THE OCCULT — THE SUPERNATURAL — THE BIZARRE

Weird Tales

47961

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SUMMER

ALL CLASSIC

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ALL NEW

CARL JACOBI • RAY RUSSELL
LEO P. KELLEY • SUSAN C. LETTE

HE WAS THE LEGEND, TOO!

That WEIRD TALES is a legend is mainly due to the brilliant editing of Farnsworth Wright whose name appeared on the masthead from the November, 1924 to the March, 1940 issues. Sadly, when he died in June, 1940, not a line about his passing was run in this magazine.

That injustice this editorial now sets out to correct. Farnsworth Wright did not create WEIRD TALES, but he unquestionably was the soul of the publication during its years of glory. He discovered Robert E. Howard, August W. Derleth, C. L. Moore, Robert Bloch, Edmond Hamilton, Frank Belknap Long, Arthur J. Burks, Robert Spencer Carr, Donald Wandrei among scores of others and bought the very first story of Tennessee Williams. In the realm of fantastic art, he purchased the first works of Virgil Finlay and Hannes Bok, and what is not known is that he bought the first professional sketches of Richard Calkins, who later did the artwork for the Buck Rogers strips!

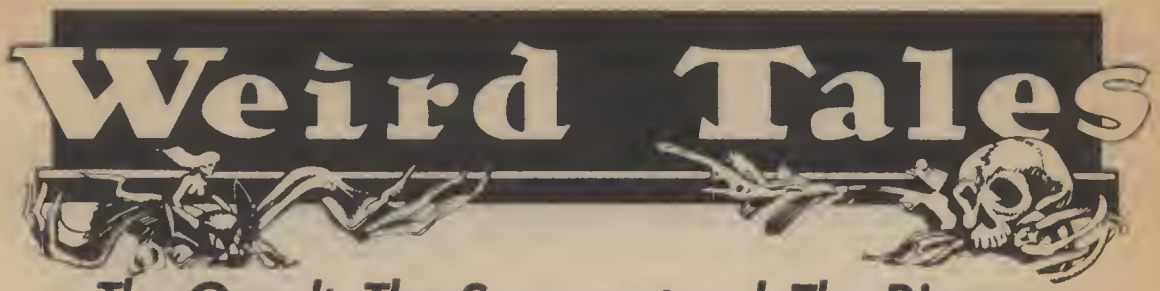
Wright's achievement in successfully keeping alive what was to all intents and purposes the world's first all-fantasy magazine cannot be minimized. The fact that WEIRD TALES existed and already had a steady readership when the first science fiction magazine appeared in 1926, undoubtedly gave a big assist to launching that field. Wright had run one or two straight science fiction pieces in every issue of his magazine, so he provided a reservoir of readers that could be tapped. Additionally, the number of the authors that wrote science fiction with his encouragement provided a trained cadre of specialized authors for the new publications.

Wright really cared about authors and there was no limit to his encouragement for those he felt possessed talent. The result was a publication which was correctly subtitled "The Unique Magazine." He generated a literary atmosphere never equaled or duplicated by any other publication.

He made a few errors in judgement. He rejected *The Colour Out of Space* by H. P. Lovecraft, possibly that author's supreme masterpiece. In his attempt to "popularize" the magazine, he ran sensual, erotic covers that did not correctly mirror the contents. Despite this, the debt of the fantasy field to him was overwhelming. Few publications, pulp or slick, have had a higher percentage of their total fiction contents reprinted in anthologies and author collections. While science fiction is normally at the opposite end of the spectrum from most supernatural fiction, he won praise and support in the rising science fiction field by the sheer literary quality of his product.

The man Jacob Clark Henneberger selected to pilot his magazine, who so magnificently created the legend of WEIRD TALES, has now been dead twenty-four years, but the issues that comprise the sixteen years of Farnsworth Wright's editorship have become the fantasy collector's treasure and Wright's monument.

SAM MOSKOWITZ
Editor



The Occult • The Supernatural • The Bizarre

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ANY MAGAZINE TO grow and develop, must continue to bring new talent on the scene, and in a publication as steeped in nostalgia and fantastic lore as WEIRD TALES, the reappearance of one of the great old names from the past with something new is always a cause for elation.

Carl Jacobi was a discovery of WEIRD TALES. When at the University of Minnesota, he entered a short story contest where one of the judges was Margaret Culkin Banning. She was reputed to have been responsible for submitting his short story *Mive,* a tale of a gigantic breed of butterfly whose powdery coating creates frightful illusions in the mind of a man who has tasted it. The story, which appeared in the January, 1932 issue of this magazine, showed the very powerful influence of H. P. Lovecraft. Robert E. Howard, later one of Jacobi's most enthusiastic supporters, wrote in concerning the first story: "There are glimpses that show finely handled imagination almost perfect—just enough revealed, just enough concealed."

While Jacobi was never a prolific writer, his stories peculiarly suited the fancy of WEIRD TALES readers. As early as 1947, when ARKHAM HOUSE still had a wide spectrum of uncollected masters of the supernatural to pick from, his tales appeared in hardcover under the title *Revelations in Black,* a title taken from one of the most highly praised vampire stories ever to appear in the pages of this magazine.

A second book of his *Portraits in Moonlight* was published by ARKHAM HOUSE in 1964. He was reported to be working on the content of a third volume. Unfortunately Mr. Jacobi had a stroke which has slowed down his rate of literary production still further.

We are fortunate indeed to have secured this new story, *The Music Lover,* a very modern type of presentation from a WEIRD TALES master.

The Music Lover

By CARL JACOBI

THE LAST THING in the world George Bainter thought of buying that August afternoon was a record-player. But the music department of Elwell's Department Store was on the same floor as the general offices, where he had called on an insurance client, and he heard the muted throb of melody in the air while he waited for the down-elevator.

You might say Bainter had a tin ear. He liked any music with a firm beat, a simple tune, and a race-track tempo. As far as classics were concerned, he could detect little difference between a Chopin Sonata and a Bach Fugue.

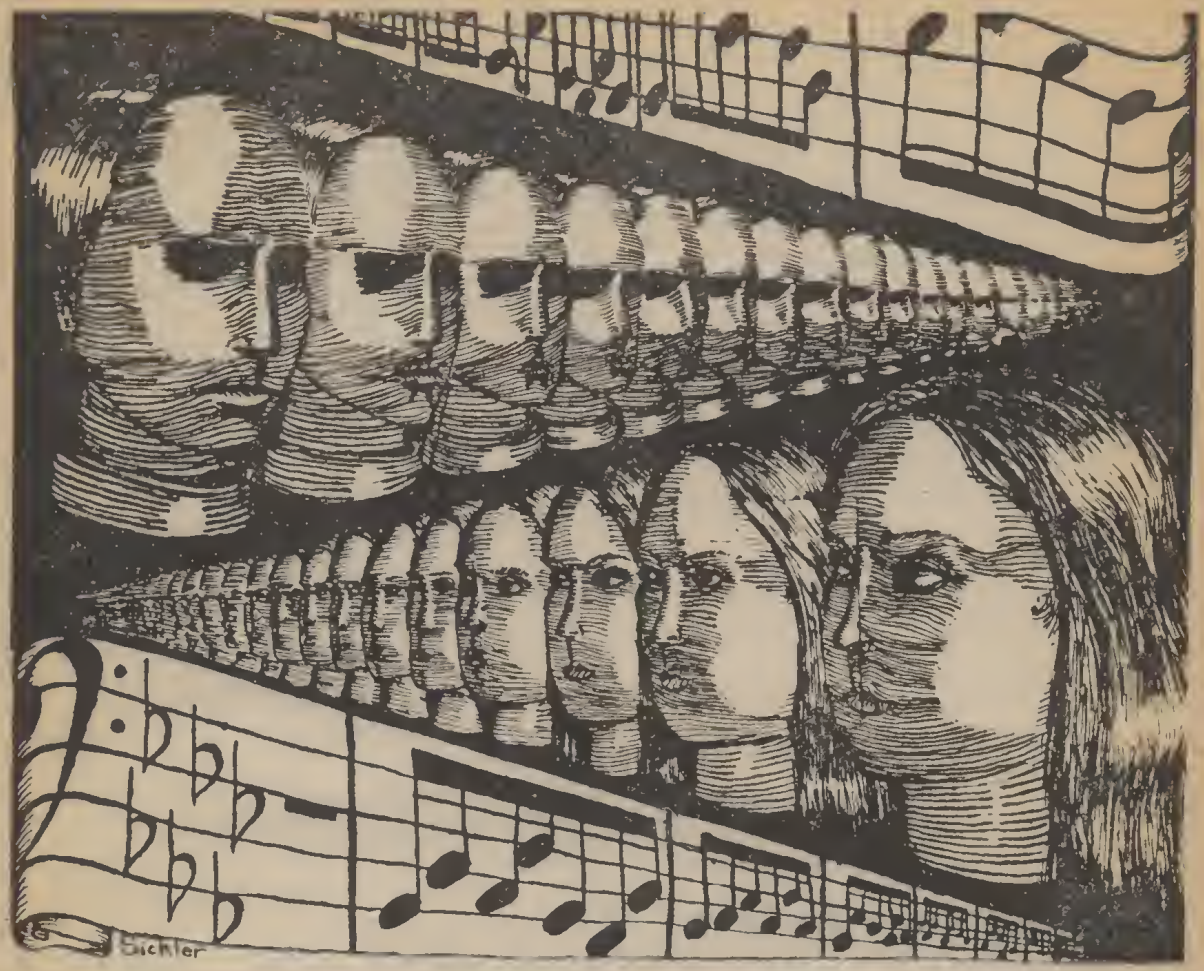
Bainter didn't know it but the Elwell store's crack salesman was on duty that afternoon. He spotted the insurance agent waiting for the elevator, noticed him looking over his shoulder at a walnut cabinet that stood attractively just off the aisle. The salesman sauntered over.

"Good afternoon," he said. "Can I interest you in our home-theater console?"

The home-theater console retailed for one thousand two hundred fifty dollars which was of course beyond Bainter's means, but the salesman's low pressure tactics and shrewd character analysis were moderately successful. After due time, infinite persuasion and friendly chit-chat he wrote an order for one Harmony Deluxe Stereo, fifty percent down, balance in ninety days, delivery Wednesday.

Pleased with his purchase, Bainter thought his wife, Madge, would likewise be pleased, considering her devotion to things musical, but she wasn't.

"A stereo!" she said. "And you with nothing but a bunch of old



rock-and-roll 78's. What are you going to do with it?"

Bainter replied that the instrument would play records of all speeds and besides it was a good-looking piece of furniture.

But on Wednesday, the day of the phono's arrival, Madge apparently did an about-face. She presented Bainter with a thin package tied with a white ribbon.

"If you've forgotten today is our anniversary, I haven't," she said.

Smiling guiltily, he opened the paper-wrapping to reveal a twelve-inch record in an old-world, gaily-colored envelope. *Double Concerto in B Flat Minor,* read the label, *Piano and French Horn. Sebastian and Moratime Talbot. Belgian Symphony Orchestra. Stereophonic Recording.*

"Play it," Madge said.

Bainter dropped the record on the turntable. He had some hesitation in adjusting the bass, treble, and presence studs, for he was unfamiliar with the controls. But presently the needle arm swung over and the instrument began to play.

Even to an untrained ear like Bainter's the music was entrancing. The sound of the piano was not only reproduced with a timbre and tonal quality that was amazingly life-like but the separation of the right and left hand speakers had a mystic, fairy-like beauty to the listening ear. At the same time the French horn obligato seemed to emerge from hidden caverns in the opposite wall. It was as if two complete orchestras were on either side of the room, each striving for his attention.

"Separation," said Bainter. "That's what the salesman said stereo is. Division of the music into separate but homologous parts. But I had no idea. . ."

He listened ecstatically. Yet as he did some of the pleasurable qualities seemed to fade and the sense of division increased. He got the impression that one of his ears was drawing farther and farther away without,

however, decreasing the sound. A faint spell of nervousness seized him.

Bainter got up, walked to the instrument and lifted its cover. The needle was but an inch from the starting edge. It seemed a long time since it had started to play. He pushed the control to *stop.*

And now in one corner of the record label he saw several lines of printing he had not noticed before. *For best results,* it read, *listener should sit eight feet from phono, four feet to right of center. Excessive clothing will tend to muffle sound.*

Bainter frowned slightly in puzzlement. Then, shrugging, he slipped out of his coat, placed his chair in the specified position and started the record again.

The second playing left him slightly breathless. His hands trembled a little as he put the record away in the cabinet. Madge, noting his queer look, asked if anything was wrong.

"Because if there is," she said, "let me know and I'll be glad to cancel the party."

"What party?" asked Bainter

"I told you; it's our anniversary. I invited a few friends over. Just Bill and Patty, Clair and Joe and Ellen. And Eric Waverly, of course."

"Of course," Bainter said. "That guy gives me a pain."

"Now, George, you know he's a bachelor and all alone."

"That's just what bothers me," Bainter said.

It did bother him. Not the fact that Waverly was a bachelor, but the fact that he made eyes at Madge whenever he thought Bainter wasn't looking. Only last week when Waverly had stopped by, ostensibly to return a borrowed book, Bainter had seen him holding his wife's hand.

Waverly was an electronics man and in far better financial circumstances than Bainter. He was big, muscular, and handsome, with a widow's peak and a perpetual smile. What he saw in Madge was a mystery.

On the wrong side of forty, interested in little save her collection of music first editions and manuscripts, she had allowed herself to go to seed. Her hair was greying rapidly and her eyes were red and watery from a constant allergy. It was not love but the right of possession that aroused Bainter's jealousy.

TWO HOURS LATER the guests arrived. The women went into the kitchen and Waverly began to examine the new stereo.

"Should've told me you were interested in one of those things," he said patronizingly. "I could've got you a better deal."

"I did all right," Bainter said.

"For a package job maybe. I could've got you some high-grade components—speakers, amplifiers, a much better turn-table—and saved you money to boot. Play it."

Bainter hesitated. A little reluctantly, then, he placed the record Madge had given him into manual operation and sat down in the chair which was still in the specified position.

The music began and again he was charmed by its life-like qualities. Again he got the impression that one of his ears, or rather his auditory nerve, had detached itself from his body and was moving sideways across the room.

Then he received a profound shock.

Looking through the open doorway into the dining room, he saw the three women and Madge gathered about a familiar figure who was smiling and speaking amiably. As from close range he heard the figure's voice and this was also familiar. He completely forgot Waverly, who now moved to join the group in the dining room.

The complete realization dawned upon him gradually. It was himself—his alter ego—who stood there. But it was more than a separation of his corporeal self into two images. With the phenomenon came a twofold awareness of his surroundings from each of the two vantage points.

Like the phono, which had electronically divided the grooved recording into separated vibrations, so now he had two source stations. That is to say, he could see himself from the parlor in the dining room, and from the dining room, as he occasionally glanced through the doorway, he could see himself—image-number-one—in the parlor. After the initial shock Bainter wondered about the

guests. What would they think if they saw him in two places at the same time?

But the phenomenon apparently didn't work that way. As he strode after Waverly toward the dining room he was aware that image-number-two faded from the gaze of image-number-one.

Panic seized him. He was seized by a fear for survival. What did they call a splitting of personalities? Schizophrenia. Perhaps he faced a breakdown of his mental-nervous system. Perhaps he was undergoing the first step in the losing of his sanity. If so, what had induced it?

The double effect remained, but was not noticeable to the others during the meal. The second image seemed to lurk in the shadows near the kitchen. It didn't move nor speak, but Bainter was so unnerved he barely touched the baked meat loaf which was Madge's pride. He only drank repeated cups of coffee.

He said nothing to his wife or to the guests. After the supper Madge remained behind to clear the dishes, refusing all aid in the task. In spite of his perturbed state of mind, Bainter was acutely conscious that his other self stood in the shadows of the doorway drapes, watching his wife.

Presently Waverly, who had been describing one of his company's newest electronic gadgets, got up and strolled toward the kitchen. Instantly Bainter-number-one came on the alert as jealousy swept like a cloud over him.

He watched Waverly move toward the doorway out of his field of vision into the field of his second self. He saw his wife enter the kitchen as Waverly came through the swinging door. He saw them go into each other's arms, cling there in a passionate embrace. He heard Madge say, "Careful. George might see us. I think he's suspicious already."

NEXT MORNING, to his almost overwhelming relief, Bainter found that the double effect was completely gone. But the experience had left him with extreme hypertension.

He phoned his office that he would not be in that day. In the afternoon, still concerned for his mental health, he called at the offices of one of the city's most prominent neurologists where nervously he began to outline his symptoms.

"What's schizophrenia, Doc?"

The physician smiled. "I can assure you that isn't your trouble. But frankly, yours is an unusual case. Why do you connect your symptoms with a record player?"

"I don't know. It just seems the source, the focal point."

Bainter came away disturbed and unsatisfied; the medic had said little to console him. Back home he found Madge also nervous and ill-at-ease. From time to time, she glanced sideways with a sudden turn of her head. Bainter was about to ask her what was wrong when the skirling of the telephone interrupted him. Madge answered it, instantly lowered her voice:

"Are you mad? Why did you call me here? Yes, he's in the other room."

Unseen, Bainter maneuvered himself behind her until he could hear the voice at the other end of the wire.

He listened to them exchange words of affection and then he heard Waverly say, "Hasn't there been any reaction yet?"

"Yes, he stayed home from the office today. But later he went out. I don't know where he went."

"It should work faster than this. Are you certain he followed instructions?"

"Of course I'm sure. What's it supposed to do?"

"I'm afraid it's too involved for your pretty little head. Besides, I don't want to speak of it over the phone."

"But I still don't understand."

"Just leave everything to me."

"Eric, I want to know," Madge said vehemently.

There was silence at the other end for a long moment. Then Waverly said slowly, "It has to do with ultra sonics. Bombarding the body with thousands of cycles produces all sorts of effects; destroying the marrow in the bone structure for one thing. I went a bit farther than that. That record was made to. . ."

"Eric, I've not been feeling myself the last day. Could it be. . .?"

"No, of course not," Waverly said

quickly. "You're just tense, that's all."

At that moment Bainter made a movement and Madge saw it out of the corner of her eye. She said, "I'll have to call you back. I'm busy now."

A slow, all-encompassing wrath swept over Bainter. Shoved aside was concern for his health. He knew the source of the trouble now and the significance probed deep into him. He had little or no money to leave behind; if he had, he could have understood such a motive. But simply to make the way clear for their desires—that was staggering. An icy deliberation settled over him. Two could play that game of chess, he told himself. Forewarned was forearmed.

He went into the parlor, pulled the record player away from the wall, undid the turnscrews on the back panel and gazed at the wiring within.

Satisfied, he shoved the instrument across the room until it was abreast of the radiator.

A single thought brooded far back in a corner of his brain: *In the event anything happened to Madge he would have an alibi.* Everyone knows that a man can't be in two places at once.

He let two days pass. When Madge left for a shopping trip he took the opportunity to search her room. He found no savings bonds or jewelry of any value or insurance policy. Madge had her own ideas about insurance and had refused to invest in such "intangibles".

But in a bureau drawer he came upon her collection of music originals, most of which she had inherited from her father.

On top was the Mozart with its date of 1779. He didn't know how much it was worth but he remembered that her father had been offered thousands for it.

Continuing his preparations, Bainter bought a step-up casola plug and proceeded to wire it to the amplifier of the stereo. The casola would multiply the voltage and short to ground at a trigger touch. It would also consume itself while completing its operation. One had only to touch the ornamental metal band on the cover while dusting to make contact with the deadly charge.

