You speak of the one whom your creatures assailed and forced into your cave in the mountains," he said shortly. "You speak of the man whom you kept chained up like a wild beast for five years. You speak of the man whom you would force to carry on your devil's work, and when you had so controlled him with the devil's powers you have learned, then you could safely leave him. When you had played your infernal tunes upon his mind, when you had drawn the resolve of his brain, when you had welded him to your purpose—then you would leave him to labour at the work, the purpose of which is—what? That is the man of whom you speak. Well, I know him. What of it?"

"And how did you know all this?" asked the Genghis, his hairless face crinkling like a strip of parchment.

"If you are so preter-human as you claim, you should know!" snapped back Lee. "Go on with what you wish to say."

"You are a bold man," remarked the Genghis slowly; "but your punishment can wait. I came to speak of the one who escaped. I know that he has sought your aid. I know that you spoke with him to-night. I have come to warn you that you interfere in this at your peril. Not yet is the time ripe for me to apply the practical part of my purpose to the world. Not yet have I achieved the last step which will complete thousands of years of preparation. Not yet have I received the orders to hurl upon the world the powers which are mine. I was forced to abandon my work to seek the fugitive, and him will I find. Back to his cave must he go, and he who interferes courts death."

Lee shrugged.

"This is London, not Tibet," he remarked.

"That may be so, but I will show you that the power of the Genghis is as effective here as there," rejoined the dwarf.

Suddenly, without an effort, he arose, and throwing off his cloak advanced towards the desk. Lee now saw him for the first time as he really was, and he was filled with a nausea as he gazed upon the grotesque figure which was more gargoyle than man.

But a dwarf in stature, and with that huge head surmounting a childish neck, he was far from pleasant to look upon, but this unpleasantness was enhanced by the round, pigmentless, staring eyes, by the hairless head and cheeks, and by the naked appearance of the whole cranium. Even though he wore a loose robe, Lee could see that his lower limbs were thin and scrawny, yet strangely enough the arms and shoulders of the Thing—he could think of it in no other way—seemed exceptionally powerful.

Lee raised his hand, and pointed his cigarette in a straight line with the creature's eyes.

"Stand there!" he said quickly. "If you come closer I shall take steps to stop you!"

The Thing paused, and his ghastly lips opened in a mirthless and noiseless chuckle.

"Feeble, puny one!" he said gaspingly. "You would attempt to coerce the Genghis? Listen to me! I have come here for a certain purpose. By my powers—no matter how—but by them, I know you to be Destiny's danger to me. It has been written that one will rise up in a far land who will struggle against the Decree of the Order—one will fight with strong weapons against the Genghis. You—you are that one. All the chemical results of my teachings point to you. Destiny has placed you in the path of the fugitive—he who was destined by me to carry on the work of the Genghis. You, in your arrogance, would help him. You, in your supreme self-confidence, would rise up, even as the prophecy says, and fight the Genghis. Beyond that the future is dark. Not even the Genghis can read it, but it is also written in the second tome and on the thirty-first page—only a long time afterwards did Lee know that this referred to one of the great books in the cave of Tibet—that the Genghis must strike and strike quickly.

"In one thing only has the prophecy been at fault. It spoke of the great work of the Genghis being completed. He who was to rise up against the Genghis was thought to belong to the period when that work was completed. But you have risen up, and I know you to be the one spoken of. With the full confidence of my knowledge, I hereby declare that you shall be swept aside before you can do aught. And this night you die!"

The Genghis, who seemed to be voicing the decree of some power which controlled him, was standing rocking slowly back and forth, his hands upraised and clasped across his chest. His eyes were fixed on Lee with a stony stare, and as the dread words issued from between the repulsive lips, Lee felt a throb of disgust surge up within him.

Physical fear he felt none, but a sensation which he could not define was gripping him and stealing away from him his control. He felt that if he did not bring to bear all the will power he possessed he would sink under the spell of those ghastly eyes, and then—merciful heavens!—what would happen?

A cold sweat broke out on his forehead as he gripped himself and fought for control. Then, with a wild anger suffusing him, he rose to his feet and started round the desk. He had just one desire which he knew he must carry out—he felt from the bottom of his soul that he must strangle this horrible Thing with his bare hands or go to his death.

The Genghis watched him come; then, instead of withdrawing as Lee thought he would, the Genghis made a sudden leap, and the puny-looking hands gripped Lee with a pressure which almost made him call out.

Lee, at the touch, struck out with a fierce passion, but as the horrible lips of the Genghis drew closer and closer to his throat, as the vile Thing rose up on its toes as though to reach for his jugular with the long yellow teeth which Lee could now see, there issued from between those bestial lips another mirthless chuckle, and as it came forth a terrible fear overcame Lee. He fought and struggled with every atom of his strength, but he might as well have struggled against the power of Hercules himself, so helpless was he in the grip of the ghastly, mouthing Thing which sought his throat with bared teeth.

Lee would never have believed that such a shrivelled specimen could have possessed anything like the strength. The fingers of the dwarf were gripping through the flesh of his arms until they almost met through the biceps. And it was all done without the least effort.

Lee felt that there was much more strength there did the Thing care to use it.

And nearer and nearer were these yellow fangs drawing towards his throat.

Lee could picture them sinking deep into the soft flesh of his neck—could see the blood gushing from his jugular and the bestial lips dripping with the gore.

With very nausea he closed his eyes, and as he did so he felt himself lifted bodily into the air. The next moment he was flung with terrific force across the room to strike the wall with a force which shook the house and which drove every shred of consciousness from him.

As the limp heap lay huddled up where it had fallen the Genghis stood looking at it, his ghastly eyes betraying not the flicker of an expression. Then slowly his great head nodded slowly, and his hand went within his loose robe.

Even more slowly it was withdrawn, and with an utterly impersonal gesture the Genghis held his hand up to the light.

Between the thumb and the first finger of his right hand there was something which gleamed balefully under the light—something which looked like the liquid fire of melted rubies. The Genghis held it so for a moment, then with a swift movement he once more thrust his hand within his robe.

This time it came forth holding what appeared to be a tiny rubber bulb with the finest of steel needle points on the end of it.

With his long, yellow teeth he drew the cork which stoppered the small bottle, and thrusting in the needle point of the rubber bulb, pressed the bulb itself.

