

The Enchanted Stone

By Lewis Hind

THIS is a true account of the Enchanted Stone, and of the strange circumstances by which it came into my possession.

The paper had been running eighteen months, when one November morning, among the manuscripts that arrived by the early post, I found one, written in a queer, square handwriting, and redolent of a pungent Eastern perfume. It was unsigned, but at the foot of the last page stood a symbol of irregular outline, about the size of a two-shilling piece. The surface was wrinkled, like the face of an old woman by Rembrandt, and also bore three dark markings, in appearance somewhat akin to sun-spots, seen through a powerful telescope. This disc was pierced by an arrow an inch long, scrawled over by some mystic letters. The manuscript, which was written in flowery language, began with these words—"Om!! Salutation to the Revered and Sublime White Queen, whose arms encircle the globe," and ended with this cryptic peroration—"I am not inconsiderate, like the grass-eating animals. I will repay. The earth and the mountains may be overthrown, but I, O Queen, will not rest till I regain the Enchanted Stone."

The body of the manuscript contained, so far as I gathered in a hurried

hurried perusal, a pious request that a certain gem which was about to be presented to the Queen by the Raja of Peppert hala, should be restored to the writer, who proclaimed himself the lineal descendant of the rightful owner of the gem. The Raja of Peppert hala, I concluded, was the broken-down ruler of a bankrupt feudatory state in Northern India. Further the communication stated that the writer would call upon me that afternoon at four o'clock.

I was puzzling over this odd manuscript when the tape machine that stands in the corner of my room began to tick. As it was unusual for news to be sent through at such an early hour, I threw down the anonymous effusion, and hastened toward the instrument. The tape coiled from the machine, and I spelled out the following :

“10.30 a.m. Prince of Wales has just left Marlborough House to call upon the Raja of Peppert hala, who is staying at Buckingham Palace by Her Majesty's invitation.”

That was a remarkable item of news in itself, to say nothing of the coincidence. Our last Indian visitor, I knew, had lodged in the Gloucester Road. Why then should the Raja of Peppert hala, an insignificant chieftain, whose name was not even mentioned in Griffith's *Indian Princes*, be staying at Buckingham Palace by Her Majesty's invitation ? It being Press day, I had not time to puzzle over the anomaly, so I sent the manuscript and the news item to Mayfair, my friend and sub-editor, who worked in a room at the end of the passage, asking him to investigate the affair and let me know the result before four o'clock. Although Mayfair was but twenty-one years of age, he was like certain of the children of Israel, one in whom there was no blemish, well-favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, cunning in knowledge, understanding many things,

things, who had easily brought himself into my favour and tender love.

By this time it was eleven o'clock, the hour when the printer began to send down pages to be passed for press. The strain lasted well into the afternoon, and the mysterious manuscript had been quite driven from my mind, when a card was brought to me bearing nothing but a duplication of the symbol that sprawled at the foot of the perfumed article. I looked at the clock. The hands pointed to four.

I told the messenger to show the stranger into the ante-room, and to ask Mr. Mayfair to come to me at once.

"Hush," I whispered when Mayfair appeared. "He's in there," indicating the adjoining chamber. "Will you sit at my desk? Pretend to be writing. Listen attentively, but do not speak unless I address you."

The clock struck four. I threw open the door of the ante-room.

The man who came forward, lightly and noiselessly, with the grace of a free animal, was yellow like a Mongolian, but his features were finely chiselled, and in stature he was tall and slim. He wore a long, frayed frock-coat buttoned high up around his neck. The crown of his head resembled a yellow billiard ball. I have never seen a man with less hair. His eyes were deep-set and piercing, and, like the slight nostrils, and the thin quivering lips, alive with intelligence.

"You have read my words?" he asked eagerly, and in excellent English.

I nodded an affirmative.

"And you will publish my words in your paper?"

I shrugged my shoulders. "We are so crowded. Our space is limited. Besides——"

He

He strode to my side. "I am some judge of character," he remarked, in a tone quite innocent of egoism, speaking as if he were stating an incontrovertible fact. "You believe in the good and wise God?"

"Really," I began.

"Yet," he swept on, "you will hinder the revelation He has promised to mankind."

"Do you refer to me, or to the paper?" I asked gently. It was clear I had to deal with a religious fanatic.

"Yours is a great journal," he continued, ignoring my question. "You are the Editor! You wield power! You are not rich! Procure for me the Enchanted Stone, and I will give you two, three, five thousand pounds."

