

THE WOLF-MEN

A Tale of Amazing Adventure
In the Under-world

BY
FRANK POWELL

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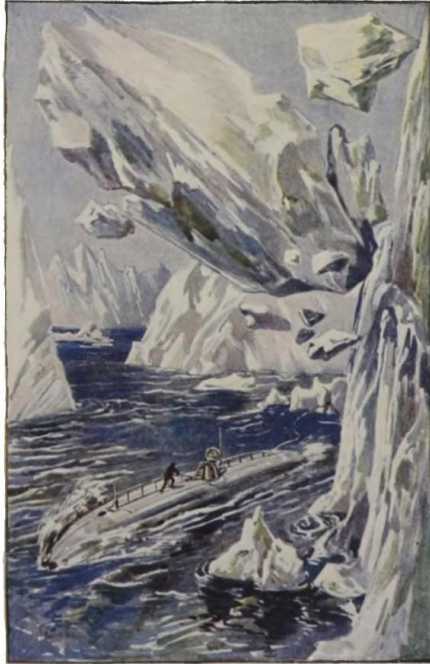
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THE WOLF-MEN.



"FOR AN INSTANT IT HUNG POISED, THEN THUNDERED
DOWNWARD"

Frontispiece

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THE WOLF-MEN.

PROLOGUE.

“YOU’LL come, then?”

Professor James Mervyn’s voice quivered with eagerness as he put this question to his companion, Sir William Seymour, in a private room of a large London hotel. The baronet, a man in the prime of life, over six feet in height, and broad in proportion, his bearded face tanned by many a year of travel under a tropical sun, rose, and paced the chamber for some moments ere answering.

“Yes, I’ll come,” he said at length. “I had made all arrangements to leave England to-morrow for a spell in India; but that must slide. I can’t miss this chance of a trip to the Pole. But now tell me something more of this wonderful idea of yours.”

The professor’s spare form seemed to dilate with scientific zeal, and his eyes flashed as he commenced to speak.

“To begin at the beginning,” he said. “I have had the idea in my mind for some years, but until the last six months I saw no chance of putting it into execution. Although my theory has been ridiculed and laughed to scorn by most, if not all, of my colleagues, yet I am still convinced that it is not only feasible, but that it is the only way in which the secret of the Pole, so jealously guarded by Dame Nature, may be wrested from her grasp.

“This was my line of reasoning: that it would be possible for a properly equipped submarine vessel to dive beneath the great ice barrier, and so reach the open sea which we know exists beyond. But the submarines of the day were in no way suitable for the

attempt. Mere toys in size, and in some instances proving veritable death-traps to their unfortunate crews, of what use were these to cope with the perils of the Arctic seas? So my theory remained dormant until, some weeks ago, I received a letter from Garth Hilton. You remember what a fellow Garth always was for making model boats?"

Seymour nodded affirmatively.

"Well," Mervyn continued, "it seems that he has had his old school chum, Tom Wilson, the engineer, staying with him at Hilton Manor for several months, and between them they have managed to construct a submarine, which, if it but answer their expectations, will prove the very thing I have been waiting for all these years. This is Garth's description of his craft," and, extracting a letter from the depths of a bulky note-book, Mervyn read as follows:

"Total length, three hundred and fifty feet; beam, fifty feet; torpedo-shaped, with turret or wheelhouse, from which the vessel is governed, in centre of deck. Tanks for submerging or raising; air reservoirs for supply whilst beneath the surface; liquid air engines, a patent of Wilson's, maximum speed of which is forty-five knots per hour upon the surface, and thirty submerged."

"Whew!" The professor's companion whistled in his astonishment at this last statement.

"Liquid air engines!" he said. "Why, I always thought that liquid air was a powerful explosive agent?"

"True," returned Mervyn; "but you must also remember that steam becomes an explosive when compressed, as witness the recent

boiler explosion, so that is no argument against the use of liquid air as a propelling power.”

“But I don’t quite see——” the baronet began in a puzzled tone.

