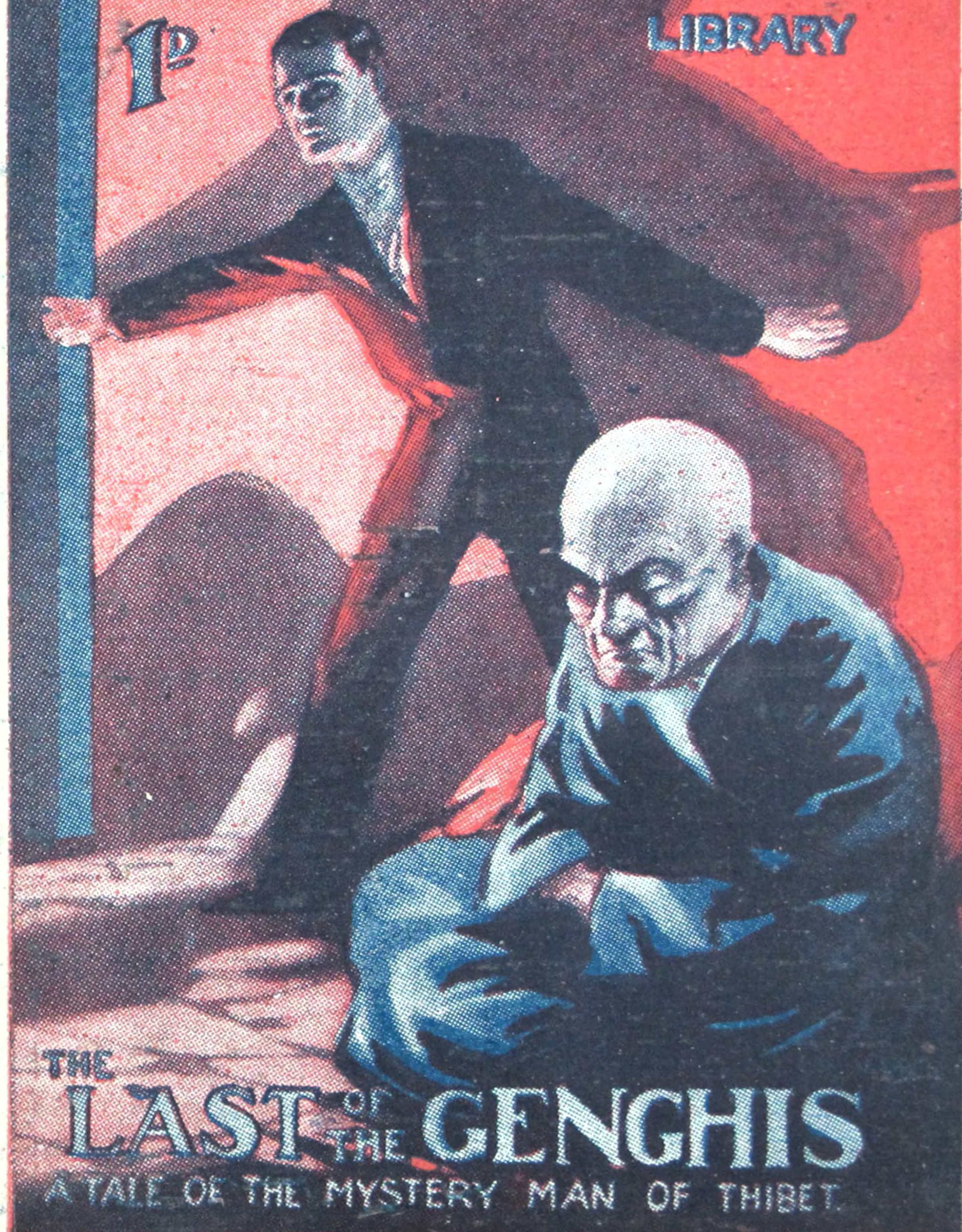


NO. 46. LONG COMPLETE DETECTIVE STORY. 1⁰. *Week ending April 22, 1916.*

NELSON LEE

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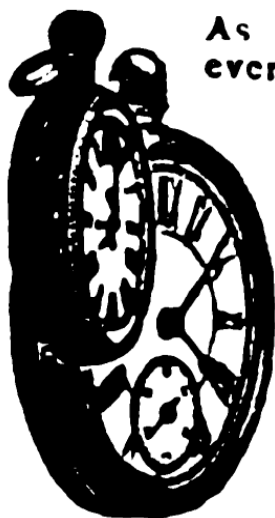


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CHAPTER I.

The Effect of Fear—Nelson Lee Listens to an Astounding Tale.

"It is impossible that you are Professor Richard Featherstone." Nelson Lee shouted out the words as he leant forward in his chair and gazed across the desk at the haggard, unkempt-looking man who sat opposite him.

"It is impossible that you are Featherstone," he repeated. "I can scarcely believe it."

"Alas! It is true enough," came the reply of the man whom Lee had addressed. "I know myself what a terrible change there is in me, Mr. Lee—a change that one would think impossible in three short months, but to me those months have been an eternity of torture—of daily dread and nightly agony. I have stood it as long as I can. If I find no relief I shall go mad."

As the other talked, Lee studied him closely. That it was really Professor Richard Featherstone, whom he had met during his first brush with the Genghis, the Mystery Man of Tibet, there could be no doubt. Yet what a different Featherstone it was, and as he gazed upon him, Nelson Lee knew that only some great soul torture could so change a man as he had been changed.

He had met Featherstone three months before. Even then the professor appeared much older than he really was, due to the fact that he had lain a prisoner for five long years in the cave of the Genghis in Tibet.

During an exploring expedition of the forbidden land of Tibet, he had been captured by the emissaries of the Mystery Man, and for five years he had lain in a rock cave, chained as an animal, and forced to listen to the strange teachings of the Genghis—the supreme representative of a mysterious body of Eastern scientists, who had occupied the cave in Tibet for untold thousands of years, and to whom even the Grand Llama himself was subservient.

But at the end of five years, Dick Featherstone—he had been plain 'Dick' then—had managed to escape, and on two occasions since then had

almost fallen again into the clutches of the Genghis, who had followed him to Europe.

Nelson Lee had been mixed up in both affairs, nor could it be said that Lee had come off with very much advantage. Yet he had managed to preserve the life of Featherstone, and for the time being, outwit the Genghis. During those three months he had heard nothing more of the Mystery Man nor, in fact, of Featherstone.

It had caused him to wonder a little that the professor did not communicate with him occasionally, at least. But then, he remembered that Featherstone had gone to stay with Senor Rantolado, the Brazilian who had been one of the victims of the Genghis, and as the beautiful Senorita Yanguori was also an inmate of the Brazilian household, it was not so strange after all.

Nelson Lee had seen in one vivid flash the love this strange and lovely girl had for Featherstone, and he had no doubt that after his unfortunate experience at the hands of the Black Wolf, Featherstone would find it indeed easy to appreciate the unspoiled charm of the senorita.

So, in the rush of business, he had practically dismissed the whole affair from his mind, but now it was suddenly brought up again by the dramatic appearance in the consulting-room at Gray's Inn Road, of Featherstone, looking fully ten years older than he had three months ago—haggard of eye and white of hair, with a furtive air about him which did not sit well on any healthy Britisher.

It was just after dinner. Lee and Nipper had dined quietly at Gray's Inn Road, and were at work on some notes for the "Case Index," when Featherstone had come in. He had not paused to remove the heavy travelling coat he wore, and from the mud splashes upon it, as well as upon the soft hat he held in his hand, Lee surmised he had travelled far and hard.

Not until Featherstone had spoken his own name did Lee recognise him, though, of course, he would have done so in a moment or so, and his exclamation of disbelief was more that of one utterly amazed than of one who really had not yielded recognition.

As he gazed upon his visitor, Lee could well believe that the past three months had been a period of terrible strain. It must have been, to work such a radical change in the man as had been worked.

Instinctively, Lee knew that the Mystery Man of Tibet was at the bottom of it, but once before he had asked for Featherstone's confidence, and the other had not given freely of it. Now Lee would ask nothing. If the other sought his aid—well, he must do the talking. It was with this in mind that he said:

"I can quite believe that you have suffered a good deal during the past three months, professor. Your appearance does not belie your statement. But why have you come to see me?"

The other made a helpless gesture.

"Because, if any man living can help me you are that man. If you cannot do so, then, indeed, I am doomed."

"Come, professor, calm yourself," said Lee quietly. "You remember three months ago I did all in my power to help you, and because I did not do more was because you would not be frank with me. The fear you felt for the Genghis seemed to lock your tongue. After all, he is but flesh and blood as other men. You, as an educated man, should not permit yourself to get into this state."

"But you do not understand, Lee!" exclaimed the other. "He—he —"

Lee held up his hand.

"Let me say something, professor," he said curtly. "You say you have come here to-night to seek my aid. You did that once before. I gave freely and asked no questions. But this time I must tell you before you speak, that unless you feel inclined to tell me everything—and when I say everything I mean everything with a capital 'E'—then your visit is only a waste of time. I refuse to touch the matter on any other terms."

Featherstone was silent for a minute, then he lifted haggard eyes to Lee's.

"It was because I felt I had no right to drag any other man into danger," he whispered hoarsely. "It was because I dared not—dared not, I tell you, permit any other man to run the danger I was running, and am running."

"Heaven help me, it was because I tried to carry this burden and keep others from feeling the shock of the doom which awaits me, that I kept silent on some things. You I told more than any other, but it is true that I did not tell you all."

"For the last three months I have lived the life of a man threatened with a terrible fate, and have been unable to raise a hand to gain a single moment's surcease. It has been a living death, and now as the date draws near——"

"As the date draws near!" echoed Lee sharply. "What do you mean?"

"How can I tell you!" cried the other. "If I do so, then you, too, will be an object of the hatred of the Genghis."

"I fancy I can shoulder any responsibility in that direction," responded Lee coolly, as he lit a cigarette. "See here, Featherstone, pull yourself together. You came to see me to-night because you are at the breaking-point. You speak of some date drawing near. I judge from your demeanour that, as that mysterious date draws nearer, your self-control is being worn to shreds."

"Under terrific stress you have done what you should have done three months ago. You have come here to-night, hoping you would have the courage to make a clean breast of things to me, and now you whimper there like a kicked dog. That is not quite—er—British, Featherstone."

"After all, man must meet his end when his time comes, and it is not going to help matters to get in such a state over it. If it will help you to decide what to do, I may tell you categorically, that I do not care two straws for this Mystery Man of Tibet. He is one of the most dangerous men living, I grant you that. But he is flesh and blood, and if you are in danger from him, why, man, call up your native courage and meet the danger like a man and a Britisher."

As Lee talked on quietly, the professor gradually grew calmer, and when the criminologist's voice finally tailed off, Featherstone passed his hand wearily across his brow.

"If—if I drag you into the doom that threatens me," he said, "I shall never forgive myself. It isn't that I fear death. I have faced it more than once and I did not flinch. I have tested my own courage, and I know that I am no coward. But it is the uncertainty—the constant anticipation that has caused this havoc in me."

"But I will tell you all. If it brings down upon you the fate that threatens me, then forgive me. Yet I have reached the stage where I can stand the strain no longer, and if you cannot help me, then I am lost."

"Listen! I will go back to the time when I lay enchained a prisoner in the cave of Tibet, for it is there this whole ghastly business has its genesis. You remember something of that tale, Lee. Three months ago I told you a little, and I shall not bore you by the repetition of it. But there was much I did not tell you, and to-night I shall do so."

"But let me solemnly warn you that once you are in possession of the truth, your danger will be the same as mine. Though he is not here, the Genghis will know I have told you, and within his net of menace you too will be drawn."

Lee nodded.

"Get on with the story, professor. I met your Mystery Man twice, and while I am free to confess that he is a desperate and dangerous man, I do not fear him."

"So be it," murmured Featherstone. "You will recall how, when I came down from Oxford—I had taken General Science—I went out to Rangoon where my father was a practising physician. You know, too, that it was our idea to devote ourselves to research among some of the chemical sciences of the East, as well as to define more strictly the ethnological sequence of the races stretching from the Persian Gulf to Siberia.

"Then you will recall how, before we settled down to work, it was decided that I should go north, following the course of the Irawadi as far as possible, and endeavour to discover its source. It was while on that trip I was captured by the emissaries of the Genghis. Then I was as ignorant as you are as to the true reason for my being taken captive.

"Naturally my first thought was that I was being held for ransom, but I had not long been a prisoner in the caves of the Genghis before I discovered the true motive. It had nothing to do with ransom. How little the wealth of the world as is understood by us of the West, appeals to the Genghis! It was for a far more terrible purpose.

"You know that for thousands of years a sort of religious brotherhood or priesthood has occupied the caves where I was a prisoner. As far as I could make out, they had devoted themselves to chemistry during those thousands of years, but not organic or inorganic chemistry, as we of the West understand it. No! But a chemistry which is far above ours in subtle understanding of the laws of Nature, as the Milky Way is above the little system in which we revolve. It was the chemistry of the sub-conscious."

Lee lit a fresh cigarette.

"I guess a little of what you mean," he said. "But pray go on. You interest me immensely."

Featherstone proceeded.

"Why I was picked to be the next Genghis I cannot tell you to this day. The present Genghis of course followed the scientific work of every country in the world, and from one or two remarks he let drop, I gathered that he had chosen me on account of one or two branches of research I had opened up at Oxford.

"I had touched the borderland of the chemistry of sub-consciousness, so to speak. The fact that I was British and not of the East, seemed not to matter at all to him. He felt a supreme confidence that, during the period of my novitiate, I should become so much the creature of the laws of the Genghes, that all sense of individual race would drop from me. And I think in time that would have happened.

"My food during those five years was a small, compressed tabloid three times a day, with a glass of water. It seems strange to think that the human body could be satisfied by such a diet; but I can honestly say that during the whole five years my body craved no single substance in the shape of food. Then I was mad to study. At first it was a strange tongue in which I was drilled—a tongue that has come down from the unwritten past, and is the sacred tongue of the Genghes.