Several times during the days that followed Bainter interrupted his wife in little incidents he was sure were a part of the plot against him.

She terminated phone calls abruptly and hastily swept aside pieces of correspondence when she became aware of his presence. She also suggested from time to time that he play the stereo.

For this Bainter needed no urging. Though he knew he was playing with fire, he couldn't help himself. Like a magnet the record player drew him and the attraction of Madge's record was even more potent.

Entering the parlor he would become an automaton, go to the cabinet, take out the record and place it on the turntable, careful not to disturb the casola. Then he would close his eyes and listen.

A moment later the feeling of separation would sweep over him.

Simultaneously, as his secondary self took form, he again possessed that double point of view.

But as time went on these transitions became harder to control. Once his wife queried him, "Where did you go just now?"

"What do you mean?"

"I thought I saw you go into the kitchen. But now you're here."

"You're seeing things," Bainter replied blandly.

One September day he took the Mozart manuscript and four others of Madge's collection to Dan Rollard, an antique and rare book dealer with offices on Jennifer Street. Rollard, who was an old acquaintance, studied them through an eye-loop.

"They're all originals," he said. "Of course the Mozart is most valuable. I'll give you eight thousand for it, two for the other four."

Bainter nodded. "Thanks. I'll think it over."

On the way home it pleased him to make plans for the spending of the money. He would quit his job and use the free time to branch out into something else more profitable. Or he might pick up that inboard deep-water cruiser he had seen at the Sportsman's Exhibit last week.

Ten thousand wouldn't finance all of it but it would constitute a substantial down payment. Or he might

take an extended vacation down to Miami and live it up on the town.

He was sitting in the cross-town bus, musing in this fashion when he chanced to look at the man across the aisle.

A little delayed shock swept through him. His secondary self sat there, likewise reading the evening paper. Up to that time the dual entity had been confined to his house. Somehow he had never thought it would go beyond those portals.

He got off the bus at Twenty-seventh Street, his intersection, and stood for a moment on the curb. Several persons followed but no one was familiar. He began to walk through the September dusk, scuffing the fallen leaves, halting at intervals to glance over his shoulder. He reached home without incident.

But there he saw at once that all his plans had culminated. A police car was at the curb and a group of neighbors stood silent and grim-faced in the yard. As he ran up the steps the flash of a newsman's camera shown through the window.

THE FIRST THING Bainter did after the funeral was to destroy the Concerto record. The double-self spells, however, continued intermittently. If the record didn't cause them, what did?

As he relaxed somewhat, he began having strange dreams. He dreamed of his wife and Waverly, which was normal, and he also dreamed of himself in a curious fashion. In his sleep he was two. . .three. . .sometimes four men, jogging in double time down the deserted Minneapolis streets. Now he stood at the roulette table of a luxurious gambling casino and the other players around the wheel were duplicates of himself. So too was the croupier. Again he was in a concert hall, a member of a symphony orchestra and, looking about him, he saw that the other players were all Bainters, as were the occupants of the boxes and those in the parquet-circle as far as the footlights permitted him to see.

The disturbing thing about these dreams was that a residue of their background lingered over into the world of reality. When he entered his Nicollet Avenue office he thought for a moment he saw the velvet drapes and the crystal chandelier of his nightmare gambling casino. When he emerged from the elevator into the lobby he fancied he was in the concert hall of his dreams.

From time to time he was aware of his double self following him. But gradually it grew fainter and fainter until one day it was gone altogether.

He wondered what Madge's thoughts had been during the time she, too, had been affected by a dual entity. For he knew that she had been set upon by the same phenomenon, not long before her death. He had seen the confusion and fear in her eyes, had discovered evidence of her playing the recording in his absence.

Briefly he wondered what would have happened had she lived, but then he dismissed it from his mind. He had other problems.

Though he was now low on funds—the funeral expenses had been larger than he had expected—he made no attempt to sell any of Madge's collection; no use in arousing suspicion at this point. He searched the house in a vain hope of finding other valuable articles his wife might have gathered but found none.

He did find things that disturbed him, that left a question-mark in his thoughts. On three occasions he found the power of the stereo had been left on all night, with the volume control turned way down. He didn't rmember switching it on.

Again, after he had emptied Madge's closet and made a bundle of its contents, preparatory to selling them to the rag man, he saw that he had left behind his wife's coat and favorite dress. Bainter shook his head in puzzlement.

"Must be getting absent minded," he muttered.

A week later on Jennifer Street before the entrance of the Standard building, he met Dan Rollard, the antique book man. Bainter said, "I've decided to sell the music collection. I'll bring it in tomorrow if you're still interested."

Rollard lit a cigar and looked at him queerly. "You're joking," he said.

"Why should I joke?" asked Bainter, surprised.

Rollard laughed. "Always kidding. Well, if you've forgotten selling me those manuscripts, I haven't. My bank account is thinner by ten thousand since I bought them from you."

Bainter walked away in a daze. So his alter ego still existed, was consummating transactions without his knowledge! In the shadow of this staggering revelation the loss of his anticipated windfall was dwarfed and cold perspiration broke out upon him.

He arrived back home, switched on the lights and went into the parlor. He opened the cabinet and took out a record at random. He placed it on the turntable of the stereo which was unharmed by the action of the casola. He did these things mechanically, eyes unseeing, as a man under a spell. Then he sat back in his chair and listened.

The record played to the end. He started it again. Gradually as he sat there an odd feeling stole over him, an awareness of another presence in the room—a presence in reality, not a phantom image. For a long time he forced his eyes to remain focused on the stereo, refused to look to either side.

But then, even before Bainter slowly turned his head, he knew that it was Madge who lounged there in the opposite chair, grinning at him.

August

By H. P. LOVECRAFT

Come, mellow month, whose full-blown charms
  O'er mead and wood diffuse their grace;
Whose ardour all the valley warms,
  And glads the grateful mountain's face.

The waving corn in yonder field,
  Delighted, owns thy genial ray;
Whilst clover'd plains adoring yield
  The frankincense of new-mown hay.

The sky a lovelier blue puts on;
  The sun thro' Virgo proudly rides;
The lark sings sweeter at the dawn;
  The stream with purer crystal glides.

The grove with tropic plenty flow'rs,
  And Summer reigns in regal state;
Precious the boon of earlier hours,
  Yet now doth each one culminate.

To youthful bards the Spring I give;
  To sighing swains the June devine;
But I midst riper joys would live,
  And choose the August days as mine!

LEO PATRICK KELLEY'S fiction is best known to science fiction lovers. A sporadic contributor to that field since his first story, *Dreamtown U.S.A.* appeared in the February, 1955 issue of IF magazine, he has also appeared in THE MAGAZINE OF FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION, FANTASTIC SCIENCE FICTION and GALAXY.

However, those who follow tales of the supernatural will remember his *The Dark Door*, a tale of a mild woman with frightening allies of defense which appeared in WITCHCRAFT & SORCERY for January-February, 1971.

The revival of witchcraft and satanism has been widespread enough and newsworthy enough to rate long feature articles in many prominent magazines, not least among them *TIME*. The subject was given great impetus by the "God is Dead" phase and has encouraged a rash of occult novels and moving pictures. *Rosemary's Baby* became a cinema classic and already has its imitations and variations.

It is no longer necessary these days to return to old Salem or some other witch-infested place or era as a locale for a convincing story of that type. A valid background for witchcraft and satanism exists in many American cities today and on a substantial number of college campuses.

Leo Kelley presents here, in a college setting, a slightly different slant on the standard concept of a coven. There is no question that the surprise Mr. Kelley springs on us, will prove to be just one of many fascinating aspects of devil worship of which most of us were ignorant.

Generation Gap

By LEO P. KELLEY

AS HE SAT in his office correcting examination papers, Professor Rodney Abquist tried to ignore the scent of spring in the air that crept slyly through the partly open window. But it nudged his nostrils and sent the middle-aged Professor's fancy lightly turning to thoughts of—

He forced himself to concentrate on the multiple choice questions and answers on the paper spread out before him on his desk.

But in the darker corners of his mind's eye sprites cavorted. All female. All wearing wispy garments that revealed everything.

Q. The opening line of T.S. Eliot's poem, The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock is (a) Let us linger, you and I (b) Let us tarry, you and me (c) Let us go then, you and I.

Other lines from the poem ghosted through his mind unbidden. *I grow old. . .I grow old. . .I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.*

"I'm only forty-two," he told the sprites who pointed young accusing fingers at him and then giggled away.

He leaned back in his chair and sighed. He thought of other men as ancient as he was and how they regretted things they had done in their lives and how, given a single second chance, they would set the record right. But himself? He regretted things he *hadn't* done. Meaning, mainly, the girls he had never been able to talk to, let alone touch.

He supposed—no, he knew that it had all been his own fault. The missed opportunities were his fault because of his fainthearted approach to what he had then thought of as the seamier side of life.

Seamier, indeed! Mere rationalization, he now realized.

But I was always so busy, he told himself. Not true. I was frightened, he admitted—afraid to speak to a girl, especially if she was pretty. He had heard that nasty little voice whispering inside his mind. *Who would want to bed or wed a worm? What girl would consider mating with a mouse?*

Professor Rodney Abquist hadn't been too busy to bother with girls in those young years, just too timid. He hadn't been beyond hearing the call of the wild, as he had sometimes told himself in his lonely room not far from the university campus where he studied. And studied. And then desperately studied some more while visions of things far gaudier than mere sugar plums danced in his head.

No, he was just too tame. When, on rare occasions, a girl spoke to him of biology or other dangerous subjects, he turned the conversation around and talked knowingly and at length about iambic pentameters. The girls were inevitably awed. They thought young Rodney Abquist wise.

He never touched one of them.

He had been, he now knew, in a word, foolish. All his young years had been wasted in a celibate desert where he enjoyed not a single female oasis.

I grow old, he mourned silently. I grow old. . .I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled. I shall shrink and dry up and along will come an unexpected wind and I shall be whisked away. Probably no one will notice my disappearance anymore than most people notice my appearance.

They are right, he concluded sadly. Now it is all a matter of field trips and athletics, co-educational dormitories and the pill. The Halls of Ivy, he thought, have been transformed into horticultural bedchambers.

Perhaps he was exaggerating his torment. But at forty-two years of age, demons prodded him with pronged thoughts of fleshly delights which he strongly suspected would never be transformed into eager midnight deeds.

Too late, too late. Yet girls, it seemed to him, were everywhere, their slick eyes watching the world and their fingers all afire with it.

Which brought him to Rosalie.

Rosalie Jennings of the long black hair that was only a small part of her pert and almost sinful loveliness. Twenty-year old Rosalie whose beauty compensated sensationally for her distressing lack of brains.

He looked down at her examination paper which he was correcting. She had chosen the correct answer to the Eliot question: *Let us go then, you and I.* He went through the rest of her paper, blue pencil poised. But he had to use his weapon only twice.

Rosalie had given only two wrong answers out of a total of one hundred multiple choice questions. It couldn't be a matter of chance that she had gotten so many right.

Yet, in the past semesters in which she had taken several of his courses, she had barely been able to achieve a passing grade and that, as she herself had confessed, only with the most diligent burning of much midnight oil to illuminate her textbooks and the shadowy caverns of her rather slow mind.

Well, he should stand up and cheer, Professor Abquist told himself. He had taught her and evidently taught her well. She was rapidly approaching the edge of an A in his current course. But why should her recent excellent results on examinations make him feel so uneasy? Was it that he secretly suspected her of cheating?

Impossible.

The monitors would have caught her. But it was nevertheless rather amazing, this sudden burst of intellectual prowess she was displaying. In class, she was frequently the one with the answer to the most difficult questions he posed to his students. A minor mystery. Not really worth mentioning. It was all probably traceable to increased motivation on Rosalie's part.

He had, at her request, spent many hours with her—in his chaste office. It wasn't exactly a matter of private tutoring. It was more a matter of motivating the girl. Yes, certainly.

Their meetings, Professor Abquist had to admit, motivated him as well. They motivated him to take her in his arms and tell her she was beautiful and that even men as ancient as he was were not immune to her charms.

He did, of course, nothing. He kept his scholarly distance from Rosalie, calling it a matter of professional ethics while damning the distance he kept as a torture worse than the one inflicted upon Tantulus.

He glanced at his watch. With some shock, he realized Rosalie would be at his office door in a matter of minutes for her appointment. He ran his thin

fingers through his hair, wishing he had remembered to carry a comb with him.

When he was reasonably sure that what hair he had left adequately covered his bald spot, he took off his glasses and slipped them into his desk drawer. Although he couldn't see print without them, he could see Rosalie and that, for now at least, was all that mattered to him.

When she came, it was without the sound of announcing trumpets which Professor Abquist would have accepted as being clearly the girl's due, reasoning that beauty such as hers was entitled to such regal accoutrements.

"Hey, I'm not late, am I?" Rosalie cried as she bounced into his office after having barely knocked on the door. "I ran all the way."

Her last statement melted the Professor's skeleton and he feared for a moment that he was going to slide from his chair to lie in a boneless puddle at her glorious feet. Imagine! Rosalie Jennings had run all the way—to him!

"No, Miss Jennings, you're not late. In fact, you're two and a half minutes early."

He gestured as casually as he could and she sat—sprawled, actually—in a chair next to his desk. Her blue denimed legs formed an inverted V, sandaled at the latter's two tips. Her cotton shirt was open at the neck and its tails were far from neatly tucked in. "Well, like how'd I do?"

Blunt. Direct. Just like all the members of her generation. No beating about the bush. Come right out with it, slam-bang, whammo. Say what you think; take what you want.

Professor Abquist yearned briefly for the days of civilities and manners that, he seemed to remember, had bridged the gap between the generations once upon a long dead time. Gap? No, chasm. It had been eons since anyone had called him, "Sir."

"Quite satisfactorily," he answered her question. "However, you did mix up your nightingales and skylarks."

"I never can remember which one was Shelley's and which was Wordsworth's. But I passed?"

"My dear, you did far more than pass. You had but two incorrect answers."

The heat was rising in the room, Professor Abquist realized. He would have to speak to the custodian. But when he reached out to touch the radiator—cold. Odd.

"It's all your fault," she remarked coyly.

He was nonplussed. "Fault? Mine?"

She laughed and reached out to touch his fingers which were fiddling nervously with a paperweight. "You spent a lot of time with me. You taught me a lot."

"Miss Jennings, I—."

Her hand tightened on his fingers. "Hey, I told you before. Call me Rosalie, okay? We're like friends, right?"

"Yes." It was all he could manage.

"So I'll call you Rodney. Oh, don't look like that! I mean I'll just call you Rodney when we're alone like now. You know. I promise. Not in class or anything like that."

"It wasn't all my fault," he said, pleased. "I'm sure I couldn't have taught you so much so quickly. You've been studying hard. I'm sure that's it."

A smile came to her face, passed away. "I've been studying hard, that's true. But not the way you think."

"I'm not sure I follow you—Rosalie."

"There are lots of ways to get what a person wants. All kinds of ways, some old, some new. I just happened to find a kind of freaky one."

"You have a good mind," he lied. "With some further intense cultivation—."

"I'm dumb, Rodney. You know that."

He wished she wouldn't make such a fetish of the truth. It disconcerted him. He was accustomed to indirection and innuendo in conversations like this. He found them safer.

"So is Chet Baron," she added. "And Mickey Denner."

"Ah, Chet Baron. He is your fiancee still?"

Her eyes widened in surprise. "No way! Oh, sure we got it together a couple of times but we're just friends. Like I'm into some of the same things Chet is these days."

Professor Abquist managed not to wince at her execution of the English

language. "Mr. Baron has also been doing quite well in my examinations of late. Mr. Denner too, as a matter of fact." He managed to suppress the urge to add the word "surprisingly."

"Do you think we cheat?"

He shook his head so violently that he inadvertently freed his fingers from Rosalie's warm grip.

"You're kinda cute, you know that, Rodney? You're so smart when it comes to the dear departed days like, you know, the Nineteenth Century or whatever, but you're nowhere when it comes to now." She lapsed into silence, studying him. "You never got married?"

He forced himself to sit quite still and maintain a semblance of a smile. "No, I didn't."

She was suddenly standing beside him. She took both of his hands in hers and he rose. As she pressed against him, he couldn't stop himself from kissing her. No man could, the way she was acting.

"Well, you're obviously not gay," she commented. "You're just shy!" She clapped her hands together as if she had discovered that rainbows really do have huge pots of gold at their ends. "I can dig it, I mean I really can. You're—you're—." Seconds later, she unearthed the word she had been seeking. "You're *refreshing!* You know, cool."

"About your examination results, Miss Jennings," he began, sitting down again with studied sobriety.

"Rosalie," she corrected with mock sternness. "Listen, you know what? Maybe I could teach you something. I bet you've never been with a girl before. Have you? I mean—you know."

He hesitated a moment and then shook his head, hope flaring red within him.

"Not even once? I mean, not ever?"

The sympathy in her tone, the genuine expression of interest on her face, made him willingly betray himself. "Not even once," he admitted. "Not ever," he said, his secret shame revealed.

"Groovy. I like you." She smiled, almost triumphantly.

"But—."

"Tonight," she said firmly. "Meet me at the belltower tonight. Ten o'clock."

"Rosalie," he moaned, as she touched his cheek with five smooth fingers. "I couldn't. I mustn't!"

She was whispering words to him and touching his face, tracing the line of his jaw, of his lips. He didn't resist, couldn't, when she kissed him.

Just before she left the office, she said, "You know, a guy like you is hard to find these days. You're not like any of the other guys I know. You're out of sight!"

After she had gone, Professor Abquist looked at his watch. A few minutes after four in the afternoon. Nearly six hours to go before. . . .

HE SPENT THEM at his small bungalow in the university town some distance from the campus making ready for Rosalie and the night ahead of them. He showered and cologned. He shaved and after-shaved. He carefully combed his hair in a debonair swirl over his bald spot.

He tried not to think about the competition—specifically about Chet Baron or all the other Chet Barons an unfair world had unleashed upon the campus. Rosalie, had, after all, arranged to meet *him* tonight, not Chet Baron or that Neanderthal Mickey what's-his-name. He was glad that there were still some discriminating young women in the world who preferred mature men.

But doubts plagued him. He thought of all the rumors about the younger generation that swept like wild winds across the campus from time to time.

He recalled the riots and the times the police had been called and students arrested for possession and or use of drugs.

There had been that mutilated dog found dead on the steps of the Sciences Building. It had been daubed with red paint. He imagined orgies and almost decided not to meet the seductive Rosalie.

But this was a chance he could not afford to miss. He might lose his job, he thought. Well, there were other jobs. He would, he hoped, lose his—. He chuckled happily at the thought of that burden at long last lifted from him.

He arrived at the belltower at nine thirty five. He stepped behind some decorative shrubbery in order not to be seen as he kept anxiously examining the luminous dial of his watch.

At ten minutes after ten, she came, still in blue jeans and sandals and sloppy cotton shirt. He came out of the shadows. She kissed him lightly on the cheek and, without a word, led him to the large parking lot behind the Administration Building.

"Wait!" he protested, drawing back when he saw the others. "I thought—."

"I know you did," she said smoothly. "But there's later. After the meeting. I told you I could teach you a thing or two. But first, the meeting."

He stared in dismay at Chet Baron lounging casually against the fender of a flashy sports car and at Mickey Denner and the nine other boys and girls, who all seemed to be waiting for them.

"What meeting?" he managed to mumble, feeling his face flushing.

"Hi!" Rosalie called out to the group who came to life as she strode toward them. "You all know Professor Abquist. I told you about him coming to the meeting with us tonight."