“Let me try to make it clear to you,” interrupted Mervyn. “Though but eighteen, young Tom Wilson is already recognised as an authority on the subject of liquid air and its capabilities as a propelling agent. As you will recollect, his father was a famous engineer, and the family talent appears to have descended to the lad.

“Ever since he left school Tom has been working on his engines, lack of funds alone preventing him from perfecting them before now. With financial aid from Garth, however, he has at last been enabled to complete them, and I give you my word they are the finest set of engines I have ever been privileged to examine.

“The huge boiler is somewhat similar in shape to that of an ordinary marine engine, but is much larger, and contains a number of immense tubes, in which is stored the liquefied air. From these the stuff works direct upon the powerful cylinders. Heat, of course, is entirely unnecessary; in fact, it would shatter the whole affair to atoms, liquid air being many degrees colder than ice.

“The first two gallons of the stuff cost Garth six hundred pounds to make; but there the expense ends, the engines drawing their own supplies from the air as they work.”

“Wonderful!” Seymour cried; “and the vessel does forty-five knots to the hour, you say? What will the world think of it when the news becomes public?”

“The news will never become public,” retorted the scientist, “if we can avoid it. Garth has taken the greatest care to prevent the facts leaking out. All his workers are picked men, and have been sworn to secrecy with regard to the nature of the vessel upon which they are engaged.”

“It will leak out,” asserted Seymour, “despite his precautions. A thing of that sort cannot remain a secret long. The very secrecy will attract the attention of the curiously inclined.”

“Exactly,” returned Mervyn, “that is what we are afraid of. Already, it seems, some hint of the matter has reached the Continent, in spite of Garth’s care. Two days ago I ran down to the Manor to look over the boat ere the final details were completed, and while there, Garth called my attention to a couple of suspicious-looking characters—foreigners, evidently—who, he said, had been hanging round the village for some days. Still, I think there is little to fear. The dock where the submarine floats is guarded night and day.”

The scientist refolded the inventor’s letter, and replaced it, ere resuming the conversation.

“Of course, what I have read to you is a very bald statement of the facts. When I went down I confess I was surprised at the singular beauty of the craft. She is built of steel throughout, and furnished in a most luxurious manner; in fact, she must have cost Garth a fortune.”

“When do you start?” questioned Seymour.

“Within three days,” was the answer, “if the trial trip proves satisfactory. You will come down for that, I suppose? Then there is

the affair of the christening to be gone through—we have not yet decided on a name for the vessel.”

“There will be room for a weapon or two, I suppose? I should feel lost without my guns.”

“Bring a whole armoury if you like,” replied Mervyn, smiling, “though I doubt if you will find much scope for your sporting instincts in the icy realms of the north. There is a special chamber fitted up as an armoury aboard the vessel, and there are racks in the turret in which a few weapons will be kept in case of emergency. Oh, I forgot to tell you—Silas is coming.”

“What!” cried Seymour, “Silas Haverly? That’s good. He’s always ready for any adventure that may turn up. Is he down at Hilton now?”

“No,” returned the scientist; “he goes down to-morrow.”

He pulled out his watch as he spoke.

“By Jove!” he cried, “I’ve only twenty minutes to catch the express. Are you coming down with me?”

“Yes,” returned the other. “I’ll just leave word for my traps to be sent on, and then I’m with you.”

Three minutes later the two men passed out of the hotel entrance, and, entering a cab, were driven rapidly away into the night.

CHAPTER I.

AT THE MERCY OF CONSPIRATORS.

SILAS K. HAVERLY, millionaire and explorer, settled himself comfortably back in the corner of a first-class smoker. He had ten minutes to wait ere the express—which was to bear him sixty miles across country to Stanwich, the nearest station to Garth Hilton's place—was timed to start.

To look at him no one would ever have imagined that he was the owner of a colossal fortune—one of the railway kings of America. Yet such he was. Starting at the very foot of Fortune's ladder, he had worked his way upward, until he owned the greater part of the vast network of rails upon which he had worked as a boy.