Then he released the pressure, and immediately it could be seen that a small portion of the ruby-coloured liquid was drawn up into the bulb.

Holding the bulb with care he re-stoppered the bottle by the simple process of thrusting his mouth down against it and ramming in the cork with his teeth.

Then he thrust the bottle back beneath his robe, and with the bulb in his hand approached the unconscious form of Nelson Lee.

Standing over him with the bulb poised in his hand, the awful grotesque figure again laughed that mirthless and soundless laugh, then with the yellow parchment skin of his head wrinkling up with the ghastly amusement he seemed to feel, he bent over the body and aimed the point of the bulb at Lee's arm.

At that very moment the door leading from the consulting-room into the corridor, which in turn led into the laboratory, opened cautiously, and a head was thrust into the room. It was Nipper, his hair all ruffled from contact with the pillows, and his eyes still sleepy.

The thud of Lee's body against the wall had wakened him and had brought him on the scene—on the scene as he usually came on it, with his automatic held ready for business.

For one horror-stricken moment he gazed on the sight which met his eyes.

Picture it if you can!

The consulting-room—the unconscious body of Lee huddled against the wall where he had been thrown, the awful Thing bending over him, with his thin bestial lips drawn back in a snarl over the yellow fangs, the thin, scrawny, dwarfed body of him—the huge head topping it—the long, white robe dropping from throat to ankle, the bulb poised over Lee—everything combined to meet Nipper's eyes when fresh from sleep, it was no wonder that the lad was at first stupefied with sheer amazement.

But as he saw the deadly descent of that bulb towards his master's arm, as he took in the equally deadly purpose of the Thing's bearing, he realised that his master was in terrible peril, and with a motion as cautious as it

was steady he raised the automatic he had grabbed when he jumped out of bed and aimed it at the Genghis.

For one second—for two seconds he held it thus, then, just at the moment when the Genghis made to thrust the needle-point into Lee's arm, Nipper pulled the trigger.

There was a terrific crash as the weapon spoke and a sharp cry from the Genghis as his right arm dropped to his side, with the bulb bouncing on the floor. Nipper rushed into the room just as the Genghis clapped his left hand over his right wrist.

One single look he threw at the lad, who was coming towards him with pistol raised, then, with a strange cry, he made for the door, and throwing it open, dashed down the corridor and out of the house, slamming the street-door after him with a great crash.

Yet even as he ran it was borne in upon Nipper that, though the bullet had undoubtedly hit the Thing on the arm, the wound had not bled.

Nipper's first thought was to follow the Genghis as he fled, but a glance at the huddled body of Lee decided him to remain, and, tossing the automatic to one side, he bent over his master.

A brief examination showed him that, though he was unconscious, Lee was not seriously injured, and when Nipper had fetched cold water and brandy he finally managed to bring his master round.

Lee opened his eyes and stared up with a vague expression.

"The Genghis!" he muttered.

"The Genghis? Do you mean that bald-headed, shrivelled monkey with the night-shirt on, guv'nor?" asked Nipper, as he assisted Lee to his feet.

A wan smile lit up Lee's face.

"Your description is more forcible than elegant, Nipper," he said; "but that is who I mean."

"Well, guv'nor, the last I saw of him he was doing a Marathon for the street door, hanging on to his wrist where I pinked it."

"You came just in time, my lad," said Lee. "You fired at him, then?"

"And I had cause to, seeing he was bending over you with this in his hand."

As he spoke Nipper picked up the rubber bulb and held it out towards Lee. Lee took it and held it up to the light for a moment, then, with a strong effort to control his limbs, he staggered to the desk, and pulling open a drawer, thrust the bulb into it. Then he sank down into the desk chair and dropped his head on his hands.

"Tell me, Nipper," he said huskily, "tell me, my lad, what did you see?"

Nipper, who sensed a tragedy, sat down on the edge of the desk, and glanced at his master with a worried look.

"Well, guv'nor," he said slowly, "I was asleep when I was woke up by what I took to be an earthquake. You know you said you were going out to some ghost party or other, and I tumbled into bed about ten o'clock. Well, sir, when I woke up I turned on the light and had a look at the time.

"Ten minutes past one it was, so I couldn't understand what the noise could be.

"I picked up my automatic and slipped along the corridor. I saw the gleam of a light under the door, and opened it very carefully.

"Then I saw you lying in a heap against the wall and that monkey in the night-shirt just bending over you ready to stick that thing into your arm. I thought it just as well to fire first and ask questions afterwards, so I pinked him on the arm.

"He dropped the bulb like a shot and gave a yell. He looked at me once, and the last I saw of him he was making for the door with his night-

shirt flying out behind him like a dirty dish rag. He didn't wait to be questioned."

Lee raised his head from his hands.

"My lad," he said earnestly, "you came just in time. That creature of whom you speak with such contempt picked me up like a baby and threw me across the room with such force that it knocked the senses from me. I have no doubt that had he succeeded in injecting into me the fluid we are practically certain to find in that bulb, I should have been dead by now, or, at least, in the grip of death!"

"That man, Nipper, is about the most dangerous individual we have ever got up against. But it is a long tale, and I do not feel up to telling you about it to-night.

"Only let me say this—be on your guard every second should you ever meet him again. Shoot first as you did to-night, and ask questions afterwards. It is your only protection against him."

"Do you mean to say that little runt picked you up bodily and threw you across the room, gov'nor?" asked Nipper in amazement.

Lee nodded.

"He did, Nipper. And he did it as easily as you would pick up that Eastern idol off the mantel and throw it into the corridor. I was helpless—a baby in his grip."

Still wondering at this apparently inexplicable thing, Nipper slipped from his desk and gave Lee a hand into his bedroom. He assisted him into bed, and then bidding him good-night, returned to the consulting-room with the intention of again retiring himself.

So a few minutes later peace settled down upon the house in Gray's Inn Road—a peace, unfortunately, which was not fated to last long.

CHAPTER V.

The Disappearance of Professor Featherstone—A Startling Denouement.

THE hands of the great clock in the lobby of the Hotel Venetia pointed to exactly one o'clock when Nelson Lee and Nipper entered the hotel from the Piccadilly entrance. The main lobby was filled with the usual luncheon crowd, either just making their way to the dining or grill-room, or lounging about waiting for those whom they were to meet.