With that he drew from an outer pocket a bundle of bank notes, and flung them upon the table. They were for £1000 each, and undoubtedly genuine.

"Replace those, please," I said. "This is not a private enquiry office. Now let us understand one another. I gather that a poor old gentleman, the present Raja of Peppert hala, who is now lodging at Buckingham Palace, by Her Majesty's invitation, has in his possession a valuable stone which you assert is your property, you being the lineal descendant of the rightful owners, who centuries past were Rajas of Peppert hala. You also state that this gem was stolen some hundreds of years ago by a Mohammedan chief at the time of the invasion of India; that the said stone has brought nothing but trouble and disaster to its various owners; that the present possessor has in a moment of generosity determined to present this ill-omened and unlucky gem to Her Majesty, and that he has travelled to England for that purpose. Further, you are so anxious to get possession of the gem as to offer me a bribe of £5000 if I succeed in restoring it to you. Now, before I move a
step

step in this matter, I must ask you first to produce documents satisfying me that the stone ever belonged to your ancestors, and, secondly, to show proofs of your own identity ; in a word, make it clear to me that you are the lineal descendant of the former Rajas of Peppertala. For all I know, the stone has been already handed over to Her Majesty, and is at this moment lodged in the Tower with the other Regalia. I'm afraid I could not consent to steal the Crown jewels even for a bribe of £5000."

"To restore, not to steal," he interposed, quickly.

I laughed a little contemptuously at the emendation. His demeanour changed. He drew himself up to his full height, the long lashes fell across his eyes, his head sunk upon his breast, and he cried in a broken voice and with hands upraised : "How long, O Lord, how long ? I am as one standing upon the housetops, trying to grasp the stars of heaven."

His dejection was so poignant that my heart softened. "Procure me the proofs," I said, "and I will see what can be done. In the meantime we will insert a paragraph, non-committal, but of a nature that may arouse public interest and, possibly, sympathy."

Having thus delivered myself I threw open the door of the ante-room, as a hint that the interview was ended.

The chamber faced the west. The sky was clear, save for a bank of heavy clouds along the horizon. The fog which hung about the streets was of that wreathy, fantastic character that makes potential mysteries of chimneypots, wayfarers, and telegraph posts. As I threw open the door, a heavy cloud was just rolling away from the setting sun. I paused in admiration—I had almost written adoration—of the spectacle. For one moment the sun glowed like a great angry eye, with a little feathery wing dancing impishly over its surface ; then another cloud-bank swept up, like
a puff

a puff of gun-fire from a distant coast. The good, round light went out, and in its place came gloom and the shadows of night. Then the cloud rolled away, and for a moment the sun shone forth upon the world again in a blaze of good-night splendour.

What happened next was begun and ended in the space of three seconds. A trill of low laughter fell upon my ears; turning swiftly, I observed Mayfair trying, with poor success, to preserve his gravity. Seeking for the cause, I found it in the Yellow Man, who had fallen upon his knees, with long arms raised reverently towards the sun, that glowed full upon his ascetic face and head, which bobbed in unison to a torrent of words, in some unknown tongue, that broke from his lips. It was the back of the man's nodding head that moved Mayfair to mirth. Had he seen his face as I saw it at that moment he would have felt no inclination to laugh—so sad, so profound, was the look of passionate entreaty that illumined his countenance. It moved me strangely, and then, in a flash, my wonder was changed into horror—and I was rushing across the room to where Mayfair sat still laughing, but now in a desperate kind of way.

I caught the Yellow Man's arm as the dagger gleamed downwards in a sharp, swift stroke, and so lessened the force of the blow, but I was not in time to save the boy. Then blood spurted from the wound, and Mayfair fell forward upon his face.

"You devil," I cried, seizing the creature's hand that still gripped the dagger; but he slipped from my grasp like an eel and disappeared from the room, closing the door silently after him. I let him go, for Mayfair had fainted and needed me. His pretty white necktie—he always liked dainty clothing—was stained with blood. I staunched the flow, bound up the wound as well as I knew how, laid him down full length upon the floor, and then considered. At all costs the affair must be hushed up. I

wrote

wrote a note explaining the nature of the injury, then rang the bell, and met the messenger outside the room.

"Take this letter to Doctor Eastern," I said. "Bring him back with you."

