

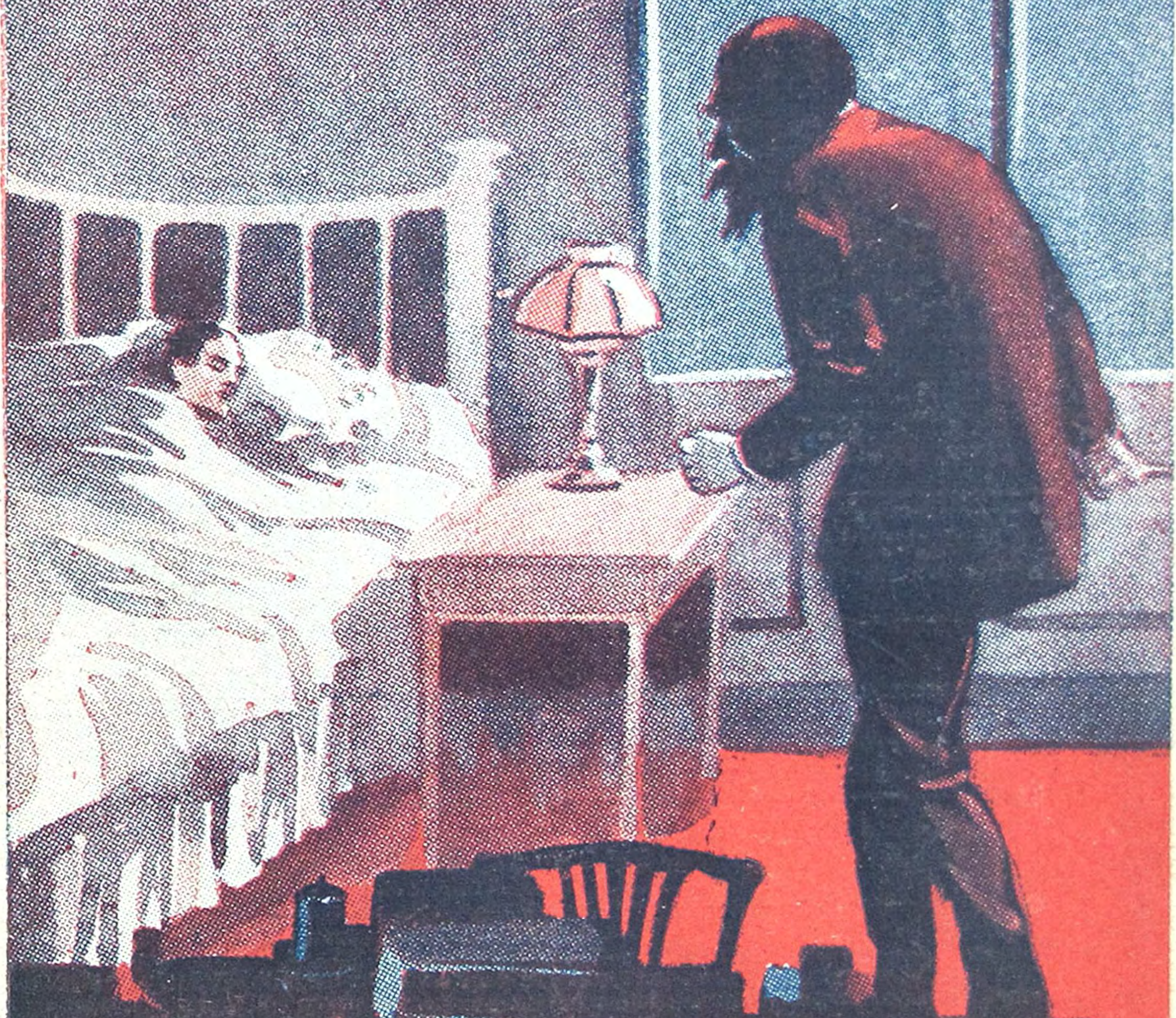
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THE RED MENACE

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NELSON LEE, The BLACK WOLF, and GENGHIS, The Mystery Man of Tibet.

CHAPTER I.

Which shows Nelson Lee at work, and which reveals the situation existing after Nelson Lee's first meeting with the Mystery Man of Tibet.

“THE man trained solely in science falls easily into a superstitious attitude; he is overdone with classification. He believes in the possibility of exact knowledge everywhere. What is not exact he declares is not knowledge. He believes in specialists and experts in all fields. I dispute this universal range of possible scientific precision” (Extract from “Metaphysics”; H. G. Wells.)

Nelson Lee allowed the book he was reading to drop down to his knee, and, leaning back in the big easy-chair which he had drawn up before the fire, he closed his eyes.

“The man trained solely in science falls easily into a superstitious attitude.” He was asking himself, did that phrase apply to himself?

Was he, Nelson Lee, allowing himself to fall into a superstitious attitude? Was he allowing himself to be governed too completely by the rigid laws of analyses and deduction which he had evolved to suit the peculiar form of the profession which was his.

If a man be a chemist, or a biologist, or a surgeon, or a watchmaker, he has certain precedents to go by; certain rules laid down by those who have gone before him, and who have found that these laws apply to the narrow limits of the science or trade in hand.

But with Lee it was different. Criminology, it is true, has developed into a science apart—an outgrowth of Sociology, and now rich enough in scientific attention to be termed Criminal Anthropology.

Strictly speaking, Nelson Lee studied the peculiarities of different criminals, not so much to decide the why of their crimes, but to gain some inkling as to the cause.

In deciding whether a man was born a criminal or became a criminal through environment, he often was able to so utilise his knowledge as to adapt it to the reasoning methods peculiarly his own.

Lee was not a believer in the theory that a criminal must necessarily be “a miserable distorted blockhead, an ape face, an imp face, an angry dog

face, a sullen ox face, or the progeny of stupidity, both intellectual and moral."

He had dealt with too many men, who showed every sign of intellect and breeding; men who had used these very assets in the furtherance of their criminal deeds; men who mixed with the highest in the land, enjoyed the pleasures and pursuits of cultured men and women—yet preyed secretly upon society.

Through the long run of his career Nelson Lee had come upon many strange persons.

He had had more than one insight into the secret of a human soul laid bare. He had learned to discriminate to some extent between the different classes of criminals, though, truth to tell, such discrimination will never be an exact science.

Yet, with all the types he had had to deal with, he had never crossed swords with a more weird creature than the Mystery Man of Tibet—the Genghis.

Who was this strange creature? What was his purpose in the world? What menace to humanity did he brew in that secret cave of his in the Himalayas?

In what way would he strike next? And with what definite purpose?

Those who have read of Nelson Lee's first meeting with the Genghis will remember what happened when the Mystery Man came to Europe.

They will recall how Professor Featherstone—when he was plain Dick Featherstone and fresh from Oxford—while on an exploring and anthropological and ethnological expedition into the wilds of Tibet, was captured by the creatures of the Genghis, and carried prisoner to the secret cave in the mountains.

They will recall, too, how he was chained there to the wall of the cave for five long years, during which he was compelled to receive instruction from the Genghis, and live the life of a religious fanatic, for he had been chosen by the Genghis to succeed him.

Why he had been chosen he never knew.

It may be argued by some, that when the Genghis died, Featherstone could easily have escaped, but those who make that argument make it in ignorance of the mental sway the great intellect of the Genghis would eventually achieve over Featherstone, and before he passed away, the Genghis would have taken further measures to bind the other irrevocably to his purpose.

The Genghis had a knowledge of chemical control, which no man might know. Featherstone would have been stripped of his identity as Featherstone; he would have been moulded into the representative of the Genghis—and no more horrible fate could one imagine!

But he had escaped, and had come to England, where he lived in deadly fear of the vengeance of the Genghis.

Then to London, too, had come a Brazilian—a Senor Rantolado, who was deeply versed in psychic knowledge.

With him he brought a medium—not the ordinary type of charlatan, but a mysterious and mystical girl, whom he had found in an old Incan monastery in the heart of the lost and forgotten Caqueta jungle, which lies between Brazil, Ecuador, Peru, and Colombia.

Nelson Lee had been requested, in company with other scientists, to act as a member of a committee of investigation, to pronounce upon the marvellous gifts displayed by the girl, and whether there might be anything in it or not. It is a fact that Nelson Lee saw in a crystal globe a marvellous kaleidoscope of visions—a kaleidoscope in which he recognised the Black

Wolf, a queer-looking creature, whom he afterwards discovered to be the Genghis, and Professor Featherstone himself, who, as Fate had decreed, was also a member of the committee of investigation.

Then Lee had known nothing of what had happened to Featherstone in Tibet; but that same night Featherstone had confided in Lee, and had prayed his help.

Lee had promised, and not on that Featherstone had disappeared in a manner which seemed to show collusion on the part of the Black Wolf, who, by the way, had been strangely elusive during all the affair.

Then hot foot had come a frantic message from the wife of Senor Rantolado, and Lee and Nipper had arrived at the house in Regent's Park, where the Brazilian lived, to discover that the man had had a mysterious visitor, and that since the departure of this visitor he had suddenly gone raving insane.

Nelson Lee, in his first brush with the Genghis, has gone down under the greater strength of the other, and but for Nipper would have been a victim of the Waters of Madness even as Rantolado was.

How had he discovered that the mysterious ruby-coloured liquid which the Genghis had tried to inject into him was a Water of Madness?

By microscopic tests in his own laboratory, where, when it had been injected into a rabbit, it had produced almost instant insanity.

And now, two weeks after his first meeting with the Genghis—two weeks which had been filled with other cases—now, when he had an evening to spare, his thoughts had immediately gone back to the case which had been so baffling, and which had left him helpless to strike back.

Featherstone still missing; Rantolado was confined in an upper room of the house in Regent's Park, raving almost continually. Mademoiselle Yanquori, the medium, had had a nervous collapse, and, as far as Lee knew, was still confined to her room. Nothing more had been heard of the Black Wolf, who, under the name of "Miss Carlile," had stayed at the Hotel Venetia, and had, so Lee thought, decoyed Featherstone away; and not a word had been heard of the Genghis.

Had the Mystery Man gone back to Tibet, taking Featherstone with him? If so, then where did the Black Wolf come in?

If she had decoyed Featherstone from the Venetia, had she done so in collusion with the Genghis?

Assuming that to be a possibility, then what was her purpose? How could she possibly have anything in common with the Genghis?

It was too much for Lee, yet he knew that somewhere in the maze of events lay the thread he sought.

Almost every night he had toiled in the laboratory, testing the blood which he had collected from the rabbit which Nipper had killed after the Water of Madness had been injected into it.

He had pondered more than once on that phrase which he had read again this evening, and had thrust the rigid lines of science aside in an effort to find some explanation of the mystery of the Genghis.

Who was this strange creature?

He had heard enough from Featherstone to tell him that the Genghis was the present representative of a long line of Genghes, who had lived and worked in that cave in Tibet from time immemorial.

Steadily, as the centuries had advanced, they had toiled away at a sort of super-chemistry—a chemistry which had not only to do with organic and inorganic chemistry as we know it, but also a chemistry of the subconsciousness.

Long before Egypt rose as a great power were the Genghes toiling in

that secret cave, before Greece ruled as a world empire, before Rome rose as mistress of all peoples, before Babylon grew to be a jewel of the East, were they there.

For what purpose?

Who were they? What was their peculiar aim in it all? Science provided no solution, as Lee had already discovered, and when he had pulled himself free of the fetters of science he had gone into the matter, from an historical point of view, in an effort to find in the history of the past the key to the riddle. And in a vague way he thought he had found it.

Mark this carefully. In a study of the oldest historical records he could find—ay, even in a study of the old legends of the East—he had found some things, which, strangely enough, seemed to form a series of steps down into the present.

He had discovered from an old Chinese tomb of legends, that Fu-Hi, the first Emperor of the Chinese, who lived nearly three thousand years B.C., came from some mysterious place "high up," and swept with his hordes over the surrounding country, subduing it to his yoke.

And given in Chinese the other name of Fu-Hi was "Chengsze"—pronounced Chengiz.

Wasn't that near enough to the name Genghis—or Jenghis, as some render it—to form a strong connection in Lee's mind between the two names?

Listen further.

Five hundred years later, another great warrior swept down from "high up," and established himself sovereign of all the country from Tibet to the Pacific, from India to the northern limits of Siberia. Again a thousand years later, another great conqueror came from the west, and levelled the places before him.

Then came definite history to consult.

In 406 A.D., while Rome was still a great empire, though on the decline, there was born Attila, the Emperor of the Huns.

From Tartary—the place "high up"—came the Huns, and conquering Asia, swept westward into Europe. Even to the Atlantic they carried sword and rapine, and at the gates of Rome itself they battered with their barbarous weapons.

Another period elapses, and then from the same source there arises another powerful being—he who bore the name of Genghis, as a flaunting banner to the world—Genghis Khan the Great.

It was only shortly after William the Conqueror came to Britain that Genghis Khan rose up in the East, and, sweeping all before him, stretched his empire from the Yellow Sea to the Dneiper.

Was there nothing but coincidence in the fact that he, too, bore the name of "Genghis"?

Then came still another from that source—the great and terrible Kublai Khan, grandson of Genghis, who threw his legions even into Japan. Was it possible that this sequence of great warriors might have come from one and the same source? Was it possible that they may have gone out into the world, each with the same definite purpose in view?

What was it which obtruded most distinctly from the life of each? It was a savage determination to spread the rule of the Tartar and the Mongol over all the world.

Did the Genghes of old, who lived in that secret cave of Tibet, form the genesis of these efforts? Was the great idea of world dominion born there? Was it from there the strings were pulled which threw the world into a terrific upheaval?

Was the Genghis of the cave connected with the man of each period, who, in more cases than one, called himself "Genghis"? Who could say?

Yet, in reviewing all the events of the past, Nelson Lee, for the first time in his life, began to scent something of connection between those periods which spread over all the years of antiquity.

Then from that could he possibly get some thread of suggestion, which would throw into clearness the purpose of the present Genghis—the Mystery Man of Tibet? Was it from history that he was to find the true explanation of the problem? Something of this sort was passing through his mind the while he rested in his chair, with eyes closed.

Something of the phrase he had just read from that great writer, whose book he had been perusing, seemed to whisper to him that it was in history and not in science that he would find the clue, though in science only would he find the weapons whereby to fight this mysterious menace of the East.

It was with an unpleasant shock of coming back to the realities of the present that he heard the telephone bell jingle.

Frowning, he rose and crossed to the desk.

"Hullo!" he called. "Yes; this is Nelson Lee. Oh, yes, Senora Rantolado! Ah! Senorita Yanguori is better. I am delighted to hear it. She wishes to see me? Yes, I shall come round at once. The other? Well, senora, I do not want you to bolster yourself up with false hopes, but, as you know, I have been working steadily in an effort to arrive at some point where I can feel equal to taking the risk of trying to cure your husband.

"Yes, I think I am prepared to make the attempt, providing you consent to the methods I should adopt. To-night? Well, I hadn't thought of doing so quite so soon, but I shall have a look at your husband, and perhaps—No. I am sorry to say I have heard nothing further from Professor Featherstone. His disappearance is an utter mystery to me. I shall do so at once. Good-bye!"

With that, Lee hung up the receiver, and stood by the desk pondering.

"So Senorita Yanguori is better, and wishes to see me," he murmured slowly. "Well, that is one piece of good news. And Senora Rantolado wishes me to try the anti-toxin on her husband. I don't know—I don't know. It is all very irregular. From the blood of the rabbit, which we injected with the ruby-coloured liquid which the Genghis would have injected into me, I have been able to make an anti-toxin, it is true, but what effect will it have upon him? That is the riddle."

With a quick motion, Lee drew out a drawer in his desk and took out a small red leather notebook. With deft fingers he turned the leaves until he came to the page he sought. Upon it had been jotted down a series of complicated-looking symbols.

"Three rabbits, inoculated with the Water of Madness, as I have named the liquid which we found in the bulb dropped by the Genghis, when he tried to inject the fluid into me.

"Three rabbits, and each animal showed the same symptoms after injection. Each animal showed distinct insanity of a severe form. Four ordinary rats, injected with the liquid, also showed a violent form of insanity.

"Sixteen white mice, injected, showed the same symptoms. Test sufficient in my opinion that the effect of the ruby-coloured liquid is to produce insanity.

"Then, I am firmly convinced that liquid injected into the veins of Senor

Rantolado by the Genghis was the same. In his case it also reveals itself in the form of violent insanity.

"Now for the tests of the anti-toxin. With the anti-toxin which I made from the blood of the first rabbit to be injected with the fluid I have inoculated the three rabbits, the four rats, and the sixteen white mice. When they were inoculated they were one and all in a condition of violent insanity. One hour after the inoculation, the white mice appeared quite normal again; one hour and eleven minutes afterwards, the rats came to a normal condition; one hour and twenty-four minutes after the inoculation the rabbits had lost every vestige of insanity.