Lee murmured to Nipper to wait for him, and crossing to the desk, nodded to the clerk.

"You got my message?" he asked.

The clerk bowed and smiled.

"Mr. Varden left word over an hour ago, Mr. Lee," he replied. "A private room has been engaged for you. Rex, the head waiter, has the matter in hand, and will show you to it when you are ready."

Lee nodded his thanks, and was turning away when the clerk spoke again.

"By the way, Mr. Lee, there was a gentleman in here a few minutes ago asking if you had arrived. When I informed him that you had not done so he decided to leave a note for you. Here it is."

As he finished speaking the clerk reached into a letter-box behind him and took out an unstamped envelope with the crest of the hotel on the flap.

Somewhat puzzled, Lee took it, and murmuring his thanks, walked across the lobby to where Nipper was standing, opening the envelope as he went.

It contained a single sheet of the hotel notepaper, and, unfolding it, Lee read:

"Dear Mr. Lee,—I trust you will forgive me for breaking our luncheon engagement. When I left you last night it was with the intention of keeping it punctually, but on my arrival at Half Moon Street I found a telegram awaiting me. It was from Miss Carlile, whom you will remember I asked to be my wife. She desired me to be at the Venetia to-day at twelve o'clock sharp, as she was in need of me, so there was nothing to do but go.

"I was in hopes that I would still be able to keep the appointment for lunch, but found when I got there that she wished me to go out with her. Therefore I hope you will forgive me. As soon as I return I shall seek for you about the hotel, and if you are not here shall communicate with you at Gray's Inn Road.

"I sincerely regret that I have been compelled to break the engagement, as I feel this morning more than ever that you are the only man who can help me.

"Ever sincerely,
"RICHARD FEATHERSTONE."

Lee folded the letter up and thrust it back into the envelope. His face was very thoughtful when he reached Nipper.

"Professor Featherstone is not lunching with us after all, Nipper," he said shortly. "He has gone out, and is not certain when he will return. Wait here, my lad. I wish to see Varden for a few minutes."

Nipper sat down in a deep leather chair and Lee crossed the lobby towards the corridor which led to the manager's office.

"I don't like it," he muttered, as he went along. "I don't like it. If I only knew the true meaning of that vision I saw in the crystal! If I only knew how much was vision and how much figment of my own imagination. I saw the face of the Genghis, and it was truly the face of the Genghis. I saw the face of Professor Featherstone, and it was truly the face of the professor.

"I also saw the face of the girl on the steamer—the girl whom he has asked to be his wife—the girl to whom he has told all of what happened in Tibet, the girl whose name is Carlile.

"But the face I saw was the face of Mademoiselle Miton, the Black Wolf.

"Was that a true vision as were the others, or was it but a trick of the mind. If I only knew! If it were the Black Wolf, then he has gone out with her. In that case Heaven only knows where he has gone. I shall see Varden, and see what he knows about her."

Lee found Varden, the manager, busy in his office. At the moment he was dictating to his secretary, but on Lee's entrance he dismissed the girl and waved Lee to a seat.

"I left word about your private room at the office," he said, as he pushed a box of cigars across the desk. "I told them to have Rex look after you."

Lee pinched the end of the cigar and lit a match.

"Much obliged, Varden," he said, "but I am afraid I shall not need the room, after all. The guest I expected will not be here."

"Oh! that will be all right," rejoined the manager. "I will send out word to Rex about it."

"By the way, Varden," said Lee after a short pause, "I want to make an inquiry about a guest you have staying here.

"What is the name?"

"It is Carlile—a Miss Carlile," said Lee.

Varden frowned in thought.

"I don't seem to know the name, but I will have inquiries made, Lee. Just wait a few moments."

Leaning over the desk he pressed a button, and to the page-boy who answered said:

"Send Mr. Willis here. I have been down in Devon," he said to Lee, when the boy had gone. "I don't just know whom we have staying here at present." It was only a few minutes when Willis, the sub-manager, opened the door and came in. He nodded to Lee, then inquired of Varden what he wished.

"Mr. Lee wants to know if we have a guest of the name of Carlile staying here, Willis—a Miss Carlile?"

Willis nodded.

"She has been here for three weeks or more," he said. "But she left to-day."

"Left to-day!" echoed Lee quickly. "Are you sure of that, Willis?"

"Perfectly, Mr. Lee," responded Willis. "She left about noon in the company with a gentleman."

Lee rose to his feet.

"Did you see the man?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Was he fairly tall, clean-shaven, with oldish eyes set in a young face—a scholarly-looking man?"

"You have described him to a 'T', Mr. Lee. That was the man."

"And you say this Miss Carlile left the hotel with all her luggage?"

"Well, the luggage went before she did. It was taken away by a private motor."

"You have no idea where she has gone, I suppose?"

"Not the remotest; but I shall do my best to find out for you, if you wish."

"I should appreciate it very much, Willis."

"Then, wait here a few minutes, Mr. Lee, and I will see what I can discover."

Willis went out, and Lee dropped back into his seat.

"What is the trouble, Lee?" asked Varden.

Nelson Lee ran a hand through his hair.

"To tell you the truth, Varden, I don't know myself," he replied. "I am anxious to run this Miss Carlile to earth, though. I have no definite suspicion against her, but, on the other hand, there is something which makes me keenly desirous of having just one meeting with her. It is a queer case altogether, and, so far, I have been able to pick up only one or two of the threads. If I was ever right in my life I think I am correct in saying that before I have finished with it it will be one of the greatest cases I have ever touched."

"And now, Varden, I shall not trouble you further. I will go out to the office and see what Willis has been able to discover."

In the office Lee found Willis talking to a couple of clerks. He came forward as Lee approached the desk.

"Sorry, Mr. Lee," he said, "but nobody seems to know where she went. She sent her luggage away in a private car, and the same car returned for her. She and the man I told you of drove off together."

"Thank you," said Lee. "I shall have to wait until something else turns up."

He walked across to where Nipper was sitting, and with a gesture signed for the lad to follow him. Once in the street, Lee hailed a taxi, and told the man to drive to Gray's Inn Road.

"What now, gov'nor?" asked Nipper.

