ENGLISH STUDIES SERIES 1

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THE CAREER OF JENGHIS KHAN

We have now to tell of the last and greatest of all the raids of nomadism upon the civilizations of the East and West. We have traced in this history the development by side by side of these two ways of living, and we have pointed out that as the civilizations grew more extensive and better organized, the arms, the mobility, and the intelligence of the nomads also improved. The nomad was not simply an uncivilized man, he was a man specialized and specializing along his own line. From the very beginning of history the nomad and the settled people have been in reaction. Whenever civilization seems to be choking amidst its weeds of wealth and debt and servitude, when its faiths seem rotting into cynicism and its powers of further growth are hopelessly entangled in effete formulae, the nomad drives in like a plough to break up the festering stagnation and release the world to new beginnings. The Mongol aggression, which began with the thirteenth century, was the greatest, and so far it has been the last, of all these destructive ploughings of human association.

From entire obscurity the Mongols came very suddenly into history towards the close of the twelfth century. They appeared in the country to the north of China, in the land of origin of the Huns and Turks, and they were manifestly of the same strain as these peoples. They were gathered together under a chief; under his son Jenghis Khan their power grew with extraordinary swiftness.

The career of Jenghis Khan and his immediate successors astounded the world, and probably astounded no one more than these Mongol Khans themselves. The Mongols were in the twelfth century a tribe subject to those Kin who had conquered North-east China. They were a horde of nomadic horsemen living in tents, and subsisting mainly upon mare's milk products and meat. Their occupations were pasturage and hunting, varied by war. They drifted northward as the snows melted for summer pasture, and southward to winter pasture after the custom of the steppes. Their military education began with a successful insurrection against the Kin. The empire of Kin had the resources of half China behind it and in the struggle the Mongols learnt very much of the military science of the Chinese. By the end of the twelfth century they were already a fighting tribe of exceptional quality.

The opening years of the career of Jenghis were spent in developing his military machine, in assimilating the Mongols and the associated tribes about them into an organised army. His first considerable extension of power was westward, when the Tartar Kirghis and the Uigurs (who were the Tartar people of the Tarim basin) were not so much conquered as induced to join his organisation. He then attacked the Kin empire and took Pekin (1214). The Khitan people, who had been so recently subdued by the Kin, threw in their fortunes with his, and were of very great help to him. The settled Chinese population went on sowing and reaping and trading during this change of masters without losing its weight to either side.

We have already mentioned the very recent Kharismian empire of Turkestan, Persia and North India. This empire extended eastward to Kashgar, and it must have seemed one of the most progressive and hopeful empires of the time. Jenghis Khan, while still engaged in this war with the Kin empire, sent envoys to Kharisma. They were put to death, an almost incredible stupidity. The Kharismian government, to use the political jargon of today, had decided not to 'recognize' Jenghis Khan and took this spirited course with him. Thereupon (1218) the great host of horsemen that Jenghis Khan had consolidated swept over the Pamirs and down into Turkestan. It was well armed, and probably it had some guns and gunpowder for siege work—for the Chinese were certainly using gunpowder at this time, and the Mongols learnt its use from them. Kashgar, Khokand, Bokhara fell and then Samarkand, the capital of the Kharismian empire. Thereafter nothing held the Mongols in the Kharismian territories. They swept westward to the Caspian, and southward as far as Lahore. To the north of the Caspian a Mongol army encountered a Russian force from Kieff. There was a series of battles, in which the Russian
armies were finally defeated and the Grand Duke of Kieff was taken prisoner. So it was that the Mongols appeared on the northern shores of the Black Sea. A panic swept Constantinople, which set itself to reconstruct its fortifications. Meanwhile other armies were engaged in the conquest of the empire of the Hsia in China. This was annexed, and only the southern part of the Kin empire remained unsubdued. In 1227, Jenghis Khan died in the midst of a career of triumph. His empire reached already from the Pacific to the Dnieper. And it was an empire still vigorously expanding.

Like all empires founded by nomads, it was, to begin with, purely a military and administrative empire, a framework rather than a rule. It centred on the personality of the monarch, and its relations with the mass of the population over which it ruled was simply one of taxation for the maintenance of the horde. But Jenghis Khan had called to his aid a very able and experienced administrator of the Kin empire, who was learned in all the traditions and science of the Chinese. This statesman, Yelü Chucai, was able to carry on the affairs of the Mongols long after the death of Jenghis Khan, and there can be little doubt that he is one of the great political heroes of history. He tempered the barbaric ferocity of his masters, and saved innumerable cities and works of art from destruction. He collected archives and inscriptions, and when he was accused of corruption, his sole wealth was found to consist of documents and a few musical instruments. To him perhaps quite as much as to Jenghis is the efficiency of the Mongol military machine to be ascribed. Under Jenghis, we may note further, we find the completest religious toleration established across the entire breadth of Asia.

NOTES

LINE

1 tell of = give an account of, write about, deal with.
   It is advisable for the student to use tell only in the more frequent patterns:
   He told me to come, He told us something.

6 nomads
   Tribes or peoples that wander about in search of pasture, here contrasted with the various civilizations, whose characteristic was settled life in one place.

10 have been in reaction = have affected and influenced one another.

11 amidst = among.
   Only used in formal, literary writing.

13 effete = exhausted, worn out.

14 festering = rotting, infected.
   (Often used of a wound that has become infected.)

17 so far it has been the last
   Note the change to the present perfect tense here, required because, although the author is talking about past events, he wishes to link them with the present state of affairs.