"That was the effect with animals. What will it be with a human being? None can say. I have had the report of all the most eminent physicians of the country on Senor Rantolado, and they say nothing can be done for him—that he will always be mad. They scout my statement that his insanity was caused by anything injected into him. They one and all say it is but the complete crashing down of the brain, and that there is little hope that he will ever get normal again.

"I—I feel as certain as I stand here that his insanity was caused by nothing more nor less than an injection of this awful fluid by the Genghis—the Mystery Man of Tibet.

"Am I, therefore, after having made the tests I have with the anti-toxin—am I justified in inoculating Senor Rantolado with it? It is a difficult question. If the anti-toxin should act upon him in the same manner as it acted upon the rabbits, the rats, and the white mice, then there is a shadowy hope.

"On the other hand, if it should have a different effect, it might easily cause his death. In any case, I am taking a great risk; but—but I feel that I am justified in trying it.

"However, I shall decide to-night. And now to get long to the house in Regent's Park and see Senorita Yanquori. For two weeks I have waited impatiently to see her, for I verily believe that in her hands lies the key which will unlock the mystery of the disappearance of Professor Featherstone."

CHAPTER II.

The House in Regent's Park—Nelson Lee Finds the Key.

NELSON LEE was admitted to the house in Regent's Park by the elderly Brazilian, who acted as butler to the Rantolados. It was two weeks since Lee had seen the man, and as he glanced at his face it was with something of a shock.

The man showed every sign of being under a severe strain, and it was plain to Lee that he must be strongly attached to his afflicted master.

Scarcely had the door closed after him than the man grasped Lee's hand, and, with the tears gushing from his eyes, said in low, hurried Spanish:

"Senor—senor, is there no hope? Can you do nothing for my master? I have waited and watched for your coming, senor. No one else can help him."

Lee gently disengaged the man's hands.

"Steady, Hombre," he said quietly. "Your master is, as you say, afflicted, and you may rest assured I shall do all in my power to help him.

"Soon—very soon we shall make a definite attempt, I think, and then

only can we tell. But you must keep yourself under more control than this. Your mistress, the senora, is under even a heavier sorrow, and she must not see you this way. Now take me to her."

The man straightened up and made a strong effort to control himself, even as Lee had told him to do.

"Madre de Dios," he said softly. "It is all in the hands of Heaven."

Lee followed him along the hall to the boudoir, where he found Senora Rantolado waiting for him. When he had first met the senora her exotic South American beauty had struck him forcibly, and now he could not help but notice what a severe effect her husband's affliction had had upon her.

The warm glow was gone from the cheeks, the dark eyes were drawn and wide with suffering, the petite, rounded figure was severely clad in black—her whole appearance was most woe-begone in the extreme.

She greeted Lee with the manner of one clutching at a straw in mid-ocean; and Lee, smiling his pleasant, kindly smile, thrust her gently back into her chair.

"Well, senora," he said cheerfully, "I was indeed glad when you telephoned me. I am delighted to hear that Senorita Yanquori is better. Are you sure it is not too late for me to see her to-night?"

"Oh, no, Senor Lee!" exclaimed the senora. "She is waiting now to come to you. She has been quite prostrated ever since that awful night but to-day, quite suddenly and with no apparent reason, she grew rapidly stronger."

"She said herself it was as though some strong influence had been removed from her. She seems quite bright. And, oh, senor, will you not try——"

Lee held up his hand.

"Not that, yet," he said gently but firmly, realising that the senora was going to speak of her husband. "Not that yet, senora," he said. "I shall do all in my power, you may be sure; but we must wait for the right moment. Only this will I say. If to-night your husband seems quiet enough for me to make the attempt, I shall telephone for my assistant to bring some things round, and I shall make it. And now, may I see Senorita Yanquori? It is getting late."

He glanced at the clock as he spoke, noting as he did so that it was just half-past nine. Almost at the same moment the curtains at the end of the luxuriously furnished room parted, and a girl came in.

How can one describe that mysterious and lovely girl whom Senor Rantoldo had found in a lost and forgotten spot in South America!

Not tall, not short, she was slim, and upstanding as a supple and graceful sapling. Against the black of the gown she was wearing her throat and softly rounded cheeks gleamed white as alabaster.

A great mass of blue-black hair crowned a small, beautifully shaped head, and set beneath two heavily pencilled eyebrows was a pair of the deepest and most lustrous eyes Nelson Lee had ever seen.

They gleamed soft and alluring as hidden woodland pools. She spoke only a little Spanish, and no English at all, but when he had met her previously, Nelson Lee had brought the light of gladness to her eyes by speaking the rarely known Quicha tongue, which had been the language of the Incas—that mighty and cultured race which died off in Peru after the Spanish conquest.

To-night he greeted her again in her beloved tongue:

"It gives me happiness to see you recovered, White Lily"—the formal

way of addressing a young lady in the Quichuan tongue. "The stars have faded since you have not been there to give them light."

"The Sun God shine upon you always, Great One," she replied, her cheeks tinging with a warm glow of pleasure. "The stars are but the Sun God's glory." She held out her hand European fashion as she spoke, and as he took it Lee felt again the electric thrill pass through him, which he had felt that other night when across the table, in a little silken tent, she had held his wrists the while he gazed into the mysterious globe of crystal.

"I sent for you to-night, Great One," she went on slowly, "because to-day the weight which has been bearing me down has been lifted from me. I have sent for you, Great One, to ask you if you have heard anything of the one who sat with you that night when the light went out?"

"You mean Professor Featherstone?" asked Lee, in Spanish.

The girl bowed.

"Yes," she whispered, while a flush swept up from her throat and suffused her. "It is he whom I mean, senior."

"I have heard nothing," replied Lee slowly; "but I have not given up hope, senorita." And as he gazed upon her, Nelson Lee knew the girl's secret.

He knew that she loved Featherstone. And Featherstone? Featherstone was in the grip of the fascination of the Black Wolf. He had asked the Black Wolf—the Black Wolf was but Miss Carlile to him—to be his wife—proof indeed that he loved her.

Through his love for her it had been easy enough for the Black Wolf to lure him away.

Did the Black Wolf love him? No one could answer that. Yet this slim, flushing girl who stood by him loved Featherstone.

Lee's sympathy went out to her as he gazed upon her, and something in his look must have told the girl that he knew her secret, for her own lovely eyes dropped and she turned away in warm confusion.

Nelson Lee gave no sign of the knowledge which had just come to him. To exhibit even a hint of it would but be to confuse the girl more. Yet as he pondered upon it he knew that she was worthy of any love which a man might give her.

A breath from the past she was—a sweet, alluring breath of sweetness from a past which men thought dead. As clear of skin and pure of soul as a girl might be, yet was she of an alien time and people.

A life of seclusion in that lost monastery in the Caqueta jungle had not served to entirely eradicate her natural grace and loveliness.

Life in the great outside world to which she had come might teach her much of joy and suffering—the great outside world usually manages to do that—but it could never spoil her.

And in the next breath Lee began to wonder if he could by any chance use the girl and her love for Featherstone as weapons in his search for the professor.

Why not?

Poor mad Rantolado called her a medium. Rantolado claimed she was genuinely occult.

Whatever may be the claims of the numerous charlatans who make a living out of the credulity of the ignorant, those who have at all studied the subject will scarcely deny that there is much in clairvoyance and hypnotism that cannot be explained.

Lee himself had discovered that two weeks before. There was the vision in the crystal globe for one thing—there was also that strange seance which had followed it—both occasions having given him a knowledge he had not before possessed.

By one he had seen a long vision of the past life of the Genghes—the mystery men of the cave in Tibet. By the other he had been given to know that the present Genghis was actually in Europe.

From that moment he had been plunged into a maze of mystery which the past two weeks had by no means tended to dispel.

On the contrary. They had but deepened the mystery from every viewpoint. Sensitive to the mental processes of others, Senorita Yanquori felt something of what was going on in Lee's mind.

She had moved across close to Senora Rantolado and now was standing beside the senora's chair gazing at Lee with a dreamy expression in her eyes. Almost involuntarily, it seemed, as though prompted by a force within her, she asked softly in the Quichuan tongue which was native to her:

"What is it, Great One? You are thinking of me."

"I was wondering, White Lily, if you felt sufficiently recovered to help me?" said Lee, glancing at her steadily.

"But certainly, Great One," she answered quickly. "Have I not told thee that the weight has been removed from me—that I have been freed from the oppression which was crushing me down? Whatever the Great One demands, I will do."

Lee looked at Senora Rantolado, who was sitting in a dejected attitude.

"What do you think, senora?" he asked in Spanish. "Do you consider Senorita Yanquori well enough to use her powers in the matter? It is at best a slender hope, but we have reached an impasse, and unless something turns up, it may be too late."

The senora looked up.

"She is often like this, Senor Lee," she said quietly. "My—the senor said it was a nervous depression which would return and return while she lived in the world which borders on the mysterious."

"When the oppression leaves her she is quite normal again. She is quite recovered, and I see not why you should not use her as you think best."

"Will you come to the room where the little tent sits and talk to me?" he asked, turning back to the girl.

She made a gesture of assent, and allowing her hand to rest for a moment in silent caress on the shoulder of the senora, she came across to where Lee stood.

Lee opened the door for her and followed her through different rooms until they came to the room which Rantolado had had fitted up for the crystal gazing test two weeks before.

With what different sensations had Lee entered it then!

His mind had been tolerantly sceptical. He had come to watch that in which he had little faith. He had gone away wondering deeply.

The walls were still hung with the rich oriental silken hangings, the heavily-cushioned divans still reposed about the room, and the little silken Indian tent was in its corner just as it had been two weeks before.

In no single respect had the place been changed. Pausing by a divan, the girl turned to Lee.

"What does the Great One wish to say?" she asked.

Lee himself scarcely knew what he wished to say. Did he wish to gaze once more into that mysterious crystal globe? Did he wish another attempt to be made to bridge the gulf of the unknown?

Idly he bent down and picked up a small brightly-polished globe which lay on a small tabourette.

It was a casual act, done in the throes of thought, and little did he dream that it was to open up the lane of suggestion for which he sought.

He was endeavouring to frame some plan of conversation which might assist him towards making a decision, and to this end looked up at the girl,

when suddenly he drew a sharp breath and watched her closely. She was gazing at the polished brass globe which he held, an expression in her eyes such as he had never seen before.

Slowly, and with infinite grace, she sank down on to the divan, her eyes still glued to the globe.

And now Lee realised what it meant. The bright flash of the globe had provided the medium whereby she was being self-hypnotised!

Scarcely breathing, Lee held the brass sphere steady in his hand, watching the girl's eyes closely. There was, now that he came to think of it, little of an extraordinary nature in the fact that the girl should so easily drop under the spell of self-hypnosis.

Naturally a subject for clairvoyance—trained to that and little else from early childhood—steeped in an atmosphere of mystery and saturated with the tents of the old faith of the Incas, it was as natural for her to sink under the spell of self-hypnosis as it would have been for an English girl to succumb to the effects of a strong opiate.

Now Lee saw her eyelids flutter and drop.

Once, twice, thrice, they opened as though the girl's will were fighting to keep in the present, then for the fourth time they dropped, and this time they did not open. Tiptoeing softly, Lee laid the brass sphere down on the tabourette and knelt on the floor beside the girl.

With a gentle movement he laid a hand on each of her wrists, and gathering himself together for the effort, spoke in low gentle tones:

"If you hear me, White Lily," he said in the Quichuan tongue, "if you hear me, White Lily, take heed and listen, for he whom you love is in danger. Your mind will dwell on him, White Lily—your will must control your subconsciousness—you must think with all your mind of Richard Featherstone—the man you love."

"Do you hear me, White Lily? Do you heed me?"

As Lee's voice trailed away there fell a deep silence on the room. Then the girl gave a long sigh, and her red lips parted.

A pang of pity swept over Lee as he saw how white and drawn her face was. It was as though the unmasked countenance revealed the anxiety which her love had hidden from outside eyes.

"I hear," she said softly. "I hear, and I think—I think always of Richard Featherstone."

Another short silence during which Lee held her wrists firmly. Then came her voice again, dreamy and low, rising and falling like soft music.

"I see him," she said slowly. "I see him—he is close to me. I see a room. The walls are hung with heavy silken curtains, the colours of which are blue and orange and black."

A swift glance about him told Lee that she was describing the hangings of the very room in which they sat.

"About the room," proceeded the girl, "are low couches of strange shape and heavy with rich cushions. There, too, the colours are as the colours of the walls."

"In one corner there is a small tent—a tent of silk, the stripes of which are blue and orange and black. Inside the tent is a small table, and on the table a glass globe."

"There is a girl sitting at the table. She is waiting. Outside in the room several men enter. Among them is he of whom you speak—among them is Richard Featherstone."

"The girl in the tent looks out from between the silken flap and sees him. His eyes rest on hers for a moment. He seems not to see her, but she feels a great wave of strange feeling sweep over her as she looks upon him. Then he moves away and she sees no more."

"Now the men gather close together. One of them has torn a sheet of paper into several strips. They each draw a strip and compare them. Three of them are chosen for some purpose.

"It is to go into the tent. One after another they do so. The first and the second have gone into the tent. Each of them has read in the crystal globe on the table the vision the Fates permit him.

"Then comes the third. He is different from the other two. He is strong and of a mighty mind.

"He, too, sits down at the table and the girl takes his hands. He reads the crystal and then departs from the tent.

"Now I see another room. It is barely furnished—the walls are ugly and white, the floor bare. In it there is a long table and several chairs.

"Around this table are gathered the men who stood in the other room. At the end of the table is the girl who sat in the tent.

"They join hands and all the lights go out. There is a silence. There is a cry and letters of fire appear in the darkness.

"They are the letters: 'G-E-N-G-H-I-S'.

"The hands drop away—the room lights up—the girl faints. I see Richard Featherstone and the man who went last into the tent.

"They are walking along a street together. Richard Featherstone is talking to the other man. Now I see a house. It is a great building set in the midst of trees. It is a square house with two towers on it and many windows.

"The sun is shining, and a girl walks up and down before the house. She is very beautiful. Her eyes are dark as night. She is dressed in white, and at her waist is a bunch of small white flowers, the name of which I do not know.

"Away to the right is a strange erection, the meaning of which I do not know. It is built of stone and is like a tower. Projecting from it are four arms which move round slowly. I do not know the purpose of it.

"Now the girl is turning and going into the house. The hall into which she has gone is a vast apartment.

"Now I see a room. It is small, but furnished beautifully. Sitting in a low chair by the window is Richard Featherstone. He is reading.

"The window is heavily barred. Now the door of the room opens and the girl who is dressed in white comes in. Beside her are two swarthy men. They hold strange weapons in their hands. The girl speaks to the man in the chair and appears to be pleading with him.

"He is about to answer her, and—but now a shadow has come over all. I see it spreading and spreading in every direction.

"Now it is contracting again. It shrinks to the proportions of a man. It is a strange looking creature—small, dwarfed, and with a huge head. He is looking at me—he forbids me to gaze upon him any longer—oh, dear!

"Heavens, I fear him!"

The last words left the girl's lips in one terrified shriek, and the next moment, jerked out of her hypnotic trance, she was crying and moaning hysterically, with her head on Lee's shoulder.

CHAPTER III.

Lee Reads the Riddle of the Trance—A Terrible Struggle—Nipper's Arrival

EVEN as he eased the girl back on to the divan, Nelson Lee's mind was working desperately, trying to ferret out some meaning from the words she had uttered.

It was plain enough to him that in the first part of her hypnotic trance

she had but lived over the events which had happened there two weeks before.

But the latter part of the vision—what did it portend?

Lee could see no possible connection between it and the other. Yet if he could trust it as a true hypnotic vision—if he could put any dependance upon it, then it must be the key to something which had to do with the missing Richard Featherstone.

That part of the vision which had to do with the events which took place in that same house a fortnight before could for the time being be put aside.

He himself knew all the details.

But the other—the talk of the big house with the two towers—of the girl who was standing on the terrace in front of the house—the girl with ‘eyes black as night,’ and who wore a small bunch of white flowers at her waist?

What of her?

And what of the square tower which stood in the expansive grounds of this same house—the tower which had had ‘four arms’ projecting from it?

It was natural that Yanguori should not know the meaning of it, for she had never seen one, but to Lee’s mind at once came the explanation of it.

She was referring to a windmill. Then the room in the house with the iron bars across the window and with Richard Featherstone sitting imprisoned in it!

Could Lee connect up a definite clue from that? If he could, then it seemed that Featherstone was being held prisoner in a large country house of a type of architecture of the Tudor period.

It would be a big place, standing in its own extensive grounds, and in part of the grounds would be a windmill.

The girl on the terrace—she would easily fit the description of the Black Wolf, for Mademoiselle Miton had ‘eyes black as night,’ and she almost invariably wore a small bunch of ~~white~~ ^{white} ~~violets~~.

In Lee’s mind she had been identical with the Miss Carlile whom Featherstone had met on board the steamer after leaving Rangoon—the same girl whom he had asked to be his wife.