"There is work for us to do at home," replied Lee shortly. "Featherstone has disappeared, and while he went away by his own free will, I cannot

help but think it was a decoy. He has been lured—Heaven only knows where!—and how we are to find him I cannot tell you—yet.”

Once in the consulting-room, Lee went straight to the desk, and opening the drawer, in which he had locked the bulb the previous night, took out that deadly weapon.

“Come along to the lab., Nipper,” he said. “We will make a test of the stuff in this bulb, and see if we can discover what it is.”

Nipper followed Lee to the laboratory, and when the door had been closed and locked, they both donned white garments.

Nipper laid out the rubber gloves, oxygen masks, and different instruments and bottles which Lee might use, while Lee took down a tiny glass open-mouthed phial, and, gently unscrewing the needle-point from the bulb, poured the contents into the phial.

Only about a gramme of liquid was there, but as it trickled down into the phial, Lee noted, as his first step, that it was of a deep ruby colour.

His next test was a microscopic one. While Nipper prepared a powerful microscope, and arranged the brilliant electric bulb so that the light would fall on the slide from the proper angle, Lee took a single drop of the ruby-coloured liquid on a slide, and slipped it under the lense.

Then he bent over the instrument, and turning a brass screw here and there finally got the microscope adjusted to his satisfaction.

Nipper, in the meantime, had taken up a sheet of paper and pencil, and stood waiting while his master should call out the different features of the liquid.

A minute passed—two minutes went, and still Lee gazed through the lense without making a remark. Then suddenly his lips opened, and he said in low, tense tones:

“Colour evenly spread throughout; where liquid has spread on glass appears to thicken a little at the edges, though without any apparent increase of density in colour; contains three separate and distinct fields of bacilli, but all of the same variety; variety as follows:

“Round foretip or head, twisted, elongated body—blunt, divided tail-species, unknown to me. Fields composed of roughly”—now followed a long period of silence while Lee made a rapid computation—“roughly eight hundred bacilli to a field—say two thousand odd to each drop. Bacilli are extra large type and of sluggish movement, circulating steadily within the limits of the field each occupies, but not crossing to any other field.

“Drop shows signs of no other bacilli; consistency now getting somewhat thick and sticky; movement much slower as air reacts upon it; composition of drop unknown, and revealing little of a familiar nature.”

Suddenly Lee raised his head, and looked at Nipper:

“Got all that?” he asked curtly.

“Yes, gov’nor,” replied the lad. “It seems a complex thing all right. Can you place it?”

Lee shook his head.

“I have never come upon the mixture before, my lad, nor have I ever seen that type of bacilli before. Just hand me down my book of ‘Bacillus of All Types.’ Perhaps we shall come upon the sort in there.”

Nipper reached down the volume Lee desired, and handed it across.

Slowly and methodically Lee turned the pages, each of which was given up to the sketch in full, and in sections of a type of bacillus.

There were bacilli there of every known sort, and in several blank pages at the back of the book were pencilled sketches made by Lee himself of bacilli discovered since the book had been printed.

But, though he searched from front to back, he could not locate the

strange bacillus he had come upon in the drop of ruby-coloured liquid which he had examined under the microscope.

"If we only knew the effect of it, we might get some indication," he muttered aloud.

"How about trying it, then, gov'nor?" asked Nipper quickly. "If it is as important as you seem to think, it is surely warrantable to test it on some animal. We might try one of the rabbits in the garden."

Lee laid the book down quickly.

"The very idea, Nipper," he said. "Get one at once!"

Nipper hurried from the laboratory, and while he was gone, Lee bent once more over the microscope. He noticed now that the liquid was thickening to a jelly-like consistency, and that the bacilli seemed far more numerous than before.

"They do some devil's work," he muttered, "and, by thunder, if I can find out what that is I will do so!"

Just then Nipper returned carrying a rabbit in his arms. Taking it across to the experimenting table, he held it while Lee prepared a little of the liquid in a hypodermic. Then thrusting the needle into the animal's side he pressed the hypodermic home.

Nipper set the rabbit down on the floor now, and they bent over it, watching it closely. For some minutes it seemed quite normal in every way, then suddenly its limbs seemed to stiffen, and it began to perambulate about the room as though drunk.

From that the symptoms of the effect of the injection increased rapidly, and while the animal seemed in no pain whatsoever it acted as though completely bereft of its normal control. Could one have applied the phrase to an animal, one would have described it as "completely daft!"

It rose on its hind legs, it rolled over on its side, it danced in most grotesque fashion, it betrayed all the symptoms of an animal in the throes of madness. Then it began to career about the room until it grew dizzy, and dropped down into a corner.

With a quick motion Nipper grasped it, and carried it back to the table.

Lee made a quick test of the heart, and found it almost normal. He gazed into the rabbit's eyes, and down its throat. Puzzled, he told Nipper to set it down again, and then, as it began once more to dance in crazy fashion, Lee brought his hand down with a bang which shook the bottles on the experimenting table.

"No pain, my lad, but completely insane," he said hoarsely. "The ruby-coloured liquid has done it; the strange bacilli are the bacilli of madness. Take the rabbit and kill it my lad. Collect the blood in a crucible. We must see if from it we can make an anti-toxin.

"My heavens! To think that I was within an ace of having that same liquid injected into me last night. Insanity! A thousand times worse than death!"

Lee turned now and poured the liquid which remained in the phial back into the bottle from which he had taken it. He laid the glass microscopic slide back in its case, and then, replacing the different articles he had been using, washed his hands.

Nipper had disappeared, but now returned carrying a large phial almost full of the rabbit's blood. He corked it carefully, and set it away.

Just as these things were completed, they both became conscious that the telephone was ringing violently.

Lee hurried along the passage, and taking down the receiver called:

"Hallo! Yes: Nelson Lee is speaking. What is that? Oh, yes, Senora

Rantolado! You wish me to come at once? Something terrible has happened? Yes; I shall be there within twenty minutes."

Hanging up the receiver, he swung round to Nipper, who had just entered the room.

"Quick, my lad, get a taxi! Something terrible has happened at the house in Regent's Park!"

CHAPTER VI.

The Germ of Madness—Nelson Lee Makes a Solemn Vow—Finis!

WHAT Lee expected to find at the house in Regent's Park he could not have said.

Something which Senora Rantolado had described as "terrible" had happened to Senor Rantolado.