"It took me six months of terrible study to master the tongue sufficiently to speak it; and then I was introduced to the first of a series of great tomes, dealing with the science of the Genghes. I was not averse to this study,

for, while always on the watch for a chance to escape, the occupation of mind kept me from going mad.

"It was then I discovered that the cult of the Genghis was not unlike that of some of the higher Buddhists—that is say, over six thousand years ago they aimed at the lengthening of human life. This first tome spoke of the great ages to which the ancient races of the world had reached, and quoted instances which showed a greater number of years even than some of the patriarchs of the Old Testament.

"For instance, Methusaleh and Noah, and a few more of the earlier Biblical characters, reached ages getting close on for a thousand. Well, this first tome spoke of a man who had lived in a cave in Turkestan before the Deluge—the tome referred to a Deluge similar to our Biblical Flood—for over twelve hundred years. Yet, after the great upheaval of the world in those far-off days, the ages of man became less and less, until they averaged three score and ten.

"The Genghes realised that if they would achieve what they set out to do, they must so study the chemistry of the human body as related to the chemistry of nature, that they could cause an increase in this length of time allotted to man. So they set to work.

"The Buddhists, and the Llamaists Mystics, also studied the same things, and when I tell you that by the time Cleopatra was ruling over Egypt, the Genghes had raised the possibility of life to over three hundred years, I am only telling you what I believe to be fact.

"But by the Middle Ages, there were devotees of the priesthood living who had written in the tomes of the order over eight hundred years before, and whose handwriting was still to be seen up to nearly seventeen hundred, when the last one 'passed on.'

"The present Genghis, in speaking of his own work in the cave, speaks of a period of forty years, during which he has toiled there. But in using those words he does not mean what we mean by forty years. In the language of the Genghes, a 'year' means a period of time equal to ten years as we count them, and that means he has been there for four hundred years—and, Lee, I believe it.

"That was the first thing I learned. How pitifully little I discovered, after all. I was but a babe as I pored over those great tomes.

"The next thing I discovered was that they had set themselves, thousands of years ago, to the creation of elements, such as pure gold, silver, lead, copper, and all the rest of them. And in this they succeeded. I could tell you something about that, but for another time.

"Next I dimly saw that they were following up a well-defined search to fully understand and master the electrons of the human body. When I speak of the electrons of the human body, I do so in a physical way. What did we believe until very recently? We believed that the atom was the smallest form of matter. Then some of our Western scientists made a conjecture that the atom which is too small even to be picked up by the most powerful microscope, was composed of even smaller particles, so called electrons

"They formed a theory that these electrons were infinitesimal bodies charged with negative electrical force revolving round a central particle charged positively, much as the planets revolve round the sun. Imagine a revolving world like that, too small for any instrument to show it.

"But the Genghes went ever farther than this four thousand years ago. They discovered that all matter is divided into atoms—that all atoms are divided into electrons—that there are negative electrons revolving round a central positive electron, that this revolution is governed by certain

definite radio-active laws, and that the electrons are in reality a perfect fluid—not fluid as we understand from water, which is a heavy, thick fluid, but a fluid so thin, so tenuous, and yet so elastic, that all basic matter is just that.

“Compressed under certain actions of Nature, it would form the different solids we know—earth and stones and metals and bases. Then could it be divided? That was the great problem they set themselves to solve; and they solved it. They discovered that it could be. They discovered the law of Nature which made it possible, and that is where the chemistry of the subconsciousness came in, for they found that these invisible electrons, of which all matter was composed, were controlled by a certain phase of subconscious attitude. In other words, a certain mental condition would control them.

“Do you think that the Genghes reached this goal easily? No. It took over two thousand years of constant study and research to achieve that knowledge.”

Lee lit a fresh cigarette. He was keenly interested in what the professor was saying, and as a scientist himself he knew that there was a very great deal in what he was saying.

As Featherstone talked, and his scientific ego got engrossed in his subject, the look of terror passed from his eyes, and for the time being he was the pure scientist, wrapped up in his subject. He, too, lit a cigarette and took a few puffs, then he resumed.

“In that cave I discovered the things I have just told you, Lee. I did not study sufficiently to know how the Genghis made the red liquid, which, when injected into the human system, causes insanity. But that is comparatively simple to him. But one other big thing I discovered—though, mind you, the whole propaganda of the priesthood is a colossal thing, and even I cannot even guess at its true magnitude—is this:

“Hundreds of years ago they discovered scientific means of harnessing the rays of the sun, and of concentrating them on any given point with such force that the concentrated heat would melt the hardest metal like snow. How was it done? I can't tell you; but this I know, that the Genghis had a small metal globe about the size of an ordinary football. On this every country and sea of the globe was marked with minute detail. That globe, Lee, was spoken of in tomes written when the Trojans thought the world consisted only of the land about the Mediterranean, and that beyond that there was nothing.

“How did they do it? They had the world explored and charted before the Romans were a race, and they didn't go over the seas in ships, fight through tropic jungles as the Spaniards, or trudge to the poles over icy wastes as did the explorers we know of. They visited every portion of the world in spirit—their astral bodies explored the world.

“Attached to this metal globe was a small instrument controlling a tiny needle. The globe in turn was connected with a peculiar metal machine, fixed against the wall of the cave. If this machine were started, and the needle touched to any particular spot on the metal globe, the rays of the sun were immediately harnessed and directed to the great solid world, as we know it, at a spot exactly coinciding with the spot touched by the needle on the metal globe.

“What followed? There followed a terrific upheaval. If that spot happened to bear a volcano, then there was a violent eruption, devastating miles of the surrounding country. If the spot was on the sea, then on the sea there arose a terrific hurricane, superinduced by the fury of the concentrated sun-rays.

“Don't you see what a terrible weapon this is for any being to have?

THE LAST OF THE GENGHIS

It gives him a superhuman power, and places in his hands an instrument of destruction such as was never known. But it has to be used with great care. A terrible upheaval on one side of the globe often reacts on other parts, and, therefore, the Genghes themselves ran the risk of causing a reactionary upheaval in the Himalayas.

"But always they have watched the growth of nations; they have seen nation after nation born, and have life, and die. They have watched it all unmoved until—until, Lee, the British nation rose in its might, and to heights undreamed of. In that they saw a menace to their own plans. In the past, when any nations threatened their own supremacy, they caused their own conquerors to go out and spread havoc and destruction among the races they termed upstarts.

"Remember how Atilla, the Hun, spread destruction across Europe centuries ago. Recall the terrible ravages of Kublai Khan and Genghis Khan—the latter one of the Genghes himself. And now I tell you that the hour approaches when they meditate destruction of the great British nation.

"How? That I cannot tell; but it will be by the use of everything in their power. You may ask where they can get a leader to do their bidding. Lee, listen!"

As his voice trailed off, Featherstone bent over the desk, and when he spoke again, he whispered:

"Lee, listen! Have you ever traced back the real descent of the German Kaiser?"

Lee nodded slightly.

"I know that he is a Prussian, and that the Prussian tribe of Germany is descended from some of the old barbarian races of Northern Europe."

"That is true; but it does not tell all," responded the professor quickly. "Lee, the German Kaiser is a direct descendant of the Hun Attila who swept across Europe at the behest of the Genghes centuries ago, and as sure as I sit in this chair, it is true that he will be the next instrument of the Genghis for spreading death and destruction abroad."

(NOTE.—It must be remembered that Lee's notes, from which these records dealing with the Genghis were taken, were written before the outbreak of the present Great War, and are, therefore, doubly valuable on that account.)

"Through him the Genghis has built up the German nation to what it is to-day, and through him he is determined to crush the British nation out of existence. Once he had done that, he knows that all other nations will soon wither. He came to Europe to find me, and drag me back to the cave in Tibet.

"That brought him to London, but since he has been here, and since I have 'contaminated' myself by mixing with my fellows, thus undoing all the subconscious chemical work he had accomplished in five years, he has abandoned that idea, and now only seeks to kill me. He has even set a date, and that date, Lee, is three days hence. That is why I am here to-night; and that is why I have perhaps recklessly allowed you to know the truth."

"How on earth do you know ~~that~~ he intends to kill you?" asked Lee. "Did he tell you so?"

"Yes, but not as you think," replied Featherstone slowly. "Do not think me utterly mad, Lee, when I tell you that although I have slept behind bolted doors, and with a guard outside my room, the Genghis has

visited me every night for the last two months, and each night he had uttered this phrase, until it rings in my ears every moment of the day:

“ ‘Ingrate and traitor, you are doomed. The power of the Genghis could destroy you at any moment at the blast shrivels the dead leaf. At the date of the equinox I shall come for you and shall destroy you. Nightly shall I visit you to remind you of my power.’ ”

“ That was what he said to me on a night two months before, and that is what he has said to me every night since. It is only three days now to the equinox, and on that date I know he will keep his word. After that, the deluge.”

“ What do you mean by that last remark?” asked Lee curiously.

“ I mean, Lee, that then he will lose no time to start his plans into action. He is probably working already to precipitate the world havoc he had planned.” He broke off suddenly.

“ There, Lee,” he said, “ is the whole truth as I understand it. Will you—can you help me? But, alas! I fear no human power can pit itself against the strength of the Genghis.”

Lee did not reply for a minute; then, knocking the ash from his cigarette, he said:

“ Where are you living now, professor? You were staying with Senor Rantolado, I know, but he is no longer at his house in Regent’s Park; or so I judged when I called a week ago and found the windows all shuttered.”

“ That is so,” responded the professor. “ I have told Rantolado a little of my story, and he is a brave man. He insisted on helping me. Also, the—er—the Senorita Yanguori has been most kind to me. We are all living together, and it was the suggestion of the senor that we should take a house far out of London. We have taken a place on the north coast of Devon, close to the edge of the cliff there, but even that has not availed to prevent the visits of the Genghis.”

“ So you have all gone down there,” mused Lee. “ And what does the senorita think of all this?”

“ She—she—— Lee, listen! You remember what I told you about the Miss Carlile whom I met on the boat from Rangoon, and to whom I proposed marriage?”

The Miss Carlile, who was in reality the Black Wolf, and who wound up by kidnapping you and playing you off against the Genghis,” chuckled Lee. “ Oh, yes, I remember the circumstances quite well.”

The professor flushed in an embarrassed way.

“ Er—that was all a great mistake,” he said haltingly. “ I had not seen a white woman for five years; she was sympathetic, and I lost my head. But it was not love I had for her. Yet I do feel love for the senorita, and she has promised to be my wife if—if——”

“ If the Genghis doesn’t carry out his threat,” finished Lee curtly. “ I see what you mean. Does she feel fear of him, too?”

“ She does and she doesn’t. She believes that he will do his best to carry out his threat, but even so she wishes to marry me before the date of the equinox. She says that together we will face it.”

“ I am glad you have seen her worth,” murmured Lee softly, as he thoughts went back to the lovely girl whom he had met at the house in Regent’s Park. “ I am glad. She has a soul of purity and nobility. But, at the same time, I think you are wise not to marry until after the date of the equinox.”

“ It was she who persuaded me to come to you and tell you all,” said the professor. “ She said that you would help us if you could, and that you were the only one who could.”

"What do you wish me to do?" asked Lee.

"I do not know," answered the other. "I—I must leave myself entirely in your hands."

"Did you come up to-day from the house in Devon?"

"Yes, I motored up. I left my car in a garage in Holborn, and took a taxi here. I came direct."

"The others are still in Devon?"

"Yes."

Lee fell into a thoughtful silence, then finally he rose and strolled across to the fireplace, leaning his elbow on the mantelpiece.

"Well, Featherstone," he said, "it is certainly a weird tale you tell me, and if you went to some men—intelligent men in London—with it, they would think you mad. But I myself have seen enough of the Genghis to appreciate that he is a great menace. Yet I cannot agree with you that his astral body visits you every night.

"Myself, I think that during the five years you lay a prisoner in the cave in Tibet, you became hypnotically controlled by him. It is simply absent treatment, as it is known that he is using. By his own will, he can command you to fall into a hypnotic trance every night, and command you to think you see him and hear him. When you awake, you firmly believe that you have done so.

"Yet the threat that he utters may be material enough. At the same time, even supposing his astral body does visit you—we will grant even that possibility—his astral body cannot carry you away, for, being only tenuous electrons in a state of minor compression, there is no real matter to handle such a lump as you. That means, if he is coming after you in three nights, that he must come in person. No astral visitation will carry out his threats. In that case, we can be ready for him. Although I appreciate his power, I fancy we can prepare for his visitation.

"As to the other part of your strange tale—well, when you began to talk, I turned on the dictaphone which is concealed in my desk, and the record has registered the whole thing. Later on, I shall give some study to what you advance as a theory."

Featherstone sprang to his feet.

"Then you will help me?" he cried. "You will risk the wrath of the Genghis?"

Lee shrugged.

"I guess we'll take a chance on his nibs!" he granted. "I have a little score to settle with him myself. I remember that he picked me up in this very room and threw me into the corner like a heap of old clothes. Also, there are one or two other little matters I wish to talk to him about. You can certainly count on my assistance, professor. And, since Nipper and I haven't had a change for some little time, I think we will return to Devon with you and await the visitation of this strange bogey down there.

"I have a fancy to cross swords with him on the cliffs of England, symbol of the British Empire, of which it is the heart, and which, according to you, this pleasant gentleman from the East would destroy, using the German Kaiser as an instrument. And in that, Featherstone, I do not know that you are so far wrong, after all. But only the future can tell. Now, let us talk about other things. You need your mind taken off this affair."

So Lee began to discuss the qualities of that charming and lovely girl, Senorita Yanquori, and in five minutes Nipper was grinning at the subtlety of his master, who played on the chords of the human being as a musician plays on the harp.

CHAPTER II.

At Cliff Castle—A Terrible Discovery—Where is Nipper?

It was early the next morning that Nelson Lee motored down to Devon with Professor Featherstone.

Featherstone had stayed for the night at Gray's Inn Road, and, under the cheerful influences of Lee and the lad, seemed much brighter than he had been on his arrival.