"What's happening, Professor?" from a cheerful Mickey Denner.

"Glad you could come, man," Chet Baron said, crushing Professor Abquist's hand in his own.

And then Rosalie took him by one arm and a girl he vaguely recognized from his lectures took him by the other and within minutes he found himself in a convertible speeding off-campus and toward the beach.

There was no time for questions. Rosalie kept up a steady chatter about nothing in particular and before he knew it, he was there, wherever "there" actually was. He hadn't kept track of the route they had taken.

"The beach house is right down there," Rosalie told him, pointing down the incline. "Come on, Rodney."

"You promised!" he muttered at the sound of his name.

She simply smiled.

The beach house, he discovered, was rundown and its floors were gritty with sand. Black burlap was draped heavily over the windows and empty beer cans lay abandoned everywhere.

Professor Abquist looked speculatively and a little nervously toward the closed door of the rear room where the orgies, he supposed, occurred.

"I got only two questions wrong in the exam," Rosalie announced gleefully to the gathering.

There was a collective response, a reverent response, in a language Professor Abquist was certain he had never heard before.

Chet Baron said, "That's nothing. I scored twenty three points in the game against State last week."

Another similar response fluttered through the room at Baron's announcement.

Like a litany then, each of the other students added a statement about some personal success that they had recently enjoyed.

Professor Abquist ventured, "Congratulations, Mr. Baron. You'll put our University on the basketball map. I can't take any credit for your high scoring but I do take some small credit for Rosalie's—for Miss Jennings' really rather amazing progress in my course. She and I have been working very hard together lately."

"Hey, man!" It was Mickey Denner.

"Yes?"

"You don't really believe that, do you? I mean about you being responsible for Rosy here making out so good in your exams?"

"Why, yes, I—."

Someone standing behind Professor Abquist spit an obscenity into the air.

Chet Baron laughed, an unpleasant sound.

Suddenly uneasy, Professor Abquist considered rising and—what? And nothing. He'd never be able to walk all the way back to the campus. He gave the group a humble smile. "I didn't mean to imply that I was *totally* responsible for Rosalie's success. I said—."

"Man, you're not responsible at all," Mickey Denner interrupted.

"Then who is?" Professor Abquist asked somewhat testily.

"Not just yet, Rodney," Chet Baron said sharply.

Professor Abquist felt a faint fury rise within him at the familiar use of his name by this lout who was on campus solely by virtue of an athletic scholarship—this mutant who measured six feet and nine inches from the soles of his feet to the hairy crown of his head.

"Well, we might as well tell him now as later," Rosalie remarked offhandedly.

"Tell me what?" Professor Abquist inquired, decidedly uncomfortable under Rosalie's suddenly and oddly ugly eyes.

They told him then, taking turns, each of them adding bits and pieces of shocking information. They worshipped *Him*, they said. Professor Abquist could hear the capital letter in their hushed voices. They told him who *He* was. They told him all about the dead dog.

"We were having the Summoning in the sub-basement of the frat house on campus," Chet Baron said. "We'd painted the dog with the proper symbols and—."

"The mutt got loose," Rosalie interrupted. "It got out of the frat house and dropped dead in front of the Sciences Building."

"That was a real bummer," Mickey Denner muttered. "We had to call off the Summoning that night."

"But the week after," Rosalie said brightly. "Remember?"

When they told Professor Abquist about *First Fruits*, horror seized and shook him in its sharp teeth.

"That baby that was kidnapped in Carmel?" he managed to whisper, incredulous. "The one who was—?"

"We took it," Rosalie said, her voice a razor slicing the air.

"You *killed* it!" Professor Abquist shouted, rising to his feet.

Chet Baron pushed him back down into the chair. Mickey Denner brought rope and, with the help of the others, used it to halt Professor Abquist's struggles. Chet Baron used a silk kerchief a girl gave him as a gag.

"How do you think we got our gifts?" whispered Rosalie in Professor Abquist's ear. Her breath slithered across the cold skin of his sweating face. "Chet was never really all that good at basketball in spite of his size until he sold his soul. I couldn't even *read* a book let alone understand what it was all about, until I did too. Of course, we have to pay for our gifts from time to time. That's how we get to keep them."

When they picked him up and carried him into the back room of the beach cottage, the first thing Professor Abquist saw was the black altar flanked by the equally black candles which Rosalie Jennings was reverently lighting.

Then he saw the long knives in his students' hands and he knew. He knew with an icy and terrifying certainty why Rosalie had spent so much time with him and why she had asked her particular and very personal questions about his past experiences—about his lack of a specific kind of experience.

He knew from his own wide-ranging and extensive studies that virgins were considered a highly acceptable sacrifice in certain Satanic rites.

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RAY RUSSELL'S SPECIAL BRAND of horrors have appeared predominantly in the pages of PLAYBOY magazine. This is not surprising knowing their quality and PLAYBOY'S penchant for publishing fantastic fiction. Russell's period of heavy writing really came when he left his post as executive editor of PLAYBOY in 1961. *Sardonicus and Other Stories* appeared from Ballantine Books in 1961, the same year that Columbia Pictures produced the title story as a film starring Oscar Homolka, Ronald Lewis and Audrey Dalton. Since that time he has written many film scripts, having taken up residence in Beverly Hills, California.

When PLAYBOY launched a series of science fiction paperbacks in 1971, predominantly of material taken from their own files, they made a point of titling it "Playboy science fiction/fantasy," in acknowledgement of the many dark and horrifying themes of the stories, such as Russell's *Sardonicus* and *Sagittarius.*

Ray Russell always wanted to sell to WEIRD TALES, but when the magazine was in existance he was in the process of carving out his first big success for himself with the men's magazines, and when he had the time, the magazine was no longer around. In *Lethal Labels* he at last gives us a sampling of the style that helped create his literary success.

Lethal Labels

By RAY RUSSELL

HATE, WHICH ONCE had been a sleeping seed in Derreck, had taken root and grown into a tall weed, black and ugly, that climbed from deep inside his toes and quickly shot its shaggy tendrils up his legs, sprouting through his veins and arteries until it coiled inside his belly, branched into every pocket of his lungs, wrapped itself around his heart, crawled behind his eyes and blinded them, filled his skull and lusciously crushed his brain.

No parasite, this weed; neither was it merely a commensal. Its relationship with Derreck was symbiotic—it needed him, he needed it. He provided the humid hothouse in which it thrived; it shaped, braced and supported him.

Hate gave him purpose. Food and drink were not so vital to him, the flesh of women not so sweet.

He hated many people and many things. He hated motorbikes and rock stars. He hated the Postal Service and the telephone company. He hated the President and the President's opponents. He hated television and newspapers. He hated abstract things, like success—other people's. He also hated failure—his own. In a sense, he hated love.

One thing he did not hate was hate. He fed it and watered it and tended it.

He hated Harold, who had bullied him when he was a child and whom he hadn't seen in thirty years. He hated Gerald, who lived next door and played atonal operatic recordings, Penderecki, Genestera, Berg and the like. He hated Philip, who had stolen his girl. He hated Phyllis, for allowing herself to be stolen.

Most of all he hated Kurt.

He hated his laugh and his smile. He hated his voice. He hated his hair. He hated his walk. He hated the way he cleared his throat. He automatically hated everything Kurt liked.

His hatred for Kurt was pure—unadulterated by any harm, real or imagined, Kurt had done him. Kurt had never, in fact, done him any harm. They hardly knew each other.

Derreck put lables on the objects of his hate. He called television The Boob Tube. He called newspapers Toilet Papers. He called the President "That Man."

He called Harold "The Ape", Gerald "The Idiot", Philip "The Swine", Phyllis "The Tramp". Kurt he called something too vile to record. These labels permitted him to evoke instant

images in his mind, non-human cartoons, targets.

He wanted these people to die. He dreamed of elaborate tortures for them. Fire for one; for another, thirst; for others the rack and the Iron Maiden. For Kurt, a leisurely, lengthy, graduated series of horrors never before heard of, each more hideous than the last, spawned by Derreck's inventive imagination solely for the exclusive agony of Kurt.

All this was fantasy. Derreck lacked the courage to commit even the plainest murder.

Some friends he had, old acquaintances and cronies, and to them he aired his hates. They humored him. They saw in Derreck a faint and faded shadow of a man they once liked, and for the sake of that man they occasionally accepted his company, answered his letters, returned his phone calls.

When some misfortune befell a person Derreck hated, let us say The Swine, these friends could count on a phone call from Derreck, his voice gleeful and gloating.

When something good happened to The Tramp, for instance, they knew it would not be long before Derreck would phone, in a rage, the dark weed thick in his throat, choking him.

His letters were full of little else than hate. They were entertaining, however, because he expressed his hatred eloquently, elegantly, often with wit.

In the upper lefthand corner of his envelopes, he always affixed a gummed label bearing his name and address. They were small and very inexpensive: he bought them by mail, hundreds for only a dollar. They came in a minuscule plastic box with a hinged lid. A single boxful usually lasted him over a year.

ONE DAY, when his supply of return address labels was nearly depleted, he sat down at his desk to order a fresh batch. An impish thought occurred to him. Why not, while he was at it, order some other labels of the same kind but imprinted with a short phrase? Nothing complex or clever, something simple, basic.

The idea tickled him. He wrote out the order and enclosed an extra dollar.

A few weeks later, his labels were delivered. They were, in his eyes, things of classic beauty:

Chuckling malignantly, he stuck them on all his letters to all his friends. He slapped one on an anonymous postcard and mailed it to Kurt himself. He carried the little plastic box in his pocket and surreptitiously affixed the labels to posters, menues, men's room walls, the flyleaves of library books.

Time passed, weeks and months rolled by, but the supply of labels hardly seemed to diminish, no matter how lavishly Derreck used them. The winter holidays came, and he used them even on his Christmas cards.

It was close to a year later that one of his friends phoned to say, "You've heard the news, of course?" He'd heard no news. "About Kurt?" What about Kurt? "You really don't know? He's dead. A stroke."

The warm bright glow of power bathed Derreck for days. It surrounded him, a glinting gold nimbus. He became a permanent resident of the state of Euphoria.

The labels had done it, he was sure. They had worked some kind of voodoo, externalizing his hate and forging it into a solid thing, a hard sharp weapon that had homed in on its target and destroyed it.

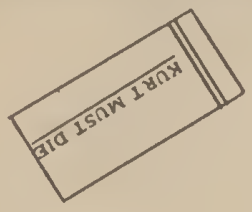
He told this to his friends. Most of them humored him, as usual. A few tried to convince him that the labels had not been responsible for Kurt's death. Kurt, they reminded him, had not been a young man. He'd suffered from hypertension for quite some time.

His death was an accident—a cerebrovascular accident, the doctors called it. To claim that the labels had killed him—after almost a year!—was not unlike an Indian medicine man performing a rain dance every day during months of drought and then hogging credit for the cloudburst that finally drenched him.

Derreck was not to be dissuaded. He believed in his labels.

A few of them were left. They had

done their job and they had done it well. He had no further need of them. He took them into his bathroom and flushed them into the sewer, one



by one.

Then, rubbing his hands together briskly, he sat down at his desk to order more. After all, there was still Harold to dispose of, and Gerald, and Philip, and Phyllis. And when all of them had been struck down like Kurt, others would occur to him, old injuries and insults would be dredged from memory, new names would be added to his label list.

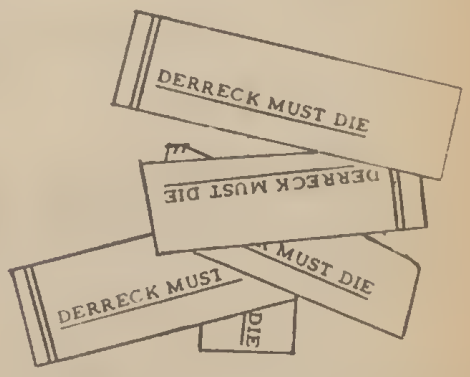
But it would not do to be greedy or impatient. One at a time was the way. Phyllis would be next.

He wrote the deadly phrase with gusto, adding his name and address for delivery. He slipped the money into the envelope, addressed and sealed and stamped it, strolled triumphantly to the mailbox and dropped it in.

This time, he could hardly wait for the labels to arrive. It seemed to take forever. At last, they were delivered to his door. He opened the tiny package with trembling hands. Breathlessly, he unsnapped the lid of the little plastic box and opened it. Delicately, with his fingertips, he lifted out one of the labels.

His face went grey. How could this be? Were his eyes lying? He brought the labels into better light, but still the printed phrase was the same. Derreck, grasping for answers, barely had time to recall the manic haze in which he had ordered these labels, writing down the phrase and his own address. The label printer, lazily and imperfectly reading the order, had made a stupid mistake. . .or had the mistake been Derreck's?

The pain felt like a giant log smashing his heart. He fell, the labels erupting in all directions, brightly twirling in the air like a flurry of butterflies, fluttering gracefully down to rest at last upon the carpet, on his hair, on his face, on his open staring eyes—



Long Watch

By DOROTHY QUICK

DAUGHTER, the tide is running low.
Is it the wind that is sobbing so?
What of the rocks and the undertow
And those long gray miles where the gray ships go?

Daughter, the tide will turn at last.
Is it your heart that beats so fast?
Whose ensign flies from the tilted mast?
In what strange port was the anchor cast?

Daughter, many a long night through
I've tried forgetting, the same as you.
Did you trim the lamp, as I told you to?
The sea's a lover. It's true, it's true!

The tide turns back and the storms abate,
Daughter, remember soon or late
And ships come home with their precious freight
No matter if women watch and wait!

THE NEWLY-DISCOVERED William Hope Hodgson stories and the biography of his life presented in the first three issues of WEIRD TALES have produced a virtual tide of acceptance. It was originally our intention to publish only three of the Hodgson discoveries, but the demand is so great that we have decided to issue a fourth story of unusual merit.

Early in his writing career, Hodgson created a world of his own, a virtual mythos regarding the Sargasso sea. He was not the first or the last to write about that legendary mass of floating seaweed, debris and rotting ships, but no one wrote as many stories concerning it and certainly no one attempted to weave the material of all the stories into a consistant pattern. The Sargasso was Hodgson's lost world, more important to him than Cthulu was to H.P. Lovecraft, or Barsoom to Edgar Rice Burroughs.

His fictional preoccupation with the Sargasso began with *From The Tideless Sea* (THE MONTHLY STORY MAGAZINE, April, 1906) and its sequel *More News From the Homebird* (THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE, August, 1907), both literary gems. It continued with *The Mystery of the Derelict,* (THE STORY TELLER, July, 1907) which introduced the Sargasso breed of special rats.

His masterwork of the Sargasso was his first novel, *The Boats of the "Glen Carrig,"* a remarkable thriller published by Chapman & Hall, London in October, 1907. In 1913 Hodgson again returned to the Sargasso locale in his short story *The Thing in the Weeds* (THE STORYTELLER, January, 1912). This time the emphasis was upon the gigantic octopus as the major threat to ships that wandered into the weed.

The Finding of the Graiken (THE RED MAGAZINE, February 15, 1913) followed *The Thing in the Weeds* with its stress on the Graiken (another term for giant octopus), but added other supernormal elements which make the story well worth reading.

This story represented another fascinating chapter in Hodgson's own mythos.

The Finding of the Graiken

By WILLIAM HOPE HODGSON

WHEN A YEAR had passed, and still there was no news of the full-rigged ship Graiken, even the most sanguine of my old chum's friends had ceased to hope perchance, somewhere, she might be above water.

Yet Ned Barlow, in his inmost thoughts, I knew, still hugged to himself the hope that she would win home. Poor, dear old fellow, how my heart did go out towards him in his sorrow!

For it was in the Graiken that his sweetheart had sailed on that dull January day some twelve months previously.

The voyage had been taken for the sake of her health; yet since then—save for a distant signal recorded at the Azores—there had been from all the mystery of ocean no voice; the ship and they within her had vanished utterly.

And still Barlow hoped. He said nothing actually, but at times his deeper thoughts would float up and show through the sea of his usual talk, and thus I would know in an indirect way of the thing that his heart was thinking.

Nor was time a healer.

It was later that my present good fortune came to me. My uncle died, and I—hitherto poor—was now a rich man. In a breath, it seemed, I had become possessor of houses, lands, and money; also—in my eyes almost more important—a fine fore-and-aft-

rigged yacht of some two hundred tons register.

It seemed scarcely believable that the thing was mine, and I was all in a scutter to run away down to Falmouth and get to sea.

In old times, when my uncle had been more than usually gracious, he had invited me to accompany him for a trip round the coast or elsewhere, as the fit might take him; yet never, even in my most hopeful moments, had it occurred to me that ever she might be mine.

And now I was hurrying my preparations for a good long sea trip—for to me the sea is, and always has been, a comrade.

Still, with all the prospects before me, I was by no means completely satisfied, for I wanted Ned Barlow with me, and yet was afraid to ask him.

I had the feeling that, in view of his overwhelming loss, he must positively hate the sea; and yet I could not be happy at the thought of leaving him, and going alone.

He had not been well lately, and a sea voyage would be the very thing for him, if only it were not going to freshen painful memories.

Eventually I decided to suggest it, and this I did a couple of days before the date I had fixed for sailing.

"Ned," I said, "you need a change."

"Yes," he assented wearily.

"Come with me, old chap," I went on, growing bolder. "I'm taking a trip in the yacht. It would be splendid to have—"

To my dismay, he jumped to his feet and came towards me excitedly.

"I've upset him now," was my thought. "I *am* a fool!"

"Go to sea!" he said. "My God! I'd give—" He broke off short, and stood suppressed opposite to me, his face all of a quiver with suppressed emotion. He was silent a few seconds, getting himself in hand; then he proceeded more quietly: "Where to?"

"Anywhere," I replied, watching him keenly, for I was greatly puzzled by his manner. "I'm not quite clear yet. Somewhere south of here—the West Indies, I have thought. It's all so new, you know—just fancy being able to go just where we like. I can hardly realise it yet."

I stopped; for he had turned from me and was staring out of the window.

"You'll come, Ned?" I cried, fearful that he was going to refuse me.

He took a pace away, and came back.

"I'll come," he said, and there was a look of strange excitement in his eyes that set me off on a tack of vague wonder; but I said nothing, just told him how he had pleased me.

II.

WE HAD BEEN at sea a couple of weeks, and were alone upon the Atlantic—at least, so much of it as presented itself to our view.

I was leaning over the taffrail, staring down into the boil of the wake; yet I noticed nothing, for I was wrapped in a tissue of somewhat uncomfortable thought. It was about Ned Barlow.

He had been queer, decidedly queer, since leaving port. His whole attitude mentally had been that of a man under the influence of an all-pervading excitement. I had said that he was in need of change, and had trusted that the splendid tonic of the sea breeze would serve to put him soon to rights mentally and physically; yet here was the poor old chap acting in a manner calculated to cause me anxiety as to his balance.

Scarcely a word had been spoken since leaving the Channel. When I ventured to speak to him, often he would take not the least notice, other times he would answer only by a brief word; but talk—never.

In addition, his whole time was spent on deck among the men, and with some of them he seemed to converse both long and earnestly; yet to me, his chum and true friend, not a word.

Another thing came to me as a surprise—Barlow betrayed the greatest interest in the position of the vessel, and the courses set, all in such a manner as left me no room for doubt but that his knowledge of navigation was considerable.

Once I ventured to express my astonishment at this knowledge, and ask a question or two as to the way in which he had gathered it, but had been treated with such an absurdly stony silence that since then I had not spoken to him.

With all this it may be easily conceived that my thoughts, as I stared down into the wake, were troublesome.