Then I locked the door and waited. My fears, I confess, were selfish, but the dread of losing Mayfair was more than I dared contemplate. In a little he moved, raising himself upon one elbow.

"What—where——?"

"Be quiet, there's a dear fellow," I whispered.

"Oh, I remember," he said, trembling at the sight of the red bandages. "I'm peppered, zounds, a dog, a cat, to scratch a man to death! a braggart—how does it go? Oh—h!" He fainted again.

By the time the doctor arrived I had decided upon my course of action. "You know my name," I said. "Well, this gentleman has been stabbed. It was a stupid quarrel. I take all responsibility, you understand. It's an unfortunate business, and I want it to be kept quiet."

The doctor was young and accommodating, and, after an examination of the injury, pronounced it to be nothing more than a flesh-wound.

"Can he be moved?" I asked.

"Oh, yes."

He dressed the wound and left, promising to call in the evening at the address I should send.

In half an hour Mayfair was able to converse. I decided to remove him at once, and, without attracting any particular attention, succeeded in getting him downstairs, and into a cab. I gave the driver the address of my rooms.

"No, no," he whispered, "take me home."

"To

"To your mother's house ?" I asked, in astonishment.

"No, no ; take me to my bride."

"Your bride ?" I gasped.

"Yes, my bride," he repeated, petulantly, and called to the cabman to drive to the Albert Embankment, opposite Lambeth Palace.

He was very much in earnest, so I let him have his way, and babbled of our next holiday, and green fields, of anything, in fact, that might distract his mind. Arrived at our destination he dismissed the cab, and, clinging to my arm, guided me towards Lambeth pier. Bearing to the right we descended the steps that lead down to the water's edge. A boat was waiting. I pushed off, under his directions, and in another moment collided against a raft. We landed, and picked our steps over the old boats and the refuse of half a century scattered there. I heard the oily lap, lap, of the waves against the raft, but could see little for the fog that hung motionless in the still air—so wet and chill. With each step my companion leant heavier upon my arm. A horrible idea flashed into my mind. By his bride did he—could he mean this unseen river oozing past in the dark like some huge prehistoric reptile. I shuddered at the thought, and at that moment we confronted the outline of a low log-hut at the eastern end of the raft. Warm welcome light streamed from the little window. My companion knocked at the door, which was immediately thrown open by a young girl—pale, work-weary, and wistful, like a Fillipino Lippi Madonna.

"I'm ill, Mary," he said simply.

She gave a little start, and cried, "Oh, my beloved." The voice was not the voice of a gentlewoman.

Then warm arms enfolded him, and he was carried within.

The door closed, and friendship's victim was left alone, with
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the fog above and fog around, and below the greasy planks sighing and sighing as they collided in the movement of the water.

In the hurried journey back to the office, the events of the day pattered through my brain, and the long fingers of Imagination stretched before me, pointing to strange and fantastic developments. I heard nothing, saw nothing as we raced through the lighted streets, except a nimble paper seller who flashed an eager hatchet face through the cab window. I bought one, a halfpenny sheet, I forget which—receiving a contemptuous comment because I demanded the change from my penny. My eye had caught the word *Pepperthala* on the front page.

When I arrived at the office I chipped a dark stain from the woodwork of the chair in which *Mayfair* had been sitting, and then carefully studied the prospect from the window. The opposite houses were still wrapped in fog. Good! The blood-guiltiness of the *Yellow Man* remained our secret. No human eye could have penetrated that dense envelope, which had grown still more opaque since sunset; I could not even distinguish the outline of the stone parapet that ran in front of my window, practically making a promenade round the building.

Turning away, the evening paper I had purchased caught my eye. The front page contained half a column about the visit of the *Raja of Pepperthala*. It was invertebrate stuff, all pure conjecture, with an imaginative account of the decay of the State of *Pepperthala*, and a disquisition on the present parlous condition of its Chief. As to the reason of the *Raja's* visit to England the reporter was silent, but a paragraph and a portrait at the end of the article roused my interest to the meridian.

It was to the effect that the *Raja* had been accompanied to England by Mr. *Edward Kettle*, "so well known a few years back

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in connection with Colonial politics, who is now acting as cicerone and interpreter to the Raja of Pepperthala."

Now I knew something about Mr. Kettle—something not quite creditable to that gentleman—in connection with a certain transfer of Government land, which I had kept close in that sanctuary of the memory reserved for the bad deeds of others. My forbearance made me the victim of repeated offers of service from Kettle. The opportunity had now arrived. I determined to go down at once to Buckingham Palace, and claim from him a slight fulfilment of his many promises. I remembered Kettle as a particularly vulgar snob, unprincipled but clever, and always ready with word or blow.