If Miss Carlile were the Black Wolf, then Lee saw nought but a sinister purpose in her playing on the susceptibilities of Dick Featherstone.

But what was her purpose?

If Miss Carlile were the Black Wolf, then her invitation to Featherstone two weeks before to go to the Venetia had been but a decoy.

He had been lured away and was being kept prisoner. But what was her purpose? Always Lee came back to that question, and always he recoiled baffled from it. It hardly seemed within the bounds of possibility that the Black Wolf could have any connection with the Genghis.

And even supposing the vision of the girl was true, then how little, after all, it told him.

Was this country place which she saw in England? Was it even in Europe? It was but a blind trail at best, and with the exhaustion which the girl was now exhibiting, Lee made up his mind that she must be got away entirely from all thought of such trances.

Slowly, but surely, the strain to her nervous system would undermine her physical health, and once she broke she would fade away like a plucked flower.

Yet from it all one thing obtruded, and it was this:

When Dick Featherstone could be located, then it would follow as a matter of course that the Genghis would not be far away.

No matter what the chief purpose of the Genghis might be—no matter what his menace to humanity in general—his immediate aim was to get Dick Featherstone into his clutches once more.

While these thoughts were passing through Lee's mind. Senorita Yanquori was slowly recovering, and now as she sat up Lee passed his arm round her and assisted her to her feet.

Slowly in this fashion they made their way back to the room where Senora Rantolado awaited them.

Senorita Yanquori crossed to the senora and kissed her, then she murmured a few words of excuse and left the room.

When she was gone Lee spoke gently to the senora.

"Senora Rantolado," he said, "I know it is your wish that something be done to try to overcome this unfortunate condition in which your husband is.

"I have, as you know, worked for the past two weeks on an anti-toxin for the poison which is eating at the senor's brain. I have had some successes and some failures, but at the same time I feel that the time has come for the attempt to be made.

"I would that it were possible to have the trial carried out by some man who is a specialist, but those whom we have consulted one and all declare nothing can be done.

"It is for you to say. If you assume the responsibility, then I feel that I can make the test. If I fail, the senor's condition may become much more critical."

The little woman looked up at Lee with wide eyes.

"No condition can be more unfortunate than the one in which he now is," she said with a catch in her voice. "He is filled with insanity—he is a wreck and a ruin.

"Were he sane, and did he know he would be gripped by this madness, he himself would be the first to plead that any test which offered the slightest chance should be taken.

"Therefore, Senor Lee, when I say that I assume all responsibility, I am only doing what I know he himself would desire.

"Madre de Dios, senor, make the test this night. Give me back my husband and I kiss your feet."

Lee turned to the desk without a word, and lifting down the receiver, called up his own consulting-room in Gray's Inn Road.

In a few curt sentences he told Nipper what it was he desired, urging upon the lad to lose no time.

Then he rehung the receiver and was turning to speak again to Senora Rantolado, when his lips closed suddenly again as a terrible scream broke the silence of the house.

The next moment the door was thrown wide open and Senorita Yanquori dashed into the room, her eyes wide with deadly fear, and scream after scream issuing from her throat.

Lee sprang to his feet and started towards her.

The senorita saw him not, but collapsed in a heap close to the senora's chair, and then through the door came another figure.

In a flash Lee saw that it was Rantolado.

He had got free from the room at the top of the house. Nor was that the worst of it. In some way he had managed to get hold of a long dagger which he was brandishing over his head.

His eyes were filled with a maniacal light—his lips thick and swollen were flecked with foam.

He was in a frenzy of insanity and would slash and stab indiscriminately. Senora Rantolado clutched the fear stricken girl and they cling together while Lee sprang for the madman.

Rantolado seeing him transferred his attentions from the women, and with a snarl like that of a panther he sprang for Lee.

The knife whistled down through the air straight for Lee, but the detective jumped to one side and the point but ripped his coat sleeve from shoulder to wrist. Then Lee drove his fist full into the madman's face, and as Rantolado staggered back, Lee closed with him.

Furiously they fought, Lee straining every nerve to grip the wrist of the madman's right hand, and Rantolado, striving with the super strength of the insane to plunge the knife into the heart of the man who opposed him. Silently now they fought—silently the two women watched them.

Across the room went the two who strove, carried by the impetuous rush of the madman. Lee gave and gave in order to watch his chance, and then, as they reeled against the desk he shot up his left hand and gripped Rantolado's wrist.

A wild shriek rent the air as the madman felt the pressure, and he strove to disengage himself from Lee's grip, but Lee held on, and working his right hand free, drove it with terrific force between the madman's eyes.

Rantolado's hold loosened, and before he could retrieve his momentary set-back, Lee struck again.

It hurt him to hit as he was doing—it hurt him to bruise and wound Rantolado, but there was nothing else for it.

It was a case of life and death now—not only his own life, but that of the women as well, and he could not afford to take any chances. Into the maddened brain of Rantolado there crept the knowledge that he was being beaten.

With the knowledge came the cunning of the insane, and as his wild eyes glared at Lee he suddenly relaxed.

Down, down he went with Lee's fingers gripping his wrist; down, down until he was on his knees.

Then, as he thought of resistance of the other was beaten down, Lee half bent over him in order to twist his arm behind his back and so control him.

In that same move Rantolado turned into a bunch of steel springs.

He came up with a sudden spring, driving the point of the knife upwards as he did so.

Only a lightning-like heave backwards saved Lee from being ripped open, and then, as Rantolado came for him again, he cast aside all endeavour to conquer him as he had been doing, and doubling up his fist, sent it in to the point of the other's chin with a force that was like the kick of a mule.

Rantolado rocked foolishly back and forth on his heels for a little, then collapsed in a heap on the floor, the knife rattling harshly to one side as he fell.

The next moment Lee was upon him, and this time he took no chances. He tied him up thoroughly, and lifting him, carried him to the couch. Depositing him there he turned to the women and said pantingly:

"I am very sorry, but there was no other way. Senora, if you will take the senorita and go to your room I shall look after him now.

"My assistant will be here at any moment, and as soon as he comes I shall make the test of which we spoke."

The senora, who was sobbing as though her heart would break, got to her feet, and so, with her arm round the waist of the senorita, left the room. When they had gone Lee rang the bell, and when the aged butler answered, he told him curtly that he expected Nipper, and to bring the lad to the study at once on his arrival.

Then, when the man had departed, he bent over the unconscious figure of the insane Brazilian. For a few moments he studied him in silence, and he was still bending over him when there came a knock at the door and it opened to admit Nipper.

The lad had lost no time in coming.

CHAPTER IV.

The Great Test—What Happened in a Night.

NIPPER stared in amazement at Lee.

"What it is, guv'nor?" he asked as he crossed the room.

Lee shrugged.

"Rantolado got out of his room in some way and ran amok," he replied shortly. "He got possession of a knife, and if I hadn't chanced to be here he would have slaughtered everyone in the house, I believe.

"It happened just after I 'phoned you. Did you bring everything, my lad?"

"Yes, guv'nor!" replied Nipper, as he laid a small black bag on the floor. "Are you going to try the anti-toxin on him?" And he jerked his thumb in the direction of Rantolado.

Lee nodded.

"Yes," he said. "He is better dead than this way, and the senora has assumed all responsibility.

"We know that the anti-toxin does work with animals, my lad, but of course we cannot tell what it will do with a human. But we shall try it. Success may be ours, or failure may follow.

"Now, then, get the things ready, and we will set to work. I don't know that I am not better pleased that he is unconscious. Perhaps we can finish our work before he comes round."

Experimental teamwork was too regular a thing with Lee and Nipper for either of them to make one unnecessary move in their preparations.

While Lee opened the black bag which Nipper had brought, and got out his instruments and the bottle of anti-toxin he had made from the poison-infected blood of the rabbit, Nipper pulled the unconscious man round into a good position and bared his arm.

Among the instruments in the bag was a small hypodermic syringe which Lee tested then plunged into the bottle of anti-toxin.

He drew a little of the ruby-coloured liquid into the tube, and when he had held it up to the light nodded his head in satisfaction.

Slowly now he turned towards Rantolado and took hold of his arm. For a brief moment he held the tube suspended as though uncertain whether he would make the test or not.

Lee fully realised exactly what it was he was tackling.

He knew that the layman would say he was taking a risk he should not take. He knew that the medical world would lift its brows at his action.

Yet what else was there to be done?

No one else would attempt any test to try to bring the unfortunate man from the pit of madness into which he had dropped. No other man would believe that there was any help for the unfortunate man.

Yet Lee had seen the same condition in animals. He himself had caused that condition.

From the blood of a dead rabbit he had made an anti-toxin, and in the case of the animals which he himself had sent insane with the poison, he had been able to bring back sanity.

Would it act the same with a human? Ah! There was the great puzzle. No matter what his own ideas on the matter may have been, he would not have dared to make the test without the assumption of responsibility of Senora Rantolado.

But she had assumed that responsibility, so——

Slowly Lee bent down and held the point of the needle close to the forearm

of the unconscious Rantolado. Then, with a sudden tightening of the lips, he drove the point home and pressed the plunger.

The next moment, for good or evil, the contents of the hypodermic had been precipitated into the system of the madman.

Lee dropped the arm and laid the hypodermic aside. Then he sat down on the edge of the couch and laid his fingers on Rantolado's pulse.

By his watch he saw that the pulse was very high, with an irregular movement which was a bad sign. It was too soon yet for the anti-toxin to proclaim its presence in the system, nor could Lee judge how long it might take in the case of a human.

With the rabbits, the rats and the white mice, it had taken in each instance a different period of time. It was but natural to conclude that it would take far longer with the human system, for Lee had noticed that as the size and physical resistance of the animal increased, so did the period of time necessary for the anti-toxin to act increase.

Nipper was standing by ready for anything which might develop, and so, as the minutes ticked by, those two sat watching, watching.

Ten minutes went by, and both glanced up as there came a slight sound by the door. Slowly and cautiously the handle turned, and with a stealthy movement the door swung inward.

In the aperture so formed there appeared the fear-stricken vision of the old butler. He gazed towards them, but as Lee made an imperative gesture, he withdrew his head and closed the door again.

Another ten minutes, and still the unconscious Rantolado showed no signs of returning consciousness.

It was only during the last four minutes and a half that Lee noticed any change whatsoever. It came with a slight lessening of the pulse beats. There was less jumpiness to them—less of jerkiness and more of a regular throbbing. In count, too, they had lessened, and when another seven minutes had rolled by, Lee noticed that the pulse had become almost regular. But it was not until forty full minutes had been ticked off that Rantolado gave vent to a long sigh, and, turning slightly, opened his eyes.

"Where am I?" he whispered, gazing up into Lee's eyes; and as he asked the question, Nelson Lee saw the calm light of sanity in his eyes.

The anti-toxin had worked. Rantolado had been dragged back from the pit of madness!

It was three hours later. Nelson Lee and Nipper had returned to Gray's Inn Road after their successful test on Senor Rantolado. The Brazilian, quite sane, had been put to bed, and after a mild sleeping-draught had dropped off into a deep sleep.

Senora Rantolado, with eyes full of tears of gratitude to Lee, had taken up her place beside the bed to watch through the night, and a little later Lee and Nipper had left for their own house.

They had retired almost at once, and Lee, fagged out from the strain of the evening, had slipped into a dreamless sleep.

How long he had slept he did not know. He awoke with a suddenness which was utterly foreign to him. The sleeping-chamber was in utter darkness, and the silence of the streets outside told him that it was somewhere in that hiatus of time which fills in the narrow gap between the time when London is asleep and when it wakens to the life of another day.

He sat up in bed, staring into the void of blackness which surrounded him. He knew as surely as he sat there that it was something alien to the room which had woke him.

He strove to disentangle the rustlings and rubbings which sounded on his

ear-drums, and which were caused by his own imagination from the almost imperceptible sounds which filtered into and across the room.

The large window which looked out on to the street was open part-way. The curtain had been drawn when he retired, but now, as his eyes became attuned to the gloom, he noticed that the curtain was no longer over the window.

Sitting there, scarcely breathing, he watched. A vagrant breath from the street stirred the blind, and the rustling sound swept across the room with startling distinctness.

Then suddenly, at the other side of the room, Lee heard the faintest noise. It was as though someone had touched one of the articles on the dressing-table. There was someone in the room!

Now he concentrated all his faculties on the part of the room from which the sound had come.

There was a dead silence. The hammering of the blood in his arteries no longer filled his ears with a roaring. He had his nervous system well under control now, and could easily distinguish between the sounds born in his own head and those having their genesis outside.

Another tiny tinkling sound ripped through the utter silence like a gunshot. Almost the next second the distant hoot of a taxi came from outside, and the every-day naturalness of it tended to steady Lee.

With a slow, stealthy motion, he twisted his hand behind him and felt under the pillow for his revolver. Inch by inch his fingers wormed their way along until they encountered the cold steel of the barrel.

There was a marvellous comfort in the touch of that steel. Inch by inch he drew it from beneath the pillow, until his fingers could close round the butt.

Then, with the heavy automatic held ready in his hand, he twisted his arm back in front of him and waited again.

A soft, scraping sound now reached him, and he held his breath, waiting for a repetition of it.

It came again, this time closer to the bed, and suddenly the truth dawned on Lee. Whoever was in the room was creeping across the carpet towards the bed! Slowly he stretched out his arm until the automatic was pointed at the well of blackness which marked the sweep of the open room. Somewhere in that well was the intruder!

Another tiny sound, and this time it was so close that Lee's heart jumped.

Who could it be?

Even as he asked himself the question there came over him a strong feeling of revulsion, of keen repugnance to the something which was creeping towards him. A subtle odour reached his nostrils and filled them.

For a moment he was puzzled as to what it could be. Then suddenly he recognised it; it was the odour of absinthe.

Stronger and stronger the odour became, until the air was heavy with it. Now he could hear the sound of laboured breathing, and as there came a slight tug at the bedclothes, Lee shot out his hand and touched the switch of the electric.

The next moment an avalanche of light filled the room, and Lee found himself gazing down into the eyes of a crouching man, who knelt beside his bed, one hand in the act of feeling for his body, the other holding a long-bladed knife.

With his left hand, Lee threw aside the clothes and sprang to the floor. He changed his grip on the automatic swiftly, and, clubbing it, bent over the man by the bed. The other uttered a peculiar throaty sound, slashing heavily at Lee.

The latter sprang nimbly to one side as the blade ripped into the bedclothes; then, before the would-be assassin could withdraw the blade, Lee was upon him.

Something told the detective that the present was no time for gentle methods. In the eyes of the man on the floor was a strange, wild look, which spoke of a mind in the grip of something outside itself. Straight down went the butt of the revolver, until it met the forehead of the other.

But if Lee had been quick, the other was no less agile. Even as the heavy butt of the automatic struck he turned his head to one side, and though the blood gushed from the wound, Lee knew from the sudden sliding-off of the butt that it could be little more than a surface bruise.

The next moment the assassin had jerked the blade from the bedclothes and was on his feet. Now, as he advanced upon him, Lee saw that he was a man of little more than medium height. His clothes were unkempt, his face unshaven, his moustache drooping with lack of care, and his eyes glittering like the orbs of a madman.

Heavier and ever came the fumes of the absinthe, and Lee, knowing well the effects of that potent spirit on the human system, thought the man had but wandered into the house while under the influence of the drug.

He was to find out his mistake before much time had passed!

The other was crouching now with his knife held ready for action, and Lee, seeing that his antagonist was determined to kill him if possible, lost no time in leading the offensive. He could easily have reversed his weapon and shot the man in his tracks, but that sort of thing never appealed to Nelson Lee, except as a last resort, and he had little doubt that he would be able to handle the maddened creature crouched before him.

He watched warily while the other glanced at him balefully. Then with a swift motion Lee feinted. He made as though to strike downwards with the butt of the automatic, then, even as the other made a quick motion to guard, Lee reversed his arm, and brought the weapon up sharply from beneath.

It caught the other full on the point of the chin, sending his head back with a jerk, and as he staggered back Lee struck again.

This time the butt of the heavy automatic struck full and clean between the would-be assassin's eyes, and he went down heavily. Bending swiftly, Lee jerked the knife from his fingers and threw it across the room; then he crossed to the bell by the door and pressed the button.

He was back beside the unconscious man on the floor when there came the sound of footsteps, and the door opened to admit Nipper, clad only in pyjamas.

"What is it, guv'nor?" he said, as he came in. "Oh, I say! What's up?"—This as his gaze took in the body of the man on the floor.

"This fellow got into the room in some way, my lad, and tried to assassinate me," replied Lee coolly. "Get some cold water, my lad, and let us see what condition he is in when he comes round. It seems like an absinthe case to me. Bring in some brandy also."

Nipper nodded, and sped from the room. When he returned he was clad in a dressing-gown, and carried a jug of cold water in one hand, while in the other was a glass with brandy in it. Lee took the jug of water and dashed some into the face of the unconscious man. After three dousings the other opened his eyes and spoke thickly. Lee bent close to listen, and to his surprise grasped the fact that the words were French.