Suddenly I heard a voice at my elbow:

"I should like to have a word with you, sir." I turned sharply. It was my skipper, and something in his face told me that all was not as it should be.

"Well, Jenkins, fire away."

He looked round, as if afraid of being overheard; then came closer to me.

"Someone's been messing with the compasses, sir," he said in a low voice.

"What?" I asked sharply.

"They've been meddled with, sir. The magnets have been shifted, and by someone who's a good idea of what he's doing."

"What on earth do you mean?" I inquired. "Why should anyone mess about with them? What good would it do them? You must be mistaken."

"No, sir, I'm not. They've been touched within the last forty-eight hours, and by someone that understands what he's doing."

I stared at him. The man was so certain. I felt bewildered.

"But why should they?"

"That's more than I can say, sir; but it's a serious matter, and I want to know what I'm to do. It looks to me as though there were something funny going on. I'd give a month's pay to know just who it was, for certain."

"Well," I said, "if they have been touched, it can only be by one of the officers. You say the chap who has done it must understand what he is doing."

He shook his head. "No, sir—" he began, and then stopped abruptly. His gaze met mine. I think the same thought must have come to us simultaneously. I gave a little gasp of amazement.

He wagged his head at me. "I've had my suspicions for a bit, sir," he went on; "but seeing that he's—he's—" He was fairly struck for the moment.

I took my weight off the rail and stood upright.

"To whom are you referring?" I asked curtly.

"Why, sir, to him—Mr. Ned—"

He would have gone on, but I cut him short.

"That will do, Jenkins!" I cried. "Mr. Ned Barlow is my friend. You are forgetting yourself a little. You will accuse me of tampering with the compasses next!"

I turned away, leaving little Captain Jenkins speechless. I had spoken with an almost vehement over-loyalty, to quiet my own suspicions.

All the same, I was horribly bewildered, not knowing what to think or do or say, so that, eventually, I did just nothing.

III.

IT WAS EARLY one morning, about a week later, that I opened my eyes abruptly. I was lying on my back in my bunk, and the daylight was beginning to creep wanly in through the ports.

I had a vague consciousness that all was not as it should be, and feeling thus, I made to grasp the edge of my bunk, and sit up, but failed, owing to the fact that my wrists were securely fastened by a pair of heavy steel handcuffs.

Utterly confounded, I let my head fall back upon the pillow; and then, in the midst of my bewilderment, there sounded the sharp report of a pistol-shot somewhere on the decks over my head. There came a second, and the sound of voices and footsteps, and then a long spell of silence.

Into my mind had rushed the single word—mutiny! My temples throbbed a little, but I struggled to keep calm and think, and then, all adrift, I fell to searching round for a reason. Who was it? And why?

Perhaps an hour passed, during which I asked myself ten thousand vain questions. All at once I heard a key inserted in the door. So I had been locked in! It turned, and the steward walked into the cabin. He did not look at me, but went to the arm-rack and began to remove the various weapons.

"What the devil is the meaning of all this, Jones?" I roared, getting up a bit on one elbow. "What's happened?"

But the fool answered not a word—just went to and fro carrying out the weapons from my cabin into the next, so that at last I ceased from questioning him, and lay silent, promising myself future vengeance.

When he had removed the arms, the steward began to go through my table drawers, emptying them, so it appeared to me, of everything that could be used as a weapon or tool.

Having completed his task, he vanished, locking the door after him.

Some time passed, and at last, about seven bells, he reappeared, this time bringing a tray with my breakfast. Placing it upon the table, he came across to me and proceeded to unlock the cuffs from off my wrists. Then for the first time he spoke.

"Mr. Barlow desires me to say, sir, that you are to have the liberty of your cabin so long as you will agree not to cause any bother. Should you wish for anything, I am under his orders to supply you." He retreated hastily toward the door.

On my part, I was almost speechless with astonishment and rage.

"One minute, Jones!" I shouted, just as he was in the act of leaving the cabin. "Kindly explain what you mean. You said Mr. Barlow. Is it to him that I owe all this?" And I waved my hand towards the irons which the man still held.

"It is by his orders," replied he, and turned once more to leave the cabin.

"I don't understand!" I said, bewildered. "Mr. Barlow is my friend, and this is my yacht! By what right do

you dare to take your orders from him? Let me out!"

As I shouted the last command, I leapt from my bunk, and made a dash for the door, but the steward, so far from attempting to bar it, flung it open and stepped quickly through, thus allowing me to see that a couple of the sailors were stationed in the alleyway.

"Get on deck at once!" I said angrily. "What are you doing down here?"

"Sorry sir," said one of the men. "We'd take it kindly if you'd make no trouble. But we ain't lettin' you out, sir. Don't make no bloomin' error."

I hesitated, then went to the table and sat down. I would, at least, do my best to preserve my dignity.

After an inquiry as to whether he could do anything further, the steward left me to breakfast and my thoughts. As may be imagined, the latter were by no means pleasant.

Here was I prisoner in my own yacht, and by the hand of the very man I had loved and befriended through many years. Oh, it was too incredible and mad!

For a while, leaving the table, I paced the deck of my room; then, growing calmer, I sat down again and attempted to make some sort of a meal.

As I breakfasted, my chief thought was as to *why* my one-time chum was treating me thus; and after that I fell to puzzling *how* he had managed to get the yacht into his own hands.

Many things came back to me—his familiarity with the men, his treatment of me—which I had put down to a temporary want of balance—the fooling with the compasses; for I was certain now that he had been the doer of that piece of mischief. But *why?* That was the great point.

As I turned the matter over in my brain, an incident that had occurred some six days back came to me. It had been on the very day after the captain's report to me of the tampering with the compasses.

Barlow had, for the first time, relinquished his brooding and silence, and had started to talk to me, but in such a wild strain that he had made me feel vaguely uncomfortable about his sanity for he told me some wild yarn of an idea which he had got into his head. And then, in an overbearing way, he demanded that the navigating of the yacht should be put into his hands.

He had been very incoherent, and was plainly in a state of considerable mental excitement. He had rambled on about some derelict, and then had talked in an extraordinary fashion of a vast world of seaweed.

Once or twice in his bewilderingly disconnected speech he had mentioned the name of his sweetheart, and now it was the memory of her name that gave me the first inkling of what might possibly prove a solution of the whole affair.

I wished now that I had encouraged his incoherent ramble of speech, instead of heading him off; but I had done so because I could not bear to have him talk as he had.

Yet, with the little I remembered, I began to shape out a theory. It seemed to me that he might be nursing some idea that he had formed—goodness knows how or when—that his sweetheart (still alive) was aboard some derelict in the midst of an enormous "world," he had termed it, of seaweed.

He might have grown more explicit had I not attempted to reason with him, and so lost the rest.

Yet, remembering back, it seemed to me that he must undoubtedly have meant the enormous Sargasso Sea—that great seaweed-laden ocean, vast almost as Continental Europe, and the final resting-place of the Atlantic's wreckage.

Surely, if he proposed any attempt to search through that, then there could be no doubt but that he was temporarily unbalanced. And yet I could do nothing. I was a prisoner and helpless.

IV.

EIGHT DAYS OF VARIABLE but strongish winds passed, and still I was a prisoner in my cabin. From the ports that opened out astern and on each side—for my cabin runs right across the whole width of the stern—I was able to command a good view of the surrounding ocean, which now had commenced to be laden with

great floating patches of Gulf weed—many of them hundreds and hundreds of yards in length.

And still we held on, apparently towards the nucleus of the Sargasso Sea. This I was able to assume by means of a chart which I had found in one of the lockers, and the course I had been able to gather from the "tell-tale" compass let into the cabin ceiling.

And so another and another day went by, and now we were among weed so thick that at times the vessel found difficulty in forcing her way through, while the surface of the sea had assumed a curious oily appearance, though the wind was still quite strong.

It was later in the day that we encountered a bank of weed so prodigious that we had to up helm and run round it, and after that the same experience was many times repeated; and so the night found us.

The following morning found me at the ports, eagerly peering out across the water. From one of those on the starboard side I could discern at a considerable distance a huge bank of weed that seemed to be unending, and to run parallel with our broadside. It appeared to rise in places a couple of feet above the level of the surrounding sea.

For a long while I stared, then went across to the port side. Here I found that a similar bank stretched away on our port beam. It was as though we were sailing up an immense river, the low banks of which were formed of seaweed instead of land.

And so that day passed hour by hour, the weed-banks growing more definite and seeming to be nearer. Towards evening something came into sight—a far, dim hulk, the masts gone, the whole hull covered with growth, an unwholesome green, blotched with brown in the light from the dying sun.

I saw this lonesome craft from a port on the starboard side, and the sight roused a multitude of questionings and thoughts.

Evidently we had penetrated into the unknown central portion of the enormous Sargasso, the Great Eddy of the Atlantic, and this was some lonely derelict, lost ages ago perhaps to the outside world.

Just at the going down of the sun, I saw another; she was nearer, and still possessed two of her masts, which stuck up bare and desolate into the darkening sky. She could not have been more than a quarter of a mile in from the edge of the weed. As we passed her I craned out my head through the port to stare at her. As I stared the dusk grew out of the abyss of the air, and she faded presently from sight into the surrounding loneliness.

Through all that night I sat at the port and watched, listening and peering; for the tremendous mystery of that inhuman weed-world was upon me.

In the air there rose no sound; even the wind was scarcely more than a low hum aloft among the sails and gear, and under me the oily water gave no rippling noise. All was silence, supreme and unearthly.

About midnight the moon rose away on our starboard beam, and from then until the dawn I stared out upon a ghostly world of noiseless weed, fantastic, silent, and unbelievable, under the moonlight.

On four separate occassions my gaze lit on black hulks that rose above the surrounding weeds—the hulks of long-lost vessels. And once, just when the strangeness of dawn was in the sky, a faint, long-drawn wailing seemed to come floating to me across the immeasurable waste of weed.

It startled my strung nerves, and I assured myself that it was the cry of some lone sea bird. Yet, my imagination reached out for some stranger explanation.

The eastward sky began to flush with the dawn, and the morning light grew subtly over the breadth of the enormous ocean of weed until it seemed to me to reach away unbroken on each beam into the grey horizons. Only astern of us, like a broad road of oil, ran the strange river-like gulf up which we had sailed.

Now I noticed that the banks of weed were nearer, very much nearer, and a disagreeable thought came to me. This vast rift that had allowed us to penetrate into the very nucleus of the Sargasso Sea—suppose it should close!

It would mean inevitably that there would be one more among the mis-

sing—another unanswered mystery of the inscrutable ocean. I resisted the thought, and came back more directly into the present.

Evidently the wind was still dropping, for we were moving slowly, as a glance at the ever-nearing weed-banks told me. The hours passed on, and my breakfast, when the steward brought it, I took to one of the ports, and there ate; for I would lose nothing of the strange surroundings into which we were so steadily plunging.

And so the morning passed.

V

IT WAS ABOUT an hour after dinner that I observed the open channel between the weedbanks to be narrowing almost minute by minute with uncomfortable speed. I could do nothing except watch and surmise.

At times I felt convinced that the immense masses of weed were closing in upon us, but I fought off the thought with the more hopeful one that we were surely approaching some narrowing outlet of the gulf that yawned so far across the seaweed.

By the time the afternoon was half-through, the weed-banks had approached so close that occasional outjutting masses scraped the yacht's sides in passing. It was now with the stuff below my face, within a few feet of my eyes, that I discovered the immense amount of life that stirred among all the hideous waste.

Innumerable crabs crawled among the seaweed, and once, indistinctly, something stirred among the depths of a large outlying tuft of weed. What it was I could not tell, though afterwards I had an idea; but all I saw was something dark and glistening. We were past it before I could see more.

The steward was in the act of bringing in my tea, when from above there came a noise of shouting, and almost immediately a slight jolt. The man put down the tray he was carrying, and glanced at me, with startled expression.

"What is it, Jones?" I questioned.

"I don't know, sir. I expect it's the weed," he replied.

I ran to the port, craned out my head, and looked forward. Our bow seemed to be embedded in a mass of weeds, and as I watched it came further aft.

Within the next five minutes we had driven through it into a circle of sea that was free from the weed. Across this we seemed to drift, rather than sail, so slow was our speed.

Upon its opposite margin we brought up, the vessel swinging broadside on to the weed, being secured thus with a couple of kedges cast from the bows and stern, though of this I was not aware until later. As we swung, and at last I was able from my port to see ahead, I saw a thing that amazed me.

There, not three hundred feet distant across the quaking weed, a vessel lay embedded. She had been a three-master; but of these only the mizzen was standing. For perhaps a minute I stared, scarcely breathing in my exceeding interest.

All around above her bulwarks, to the height of apparently some ten feet, ran a sort of fencing formed, so far as I could make out, from canvas, rope, and spars. Even as I wondered at the use of such a thing, I heard my chum's voice overhead. He was hailing her:

"Graiken, ahoy!" he shouted. "Graiken, ahoy!"

At that I fairly jumped. Graiken! What could he mean? I stared out of the port. The blaze of the sinking sun flashed redly upon her stern, and showed the lettering of her name and port; yet the distance was too great for me to read.

I ran across to my table to see if there were a pair of binoculars in the drawers. I found one in the first I opened; then I ran back to the port, racking them out as I went. I reached it, and clapped them to my eyes. Yes; I saw it plainly, her name Graiken and her port London.

From her name my gaze moved to that strange fencing about her. There was a movement in the aft part. As I watched a portion of it slid to one side, and a man's head and shoulders appeared.

I nearly yelled with the excitement of that moment. I could scarcely believe the thing I saw. The man waved an arm, and a vague hail reached us across the weed; then he disappeared. A moment later a score

of people crowded the opening, and among them I made out distinctly the face and figure of a girl.

"He was right, after all!" I heard myself saying out loud in a voice that was toneless through very amazement.

In a minute, I was at the door, beating it with my fists. "Let me out, Ned! Let me out!" I shouted.

I felt that I could forgive him all the indignity that I had suffered. Nay, more; in a queer way I had a feeling that it was I who needed to ask *him* for forgiveness. All my bitterness had gone, and I wanted only to be out and give a hand in the rescue.

Yet though I shouted, no one came, so that at last I returned quickly to the port, to see what further developments there were.

Across the weed I now saw that one man had his hands up to his mouth shouting. His voice reached me only as a faint, hoarse cry; the distance was too great for anyone aboard the yacht to distinguish its import.

From the derelict my attention was drawn abruptly to a scene alongside. A plank was thrown down on to the weed, and the next moment I saw my chum swing himself down the side and leap upon it.

I had opened my mouth to call out to him that I would forgive all were I but freed to lend a hand in this unbelievable rescue.

But even as the words formed they died, for though the weed appeared so dense, it was evidently incapable of bearing any considerable weight, and the plank, with Barlow upon it, sank down into the weed almost to his waist.

He turned and grabbed at the rope with both hands, and in the same moment he gave a loud cry of sheer terror, and commenced to scramble up the yacht's side.

As his feet drew clear clear of the weed I gave a short cry. Something was curled about his left ankle—something oily, supple, and tapered. As I stared another rose up out from the weed and swayed through the air, made a grab at his leg, missed, and appeared to wave aimlessly. Others came towards him as he struggled upwards.

Then I saw hands reach down from above and seize Barlow beneath the arms. They lifted him by main force, and with him a mass of weed that enfolded something leathery, from which numbers of curling arms writhed.

A hand slashed down with a sheath-knife, and the next instant the hideous thing had fallen back among the weed.

For a couple of seconds longer I remained, my head twisted upwards; then faces appeared once more over our rail, and I saw the men extending arms and fingers, pointing. From above me there rose a hoarse chorus of fear and wonder, and I turned my head swiftly to glance down and across that treacherous extraordinary weedworld.

The whole of the hitherto silent surface was all of a move in one stupendous undulation—as though life had come to all that desolation.

The undulatory movement continued, and abruptly, in a hundred places, the seaweed was tossed up into sudden, billowy hillocks. From these burst mighty arms, and in an instant the evening air was full of them, hundreds and hundreds, coming towards the yacht.

"Devil-fishes!" shouted a man's voice from the deck. "Octopuses! My Gord!"

Then I caught my chum shouting.

"Cut the mooring ropes!" he yelled.

This must have been done almost on the instant, for immediately there showed between us and the nearest weed a broadening gap of scummy water.

"Haul away, lads!" I heard Barlow shouting; and the same instant I caught the splash, splash of something in the water on our port side. I rushed across and looked out. I found that a rope had been carried across to the opposite seaweed, and that the men were now warping us rapidly from those invading horrors.

I raced back to the starboard port, and, lo! as though by magic, there stretched between us and the Graiken only the silent stretch of demure weed and some fifty feet of water. It seem inconceivable that it was a covering to so much terror.

And then speedily the night was upon us, hiding all; but from the

decks above there commenced a sound of hammering that continued long throughout the night—long after I, weary with my previous night's vigil, had passed into a fitful slumber, broken anon by that hammering above.

VI.

"YOUR BREAKFAST, SIR," came respectfully enough in the steward's voice; and I woke with a start. Overhead, there still sounded that persistent hammering, and I turned to the steward for an explanation.

"I don't exactly know, sir," was his reply. "It's something the carpenter's doing to one of the lifeboats." And then he left me.

I ate my breakfast standing at the port, staring at the distant Graiken. The weed was perfectly quiet, and we were lying about the center of the little lake.

As I watched the derelict, it seemed to me that I saw a movement about her side, and I reached for the glasses. Adjusting them, I made out that there were several of the cuttlefish attached to her in different parts, their arms spread out almost starwise across the lower portions of her hull.

Occasionally a feeler would detach itself and wave aimlessly. This it was that had drawn my attention. The sight of these creatures, in conjunction with that extraordinary scene the previous evening, enabled me to guess the use of the great screen running about the Graiken. It had obviously been erected as a protection against the vile inhabitants of that strange weed-world.

From that my thoughts passed to the problem of reaching and rescuing the crew of the derelict. I could by no means conceive how this was to be effected.

As I stood pondering, whilst I ate, I caught the voices of men chaunteying on deck. For a while this continued; then came Barlow's voice shouting orders, and almost immediately a splash in the water on the starboard side.

I poked my head out through the port, and stared. They had got one of the lifeboats into the water. To the gunnel of the boat they had added a superstructure ending in a roof, the whole somewhat resembling a gigantic dog-kennel.

From under the two sharp ends of the boat rose a couple of planks at an angle of thirty degrees. These appeared to be firmly bolted to the boat and the superstructure. I guessed that their purpose was to enable the boat to over-ride the seaweed, instead of ploughing into it and getting fast.

In the stern of the boat was fixed a strong ringbolt, into which was spliced the end of a coil of one-inch manilla rope. Along the sides of the boat, and high above the gunnel, the superstructure was pierced with holes for oars. In one side of the roof was placed a trapdoor. The idea struck me as wonderfully ingenious, and a very probable solution of the difficulty of rescuing the crew of the Graiken.

A few minutes later one of the men threw over a rope side-ladder, and ran down it on to the roof of the boat. He opened the trap, and lowered himself into the interior. I noticed that he was armed with one of the yacht's cutlasses and a revolver.

It was evident that my chum fully appreciated the difficulties that were to be overcome. In a few seconds the man was followed by four others of the crew, similarly armed; and then Barlow.

Seeing him, I craned out my head as far as possible, and sang out to him.

"Ned! Ned, old man!" I shouted. "Let me come along with you!"

He appeared never to have heard me. I noticed his face, just before he shut down the trap above him. The expression was fixed and peculiar. It had the uncomfortable remoteness of a sleep-walker.