Whether he was dead or dying Lee could not know. He had deemed it best not to waste valuable time asking questions over the telephone. The only thing to do was to reach the house in the shortest time possible, and well within the time he had specified, the taxi which they had taken pulled into the kerb before the stately mansion.

Lee was out on the instant, leaving Nipper to pay the man. Scarcely had he pressed the button beside the door when the latter was flung wide by the same elderly South American butler, who had opened to him the night before.

Lee's keen eyes noted that the man was in a state of terrible agitation, but he did not wait to ask the reason. He wanted to get to the heart of things at once.

In rapid Spanish he asked where the senora was to be found.

"She awaits the Senor Lee," replied the man. "Will the senor please come this way?"

Lee found himself led to a small boudoir, which led off the hall, and there, sitting in a low chair, in a state of utter collapse, was the Senora Rantolado.

She had been crying, as Lee could see, and as she lifted her tear-stained face the tears started again.

"I am sorry, indeed, to see you so upset, senora," said Lee gently. "What has caused it? What has happened?"

"Oh, Senor Lee," cried the little woman in tones of anguish, "I know not what has happened to my husband. Last night he was all right; this morning he was even brighter than usual. But now—but now— Oh, senor, how can I tell you?"

Suddenly, as the senora broke into a fresh storm of weeping, the curtains at the end of the room were thrust aside, and, looking up, Lee saw a slim girl, habited in black, enter. For one moment he was held spellbound by the utter beauty which radiated from her, then, collecting himself, he bowed.

The girl acknowledged the bow with a little curtsy, then she ran to the senora and put her arms around her.

"Senora—senora," she cried in halting Spanish, "you must not give way. Allow me to tell the senor what has happened.

"Senor, you speak the Spanish, I know," she went on, looking up at Lee.

Lee bowed, realising now that it was the girl whose hands had clasped his the night before.

"I do, senorita," he said; "but, if it would be of any assistance to you,

I may say that I speak a little the language of the ancient Peruvians—the Quichua tongue.”

The girl's deep, lustrous eyes lit up startlingly, and before Lee could prevent her she had grasped his hand, and was pouring forth a flood of the soft liquid sounds, which made up the sweet and cultured language of the dead and gone Incas.

Lee's mind strove to follow her, and he gathered that she was uttering her joy at finding in this strange land one who spoke the beloved tongue which was hers.

Lee led her gently to the chair, and said in the same tongue:

“What is it that has happened, senorita? The Senor Rantolado has met with some trouble—tell me what it is.”

“Oh, Great One,” said the girl, “he has met with the spears and shafts of the devils of the night. This morning, when the Sun God rose, he was well, then, Great One, he had a visitor—one whom we did not see. The visitor departed even as he came; yet we know he was here, for we heard voices in the room which the senor occupies.”

“Then, Great One, the senora went in to see the senor. I was near at hand, Great One, and I heard her cry out. I ran into her, and there I saw a terrible sight. The good senor was sitting at his desk, laughing like a babe—he was, as one whose brain has been stolen, senor. He is still that way, Great One, and we—we are afraid to go to him.”

“You are great—you are strong—you are destined by the fates, Great One, to stand as a wall in the trouble which approaches. Even I, Yanquori, have read and have seen that this must be. There are many dangers ahead, Great One—there is an abyssmal pit which you must tread—but you must fight, Great One—you must fight.”

Suddenly her voice trailed off into a low murmur, and Lee, glancing at her saw that she had slipped off into a trance.

Allowing her hand to drop, he turned back to the senora, who was weeping violently. Laying a hand on her shoulder he said quietly:

“You must bear up, senora. I pledge you my word I shall do all in my power to help you. I go now to the senor.”

He turned, and beckoning to Nipper to follow him made for the door. In the hall he came upon the butler, and said to him curtly:

“Hombre, conduct me to your master's room.”

The old butler turned obediently and led the way along the hall to a door at the end. There he paused and crossed himself devoutly.

“The devils are in the brain of the senor,” he muttered, and turning, fled.

Lee shrugged and laid his fingers on the handle of the door. Then he pushed, and the next moment he and Nipper were standing on the threshold gazing into the room.

It was a luxuriously-fitted study, and at the desk which stood by the window they saw Senor Rantolado seated.

As they entered he was leaning over the desk mumbling foolishly, and in his eyes was the light of madness.

He did not glance up as they came in—in fact he seemed totally oblivious of their presence.

Lee walked across quickly and laid a hand on the shoulder of the Brazilian.

“Senor,” he said quietly, “don't you know me?”

Like a quivering flash of lightning Rantolado was on his feet, and only then did Lee see that in his right hand was a long knife, which he brought round in a vicious sweep. Only a frantic jump on Lee's part saved him

from being slashed deeply, and then with a cry like that of a wild beast, Rantolado sprang for him.

"Look out, gov'nor!" yelled Nipper. "He's as mad as a March hare!"

Lee dodged round the desk, and then Rantolado, spying Nipper, flew for him. Nipper grabbed a chair and threw it full at the madman, bringing him to the floor as he did so, then he and Lee made a simultaneous rush for the madman before he could rise.

But Rantolado fooled them.

Rolling over swiftly he gained his feet and made a savage lunge at Lee. The blade just grazed Lee's shoulder, and then the Brazilian went for Nipper again.

"Nothing for it, Nipper," cried Lee, "but to down him. We must disarm him some way. Get a weapon, and when he gets near enough let him have it."

Lee himself had snatched up a poker from the fireplace, and now, as at the sound of his voice, Rantolado made for him, he stood his ground, the poker raised on guard.

Rantolado came on brandishing the knife, then, just as Lee thought he was going to strike, he stopped, his eyes, filled with the cunning of the mad, narrowed, and holding thus he waited.

From behind, Nipper, who had snatched up a heavy paper-weight from the desk, was creeping up on him, and in another moment or two would be upon him.

But just as the lad was about to strike, the madman turned like a flash and lunged. At the same instant Lee brought down the poker with terrific force, and Rantolado staggered.

Lee raised the weapon and brought it down remorselessly a second time, and this time the knife fell from the nerveless fingers of the madman and he dropped in a huddled heap to the floor.

Lee and Nipper were upon him like a flash, and this time he did not escape. A curtain cord formed a very good rope by which to secure him, and when he had been properly trussed, they lifted him on to the couch.