"Absinthe! Absinthe! For the love of mercy, absinthe!" he was muttering.

Lee took the glass of brandy from Nipper's hand, and, placing it to the lips of the man on the floor, poured some of the raw spirit down his throat.

It caused him to cough and splutter, but as it worked its way into his blood Lee saw a look of sanity return to the other's eyes.

He looked at Lee in puzzlement.

"Monsieur," he said hesitatingly, "where am I?"

"Get up!" ordered Lee curtly.

The man obeyed at once, and with Lee holding him firmly by the arm, they went out through the dressing-room to the consulting-room.

Nipper had already turned on the lights, and the fire was not yet dead. Lee laid his automatic on the desk and sat down.

"Take that chair!" he ordered curtly in French.

The unkempt individual sank obediently into the chair Lee had indicated, and as the strong desk-light fell full on his features, Lee gave a start.

Now for the first time he recognised the man. Yet in his next words he gave no sign that he had done so.

"What have you to say for yourself before I send for the police?" he asked.

"I, monsieur?" said the other, in a tone of surprise which somehow rang true. "I, monsieur? But why should you send for the police? What have I done?"

Lee turned to Nipper.

"Go into my room, my lad, and get the knife which you will find on the floor by the window."

Nipper left the room to obey, and Lee sat in silence until he came back carrying the knife. Lee took it from him and held it up before the eyes of the man who had nearly succeeded in killing him.

"Do you recognise this knife?" he asked.

The Frenchman bent forward a little and gazed upon it with puzzled eyes.

"But, yes, monsieur," he replied, after a moment. "It is Ja—— It is a knife which I recognise."

Lee noted the slip he almost made, but paid no attention to it. It had served, however, to convince him that the suspicion which was forming in his mind was the right one.

"And, gazing at this knife, you do not know why I should send for the police?" he went on curtly.

The man shook his head.

"No, monsieur, I do not," he responded.

Lee laid the knife down and rested his elbows on the desk.

"How long have you been on this absinthe bout?" he asked suddenly.

The man flushed.

"I—I, monsieur—I will confess that I am a victim to absinthe. It is now over one year since I have touched it. But to-day—or was it yesterday?—I took a little and then some more."

"Do you know what you have been doing to-night?" queried Lee.

"No, monsieur."

"I will tell you," said Lee grimly. "Regard this knife! You crept in through the window of my bedroom and stole across the floor to where I lay sleeping. You made a slight sound which woke me, otherwise I should have been dead by now. I woke, however, and drew out this pistol from beneath my pillow. Then I turned on the lights, and saw you crouching beside my bed ready to kill me with this knife, which you held in your hand. Will you deny that?"

"But—but, monsieur, it is impossible! I assure you I did not do such a thing!"

"And I say you did!" rejoined Lee shortly. "If you have nothing more than that to say, then I shall be compelled to send for the police."

A deep fear filled the eyes of the other.

"Monsieur, listen to me, I beg of you!" he said earnestly. "I will not deny that I may have done what you say, but if I did I know nothing of it. Let me tell you, monsieur. To-day—yesterday, I drank of the absinthe, as I told you. When it is in me, monsieur, the devil grips me. I am a madman—I know not what I do. I was in a little cafe drinking alone. I remember that perfectly well. I have been in this country only a few days, monsieur, and know but few people. I have been in the country district until to-day, monsieur, and, by the saints, monsieur, I do not know how I did what you say I did."

"I came up to London to-day, monsieur, on a mission for my mistress, and was to return to-night. I—I got drinking the absinthe, and that is all I remember. It was the grotesque one who made me drink more than I should have, I think."

"I thought you said you were drinking alone!" said Lee sharply.

"That is true, monsieur—that is true!" the other hastened to reply. "I was drinking all alone. But at the next table was a grotesque one, who spoke to me, and when he discovered I came from Paris he spoke of the places I knew. It was while I spoke with him that I must have taken more than I intended. I remember that he came to my table after that. Then—then, monsieur, I remember nothing else."

"Why do you speak of this man as the grotesque one?" asked Lee.

"Because, monsieur, he was droll. Never have I seen one of his appearance before. It is a strange country, this, monsieur."

"What did he look like?" pursued Lee.

"He was a hunchback, monsieur—a dwarf such as our own Victor Hugo wrote of. He wore the clothes of this country, monsieur, but they were far too large for him. His face was yellow, and his head as smooth as the ball which is used in roulette. He was droll, monsieur, yet he spoke well."

Lee shot one quick look at Nipper, whose lips silently framed the one word "Genghis."

Lee gave a scarcely perceptible nod and turned back to his captive.

"You say you remember nothing else after that?"

"No, monsieur."

"Then how do you account for the possession of this knife?"

"That I cannot tell you, monsieur. I know the knife—yes. But how it came into my hands I do not know."

"Where did you last see it?"

"I—I—— Must I answer that, monsieur?"

"You must, unless you wish me to send for the police," responded Lee grimly.

The other wavered for a little; then, in a whisper, he said:

"It—it belongs to my brother, monsieur."

"Oh, it does! And where is your brother?"

"He—he—— Oh, monsieur, let me assure you that what I may have done while mad with the absinthe has nothing to do with my brother! Indeed, it hasn't! He is many miles from here!"

"Answer my question," said Lee sternly. "Where is your brother?"

"He is in the country, monsieur," replied the man hesitatingly.

"Do you have the same mistress?"

"Yes, monsieur." Then the man wrung his hands. "Monsieur, this will be the ruin of me. Ask no more, I beg of you! Let me go. What I did, I did while under the influence of the absinthe. I will promise you that

henceforth I shall never touch another drop! Truly, I have never done murder!"

"Then why should you select me?" asked Lee.

"That I cannot tell you, monsieur. I—I must have been passing, and seeing the open window the mad idea seized me. That is the only way in which I can explain it."

"And the knife?"

"I swear to you by all the saints, monsieur, that I do not know how it came into my possession!"

Lee pondered for a little. There was something familiar in the man's features, and at first he had felt certain that it was none other than Marcel, one of the Black Wolf's French servants. But now, as he talked with the fellow, he saw that while there was a pronounced likeness it was not Marcel. Could Marcel be the brother of whom he spoke, he wondered?

There was something decidedly fishy in the whole business. What had at first seemed like the isolated action of a madman—a man maddened from absinthe—now took on the form of something definitely aimed at himself.

The Genghis!

He felt the "grotesque one" of whom the fellow spoke could be none other than the Genghis. Which would mean that Genghis was still in England. Yet, if the fellow was telling the truth, then how had he come in possession of the knife?

Suddenly he raised his head.

"You realise, of course, what will happen if I send for the police?" he said curtly. "You will be locked up, and will be tried for attempted murder! In court you will be forced to tell how you came into possession of this knife. That will drag in this brother of whom you speak, and your mistress as well. By the way, what is the name of your mistress?"

"That, monsieur, I cannot tell," replied the other. "Do not ask me, I beg of you, monsieur! Her name I cannot tell you. Do with me as you wish—send for the police—lock me up—try me for murder, but do not ask me to drag in my mistress. I shall never be forgiven as it is."

Lee took a different line.

"I am afraid that is what I shall have to do," he said slowly. "Unless, of course, you give me a more satisfactory explanation of the matter than you have done."

The Frenchman spread out his hands.

"Monsieur," he cried, "what more can I say? I drink the absinthe—I drink until the little green devils seize upon my brain. Then I lose all knowledge of myself. It is that I must have walked and walked, and then—then, monsieur, I see the open window. The little green devils beckon me to enter. Then—then, monsieur, you found me."

"And the knife?" said Lee, with a sardonic smile.

"Ah, that—that, monsieur, I cannot explain!"

"Yet it belongs to your brother!" commented Lee drily. "What is your name?" he continued.

The other hesitated for a moment only; then he replied:

"They call me Jean, monsieur."

"Jean!" echoed Lee. "Jean what?"

"Nauresse, monsieur."

Lee grunted, and again dropped into thought. For five long minutes there was silence in the consulting-room. Then he lifted his head, and gazed straight at the man who sat regarding him with fear-laden eyes.

"Look here, my friend," said Lee slowly. "What would you do if I gave you your liberty? Supposing I permit you to go free and say nothing

to the police about your intrusion in my house this evening? What will you do?"

The man in the chair dropped suddenly to his knees, and put his hands together in supplication.

"Do," he cried—"do, monsieur! I would swear never again to drink of the absinthe! I would swear to return at once to my mistress, and work faithfully and loyally! I would burn a candle for you, monsieur, and ask a special blessing! You would be in all my prayers, monsieur!"

Lee shrugged.

"Get up!" he ordered curtly.

The wretch obeyed, and stood in an attitude of uncertainty.

"Open the door, Nipper," said Lee.

Nipper did so, and stood by it, waiting. Surely the "guv'nor" was not going to let the fellow go, he kept telling himself!

Lee did not glance in Nipper's direction, but turned to the cowering wretch before him.

"I am going to let you go," he said curtly. "There is the door open. Go! And remember what you have done this night. Remember that you are almost a murderer!"

The man gave an inarticulate cry of joy, and would have dropped to his knees again but Lee curtly waved him away, and with one backward glance the fellow passed out into the corridor. They heard his footsteps as he went along the hall, then they heard the front door open and slam.

No sooner had it done so than Lee turned to Nipper.

"Quick, for your life, my lad!" he said swiftly. "Grab some clothes—anything! After him—top speed! Keep on his trail until you track him home! And for your life do not be seen!"

Nipper gave one astonished glance at his master, then he flew for his room. Into a pair of trousers he got as quickly as possible, and over the coat of his pyjamas he put a heavy tweed coat. Socks and boots were put on with lightning speed, and over all he threw a big overcoat. Into a small bag went the rest of his clothes, with a few other articles he thought might be useful, and exactly three minutes after the departure of Jean Nauresse, Nipper was in Gray's Inn Road speeding along towards Holborn, for far down the street he could just make out a figure which he reckoned would be that of Jean Nauresse.

CHAPTER V.

Nipper on the Trail—A Startling Denouement.

NIPPER turned up the collar of his overcoat and walked as briskly as possible. He dared not run, for if his quarry heard running footsteps behind him he would at once take alarm. And when Lee said a thing, Nipper knew his master meant it. His orders were to stick to the trail and not be discovered. It was not until his quarry got into Holborn that Nipper had crept up far enough to go ahead more slowly.

There was scarcely a soul abroad at that early hour, only a few milkcarts rumbled by now and then. The early 'buses had not even started to run. It was drear and dark and chill, and the lad could not help wondering where such a one as Jean Nauresse would go.

If his word was to be believed he was a stranger in London, and the only persons he knew in England were in the country. He had come up to London for some mission of his mistress, and had fallen into a drinking bout. Everything now was closed. Where would he go? What would he do?

Nipper, thus cogitating, kept his man in sight, and followed until they came to the junction of New Oxford Street. There the quarry hesitated for a little, and Nipper saw him walk to meet a constable who was coming along New Oxford Street. There was a short colloquy, and then Nauresse proceeded along New Oxford Street at a brisk pace.

Nipper quickened his own footsteps, and as a party of early labourers turned into New Oxford Street from a side-street, he was able to walk with more impunity.

Straight along New Oxford Street until he came to Oxford Street went the quarry; then he accosted another constable, and at that moment a taxi drew in sight.

Nipper saw the constable hail it, and saw the quarry step in. Then it drove off, and setting off at a run he tore after it at top speed. Just as he came up with a constable he drew up.

"Say, officer," he said, "where did that taxi go?"

"What's that to you, my lad?" asked the constable suspiciously.

"Oh, don't waste precious time!" returned Nipper. "I want to know for an important reason—truly! Tell me, like a good fellow!"

With this he drew out a florin and slipped it across to the other.

"Well," drawled the constable, as he pocketed the coin, "I guess if you hit it for Victoria Station you will see your man. That was where he wanted to go."

"Thanks!" exclaimed Nipper, and the next instant he was off at a quick run.

Not until he had travelled almost to Oxford Circus, however, did he see another taxi, and then a delay occurred until he persuaded the man to drive him on to Victoria.

On his arrival there Nipper tossed the man half-a-crown, as per agreement, then he dashed into the station.

In the great waiting-room he gazed about anxiously for his man. There was not a sign of him. Far down on one side was a small waiting-room, and towards this Nipper sauntered. He did not pause to look in when he reached it but kept straight on, and as he passed the door his heart gave a bound, for there, dozing in a corner, was his man! He had not lost him after all!

A glance at the big clock on the wall showed him it was just a few minutes past five. He wondered if his man was going to take a train, and kept not far away from the door of the waiting-room until he should make a move.

It was almost six o'clock when that move came.

Nipper saw Nauresse emerge from the waiting-room, yawning and stretching his arms. He glanced towards the refreshment buffet, and, seeing it open, went towards it.

Nipper followed, and hung about outside until his man had put away a cup of steaming coffee and some sandwiches. Then Nauresse came out, and Nipper followed him across to the ticket window. Nauresse stopped once to question a guard, then he continued on his way.

The station was assuming an air of liveliness now. Several porters were about, and quite a few travellers were passing back and forth, preparing to leave by an early train.

Nipper kept close to his man when he saw him go towards a ticket window, and as Nauresse bent over, Nipper edged closer still. He heard him ask in broken English for a third-class ticket to Horsham, and, turning his back as Nauresse walked away, Nipper also bought a third-class ticket for the same place.

He watched his quarry while he passed the man at the barrier, then, noting

that the platform was the one on which the train for Horsham would leave, he reckoned it safe to slip along to the buffet and get some coffee for himself.

It was a pity that he did so, for while there he missed the opportunity of seeing a certain individual enter the station and pass on to the platform where the train for Horsham was already standing.

Nipper came out of the buffet quite unconscious that a man very important in the present scheme of things had just entered a first-class compartment and drawn the blind—a first-class compartment which happened to be next to the third-class compartment which Jean Nauresse was occupying.

Nipper walked along, keeping the hurrying passengers between himself and the train until he saw Nauresse. Then he jerked open the door of a third-class compartment a little farther along, and sat down close to the window, where he could keep a surveillance of the whole length of the platform.

He sat thus, watching to see if Nauresse was playing a double game, but when the train finally pulled out and his man had not left the compartment, Nipper sank back with a sigh.

"Can't do anything now until we reach Horsham," he muttered, "unless, of course, he happens to get out at some station on the way."

He had bought an early morning paper in the station, and, spreading it out, was soon engrossed in the contents, little dreaming that within a few yards of him a grim drama was soon to be played.

In the first-class compartment which was next to that occupied by Jean Nauresse sat the man whom Nipper had missed.

Even though a heavy, fur-lined coat covered him almost from top to toe, he presented a weird spectacle.

From the collar of the coat emerged a large, ponderous head on which was a tight-fitting fur cap. The face of the man was one to attract attention in any place.

It was yellow, and seamed with a thousand minute wrinkles. The eyes were large and deep-set, and extraordinarily remarkable for their utter absence of eyelashes.

Though little of the head was left uncovered by the fur cap, it could be seen that even of that small portion where the baldest of men usually carries some hair there was not a spear.

It was smooth and yellow as the egg of a Plymouth Rock. Nelson Lee would have given a good deal for a sight of that same individual at that moment, for it was the Genghis, the Mystery Man of Tibet.