"Confound it!" I muttered, and after that I said nothing; for it hurt my dignity to supplicate before the men.

From the interior of the boat I heard Barlow's voice, muffled. Immediately four oars were passed out through the holes in the sides, while from slots in the front and rear of the superstructure were thrust a couple of oars with wooden chocks nailed to the blades.

These, I guessed, were intended to assist in steering the boat, that in the bow being primarily for pressing down

the weed before the boat, so as to allow her to surmount it the more easily.

Another muffled order came from the interior of the queer-looking craft, and immediately the four oars dipped, and the boat shot towards the weed, the rope trailing out astern as it was paid out from the deck above me.

The board-assisted bow of the life-boat took the weed with a sort of squashy surge, rose up, and the whole craft appeared to leap from the water down in among the quaking mass.

I saw now the reason why the oar-holes had been placed so high. For of the boat itself nothing could be seen, only the upper portion of the superstructure wallowing amid the weed. Had the holes been lower, there would have been no handling the oars.

I settled myself to watch. There was the probability of a prodigious spectacle, and as I could not help, I would, at least, use my eyes.

Five minutes passed, during which nothing happened, and the boat made slow progress towards the derelict. She had accomplished perhaps some twenty or thirty yards, when suddenly from the Graiken there reached my ears a hoarse shout.

My glance leapt from the boat to the derelict. I saw that the people aboard had the sliding part of the screen to one side, and were waving their arms frantically, as though motioning the boat back.

Amongst them I could see the girlish figure that had attracted my attention the previous evening. For a moment I stared, then my gaze travelled back to the boat. All was quiet.

The boat had now covered a quarter of the distance, and I began to persuade myself that she would get across without being attacked.

Then, as I gazed anxiously, from a point in the weed a little ahead of the boat there came a sudden quaking ripple that shivered through the weed in a sort of queer tremor. The next instant, like a shot from a gun, a huge mass drove up clear through the tangled weed, hurling it in all directions, and almost capsizing the boat.

The creature had driven up rear foremost. It fell back with a mighty splash, and in the same moment its monstrous arms were reached out to the boat. They grasped it, enfolding themselves about it horribly. It was apparently attempting to drag the boat under.

From the boat came a regular volley of revolver shots. Yet, though the brute writhed, it did not relinquish its hold. The shots closed, and I saw the dull flash of cutlass blades. The men were attempting to hack at the thing through the oar-holes, but evidently with little effect.

All at once the enormous creature seemed to make an effort to overturn the boat. I saw the half-submerged boat go over to one side, until it seemed to me that nothing could right it, and at the sight I went mad with excitement to help them.

I pulled my head in from the port, and glanced round the cabin. I wanted to break down the door, but there was nothing with which to do this.

Then my sight fell upon my bunk-board, which fitted into a sliding groove. It was made of teak wood, and very solid and heavy. I lifted it out, and charged the door with the end of it.

The panels split from top to bottom, for I am a heavy man. Again I struck, and drove the two portions of the door apart. I hove down the bunk-board, and rushed through.

There was no one on guard; evidently they had gone on deck to view the rescue. The gunroom door was to my right, and I had the key in my pocket.

In an instant, I had it open, and was lifting down from its rack a heavy elephant gun. Seizing a box of cartridges, I tore off the lid, and emptied the lot into my pocket; then I leapt up the companionway on the deck.

The steward was standing near. He turned at my step; his face was white, and he took a couple of paces towards me doubtfully.

"They're—they're—" he began; but I never let him finish.

"Get out of my way!" I roared, and swept him to one side. I ran forward.

"Haul in on that rope!" I shouted. "Tail on to it! Are you going to stand there like a lot of owls and see them drown!"

The men only wanted a leader to show them what to do, and, without

showing any thought of insubordination, they tacked on to the rope that was fastened to the stern of the boat, and hauled her back across the weed—cuttle-fish and all.

The strain on the rope had thrown her on an even keel again, so that she took the water safely, though that foul thing was sproddled all across her.

" 'Vast hauling!" I shouted. "Get the doc's cleavers, some of you—anything that'll cut!"

"This is the sort, sir!" cried the bo'sun; from somewhere he had got hold of a formidable doublebladed whale lance.

The boat, still under the impetus given by our pull, struck the side of the yacht immediately beneath where I was waiting with the gun. Astern of it towed the body of the monster, its two eyes—monstrous orbs of the Profound—staring out vilely from behind its arms.

I leant my elbows on the rail, and aimed full at the right eye. As I pulled on the trigger one of the great arms detached itself from the boat, and swirled up towards me. There was a thunderous bang as the heavy charge drove its way through that vast eye, and at the same instant something swept over my head.

There came a cry from behind: "Look out, sir!" A flame of steel before my eyes, and a truncated something fell upon my shoulder, and thence to the deck.

Down below, the water was being churned to a froth, and three more arms sprang into the air, and then down among us.

One grasped the bo'sun, lifting him like a child. Two cleavers gleamed, and he fell to the deck from a height of some twelve feet, along with the severed portion of the limb.

I had my weapons reloaded again by now, and ran forward along the deck somewhat, to be clear of the flying arms that flailed on the rails and deck.

I fired again into the hulk of the brute, and then again. At the second shot, the murderous din of the creature ceased, and, with an ineffectual flicker of its remaining tentacles, it sank out of sight beneath the water.

A minute later we had the hatch in the roof of the superstructure open, and the men out, my chum coming last. They had been mightily shaken, but otherwise were none the worse.

As Barlow came over the gangway, I stepped up to him and gripped his shoulder. I was strangely muddled in my feelings. I felt that I had no sure position aboard my own yacht. Yet all I said was:

"Thank God, you're safe, old man!" And I meant it from my heart.

He looked at me in a doubtful, puzzled sort of manner, and passed his hand across his forehead.

"Yes," he replied; but his voice was strangely toneless, save that some puzzledness seemed to have crept into it. For a couple of moments he stared at me in an unseeing way, and once more I was struck by the immobile, tensed-up expression of his features.

Immediately afterwards he turned away—having shown neither friendliness nor enmity—and commenced to clamber back over the side into the boat.

"Come up, Ned!" I cried. "It's no good. You'll never manage it that way. Look!" and I stretched out my arm, pointing. Instead of looking, he passed his hand once more across his forehead, with that gesture of puzzled doubt. Then, to my relief, he caught at the rope ladder, and commenced to make his way slowly up the side.

Reaching the deck, he stood for nearly a minute without saying a word, his back turned to the derelict. Then, still wordless, he walked slowly across to the opposite side, and leant his elbows upon the rail, as though looking back along the way the yacht had come.

For my part, I said nothing, dividing my attention between him and the men, with occasional glances at the quaking weed and the—apparently—hopelessly surrounded Graiken.

The men were quiet, occassionally turning towards Barlow, as though for some further order. Of me they appeared to take little notice. In this wise, perhaps a quarter of an hour went by; then abruptly Barlow stood upright, waving his arms and shouting:

"It comes! It comes!" He turned towards us, and his face seemed transfigured, his eyes gleaming almost maniacally.

I ran across the deck to his side, and looked away to port, and now I saw what it was that had excited him. The weed-barrier through which we had come on our inward journey was divided, a slowly broadening river of oily water showing clean across it.

Even as I watched it grew broader, the immense masses of weed being moved by some unseen impulsion.

I was still staring, amazed, when a sudden cry went up from some of the men to starboard. Turning quickly, I saw that the yawning movement was being continued to the mass of weed that lay between us and the Graiken.

Slowly, the weed was divided, surely as though an invisible wedge were being driven through it. The gulf of weed-clear water reached the derelict, and passed beyond. And now there was no longer anything to stop our rescue of the crew of the derelict.

VII.

IT WAS BARLOW'S VOICE that gave the order for the mooring ropes to be cast off, and then, as the light wind was right against us, a boat was out ahead, and the yacht was towed towards the ship, whilst a dozen of the men stood ready with their rifles on the fo'c's'le head.

As we drew nearer, I began to distinguish the features of the crew, the men strangely grizzled and old looking. And among them, white-faced with emotion, was my chum's lost sweetheart. I never expect to know a more extraordinary moment.

I looked at Barlow; he was staring at the white-faced girl with an extraordinary fixidity of expression that was scarcely the look of a sane man.

The next minute we were alongside, crushing to a pulp between our steel sides one of those remaining monsters of the deep that had continued to cling steadfastly to the Graiken.

Yet of that I was scarcely aware, for I had turned again to look at Ned Barlow. He was swaying slowly to his feet, and just as the two vessels closed he reached up both his hands to his head, and fell like a log.

Brandy was brought, and later Barlow carried to his cabin; yet we had won clear of that hideous weed-world before he recovered consciousness.

During his illness I learned from his sweetheart how, on a terrible night a long year previously, the Graiken had been caught in a tremendous storm and dismasted, and how, helpless and driven by the gale, they at last found themselves surrounded by the great banks of floating weed, and finally held fast in the remorseless grip of the dread Sargasso.

She told me of their attempts to free the ship from the weed, and of the attacks of the cuttlefish. And later of various other matters; for all of which I have no room in this story.

In return I told her of our voyage, and her lover's strange behaviour. How he had wanted to undertake the navigation of the yacht, and had talked of a great world of weed. How I had—believing him unhinged—refused to listen to him.

How he had taken matters into his own hands, without which she would most certainly have ended her days surrounded by the quaking weed and those great beasts of the deep waters.

She listened with an evergrowing seriousness, so that I had, time and again, to assure her that I bore my old chum no ill, but rather held myself to be in the wrong. At which she shook her head, but seemed mightily relieved.

It was during Barlow's recovery that I made the astonishing discovery that he remembered no detail of his imprisoning of me.

I am convinced now that for days and weeks he must have lived in a sort of dream in a hyper state, in which I can only imagine that he had possibly been sensitive to more subtle understandings than normal bodily and mental health allows.

One other thing there is in closing. I found that the captain and the two mates had been confined to their cabins by Barlow. The captain was suffering from a pistol-shot in the arm, due to his having attempted to resist Barlow's assumption of authority.

When I released him he vowed vengeance. Yet Ned Barlow being my chum, I found means to slake both the captain's and the two mates' thirst for vengeance, and the slaking thereof is—well, another story.

PERLEY POORE SHEEHAN wrote in the era of the great scientific romancers—Edgar Rice Burroughs, George Allan England, A. Merritt, Francis Stevens—and his work compares favorably with the best of them. Yet, as occassionally happens to fine writers, it is rare to find his stories reprinted.

For Sheehan, a mild revival of his work started with the publication of a deluxe, boxed edition of his fast-paced fantasy novel *The Abyss of Wonders* by Polaris Press in 1953.

In the introduction to that book, P. Schuyler Miller briefly outlined Sheehan's life. He was born June 11, 1875 in Cincinnati. He received his first journalistic experience on a Hamilton, Ohio newspaper. Eventually, he became an editor on the Paris edition of the NEW YORK HERALD. He graduated with a degree in Philosophy from Union College, Schenectady in New York. For a time, he was Managing Editor of THE SCRAP BOOK, under Robert H. Davis.

THE SCRAP BOOK was a remarkable potpourri of every conceivable type of human interest piece, as well as fiction. It was for a period published in two sections, one fiction and one non-fiction. At other times it experimented with illustrations on virtually every page, all in color. It was a highly innovative magazine in its prime.

Monsieur De Guise first appeared in the January, 1911 issue of THE SCRAP BOOK, when it had become a pulp paper magazine with all illustrations gone. It shared the fiction quota with *The Radium Terrors,* a near-science fiction serial by Albert Dorrington, and Edgar Allan Poe's narrative of the future, *Mellonta Tauta.*

This brief story should not be read, it should be savored. It is a hauntingly effective masterpiece of weird fiction, superbly rendered both in what it says and what it leaves unsaid. It will go down on your mental list of all-time favorites.

Monsieur De Guise

By PERLEY POORE SHEEHAN

THAT ANY ONE should live in the center of Cedar Swamp was in itself so singular as to set all sorts of queer ideas to running through my head.

A more sinister morass I had never seen. It was as beautiful and deadly as one of its own red mocassins, as treacherous and fascinating.

It was a tangle of cypress and cedar almost thirty miles square, most of it under water—a maze of jungle-covered islands and black bayous. There were alligators and panthers, bear and wild pig. There were groans and grunts and queer cries at night, and silence, dead silence by day.

That was Cedar Swamp as I knew it after a week of solitary hunting there. I no longer missed the sun. My eyes had become used to the perpetual twilight. My nerves no longer bothered me when I stepped into opaque water, or watched a section of gliding snake. But the silence was getting to be more than I could bear. It was too uncanny.

And now, just after I had noticed it, and wondered at it for the hundredth time, I heard a voice. It was low and clear—that of a woman who sings alto. There were four or five notes like the fragment of a strange song. And then, before I had recovered from the shock of it, there was silence again.

I was up to my knees in water at the time, wading a narrow branch between two islands. I must have stood there for a full minute waiting for the voice to resume, but the silence closed in on me deeper than ever. With a little shiver creeping over one part of my body after another, I stole ashore.

The island was one of the highest I had yet encountered. I had not taken

a dozen steps up through the dank growth of its shelving shore before I found a deeply worn path.

This, I could see, ran down to the water-front on one direction, where I caught a glimpse of a boat-house masked by trees. I turned and followed the path in the other direction up a gentle slope.

As I advanced, the jungle around me thinned out and became almost park-like. There were open stretches of meadow and clumps of trees, suggesting a garden. But I was so intent on discovering the owner of the voice that the wonder of this did not at first impress me. I had, moreover, an eery, uneasy sensation of being watched.

I walked slowly. I carried my gun with affected carelessness. I looked around me as though I were a mere tourist dropped in to see the sights.

I had thus covered, perhaps, a quarter of a mile, when the path turned into an avenue of cabbage-palmetto, at the further end of which I saw a house.

It was large and white with a pillared porch, such as they used to build before the war. It was shaded by a magnificent grove of live-oak trees. There were beds of geranium and roses in front, and clusters of crepe-myrtle and flowering oleander on a well-clipped lawn.

It all gave an impression of infinite care, of painstaking up-keep, of neatness and wealth, yet, there was not a soul in sight. Not a servant was there. No dog barked, I saw no horses, no chickens, no pigeons, nor sheep; no familiar animate emblem whatever of the prosperous farm.

I stood in the presence of this silent and lonely magnificence with a feeling that was not exactly fear, but rather stupefaction. For a moment I was persuaded that I had emerged from the great swamp into some unknown plantation of its littoral.

But a moment was enough to convince me that this could not be. I was, without the slightest doubt, almost at the exact center of the morass.

I was too familiar with its circumference and general contour to be wrong as to that. For a dozen miles at least, in every direction, Cedar Swamp surrounded this island of mystery with its own mysterious forests and bayous.

Once again I was acutely aware of being stared at. Almost at the same instant a man's voice addressed me from behind my back.

"Monsieur," it asked, "why do you hesitate?"

I might as well confess it right away—I believe in ghosts. I have seen too many things in my life that were not to be explained by the commonly accepted laws of nature. I have lived too much among the half-civilized and learned too much of their odd wisdom to recognize any hard and fast definition of what is real and what is not.

From the moment I heard that bit of song in the swamp, I felt that I was passing from the commonplace into the weird. My succeeding impressions had confirmed this feeling.

And now, when I heard the voice behind me: "Monsieur, why do you hesitate?"—I was not sure that it was the voice of a human being at all. I turned slowly, my mind telling me that I should see no one.

It was with a distinct feeling of relief, therefore, that I saw a small, pale, well-dressed old man smiling at me as though he had read my secret thoughts.

His face was cleanly shaven and bloodless. His head, partly covered by a black velvet skull-cap, was extremely large. His snow-white hair was silky and long. His eyes, which were deeply sunken, were large and dark. His appearance, as well as the question which he had just put to me suggested the foreigner. He was not alone un-American; he appeared to be of another century, as well.

I said something about intruding. He made a brusk gesture, almost of impatience, and, telling me to follow him, started for the house.

It was as though I was an expected guest. Only the absence of servants maintained that feeling of the bizarre, which never left me.

The interior of the house was in keeping with its outward appearance—sumptuous and immaculate. My host led me to the door of a vast chamber on the first floor, motioned me to enter, and, standing at the door, said:

"Monsieur, luncheon will be served when you reappear. Pray, make yourself at home."

Then he left me.

Two details of this room impressed me: the superlative richness of the toilet articles, all of which were engraved with a coat-of-arms, and the portrait of a woman, by Largilliére. All women were beautiful to Largilliére, but in the present instance he had surpassed himself.

The gentle, aristocratic face, with its tender, lustrous eyes, was the most alluring thing I had ever seen. At the bottom of the massive frame was the inscription: "*Anne-Marie, Duchesse de Guise. Anno 1733.*"

I was still marveling at the miracle which had brought such an apparition to the heart of an American swamp when I heard a light step in the hallway, and I knew that my host was awaiting me.

The luncheon, which was served cold in a splendid dining-room, had been laid for two. I wondered at this, for still no servant appeared, and surely I could not have been expected. And my host added to my mystification rather than lessened it when he said: "Monsieur, I offer you the place usually reserved for my wife."

Apart from this simple statement, the meal was completed in silence. Now and then I thought I surprised him, nodding gravely, as though someone else were present.

I suspected him several times of speaking in an undertone. But, my mind was so preoccupied with the inexplicable happenings of the preceding hour that I was not in a condition to attack fresh mysteries now.

He scarcely touched his food. Indeed, his presence there seemed to be more in the nature of an act of courtesy than for the purpose of taking nourishment. As soon as I had finished he arose and invited me to follow him.

Across the hall was a music-room, with high French windows, opening on the porch. He paused at one of these windows now and plucked the flower from a potted heliotrope. The perfume of it seemed to stimulate him

strangely. He at once became more animated. A slight trace of color mounted to his waxen cheeks. Turning to me, abruptly, he remarked:

"I mentioned just now my wife. Perhaps you noticed her portrait?"

As he spoke, a faint breath of the heliotrope came to me, and with it, by one of those odd associations of ideas, the portrait by Largilliére. I saw again the gentle face and the lustrous eyes, but the date—1733. Surely, this was not the portrait he referred to.

But he had seen the perplexity in my face, and he broke out in French: "*Oui, oui; c'est moi, monsieur de Guise.*" And then, in English: "It was the portrait of my wife you saw, *madame la duchesse par monsieur Largilliere.*"

"But then, *madame*, your wife," I stammered, "is dead."

He was still smelling the heliotrope. He looked up at me with his somber eyes for a moment as though he had failed to grasp my meaning. Then he said:

"No, no. There is no such thing as death—only life. For, what is life?—the smile, the perfume, the voice. Ah, the voice! Will you hear her sing?"

For a brief instant my head turned giddily. The world I had always known, the world of tragedies, of sorrows, of physical joys and pains, the world of life and death, in short, was whirling away from beneath my feet.

And I began to recall certain old stories I had heard about the visible servants of the invisible, the earthly agents of the unearthly. Such things have been known to exist.

M. de Guise was walking up and down the room murmuring to himself in French. I could catch an occasional word of endearment. Once I saw him distinctly press the heliotrope to his lips. He had forgotten my presence, apparently. He was in the company of some one whom he alone could see. And then he seated himself at the piano.

I had a presentiment of what was coming. I dropped into a chair and closed my eyes.

Again the heliotrope perfumed the air around me. I saw the smooth brow, the sympathetic eyes, the magic smile of the Duchesse de Guise, and then a voice—that voice I had heard in the swamp—began to sing, so soft, so sweet, that a little spasm twitched at my throat and a chill crept down my back.