On presentation of my card with the name of the paper engraved upon it, I found no difficulty in obtaining admittance to the Palace. The porter was haughty at first, but I prevailed over him, and he disappeared with my communication up a wide staircase, leaving me to wait in a large room, where the furniture was all covered up in brown holland. In a few minutes he returned, even haughtier than before. Mr. Kettle was dressing for dinner and could not see me. I wrote three words on a card, slipped it into an envelope and induced the Royal emissary to repeat his journey. . . . This time I was more successful. Mr. Kettle would see me, and at once.

The Raja of Pepperthala occupied a suite of rooms on the first floor. The night was too dark for me to locate the apartment into which I was shown, but I imagine it looked out upon the Palace gardens that stretch away to Grosvenor Place. Several minutes passed. I grew impatient. Somebody moved in the next room, then Kettle's voice reached me giving instructions to a servant. "A plague on this man," said I, and without more ado threw open the door that separated us. Mr. Kettle was standing
before

before the fire paring his nails. Oiled hair, curled moustache, liquid eyes, short putty figure, a velvet collar to his dinner coat ; he was the same hopeless, middle-aged dandy—unchanged, unregenerate. I knew my man, and so came to the point at once. “Kettle,” I said, “I want to have some conversation with the Raja of Pepperthala, and I should also be much obliged if you would let me have a peep at a certain valuable known to fame as ‘the Enchanted Gem.’”

He looked up quickly, smiled in an embarrassed kind of way, and flicked a crumb from his sleeve.

“Such an interview, my dear fellow, is quite *ultra vires*. I have already refused some of the very smartest people in London. As to what you call the Enchanted Gem I don’t know what you mean. It’s *caviare* to me, quite *caviare*,” he repeated, fumbling nervously with a gold toothpick.

I caught him by the arm (he reeked of patchouli) and whispered something in his ear. I was not in a mood to bandy words with the fellow, who rolled his foolish little foreign expressions round his tongue like a bear with a piece of honeycomb. He shrunk away from me, spreading his hands between us. “All right,” he stuttered, breaking back to the accent of other days. “Play fair !”

Observing the amusement I made no effort to conceal, he quickly recovered himself.

“What you require is *difficile*,” he said sententiously. “The old fellow is mad with rum and disease. Really I daren’t present him to a stranger. Stop ! I have an idea *bien trouvé* ! He is in the next room alone. I’ll turn down the gas. You sit here on a line with the door. I open it, inventing an excuse to speak to him. That is your opportunity, *n’cest ce pas* ! But don’t utter a sound. And if he catches sight of you make yourself scarce !

scarce! *Comprenez vous?* He's like a tiger with that confounded gem."

I promised to remain perfectly still. Then he lowered the gas, and cautiously opened the door.

I saw a broadly-built man with dusky face, long matted hair, and a thick neck, upon which the skin folded itself in great ridges. Over his shoulders a blanket was thrown. He was fondling and patting a smooth, oval object, the size and shape of a cocoa-nut, but the colour was the colour of gold. When the door opened he grabbed the casket to his chest, and, by a rapid movement of his broad shoulders, concealed the shining object beneath the blanket. That was all I saw of the Raja of Peppert-hala, but I never forgot the sight. His ancestors may, or may not have been, bullies and bastards, but this poor tamed creature had in his time been king of broad lands, with power to save or kill, and in his hands the keys of palaces, and temples, and vaults heaped high with treasure.

Kettle closed the door. He was quite pale.

"You have seen him," he whispered, "and I'm sure you ought to be infernally obliged to me; and, my boy, you've also seen the case which contains the blessed stone. Oh, don't ask me anything further! This Desire of the Nations, as they call it, is driving me mad, *absit omen*. I'll just tell you one thing," he said, mysteriously, "and you may repeat it to whoever gets hold of the blooming stone—*caveat emptor*. That's what I say. Good night."

The adventures of the day had given me material for quite a pretty little article. I walked briskly up Constitution Hill, arranging the paragraphs in my mind, thence into Hyde Park, and by the time I had travelled as far as the Marble Arch, and back again to Hyde Park Corner, the article was clamouring to be
written.

written. So I hastened down Grosvenor Place, purposing to take the train at Victoria.