It was just when Lee was straightening up that under the desk he spied a tiny grey object. Swiftly he crossed over and picked it up. Then, with a peculiar chuckling noise, he held it up for Nipper to see.

"I think we can guess who his mysterious visitor was, my lad," he said pantingly. "Do you recognise this?"

"Scott, gov'nor! It is the same as the bulb the monkey in the night-shirt had last night in the consulting-room!"

"And it has contained the same liquid which, had you not come on the scene when you did, would have been injected into my veins, my lad.

"You see Rantolado there, and you see what I would have been had he succeeded. You remember the rabbit? You saw the effects of the liquid on the animal? Now you see it on a human being. It is indeed the germ of madness, and Heaven knows what we are to do about it. The only hope is that I may be able to discover some anti-toxin for it."

Lee thrust the bulb into his pocket and gazed at Rantolado, who was lying with eyes closed, breathing heavily.

"The Genghis has succeeded so far in all he threatened," he said slowly. "He has come to England and he has made his power felt. Last night he drove back the Senorita Yanquori from her trance—drove her back by sheer domination of will—absent suggestion of will at that.

"Professor Featherstone has disappeared. Was that the doing of the Genghis? Quien sabe! But he has gone in the company of the mysterious

Miss Carlile. Is this girl who calls herself Miss Carlile—is she the Black Wolf? And if so has the Black Wolf any connection with the Genghis?

“Surely that is not possible. Yet there was the face which I saw in the crystal! Heavens! am I, too, going mad? Featherstone gone—myself attacked and almost overcome by the Genghis—and now Rantolado a raving madman! What does it all mean? What is to be the end of it all? None can say, but this I solemnly vow:

“I swear by all I hold dear that I shall not rest until I have solved the mystery of Featherstone’s disappearance—until I have done everything possible to bring Rantolado back from the grip of madness—until I have tracked down this bestial Genghis and either brought him to justice or driven him back to his cave in Tibet.

“That I solemnly swear, and I further vow that my endeavours shall be instituted at once.”

With that Lee rose, and walking slowly towards the door, left the room to make some arrangements for taking care of Senor Rantolado, until he could make some definite effort to bring back his sanity.

And Nipper, knowing that his master meant what he said, followed with a strange presentiment of danger to come tugging at his heart.

Lee had been outwitted so far, but knowing him as the lad did, Nipper knew that the game was not yet played out.

THE END.

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IN POLAR SEAS.

A Romance of Adventure in the Frozen North.

BY

FENTON ASH,

Author of "A Trip to Mars," "The Radium Seekers," etc.

HUGH ARNOLD, a young English lad, goes out to the far North with an expedition. He is joined by an Irish sailor—MIKE O'GRADY, and also VAL RUXTON.

The latter and Hugh become fast friends, but one day Val hints that Hugh joined the expedition under a false name, and says that Amaki, a neighbouring Eskimo, has been asking for tidings of a certain explorer whose name is well known in the scientific world. For some reason, Hugh turns pale.

Hugh and Val Ruxton are sent out by Grimstock, the leader, who has, for some unknown reason, taken a great dislike to the youngster, to make observations, but return to find the camp deserted—they are left to die in the dreary white wilderness.

A short time afterwards, while the two chums are out together, Hugh thinks he sees some mountains and pastureland far out to sea. Val Ruxton, however, tells him that what he sees is only a mirage.

Hugh, however, is quite right, and after travelling many weary miles the chums enter the "Green Land."

They fall in with a party of men dressed in the armour of the Vikings of old. These men, it seems, are expecting an attack by sea, and the chums, with their followers, offer to fight for them.

The offer is accepted just as a huge fleet of war-galleys is sighted. The enemy has come, and the "berserker"—the old lust of battle—seizes Hugh and Val in its grip.

A great battle takes place in which the chums prove to be splendid fighters. They are successful in boarding an enemy galley, but Hugh, turning round, gets a fright. The ship has drifted away from their own, and their retreat is cut off. (Now read on.)

Friends to the Rescue!

THUS their retreat had been cut off, and their situation rendered well-nigh hopeless. They were isolated, there, on the foemen's galley, contending against a force that now outnumbered them by fully three or four to one.

Osric, the opposing leader, saw Hugh glance round, and looked, too, and then he also realised what had happened.

"Now, yield ye, whoever ye are!" he cried, and there was the ring of triumph in his voice. "Yield, at once, ere we put an end to your insolence by cutting you to pieces. Yield—or take the consequences!"

Hugh and Ruxton glanced despairingly this way and that, but no means

of escape could they see—nor was there any longer reasonable hope of being able to prevail against such odds. Their foes had taken fresh heart, and their faces were already grinning with malignant triumph.

But yield the chums would not, all the same. They knew, from what they had already heard, what their fate was certain to be if they did, and they preferred death, then and there, to living on as "thralls" for the rest of their lives.

"Good-bye, Val! Good-bye, all!" cried Hugh. "We can but die once! Don't forget your revolver, though."

He drew his own pistol, and was about to rush recklessly forward once more, when he was arrested by an unexpected and most astonishing sound.

It was neither more nor less than the report of several rifles quite close at hand—just, in fact, behind him.

He saw his foes falling on every side. There were more shots, and more men fell. His first idea was that a vessel must have come alongside containing Grimstock and his band, and that it was they who were firing. But it was his—Hugh's enemies—against whom these deadly bullets were being aimed! What did it all mean?

He looked round, and, to his astonishment, saw Amaki and his two natives with smoking rifles in their hands. They had opened fire in the very nick of time, and once more turned the tide of battle—for their well-aimed bullets had spread panic and confusion amongst their foes, who were already taking to flight.

But Hugh knew that their stock of cartridges were small—indeed, he wondered where those already fired could have come from—so he called out to them to cease firing, in order to economise what ammunition was left.

Instead, however, they coolly continued the fusilade.

Again and again did the three reload and fire, as serenely as though they had at their back a whole arsenal filled with reserve ammunition. And it was not until Hugh came rushing over to compel them to cease firing that they ceased.

"Stop that! That's enough! You'll waste every blessed cartridge we've got!" he cried angrily as he came up.

"No, no. Plenty more," was the surprising answer.