It was a love-song, such as they sang centuries ago. I know little French, but it told of love in life and death—"*Moi, je t'ai, vive et morte, incessament aimee.*"

And when I opened my eyes again, all that I saw was the shrivelled black figure of Monsieur de Guise, his silvered head thrown back with the air of one who has seen a vision.

Subconsciously I had heard something else while listening to the song. It was the swift, muffled throb of an approaching motor-boat. M. de Guise had heard it, too, for now he left the piano and approached the window. Presently, I could see a dozen negroes approaching along the avenue of palms. They seemed strangely silent for their race.

"These are my people," said my host. "Once a week I send them to the village. They will carry you away."

The afternoon was far advanced when I bade M. de Guise farewell. As I looked back for the last time the sunset was rapidly dissolving the great white house and its gardens in a golden haze. His figure on the porch was all that linked it to the world of man.

Late that night I was landed at a corner of Cedar Swamp, adjacent to my home. My black boatman, who had spoken never a word immediately backed his barge away into the darkness, leaving me there alone.

And, although I have since made several efforts to repeat my visit to M. de Guise, I have never been successful. Once, indeed, I found again what I believed to be his island, but it was covered entirely with a dense, forbidding jungle. Which will doubtless discredit this story, as it has caused even me to reflect.

But grant that the story is true, and that M. de Guise was merely mad. Why, then in a certain event, which I need not mention, may God send me madness, too!

GEORGE GRIFFITH was the science fiction author H. G. Wells regarded as the personification of a popular success and whose influence Wells acknowledged within the context of his stories.

During the latter part of the 19th century when future war stories were the rage, George Griffith was unquestionably the most popular regular producer of such tales. His popularity was based upon a far superior imagination than that displayed by most of his contemporaries. Yet, because of the anti-Americanism of his early novels, he was virtually unknown in this country.

Science Fiction was not all that George Griffith wrote. He also produced a fair body of work of the occult and the supernatural, some of it of very wide popularity. Only recently his epic saga *Valdar the Oft-Born,* a wonderous tale of a man who finds himself killed to be incarnated time after time, through various ages of man's history, was reprinted. Especially after the turn of the century, a number of his novels appeared to take an occult turn. *The Destined Maid* published in 1901 has a villain instantly turn into a skeleton when shot in a duel; *Denver's Double* deals with astral occupation of another's body and was published the same year; *Captain Ishmael* is a variation on the Wandering Jew theme, of a man who wanders ageless, through the centuries and now and then actually meets *the* Wandering Jew, and also appeared in 1901.

The Lost Elixir comes from this same period in his life, when psychic subjects appeared to have especially interested him. It was the next to last short story that he is known to have written and it appeared in the prestigious PALL MALL MAGAZINE for October, 1903. For a writer used to penning novel after novel for serial publication in England's ephemeral weeklies, it is a remarkable piece of careful writing. It has never been reprinted in any form and never appeared in the United States before now.

The Lost Elixir

By GEORGE GRIFFITH

A WEEK AFTER I had passed my examination before the committee of the Narrative Club, which, as you may know, is an assembly into which none are admitted save those who have many wanderings to their account and are able to tell tales about them, I received a notice from the Secretary to the effect that he was in a position to accept my cheque in payment of my entrance fee, and, further, that he would be happy to introduce me to my fellow-wanderers at the usual monthly supper on the following Sunday, at nine p.m.

"You are rather in luck as regards your introduction to-night," he said, when we met at his rooms. "According to the strict rules you would have been called upon to justify your calling and election by telling us a story; but it so happens that this evening will be the only one for nearly a year that we can get hold of a man who is, perhaps, our most distinguished member. You know him by name, and you may have run across him in some of your travels—Professor Hessetine."

Of course the world-famed name was familiar to me, as it is to everybody who has read anything outside novels and newspapers; but as I had had the great privilege of sitting at the same table with him a couple of years before on a West Coast boat from Panama to Lima—whither he was going to write a monograph on the prehistoric tombs of the ancient seaboard towns—the freemasonry of travel entitled me to claim acquaintance with him.

"Then that's all right," said the Secretary, himself a noted climber of hills and slayer of retiring beasts which affect the most neck-breaking localities to be found above the snow-line, when I had mentioned this: "he'll be delighted to see you again

and have a chat about Inca-land with you. Personally, I am expecting quite a treat, apart from any story he may have to tell us; for he promised me, in his letter accepting the invitation, to be the narrator of the evening, that we should be the first to hear of what he has done at Susa. Even before the scientific papers get it, I mean."

"If he does that I don't much care whether he tells us a story or not," I said. "I can hardly imagine any ordinary travel yarn that would be anything like as interesting as Hessetine on Susa."

"That, my dear fellow," he replied, with a smile, "is probably because you have only just become a member of the Tale Club, as some of our irresponsible globe-trotters have christened it. Oh, and, by the way, that reminds me," he went on, turning towards me, "there's just one hint I ought to give you. You'll have to expect some pretty tough-laid yarns at our distinguished symposia, but we have a tacit understanding as to the acceptance of the aphorism that truth is often stranger than fiction, and so we often give truth—and the narrator—the benefit of the doubt."

"That's nothing," I laughed: "I know some myself, perfectly true, which no British jury would believe if I told them on oath in the witness-box."

Now this was a true saying, but—well, if any one else than a man of European reputation had told Professor Hessetine's story and staked that reputation on its truth I should still have had my doubts as to the complete purity of his facts.

It so happened that during supper—by the way, a supper at the Narrative Club is quite the most delightfully free-and-easy meal inside the confines of civilisation—the conversation, led off by a young doctor who had just been making a long study of the so-called miracle-healing practised by the priest-physicians of Korea, turned upon the many well-authenticated traditions which exist among nearly all peoples belonging to the older civilisations as to the possibility of prolonging human life, and even youth, indefinitely by the regular eating of certain combinations of herbs, or the direct mingling of certain animal and vegetable essences with the blood.

I noticed that, although the Professor listened most attentively to the conversation, he only assisted it by an odd remark, always very much to the point, thrown in here and there, and every now and then an approving nod or a dissenting head-shake. When the table was cleared, and the chairman, according to custom, gave up the post of honour to the Narrator of the evening, it was not very long before we discovered that he had a reason for his reticence, for the first words that he spoke after the glasses had been filled and the pipes loaded were:—

"Fellow-wanderers by sea and land I daresay you will have noticed that I have been exceedingly interested in the conversation which took place during supper. It is, of course, a most absorbing topic for all students of human things who are able to approach the most impossible-seeming subjects with that perfectly open mind which, as most of us believe, only long study and extensive travel can give. But whether it be what is commonly called a coincidence or not, I may as well preface the story I am going to tell you by saying that it bears with exceeding closeness upon that very subject."

WHILE THE Narrator was saying this he seemed to some of us, certainly to myself, to have grown—I was almost saying—centuries younger. That, however, was not quite what I mean. He might himself have been of any age, clime, or nationality, and his features and expression had suddenly undergone a subtle change which seemed a reversion to some former state of being. In other words, he appeared to transfer his personality from the present backward into that remote epoch of which he was going to tell us.

"You must not think," he went on, "that I am going to tell you that since our last meeting I have had the privilege of making the acquaintance of the Flying Dutchman or the Wandering Jew, although I fear I shall have to make an almost equal demand upon your credulity—for, gentlemen, I am going to ask you not to disbelieve me when I tell you that I, who am speaking to you to-night with the lips

of flesh, only a few weeks ago spoke, also in the flesh, with one who, as I have every reason to believe, lived and toiled, loved and thought in the long-buried city of Susa in the far-off days when Rameses the Great was king."

Among the Wanderers by Sea and Land not an eye winked. Only a deeper silence fell upon us as we waited for the Professor to continue.

"I may presume," he went on after a little pause, "that you all know I have just returned after some months' work in connexion with the excavations at Susa, one of the buried cities of Upper Egypt, which appears to have been a sort of pleasure resort on the shores of a now vanished lake, to which the aristocracy of Thebes were accustomed to go. Indeed, as a matter of fact, I am now quite certain that this was so, for I have in my possession an absolutely unique treasure in the shape of a complete plan of it, illustrated with drawings of its principal buildings, from the hand of one who saw it in all its pride and beauty.

"This is, however, a slight anticipation. I have the plan with me, and you shall see it afterwards. I was engaging my staff of skilled diggers and excavators—quite a different class from the common fellah labourers—at Memphis, as the best men are nearly always to be found there; and one day, when I had almost completed my staff and was thinking of making a start northward, I was taking my usual evening stroll among the ruins to the north of the modern city, when I was considerably startled by hearing a man's voice speaking in strangely musical tones and in a tongue totally unknown to me. It came from the other side of the fallen statue of Rameses, at the back of which I was leaning, smoking a contemplative pipe.

"I say that I was startled, because I think I may affirm without boasting that I am familiar, not only with all the dialects spoken in the Nile Valley, but with most of the languages of the far and near East. Yet I searched my memory in vain for the recollection of a single syllable or inflection, until I heard him say quite distinctly, and yet with an accent and intonation utterly strange to me, the words, or rather the exclamation, 'O Rameses, Rameses!'

"No one could have pronounced the name with such exquisite purity and such profound depth of feeling—I had almost said sorrow. Gentleman, I am not ashamed to admit that in that moment a keen thrill of awe passed through my soul, for the accents seemed to awaken some long-stilled echo of a memory belonging to a life that had been lived in other ages, and with it came the thought, I know not whence, that I was listening to a speech that human lips had not uttered for nearly thirty centuries.

"I put out my pipe and went round the base of the statue, and there I found myself face to face with such a man as I had never set eyes on before. He might have stood as model to the sculptor who designed the statue beside which we were standing. There was the broad, square, low forehead, and under it looked out at me the large, level-set eyes that might have belonged to the Great King himself. The straight, massive nose, the full, delicately-curved, sensuous lips, and the firm, commanding chin—I recognised them all, and the whole countenance wore that almost indescribable expression of contemptuous repose which is so inevitably characteristic of the royal race of Old Egypt.

"He did not show the slightest sign of surprise at my appearance. His eyes looked too weary with seeing for that. He returned my salute with a grave dignity that was, even there, in strange contrast to the scanty rags and the frayed and faded cotton shawl which hung from his shoulders. I addressed him in Arabic—for somehow the pure and ancient speech of the desert suggested itself as the most fitting medium at my command—and asked him if he would do me the favour of telling what language he had been speaking when I had unintentionally overheard him a few moments before. He replied, in Arabic which was far more fluent and idiomatic than my own:

" 'That, Effendi, was the speech in which my brother Rameses, by whose time-worn effigy we stand, wooed our cousin Nephert-Anat, the star-eyed Lily of the Upper Nile, in the days when the desert that has buried our glories laughed and sang with the joy

of its fruitfulness, and Egypt was Queen of the Earth.'

"Now, you are very well aware, gentlemen, that insanity, in its milder and more inoffensive forms, is not regarded in the East as it is here. It is treated with tolerance and by most people with respect as a sign of the special protection of the Deity. You will, I am sure, understand me when I say that my new acquaintance's first utterance inclined me to the belief that he was a scholar whom overstudy and under-feeding had made mad. But there was no sign of madness in the calm, luminous eyes which looked so steadily into mine while he was making this extraordinary speech. There was none of the restlessness of the feet and hands, or the sideway movements of the head, which are the almost certain accompaniments of insanity. On the contrary, his attitude was easy and yet full of dignity, and his manner was rather that of a man who is uttering a commonplace which has become wearisome to him.

"I, of course, realised at once that no good end could possibly be served by any show of incredulity, and so I replied just as seriously as he had spoken: 'Truly, then, O brother of the Great King, since thy days have been prolonged on earth so far beyond the common span of mortal life, great must be the blessing or grievous the curse that the High Gods have laid upon thee. Is it permitted that a stranger from a far-off land should ask thee why the shade of thy mighty brother hath waited so many cycles for thee in the Halls of Amenti?'

" 'Ah,' he exclaimed, bending down towards me—for, as I have said, he was a man of splendid stature, fully a head taller than I am—and bringing his eyes to a level with mine, 'dost thou believe me, then? Or is it only thy charity which thus listens with a show of credulity to what thou, like the others, takest for the idle tale of a madman? Speak truly, Effendi, as thy soul liveth, for on thy faith hangs the fate of one who, in the days that are forgotten, by his own rash and presumptuous act, brought upon his soul the anger of the High Gods, and cut himself off from the common lot of man.'

"I confess that I was strangely and deeply moved; and I replied, as though some inner impulse had been prompting me: 'O Egyptian, who am I, the child of yesterday, that I should say what is and is not possible to the might of the Gods? Shall the sand-grain by the seashore say to its fellow, "With thee and me the limits of Ocean end"? I would make no trespass on thy confidence, yet if thou hast the will to tell me, thy story will not fall on idle ears, and when the proof is given belief shall not be wanting.'

" 'It is just,' he said, his lips making the faintest movement of a smile. 'Yet it is well said that trust is twofold. Will the Effendi trust me in a small matter if I will trust him in a great one?'

"It may seem to you like a piece of arrant foolishness in an old traveller, but I positively could not distrust the man, and so I answered: 'So far as it is lawful and fair dealing between man and man, Egyptian, I will trust thee to the half of my goods.'

" 'I have no need of thy goods, Effendi,' he replied, with a sigh which was the saddest I have ever heard from a human breast: 'I who have feasted with kings and conquerors and scattered gold and jewels to the four winds of heaven till wealth became as dross in my hands and I had sickened of all that earth could sell—what is thy poor little fortune to me? Yet it is because I am what men call poor in money that I would ask for thy faith and thy help. The matter is in this wise. Thou art going to Susa, the city of my youth and my happiness, and the scene of the crime against the High Gods which made the one unfading and destroyed the other for ever.

"At Susa thou wilt seek to clear the dust of ages from the house in which I and mine dwelt, the temples in which we worshipped, and the tombs where the mummies of my dear ones are resting, while I, self-doomed, count on the countless suns of endless days. Now, what I ask is this: that thou shouldst make me one of thy company, the meanest of them if thou wilt, and take me to Susa, and there I will show thy workmen where to dig that they may find that which thou seekest. I will draw thee pictures of the temples and the theatres and the tombs, and mark out the streets and

squares, until all Susa in its ruins shall be as plain to thee as it was in its glory to me.'

"I don't suppose that any archaeologist had ever had such an astoundingly tempting offer made to him, and I candidly admit that I was not only tempted—I fell. But there was still the undeniable fact that, under all known human conditions, such a thing was absolutely impossible. Certain doubts, too, which I will come to shortly, had occurred to me while he was making his proposition. Still, all said and done, I stood to risk nothing but his railway fare and keep—I was already risking them and absurdly high wages too for men not half as likely-looking as my strange friend—even if I was only able to use that commanding air of his by making him an overseer, so I held out my hand, and said:

" 'It is agreed, Egyptian. To-morrow we start by the train that leaves at sundown. Come to me after the early coffee, and I will tell the dragoman and the overseer that I have engaged thee. After the paper is signed I will advance money to buy what thou hast need of. Then in thine own time thou shalt make plain those things which are now dark to my eyes.'

"Our hands met. As I believe now, it was a grip which drew two living men together across a gulf of thirty centuries. That strikes you, no doubt, as a somewhat fantastic and far-fetched notion, but I am not without hope that your opinion will change when you have heard my reason for believing as I do."

THE PROFESSOR, who had so far told his extraordinary story in the most commonplace conversational tone, paused and took a draught from a great tankard of lager before him. The silence was so strained that no one seemed to care to break it, even to get a drink. When he put his tankard down and faced us again, some of us began to find a sort of likeness in those symmetrically-cut features of his to others that we had seen on the wall-paintings at Luxor and Karnak and other familiar places on the now, if possible, vulgarised Nile, as well as on the mighty carved monoliths which raise their giant bulk above the sands of time, changeless in the midst of change, silently contemptuous of the roar of the noisy centuries and the chatter of their yesterborn children.

"During the journey to Thebes," he went on, just as quietly as before, "my friend the Egyptian took his place among the other men in my employment, and scarcely exchanged a score of words with me. This was, of course, perfectly natural. In the East master is master and servant is servant. But as soon as we had left the train at Thebes and began to prepare for crossing the fifty-odd miles of desert to the site of what once was the pleasure-city of Susa, a sudden change came over him. Those of you who have seen a man breathing his native air after years of exile will understand what I mean. He began to exert a sort of unofficial authority which not even the dragoman or the overseer tried to resist after the first few hours, during which they somehow learnt that he was at home and they were not.

"We reached the semicircle of granite hills under which the long-dead citizens of Susa once found protection from the worst of the desert winds, during the second march of the third day. We chose our camping-ground and pitched our tents. After supper I took my pipe and went for a stroll round the encampment, to see that everything was shipshape. There was such a moon in the sky as one only sees from the desert; and when my inspection was over I wandered towards the edge of the bay of smooth sand, broken by outcrops of stone which were for vanished Susa what the Monument and Nelson's Column may some day be for London—if they last as long.

"I had not gone far from the camp when I heard close by me the quiet, gentle voice of my Egyptian saying, still in the classic Arabic of the Koran:

" 'Effendi, thou hast kept thy part of that which was agreed between us. This is Susa, and my eyes already see the flood of ages rolled back, the sands swept away, and the likeness of the temples and palaces once more reflected in the blue mirror of the lake which washed their everlasting walls. Diana, as I have heard the old Greeks say, is smiling full-eyed on us to-night.

Hast thou the leisure and the will to learn why Pent-ar, priest of the Royal Blood in the House of Amen-ra and Writer of the Sacred Records, sought thy help and charity to return to the place of his birth?'

"I confess that I started a little at the mention of that name, so famous to all Egyptian scholars, by the lips of a living man who claimed it as his own, but I managed to tell him in my usual tone that if he was prepared to give me his confidence I was quite ready to receive it; and so I sat down on a huge slab of granite, and he, declining with a graceful gesture my request that he too would be seated, stood before me, a strangely eloquent figure in the bright moonlight, and told me his story with a simple dignity of diction and expression which, translating from his exquisite Arabic as I am, I cannot hope to emulate.

" 'My history, Effendi,' he began, after a long look over the wildnerness of ruins, 'shall be brief, since no man could tell even in many hours the narrative of the changing ages. And first I will explain what may have seemed strange to thee—that I, who, as I told thee at Memphis, have squandered uncounted treasures, should be too poor to pay my way here and do the work for myself which I am to do for thee. It comes about in this wise. Not many months ago I learned from such a seeker as thou art for the hidden glories of my people that a certain papyrus had been found at Thebes which was of the time of the Great King and a little after, and signed by one Panit-Ahmes, priest of Sekhet and scribe of the College of Physicians at Thebes. Further, I was told that this papyrus, which is now in your great Museum of London, contained certain passages which, though plain to decipher, had no outward meaning, and contained, moreover, characters which the most learned of those skilled in the writing of the old Egyptians could not make words or phrases of.

" 'Now in the days of the Great King this Panit-Ahmes shared with me the fame which in those days was greater than that which men could win with bow and spear, the fame of learning and of the knowledge of hidden things. This of itself, though it might have made us rivals for the favour of the High Gods, would not by necessity have made us enemies; but there was that between us which hath set man's hand against his brother since first the world began—the love of a fair woman. I divined instantly that the passages which your scholars could not read were written in the Hermetic character which was known only to the initiates of the Sacred Mysteries, and that, since this lore has been lost for many ages, there was no other on earth who could read them save myself.