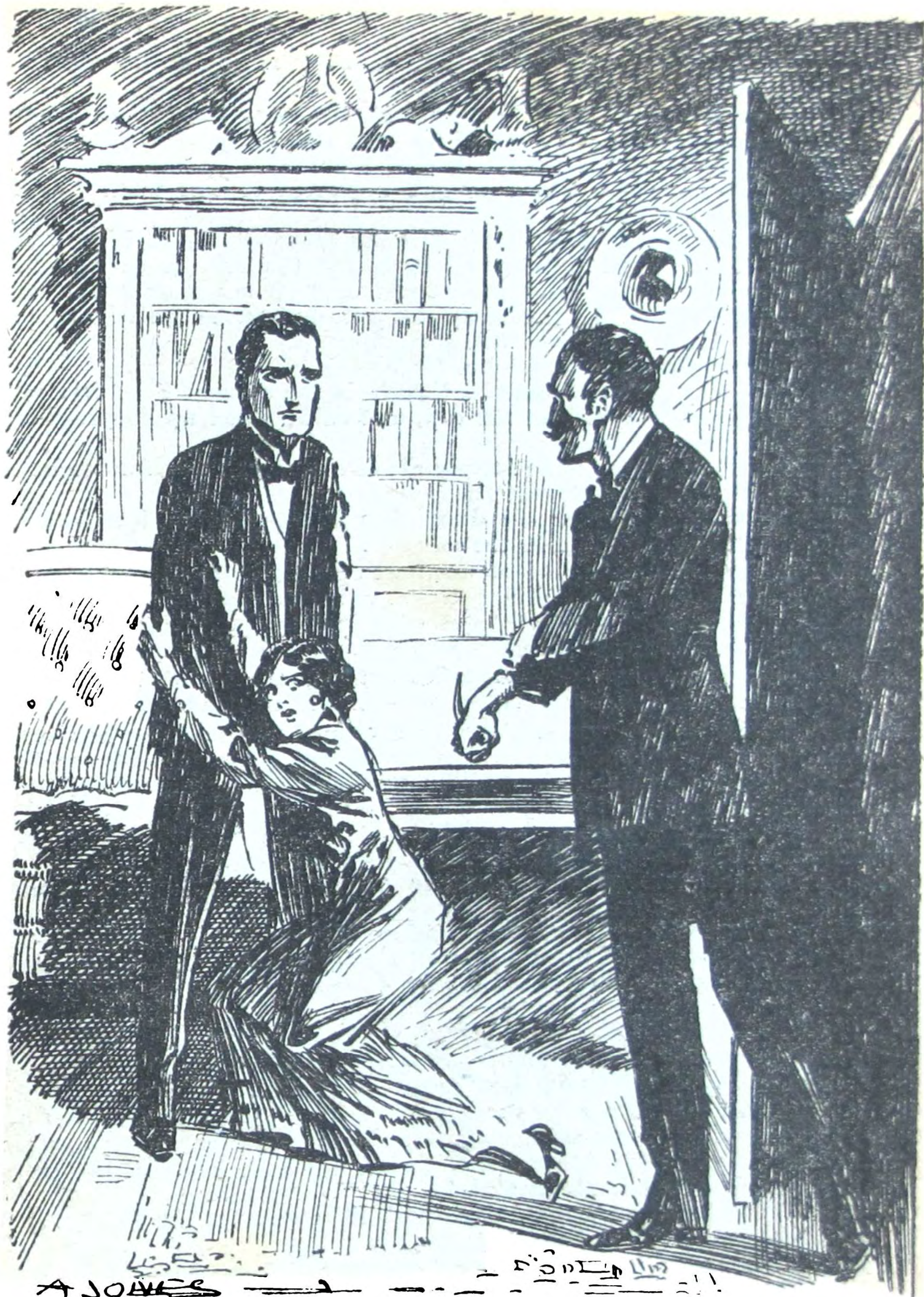
And his occupation would have been even more interesting to Nelson Lee.

On the knees of the Genghis rested a small map, which he was examining with every appearance of interest.

At first view, it would have appeared puzzling to one who did not know beforehand what it represented. But a close scrutiny of it would have revealed the fact that it was a very careful plan of part of a railway.

At one end was a large square, which was marked "L." That was intended to stand for London, and at the other corner of the paper was a smaller square marked "H."

The latter might have stood for Horsham. Here and there along the black line which represented the railway were small crosses, marked with different letters—letters which, had one consulted the railway guides for that line, one would have seen could easily stand for different stations along the line.



In a flash Lee saw that it was Rantolado. He had got free from the room at the top of the house. Nor was that the worst of it. In some way he had managed to get hold of a long dagger which he was brandishing over his head. (See page 13.)

Then in two places the line representing the railway was thickened perceptibly, and alongside was written the single word "tunnel."

It was these two thickenings of the line drawing which the Genghis was closely studying.

At that same moment, Jean Nauresse, in the next compartment, was dozing in his corner, little dreaming of the man who pored over the railway plan so close to him. Further along, Nipper was making a hurried change, putting on those garments which he had neglected to don when leaving Gray's Inn Road so hurriedly.

Station after station went by, and still the Genghis sat in his corner, studying the railway plan. Swiftly his eyes read the sign on each station as it went past, and when, after some time, he read a certain name as a small station flashed past, he folded up the plan he had been studying and thrust it in the pocket of his fur coat.

Then he moved with quick precision.

Off came his heavy fur coat, and was thrown in the corner of the carriage. He still retained the close-fitting fur cap, and as he stood up he presented a truly grotesque appearance.

The clothes which he wore hung loosely about him, seemingly far too large for the skinny limbs they encased.

The huge head, rising above the dwarfed, misshapen body, lent him an uncanny air, which chilled one to the marrow.

The unwinking intensity of the pigmentless eyes but added to his ghastly appearance, and as he stood swaying there, a weird, repulsive figure from another land, he seemed distinctly out of place in that modern railway carriage in the midst of a bustling, sane world.

He was like some gargoyle dropped from the realms of the past—a grotesque mummy masquerading in the garments of the twentieth century.

He moved across the compartment with a queer little shuffling hop until he was close to the door, then from his pocket he took a large, empty bottle.

On the bottle was the label of a well-known French firm, and on the label was the brand—"Absinthe."

Thrusting this in the outer pocket of his coat, the Genghis waited another few minutes until the train suddenly swept into a tunnel.

Then he moved with a swiftness one would not have thought him capable of.

Climbing with agility through the window of the door, he stood on the board running outside, and worked himself along to the next compartment.

Jean Nauresse, lying dozing in his corner, started up as a sharp hiss broke upon him.

He gazed, with eyes dilated with horror, at the ghastly face which peered in at him. He was sitting in the corner close to the window, and with a muttered appeal to his favourite saint began to move away.

But something compelling in those pigmentless eyes held him, and he stared with an ever-growing terror. To Jean Nauresse, it was an apparition—an apparition of the "grotesque one" with whom he had spoken at the little café in Soho when drinking absinthe.

Little did Jean Nauresse, brother of Marcel, the servant of the Black Wolf, dream that the meeting had been intentional.

Little did he guess that he had been quietly tracked down from the moment that he had left a certain house in London. To London he had come on a message for his mistress, it is true.

Therein he had not lied to Nelson Lee.

Yet Jean Nauresse did not know that the letter he delivered at a certain house in Limehouse had been intended for the very man who now leered in

the window at him, and made him wish devoutly he were back in the Quartier Latin of Paris.

Nor did he know—nor could he know that, no sooner had he delivered the letter and taken himself off, than a soft-footed Chinaman had followed him stealthily.

He had been watched and followed to Soho. His sitting down at the table in the little café had been reported by telephone, and thus passed on to the Genghis.

It had brought the Genghis himself on the scene, and then had followed the terrible act which had almost made him a murderer.

How could Jean Nauresse know that it had not been the madness of absinthe at all?

How could he know that he had been the victim of hypnotic suggestion?

How could he know that the knife belonging to his brother Marcel, the trusted servant of the Black Wolf, who had but recently got him a berth with the same mistress, and which he had brought with him to London as a means of protection in a strange city, would prove to be the weapon which would almost place him in the dock for murder?

About that knife he had lied to Nelson Lee. He had been in a deadly fear, and had lied glibly about it. In that lie he had seen his only salvation, though he was telling the truth when he disclaimed all knowledge of his act.

Jean Nauresse had been hypnotised by the Genghis even as he sat in the little café in Soho, and his acts of that night were but the suggestions put into his head by the Genghis. A very short conversation had told the Genghis all he wanted to know. It had taken him only a few minutes to discover that Jean Nauresse was a stranger in the country.

For two long weeks the Mystery Man of Tibet had worked to destroy Nelson Lee.

More he would have done had he not been even more occupied in trying to trace Professor Featherstone. Into his hand had dropped an instrument, and with his almost uncanny capacity for taking the main chance as it offered, he had seized upon Nauresse.

In the hypnotic trance, Nauresse had babbled out all he knew of the Black Wolf, which happened to be little.

He was too new a recruit in the service of the Black Wolf to know much.

Not even the Genghis knew why he had received a letter from the Black Wolf, and Jean Nauresse could tell him nothing there.

But he did tell the Genghis enough to inform that mysterious individual that the Black Wolf was no ordinary sort of person, and then had come the inspiration of the Genghis to use this easy tool in another purpose.

So it was that in the grip of hypnotic suggestion Jean Nauresse had been sent to Gray's Inn Road to murder Nelson Lee, and from the moment he had told Lee of the "grotesque one," Lee had guessed the truth.

He knew it had been no mere coincidence that Jean Nauresse had crept into his bedroom that night. He knew there was something else behind it, and the description of the "grotesque one" had given Lee the key.

That was why he had permitted Jean Nauresse to leave Gray's Inn Road as he had. And now Jean Nauresse found himself gazing into the pigmentless eyes of the Genghis. Again came that hiss, and the next moment in French the words:

"Well, fool, did you do my bidding?"

Jean Nauresse sat up.

"Monsieur, I know not what you mean," he quavered.

"Did you kill him?" snarled the Genghis. "Quick! Answer me!"

The look of terror in the eyes of Jean Nauresse deepened to horror. Some

thing which was inside him, yet alien to him, seemed to answer for him. He was surprised at the sound of his own voice.

"I did not kill him, monsieur," he answered mechanically. "He awoke and overpowered me."

"Fool!" snarled the Genghis.

The next moment, his arm had come in through the window, and on the floor dropped the empty absinthe bottle. Yet not then was the arm of the Genghis withdrawn. Instead, it kept on in its sweep until it was close to the arm of Jean Nauresse. For a single moment, something bright flashed, then Jean Nauresse stiffened as a sharp needle-point entered his arm.

A moment or so, then there came another flash, and the next moment the arm of the Genghis disappeared.

He gave one glance at the man in the corner, then he worked his way along the running board, and crept through the window into his own compartment just as the train swept once more into the light of day.

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Nipper opened the door of his compartment, and stepped out on to the platform at Horsham. His first glance was towards the compartment where he knew Jean Nauresse had been when they left London, and since Nipper had kept a sharp look-out at every station at which they had stopped on the way down, he reckoned his man was still safely there.

Scarcely had his foot touched the platform, when he heard a loud cry, and the next moment the door of the compartment in which he was interested burst open, and what he took to be a raving maniac reeled out on to the platform.

After that, things happened so quickly Nipper could scarcely keep track of them.

He saw the stationmaster and the guard rush towards Jean Nauresse, who was screaming and laughing like an insane man.

Then two other men hurried towards the scene, and with something of a shock Nipper recognised Marcel and Jacques, the two faithful henchmen of the Black Wolf.

If they were here, it meant that the Black Wolf must be somewhere near at hand. Nipper saw them rush towards Jean Nauresse and grip him by the arms, saw Marcel look at Jean with horror; then, as Jean grew violent, saw Marcel twist the insane man's arm behind his back.

But the strength of four men could not suppress the maniacal strength of Jean Nauresse, and two porters were compelled to lend their assistance before the man could be held quiet.

Edging nearer, Nipper saw another porter step into the compartment and emerge again with an empty bottle in his hand.

Nipper got still closer, until he could read the word on the label of the bottle. "Absinthe," he read: and then he remembered what had happened at Gray's Inn Road the night before.

He immediately recalled the fervent promise Jean Nauresse had made to Lee that he would never again touch another drop of absinthe, and now it appeared he was in the absinthe frenzy scarcely three hours after his promise.

Then, with a sudden quickening of his memory, Nipper remembered that Nauresse had had no opportunity to purchase absinthe since he had left Gray's Inn Road.

Nor had he had a bottle of the stuff on him.

Lee and Nipper would have discovered it when they searched his garments for weapons. Then how on earth had he become possessed of the bottle?

Nipper, deeply puzzled, was standing on the edge of the crowd that had

gathered, closely watching the proceedings, when he saw a fur-coated figure emerge from the compartment next to the one from which Jean Nauresse had burst, and his heart almost missed a beat as he recognised the Genghis, the Mystery Man of Tibet.

Nipper had only seen the Genghis once, but that had been sufficient to engrave for ever on his memory that hairless yellow face and those staring pigmentless eyes.

What on earth was the Genghis doing there?

Nipper turned his attention from the madman and watched the Genghis.

The yellow-faced man went past the crowd with a queer, shuffling hop, not deigning to cast a single glance in the direction of Jean Nauresse.

Then Nipper saw Marcel suddenly drop Jean's arm and force his way through the crowd until he had intercepted the Genghis.

Nipper saw Marcel address a few words to the Genghis, and, while the Genghis did not move his head in either affirmative or negative, his lips moved slightly. Then Marcel bowed, and, with expressive Latin gestures, pointed to the madman.

The Genghis condescended to cast a single glance in that direction, then he gave an almost imperceptible nod of the head and kept on.

Nipper hurried after until he saw Marcel assist the Genghis into a big black limousine which stood outside the station.

He wrapped a heavy fur robe about the Genghis, then he hurried back into the station and approached the crowd again.

After a lengthy confab with the station-master, during which the empty absinthe bottle was brought into evidence time and again, he was permitted to take charge of Jean, and with the assistance of Jacques and a couple of porters managed to drag him out to the car.

While they were tying the maniac's hands and feet, the station-master hurried out, and edging along as close as he dared, Nipper heard him say:

"You will have to let me have your address. If anything more comes of this affair I want to know where to find you."

Marcel hesitated for the single fraction of a second, then he replied:

"It is the place known as the Mill House, monsieur."

"Oh! I know it all right," nodded the station-master as he turned and went back into the station.

Nipper watched while the big car drove off, turning towards the Guildford Road, and then as it disappeared in a cloud of dust he made tracks for the telegraph office.

CHAPTER VI.

Nelson Lee Receives a Wire—A Few Deductions—Sixty Miles an Hour.

NELSON LEE was just sitting down to breakfast the next morning when there came a double rat-tat at the front door and a few moments later Mrs. Jones the housekeeper entered, bearing a telegram on a tray.

Lee took it and tore open the flap of the envelope, then he spread out the sheet of paper it contained.

"Lee, Gray's Inn Road, London," he read.—"Followed quarry as directed. Trail led Victoria Horsham train alighted at Horsham immediate sensation stepped out raving like maniac took six men to hold him empty abatinthe bottle discovered in compartment but prepared to swear he had no chance to purchase absinthe from time he left Gray's Inn Road

was watching proceedings when Marcel and Jacques servants of B. W. appeared and took hand then from very next compartment Genghis himself stepped out approached by Marcel entered big black motor—have number. Marcel and Jacques took charge Nauresse think Nauresse brother Jacques very much alike was tied and put in car then car drove off to place called Mill House waiting for instructions.

“Reply, King’s Head Hotel.

NIPPER.”

Nelson Lee read over the message twice, then he slowly folded it up and went on with his breakfast.

He ate mechanically, for his mind was very busy with this new turn of affairs. It meant a very great deal to him this positive proof that the Genghis was still in England, and it meant a good deal more to know that he undoubtedly had some connection with the Black Wolf.

Long ago Nelson Lee had connected the Black Wolf with the Miss Carlile whom Dick Featherstone had met on the boat from Rangoon and to whom he had proposed before they landed in England. But what the Black Wolf could have to do with the Genghis Lee could not even guess.

He knew enough of the charming and elusive Black Wolf to know that she would only be playing for big stakes.

Yet even taking that into account he could not fathom her object in the present instance.

As far as he could see there was little for the Black Wolf to gain by any sort of association with the Mystery Man of Tibet, and certainly she was not the type to allow herself to be made a tool of.

They were either playing some big game together or——

But what did this wire of Nipper’s mean?

Jean Nauresse had landed at Horsham raving like a maniac. In the compartment he had occupied was found an empty absinthe bottle. In the next compartment to him had travelled the Genghis.

Lee’s thoughts went back to the night before when he had wakened to the consciousness that there was someone in his room.

He remembered the odour of absinthe then and what had followed.

From the moment Jean Nauresse had spoken of the “grotesque one,” Nelson Lee had felt certain that the Genghis and not absinthe had been responsible for the murderous attack on him.

He knew that hypnotic command would be a comparatively simple affair to the Genghis.

Then two things leaped into his mind.

One was the fate which had overtaken Rantolado, and the other was the fact that on the railway line between London and Horsham there were two fairly long tunnels.

He regarded the presence of the Genghis in the compartment next to Jean Nauresse as more than mere coincidence.

He thought again of those tunnels, and in his mind he could see the dwarfed, misshapen body of the Genghis creeping along the running board and leaning in the window of the next compartment.

“The empty absinthe bottle is a blind,” he muttered as he rose from the table. “The man is not crazed from absinthe. He had no opportunity to buy it after leaving here.

“It was thrown in there by the Genghis, and Jean Nauresse is a victim of the red madness, even as Rantolado was a victim.

“But why—why—why? I confess I cannot understand why he should so attack Jean Nauresse, who is undoubtedly a servant of the Black Wolf, if the Genghis and the Black Wolf are on friendly terms, unless—unless it is because—ah! by Heaven, I have it.

"It is because Nauresse failed to kill me, and the Genghis would have him safe in the grip of the red madness so the Black Wolf should not know the liberties he had taken with her servant.

"In that condition Jean Nauresse cannot talk.

"By Heaven, the game grows warmer!"

"Making for the consulting-room, Lee wrote out a telegram to Nipper, which ran as follows:

"On my way to Horsham in the car find out all you can about Mill House will pick you up at the King's Head.
LEE."

Then he telephoned the garage and ordered his own big grey car to be sent round at once.