"Plenty more, you idiots! How can there be plenty more, when—? Hallo! What in the name of wonder does this mean?"

Hugh stood and stared like one in a dream. There, with the shouts of battle all around, with the death-shrieks filling the air, the triumphant shouts of victors, the groans of the stricken ones, forgetting all else, staring at the Eskimos.

"Wh—what—does this mean?" he asked slowly. He pointed to the rifles.

Amaki smiled his peculiar smile and quietly offered him his own rifle.

"This one—Mister Ruxton's," he muttered in his broken English, handing over also Val's rifle. "Him good rifle—shoot well—got plenty bullet-pills," which was his quaint word for cartridges.

Hugh took the two rifles and stared at the other two which he saw in the hands of Amaki's companions. "Where did they come from? How many cartridges have you got?" he asked.

"Hop bullet-pills," was the answer. And Amaki began to produce cartridges from his clothes like a conjuring trick. And Hugh saw that not only had the old man more rifle cartridges than he had any idea of—in spite of his having already used so many—but that he had spare rifles, and a lot of revolver cartridges as well.

Utterly nonplussed though he was, Hugh plumped upon these last and stowed some away in his clothes.

Then the remembrance of the strange situation came back to him, and he began to look about.

First he caught sight of the *Cedric*, which had drifted away, and he noticed, with a start, that the *Raven Banner* was no longer flying. This told him that Rudlaff must have been beaten and captured, with his vessel. Still, he was bewildered, and unable to understand what had happened.

"You did this?" he asked Amaki. "You threw off the grappling irons and set us clear just in time to save us from being attacked in the rear by those other johnnies, eh?"

Amaki did not understand the words exactly, but he guessed at their meaning, and he nodded vigorously.

"It's wonderful! Marvellous!" exclaimed Hugh. "It's like a fairy tale! But—where did those rifles—and all this ammunition come from?"

Meantime, Ruxton had been taking practical measures to reap the full advantage of the favourable position which Amaki's unexpected intervention had brought about. He had made the wounded leaders prisoners and taken command of the vessel and all the people on board. The men—soldiers and sailors alike—were thoroughly cowed by what had taken place, while the young officer, Kern, was too astounded and dazed to offer any opposition.

Hugh now came up to his chum, bearing the two rifles and some cartridges, and explained briefly what had occurred, so far as his understanding went—which, as he remarked, "doesn't amount to much."

"I wish, Val," he said, "you would go over and talk to Amaki, and get out of him what it all means. You understand his lingo—which is more than I do—and you may be able to get him to explain this most amazing puzzle. As for me, at present, I scarcely know whether I am on my head or my heels!"

"I'll go if you take my place here," said Val. "We must make up our minds quickly what our next move is to be. We've captured the ship—thanks, as it seems, to Amaki—what are we going to do next? They won't let us alone long, you may be pretty sure."

He went across to Amaki, while Hugh busied himself with the care of the wounded and prisoners. Ruxton remained for some time talking in a low tone with Amaki, and when he at last finished and returned to Hugh, there was an expression on his face stranger and more inscrutable than anything his chum had ever seen there before.

"See here, Hugh!" he cried. "We must 'bout ship and do our best to get out of this, now we've got a vessel to ourselves, by showing 'em a clean pair of heels."

"What?" cried Hugh. "Turn tail and run away, just as we've gained such a signal success? Why! what will they think of us? They'll think we're cowards, indeed!"

"Nonsense, man!" said Ruxton, and in his voice there was a ring of new and unexpected sternness and determination. "What have we to do with the pretty squabbles and quarrels of these people? We have our own safety to think of! Providence has placed in our hands a means of escape—and, by Heaven, we're not going to throw it away!"

Chained to the Oar—A Mysterious Friend—The Vikings Give Chase.

HUGH looked wonderingly at his friend. He could not in the least see how the fact that they had captured a vessel and held control of it was going to aid them to escape. How, he asked himself, could they cross the great White Wilderness? If they fled into it again, it would only mean that they would starve to death there, as they had so nearly done before. The very thought of returning there made him shudder.

Yet Ruxton was firm in refusing to answer any questions or give any further information just then. His manner said plainly: "You must trust me for a while. I cannot tell you at present all I know or suspect."

In the end, Hugh put his curiosity in his pocket, so to speak, and set himself loyally to work to back up his chum in whatever he had made up his mind to do. "Of course," he reflected, "I know I can trust him. He will explain everything when the time comes."

The tide of battle had drifted away from them. Gerwulf's people seemed to be getting the best of the fight, and they were following up their successes and pursuing Osth's men who were apparently in full retreat towards the land from which they had started. The Cedric was now flying a different banner—a sign that she had been captured—was being towed off by the victors. They expected that the Colbrand would follow, for the banner of the mythical giant still streamed out in the breeze, and no one outside the vessel knew that she had "changed hands."

It was not till some time later, when she was seen to be making her way with all speed towards the head of the lake, that something wrong was suspected, and pursuers were despatched to inquire into matters and bring her back.

Meanwhile she continued on her course as fast as oars and sails, with a good wind behind them, could send her along. Ruxton marched up and down keeping a sharp outlook on all sides, though at times he seemed to be almost lost in thought. Hugh kept an eye on things in general, speculating all the time as to what was going to happen when they reached the end of the lake.

Then it was that the two sailors, Mike and Cable, came rushing from below, their excited faces showing that they were almost ready to burst with news of some startling discovery.

"They be below, sir!" cried Bob. "I see 'em meself! Nigh all on 'em!"

"Thru for you, Bob, darlint; it's roight, ye are," Mike put in. "Saints above us! I niver was more surprised in me loife!"

"What are you talking about? Who are you talking about?" Hugh demanded.

"Them theer land pirates. Them murderin' galoots," said Cable.

"Thru for ye, Bob," Mike confirmed again. "Oh, the wicked divils!"

"For goodness' sake talk sense!" exclaimed Hugh testily. "I'm getting a bit tired of all these mysteries. What on earth is it, now?"

"Grimstock, sir—it's Grimstock, an' his handsome crowd," was Cable's astonishing answer. "They be down below—a toilin' an' a sweatin' away at the oars, chained down to their seats like—like—well, like chained monkeys made t' work."

Investigation proved this to be true. There they were, between decks below, a pitiable sight, chained in their places, with iron collars round their necks, and toiling at their work under the supervision of trained task-masters armed with whips.