" 'That day I sold a few curious jewels, the last of a once great store, to the explorer, bought myself some clothes of the European fashion, and took passage to London. As I can speak your language, as I can all others which I have seen come into being since my nurse taught me the ancient tongue of Khem, I went to the chief keeper of manuscripts in your Museum and offered to translate this papyrus for him, though in doing so I was breaking the oath of my initiation, so strong upon me was the desire to learn what Panit-Ahmes had hidden in the Hermetic passages.

" 'He looked on me at first in wonder, as thou didst, Effendi, when we stood that evening by the statue of Rameses; but there was unbelief as well as wonder in his eyes and his speech, so I went to a case in which some papyri of the time of the Second Amen-ho-tep, who took the great city of Nineveh, rested, and these I read off into English as quickly as you, Effendi, would translate from an Arabic writing. Then he believed, but his wonder grew greater; and in the end, after much talk and writing to many people, as is the fashion of the English, the permission I craved was given to me, and in a day I made the translation and a copy of the Hermetic passages for myself. The scholars of the Museum were greatly amazed, and offered me a high stipend to remain and work for them; but how could I, Pent-ar the Initiate, take money for the revealing of the Holy Mysteries to unbelievers? Also, I had deceived them, for the meaning I wrote down of the mystic sentences was not the true one. Had I written that, they would have laughed at me, and I

should have broken my oath for nothing.

" 'Now the meaning of the passages was this—and by it thou shalt learn, ere many days have passed, whether Pent-ar the Scribe hath told thee the truth or a lie:

" '*O thou who in the days to come shalt be weary of the burden of years: Behold, my hate shall be buried in my tomb, that I may greet thee as friend in the Halls of the Assessors.*

" '*When the High Gods, whose holiness thine impiety hath outraged, shall judge thy cup of penance to be full, it may be that thine eyes shall see this writing, which thou alone of men wilt in those days be able to read with understanding.*

" '*Then shalt thou learn that the flame lit in thy veins by the Elixir of Long-Drawn Days may be quenched only by the dew which thou shalt find even then moist on the waiting lips of Love. It was given to me to learn the secret of the poison which was the antidote to the venom of endless days. Thy mistaken love bound her soul in the flesh-fetters which through ages of weariness thou shalt learn to curse. My love gave her rest.*

" '*From her lips, in the good time of the High Gods, it may be given to thee to drink the Elixir of the Lesser Death. On the green shores of Amenti we wait and pray for thee.*

" 'Effendi, thou hast already heard the story of Pent-ar, for beyond the recital of the Passages of Panit-Ahmes—once my rival and enemy, and now my friend and only hope—there is little to tell that thou hast not already guessed.

" 'In many climes and ages I have seen men seeking the essence which they in their ignorance called the Elixir of Life. I could have given it to them, as I could give it to thee if I wished to repay thy friendship with a curse; for it was I who, guided by the malice of the Infernal Gods, discovered the reality of which they were seeking the shadow, and the manner of finding it was this:

" 'When the Great King was building the Hall of Seti at Luxor, many structures were cleared away to make room, and great excavations were necessary for its foundations. In one of these I, when, as Keeper of the Records, examining the ground that no hidden sacred place might be violated by the workmen, found a very ancient temple, so old that it was buried in those days even as Susa is buried in these. By virtue of my office I passed into it alone;—would that my feet had rotted to the ankles before I had crossed that fatal threshold! In the inmost sanctuary, in the place of hiding behind the chief altar, I found a golden casket of scrolls, which, as was my right, I took home with me, that I might if possible discover new secrets amongst their contents. That which I sought I found, and more.

" 'Fastened by a blood-red seal to the smallest of the scrolls was a great emerald wrapped in many folds of leaf of gold. The scroll, deciphered after much labour, told me that it was hollow, and that its cavity was filled with the Elixir of Long-Drawn Days. "O thou," ran the scroll, "whose learning shall teach thee the meaning of these words: know that the Elixir of the Emerald is the last of the secrets of the Infernal Gods vouchsafed to man. If thou hast courage, and wouldst outlive the changing ages, thyself unchanged amidst them; if thou wouldst see the generations of men pass away like shadows from the bright morning of thine eternal youth, mingle but a drop of this ichor—which is the tears of Isis—with thy blood, and never shall it be chilled with frosts of age, nor its flow arrested by the hand of Death. Dost thou love? Then shall one drop more in the veins of thy beloved give thee and her the delights of quenchless love and deathless passion as long as the ages last. Immortal—the Infernal Gods greet thee!"

" 'Alas! Effendi, I loved, and through my love I was lost. . . . .I would fain spare myself and thee, Son of the Younger Days, the story of that which was the same then as it is now, and as it shall be when the last son and daughter of man pledge their troth on the brink of the common grave. Let it therefore suffice to say that Amaris was in my eyes even fairer and more desirable than her sister the lovely Nefert-Anat herself, who was honoured by the love of the Great King. Endless days of fadeless youth with her—what more could the Gods

themselves give me? I took the elixir in my satchel one evening when I was to walk with her through our favourite paradise among the palms. I read the scroll to her and showed her the emerald. Then I tempted her as I had been tempted, and because she loved me I won my way with her.

" 'Soon afterwards we were married, for I was of the Royal Blood and Panit-Ahmes was not. Moreover Rameses and Nefert were my friends and pleaded my cause well. My rival cloaked his wrath and his hate under a guise of resignation, but the fires burnt still in his breast and well-nigh consumed him.

" 'On our marriage-night I instilled the elixir into my veins and hers, and we went to rest dreaming that, as long as the sands of time should run, for us all nights would be like this, all mornings like the morrow. The next day, in the boasting pride of my happiness and triumph, I told Panit-Ahmes of what I had done, and then, telling him that I and my Amaris, alone of the sons and daughters of men, should live and love for ever, I flung the emerald and what was left in it of the tears of Isis far out among the brown waves of the Nile.

" 'What hidden lore Panit-Ahmes may have known then or discovered later I know not, but he laughed when he saw me throw away what kings would have given their dominions for, and told me that since I had kept part of the curse of the Infernal Gods for myself I was welcome to do what I would with the rest. "As for Amaris thy wife," he said, as he turned away from me, "I have loved her, and I will save her from the doom that thou shalt some day pray the High Gods in vain to take away from thee."

" 'For a year, Effendi, I was happy—happy, perchance, as no other wedded lover has been since then, for that year was to me only the first of the countless years which should all be as bright as it was. Then Panit came to me, and told me that he had found in a dream, which was a revelation from the High Gods, the secret of the antidote to the tears of Isis. I laughed him to scorn, so marvellously had the elixir renewed my already fading youth within the short space of a year. I boasted that I would drink a measure of it as I would a draught of the red wine of Cos, but he flung my laugh back at me, saying that since I loved the life of the flesh so well, I should live it. It was not for me, but for Amaris, that she might lay down the burden of living when the Gods pleased or she was weary of carrying it.

" 'Then said I, in my pride, "O Panit-Ahmes, Amaris will be singing the songs of youth in the days when thy mummy is dust. Let her drink if she will. She is my most precious gift from the Gods; thou canst not take her from me."

" 'Never was vainglorious boast more bitterly requited, never was boaster made more humble than I was. Amaris, full of faith and vivid life as I was, took the hazard of the draught laughingly, and seemingly was none the worse for it. Yet another year had not gone by, before she sickened of a fever that followed a low Nile, and died. Mad with grief, I took the fever too, and for many days lay in delirium. When I returned to health and reason, the mummy of Amaris already lay in its place in the City of the Dead, over yonder behind the northern spur of the hills, and Panit-Ahmes too was dead, and had taken his secret with him over the River of Darkness into the Land of Shadows.

" 'Effendi, my tale is told, nor will I weary thee further by telling thee the awful story of the years that have passed between then and now. I have seen the races of men come and go, and their empires wax and wane. I have seen altars rise and fall, faiths born and die, like shadows drifting over the eternal sea. I have learnt the vanity of human things—the shame of glory and the poverty of wealth and the dream of dominion—and here I stand before thee, poor and lonely, without a friend or a lover among all the myriads of men, weary of living, and asking only of the High Gods and thee to find the tomb of Amaris, that I may lay my lips on hers, and from them receive the sweet summons to join her waiting shade on the green shores of Amenti.'

"SUCH, GENTLEMEN," continued the Professor, laying down a few slips

of paper which he had used every now and then to help his memory, "such was the extraordinary story which I heard under such singular circumstances amidst the ruins of Susa. I will tell you the sequel to it in as few words as possible, for I must confess that my theme has somewhat run away with me. Marvellous as it may seem to you, I must ask you to accept it as I saw it and as I tell it to you. There are some things which do not admit of discussion or explanation, and I think you will agree with me that this is one of them.

"Pent-ar was as good as his word, so far as his knowledge of the locality went. The precision with which he indicated the course of the streets and the positions of the hidden buildings was little short of miraculous. For upwards of a month he possessed his world-weary soul in patience, until he had completed the plan of which I spoke some time ago. When he brought it to me, soon after sunrise one morning, he said, with that strange, joyless smile of his:

" 'Effendi, have I kept faith with thee? Have I promised aught that I have not performed? If thou art content with me give me now my freedom, that I may go and seek the tomb of Amaris.'

"My answer was an order to my overseers to move the camp at once under his direction to the City of the Dead. Once there, his whole manner changed. His eyes burned with the fire of an eager anticipation, and he worked with pick and shovel harder than the best of the labourers. At the end of a week we had laid bare a small pyramid, the apex of which, only showing a couple of feet or so above the sand, he had found with unerring instinct or memory after an hour's survey of the wilderness of ruins amidst which it stood. Just before sunset on the last day he came to me with two lamps in one hand and a powerful crowbar in the other.

" 'My friend,' he said, using the term for the first time, 'Pent-ar has come to bid thee farewell. The tomb is found, and Amaris waits for me within. I go to open the way to her. If thou wouldst see with thine own eyes the proof of the things which I have told thee, come with me now to the Gate of Death. But bring all thy courage with thee, for it may be thou wilt need it.'

" 'I will come, Pent-ar,' I said. It did not seem a time for more words, so I took one of the lamps and followed him to the tomb in silence. It would have taken my workmen hours to remove the great stone slab which closed the entrance; but he, evidently knowing all the secrets of the lost art, laid the passage open in less than an hour. Still silent, we went in, he leading. After I had counted twenty paces the passage ended in a chamber about twelve feet square and fifteen high. In the middle of it, on a huge cube of polished black marble, lay two splendidly adorned sarcophagi. One was open and empty, the other closed.

" 'The resting-place of him who died not,' Pent-ar whispered, holding his lamp over it. Then he gave the lamp to me, and set to work with a chisel and mallet, which he had picked up outside the pyramid, on the lid of the other sarcophagus. When he had loosened it I helped him to raise it. A mummy-case lay inside, and this with reverent hands we lifted out and laid across the end of the stone. For a moment Pent-ar stood beside it, with hands raised above his head, and murmured in the ancient tongue what was doubtless a prayer for forgiveness and the favour of his outraged Gods. This finished, he took his knife from his belt and with a few deft silent movements detached and removed the cover of the case.

" 'Amaris! Amaris!' he murmured again, falling on his knees beside the case, and saying some more words in his own speech.

I looked over his shoulders, and to my amazement I saw, not the mummy I had expected to find, but the unswathed, white-robed figure of an exquisitely beautiful girl, who, instead of having lain there hidden from the sight of men for thirty centuries, might have fallen asleep only an hour before.

" 'It is time,' said Pent-ar, rising and taking my hands. 'Is she not beautiful, my love, my bride? See, are not her sweet lips moist still with the dew of love, as Panit said? Now farewell, Son of the Younger Days and last of my

friends on earth. In a few moments Pent-ar will be walking in the groves of Amenti hand in hand with Amaris. Farewell, and let not thy courage fail thee in the presence of Death the Releaser.'

"As I pressed his hands and bade him farewell, a flood of memories swept over my soul, I know not whence. Was it possible that I, with other eyes, had once looked with love on that fair face; Who knows? But before I could frame the question I would have asked Pent-ar, he had stretched himself lengthways over the case and pressed his lips to those of his dead love.

"Gentlemen, I hope I may never see such another sight as that which I beheld in the next few moments. No sooner had their lips met than the fair flesh of the mummy grew dark and shrivelled into a thousand wrinkles. The eyes sank back into the sockets, the gloss faded from the gold-brown hair, and the rounded form shrank together under the garments. But even this was as nothing to the awful change which the magic of the Death-kiss had wrought on Pent-ar. He who a moment before had stood with me; a living breathing man, holding my hands and speaking to me in his now familiar voice, became, as it were in an instant, not a corpse, but a skeleton covered with a dry brown skin, through which the grey bones broke their way as they dropped with a gentle rustling sound into the case in which the ashes of the long-parted lovers were permitted to mingle.

"In my wonder and horror I dropped the lamps I was holding, and when I had groped my way into the outer air I found it full of flying grains of sand. I fought my way, half choked, back into camp. That night the worst sand-storm I have ever seen raged until morning, and when I was able to go back to the City of the Dead I found nothing but a wide, level plain of driven sand where our excavations had been made. It was the winding-sheet of Pent-ar and Amaris, and beneath it their ashes shall, I trust, rest in peace until the dawn of the day whose sun will never set."

KUDOS TO N.E.S.F.A.

EDITORIAL REVIEW

THE ART OF BIBLIOGRAPHY is a difficult one at best, and yet a more necessary one to serve both interested fans and serious researchers is hard to imagine. For that reason, we viewed with interest the New England Science Fiction Association, Inc.'s NESFA INDEX to Science Fiction Magazines and Original Anthologies: 1971-1972.

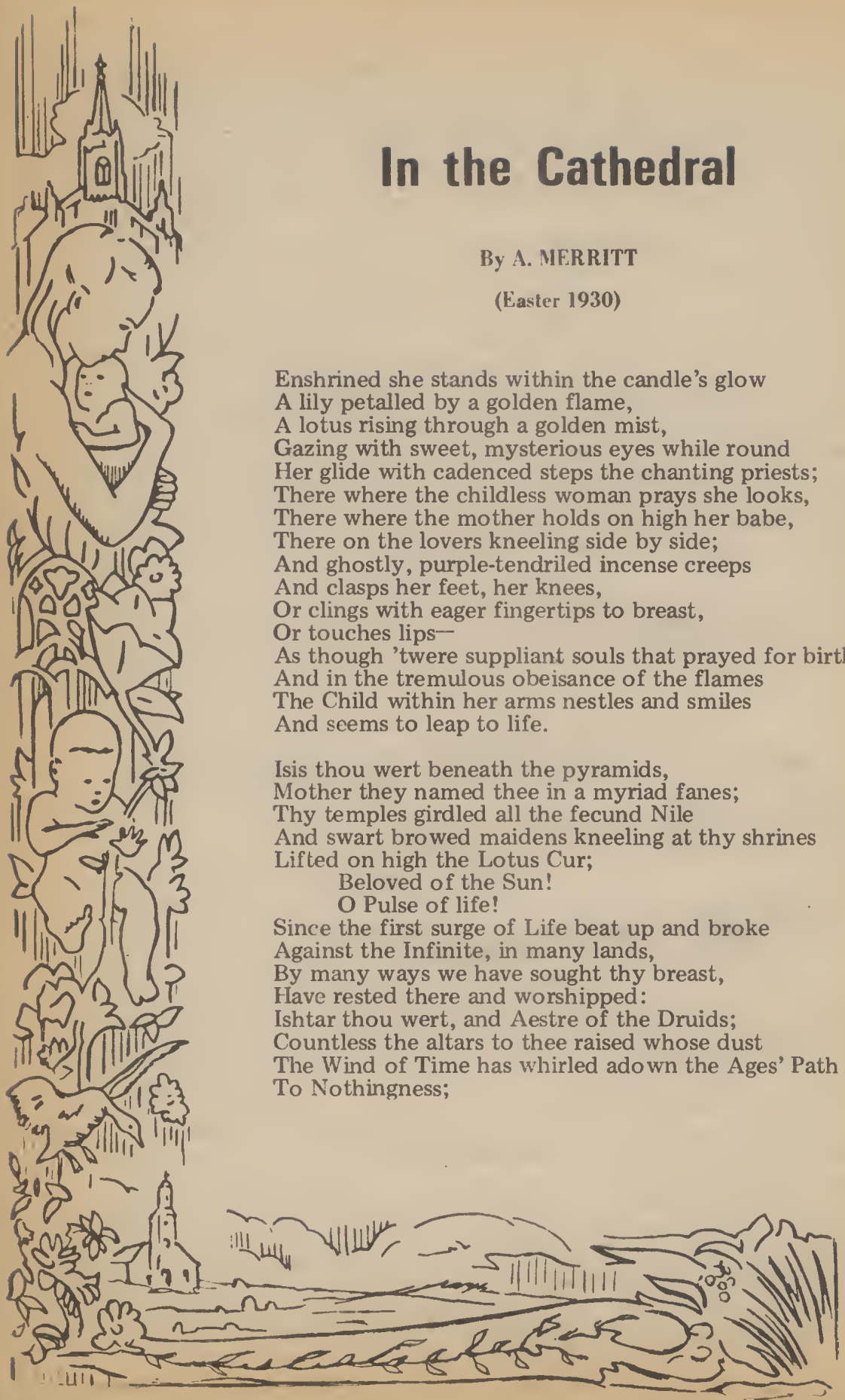
Printed in Cambridge, Massachusetts by N.E.S.F.A. and available for a mere three dollars, the index proves to be a most valuable guide. Following a "triple listing" format – by author, by title, and also by magazine or anthology – this remarkably complete guide also gives the month of publication, the volume and number, the page size, the number of pages, and even the cover artists. It is coded to show whether or not the work is a reprint, and even whether or not it was co-authored.

A more truly complete guide for layman and professional is hard to imagine.

It should also be noted that N.E.S.F.A. also has available hardcover editions of works by such notables as L. Sprague de Camp, Robert A. W. Lowndes, and Avram Davidson, at moderate prices.

This astounding guide to science fiction publications may be ordered direct from the New England Science Fiction Association, at Post Office Box G, MIT Branch Post Office, in Cambridge, Mass. 02139.

If you have a serious interest in the *outre* forms of literature, we recommend you purchase a copy.