He had just rehung the receiver when the 'phone rang, and once more lifting down the receiver he spoke.

The voice of Senora Rantolado came to him over the wire. It was tearful with joy.

"Oh! Senor Lee," she said, "my husband is awake, and oh! he is quite, quite all right again. He is asking for you. The last two weeks is a complete blank to him.

"Shall I enlighten him?"

"No, I do not think that would be wise at present," replied Lee quickly. "I cannot tell you, senora, how pleased I am that the test has turned out a success. Keep him as quiet as possible and leave it to me to enlighten him.

"I must leave town this morning, but I may return to-night. If I do so I shall ring up, and then, if you wish it, come round."

"Oh, thank you with all my heart, Mr. Lee," came the voice of the senora. "You have lifted a mighty load from my heart."

Lee laughed and replied with some kindly remark, then rehung the receiver, though he could not help a little glow of satisfaction as he thought of the success of the anti-toxin.

Now he had definite proof that he could fight one weapon at least of the Genghis, and if he could but get hold of Jean Nauresse again—well, if Jean Nauresse were suffering from the red madness it might be a strong card in Lee's hand before this game was finished.

How little he dreamed then that a much stronger card was to be dealt him in the game.

Ten minutes later, with a bag thrown into the tonneau, Lee was driving through the London traffic on his way to Horsham, and if ever the grey car showed her mettle she did that morning once Lee was out of the city limits.

He took the road leading through Epsom, and when it had been left behind he found himself in the real country.

He was spinning along at about thirty miles an hour then, but now he let the car out still more, and the indicator crept up steadily from thirty to forty to forty-five, then as a long level stretch of road appeared, the needle jumped to fifty.

Thundering along with the empty tonneau rocking from side to side, Lee let her out still more, and as he turned into a long gradual drop the needle swung round to sixty miles an hour.

It was reckless driving if you will, yet he kept a wary eye for cross roads, and once as a farm cart lumbered out from a lane Lee nearly had himself and the car into the next field with the jerk he was compelled to give to escape a collision.

Still he did not relax his speed, for he knew that everything depended on how soon he could get to the Mill House.

He had little doubt now that the Black Wolf was there. He had still less doubt that there was some sort of relationship between the aims of the Black Wolf and the aims of the Genghis.

What that relationship was he could not even guess.

That it included a common interest in Professor Richard Featherstone he felt confident.

But there was where he reached an impasse.

That Jean Nauresse was but a cog in the greater machine seemed certain. The main drama centred round the Genghis and the Black Wolf, and with those two Nelson Lee must deal—those two must he outwit if he were to bring the case to a successful conclusion.

Events of the past had been sufficient to make him exceedingly wary in dealing with the Black Wolf, and recent happenings had served to show him exactly how dangerous a customer was the Genghis.

If they really were working together they would form a very dangerous team.

Not until he reached Warnham Park did Lee slow up perceptibly, and when he finally drove along narrow and congested West Street in Horsham none would have thought that the big car which panted along so slowly had just been tearing along at the rate of sixty miles an hour.

At the King's Head he pulled up, and scarcely had he done so when the door was opened and Nipper appeared. He climbed into the car beside Lee, and while his master took off his driving gloves and lit a cigarette, Nipper made his report.

"I have made inquiries about the Mill House, guv'nor," he said. "It is a large estate on the road about eight miles—on the Guildford Road. I was talking to the barmaid about it, and she was under the impression that it was vacant.

"It belongs to a Colonel Green, who is in India."

Lee nodded slightly, and scarcely moving his lips said:

"It has probably been leased recently. We shall drive out at once. On the Guildford road, you say?"

"Yes, sir."

Lee slipped on his gloves again and laid his hands on the driving wheel. A few moments later he was again threading his way through the traffic of West Street until he reached the wider road beyond. Then he let the car out once more and they swung along at a sharp pace until they passed the old Shelley place and were in the open country once more.

On the asphalted main road the car spun along smoothly, and it was about a quarter of an hour later when Nipper turned to Lee and said:

"We turn down here to the left, guv'nor."

"Why, this is the old Roam Gate," said Lee. "I know this road well."

He swung round the sharp corner as he spoke, and then, half a mile or so along, just before they came to a thick wood, Lee suddenly pulled up and gazed across a wooded park towards a solitary windmill which stood gauntly outlined against the sky.

"My heavens!" he muttered.

"What is it, guv'nor?" asked Nipper. "This is the Mill House place. Do you recognise it?"

"I do," replied Lee shortly. But he recognised it in a way in which Nipper did not understand.

Into Lee's mind had jumped the remembrance of that vision which Senorita Yanquori had had the night before.

He remembered her sing-song voice as it had spoken of a large towered house with off to one side a stone tower with wings protruding from it.

She had never seen a windmill in her life, but at the time it had occurred to Lee that what she meant was a windmill.

Now, as he caught sight of the stone tower silhouetted against the horizon, he knew that the vision of the girl had been a true hypnotic vision—he knew that further along through that wooded park he would come to a big square house with towers—a house showing signs of Tudor influence.

He knew in his heart that in the house would be the Black Wolf, and that in a room somewhere would be Dick Featherstone.

Was the Genghis there also?

Slowly Lee drove on until he came to a small lane leading off to the left. The Mill House estate was on the right. Down this lane Lee drove the car until he had covered a good quarter of a mile.

Then a small, almost choked up branching lane appeared, and Lee turned into it.

"An admirable place to leave the car," he muttered as he drew up. "Come along, my lad, we will see what this Mill House may reveal to us."

He climbed out as he spoke, followed by Nipper, and together they made their way back along the lane they had just travelled.

When they reached the road once more Lee crossed and climbed over the fence into the grounds of the Mill House.

The thickly-wooded park extended down close to the road, and by taking advantage of what cover offered they were enabled to make their way through the wood until suddenly in the distance a large square house showed up.

Lee dropped down to the ground and drew Nipper down beside him. Even as they gazed out across the noble park they saw a white-clad figure walk quickly along the terrace and enter the broad portals of the house.

Though the distance was great, something familiar in the figure told Lee that it was the Black Wolf.

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CHAPTER VII.

The Black Wolf and the Genghis—The Genghis Strikes Swiftly.

IT was the Black Wolf!

For a good two hours had there been a visitor waiting for her return. Little thinking that a certain letter which she had sent to town by the hand of Jean Nauresse would bring the recipient to Mill House so quickly she had motored early that morning to Guildford.

Scarcely had she returned when she had been informed by Jacques and Marcel of all that had happened during her absence—of the arrival of a stranger who even then was waiting at the house and of the condition in which Jean Nauresse had arrived from London.

Not for a moment did either Jacques or Marcel dream that Jean was suffering from anything but absinthe madness, and with an expression of disgust the Black Wolf curtly ordered them to bring Jean before her for judgment as soon as the madness should pass.

Then she had hurried along to the house and entered by a side entrance. In her own room she had changed quickly, and emerging again by the side entrance, had walked along the terrace to the main portals.

It was at that same moment that Lee and Nipper had seen her.

Once in the great hall of the place she was met by Andre who was acting

as butler. To his mistress he whispered that the stranger was waiting in the library and thither the Black Wolf hastened.

Now, in identifying the Black Wolf with the Miss Carlile whom Dick Featherstone had met on board the steamer out of Rangoon, Nelson Lee had been correct.

Her meeting with Featherstone had been an accident, but that young man had told her only a little of what had occurred to him in the cave in Tibet when the curiosity of the Black Wolf had been aroused.

With all the art of which she was a mistress, she had played upon the susceptibilities of Featherstone until, as is already known, he had proposed to her.

During that long voyage to England the Black Wolf had wormed out of him every detail of his five years' captivity in Tibet, and when they parted in London she was already forming plans for a campaign which included no less a personage than the Genghis himself.

Featherstone was in possession of much knowledge that interested the Black Wolf, but from what he told her she knew that in that cave in Tibet there lived a master of the chemical knowledge which she herself had scarcely dreamed of.

Of chemistry, as is ordinarily understood, the Black Wolf had a very deep knowledge. But it was the chemistry of the subconsciousness—the soul chemistry which she only vaguely suspected existed, that she was determined to probe.

A delver in the rare and complicated records of the past—a student of the deepest form of theosophy—the Black Wolf had begun to realise that in the days before the written history of man had its genesis there, was a depth of knowledge of certain things which had been lost to a more material age.

Present day peoples regarded them as merely the prattlings of charlatans, but the Black Wolf had gone deeply enough into the matter to realise that there was much—very much to be learned of the past.

Now from what the trusting Dick Featherstone had told her she knew that it had not all died out. She knew that somewhere in Tibet there still existed a descendant of an order who had carried on this strange form of chemical research for untold thousands of years.

Could she gain some of that knowledge?

Could she pit her wits against those of the living representative of that long line of fanatics?

Once in possession of even a little of that weird knowledge which had been so closely guarded during thousands of years, she would be equipped for the life she had chosen as no one ever had been equipped before.

Therefore it had come as a shock to her to learn from Dick Featherstone, at the Hotel Venetia in London, that the Mystery Man of Tibet was in England.

Swiftly had the Black Wolf acted.

Lee was again right in thinking that she had lured Featherstone away. It had been easy. A languishing look from her dark eyes, a smile of her red lips, and Featherstone had been her abject slave.

To lure him to the place she had taken in Sussex had been child's play, and once within the portals of that house Featherstone had not left them.

In him the Black Wolf realised she had the strongest card she could possibly possess to play against the Mystery Man of Tibet, and so successfully had she pitted her wits against the cleverest brains of Europe that she had no great fear at playing the cards against the Genghis.

How little she realised the calibre of her opponent.

Then had followed a cautiously-worded advertisement in the personal

columns of the London daily papers. It had brought a reply and an address to which the Black Wolf could send a letter.

Jean Nauresse—a new recruit to the service of the Black Wolf—had been chosen as the bearer of the letter, and what followed the arrival of that individual in London is already known.

Now the Genghis had arrived, and the hands must be played.

The Black Wolf knew it must be the Genghis himself, for the description of Marcel and Jacques coincided with that of Featherstone. Utterly confident in her own powers, the Black Wolf went down the hall and opened the door of the library.

The next moment she was gazing upon the Genghis—the Mystery Man of Tibet. Schooled as she was to conceal her emotions, the Black Wolf could not repress a shiver as she gazed upon the dwarfed and misshapen figure which rose as she entered.

She took in at a single swift glance the shrunken puny limbs—the great oversized head—the staring pigmentless eyes—the hairless face and skull, smooth as an egg.

The next moment she had control of herself, and was bowing formally.

“You have come to see me,” she murmured, by way of opening the conversation.

The Genghis still stood, his weird eyes full upon her face as though to read her very soul.

“I have come—to see you,” he replied in French. “I have received your letter in London. You say you have information of great value to me, and that you are prepared to negotiate regarding it.

“I already know what you have. You are holding captive Richard Featherstone, the man I seek. Am I not right?”

The Black Wolf gave a start. The opening of the duel did not augur very well. She did not dream that he knew she was holding Featherstone.

She sank gracefully into a chair, determined to apply all her art to the game.

How little she knew the utter uselessness of the charms of her sex when dealing with the emotionless man before her.

He had evolved to a degree far removed from the plane where the charms of sex might be an influence.

She laughed softly.

“I shall not admit whether you are right or wrong,” she replied. “I sent for you because I was prepared to deal with you. Let us grant that it may be possible the man Featherstone is the card I hold. You will wish to know what I can desire in return.”

“You sent for me, madam. You only can explain!” replied the Genghis curtly.

“I have heard much from the man Featherstone regarding you,” went on the Black Wolf coolly. “He has told me that you are a master of a chemistry of which we moderns do not dream. I have delved into the past more perhaps than any other of my sex—as much as any antiquarian living—and from time to time I have had a dim notion that such a chemistry did exist at one time.

“Yet there I stopped—there I was compelled to stop for lack of facilities to go further. It was then that I came upon the man Featherstone. It was from him I learned that not only did such a form of chemistry exist, but that a living exponent of it actually was on the earth.

“I would know the mysteries of that form of chemistry, sir.”

“You are asking me to teach you the mysteries of six thousand years’ research in exchange for the man Featherstone?” asked the Genghis slowly.

“That is the form my request was intended to take.”

"You are apparently not aware that by the rules of the order I serve no woman may know the secrets of which I am the only living exponent."

"I did not know that, but—all rules are made to be broken. For instance, sir, it must be against the rules for one of the novitiates to be allowed to escape after being taught as much as the man Featherstone was taught."

For the fraction of a second a terrible light blazed in the eyes of the Genghis, but the next instant the same inscrutable stare had returned to them.

"In that you are correct," he said after a moment. "It is for that reason I am in this country seeking him."

"Then will you not accept my proposal?" said the Black Wolf. "Grant me facilities for the acquisition of the secrets of which you are the keeper and I will hand over to you the man you seek."

"For what purpose do you require this knowledge?" asked the Genghis slowly.

"In order that I may apply it myself. I would rise to heights undreamed of by the men who call themselves scientists and chemists."

The Genghis made a gesture of contempt.

"Scientists and chemists," he said scornfully. "They are children playing with things they do not understand. The great discoveries of which they speak from time to time were ours thousands of years ago. We deal with a super chemistry—a chemistry which reaches the very soul of Nature herself."

"And you, a woman—one of the lower orders—wish me to give up to you the secrets which we have guarded for six thousand years. It is impossible."

"Yet if you permit the man Featherstone to go free he will be in a position to reveal many of the secrets," responded the Black Wolf coolly.

"That also is true," remarked the Genghis. "But a woman—it is unthinkable. You would spread the knowledge broadcast at once."

"Not I," rejoined the Black Wolf. "If you will take the trouble to make inquiries as to whom and what the Black Wolf is, you will soon correct your ideas on that."

"I know all there is to know about you," said the Genghis. "Think you I came here to see you without first discovering what I could about you?"

"Then you will not consider my proposal?" asked the Black Wolf.

"Would you have me let the man Featherstone go free. You may be powerful—you may have command of certain ways and means which are of the mysterious, but the fact remains you cannot spirit away a solid man."

"If this man Featherstone goes free and seeks the protection of the law of this country, you will apply many of your powers without success."

"How madly you talk!" snapped the Genghis. "I—I the Genghis could destroy every person in this country did I wish—I the Genghis could sink this puny island into the sea in a single night. But not yet is the time—not yet. It will be done as it has been written."

"And it is written that 'the white upstarts shall kill the white upstarts. Themselves shall they bring their own downfall, and when they are at each other's throats then will the Genghis show his power—then will this earth see such a terrific upheaval of nature as never has been since the days when it was a molten globe careering through the void."

"Then will the Genghis reign supreme, and then will the yellow races—the chosen of the order—rule the earth. Each and every last white upstart shall be enslaved, and with the saffron flag of the Genghis waving over the earth so will it come into a sane and chemically correct form of life."

"That is the end to which we have worked for thousands of years, and that is the secret you wish me to share with you."

"If the whites are to be swept from the earth, why then did you choose the man Featherstone as the next Genghis?" asked the Black Wolf curiously.

"There is no colour with the reigning Genghis," replied the Genghis. "The man Featherstone was chosen as the next Genghis. During his period as a novitiate he would be raised above his colour. He would be bound body and soul to the cause of the order.

"He would know no colour—he would be but the instrument of the order to carry out that which is written. He was chosen because he revealed scientific attainments such as came highest in this white-governed world."

Suddenly the Genghis rose.

"Woman," he said slowly, "you hold the man whom I seek. I will trade with you. Give him to me and I will place in your possession a knowledge which you do not dream of."

The Black Wolf rose also, her breast rising and falling a little quicker than usual.

"Do you mean that?" she asked quickly.

"I shall do as I have said," replied the Genghis, staring at her with his pigmentless eyes. "Within the next half hour you shall receive a knowledge which as yet you do not possess. I, the Genghis, say it.

"Now lead me to this man Featherstone so that I may speak with him."

The Black Wolf hesitated for the fraction of a second. She was thinking rapidly.

Did this sudden yielding of the Genghis mean that he had surrendered, or was it some trick? Still, she was surrounded by her own people, who were surely more than a sufficient protection against this wizened, misshapen creature.

What could he do alone? Her reason answered that he could do nothing, so, turning, she made for the door. She reached it just before the Genghis, and, laying her fingers on the handle, was about to turn it, when the Genghis drew a little closer to her.

Suddenly his hand went up. There was a momentary flash as the light caught something bright, and the next instant the Black Wolf felt a sharp prick in her arm.

She opened her lips to cry out, but the hand of the Genghis swept across her mouth, and the next moment she was picked up like a feather and carried across to a couch.

She fought hard, but the man who had once thrown Nelson Lee across a room had little trouble to manage the Black Wolf, and even as he laid her down on the couch a foolish, inane laugh broke from her lips.

Her eyes, which a moment ago had been keen and languid, now glittered with the light of insanity, and as the laugh broke off in a slobbering gurgle, she screamed once, twice, thrice, with the haunting and nerve-racking cry of the insane.