They left early in the morning, lunching at Taunton on the way, and passing through Bideford about mid-afternoon. They decided to keep straight on to the place where the professor and the Rantolado party were staying, and, crossing the bridge which spans the Torridge at Bideford, the car was headed out on the Clovelly Road.

On the way down, Featherstone had told Lee something about the place for which they were bound; but not until they had crossed a small moor, and after passing along a desolate stretch of country for another five miles, did Lee realise exactly how lonely and bleak the place was. He got his first glimpse of it as they topped a bleak rise.

It was late afternoon, and the sun was already low in the west. Heavy clouds were banking in the east, and a cold wind was blowing up from the side stretch of Bideford Bay and the Bristol Channel, which lay at their feet. The whole countryside was grey, brown, and desolate, and sheer on the edge of the cliff was the house. It was known as Cliff Castle, due undoubtedly to the fact that at either end of the great, rambling building there was a tower.

The place was not an old one as places in England go. It had been built some fifty years ago by an eccentric man who had retired from a stormy business career in London, and had for some reason known only to himself, erected this prison-like building in which to pass his remaining days.

On his death a nephew, the only heir, had visited the place, and had even attempted to live there part of the year, but he had given it up years before, and with the single exception of one time when a physician had endeavoured to turn it into a sanatorium, the place had remained untenanted ever since.

There was scarcely a tree about it, and a high board fence, which the first occupant had erected about it, made it even more forbidding in appearance than it otherwise would have been. It was a great, forbidding, gloomy pile, which would have been sufficient to arouse unhealthy thoughts in one at any time, and why Featherstone had picked it out as a place of retreat, while in the mental condition which had gripped him, Lee could not fathom. He said as much while they climbed the bare road which led up to the place.

"I didn't know it was so bad until we got down here," he said in explanation. "It was recommended to me by the agents, and it seemed so reasonable that I took it without coming down to inspect. It was only then that Senor Rantolado insisted on coming with me, otherwise I should have chosen a different sort of place. But one doesn't mind it so much when one gets used to it, and after all, it would be hard to find a better place for my purpose. It commands a view for miles around and no one can approach the place without being seen from the house.

"The senor brought down most of his servants, and we have a look-out stationed constantly in the east tower. He will have seen us as we approach, and they will already be expecting us."

"Certainly it has that to recommend it," replied Lee; "nor does there seem to be another building within miles."

"There are one or two abandoned huts on the moor we crossed," said Featherstone, "but beyond that the nearest farmhouse is over three miles from us."

They had reached the gates now, and Featherstone drew the car up and sounded the horn. Between the iron bars they could see far up the drive, and as they peered through, they caught sight of a man running towards them. It proved to be one of Rantolado's Brazilian servants. He opened the gate for them, and when the car had driven through, slammed it after them, taking care to lock it. It was a good deal like entering the driveway of a prison.

Featherstone drew up at the main portico, and scarcely had Lee alighted, when the door was thrown open and Senor Rantolado ran out. He shook hands with Lee warmly, and from the fervid nature of his grip, Lee knew that he was a more than welcome visitor.

He and Nipper followed the senor in, while Featherstone took the car on to the garage. This plan suited Lee, for he was anxious to have a word or two alone with Rantolado. He chose the moment when they were alone in the big hall.

"I am indeed glad that you were able to come down," said the Brazilian. "The professor is getting more and more nervous as the date approaches."

Lee gazed straight into the Brazilian's eyes.

"And you," he said slowly, "what do you think of all this, senor?"

The other's eyes widened.

"I think he is a doomed man," he whispered back. "If you had seen what I have seen—if you could but realise the devilish power of that strange man from Tibet, you would understand how I feel. Featherstone has been condemned, and if it is possible for his enemies to carry out their threat, he will go to his death two days from now."

"Then you believe in these nightly visions which the professor claims to have?" asked Lee.

"Visitations, I should call them," rejoined the senor. "Yes, I do believe in them, Mr. Lee. I believe that he is visited nightly by the astral form of the Genghis."

"But the astral form of the Genghis can't carry off a flesh and blood human," remarked Lee.

"True, but that may not be necessary. He had such control over Featherstone in a mental way, and Featherstone is in such a state of mental funk and dread, that he would succumb to any imperative command of the other."

Lee nodded.

"I quite realise that possibility, but we must set ourselves to checkmate the plans of this pleasant old gentleman from Tibet. After all, this is not Tibet, and we are sane products of a modern age."

They strolled along the big hall now, and turned into a small drawing-room which looked almost cheerful. It was decorated in faded blue, but a cheerful fire burned in the grate, and some hand had placed flowers about. Tea had been brought in there, and a pleasant odour came to Lee from a great muffin dish that stood on a small brass tripod before the fire.

There was no one in the room as they entered, but scarcely had the door closed after them, than it was opened again, and Senora Rantolado came in, followed by the Senorita Yanquori. Lee had not seen the senora since he had inoculated her husband three months before, and by a risky deed saved him from insanity.

Yet the senorita had by no means forgotten the man who had turned her life from a torment into one of happiness, and when she greeted Lee her little warm hand pressed his with welcome.

She murmured some friendly greeting, and then he was taking the hand of the senorita. He was almost startled at the change in this strange girl from the wilds of Brazil. When he had seen her last she had been

pale, almost colourless. Her skin had gleamed like marble against her dark eyes and heavy black hair. Her figure had been slim, almost too slim, and her every gesture had been full of nervous restlessness.

Now she had a tinge of colour in her cheeks, and her skin was warmly brown against her hair. Her figure, too, was plumper, and her gestures more measured, more controlled. She had improved decidedly in health, and Lee's eyes betrayed his realisation of this, for she laughed softly, and to his surprise spoke in fairly good English.

"You think it is that I am improved, is it not, Senor Lee?" she asked.

"I thought such a thing was impossible," replied Lee gallantly, "but, indeed, you are, senorita. What is the secret?"

"It is that the Senor Rantolado permits no more that I go into the trance. Only twice have I been so in three months. He makes me walk and walk and walk until my poor feet ache, and he has made me play the funny game of golf. I ride, I walk, I play, but no more do I have the trance."

Lee nodded his head with satisfaction.

"The Senor Rantolado is a wise man," he said warmly. "The trances, while being of great interest, and permitting opportunity for him to study psychic phenomena, were bad for your health. I am indeed pleased that he does not permit you to follow that any more."

Here the senor came forward. He had overheard one or two of Lee's remarks.

"I agree with you, Lee," he said. "I was keenly interested in psychic phenomena, as you know, and three months or so ago, when I invited a gathering of scientists to my house in Regent's Park, it was because I felt that Senorita Yanguori was a psychic subject such as had never been seen before. But you will remember what a tragic ending that affair had, and had it not been for you, I should have finished out my life a raving lunatic."

"It was when I recovered that I swore never again to play with hidden forces of which I knew so little, and I forbade the senorita to have anything to do with it. It has been impossible for her to shake it off altogether, and once or twice she has dropped into a trance against her will, but she has been leading the life of an ordinary healthy British girl, and her health has improved, as you see."

"My wife and I have legally adopted her as our daughter, and from now on no more psychic phenomena. Once we get Featherstone over this danger that threatens him, we hope to settle down more happily. If we do get him over it?" he added, more to himself.

Lee watched the girl closely when Rantolado spoke of the professor. He saw a lovely colour leap into her face at the mention of Featherstone's name, then a look of fear filled her eyes, and she half turned away as tears gushed to her eyes.

Lee could see that she was under the same dread felt by every inmate of that mysterious house, and he was glad when the next moment the door was thrown open and Featherstone himself came in. They drew up their chairs then, and with the senora presiding at the tea-table, they kept up a forced gaiety—at least, forced on the part of all but Lee and Nipper. Lee purposely kept the conversation off the matter which had brought him down to Cliff Castle. He spoke of the theatres in town, and a dozen bits of gossip that would interest them. The two women responded to his lead very soon, and before tea was half way through, their laughter was ringing genuinely responsive.

Yet Lee noticed that although there were six of them there, seven cups had been placed on the table. He knew this might easily have been due to carelessness on the part of a servant, yet it looked as though seven had

been expected to tea, and when he saw a seventh plate, he felt that this must be so. Yet he could not guess whom it might be for; from what he knew of the household he thought everyone was present. It was a remark of the professor's that settled the mystery.

"Where is Vadilla?" he asked, turning to the senor.

"He takes tea in the study to-day," replied the Brazilian. "He will come in later. He is writing some business letters for me and wishes to get them away."

The professor nodded, and turning to the senorita, made some remark. Lee, however, followed up the other subject.

"Your secretary?" he asked Rantolado.

"Yes, senor," replied the other. "I brought him down with me as much to have as many men here as possible, as to look after my letters."

That explained the seventh plate and revealed, too, how thoroughly the preparations had been made to meet the danger which menaced them.

Already Lee had seen three male servants, and he doubted not that there would be half a dozen at least. That, with the senor, the professor, Vadilla the secretary, Nipper and himself, made a rather formidable party, sufficient surely to meet any ordinary danger which might come.

Yet every minute that passed showed Lee more and more how tense was the atmosphere of the place. When the door opened to admit Vadilla, the Brazilian secretary, Featherstone swung round like a shot, while both the women jumped nervously. There was an undercurrent of dread and anticipation in that household, which for all the brave show they made, proved a distinct menace. How could any man grope with such a danger?

After tea, Vadilla the secretary went back to his work, the Senora and Senorita Yanguori went off to see about some rearrangement of the rooms to meet the needs of the addition to the party, and Senor Rantolado, Professor Featherstone, Lee and Nipper, got caps and went out into the grounds.

Lee was anxious to get a clear-cut idea of the arrangement of the place both outside and in. And in order to fully understand the tragic events which were destined to take place there ere long, a brief description of the lay out of the place as Lee saw it, will be in order at this point.

It will be remembered that the road leading from Bideford passed the main Clovelly Road and then took its way across a barren moor—known as Camar Moor. Somewhere on the outskirts of this small moor there was a river known as the Camar River, and from this the barren stretch of country took its name.

Here and there across the moor were scattered farmhouses, some occupied, and some long ago deserted to a crumbling fate. The nearest farmhouse to Cliff Castle was about three miles distant, and standing on the rocky edge of the cliff, Lee gazed back in the direction in which he knew that farmhouse to lay. It could not be seen, being out of sight behind a rolling bit of moor. Yet he could see the dusty, narrow road, looking like a white ribbon, as it wound its lonely way across the moor.

He had passed behind the house, and now stood close to the edge of the cliff, which dropped sheer to the sea fully six hundred feet below. Away to the right lay the broad sweep of Bideford Bay, to the left was a jutting point, and off to the north, in the grey expanse of the British Channel, sat Lundy Island, that rocky isle which lies lone and drear sixteen miles off the coast.

Cliff Castle itself was of peculiar architecture. It was a big, rambling place of forbidding aspect, and not unlike a fortress in appearance. It was of grey stone, which Lee noted abounded in the district, and the

only effort to break the monotonous regularity of design was in the twin towers which rose one at each front corner of the building. From the top of them he judged one could see a wide stretch of the moor, and wondered if it would be possible to pick out the distant farmhouse with a pair of glasses.

He noted further that the high wooden fence enclosed the place on three sides, the cliff side being left unfenced. Nor did it need a fence there, unless it might be to keep one from stepping over the edge, for an ascent from the beach below was out of the question.

When he was satisfied with his scrutiny of the grounds, he went back to the house, followed by the others, and sitting down before a cheerful, open fire which burned in the big square hall, he asked Rantolado to describe the arrangement of the interior of the house.

The Brazilian began at once:

"On the ground floor there is, on the left of this lounge-hall as you enter, the main drawing-room, and adjoining that on the same side of the house is the small drawing-room—that is the room in which we had tea. On the right as you enter—that door there leads to it—is the music-room, and next to that the dining-room. Behind this lounge-hall is the inner hall, containing the staircase which leads to the floor above, and off that inner hall, too, is the passage leading to the wing where the kitchens and domestic offices are situated.

"On the first floor there are in the main building a square hall and five bedrooms. Here I will make a brief sketch of them, and later on I will show them to you. This front room, which, as you will understand, embraces part of the tower on the left of the entrance as you come in, is the bedroom occupied by Senora Rantolado. Back of that—the room over the small drawing-room—is the bedroom occupied by Senorita Yanquori.

"This front room adjoining the senora's room is the one I occupy; this right-hand tower-room is where Professor Featherstone sleeps, and this adjoining room, which is over the dining-room, is where my secretary—Vadilla—sleeps. In the wing over the kitchens are servants' rooms.

"On the next floor the arrangement of the rooms is exactly the same, but with the exception of the servants' rooms in the wing, none is occupied.

"That was the arrangement until you came down. The senora is re-arranging things now, and to-night we shall sleep as follows: The senora will go into the room occupied by Senorita Yanquori, and they will occupy that together. I will take the room adjoining, which has been occupied by my wife. Vadilla will take the small front room which I was occupying. Featherstone will sleep in the right-hand tower room as usual, and you will occupy the large bedroom over the dining-room, which Vadilla has been in. That leaves only your assistant Nipper to dispose of, and my wife is giving him one of the tower rooms on the next floor."

Lee nodded.

"I follow you quite clearly," he said. "Later on, I should like to have a look at all the rooms, if I may. Now, the professor told me there had been a guard outside his room every night since he had been—er—visited by the Genghis. Where does this guard remain?"

"He sleeps on a pallet in the hall, just outside the door of the professor's room."

"You know the man all right? You can trust him?"

"Oh, yes! He is a servant of my own, whom I brought from Brazil with me. He is thoroughly trustworthy."

"And at what hour are these visits of the Genghis supposed to take place?" asked Lee.

"Featherstone says always at midnight."

"Is that right, professor?" asked Lee, raising his voice, and turning to the professor, who sat talking to Nipper on the other side of the fire. "Does your nightly visitor usually turn up at midnight?"

Featherstone nodded.

"It is always a minute or so after midnight when he leaves," he replied. "I don't know what time he comes, for I have never yet been awake. I wake up to find him in the room, and I am helpless to move hand or foot while he is there. It is only after he leaves that I can do so."

"And this man who sits outside the door," said Lee, "does he ever see your visitor?"