A wiry figure of a man he was, with endurance written all over him. He had a cool, determined face, and the firm set of his chin revealed the dogged resolution which had enabled him to amass one of the largest fortunes in the world. Altogether, he was not a man with whom one would care to trifle.

"H'm!" he muttered, blowing a cloud of smoke from a fragrant cigar, "I guess I'm having it all to myself this trip."

Indeed, it did seem as though he was to travel alone, for the time of departure arrived, and all the passengers appeared to have taken their places. There was a whistle from the guard, a warning shriek from the engine, then the iron monster began to glide out of the station. As it did so, two men rushed across the platform, flung open the door of Haverly's compartment, and, despite the cries of

the officials to “Stand back,” precipitated themselves into the carriage.

“Only just in time,” one of them said with an oath, as he slammed to the door behind him; “it would have been all up with the scheme if we had missed this train, for——”

He broke off short as he became aware of the presence of Haverly, and took his seat, scowling darkly at the American, who appeared to be blissfully unconscious of the existence of his fellow-travellers.

Yet already the Yankee had “sized up” the twain as a pair of rascally adventurers who would stick at nothing to secure the success of their plans. That they were engaged in some nefarious scheme seemed plain from the few words that one had let slip as he entered, and the millionaire wondered what could be the nature of their enterprise.

In low tones the two conversed as the train sped over the gleaming rails, rapidly leaving the brick and mortar tentacles of the London octopus behind. Through the smiling countryside the express flew, belching forth a blighting, poisonous cloud of smoke, which hung for a time almost motionless, ere dissolving into the atmosphere, so still was the evening air.

The first stop was at Granley, and here Haverly’s companions alighted.

“I wonder what their dodge is?” the millionaire muttered, as they passed down the platform; then an exclamation escaped him.

Just beneath the seat where the two men had been sitting lay a crumpled sheet of paper. Promptly Haverly secured this.

It was a letter. He opened it out quickly, and the first word to catch his eye was “*submarine*”!

Instantly his alert brain grasped the significance of the discovery. He connected it immediately with a message he had received from Hilton some days previously, referring to the suspicious characters hanging about the vicinity of the Manor, and to the fear that an attempt might be made to steal the boat. At the time he had dismissed the idea as absurd, but now——! Without further scruple, he proceeded to make himself master of the contents of the letter.

It was brief, but very much to the point, running thus:

“DEAR FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE,—It is imperative that the affair be carried out without delay, as we are advised that the expedition starts within two days. Once the vessel leaves the dock, not all the plotting in the world could ever give us possession of her. Therefore it remains for you, my friend, to carry out your part of the programme with all speed. You must gain possession of the submarine to-night. Let nothing hinder you. We hear that Hilton Manor is a lonely house, and four determined men, well armed, should be able to overcome all resistance offered by the inventor and his friends. What matter a few lives more or less, so that our plan succeeds and we attain our object? The *Night Hawk* will await you at the appointed spot, outside the bay. *We remind you of the penalty of failure!*”

That was all, but it was enough to startle even the cool-blooded Yankee for a moment.

The missive was practically the death-warrant of his friends down at Hilton, who were even now preparing for departure on their

North Polar trip. Hastily he placed the incriminating sheet in his breast pocket, wondering the while why the conspirators had left the train, instead of going straight through to Stanwich.

Hardly had the thought crossed his mind ere the twain reappeared, and climbed into the carriage. Haverly noted with secret satisfaction that they seemed strangely uneasy, glancing about as though searching for something.

“Lost anything?” he inquired casually, as the train moved off again.

“No,” one of them snarled, but the look with which he favoured the American made that gentleman glad that he carried a six-shooter in his pocket. Ere long the express was once more racing over the country at sixty miles an hour.

The millionaire’s scoundrelly companions seemed by this time to have given up their search, for they settled themselves back against the cushions, muttering together in low tones, which the roar of the train completely drowned. Haverly, whilst apparently studying the flying landscape, contrived to keep his eye upon the pair, who had evidently made up their minds that their fellow-traveller had picked up their lost letter.

At length one of them addressed the American.