The Black Wolf had fallen a victim to the red madness!

So, leaving her thus, the Genghis, his face as emotionless as ever, made for the door with the queer, hopping shuffle which was characteristic of him, and reached it just as Andre, roused by the cries of his mistress, ran down the hall and laid his fingers on the handle of the door.

It was jerked open by the Genghis, and, after one glance at the laughing, screaming figure on the couch, Andre hurled himself upon the Genghis.

The Genghis thrust out his arms, caught hold of the other as he would have caught hold of a child, and, picking him up, threw him bodily across the hall. Then, shuffling past the unconscious figure, he made for the stairs. He was seeking Dick Featherstone.

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Professor Richard Featherstone sat hunched up in a low easy-chair, gazing into the dying coals of a small open fire.

The room in which he sat was neither barely nor luxuriously furnished. It was one of the plainly furnished rooms so common in large country houses, and which are to be found near the topmost and remote parts of such houses.

At times, when the house might be full of guests, it might do for one of the servants of the guests or, at a pinch, be used by a poorer relation.

It was small, furnished with an old-fashioned bedstead and high chest of drawers, with a movable mirror thereon.

The floor was carpeted with a carpet which obviously had once adorned the floor of one of the lower rooms.

The window was small, and strangely enough was crossed by several stout iron bars less than six inches apart.

In one corner was a small bookcase, containing books and an open volume lying on the floor beside Featherstone bore mute witness to the fact that he had sought solace from the shelves.

Featherstone himself was looking haggard and worn. And well he might!

Life as he had found it had been a hard task-mistress. Fresh down from 'Varsity, he had gone out to Rangoon filled with all the high ambitions and virile intentions of youth. He had been Dick Featherstone then. Swiftly, without the slightest warning, there had followed his capture by the creatures of the Mystery Man of Tibet, and after that has followed his five years' captivity in the cave in Tibet.

Those who followed the strange adventures of Featherstone when the Genghis first made his plunge into the arena of European affairs will recall the Spartan life Featherstone had been compelled to live during that five years.

They will also recall his great dash for life and his subsequent arrival in Rangoon, an aged and broken man.

When he had eluded the creatures of the Genghis, and had felt the deck of a British merchantman under his feet, he had known the first peace of spirit for over five years, and it is little wonder that he fell a victim to the soothing charms of the girl who called herself Miss Carlile.

With all the art of which she was a past mistress, "Miss Carlile" had led him on, and when the inevitable proposal had come, she had neither refused nor accepted him.

Such is the wile of a woman.

Well she knew that by keeping him on tenterhooks, so to speak, he would be much more closely bound to the dictates of her whims than if she gave him a definite answer either way.

She wanted time to think and to make some private inquiries, did the Black Wolf. Then, on the day following the evening of the tragic happenings at the house in Regent's Park, had followed her summons to Featherstone to come to her at the Hotel Venetia.

With a heart bursting with anticipation, he had gone, and it will be remembered broke a luncheon appointment with Nelson Lee to do so.

Well had it been for him had he kept that appointment instead of yielding to the lure of the siren.

Not until he had arrived at the Mill House, and had been lured into that room where he now sat, did Featherstone suspect any double-dealing; but, in the two weeks during which he had been imprisoned there, he had been enlightened in no uncertain manner.

Nor had the enlightenment come without its suffering.

Now, as he sat in a reverie before the fire, he acknowledged to himself that he never had loved "Miss Carlile"—that he never could have given the true love of his nature to such as she!

He had come from a terrible five years straight into the outside world, and fate had decreed that she should cross his path at that moment.

She was the first dainty white woman he had seen for all that time. She embodied all that seemed desirable to him. She was a past mistress in the arts of fascination.

Therefore it is indeed little wonder that Dick Featherstone succumbed to her. But now his soul had been purified as by fire.

He was his own man again, so to speak. He knew her for what she was; he had tasted of her treachery. He had filled his soul with hate where once there had been at least the germ of love.

He knew not her true purpose with him, but that it had something to do with the Genghis he had little doubt.

From the moment of his captivity, she had come to him daily, seeking for information regarding his five years in the cave in Tibet.

Her questions alone told him that she was a master of chemical knowledge, and dimly he suspected her desire to clutch at the secret knowledge of the Genghis.

His only satisfaction had been in a stubborn refusal to enlighten her.

So the days had sped, and only the day before she had left him with an enigmatical smile upon her lips. Why did he not rise and for the moment forget that she was a woman?

Why did he not fight his way from that room and so to freedom?

Because the Black Wolf never visited him that Andre or Marcel or Jacques was not just outside the door with a loaded revolver held ready for business. So it was that when he heard fingers on the handle of the door Featherstone scarcely turned his head.

It could but be "Miss Carlile" coming to make her daily visit, and to pump him once again about that terrible five years in the cave in Tibet.

He heard the key turn in the lock; he heard the door swing open. Still he did not turn his head.

Unconsciously, he was listening for the swish of her skirts as she should cross the room to him.

Then came a long pause.

She must be standing by the door looking at him, he thought. He would not turn his head; he would not look. Stubbornly he continued gazing into the fire until there came knocking at his brain an imperative order for him to turn.

He fought against it with all his strength. He told himself it was simply because she was gazing at him so intently that he felt this strong inclination to turn.

Still he fought against it, and still something urged him to obey.

He anathematised himself for being weak enough to feel the demand of a woman's mentality. He swore to himself that he would not turn. He hunched lower in his chair, and strove to concentrate his thoughts on something else.

He thought of Nelson Lee, and wondered if he was taking any steps to find him.

He thought of that fatal night at the house in Regent's Park, and his mind went on to Senorita Yanquori.

He had thought of her more than once during his captivity, and strangely enough he had always found comfort in doing so. The remembrance of her had been like a breath of spring to him.

Yet subconsciously the command for him to turn became more and more insistent, until finally his will-power broke, and slowly he twisted his head.

The next moment, as his eyes came round and took in the doorway and

what stood there, he was on his feet, with a startled cry. All his self-control dropped from him, and he whimpered like an animal that has been beaten.

He saw the Genghis with a ghastly, meaning smile upon his face.

Then it was that Dick Featherstone uttered a single loud cry and dropped prone to the floor.

Nature had mercifully come to his assistance.

CHAPTER VIII.

Nelson Lee Decides to Move—The Fight at the House—Finis.

AFTER he watched the Black Wolf disappear into the house, Nelson Lee lay flat on the ground for several minutes, watching like a hawk. Perhaps ten minutes, perhaps twelve, had gone by when he turned cautiously to Nipper and whispered:

"I think we will go ahead, my lad. We certainly will gain little lying out here, and I am most anxious to know what sort of an interview is going on between the Black Wolf and the Genghis. Besides, Professor Featherstone is a prisoner in that house, or I miss my guess, and with the Genghis there he will be in great danger. We may meet with opposition, so be ready for it. We will keep cover as long as possible, then make a run for the main doorway. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly, guv'nor. I'm ready when you are."

"Then come on, my lad!"

As he spoke, Lee began to work his way along, keeping the cover of the trees until he came to the edge of the park.

From there, the terrace in front of the house was less than thirty yards away. Lee got to his feet, and took a careful survey of his surroundings.

Just beyond the corner of the house, he could see the main stables and a smaller building, which he took to be the garage.

There wasn't a soul in sight, however; so, signing to Nipper, he stepped out into the open. He began to cross straight towards the house, and had covered perhaps ten yards of the thirty he must traverse when there sounded the report of a rifle somewhere in the direction of the stables, and the next moment a bullet whizzed past his head.

Lee ducked and, calling to Nipper, took to his heels. Three other shots followed in rapid succession, but both Lee and Nipper were running in zigzag fashion, and no hit was registered.

Just as Lee reached the terrace, and before the view of the stables was cut off, he saw two men rush out and head for the house.

In that fleeting glimpse, he recognised Jacques and Marcel. Now Lee was on the front steps, with Nipper at his heels.

Arriving at the door, he did not attempt to ring, but turned the handle, and gave a grunt of satisfaction as the door yielded. With his heavy automatic held ready for business, Lee strode into the hall, and stood gazing about him for a moment.

Suddenly, on his ears there broke the sound of insane screaming and laughing, and listening carefully, he judged it to come from down the hall.

He motioned to Nipper to follow, and half-way down drew with an exclamation of surprise. Against the wall, in a huddled position, he saw a human form. The hall was dim just there, and he could make out little more than that it was a man.

Hastening across, he turned the body over and saw the features of Andre.

A brief examination showed Lee that he was still alive, and something in

the fellow's attitude made him think of the time when the Genghis had thrown him across the consulting-room in Gray's Inn Road.

He was just rising from his examination when a door down the hall burst open, and Jacques and Marcel rushed in. They had discarded their rifles, and were holding revolvers in their hands.

As they saw Lee and Nipper, they raised their weapons and fired.

Lee and Nipper had ducked at the psychological moment, and now, with a swift motion, fired in return. As usual, both fired low, wishing to wound rather than kill, and, as a result of the rush of the other two, both shots missed.

It was but natural that Jacques and Marcel, seeing Lee bending over the unconscious body of their fellow-servant, should at once think that Lee had knocked him senseless. With a furious snarl, they made for the two men whom they thought responsible, and, before Lee and Nipper could fire again, the pair were upon them.

With a simultaneous motion, they reversed weapons and clubbed them. Lee met the downward blow of Jacques with a quick counter, and drove the butt of his weapon full to the face. It caught Jacques between the eyes and sent him staggering back.

But the fellow had a thicker skull than Lee gave him credit for.

He recovered himself almost instantly, and came for Lee with a growl like that of a wild beast.

Lee, somewhat unprepared for so furious a return, was off his guard, and Jacques, driving the butt of his weapon down with all his strength, caught Lee a glancing blow on the side of the head. The stars danced before Lee's eyes, and for a moment he thought he was going down. Then, like his antagonist, he recovered, and as Jacques came on he clinched.

Weapons were of no use now. It was a case of strength and strategy, and there Lee had the superiority. He gave a little to the twistings of his antagonist, then as Jacques sought to drive home the advantage he thought he possessed, Lee stiffened himself, bent slightly, caught Jacques with a new grip, and before the astonished fellow knew what was happening to him he was flying across the hall, to fall heavily at the foot of a suit of armour.

Lee was after him like a flash of lightning, and before he could rise had jerked the weapon from him. Reversing it until it pointed at Jacques, he ordered him curtly to get up.

Jacques obeyed sullenly, and as he held him quiescent with the revolver, Lee watched the progress of the struggle between Nipper and Marcel.

The two of them were locked together in a savage embrace. Nipper had forced his man's weapon out of his hands, and during the course of the fight had kicked it out of reach. He himself still clutched his own weapon, however, and Marcel was clinging on to the wrist of the hand which held it with all his strength, taking blow after blow in the face from Nipper's other hand.

Suddenly Nipper paused in his pummelling and his hand dropped to his side. His whole body relaxed, and he staggered as though to fall.

With a grunt of satisfaction Marcel loosened his grip, and prepared to put in the finishing blow. And then, to his intense surprise, Nipper turned into a bundle of steel springs. His body stiffened quickly, his arm came up, and before Marcel could make a move to prevent, the butt of the revolver had been brought down on top of his head with a force that resounded along the hall. He gave a single grunt and crumpled up.

Nipper, panting but triumphant, turned to see how his master was faring, and grinned cheerfully as he saw Lee smiling at him.

"That was something like," he said. "What are we going to do with them, guv'nor?"

Lee pointed towards a door beneath the great staircase.

"Open that door, my lad," he said. "I think you will find it to be a cupboard of sorts."

Nipper strode across to it and turned the key. Drawing open the door he revealed a dark cupboard half filled with tennis racquets and croquet mallets.

Lee nodded with satisfaction.

"Drag the other two in there, my lad," he ordered. "I'll make this one go last."

Nothing loth, Nipper caught Marcel by the shoulders and dragged him into the cupboard. Then he pulled and tugged at the unconscious Andre until he was lying beside his fellow-servant.

That done, Lee made a curt motion to Jacques, and with a surly mein the fellow obeyed. Then Nipper closed the door and turned the key.

"That will keep them out of mischief until we decide what to do with them," said Lee. "I——"

Suddenly he broke off, as the insane screaming and laughing further along the hall broke out again. Now they could hear that it came from behind a door at the very end of the hall, and with a sign to Nipper, Lee hastened towards it.

Laying his fingers on the handle, he turned, and the door yielded. The next moment he was gazing at a pitiful sight indeed. On the couch lay Mademoiselle Miton, laughing and crying by turns. Now and then she would scream in a frightened way, and Ninette, her French maid, who was crouching beside her trying to sooth her, had a look of desperate fear in her eyes.

Lee strode across to the maid and, in French, said:

"What is it?"

Ninette turned, and, in obedience to the command in Lee's voice, replied:

"Monsieur, I know not what has happened. My mistress came in here a little while ago to meet a visitor. I heard her screaming and ran down to her. I find her this way, and the visitor gone."

Lee swung sharply to Nipper.

"It is the Genghis," he said quickly. "He must still be in the house." Then he gripped the maid by the shoulder. "Ninette," he said sharply, "tell me in which room the prisoner is. Speak quickly, for much depends upon it—your mistress's welfare, for one thing!"

Ninette wavered for a moment; then, compelled by Lee's eyes, she made answer:

"He is on the top floor, monsieur—the fifth room along."

Without a word, Lee turned and made for the door.

"Come, my lad, we haven't a moment to lose!"

He raced along the hall at top speed, and swung round the post of the great staircase. Up the steps he went, three at a time, until he reached the floor above. Along the hall there he dashed until he came to the second flight. At the third floor he paused for a moment and gazed along the corridor which stretched before him.

Even as he did so he saw a door open, and into the corridor stepped the Genghis himself, with the body of Dick Featherstone swung across his shoulders like a sack of flour.

His staring, pigmentless eyes took in Lee at once, and for a moment he wavered. Then Lee raised his weapon and held it steady.

"Genghis," he called sternly, "drop that man! If you don't I swear I shall fire!"

The Genghis made a queer gurgling sound, then with a quick shuffle he was back in the room. Lee and Nipper raced along and crashed against the door. They burst into the room just in time to see the Genghis throw Featherstone to the floor and swing round towards them.

Lee was taking no chances. His automatic was ready for instant use, but he could not bring himself to fire upon the man as he stood there defenceless. He was about to demand the surrender when, with a quick movement, the Genghis thrust his hand into his pocket and took out something. Swiftly his hand went to his mouth, and as the tinkle of breaking glass broke on their ears, Lee and Nipper rushed him.

But they were too late. A tiny trickle of blue liquid ran down from the lips of the Genghis and dropped from his yellow chin. A moment he stood facing them, an enigmatical look in his eyes; then he dropped prone to the floor and lay still.

"He has killed himself!" gasped Nipper, as he gazed on the figure of the Genghis, which looked ever more grotesque than ever.

"And a good thing if he has!" grunted Lee, as he turned to Featherstone. "He has done enough damage as it is."

A cursory examination of Featherstone served to reveal that he had merely collapsed from overstrain. A strong dose of raw brandy soon pulled him round, and he sat up with a shudder.

A marvellous change came over him when he looked up and saw Nelson Lee bending over him. Then he gave one look at the prone figure of the Genghis.

"I wondered if you would find me," he said, in a whisper. "You came just in time." He pointed towards the Genghis. "Is—is he dead?"

"I think so," replied Lee gently. "But don't worry about him any longer. Lean on me and let me assist you downstairs."

Lee and Nipper between them got Featherstone up, and helped him out of the room and down the stairs to the ground floor. There they left him on a seat in the hall, and while Nipper left the house to get the bag Lee had left in the car, Lee quietly questioned Featherstone as to what had happened during the past two weeks.

He was still hearing the details of the story when there was a loud hoot outside, and the car drew up before the portico. A few moments later Nipper came in with the bag, and Lee, leaving the lad to look after Featherstone, made his way along to the library.

He found the maid Ninette still crouching beside the couch on which lay her mistress. The Black Wolf appeared to have dropped into a light doze, for her eyes were closed. The sound of Lee's entry, however, woke her, for as he crossed the room towards her she sat up, and her insane screams broke out afresh.

Lee laid his bag down and turned to the maid.

"Listen, Ninette!" he said earnestly. "You remember me, do you not?"

The woman bent her head.

"Yes," she answered. "You are Monsieur Lee, the enemy of my mistress."

Lee shrugged.

"Your mistress has fallen victim to a greater enemy than I have ever been," he said curtly. "The visitor whom she entertained has caused this condition in her, Ninette. She is in the grip of something which is worse than ordinary madness. Unless something is done for her she will always be this way. She will live, perhaps, a long time, but she will never know

you. There was a man in London who was visited by the same person whom your mistress received to-day. He was like this afterwards, and one evening he got loose with a knife. Ninette, I think I can help your mistress, and I am willing to try. Are you willing to trust me?"