The professor shook his head.

"He has never seen him yet," he responded.

"Yet he did not visit you last night when you slept at Gray's Inn Road?" suggested Lee.

"No; I had last night the first night's peace I have had for three months."

"And to-morrow night is the equinox," muttered Lee.

Lee turned the subject to other matters now, and they sat smoking and talking until it was time to dress for dinner. When he rose to ascend to his room, Senor Rantolado went along with him and showed him the arrangement of the rooms as he had described them in the hall. Then Lee dressed, and was back in the hall just as the dinner-gong went.

It is not necessary to dwell on the details of that meal, farther than to say that under the lead of Lee, all hands made a strong effort to shake off the depression which was upon them, and by the time they joined the ladies in the music-lounge, there was quite an air of cheerfulness about them.

Little did they dream of the tragedy which was to shake them before many hours had passed.

Senora Rantolado and Senorita Yanquori retired early, and when they had gone, the men sat and talked until about half-past ten. Then it was Lee who made a move, and the others rose as well.

By eleven, they were all in their rooms, and the windows and doors of the lower floor had all been bolted.

Nipper, who was sleeping alone on the top floor, undressed quickly, and sat at the window for some time gazing across the black expanse of the moor, which lay sombre and lonely beneath the great starlit dome above. There was no moon yet. Later on there would be a waning orb, but it would not rise until past midnight.

It must have been a quarter to midnight when he finally slipped into bed.

Lee had wasted no time in retiring. He was already in bed and composing himself for sleep. On the next night he would not retire at all, for that was the night when the Genghis had threatened to carry out the annihilation of Dick Featherstone.

And so all the members of that great household slipped into slumber.

Up on the top floor, where Nipper slept alone, there was a great and profound silence. The lad lay sleeping quietly, his dreams a jumble of the day's events. From one thing and another they carried him along until he found himself standing on the sheer edge of the cliff, gazing out across a sunlit sea. Then, even as he stood balanced there, he saw a huge form rise from the ocean and spread and grow until it took the form of the Genghis.

Nipper seemed to be a strangely detached observer of the phenomenon, until the towering form of the Genghis turned and floated over the sea

towards him. Then it swooped down upon him, and he felt a sense of suffocation as the form enwrapped him. He struggled and fought to free himself. It was of no avail. The great form crushed him down, down, down, until, struggling with all his strength, he got his head clear and opened his mouth to cry for help.

The next moment he was sitting up in bed, his heart pounding terrifically, and the last echoes of a distant scream ringing in his ears.

Like a flash he was out of bed, and with great speed was slipping into his trousers. Even as he grabbed his coat and started for the door there came another scream, this time high and piercing.

Jerking open the door, Nipper raced for the stairs. Down them he tore until he reached the hall on the first floor. He paused there, and gazed about him. A form lay on the floor over by the wall, and he started for it. Then the gleam of a light beneath the door of the adjoining room told him the screams had been heard by the others, and as there came the sound of a distant door slamming, he raced down the stairs to the ground floor.

CHAPTER III.

Nipper On the Trail—Caught !

NIPPER had no idea what had happened. He knew that it had been no scream of his own that had awakened him, but a scream fraught with a ghastly fear of death, from somewhere below. There was that still form on the floor in the upper hall to bear witness to some terrible fate, and instinctively he knew it must be the body of the Brazilian servant who was on guard outside the door of the professor's room.

Where the second scream had come from he had no idea, more than that it had emanated from one of the lower floors. It was of a higher timbre than the first scream, and in its agonised accents he seemed to recognise the tones of Senorita Yanquori.

He would have waited until Lee or one of the others had rushed out, but the slamming of the door below had told him that someone might be in flight. So down the stairs he tore, and through the inner hall to the big front hall. A cold draught caught him there, and on reaching the front door he was not surprised to find it open.

At the same moment when Nipper dashed out into the driveway, Nelson Lee was jerking open the door of his bedroom on the floor above, and it would have been far better had the lad waited to consult his master. But far down the drive Nipper had caught sight of some shadowy figures, and with the scent of the quarry strong, so to speak, he dodged for cover, and raced down the soft turf towards the gate. Someone had gained entry to the house—someone had done deeds of terror in the house, as that still form in the hall upstairs bore mute witness, and the intruders were making good their escape.

That was good enough for Nipper. Although there was a lodge by the main gates, it was unoccupied, and, on reaching the gates, Nipper found that the little pedestrians' gate was unlatched. He opened it softly, and gazed across the bleak moor.

The dilatory moon had risen while he slept, and though it was still low in the east, he could see the bleak tors and heavy stretches of scrub which marked the desolate moor.

At first he could make out no signs of the quarry. It was as though the moor had swallowed them up bodily, but as he stood by the gate gazing this way and that he suddenly caught sight of a moving blotch straight ahead and seemingly bound straight into the moor.

He dodged along after it, taking cover from time to time behind great granite boulders which were strewn about the moor, as though dropped there in the glacial period by some vast ice-floe from the north. Then as suddenly as he had caught sight of the moving blotch he lost it again.

Ahead of him lay a land of light and shadow. The tors and great boulders assumed weird and uncanny shapes, tailing off into vast patches of black. Where Nipper stood now there was only stunted gorse and boulders; but on in the patch of black where he had lost the quarry the scrub began, and he realised that unless he sighted them again soon he would run the risk of losing them entirely.

Keeping well in the shadows cast by the boulders, he dodged ahead until he had covered the moonlit patch, and had reached the edge of the scrub. There he paused and listened. Back of him the big stone house loomed grey and deserted-looking, though even as he glanced back at it he saw a light appear in one of the windows. From that he knew his master was about, and probably already wondering what had become of him. But to go back now was to lose definitely all tracks of the quarry ahead, and Nipper did not want to do that.

Not a sound came from ahead. The scrub was as silent as the grave. Whoever the quarry might be they made little or no noise in their progress. But the moon was rising higher every moment, and the long shadows were shortening.

Standing close in the scrub it was not as dark as it had appeared to be from a distance, and finding the rough semblance of a path, Nipper started forward again, treading with the stealth of a panther. He was determined that the quarry should teach him nothing of caution.

From what little he had already seen, he judged that the quarry had a much better idea of the lay of the country than he had. In the few hours he had been there, he had had no opportunity to examine the surrounding moor.

All he knew of it was the little he had seen as they motored across the white road which crossed it, and the stretch which was visible from the house itself. He knew only that he was leaving the sea behind him, and that he appeared to be travelling about south.

The path grew even more distinct as he went along, and although it took a winding course, it kept the same general southerly direction.

Still he caught no further view of the quarry, and he did not dare go too quickly, for fear of running into an ambush.

He had travelled what he judged to be about a quarter of a mile, when the scrub suddenly broke away, and he came to an open patch, on which the moonlight lay in a great pool. In the very centre of the patch was a huge boulder, which stood grim and solitary, like the central pivot of some Druidical remains.

Gazing upon the spot, Nipper thought what an ideal spot it would have been for the mysterious worship of the ancient Druids. He crept across softly to the boulder, and, standing in the shadow, gazed about him. He could see the dim beginnings of three paths leading from the spot, and the puzzle was which one had been taken by the quarry.

Should he take the one leading to the east, the south, or the west? The fourth path to the north he had just come by.

He waited until it seemed that there was no ambush, then he crossed the patch of ground to the path on the east side. There he dropped to his knees, and by the light of the pale moon, endeavoured to study the ground for signs of the passage of the quarry. He worked about carefully, but could see no signs of gravel disturbance; so, rising, he made his way to the path

leading to the south. Here he paused even as he bent, and stretching out his hand caught hold of a tiny twig which lay on the ground. Holding it out so the moonlight would fall upon it, he examined the end which had been broken off. It was a new break, and the wood under the bark glistened wet and white. The quarry had gone by the path leading to the south.

Entering the shadow of the path, Nipper went ahead at a quick pace. He had gone scarcely ten yards when he drew up, and frowned. His boots were making too much noise. Hurrying back to the open patch, he drew them off and tucked them under the shadow of the big boulder, then he went on again, and travelling in his stockinged feet he made scarcely a sound.

He sped on more quickly than ever now, and coming to a second open patch was delayed only long enough to make sure that the flight still continued to the south. Then on again, until he suddenly drew a sharp breath and stopped at the very edge of another open space, for just ahead of him he had caught sight of a low, tumble-down cottage, into which two figures were just disappearing.

Nipper crept back and searched stealthily about until he was able to find a place in the scrub where he could conceal himself and yet could see. He remembered now, that as they had crossed the moor that afternoon, Professor Featherstone had spoken of a few deserted cottages scattered about the moor. This he reckoned must be one of them. But it was not deserted, for had he not just seen two figures enter it? Although he could not be sure, one of them appeared to be carrying a heavy bundle.

Nipper crouched down low, and spread the branches apart so that he could gaze across the little patch of open ground. He saw a light gleam out, then the sound of voices came to him. Against the open patch of the door he saw a figure pass, then came another, and as his eyes took in the meaning of it, his pulses raced. He had seen the Genghis himself, and in his arms was the body of a woman. One fleeting glimpse only did the lad have, then there came the closing of a door and silence.

It was fully a minute later when the door slammed again, and the oblong of light that marked the door became obscured by two figures. One of them Nipper recognised as the Genghis. The other he could not make out.

They stood thus for a little, then the strange figure detached itself from the other, and he saw a man step out from the cottage. A low word followed him, and just before striking off into the scrub, Nipper saw him nod his head.

He had just time to notice that the man's garb was Eastern—he wore a close-fitting fez—when the scrub swallowed him up, and he knew that the Genghis remained in the cottage. And in that same cottage with the Genghis, helpless and a prisoner, was a woman, whom he knew to have been brought from Cliff Castle. It must be either Senora Rantolado or Senorita Yanquori.

Then he remembered the second scream he had heard even as he hurried into his clothes, and how it had sounded like the tones of Senorita Yanquori. It must be the senorita who lay a prisoner there.

But why? Nipper asked himself. Why should the attack have been made on the house? Why should the Brazilian servant have been attacked and possibly killed? Why should the senorita have been carried off? Had the Genghis made his attack a night earlier than intended? Had they, after all, made a mistake in the date? Was the system of figuring time which the Genghis had used different from the Western system which Featherstone had used? Was the professor then lying dead back at the house? And had the Genghis taken the senorita away with him as a further vengeance?

Nipper's head whirled with the problems. He knew so little of what had actually happened at the house. All he had to go upon was what he had seen since he had left the house. But this he did know. He knew that Professor Featherstone's fear was no idle one, nor any chimera of a diseased mind. It was concrete and finite to a degree.

He might talk as he pleased about the nightly visits of the astral form of the Genghis. Whatever be the truth of that—and Nipper was not disposed to form an opinion on its at present—the thread was real enough, and the Genghis himself was here close to the house, proving that he was determined upon vengeance.

How he had come down, how he had been able to trace Featherstone's movements, how he knew so much of that desolate moor, Nipper could not guess. He knew enough of the Mystery Man of Tibet to realise that he had an uncanny faculty for being in all sorts of places, and somehow Nipper did not wonder at his intimate knowledge of that moor. He was here, that was enough for the lad, and apparently he had already struck.

Nipper felt certain that the woman who lay a prisoner in that hut was none other than Senorita Yanquori. It showed how determined the Genghis was to enter the house during the night when half a dozen able-bodied and determined men slept there, to boldly make his attack, and to get away before he could be caught.

It should have been sufficient in itself to warn the lad that he was tackling a desperate proposition, to come along single-handed. But all he remembered was that he was on the trail, that he had tracked down the quarry, and that a woman lay helpless in that hut. He would pit his wits against the Genghis.

Fully an hour went by while Nipper lay there concealed in the scrub, his gaze riveted on the open door of the hut. If the Genghis feared he might have been followed, he gave no sign of it, nor did he exhibit any fear. The door of the hut stood open, and the lamp he had lighted sent forth its beams into the moonlit night. He must feel very safe.

So silent was it, that at the end of an hour Nipper began to fear that the Mystery Man had left the hut by some back way. But he knew this was practically impossible. From where he lay he must have seen any such move, and he strongly doubted if the hut had a back door.

He waited another quarter of an hour, and when dead silence still reigned, he cautiously parted the branches and crept out of his place of concealment. Slowly and with infinite caution he went ahead on hands and knees, until he was clear of the scrub, and on the turf that covered the little open patch.

He paused there, and peered towards the hut. He could see nothing but the gleam of the lamp; he could hear not a sound. He went forward foot by foot until he had covered half the distance between the edge of the scrub and the hut, then he crouched low and listened again.

Still dead silence, and, at the end of another five minutes, Nipper essayed another attempt. Foot by foot, inch by inch, he crept on, until the shadow of the hut lay across him, and then he paused again. At an angle he could see a portion of the interior of the hut. He could see a plain deal table, upon which stood a lighted lamp. Beyond the table he could see a single chair, and he could just make out the edge of some straw, which seemed to have been thrown in the corner of the room.

Of the Genghis there was no sign. Keeping close to the side of the hut, Nipper crept on until he could almost reach out and touch the door. He

waited now, lying close to the ground, with his ear against the side of the hut. Not a sound came from inside. Two more feet and he would be able to gaze straight through the open doorway.

Should he essay it? Was the Genghis there?

The thought of the woman whom he had seen carried into the hut decided him, and, rising a little, he started on. One foot, and foot and a half, two feet, and then by craning his neck he could see into the hut, and as he gazed through the open doorway his heart fairly stopped a beat, then went pounding at a terrific rate.

The Genghis was there, and seemingly he gazed straight into Nipper's eyes. Nipper felt a panic sweep over him, and for a moment he felt an imperative desire to up and run for it. Then, as the Genghis made no move, and as his heart grew steadier, his gaze cleared, and he looked again.

The Genghis was sitting on the floor of the hut, Turk fashion, with his knees drawn up under him. His head was bent, and his hands lay folded in his lap. Gazing at him now, Nipper saw that his eyes were closed, and under the feeble light cast by the lamp there was a peculiar grey look in the face of the Genghis. At first he thought he must be asleep, but something rigid in the attitude caused him to look still closer.