22 of the same strain = of the same ancestry or racial origin.

30 horde = a troop of nomads (specific use); a great crowd or company (general use).

33 snows
   Here used in the plural because the author is referring not merely to the substance, snow, but to large areas of snow, or to several falls of snow lying on the ground.

36 insurrection = revolt, rebellion.
   There is no verb from insurrection; rebel or revolt must be used.

42 machine
   Here organization.

49 threw in their fortunes with his = decided to support him and share his fortune.

58 put to death = executed.

60 jargon = the specialized terminology of a particular science, art, profession, or trade. The word is used contemptuously.

61 thereupon = at that, when that had been done.
   Only used in formal, literary writing.

68 thereafter = after that.
   Only used in formal, literary writing.
annexed = incorporated into the conqueror's dominions.
tempered = moderated.
sole = only.

Always used in front of the noun it refers to.
to him ... is the efficiency ... to be ascribed
Note inversion of the usual word order.
Compare: To London came representatives of many countries.

EXERCISES

1 Pick out the sentences in the text which could be quoted in justification of the following statements:
a Nomadic raids upon the civilizations of the world have had beneficial effects.
b Very little is known about the history of the Mongols before the close of the twelfth century.
c The Chinese in the twelfth century had a greater knowledge of military science than the Mongols.
d In his war against the Kin, Jenghis Khan did not receive active support from the settled Chinese population.
e Jenghis Khan made use of Chinese administrative as well as military experience.

2 Fill in the gaps in the following passage with a or an, the, some, or leave them blank, as required:
   — Mongol aggression, which began in the thirteenth century, was the greatest of all — raids of — nomadism upon — civilizations of — East and — West. We have already traced — development side by side of these two ways of — living, and have pointed out that as — civilizations grew more extensive and better organized, — arms, — mobility, and — intelligence of — nomads also improved. — nomad was not simply — uncivilized man. He was — man specializing along his own line.
   — Mongols were — horde of — nomadic horsemen living in — tents and subsisting mainly upon — mare's milk products and — meat. Their occupations were — pastur-
   age and — hunting, varied by — war. They drifted northwards as — snows melted for — summer pasture, and southward to — winter pasture, after — custom of — steppes.
   Jenghis Khan sent — envoys to Kharismia. They were put to — death, — almost incredible stupidity. — Mongols took Samarkand, — capital of — Kharismian Empire and advanced to — Caspian Sea, where they encountered — Russian army. They defeated — Russians in — series of — battles, in one of which — Grand Duke of Kiev was taken — prisoner.

3 Rewrite the following sentences, substituting relative clauses for the phrases with participles (underlined).
   Example: The people sitting in the back row could not hear the lecturer.
   The people who were sitting in the back row could not hear the lecturer.
   a The nomad was not simply an uncivilized man, he was a man specialized and specializing along his own line.
   b They were a horde of nomadic tribesmen living in tents and subsisting mainly upon meat.
   c Their occupations were pasturage and hunting, varied by war.
   d Like all empires founded by nomads, it was purely a military and administrative empire.

4 Fill in the gaps in the following sentences with as, when, or while, as required.
   a We have traced the development side by side of nomadism and civilization, and have pointed out that — the civilizations grew better organized, the arms, the mobility, and the intelligence of the nomads also improved.
   b We have pointed out that — civilization seems to be decaying, the nomad drives in like a plough to break up the festering stagnation.
   c The Mongols were nomads, who drifted northward — the snows melted to summer pasture.
Jenghis Khan, still engaged in a war with the Kin Empire, sent envoys to Kharismia.

The chief minister collected archives and inscriptions, and — he was accused of corruption, his wealth was found to consist only of documents.

Western Europe's first attempt to expand, in the movement known as the Crusades, was unsuccessful, for the attempt to impose the political and economic dominion of West Europeans on other peoples ended in complete failure, — in the interchange of culture, the Europeans received a greater impress from the Muslims and Byzantines than they imparted to them.

Many university students who live at home are able to have a quiet room in which to work, but most of them, — they were grammar school pupils, probably had to work in the family living-room.

During the twenties motor vehicles became increasingly common and more and more shops called daily or weekly for orders and delivered goods free of charge, — light commercial vans displaced the horse and cart.

Notice the phrase to use the political jargon of today (line 59). This construction with the infinitive denotes a kind of interpolation on the part of the author — as if he were saying: Here I shall use the political jargon of today.

Rewrite the parts underlined of the following sentences, using this infinitive construction. Be careful to punctuate the rewritten sentences correctly.

He was here I shall use his own words an absolute monarch who does not have to answer for any of his actions.

Here I shall quote form a United Nations report it took 200,000 years for the world's population to reach 2,500 million.

The world is faced with alarming problems: the threat of atomic war and the danger of over-population. Here I have mentioned only two of them.

It is obvious that when people live together in communities their freedom to do as they like must be restricted in various ways, Here I shall take an obvious example if an individual is in the habit of throwing his household rubbish into the street, he must be prevented from doing so, otherwise the health of his neighbours will be endangered.

In the text the following words are used metaphorically. Make sentences of your own using each of them in a literal, physical sense:

choke, weed, entangle, festen.

Give the adjectives that are related to the following nouns:
servitude, nomad, stagnation, occupation, custom, ferocity, destruction, corruption, toleration.

Give verbs that correspond to the following nouns:
mobility, stagnation, aggression, insurrection, maintenance.

Take some other empire from any period of history, and give a short account of its rise, as the author has done in the text.