The maid got to her feet, and gazed long and earnestly into Lee's unflinching eyes. At last she sighed, and bent her head.

"Do what you can, monsieur," she whispered; "I trust you."

Lee immediately opened the bag, and took out a phial of the anti-toxin which he had used on Rantolado. Into a hypodermic he drew a little of the liquid, and then pulled up the sleeve of the Black Wolf. It needed all his strength and that of Ninette to hold her while he made the puncture. Then he pressed the plunger home and allowed the arm to drop. Replacing the hypodermic in the bag, he took out another phial and withdrew the cork. While the maid held her mistress he poured a few drops between her lips.

"That will make her sleep at once," he said. "When she wakes she will, I hope, be sane. I am going soon, Ninette, but before I depart I am going to give you a letter to give your mistress when she wakes. Will you do so?"

"Yes, monsieur."

Lee walked across to the desk, and, sitting down, drew a sheet of paper towards him. He wrote busily for a few moments, then he addressed an envelope to Mademoiselle Miton. This is what he wrote:

"Mademoiselle,—I trust that when you wake you will have recovered your sanity. I know now that you pitted your wits against those of the Genghis. You were foolish. Yet you are not the first to fall a victim to the red madness. I have done what I could for you. I have injected a strong anti-toxin which should be the means of bringing back your sanity. Because I cannot take advantage of a helpless woman, I leave without notifying the police of your whereabouts. You have twenty-four hours in which to leave. After that the chief of police of Horsham will be notified as to who is at present in occupation of the Mill House. I trust you will not need any further explanation.—NELSON LEE.

"P.S.—Your man, Jean Nauresse, is not suffering from absinthe madness, as you think. He, too, is a victim of the red madness. Permit me to remind you that he travelled to Horsham by the same train which brought the Genghis. They were in adjoining compartments. You have seen the condition he was in—yours was the same. Ask your maid Ninette.—N.L."

He thrust the letter into an envelope and sealed it. Then he handed it to Ninette, and with a few more words left the room.

In the hall he paused beside Nipper and Featherstone, and suggested that they enter the car at once.

"But what about the Genghis, guv'nor?" asked the lad. "Will you leave his body here?"

Lee thought a moment, then said:

"Wait!"

He ran up to the top floor again and along to the room where the Genghis had been lying. Opening the door he thrust his head into the room, then started back, with a startled exclamation.

The Genghis had disappeared!

"Playing possum!" muttered Lee. "And I thought him dead."

He hastened from the room, and, in company with Nipper, searched high and low, but not a sign of the Genghis could they find. At last, in the kitchen, a frightened scullery-maid told them that a terrible-looking man had passed through the kitchen about twenty minutes before, and had hurried off across the park.

Lee shrugged, and led the way back to the hall.

"Too bad!" he said. "He certainly played one on us that time. And from what I know of that gentleman, it will be little use to search for him now."

Leaving the three prisoners in the hall cupboard to make their presence known as best they might, Lee and Nipper assisted Featherstone into the car, and a moment later they were thundering down the drive on the way back to London. Some two hours later the car drew up in front of the house in Regent's Park, where all three descended.

The moment the front door was opened by the old Spanish butler, Lee knew from the look of joy in his eyes that Rantolado's return to sanity was a permanent one, and their reception by Rantolado himself a few minutes later was sufficient to convince any man.

He was sitting in the library with the senora, and at Lee's suggestion Senorita Yanquori was sent for. She came in shyly, and Lee watched her intently when her eyes lit on Featherstone. They filled with a sudden glory, then dropped in confusion, and Lee knew that he had been right. Her whole soul had been in that look.

At his suggestion the senorita took Featherstone into the next room while he talked with Rantolado and the senora, and when he finally rose to go it had been arranged that Featherstone should remain there for the present.

Then in the car back to Gray's Inn Road, where they found a telegram awaiting them. It had just been brought.

Lee tore it open, and a smile crossed his face as he read:

"Many thanks, monsieur! I saw Jean Nauresse, and I can appreciate what you have done for me. I leave forthwith.—M.M."

"Thus endeth the second bout ~~with~~ the Mystery Man of Tibet," Lee murmured, as he tore the telegram into shreds. "Yet he still moves unrestrained. Nipper, my lad, we must bring that creature to earth, or he will do some serious damage yet!"

"Well, gov'nor, I guess the only way to bring him down is to do as you suggested before—to shoot first and ask questions afterwards."

"I fancy you are not far wrong, my lad," replied Lee, as he drew out his cigarette-case. "However, the future will tell. And for the moment let us forget him. To-night we shall dine alone at the Venetia."

THE END.

Next week another story of NELSON LEE and his great battle of wits against "THE GREEN TRIANGLE" will appear under the title of

"THE BURIED INVENTION."

Do Not Miss It.

NEIL THE WRECKER

A Thrilling Story
of Adventure in
the North Sea.

By DAVID GOODWIN.

HAL FORSYTH, the hero of our story, is one of the crew of the trawler *Bonnie Jean*. The skipper, JOE WEST, takes a great liking to the lad as does his son, BEN, whose chum Hal quickly becomes. The young seaman has a great enemy in HAGGART NEIL, the brother of "Black Jack," a notorious North Sea pirate, who, by Hal's hand has been brought to book. Neil swears revenge on the lad and the *Bonnie Jean* in general. Ben and Hal soon show their bravery by boarding a large ship whose crew is in mutiny, and rescuing the captain, who has been locked in his cabin. (Now read on.)

Haggart Neil Again.

THE captain dashed up the companion-ladder like a white streak, and Hal followed close at his heels. A dozen of the mutineers were swarming into the boats to lower them. Over all, from the heated air of the fo'c's'le, came the wails of the sick.

Crack! Crack! Crack, crack! rang the captain's pistols, and four of the cowardly crew leaped up and spun round, shrieking, to fall back upon the decks. The remainder started round in terror. The grim, savage face of the captain glowered upon them as he stood on the break of the deck, a revolver in each hand, the smoking muzzles pointed full at the crew.

With yells of terror they broke and fled in all directions. Those in the boats, with a last frenzied effort, tried to cast off the davit-tackles, and escape, but half a dozen bullets from the captain's revolver tore through the boats' floorboards, and rendered the skiffs useless.

"There, ye coal-coloured scum!" cried the skipper. "Put to sea as soon as ye please, for I've riddled your boats for you! Ah, you'll get out, will you?"

Screaming with fright the negroes scrambled out of the boats, and bolted for the forecastle, into which they dived like rabbits. In a few seconds there was scarcely a black man left upon the decks except those who were wounded.

And then a still more startling thing happened. Boats were heard bumping up against the port side of the steamer, and over her low port rails on the well-deck sprang seven or eight white men in sea boots and jerseys. Armed with stretchers and hand-spikes, they, too, chased the last of the negroes in through the forecastle doors with ferocious yells and threats. They made a tremendous noise and a great deal of show, but they were too late to be of much use.

The new-comers were brought up short by the Scots engineer, who had shot the outside bolts of the forecastle door and was leaning up against it facing the strangers, cool and unruffled, with the cigar-butt still between his teeth.

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NELSON LEE LIBRARY, March 11th, 1916.

"Where in Pollokshields did you come from?" he inquired sarcastically. "D'ye tak' this for a shillin' trip round the Nore, wi' tea an' shrimps thrown in?"

"Keep 'em in, Mac!" cried the skipper, too busy at the moment to realise the arrival of the strangers; and, reloading his pistols, he stuffed them into his hip-pockets. "We shall have no more trouble wi' that lot. Who was it let me out o' the cabin?" He turned to Hal. "You, my lad, wasn't it? Then, by gosh, you've saved the ship! An' your pal here, too! It isn't the first time I've had help from a Dogger trawler. Are those chaps mates o' yours? They've come a bit late for the fun."

Hal was staring wide-eyed at the eight men who had so suddenly appeared. The leader of them, scowling at him sideways, was Haggart Neil of all people in the world! A glance to windward showed the Vulture lying hove to not a cable's length away.

How she had managed to turn up so mysteriously was more than either of the boys could imagine. But there she was, with only one man left aboard her, and the rest had just boarded the steamer from their boats.

On the other side the Bonnie Jean was working up under the light breeze as fast as she could, and her boats were already being launched, and in a few moments were pulling towards the ship.

"Mates of ours!" cried Ben, in astonishment and disgust. "I'd sooner be shipmates with Davy Jones! That's Neil of the Vulture! Yonder's our vessel, sir—the Bonnie Jean."

"Well, friends," said the captain rather sarcastically, turning to the Vulture's crew, "what may I be owin' the pleasure o' this visit to?"

"We've saved the ship for ye, skipper, an' guid luck tae ye!" cried Haggart Neil triumphantly. "We saw ye havin' trouble wi' yon black de'ils, an' we came up quick, an' was juist in time tae settle them for ye. I'm thinkin' ye'd likely all hae had your throats cut, for niggers is poison when they gets loose wi' knives. Ye neednae look glum, captain—we'll nae charge ye ower much for salvage. I'll come below, an' have a bit of a crack wi' ye aboot it."

The cool impudence of this fairly took the breath of the two boys away. The engineer stared at the speaker, and, taking his cigar from his mouth, spat impressively over the side. The captain's eyes nearly started out of his head.

"Ye'll not charge me much for salvage!" he said, in a dazed voice. "Lush, I could ha' told you that! Ye're right! Why, ye black-faced loon, what d'ye think ye've done for me?"

"What sort o' talk is this?" exclaimed Neil, with a fine show of indignation. And his crew echoed him with a menacing growl. "Havers! Why, we've saved your ship, man!"

"D'ye take me for a child or a fule?" said the skipper contemptuously. "Why, you an' your gang only came aboard when it was all over—an' by the looks o' you ye'd tak' mighty good care not to be any earlier! Ye'll get unco fat on all the salvage ye'll get out o' me! It was these two braw laddies that was through all the thick of it, an' what reward's goin' they'll get. 'Twas this one here let me an' my pistol get out o' the cabin."

"Him!" cried Neil, with a venomous glance at Hal. "Why, cap'en, yon's t' biggest young liar an' cur i' Grimsby! He's foolin' you! Na, ye'll juist gio the reward where it's due, or me an' my mates'll know the reason why!"

The captain, turning from him in disgust, spoke to Hal.

"Who did ye say this muckle loon is, laddie? What's his name?"

"Haggart Neil, of the Vulture," put in Ben West; "an' that ought to be enough for anybody, sir, if they know Grimsby an' the Dogger fleet."

"What, Neil the Wrecker?" said the captain grimly. "Ay, I've heard o' him. Who hasn't? If cheek can make a livin' for him he should be a millionaire! Why, there's no bigger blackguard on the North Sea, an' by the face of him he's

kin to Black Jack that I know well a few years syne. Dinna fash yersel' for him—I'll deal wi' him," he added, as at that moment Joe West came forward with Angus at his side. "Is this one o' your crew, lad?"

"My father, sir—Skipper West."

"How goes it, captain?" cried Joe heartily. "You've settled the bit of a mutiny, haven't you? I wish we could ha' got up to bear a hand, but this breezo was too light for us. I hope my son an' young Hal Forsyth haven't got in your way. They're a pair of young rips, but they mean well."

"Ye may be proud of your son, skipper," said the steamer's captain warmly, grasping Joe's hand, "an' of his shipmate, too. But as for this double-faced beggar here that thinks he can bluff me into givin' him salvage-money for doin' nothin'——"

"Ah! Haggart Neil, eh?" said West quietly. "He's sworn some sort of a revenge on me and my craft because Hal and my son got his brother juggled."

"Dinna listen tao that leein' fule!" cried Haggart. "All Grimsby knows him for what he is. Come, captain, ye canna get oot of a just obligation. I'll let ye off for twenty pound. We're baith Scots——"

"The more black shame to ye, ye wreckin' swab!" said the skipper impatiently. "Tak' yourself off my steamer's deck, an' quick about it! I gie ye two minutes to be gone!"

Instead of answering him Haggart turned to Joe West, and poured out such a flow of insult and venomous language that the skipper of the Bonnie Jean flushed and strode forward.

"Just clear a space, captain," he said to the skipper of the steamer, "and I'll take on this ruffian, an' any one of his men at the same time, an' thrash them both!"

"We'll tak' ye on all taegither!" cried Haggart with an oath, calling up his men. "See, ye skinflint loon that calls himself skipper o' this ship!" he shouted to the steamer's captain. "Oot wi' that twenty pound, or we'll take it ourselves!"

By way of reply the captain made one dart forward, and, gripping Haggart

before he knew what was happening to him, slung him clear over the rail. Neil the Wrecker soused into the sea with a hollow plunge. It was a magnificent throw. Big Joe West himself could not have done it better. Ben and Hal gave a shout of applause.

The disappearance of their leader so took the other Vultures aback that for a few seconds they stood gaping. Then five or six of them grasped their handspikes; but the crew of the steamer, led by the skipper and the engineer, made one fierce rush at them, and Neil's men fled for their lives, and tumbled pell-mell into their boats that lay alongside. They scuttled off even faster than the niggers had done. Utterly crestfallen, they set out to pick up their chief, who was swimming and snorting like a porpoise close under the quarter.

(Another thrilling instalment of this grand sea yarn next week.)

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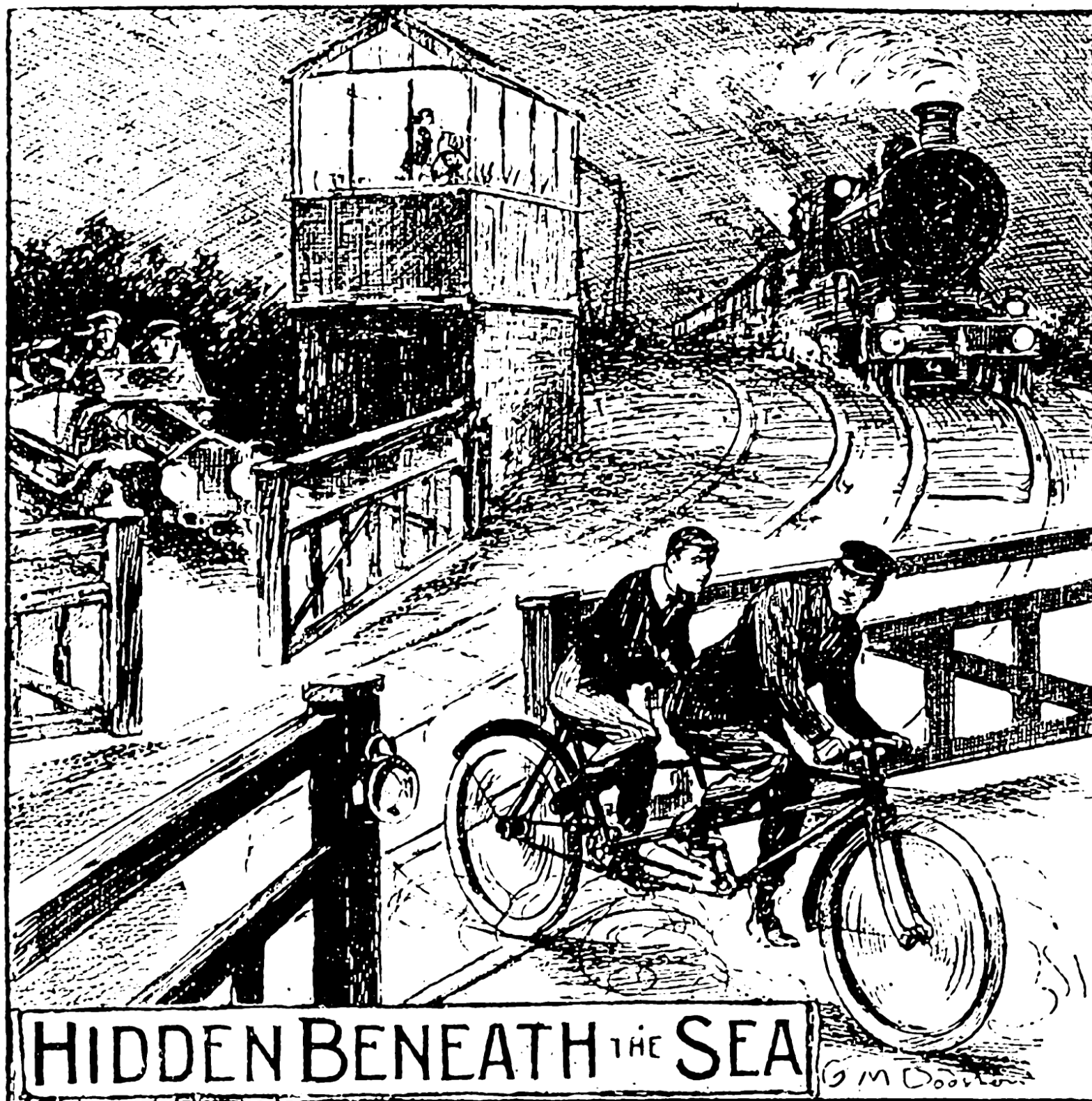
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