Then the truth burst upon him. The Genghis was in one of the trances he had heard Professor Featherstone speak of. It was such a trance that was an essential part of the sending forth of his astral body. Professor Featherstone had escaped from the cave in Tibet while the Genghis had lain in just such a trance, and Nipper recalled, too, that the professor had thought him dead.

He was in a trance now, and if it were possible for an adept of the religious body, of which the Genghis was the head, to send forth the spirit over a great distance, then it was conceivable that even at this moment the spirit of the Genghis might be many leagues away.

It might even be in Tibet, or it might be at Cliff Castle. At any rate, the longer he gazed upon that still figure, the more certain Nipper felt that the Genghis was in a trance; and with that belief came the desire to creep past him, to open the door leading to the back room of the hut, and to rescue the woman who lay a prisoner there.

For the first time, Nipper now noticed a great rush screen which covered the whole of one corner of the room. It was the corner immediately to the right of the door as one would enter the hut, and for that reason he had not noticed it before. Beyond that, the front room of the hut contained nothing but the few primitive articles which Nipper had already seen—the rough deal-table, a plain deal chair, a heap of clean straw in one corner, and the old lamp on the table.

The floor was of square stone slabs of the same sort of stone which abounded on the moor. In the far corner on the left was a plain door, and in the back room to which that led, Nipper reckoned the captive woman would be.

Still the Genghis sat hunched upon the floor by the straw, his head bent low and his eyes closed.

Nipper crouched on the stone slab that formed the sill of the door for a good five minutes before he summoned up the courage to enter. When he did so, he moved slowly and with all the silence he could command.

Just inside the door he paused, and turned his head as something bright threw a reflection of light from the right-hand corner. Just past the edge of the rush screen he caught a glimpse of some metal projection, and with a glance in the direction of the Genghis he tiptoed towards the screen.

Cautiously he peered round the edge of it, and then, as his eyes took in



Leo hastened across to them, and setting the candle on the floor, dropped to his knees. His first glance told him that the figure was that of the Brazilian manservant who had been on guard outside the door of the professor's room, and a very cursory examination showed that the man was dead. (See page 27.)

what was there, he almost cried aloud in his amazement. He was gazing upon as weird-looking a metal arrangement as his eyes had ever rested upon. In the corner, against the wall, was a high, bright steel stand, which looked like some sort of high-powered electrical contrivance.

All about it were bright copper wires, which entered at one end and appeared to come out at the other end. These were further connected with another steel arrangements, which was set on the floor beneath the other object. On the face of the larger affair was a round dial, on which had been cut a myriad of lines, radiating out from the centre.

A steel needle had been affixed to this, and at the moment it was pointing to a line just a little to the right of the central perpendicular line. Then, set out from this instrument and connected to it by more wires, was a huge steel globe of the world. Beside this globe was a small table, on which was a detailed map of sorts, and lying upon this map was a steel instrument, connected to the steel globe by a wire.

Nipper gazed at the contrivance in amazement.

He had never before seen anything like it. What on earth could the Genghis have arranged such an instrument as that in the lonely hut for? What could be its purpose?

Slowly he took in the details, allowing his gaze to remain on the giant steel globe. Then suddenly, like a flash, he remembered some of the conversation of the professor on the evening he had sat at Gray's Inn Road, telling Nelson Lee all he knew about the Genghis.

He had spoken of the power the Genghis had to send forth the astral body. He had dwelt at length on their efforts to lengthen the period of human life, and he had also spoken of the success which had crowned their efforts to harness the rays of the sun.

What was it the professor had said? He had said that, by some scientific means, the Genghis could so control the rays of the sun that he could concentrate their full power upon any given spot on the earth, that by this power he could cause the full intensity of the sun's power to strike any spot, be it lake or sea, land or volcano.

He dwelt briefly on the mechanism which was used for that purpose, and had mentioned a steel globe, fashioned after the globe on which we live.

Was Nipper gazing upon such a globe? Was he gazing upon the deadly mechanism which could harness the sun's rays? What did such a thing mean? As the sun's rays shot through space, falling upon every planet in the solar system, only a very small portion of the light and heat of that great molten body is intercepted by the earth. Only a very small portion is intercepted by all the planets combined. Most of this terrific heat is wasted in space, travelling on and on and on, until it is finally lost in the unplumbed depths of the cosmos.

But supposing even a portion of that terrible heat could be caught and focussed on some given point, then, even as the professor had said, that point must melt beneath the rays even as snow would melt in a furnace. Such a terrific concentration of heat would cause an upheaval in the Arctic itself.

But could the Genghis do that? If not, then what was the purpose of this strange instrument before him?

Slowly the lad worked himself round the screen and crept across to the table. He bent over it, and gazed at the map which had been pasted to the table. Even at the first glance, he knew it to be a detailed map of that portion of North Devon, and the small steel instrument which lay upon it he saw to be a fine steel needle attached to the globe by a wire. Bending still closer, he found that the point of the needle rested on a portion of the map which was very close to Cliff Castle. He could trace out the outline of

the cliff and the bay. Then he came to a tiny cross, which instinctively he knew to mark the spot where the house stood.

A blinding inspiration burst upon him. The method of vengeance which would be followed by the Genghis was clear to him. The Genghis would turn on the full power of the sun to the spot where the house stood, and the great pile of stone, with all it contained, would melt away like a lump of sugar in boiling water.

But the lad noticed that the needle did not point directly to the house. It was resting on a spot a short distance away from the house, and, examining the chart, Nipper saw it was resting on a huge circular space. He noticed letters there, and, screwing up his eyes, he made out the words:

“THE DEVIL’S PUNCH-BOWL.”

What that might mean, Nipper did not know. He was just about to turn his attention to the steel globe when suddenly he bethought him of the Genghis, who was so close to him. From that his thoughts went to the girl, who must be lying helpless in the back room, and it was with a twinge of conscience that he recalled that he had entirely forgotten her.

The machine must wait. The girl must be saved at once!

With that intention, he started to pass out from behind the screen; but, just as he emerged, he drew up, and to save his soul he could not repress a startled gasp, for gazing at him with his cold, pigmentless eyes was the Genghis.

If he had been in a trance when Nipper entered the hut, he was wide awake now. He was sitting just as he had been, but his head was no longer bent, and his eyes were wide open—those horrible, colourless eyes, which made one’s flesh creep. He did not look surprised; he did not reveal any signs of anger, or, in fact, any human expression. He might have been a graven image for all the emotion his face exhibited.

His eyes seemed to bore into Nipper’s very soul, and unconsciously the lad’s hand went up and grasped the edge of the screen.

Still the Genghis made no move, and thinking that, although his eyes were open, he might be still in the trance, or in a partial trance, Nipper began to edge towards the door. Inch by inch, foot by foot, he crept along until he had covered half the distance. There he paused, and glanced once more towards the Genghis.

This time the Genghis was smiling!

As long as he lives, Nipper will never forget that awful smile. It was a ghastly caricature of a smile, and though the lips smiled, the eyes were as staring and expressionless as ever. It was beyond words to describe.

A cold chill passed down the lad’s spine, and an awful panic gripped him. If the Genghis had even moved, if he had risen or spoken or frowned—anything but that awful stillness and those terrible eyes above that ghastly smile—the lad would not have minded so much.

But it was beyond the strength of his nerves. He tried to summon up power to turn and run for it. He could not tear his gaze from those eyes. He cursed himself inwardly, and tried with all his will power to whip his frozen limbs into movement. He remained glued to the floor, and all the time that deadly smile was seizing upon his imagination and filling him with a terrible dread.

He began to tremble from head to foot, and then the beads of sweat broke out on his forehead.

Yet he remained frozen in his tracks. To save his life, he could not have moved hand or foot. Then into the hammering confusion in his mind there crept the realisation that his will was being submerged to the power of the

Genghis. Unless he dragged his eyes away, he knew that his will power would collapse.

He would be hypnotised. He would be but a gibbering thing in the power of that awful creature, who sat there holding him prisoner by the very power of his will. Nipper made one violent effort to break from its power.

He flogged himself mentally in one last, despairing effort to break the shackles which were being forged about him. He brought his mind to bear on Lee, and, with every effort of his will, tried to think sanely.

But Lee seemed but a mocking cloud—far, far away. Try though he might, he could not concentrate, and it was with an inward groan that he felt his mind slipping back beneath the spell of those terrible pigmentless eyes before him.

Slowly but surely he yielded, until suddenly his will slipped from him, and he was conscious of nothing but those eyes growing, ever growing, as they came nearer and nearer to him. They bore down upon him. He made one last, feeble effort to escape their menace; then he seemed drawn deep down into their depths, and as his ego collapsed he went hurtling down into abyssmal depths.

CHAPTER IV.

A Strange Awakening—Nipper's Terrible Struggle—Beaten!

NIPPER came to himself with his mind in a tumult of confusion. At first he could not remember what had happened. He was primarily conscious of a dragging sensation about the lower part of his body, and a terrific thumping pain in his head. He did not even attempt to open his eyes at first, so slowly did consciousness creep back to his numbed and battered body.

He realised, in a detached way, that he was lying sprawled out, and that he was in pain. The nerve telegraph system of his body refused to register more than that. Then slowly, very slowly, his mind asserted itself, and he had a more concrete sense of pain.

With that came the first stirrings of curiosity, and feebly he opened his eyes. He was at a loss to understand where he could be. Subconsciously, he was aware of a sickly odour which crept into and filled his nostrils, causing a sense of nausea as he breathed in laboured fashion. He saw dimly that the cold grey of dawn was spreading in the east, and in the west there still rode the waning moon—a chopped-off body which had faded from a pale yellow to a dead white.

He closed his eyes again wearily and tried to collect his thoughts. With an effort, he recalled the fact that he was in North Devon, then, by slow stages, he advanced his remembrance on to the point where he had heard the screams at Cliff Castle.

From that point his mind picked up the threads with more alacrity and he traced out his chase across the rock-strewn and scrub-covered moor to the hut where he had seen the Genghis.

The Genghis!

At the thought of that vile creature, memory returned to him with a rush. He recalled his creeping advance into the hut where the Genghis had sat on the stone-paved floor. He went a step further, and remembered how he had crept behind the huge rush screen and there had come upon the strange mechanism which the Genghis had erected in the hut.

Then, with a sharp pain at the recollection, he pictured the terror and the horror of finding the Genghis awake and staring at him with his thin lips twisted into a satanical smile.

There the lad's brain refused to work farther along those lines. He had a vague feeling of horror as he recalled the staring, pigmentless eyes of the Genghis, but more than that he could not remember.

Now he opened his eyes again and stared about him. There was no sign of the hut, nor of the moor, in fact. He seemed to be alone in some mephitic spot from which all human life but his own was shut off. Slowly he raised his head and gazed about him more closely.

Dimly through the misty light of dawn he could see a flat stretch of black: surrounding him and beyond, rising until it became lost in the mist—a wall or cliff. At first he thought he must be lying on the seashore, but then the soft stench of his surroundings told him differently.

He struggled to drag his body ahead a little, for the pressure on the lower part of his body was growing uncomfortable. It was with a good deal of a shock that he found he could not move; and a soft suction noise behind him caused his brain to clear like magic.

He twisted his head painfully, and his heart almost missed a beat as he saw that his limbs were entirely out of sight. They had sunk almost to the hips in some vile black ooze. He turned his head back and stretched out his arms. The ground on which the upper part of his body lay was solid enough, for there his body had not sunk; but where the nether limbs lay they had sunk, and from the increasing pressure upon them he knew the truth—his limbs had sunk in a quicksand.

He gave a gasp as the truth burst upon him, and, clutching wildly at the solid ground before him, he made a strenuous effort to pull his limbs free of the deadly clutch.

But the more he endeavoured to brace them the deeper they sunk; and, with a wave of terror, he felt his body sinking into a vile ooze. He realised now that he must remain cool if he were to tackle the predicament with intelligence.

He knew sufficient of quicksands to know that a false or panicky move would be his undoing. The light was sufficient now for him to get a clear view of his surroundings, and he gazed upon as weird a formation of Nature as eyes of man ever saw.

All about him the ground was flat and black with a stinking ooze. Circling this flat stretch was a high cliff, one portion of which was very close to the spot where he lay. Strong mephitic odours of decaying vegetable matter reeked about him, and he could scarcely breathe, so pregnant was the air with the nauseous matter.

Of the moor and the hut there was not the slightest sign. He could not understand it—he could not puzzle out how he had come there. That it was due to the Genghis he did not doubt. The only explanation was that the Genghis had carried him to the edge of the cliff surrounding the place and had thrown him over, thinking he would at once sink to his death in the treacherous quicksands.

It was but one chance in a million that he would land on a solid saddle formation—half his body in the grip of the terrible quicksands, and the other half lying aslant a bit of solid ground. That he had been thrown down he was sure, from the awful pain which was racking him.

His whole body was shot through with pain—proof that he had landed heavily. Then suddenly his thoughts went back again, and he remembered the curious detailed map that had been tacked to the table in the hut. He recalled the different markings upon it; and in his mind pictured the curious circular formation which had been called "The Devil's Punch-bowl"—Was this place the Devil's Punch-bowl?

From what he could see of it it certainly fitted the line markings on the map. Then if it were, it would seem that he had been cast bodily into

the awful place by the Genghis, and that being so, he could look for no assistance. The mist overhead had cleared now, and along the topmost ridge of the cliff there lay a shimmering heat haze which thinned out beyond into the pure colour of the air above.

Inside the stench-hole where he lay the warmth of the day seemed to bring out the mephitic odours of the place with a trebled intensity, and lying as he was in the midst of the rotting mould, Nipper felt the nausea grip him harder than ever.

Now, with the light of day, all sorts of weird swamp creatures appeared—small scuttling vermin born of the filthy hole and living upon its rotting life. How large was the bit of solid ground to which he clung, Nipper could not guess.

Judging from the surrounding parts he reckoned it to be less than six feet square altogether—sufficient to support him if he could but drag his legs free from the sands which gripped them.