The fog had become so much denser during the last hour, that I was quite glad to have the friendly wall of Buckingham Palace Garden as a guide. With my left hand trailing against it, I slowly and cautiously groped my way, till I drew near the spot where Grosvenor Place turns sharply round to the left into Little Grosvenor Place. There an adventure befell me. At this point, where the pavement narrows, I was crouching under the lee of the wall, to remove myself as far as possible from a brilliantly lamped Parcels Post van that came rattling through the fog, when suddenly a man dropped upon me from the top of the wall. He doubled himself up as he fell, alighting gracefully upon my head, enveloping me as if he were an extinguisher, and I a candle. At the same time a metal vessel, escaping from his hands by the violence of the shock, clanged upon the pavement, while a smaller object struck sharply against my foot.

I tumbled incontinently upon the pavement, while my visitor, recovering himself while I was still blinking, picked up the metal vessel, which I observed had burst open, and disappeared into the fog.

For a moment I sat motionless, unhurt, but confused with amazement. The person who had dropped so indecorously over the garden wall was my yellow friend of the afternoon, and the metal object which had burst open as he fell was the case that the Raja of Peppert hala had concealed beneath the blanket a few hours before.

As I was considering the bearings of this new development upon my article there fell upon the hushed air, from the direction of the Palace, a wail, repeated three times, so eerie, so pregnant with despair, that I felt almost as if something had cut into a

tissue of my sensibility. Then I heard shouts in the garden, a dog's deep bay, and a voice crying: "Quick! Here's the ladder."

That narrow slip of pavement, where I sat cross-legged like a Buddha, was clearly no place for me. Mechanically I picked up the object that had struck against my foot, slipped across the road, and was soon out of earshot of the voices.

Upon examination, my find proved to be an oval case made of very hard wood, similar in shape to the Raja of Pepperthala's stolen treasure, but smaller. On pressing a little deflection at the extreme end the case flew open. It contained nothing but an ordinary stone, in size and shape something like a hen's egg. When I arrived home I examined the stone minutely, but although it was unlike other stones one might pick up in Grosvenor Place, I could discover nothing remarkable about its appearance. It bristled all over with little corrugations and spikes. A space of about an inch square had been polished, and on this shining surface I detected three vague nebulous markings; the colour was black, and the thing was moist to the touch.

I wrote the article, and soon after midnight retired to bed, after emptying, according to habit, the contents of my pockets upon a table that stands in the centre of my room. When I awoke, considerably after my usual hour, the sun was shining through the window, and I observed, in the drowsy, semi-conscious way we note things in the first moment of waking, that soon the broad white beam of sunlight which streamed through the window would fall upon the heterogeneous collection of articles that I had thrown upon the table the night before. Then I fell asleep again. When I re-awoke the articles lay full in the glare of the sunshine—knife, keys, match-box, and, towering above them all, the big stone, flanked by its ragged-edged shadow.

I gazed

I gazed sleepily at them, too lazy even to turn my head away, till gradually it dawned upon me that I had been mistaken in supposing that the stone was black. Its colour was red. I rubbed my eyes, and sat up in bed. Yes, the stone was certainly red—a heavy dark red. And yet as I looked it became clear to me that the stone was by no means a dark red. It was a *living red*, the colour of blood. I jumped from my bed, and touched the stone with my fore-finger. It burnt.

I am not a nervous man, but I confess to feeling startled and troubled. Was I going blind? Was I in for a serious illness? I had been working and worrying overmuch of late, and Nature, I knew, sometimes sent her warnings through odd channels. But then why should the stone burn? I pulled myself together, bathed and dressed leisurely, concentrating my mind by a great effort on other subjects. Half an hour passed. I then looked again. The stone stood in the shade, and was quite black—as black as a mourning hat-band.

Could . . . ? Could . . . ? I lifted the stone, it was now cold and moist to the touch, and again placed it in the centre of the beam of light, gazing intently with paper and pencil in my hand to note exactly what happened.

The rays of the sun concentrated themselves upon its surface, and, as the thing warmed, the deep black of its normal condition gave place to a dull red. Presently the red grew into a glow like a November sunset, then it hissed to a white heat, the colour of a furnace fire, and there before me was the thing palpitating and panting as if it were alive. With the point of my penknife I pushed it still further into the light, and even as I looked—*it moved*.