“Could you oblige me with a match?” he asked. He produced a cigar-case as he spoke, and extracted one of the three cigars within.

“Pleasure,” muttered the Yankee briefly, offering his match-box with his left hand, while his right closed menacingly about the haft of the weapon in his pocket.

“Thanks,” returned the stranger, “can I offer you a cigar?” and he passed over his case, from which Haverly selected a weed.

Some thought of drugged cigars flashed over the Yankee’s mind, but he dismissed the idea, arguing to himself that the adventurers could not have foreseen the loss of their letter, so could not have prepared for it. Yet this good-fellowship did not deceive the millionaire for a moment. That there was some purpose in the conspirators’ action he did not doubt; but it would never do to let the fellows think he feared them. Therefore, keeping a wary eye upon the movements of the twain, he withdrew his hand from his pocket and proceeded to light up.

He was holding a match to the end of the cigar when the stranger’s hand shot out suddenly.

Match and cigar were dashed from Haverly’s lips, and a rag, soaked with some sickly-smelling chemical, was pressed over his mouth and nose. Holding his breath, he struggled to remove the suffocating thing, mad that he should have been caught napping when he imagined himself on the alert for an attack. With all his might he strove, but the second conspirator came to the aid of his friend, pinioning Haverly’s arms, and soon the chloroform did its work. Helpless and unconscious, the Yankee sank back on to the cushions; and while the express still rattled on at full speed, the two ruffians went through their victim’s pockets.

Everything they replaced save the letter they had taken so much trouble to secure, despising the American’s cash as game too much beneath them. With repeated applications of the chloroform rag, they kept Haverly unconscious until the train reached Stanwich. Almost ere it came to a standstill, they alighted, and, supporting

their victim between them, led him to a train waiting alongside the opposite platform.

Into one of the carriages of this they hustled him. Then, while one remained in the carriage, the other moved off to the booking-office, returning presently with a ticket, which he fixed prominently in the American's hat-band. Very few people were upon the platform, and doubtless those that observed the movements of the conspirators thought that their unconscious companion was drunk.

A final application of the rag, and the scoundrels left the carriage, closing the door upon the sleeping figure of the millionaire.

Within a few moments the latter was whirling northward, leaving further and further behind him each instant the men who were commissioned to rob his friend of the fruits of his genius, and perhaps of his life.

With every mile the train advanced the Yankee's chances of warning Garth lessened.

An hour passed ere he recovered from the stupefying effects of the drug, and by that time he was forty odd miles from Stanwich.

At first his numbed brain refused to grasp the situation, but, as his faculties recovered their normal condition, the recollection of all that had transpired swept upon him. Inwardly cursing himself for his folly, he moved to the window and gazed out.

But the landscape, over which night was fast settling, presented no familiar features. He pulled out his watch, and by the lateness of the hour, he knew that he must be far from his destination.

Suddenly the reflection in the window of his hat and its pasteboard ornament caught his eye.

He pulled out the ticket. It was for Carnmoor, a place he had never before heard of.

“They meant to get me far enough out of the way,” he growled savagely. “If it hadn’t been for this the officials would have turned me out at the first place they took tickets,” and he crumpled the offending card in his hand. The slowing down of the train caused him to glance once more through the glass. Soon they swept into a station. The glimmering gas-jets, shining feebly through the gathering dusk, revealed the name of the place.

The conspirators had timed his recovery to a nicety. It was Carnmoor! Hardly waiting for the motion of the carriages to cease, Haverly leapt out, and made straight for the telegraph office.

If he could not warn his friends in person, he could wire them.

Rushing into the office, the American startled the sleepy operator by bawling for a form.

“Tick that off,” he cried, after he had scribbled a message, “and lively,” and over the wires there flashed this warning:

“Danger! For God’s sake, beware. Plan to capture the submarine to-night. Will explain when I come.—Haverly.”

Somewhat easier in his mind, the millionaire strolled forth to inquire about the next train to Stanwich.

“There ain’t none,” was the brusque reply of the porter he questioned, who appeared to be the only specimen of that genus upon the station.

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