By sheer effort of will he had flogged himself into a state of calm detachment, and now, working slowly and with measured calculation, he made another strong effort to drag himself to safety. He dug his fingers into the soft solid, regardless of breaking nails, and then, gripping hard, tried to draw himself out.

A squelching noise behind him told him that he was moving a little; but now and then only to lose it again when his hold slipped. At the end of each time when he felt the grip of the sands loosening, his fingers slipped away from their grip and he went slithering back, his heart pounding in sudden panic as he grabbed for another hold.

He kept up these tactics for the better part of an hour, gaining an inch now and then only to lose it again when his hold slipped. At the end of the time when, exhausted and panting, he lay quiet to recover his strength, he had gained nothing towards the solid ground and had lost a good deal of his strength. With his arms stretched across the firm ground upon which the upper part of his body was resting, he lay panting, trying to recover himself.

It was only then, while his face lay close to the dirty ooze of the pestilential ground, that the nausea he felt took on a new form. He felt a sharp burning pain in his throat and a smarting irritation in his lungs.

With each deep breath he broke out into a fit of violent coughing; and then suddenly his head whirled with dizziness.

Fighting to keep his surroundings from circling so madly about him, he strove to puzzle out this latest phenomenon.

What could it be?

He sniffed the air lightly, and then, as the identity of the odour became revealed to him through the power of smell, the truth broke upon him. He was breathing in a form of swamp gas which was deadly poisonous, and unless he succeeded in getting free soon, he would succumb to its anasthetic power.

This realisation forced him to a new struggle for freedom, and it was with a terrible frenzy that he fought to free his limbs from the grip of the quicksands.

But fight though he would, those awful sands, like some giant octopus, gripped him, and but squelched mockingly as he strove to conquer. Breathing in the swamp-gas, his head was reeling more terribly than ever; and then, suddenly as the morning sun rimmed the edge of the cliff above him, he dropped exhausted.

He made one more feeble effort to keep all the universe from whirling madly about; then, as his tortured lungs took in gulp after gulp of the

poisonous swamp gas, his senses rose in one terrific churning, until, with a red whirl of madness blistering his starting eyeballs, he succumbed to the pressure of the gas and dropped into that bottomless pit of nothingness which is the prelude to the last long sleep.

CHAPTER V.

The Cry in the Night—Nelson Lee is Puzzled—The Search.

TO return to Nelson Lee.

Like Nipper, Nelson Lee was awakened by that terrible scream of deadly fear which broke out in the stillness of the night. He had just dropped off to sleep, it seemed, when he was brought up sitting with the accents of terror still lingering in his ears. For a moment he sat up in bed, wondering if it were but the last haunting notes of some vivid dream he had had, and then the sound of Featherstone who slept in the adjoining room jumping out of bed told Lee that the scream was no figment of the imagination, but a stern reality.

He was out of bed in a flash and feeling for the matches which had been placed on the night-table beside the bed. He found them almost at once and soon had the candle lighted. A sharp knocking on the door which led from his room to the tower-room occupied by Featherstone drew him across the room, and, bending down, he called:

"All right, Featherstone, I am getting up."

"You heard it then?" came back the professor's voice in agitated accents.

"Yes, yes!" responded Lee hurriedly. "But we can discuss it later. There is no time to be lost. Get into something and come out. Bring your revolver if you have it there!"

The professor's voice sounded again, but Lee, realising that precious time was being lost, made no reply. He hurried into a dressing-gown and slippers, and, picking up his candle, started for the door which led to the hall. At that very moment another loud scream broke out; this time from somewhere below, and in the accents of terror he thought he recognised the voice of Senorita Yanquori.

That sound of terror spurred him on, and jerking open the door of his room he stepped out into the hall at the very moment when the professor opened the door of his room.

Senor Rantolado was already in the hall holding a candle above his head, and, with a swift glance which took in his surroundings, Nelson Lee noticed that the door directly opposite his own was wide open.

It was the door of the room which had been occupied by the senora and the senorita. He was conscious of a low, hysterical sobbing sound which appeared to come from the room, but the next moment all his thoughts and faculties were concentrated on a still, huddled figure, which lay on the floor just outside the door of the professor's room; Senor Rantolado and the professor were already bending over the figure.

Lee hastened across to them, and, setting the candle on the floor, dropped to his knees. His first glance told him that the figure was that of the Brazilian manservant who had been on guard outside the door of the professor's room, and a very cursory examination showed that the man was dead.

Grimly Lee turned the body over, and as he did so the way in which the poor fellow had died was revealed. The whole front of his throat was jagged and torn as though it had been torn out by the fangs of a wild

beast. The carpet where his head had been lying was saturated with blood, and a great crimson stain lay on one cheek.

It was a horrible sight, and Lee knew it had been that throat, still warm, that had vocalised that first desperate scream which had awakened him. Now the insistent sobbing in the room across the hall attracted him again, and, lifting his head, he spoke to the senor.

"What do you know of it all, senor?" he asked. "Did you see anything?"

The Brazilian shook his head.

"I was awakened by a scream, Senor Lee," he said quickly. "I slipped into a dressing-gown and ran into my wife's room to see if she were all right. I found her terribly upset. And the senorita was missing. Thinking the senorita had come out here I came out, only to stumble upon this—this terrible thing.

"The senora says that she was awakened by someone in her room. Even as she sat up in bed the senorita was picked up bodily by someone and carried from the room. She told me that as I started to leave the room. Then I heard a second scream. It seemed to come from downstairs, and it sounded like Senorita Yanquori. I would have gone down, but then my eyes fell on this awful sight, and at that moment you and the professor came out."

At that moment a light appeared, coming up the stairs, and all three men turned swiftly to see what it was. The dark face of Vadilla, the secretary, appeared, lit up by the flare of a candle. For the moment Lee had forgotten all about him. They waited until he came to them, and then, in quivering tones, he said:

"Someone just rushed down the stairs, and went out by the front door. I had just come out of my room, when I heard him. I raced after, but could not overtake them. Ah, Madre de Dios!" He paused, and uttered the exclamation as his eyes fell on the figure of the murdered man on the floor. "Andrade!" he muttered. "Someone has killed Andrade!"

Lee nodded curtly.

"You are quite right, Senor Vadilla," he said. "The man has been murdered—foully murdered."

Suddenly Lee got to his feet.

"Gentlemen, we are wasting valuable time," he said sharply. "Terrible things have happened here to-night. This man has been murdered, and something seems to have happened to Senorita Yanquori."

A low cry broke from Featherstone at these words; but Lee turned to him quickly.

"You must keep up, Featherstone," he said. "We shall need all our wits, unless I am very much mistaken. But we can do nothing until we discover exactly what has occurred. Now then, come to my room, all of you. First, senor, go into your wife's room and endeavour to get her quiet. Ah! Here comes the housekeeper. Send her into the senora, and come with us."

The frightened face of the housekeeper appeared at that moment from the servants' wing, and as she caught sight of the body on the floor she opened her mouth to cry out.

Lee was across to her like a flash, and had his hand over her mouth.

"None of that," he said sternly. "Go into the senora. She needs you." He took the housekeeper's arm and led her across to the door of the senora's room, and, thrusting her inside, closed the door after her.

"Vadilla," he said, "see that none of the other servants come in here. Lock the door leading to the wing, if necessary, and then you might go up

to the floor above and tell Nipper, my assistant, to come down at once. The lad must have slept through it all."

The secretary hurried away obediently, and, accompanied by Senor Rantolado and the professor, Lee led the way into his own room. He waved the two towards seats, he himself sitting on the edge of the tumbled bed.

"Now, gentlemen," he said quickly, "let us get down to facts. Senor, you appear to have been the first on the scene. Please tell me exactly what occurred, as far as you saw or heard."

Rantolado drew a long breath.

"I was not asleep," he said slowly. "I had been chatting with my wife, and had just gone to bed, when I heard a terrible cry. I sat up in bed and listened. I could not make out where it had come from. My first thought was of my wife. I jumped out of bed, and got into my dressing-gown and slippers. I hurried to the door, which led from my room to the room occupied by my wife and Senorita Yanquori.

"I knocked several times, but got no reply. Then I heard my wife sobbing. I opened the door at once, then, and hastened in to her. She was sitting up in bed, rocking back and forth, and crying. There was no sign of the senorita. I knew not what had happened. I noticed that the door leading to the hall was ajar.

"I thought that the senorita had rushed out to see what had happened. Then I bent over my wife and endeavoured to calm her. She was so worked up that she could give me no explanation of what had upset her. I told her I would return at once, and started for the door.

"Just then she called me back, and told me that she had been woke up by the presence of someone in the room. She had an idea that in her sleep she had heard a scream, but wasn't sure.

"While she was lying there in a state of fright, she heard the senorita give a smothered cry, and the next moment someone lifted the senorita out of bed. Even while I was talking to my wife we heard a second scream; and I left her to see what it could be. I rushed out here, only to discover the body on the floor—and you know the rest."

Lee nodded, and turned to the professor.

"What did you hear or see, Featherstone?" he asked.

The professor, who had risen in agitation as Rantolado spoke of the senorita, now paused in his walk and faced Lee.

"I heard the first scream, and jumped out of bed. My first thought was of the Genghis; for to-night he appeared to me again and warned me that to-morrow I should die. I rushed to that door which connects your room with mine and knocked.

"You had heard the scream, too, for you answered me at once. I slipped into my dressing-gown and slippers, and went out into the hall. That is all I know."

At that moment the door of Lee's room opened, and Vadilla came in. His face was drawn and of a sickly yellow hue, and there was a look of fright in his eyes.

"Your assistant Nipper," he panted, "is not in his room. He has disappeared."

"What!" Lee rapped out the word more as an exclamation than a question, and stood up. "You say that Nipper is not in his room?" he said.

The secretary shook his head.

"I knocked at his door, and when I got no answer I opened it. I looked into his room. His bed is tumbled, but he is not there. His candle is lit, though, and some of his clothes are missing from the chair where they had been thrown."

Lee was silent for a moment, then he said:

"Senor Vadilla, will you please tell me all you saw or heard?"

The Brazilian set down his candle and took out a bag of cigarette tobacco and some papers. While his slim, yellow fingers rolled a cigarette, he talked.

"I will tell you what I know, Senor Lee," he said. "I was in my room. I had just retired, when I heard outside the door a loud scream. I jumped up out of bed and hurried into some garments. Then I opened the door of my room and stepped out into the hall. If the body of poor Andrade was there then I cannot say; for as I opened the door I saw a figure dash through the hall and down the stairs. I made after it, but I was too late.

"It was then I heard the second scream, which seemed to come from below. Then I came back up the stairs, and found you all there. That is all, Senor Lee."

Lee nodded.

"Thank you, senor," he said. "And now," he added, turning to Rantolado, "we must make plans for the pursuit of the Genghis."

"The Genghis!" exclaimed Rantolado and Featherstone in one voice. "How do you know the Genghis is the murderer of Andrade?"

Lee shrugged.

"I am satisfied on that point," he said slowly. "Yet it will be but a waste of time to pursue them in haphazard fashion. But we must lose no time, nevertheless. The whole affair is extremely complicated by the fact that Senorita Yanguori and my assistant Nipper are both missing.

"We all seem agreed that the second scream was given vent to by the senorita. In my opinion, she has been carried off by force. A crude reconstruction of what has happened to-night might be this:

"The Genghis, or his agents, gained admittance to the house with the object of carrying off Senorita Yanguori. We must not forget that Senorita Yanguori is very far advanced in some of the psychical science of which the Genghis is a master; nor must we forget that the senorita and Professor Featherstone are betrothed. There are two strong reasons which would form a sufficient motive for such an act on the part of the Genghis.

"We know that the Genghis desires a novitiate in his cave in Tibet—one whom he can train to carry on the work of the order. Senorita Yanguori would be an admirable novitiate; and by abducting her, not only would the Genghis gain a novitiate, but he would strike an additional blow at Professor Featherstone. To abduct her after he had wrecked his threatened vengeance upon the professor would only achieve one point. That, I think, is why he has carried her off to-night.

"The disappearance of my assistant Nipper, I put down to the fact that he probably heard the screams, and on the spur of the moment set off in chase. It was possibly he whom Senor Vadilla saw rush across the hall and down the stairs."

Here the secretary nodded his head quickly.

"He might easily have come from the floor above," he said.

"It all endorses my idea that the Genghis is in the neighbourhood, and that he is actively engaged in his scheme of vengeance against the professor," went on Lee. "Therefore, as I have already stated, no haphazard pursuit will avail. It is now"—here he paused while he took up his watch from the right table and glanced at it—"it is now five minutes to one. The Genghis has had something like twenty minutes' start. Nipper, I believe, is after him. The lad may succeed in tracking him down, and if so, he will undoubtedly return to report as soon as possible. In the meantime, we must dress and prepare to go in pursuit. I shall allow the lad until half-past

one to return here. If he does not show up by then we shall start out ourselves.

"I do not think the Genghis would leave the neighbourhood, for to-morrow is the day on which he has threatened to take vengeance on the professor; and he will stay about until then. It is up to us to close in on him and put an end once and for all to the mischief he is responsible for. And let me add, gentlemen, that you are dealing with a dangerous man.

"If you give him the opportunity to strike first you will never have the opportunity of striking back. Now, let us dress, and then we shall start out."

The other three men rose at once and left the room. Lee laid a sheet over the body of the Brazilian manservant and hurriedly slipped into some clothes. He carefully examined his automatic, slipping in a fresh clip of cartridges before thrusting it into his pocket.

Then he left the room and made his way to the big square lounge-hall, where he found Rantolado and the professor already waiting. Vadilla joined them a few minutes later, and they sat smoking and talking until the hands of the old grandfather clock pointed to the half-hour. Sharp on the minute Lee rose.

"Nipper has not returned," he said in low tones. "It is for us to act now, gentlemen. If any of you have a suggestion to offer I think now is the time to do so."

None of them seemed to have anything to put forward, so, standing in front of the open fire, Lee said:

"The moon is up now, and we shall be able to do a little before daybreak. My idea is not to search indiscriminately about the moor, but to work on a concerted plan. I have already studied a map of the surrounding country, and from what I have seen of the moor to-day I know it to be covered with scrub and boulders—an ideal hiding-place for any fugitive.