Cable and Mike had been told off by Ruxton to keep an eye on these task-masters themselves, in case they should attempt to play any tricks. Urged by curiosity, they had wandered in amongst the wretched rowers, and had almost wandered out again without making any discovery—so dark and dismal was the place in which they worked—when a smothered exclamation in English from one of the wretched beings had drawn their closer attention. Then they had looked more carefully into the haggard, half-starved faces, with the result that they had—after some hesitation—recognised Grimstock and the skipper, McClinter.

"Val," said Hugh, aside, to his chum. "I must have that man out so

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that I can question him. I will now force the truth from him about my father. He shall tell it to me—at last—or I will know the reason why!"

Ruxton nodded. "Ay—ay! I quite understand, Hugh," he said. "But first come up on deck. I want to ask you a question."

Hugh followed impatiently to the poop deck, where Val turned, and, looking at him, said, steadily:

"The question I wish to ask you is this: 'Have you ever considered the possibility that your father might have struggled on and won through and reached this country alive, even as we did?'"

Hugh looked at his questioner in doubt and surprise. Evidently, no such thought had ever occurred to him, but now that it was suggested, the idea caused him strange sensations.

"Val!" he cried—or rather, almost gasped: "You seem to know something—or you suspect! Oh! It could not be! And yet—stranger things perhaps have been! Val, for pity's sake, if you have anything to tell me, do not keep me in suspense!"

"I know nothing with absolute certainty, Hugh," returned Val, gravely. "All I can tell you is this: 'A good many years ago—somewhere about the time your father is supposed to have met his death in the White Wilderness, in this direction—a traveller with two or three Eskimo companions found his way, half dead, to this country. They were made prisoners and condemned to work in the mines as thralls. But a few years since they escaped with a small party of companions, and were killed by the borghens—the yellow-haired monsters. That is one account. But there is another story which declares that they managed to make friends with the borghens, and have lived on ever since in some of the innumerable caverns and endless underground labyrinths with which the whole of the mountains herabouts are honeycombed. Not content with that, however, they have—so the story goes—even made reprisals, by way of revenge, for the suffering they underwent while in the mines.

"These borghens, it seems, are greatly feared by the Vikings. They are declared to be a most savage, ferocious, untamable race, and, of late years, they seem to have increased, not only in numbers, but in intelligence. They have made raids and destroyed property, and even carried off some of those who had incurred their displeasure, just as any race of human out-laws might do. And rumour explains this by declaring that they are now ruled and directed by these escaped slaves—one of whom, at any rate, was believed to have been a very clever man.' I have learned all this from Amaki and Melka, to whom it has been told in some mysterious way by one or other of the thralls they have made friends with. Now, I don't wish to raise what may turn out to be false hopes in your breast, so I merely give you what seem to be the bare facts. What do you think of them? Do they suggest anything to your mind?"

Hugh shook his head helplessly.

"I don't seem able to think properly, Val," he said, almost in a whisper. "This account raises such strange thoughts—suggests such extraordinary possibilities that I feel bewildered! If you have anything in your mind that would bid me hope, I entreat you to tell it to me."

"That's just where the difficulty comes in, my dear friend," returned Val. "You see, on the one hand, this strange man may not be the one we have in our mind at all. On the other——"

"Yes, yes! Go on! On the other——?"

"On the other hand, I have had a dim suspicion of something of the sort being possible ever since the night of your encounter with 'Caliban' in the cavern."

"You have?" cried Hugh, reproachfully: "And you never told me—never even hinted it to me!"

"But I did hint it—only, I dared not put it plainly, for fear, as I have said, of raising hopes that might lead only to the most bitter disappointment. It has suggested itself to me when I have seen your strange influence over those ferocious brutes, and noticed the peculiar look of dumb, almost pathetic inquiry in their eyes each time you spoke to them—this has suggested to me, I say, the idea that they have, or had, some master whom they feared and obeyed—perhaps, even loved—who can tell? And that your voice was so like the voice of that master that they knew not what to make of it. When they heard you speak, they recognised the voice of their master and obeyed. Yet, when they looked at you, they saw it was not their master, and they were puzzled. Now, do you understand?"

"I think I do," murmured Hugh, striding restlessly up and down. "You mean that my voice and my father's may be very much alike. But tell me—when will this question be put to the test? When shall I be out of this terrible suspense?"

"This evening—in less than an hour's time, I hope. My only reason for not telling you before was that it seemed such a cruel thing to raise false hopes—if it should so turn out. We are presently to meet this mysterious being, and he has promised Amaki—through another—to help us to escape. He says he has everything needful—arms, stores, sledges. And, as a pledge, he sent, secretly, the rifles and cartridges hidden on board the Cedric by friendly thralls. There! Now you know as much as I do!"

"Ah, but there is something else," exclaimed Hugh. "These cartridges are our own—my own—which Grimstock stole from me! I recognised them—and you, too, know that they are the latest make—how otherwise, then, could they be there? Now, what does that mean? Here is more mystery!"

"Yes; you are right," said Val, after looking carefully at one of the cartridges. "That point did not strike me. Well! The enigma will be explained ere very long now."

"But don't you think, Hugh, that, in these circumstances, it would be better to postpone questioning Grimstock till we know for certain—whether——" Val paused.

"Whether this man is my father, you mean," Hugh finished for him. "Yes; I do think so. If—it should turn out—that my father is really alive—then it will be his place to deal with Grimstock—not mine!"

"Exactly. That is what I felt and wished to say, only I scarcely knew how to put it. Now, then, we will leave Grimstock and company where they are, till—as I dare to hope—we can turn them over to some one who has a stronger claim to them than even we have."

Just then, Cable's voice was heard hailing from near the bow.

"Sail ho!"

(To be concluded shortly.)

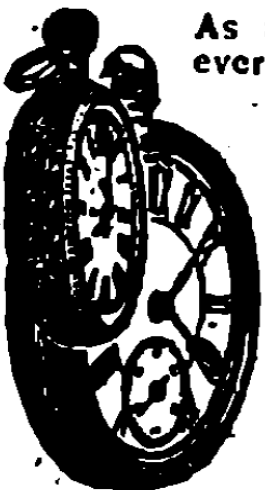
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