Methodically and carefully I cut two thin strips of paper, and placed them upon the table at either side of the stone. Then I closed

closed my eyes. When I opened them again one of the strips of paper was untouched. The other was gone—burnt. Its charred ends were curled up an inch behind the stone.

What did it mean?—A stone that glowed, and pulsed, and moved when placed in a beam of light. A stone that the sun had power to vivify. What did it mean?

The Sun!! The events of yesterday swept back to me—the Yellow Man—his mysterious words—his anxiety to procure the gem, his adoration of the setting sun. The sun again!!

I pressed my hands to my head. The voice of a paper seller in the streets below struck into my thoughts—“Robbery at Buckingham Palace. Strange Rumours.”

I ran to the window. A cab drew up at my door. In another moment, Mayfair, paler than pallor itself, burst, or rather staggered into the room.

“Madman,” I cried, “to leave your bed.”

With a ripple of laughter he placed his hand upon my shoulder, “I’m the madman am I?” he murmured, gazing at me, his blue eyes shining with merriment and admiration, “and you, what about you? Oh, my friend, my friend! Don’t speak. Let me laugh before you explain. You-you-you Napoleon! Oh! Oh! Oh! They’re after you,” he added. “You haven’t heard? The Raja and Kettle were found gagged and bound, and the gentle Kettle accuses you of the robbery—protests you were his only visitor during the evening. It *was* you, wasn’t it? Say it was you, do!”

As the words fell from his lips he reeled against me, and would have fallen had I not caught him in my arms. He was so weak, he looked so fragile, the collapse after the excitement of the morning was so complete and so sudden that I determined to keep him under my roof, and after a deal of persuasion I induced him to undress,

undress, and get into bed, where I left him in charge of my housekeeper, promising to telegraph immediately to his wife. I then dropped the stone, not without a shudder, into my pocket and started for the office. Before I had gone a hundred yards it became clear to me that I must be rid of the thing at any cost. The placard bills of the evening papers blazoned the words "Robbery—Buckingham Palace—Strange Rumours" from every street corner. There would be the very devil to pay if the stone were found in my possession. My head ached with attempts to devise schemes of getting rid of it. The obvious plan was to drop it down a sewer or over Westminster Bridge—back staircase schemes all of them, I decided, and outside consideration.

Restore it to the Raja! I dare not. Who would believe my yarn that the thing had fallen at my feet from the clouds on a foggy night in Grosvenor Place? If only I could hand it to the Yellow Man, and earn the £5000! Impossible. Oh, quite impossible.

As I drew near the office I found the lamps lighted, and the streets enveloped in a fog denser even than that of the previous day. A furtive look played over the hall porter's face, and the messenger boys were beaming with suppressed excitement. When I reached my room I found that every drawer and cupboard had been ransacked. The hall porter, a faithful creature, entered the room without knocking, crept timorously towards me, and whispered in my ear: "'Scuse me, sir, but two men from Scotland Yard have been a searching here. Gone to your house now, sir, and one of them give me the tip, sir, that they would be back here soon."

I thanked him, locked the door, turned down the gas, and threw myself upon the sofa. What on earth was I to do with the stone? Some sort of decision must be arrived at immediately. The room

was

was in semi-darkness. Fog lurked in the corners. The leaping fire threw fantastic reflections upon the window pane. That was the sole illumination.

As I lay there thinking, thinking, a sound came to me through the darkness like a cat scratching upon glass. Raising myself upon my elbow, I looked hard at the window whence the noise proceeded, and as I stared, a face, a thin, ascetic face, yellow, like a Mongolian's, with deep, searching eyes, and a restless mouth, shaped itself out of the surrounding gloom.

For a moment we stared at one another, and then an idea leapt into my mind. Slowly I arose from the sofa, lifted the stone from my coat pocket, and placed it upon the table within a foot from the window.

The thin scratch, scratch of a diamond cutting through glass fell upon my ear, then a pane was softly withdrawn from its frame, and through the opening a long yellow hand extended itself towards the stone, seized it, and disappeared back into the fog. I waited breathlessly for the pane to be replaced, but instead five bank notes fluttered through the opening, and fell upon the table. Then the glass returned noiselessly into position, and the face disappeared from behind the window.

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The above is a true account of the strange chance that brought the Enchanted Stone into my possession, and of the expedient by which I got rid of it. What I did with the £5000, together with the wonderful and fruitful adventures that befell the Enchanted Stone, and all those who became associated with it, I may perhaps tell at some future time.