"It is something like three miles along the road which crosses the moor to the nearest farmhouse. My idea is that we walk to that farmhouse and begin our search there, working back towards the house. In that way we shall, by morning, have covered a good proportion of the ground; and if by any chance we have discovered nothing, we shall be near enough to the house to have a hurried breakfast before resuming. How does that idea strike you?"

A murmur of concurrence met Lee's ears, and, straightening up, he gave the sign to start.

There was a general reaching for hats, and five minutes later four determined men walked down the driveway, heading for the road which crossed the moor.

CHAPTER VI.

A Startling Discovery—Nelson Lee Reads the Riddle—The End.

THE moon had risen late—about midnight—but by the time Lee and his companions started on their walk to the farmhouse it was fairly high in the east, and the surrounding moor was plainly lit up.

The winding road gleamed white and bare ahead of them, and the shadows of the scrub and boulders were still long. Lee led off at a brisk pace, and though he kept a sharp look-out to right and left as he walked, he did not deviate from his course until they drew in sight of the farmhouse. It was just a little after two when they sighted it, and exactly at quarter-past two when they drew up abreast of it.

The house lay dark and silent in a small plantation of trees, and after a careful scrutiny of the surroundings Lee turned to his companions.

"If we spread out here," he said, in a low tone, "and work back slowly criss-crossing as we go, then we should reach the house by morning.

"We shall make this farmhouse the focus point, and criss-cross for at least two miles each side of the road. By spreading out a couple of hundred yards or so we shall, in that way, cover a good area of ground each time we pass. But we must keep within whistling distance of each other. Two miles to the west of this point, then back, and two miles to the east. That will mean four miles each time before we raise the road again. It will be slow work, but it will be thorough. Now, are you all ready?"

A chorus of "Ay's!" answered him, and Lee proceeded:

"Have your weapons handy, and do not forget what I said about firing if you meet the Genghis. Unless you strike first you will never have the chance to strike at all. Senor Rantolado, will you take this end of the scouting? Senor Vadilla, I will ask you to go up the road a couple of hundred yards and start there. Professor Featherstone, you will go next—two hundred yards beyond Senor Vadilla.

"I shall take the other end. That will cover six hundred yards at a time, or roughly a third of a mile. The signals will be as follows: A discovery of any sort, one sharp whistle. Caution: Two long low whistles. Acute danger: A single shot to be fired. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly," replied the others.

Leaving Senor Rantolado by the farmhouse, Lee, Vadilla, and Featherstone walked back up the road. About two hundred paces up Vadilla was dropped, and another two hundred yards along Featherstone took up his stand. Then, when Lee had reached the far point which he had selected for himself, he gave two short whistles, and all four started simultaneously to cross the boulder and scrub-lined moor.

It was slow going, and ten yards off the road Lee lost entire sight of his companions. With the moon to guide him it was not difficult to keep his direction, and, working between the boulders as best he could, he crept along, peering in every possible place for signs of what he sought. Now and then he zig-zagged down towards the line which Featherstone was following, and once he thought he caught sight of the professor.

In this way he kept on until he was certain he had covered a good two miles, and yet he had seen not a sign of the Genghis, nor had any of his companions whistled. In a small open space Lee drew up and gave two short whistles, which was the sign for starting and stopping. He heard it repeated some little distance away, and then, from a greater distance, he heard it again.

The professor had evidently heard it and had signalled to Vadilla, who, in turn, had whistled to Rantolado. Lee waited until he heard the sound of someone approaching, and a few moments later the professor appeared. At short intervals Vadilla and Rantolado showed up, but none of the three had anything to report.

A little time was consumed while Lee arranged the course to be followed back, and when they had spread out to the north in the same formation they had followed, he gave the signal once more for the start. It was just a quarter to five when they reached the road again, for it was slow work getting through the scrub and searching as they went.

There they formed up again, and, with nothing to report, left the road, starting out towards the east. There the scrub was even more dense than it was to the west, and by the time they had worked their way back to the road again the sun was high in the heavens, and the hands of Lee's watch pointed to half-past seven.

They were tired, bedraggled, and dispirited at lack of success, but Lee held them to it, and after a brief respite he started them off once more, this time to the west.

By half-past-nine they were back to the road again with as little success as before. It was certainly dispiriting to fight through the scrub mile after mile and to achieve nothing, but Lee had set his mind to scouring the moor, and he would not give in.

So, after a brief rest, they began once more. To the east they found the scrub lighter this time, and when they had worked back to the road once more the house was in sight, while the hands of the watch pointed to eleven o'clock.

"One more go of it," said Lee, "and then we will knock off for something to eat. Are you all ready? Then take your positions. The scrub is getting lighter, and we should be back to the road by noon."

A few minutes later they started again. Lee, who was on the far end of the line as usual, was walking softly along, keeping a sharp lookout, when suddenly on a light breeze which swept across the moor he caught the odour of some decaying vegetable matter.

It was nauseating, and he wondered vaguely where it could come from. The more he advanced the stronger it grew, until it became almost overpowering. Whatever it was, he knew he was advancing upon it; and then, as he broke a low patch of scrub, he drew up with a sharp exclamation of surprise. Before him stretched a strange sight. A wide saucer-like depression lay in front of him, and advancing gingerly towards the edge, Lee knew by the heavy increase in the odour that the stench came from there. He judged it to be several hundred yards across, and as he reached the edge and peered over, he saw that the bottom appeared to be soft wet mud.

The sloping sides of the saucer formation dropped down sheer in places, though here and there the sides sloped gradually. He recalled that on the chart he had studied, he had seen marked a spot as The Devil's Punch-bowl; and somehow he knew instinctively that this was it.

He was just about to draw back from the place in disgust and work his way round it when suddenly from somewhere on his left there sounded a single short sharp whistle.

By the signals he himself had arranged, that meant a discovery of some sort, so, turning, Lee skirted the edge of the great depression until he came upon Professor Featherstone. The professor was lying flat on his face gazing down over the edge of the depression, and as Lee and Vadilla ran up at the same moment he pointed excitedly downwards.

"Look!" he cried. "There is a human figure lying down there!"

Lee and Vadilla both turned to peer downwards, and with the same movement Lee unslung the field-glasses he had been carrying all night. He quickly focussed them on the black object below, and scarcely had he done so when he uttered a low cry.

"My heavens, men, it is Nipper, my assistant!" he cried.

Just then Rantolado ran up, and Lee turned to him.

"Is this place the spot marked on the map as The Devil's Punch-bowl?" he asked quickly.

"Yes, senor," answered the Brazilian. "It is a very dangerous spot. The bottom is a great quicksand."

"Not all of it," rejoined Lee curtly.

Once more he focussed the glasses on the figure which lay sprawled in the mud below, and then lowering them he turned to the others.

"Who will go back to the house for ropes? There is no time to lose. In some way Nipper has got down there, and I can see that the lower part

of his body is already out of sight in the mud. The upper part of his body must be lying on a little patch of solid ground. He seems to be unconscious, and we must rescue him at once. He must have stumbled over during the night."

Vadilla had turned, and, speaking over his shoulder as he began to run, signified his intention of returning to the house for a rope. While he was gone Lee and the others sought about for a strong tree which would serve as a hold for the rope. From where they stood it appeared that Nipper was lying about ten yards from the base of the cliff.

If one had stumbled over in the night one would have fallen at about the same distance from the edge—a thing that caused Lee to surmise that the lad had fallen in that manner.

It seemed an age before Vadilla returned, bearing a great coil of rope; but in reality the secretary had been less than twenty minutes. No time was lost in tying the end of the rope to the tree which had been selected and then Vadilla the secretary stepped forward.

"Senor," he said earnestly, "I am the lightest of us. I shall descend to the rescue."

Lee shook his head.

"This is my work, senor, though I thank you," he replied; and from the expression in his eye they knew none but himself would descend on that perilous mission.

With one end of the rope tied round his waist and a strong sliding grip on it Lee stepped to the edge of the depression; and after one brief glance over the side he began his descent. The three men at the top watched him anxiously while he swung and slipped down the incline towards the bottom.

Beneath him lay death in horrible form, and a single slip would precipitate him into it. But he worked coolly, and at last they saw him swing free close to the bottom of the cliff.

Lee, who hung on the rope, gingerly tested the mud at the bottom and found it too treacherous to bear his weight. There so close to the lad he could see him lying face down in the awful stench, and to all his master's calls he gave no heed.

A sudden dread gripped Lee that he had come too late after all. It drove him to strenuous attempts to reach the spot where the lad lay, but each time he was driven back to hang on the rope, for the greedy sands oozed about his ankles trying to drag him down.

Then Lee sought about at the bottom of the cliff for a spot where he might rest. Crouching on a tiny projection of solid ground he studied the problem for some minutes, then those at the top saw him suddenly rise and untie the rope from his waist.

They saw him fashion a slip noose in the end, and saw him gather up all the slack, cutting off a long length of it. With bated breath they watched while he sent the loop skimming out towards the lad and saw it fall about the lad's shoulders.

It took ten long minutes for Lee to shale the rope until it had worked down round the lad's shoulders and under one arm. Then he drew the slip noose tight, and, bracing his feet in the tiny patch of solid ground, he began to drag the lad towards him. Across that treacherous bit of quicksand he dragged the lad until he could reach out and catch hold of him.

They saw him work busily over Nipper for a few minutes, then Lee tied the short length of rope to the piece that hung from the top of the cliff, and willing hands drew the unconscious lad to the top. The rope was dropped again for Lee, and when he was drawn to the top he found Senor Rantolade bending over the lad pouring some raw spirit between his lips.

It was some little time before Nipper came round, and at first he seemed dazed.

"Swamp gas," remarked the professor shortly. "In another hour or so he would have been dead."

Nipper opened his eyes slowly and gazed about him. At first he seemed to have no idea where he was, but at sight of his master a gleam of intelligence came into his eyes and he made a frantic gesture.

Lee, seeing that Nipper had something to communicate, bent over him.

"Yes, my lad," he said gently, "what is it you wish to say?"

Nipper strove to speak but his words came in only a halting whisper.

"Followed the Genghis," he said weakly; "found small hut straight line from house—Senorita Yanquori prisoner—Genghis caught me—threw me down here—Genghis has fixed up strange machine in hut—big steel globe like globe of world with maps and needles—needle points to Devil's Punch-bowl—no time—lose."

With that he fainted dead away, and with a strange gleam in his eyes, Lee straightened up. For some seconds he stood gazing down into the Devil's Punch-bowl, then like a flash he turned to the professor.

"You remember what you told me of the scientific means by which the Genghis controls the rays of the sun?" he asked.

Featherstone nodded.

"If those rays were concentrated on this patch of mud here, what would happen?" went on Lee.

Featherstone took one look at the lake of mud below them.

"It would cause that mud to boil up and turn it into a raging volcano," he replied. "The whole countryside would be overrun with the boiling mud. It would blot out every bit of life for miles around."

Then Lee turned to Rantolado.

"You spoke yesterday of some old deserted huts on the moor. Are they far from here?"

"No, they are between us and the house, senor," answered the Brazilian.

"Then we must go to them at once. Senor Vadilla, will you please remain here with the lad. Senor Rantolado, and you, Featherstone, come with me. It is twenty minutes to twelve. If, as I think, the Genghis is going to seek vengeance in a certain way he is almost sure to strike at mid-day.

"It is a race against death and destruction. Come! You lead, Senor Rantolado."

The Brazilian who had grasped Lee's meaning set off at a run, followed by Lee and the professor. Through the short scrub the Brazilian flew, regardless of tears and scratches. To right and left he dodged quickly until Lee reckoned they had covered half a mile. Then suddenly they broke into a small clearing where stood a dilapidated hut.

The door swung open on the hinges, and at first it seemed to be deserted. Lee now took the lead, and, rushing towards the door with his automatic held ready for business, he paused on the threshold. One look inside told him they had come upon the lair of the Genghis.

Even as he gazed inside, a door opposite opened and the Genghis himself appeared. His lips parted over his teeth in a snarl like that of a wild beast as he saw Lee and the other two at the door. He stood for a single moment glaring at them, then, without the slightest hesitation, he started for Lee.

Nelson Lee levelled his automatic straight at the other's heart.

"Stand where you are," he ordered sternly. "If you advance another step I shall shoot."

The Genghis stopped and Lee saw him shoot a quick glance towards a large rush screen which stood in the right-hand corner.

Like a flash, it came to Lee that the machine for concentrating the sun's rays was there, and with the thought came the further recollection that it must be nearing midday. The Genghis was staring at them with his pigmentless eyes, and now his lips parted in a ghastly smile.

Lee took a step forward, and started for the rush screen. He must smash that machine before midday, or the whole surrounding country would be inundated by a sea of boiling mud!

The Genghis turned on him with a snarl, and with a strange cry leaped towards him.

Lee faced him, and, as the Genghis came on, he cried another warning. The Genghis paid not the slightest attention to it, but, dodging, drew a long knife.

Lee waited another moment; then the thoughts of the hundreds of innocent beings who would be annihilated by that sea of boiling death strengthened his resolve, and he deliberately pulled the trigger just as the Genghis hurled the knife at Lee's heart.

The heavy bullet from the automatic struck the Genghis in the heart, and with a loud cry he dropped in a heap on the floor.

"My heavens!" cried Rantolado. "It is one minute to twelve!"

Lee turned like a flash, and raced for the rush screen. He threw it over bodily, and then was revealed the strange mechanism behind. One fleeting glance Lee took at the steel instrument, the steel globe, and the table on which the detailed map of the district had been tackled.

He jumped for the table, and, taking hold of the needle, swept it away from the table. He saw the needle on the steel globe move at the same time, and vaguely noticed that it had swept northwards until it was pointing to a spot close to the North Pole.

Then he drew out his watch and held it before him. Was he too late? Would his shifting of the needle be futile? Was the terrific concentration of the sun's rays already pointing at the Devil's Punch-bowl?

With bated breath, all three men watched the hands of the watch as they crept round to midday. During the last ten seconds the tension in that hut was terrific. Then the hour was passed, and nothing had happened.

But not until five minutes past twelve did Lee return his watch to his pocket, and then suddenly they remembered the dead Genghis. He lay just where he had fallen, and, stepping over him, Lee opened the door which led to the room at the rear of the hut.

There they found Senorita Yanquori, who lay bound and gagged. Featherstone ran to her with a cry, and, leaving him and Rantolado to look after her, Lee went back to examine the Genghis.

There is little more to tell. When the local police had been called in and the body of the Genghis handed over to them, together with the strange machine which had been set up, the whole party prepared to leave at once for London. They had had enough of that terrible spot!

Three days after their arrival, the professor and senorita were married; and, with the terrible doom removed from his life, Featherstone was a different man.

Nelson Lee made certain statements to the Foreign Office which caused them to quash all publicity regarding the death of the Genghis, for certain information had reached the ears of the Foreign Office regarding the activities of the Genghis in Germany.

Yet it is a strange echo of Nelson Lee's last meeting with the Genghis

that the Great War broke out a few months later, with the German Kaiser as the new Attila; and it is due to Nelson Lee that the Germans did not have that strange machine of death with which to sow world-wide destruction.

Another echo of the case came in the month of June, when word came through from several whaling stations in the north that a great upheaval of ice had taken place at the North Pole, and that a vast number of icebergs were working south through Davis Strait.

It was then that Nelson Lee remembered how the needle on that steel globe had pointed to a spot close to the North Pole, and he shuddered when he thought what would have happened if he had not shifted the needle in time.

THE END.

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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.

Order is soon restored, but just as the captain comes forward to thank the two
lads several figures scramble over the side of the ship—and, wonder of wonders!
the newcomers are Haggart Neil and his crew. They, however, are soon put to
flight, and the fish being disposed of in port, and the *Bonnie Jean* safely moored
up the canal, the lads go ashore.

A Dutchman comes upon the scene and claims several kegs of brandy which
have been brought up by Ben and Hal from the bed of the canal beneath the
Bonnie Jean. The skipper knows that it is contraband spirit, and at once
connects Haggart Neil with it. (Now read on).

In the Trap.

"IF those English brats think they're going to interfere with an honest
man's livelihood this way," the Dutchman muttered to himself in his
own tongue, "they want teaching a lesson. We've too many rotten
Englishers about here as it is. I'll let Skipper Neil know who he owes it to
that those kegs were shown up. I reckon he'll have a say in the matter!"

Although the *Jean's* crew believed Neil had put to sea, the old Dutchman
knew a good deal better. He made his way to a secluded waterway, over-
hung with plane trees, near the far end of the town, with an easy access to
the main canal, and thence to the sea. The Vulture was lying there snugly.
It was not long before the Dutchman was discussing a long glass of Schnapps
in the cabin with Haggart, and when he had related what had happened
to the kegs, the wrath of Neil the Wrecker rose nearly to breaking strain.

"Losh! Anyone'd think those accursed brats were huntin' me, instead

o' me huntin' them!" he cried. "They gie me trouble at every turn!" He struck the cabin table with his fist, and his dark, bloated face was convulsed with rage. "I'll wait no longer! I'll not stop till I get them to sea. There's a trap I was thinkin' o' settin' for them, here in Amsterdam, an' I'll get Forsyth an' young West into hands that are muckle worse even than mine. Is Jan Deventer in the town now?"

"Vhat, der big Transvaaler?" said the old Dutchman. "Ja, I know he vos. He is at his house in der Willem Strat. I see him to-day."

"Does he hate the English as much as he did?"

"I dink he nefer get ofer dat," replied the other, grinning. "He did a funny t'ing to some Englanders he caught at sea, didn't he? I nod know if dot vos true. But he fought in der Boer War. I nefer see a man dot hate anybody like he hate der English."

"He told me what he was gaun tae do wi' the next one he got to himself—if 'twas anyone that fought in the war," muttered Neil, "an' he's a man that means what he says. He's not a talker."

"But you vos English, ain'd it?"

"No!" said Neil, with an oath. "I'm Scottish!"

"And a credit you vos to dem, mine friendt," chuckled the Dutchman.

"Stow that! I'm off to see Deventer. You keep your head shut, Smidt. That's a thing I know you can do."

"Ja!" said the old Dutchman, with a shrug. "It vos noddings to me. We haf known each oder a long time, and ve do goot business. I do not care vhat you do to any Englander, especially vhen he poke his nose in my affairs. But you be careful mit Jan Deventer. He is dangerous feller, is Jan."

"I know what I'm doing," said Haggart darkly; and he left the vessel forthwith.

Half an hour later, Neil stopped at the door of a large, shuttered house in the residential part of the town, and knocking at the door, was admitted after rather a long wait by a silent, rather rough-looking manservant. Neil had a few words with him, and the man, with a nod, showed him into a sitting-room on the ground floor. Presently a big, heavily-built man, with a sun-tanned face and a beard tinged with grey, stepped noiselessly in.

"You!" he said to Neil in excellent English. "There is trouble for somebody, Haggart Neil, when you find yourself in Amsterdam. You are a bird of ill-omen. See here, didn't I tell you last time that I wanted no more to do with you—you scum of the seas!"

"Ay, ye did," said Neil civilly, not at all resenting the other's rough manner. You're a rich man, too, an' hae no need o' poor, honest sailormen. But I was useful to ye once, Deventer, an' ye did me a guid turn, so I've brought ye a bit o' news that ye'll like tae hear."

"What is it?"

"Ye swore to me once that ye'd never miss a chance to revenge yer-sel' an' your country on any Englishman that came into your hands, Jan."

The big man's face flushed, and the veins swelled on his temples. He looked absolutely tigerish.

"I'll not go back on that, while I

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live!" he said, between his teeth, leaning across the table and glaring into Neil's eyes. "Do you wonder at it? I'm not one of those that can forget! I am a Boer of the Transvaal, and that accursed country trod mine under—by treachery and the weight of gold—never by fair fighting! I lost my nationality, and I was ruined, and had to start afresh. That was a little thing. But my only son was shot beside me, in the firing-line at Vlakkfontein, and he died in my arms!"

He clenched his hands till the knuckles grew white.

"I fought to the end! I left the land for ever, on the day our cowards made their final surrender to England. And I swore an oath that same day that I would have revenge full tale for the loss of my son, the first chance that came to me!"

"Ay, I sympathise wi' ye," said Haggart softly. "For, as ye know well, an' I've often told ye, I fought on the side o' your people in South Africa. I aye thocht it was the true cause, an' I'd not ha' been one o' our butchers in kilts that marched wi' the British colours. Forbye, I'll own your folks paid me well. I was wi' Botha outside Ladysmith."

It was a lie, for Neil had never been in South Africa, and had certainly never risked his life in any firing-line, under one flag or the other. But he had long had good reasons for keeping well in with the big Boer, and a lie was less than nothing to Neil. He could hardly make himself out a bigger scoundrel than he was.

"I've heard you say so," replied the Boer impatiently. "You were not against us, at any rate. If I thought you had been, you'd be sorry for having set foot in this house! What is it you have to tell me?"

Haggart bent nearer to him.

"This," he whispered. "There's a man in Amsterdam to-day, who's kin to the man that shot your son!"

The Boer looked more like some savage beast than a man, when he heard this.

"Do you tell me so?" he muttered. "Where? Who is he?"

"Ha, ye ever heard o' Joe West, skipper o' the trawler Bonnie Jean, o' Grimsby? Well, his brother, Robert West, was in the Volunteer company o' the Lincoln Regiment, at Vlakkfontein, an' I've heard him tell many a time how he shot a young Boer at point-blank range in the trenches, an' saw him bein' held up by a big Transvaaler with a black beard, an' but that the bugles sounded the 'Cease fire,' an' his officer made him stop, he'd ha' got the big Boer, too. He was proud o' it. I've often heerd him boast about it."

Deventer's teeth ground together, and his face turned livid.

"That was the man!" he gasped out. "It could be no other, from what you say! Allamachtig! But I've waited long for this. And his brother, an' Englander skipper, is in the town now, Neil?"

"I can tell ye where to find him."

"I won't fail in it. Stop!" The Transvaaler sprang up. "Has this skipper any kindred with him? Any relative?"

"Ay, his son, Ben West—the biggest young blackguard afloat. An' his friend, young Forsyth—son o' Parson Forsyth, who was chaplain to the Lincolns in the war. You didn't get your dead lad away after the fight, by the way, did you?"

"No!" said the Boer hoarsely. "The cursed English buried him. They slung him into a trench, near their own men that were killed, an' that's all the funeral he got, I suppose."

"So ye've told me. An' I can tell you something more," said Haggart slowly. "Chaplain Forsyth refused to read the Burial Service over your son, because he was a Boer. Young Hal Forsyth has told that tale in Grimsby a dozen times, an' he says Parson Forsyth was right, too."

The Boer sank down at the table, and buried his face in his hands for a moment. Then he rose.

"This is well," he said, in a quivering voice. "Those two cubs shall pay me for the loss of my son! Better than getting hold of their father, even. He shall suffer what I suffered." He paused, and glanced at Neil with heavy eyes. "You've done well by me, Haggart. But why have you come here to tell me this? Have you anything against these two Englanders as well?"

"Have I?" cried Neil. "Not so much as you, but more than enough. They are spies of the police, at Grimsby, an' they trumped up a lyin' tale that landed my brother Jack in gaol. D'ye wonder that I hate them?"

"It's what you might expect from such a brood. Neil, you shall have your reward. You shall see me settle up with those two, and afterwards, I hope, with the father. Will that suit you?"

"I ask nothin' better!" exclaimed Neil eagerly.

"Tell me what they are like, and where I shall find them."

Haggart gave him careful directions. He was a good hand at description.

"That's enough," said Deventer, cutting him short. "I have all I want; leave the rest to me. This is better than the entertainment I promised myself to-night."

"Why, what was that?" asked Neil, glancing up.

"I had already got hold of a mongrel Englishman—a transport driver—who was in the war—the first I've had a chance at. My servants were to have brought him here to-day. But I'll have him, too." He licked his lips like a man who is about to enjoy himself, and his fierce eyes sparkled.

"We'll make a job of it. Stay here in the house till I return. My men will give you all you want. I will have those cubs here in my power within ten hours—I stake my name on it."

He turned his back on Neil, and left the house quietly by the back door.

Ben West and Hal, on leaving the Jean, stretched their legs with a four-mile walk by way of exercise, and finding themselves eventually on the banks of an old canal, with clear limpid water and a plank landing-stage, it occurred to them there was a first-class opportunity for a bath. They had a glorious swim in the sun-warmed water, and then made for a farmhouse, hoping to get some bread and cheese and fruit. There was nothing to be had, however, and by the time they had tramped back to Amsterdam, and were still a good way from the Jean, they were ravenous.

"Let's stand ourselves a slap-up feed before we go to sea again," suggested Ben; "it'll be long before we get another rollick on the mud, and there are some rare good eating-houses about here."

"As long as there's lots of grub and plenty of it, I don't care," said Hal. "Angus'll be like a bear with a sore head if we go back and ask for food now. It's two hours off feeding time."

Ben knew less about the Amsterdam restaurants than he thought, however. The boys entered a pretentious but second-rate place in one of the wider streets, which looked showy enough outside, but was a dreadful fraud when it came to serving the meal. There were about six courses, made up with stale French sauces and kickshaws, and the whole of them together would not have made one square feed aboard the trawler.

(Continued overleaf.)

"Great Scott!" said Ben in despair, looking at the last dish—a spoonful of sloppy custard—"this is no good to me. I'm hungrier than when I started."

During the meagre meal a tall, bearded Dutchman, with a face burned dark brown by the sun, had strolled in and seated himself close by. He toyed with the dishes as they were brought to him, but ate little, and he kept an eye pretty constantly on the boys. When they pushed their chairs back in disgust, preparing to depart, he rose and strolled across to them with a pleasant smile.

"A very poor meal, isn't it boys?" he said, in English that had only a tinge of Dutch accent in it.

"Wretched, sir," said Ben. "In fact, we're thinkin' of goin' somewhere else an' getting some real food."

"Well, there's a capital spread waiting at my house. I don't know what I dropped in this den for, except that it's handy, but I always have meals served up to time at home, in case I turn up. I'm going there now, and if you'll join me, I shall be proud of your company. There's a lobster salad, I know, and a pair of cold wild ducks, and any amount of sweets. Will you honour me?"

"Well, sir," said Ben, after a glance at Hal, "it's uncommonly kind of you. If we sha'n't be intruding——"

"Oh, come along!" said the stranger, with a laugh. "I hate lunching alone. I daresay we can find some amusement afterwards, too."

The boys, whose mouths were watering at the mention of the Dutchman's fare, for they were terribly hungry, walked off gaily with their new friend. He led the way through several streets, and finally stopped at a large house in a quiet by-street of the most fashionable district. The windows were shaded with latticed shutters, that let air and light through, but made it impossible to see in from the outside.

The stranger opened the door with a latchkey, and ushered the boys into a wide, spacious hall, and thence into a lofty room, with a polished oak floor well strewn with skins of leopards and jackals.

"My wig," said Ben, "we've struck a soft place this time. Wrap me up in my tarpaulin jacket, if we haven't. Look at the spread!"

"S-sh!" put in Hal. "Here comes his All Serenity."

"If you are ready," said their host pleasantly, "we'll start on the food, such as it is. I must apologise that we have to wait on ourselves. I gave my servants a holiday this morning, and they are all at St. Denis's Fair."

As Ben said afterwards, "they did themselves proud." The meal was helped on its way by just enough dry champagne to do it justice, and was rounded off by desert and coffee.

"If you've finished," said the Dutchman, "we'll go upstairs. I have a little entertainment on hand which may amuse us."

A curious gleam shone in his eye as he added the last few words. He showed the boys up into a large bare room on the next floor. It was more like a schoolroom than a private parlour, and as bare and comfortless as the other rooms were sumptuous.

The door closed behind them, and there was a sharp click. The big Dutchman had turned the key and pocketed it!

(Don't miss next week's instalment of this grand new sea story).