In the Cathedral

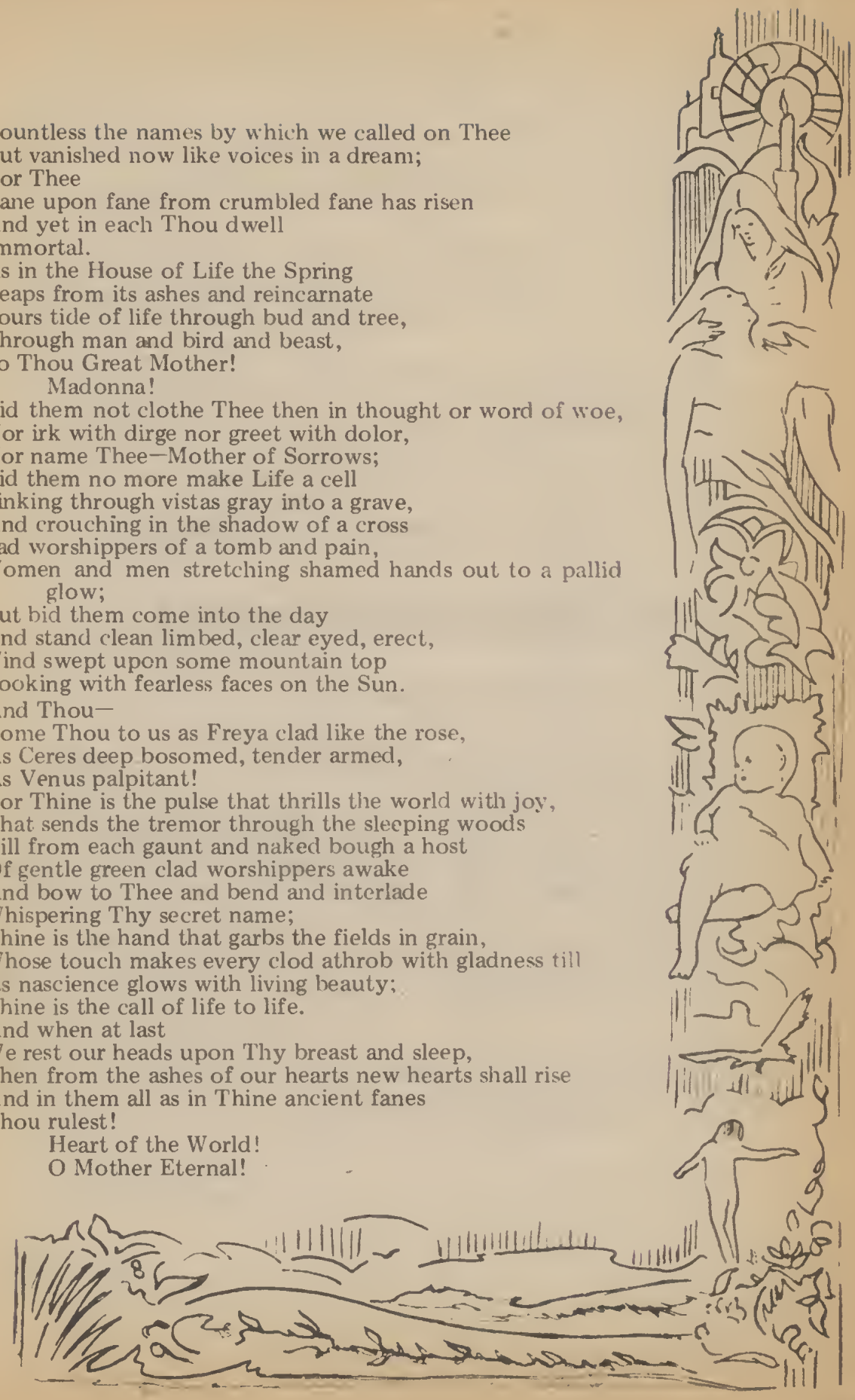
By A. MERRITT

(Easter 1930)

Enshrined she stands within the candle's glow
A lily petalled by a golden flame,
A lotus rising through a golden mist,
Gazing with sweet, mysterious eyes while round
Her glide with cadenced steps the chanting priests;
There where the childless woman prays she looks,
There where the mother holds on high her babe,
There on the lovers kneeling side by side;
And ghostly, purple-tendriled incense creeps
And clasps her feet, her knees,
Or clings with eager fingertips to breast,
Or touches lips—
As though 'twere suppliant souls that prayed for birth;
And in the tremulous obeisance of the flames
The Child within her arms nestles and smiles
And seems to leap to life.

Isis thou wert beneath the pyramids,
Mother they named thee in a myriad fanes;
Thy temples girdled all the fecund Nile
And swart browed maidens kneeling at thy shrines
Lifted on high the Lotus Cur;
Beloved of the Sun!
O Pulse of life!
Since the first surge of Life beat up and broke
Against the Infinite, in many lands,
By many ways we have sought thy breast,
Have rested there and worshipped:
Ishtar thou wert, and Aestre of the Druids;
Countless the altars to thee raised whose dust
The Wind of Time has whirled adown the Ages' Path
To Nothingness;

Countless the names by which we called on Thee
But vanished now like voices in a dream;
For Thee
Fane upon fane from crumbled fane has risen
And yet in each Thou dwell
Immortal.
As in the House of Life the Spring
Leaps from its ashes and reincarnate
Pours tide of life through bud and tree,
Through man and bird and beast,
So Thou Great Mother!
Madonna!
Bid them not clothe Thee then in thought or word of woe,
Nor irk with dirge nor greet with dolor,
Nor name Thee—Mother of Sorrows;
Bid them no more make Life a cell
Sinking through vistas gray into a grave,
And crouching in the shadow of a cross
Sad worshippers of a tomb and pain,
Women and men stretching shamed hands out to a pallid glow;
But bid them come into the day
And stand clean limbed, clear eyed, erect,
Wind swept upon some mountain top
Looking with fearless faces on the Sun.
And Thou—
Come Thou to us as Freya clad like the rose,
As Ceres deep bosomed, tender armed,
As Venus palpitant!
For Thine is the pulse that thrills the world with joy,
That sends the tremor through the sleeping woods
Till from each gaunt and naked bough a host
Of gentle green clad worshippers awake
And bow to Thee and bend and interlade
Whispering Thy secret name;
Thine is the hand that garbs the fields in grain,
Whose touch makes every clod athrob with gladness till
Its nascience glows with living beauty;
Thine is the call of life to life.
And when at last
We rest our heads upon Thy breast and sleep,
Then from the ashes of our hearts new hearts shall rise
And in them all as in Thine ancient fanes
Thou rulest!
Heart of the World!
O Mother Eternal!



A CULT IS FORMING AROUND the literary efforts of Clark Ashton Smith, just as one was created by the works of H.P. Lovecraft. Virtually all of his fiction and poetry has been collected and preserved in book form. Special publications on his life such as *In Memoriam Clark Ashton Smith,* Edited by Jack L. Chalker in 1963 have appeared. His art and sculpture is preserved in such brochures as *Grotesques and Fantastiques* published by Gerry de la Ree in 1973. Popular-priced paperbacked selections of his work are appearing.

Along with such magic names as H.P. Lovecraft and Robert E. Howard, Smith was one of the most unusual writers whose writing was to be found in the pages of WEIRD TALES. Like Lovecraft, he had developed his own mythos from his readings of Ambrose Bierce and Robert W. Chambers.

In certain respects his range of mood and appeal was superior to Lovecraft's. While he wrote as though he had swallowed and digested an unabridged dictionary, he was powerfully able to communicate the human response to the utterly alien, to transmit the meaning of being lost beyond any hope on a strange world. In this, he has never been equalled.

The Chain of Aforgomon originally appeared in the December, 1935 issue of this magazine. It represents a zenith in Smith's ability to forge poetic images in a literary work that was not science fiction, that melded many elements of the supernatural to create one of the many advanced forms of fantastic fiction that were destined to make WEIRD TALES magazine a legend among publications.

The Chain of Aforgomon

By CLARK ASHTON SMITH

IT IS INDEED strange that John Milwarp and his writings should have fallen so speedily into semi-oblivion. His books, treating of Oriental life in a somewhat flowery, romantic style, were popular a few months ago. But now, in spite of their range and penetration, their pervasive verbal sorcery, they are seldom mentioned; and they seem to have vanished unaccountably from the shelves of bookstores and libraries.

Even the mystery of Milwarp's death, baffling to both law and science, has evoked but a passing interest, an excitement quickly lulled and forgotten.

I was well acquainted with Milwarp over a term of years, but my recollection of the man is becoming strangely blurred, like an image in a misted mirror.

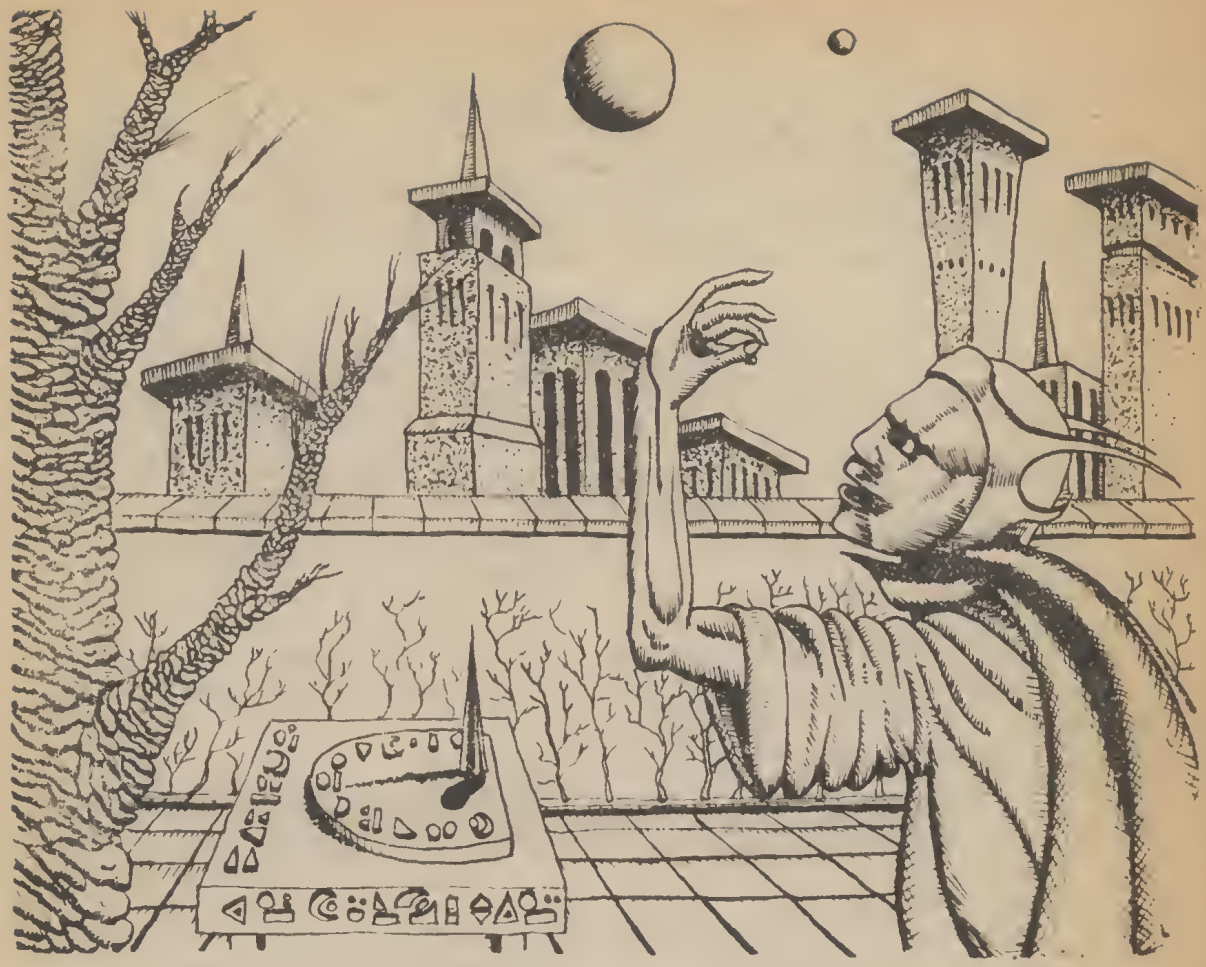
His dark, half-alien personality, his preoccupation with the occult, his immense knowledge of Eastern life and lore, are things I remember with such effort and vagueness as attends the recovery of a dream. Sometimes I almost doubt that he ever existed.

It is as if the man, and all that pertains to him, were being erased from human record by some mysterious acceleration of the common process of obliteration.

In his will, he appointed me his executor. I have vainly tried to interest publishers in the novel he left among his papers: a novel surely not inferior to anything he ever wrote. They say that his vogue has passed. Now I am publishing as a magazine story the contents of the diary kept by Milwarp for a period preceding his demise.

Perhaps, for the open-minded, this diary will explain the enigma of his death. It would seem that the circumstances of that death are virtually forgotten, and I repeat them here as part of my endeavor to revive and perpetuate Milwarp's memory.

Milwarp had returned to his house in San Francisco after a long sojourn in Indo-China. We who knew him



gathered that he had gone into places seldom visited by Occidentals.

He had just finished correcting the typescript of a novel which dealt with the more romantic and mysterious aspects of Burma.

On the morning of April 2nd, his housekeeper, a middle-aged woman, was startled by a glare of brilliant light which issued from the half-open door of Milwarp's study. It was as if the whole room were in flames.

Horrified, the woman hastened to investigate. Entering the study, she saw her master sitting in an armchair at the table, dressed in the rich, somber robes of Chinese brocade which he wore as a dressing-gown. He sat stiffly erect, a pen clutched unmoving in his fingers on the open pages of a manuscript volume.

About him, in a sort of nimbus, glowed and flickered the strange light; and her only thought was that his garments were on fire.

She ran toward him, crying out a warning. At that moment the weird nimbus brightened intolerably, and the wan, early daylight, the electric bulbs that still burned to attest the night's labor, were alike blotted out. It seemed to the housekeeper that the walls and table vanished, and a great luminous gulf opened before her; and on the verge of the gulf, in a seat that was not his cushioned armchair but a huge and rough-hewn seat of stone, she beheld her master.

His heavy brocaded robes were gone, and about him, from head to foot, were blinding coils of pure white fire, in the form of linked chains.

She could not endure the brilliance of the chains, and cowering back, she shielded her eyes with her hands. When she dared to look again, the weird glowing had faded, the room was as usual; and Milwarp's motionless figure was seated at the table in the posture of writing.

Shaken and terrified as she was the woman found courage to approach her master. A hideous smell of burnt flesh arose from beneath his garments,

which were wholly intact and without visible trace of fire.

He was dead, his fingers clutching the pen and his features frozen in a stare of agony. His neck and wrists were completely encircled by frightful burns that had charred them incredibly deeply.

The coroner, in his examination, found that these burns, preserving an outline as of heavy links, were extended in long unbroken spirals around the arms and legs and torso. The burning was apparently the cause of Milwarp's death: it was as if iron chains, heated to incandescence, had been wrapped about him.

Small credit was given to the housekeeper's story of what she had seen. No one, however, could suggest an acceptable explanation of the bizarre mystery. There was, at the time, much aimless discussion; but, as I have hinted, people soon turned to other matters.

The efforts made to solve the riddle were somewhat perfunctory. Chemists tried to determine the nature of a queer drug, in the form of a gray powder with pearly granules, to which use Milwarp had become addicted. But their tests merely revealed the presence of an alkaloid whose source and attributes were obscure to Western science.

Day by day, the whole incredible business lapsed from public attention; and those who had known Milwarp began to display the forgetfulness that was no less unaccountable than his weird doom.

The housekeeper, who had held steadfastly in the beginning to her story, came at length to share the common dubiety. Her account, with repetition, became vague and contradictory; detail by detail, she seemed to forget the abnormal circumstances that she had witnessed with overwhelming horror.

The manuscript volume, in which Milwarp had apparently been writing at the time of death, was given into my charge with his other papers. It proved to be a diary, its last entry breaking off abruptly.

Since reading the diary, I have hastened to transcribe it in my own hand, because, for some mysterious reason, the ink of the original is already fading and has become almost illegible in places.

The reader will note certain blank spaces due to passages written in an alphabet which neither I nor any scholar of my acquaintance can transliterate.

These passages seem to form an integral part of the narrative, and they occur mainly toward the end, as if the writer had turned more and more to a language remembered from an ancient incarnation.

To the same mental reversion one must attribute the singular dating, in which Milwarp, still employing English script, appears to pass from our contemporary notation to that of some premundane world.

I give hereunder the entire dairy, which begins with an undated footnote:

THIS BOOK, unless I have been misinformed concerning the qualities of the drug *souvara*, will be the record of my former life in a lost cycle. I have had the drug in my possession for seven months, but fear has prevented me from using it. Now, by certain tokens, I perceive that the longing for knowledge will soon overcome the fear.

Ever since my earliest childhood I have been troubled by intimations, dim, unplaceable, that seemed to argue a forgotten existence. These intimations partook of the nature of feelings rather than ideas or images: they were like the wraiths of dead memories.

In the background of my mind there has lurked a sentiment of formless, melancholy desire for some nameless beauty long perished out of time. And, coincidentally, I have been haunted by an equally formless dread, an apprehension as of some bygone but still imminent doom.

Many times, in my wanderings through Buddhistic lands, I had heard of the drug *souvara*, which is believed to restore, even for the uninitiate, the memory of other lives. And at last, after many vain efforts, I managed to procure a supply of the drug.

The manner in which I obtained it is a tale sufficiently remarkable in itself, but of no special relevance here. So far—perhaps because of that appre-

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hension which I have hinted—I have not dared to use the drug.

MARCH 9TH, This morning I took *souvara* for the first time, dissolving the proper amount in pure distilled water as I had been instructed to do. Afterward, I leaned back easily in my chair, breathing with a slow, regular rhythm.

I had no preconceived idea of the sensations that would mark the drug's initial effect, since these were said to vary prodigiously with the temperament of the users; but I composed myself to await them with tranquillity, after formulating clearly in my mind the purpose of the experiment.

For a while there was no change in my awareness. I noticed a slight quickening of the pulse, and modulated my breathing in conformity with this. Then, by slow degrees, I experienced a sharpening of visual perception.

The Chinese rugs on the floor, the backs of the volumes in my bookcases, the very wood of chairs, table and shelves, began to exhibit new and unimagined colors. At the same time there were curious alterations of outline, every object seeming to extend itself in a hitherto unsuspected fashion.

Following this, my surroundings became semi-transparent, like molded shapes of mist. I found that I could see through the marbled cover the illustrations in a volume of John Martin's edition of *Paradise Lost*, which lay before me on the table.

All this, I knew, was a mere extension of ordinary physical vision. It was only a prelude to those apperceptions of occult realms which I sought through *souvara.*

Fixing my mind once more on the goal of the experiment, I became aware that the misty walls had vanished like a drawn arras. About me, like reflections in rippled water, dim sceneries wavered and shifted, erasing one another from instant to instant.

I seemed to hear a vague but ever-present sound, more musical than the murmurs of air, water or fire, which was a property of the unknown element that environed me.

With a sense of troubling familiarity, I beheld the blurred unstable pictures which flowed past me upon this never-resting medium. Oriental temples, flashing with sun-struck bronze and gold; the sharp, crowded gables and spires of medieval cities; tropic and northern forests; the costumes and physiognomies of the Levant, of Persia, of old Rome and Carthage, went by like blown, flying mirages.

Each succeeding tableau belonged to a more ancient period than the one before it—and I knew that each was a scene from some former existence of my own.

Still bound, as it were, to my present self, I reviewed these visible memories, which took on tri-dimensional depth and clarity. I saw myself as warrior and troubadour, as noble and merchant and beggar. I trembled with dead fears, I thrilled with lost hopes and raptures, and was drawn by ties that death and Lethe had broken.

Yet never did I fully identify myself with those other incarnations: for I knew well that the memory I sought pertained to some incarnation of older epochs.

Still the fantasmagoria streamed on, and I turned giddy with vertigo before the vastness and diuturnity of the cycles of being. It seemed that I, the watcher, was lost in a gray land where the homeless ghosts of all dead ages went fleeing from oblivion to oblivion.

The walls of Nineveh, the columns and towers of unnamed cities, rose before me and were swept away. I saw the luxuriant plains that are now the Gobi desert. The sea-lost capitals of Atlantis were drawn to the light in unquenched glory.

I gazed on lush and cloudy scenes from the first continents of Earth. Briefly I relived the beginnings of terrestrial man—and knew that the secret I would learn was ancienter even than these.

MY VISIONS FADED into black voidness—and yet, in that void, through fathomless eons, it seemed that I existed like a blind atom in the space between the worlds. About me was the darkness and repose of that night which antedated the Earth's creation. Time flowed backward with the silence of dreamless sleep. . . .

The illumination, when it came,

was instant and complete. I stood in the full, fervid blaze of day amid royally towering blossoms in a deep garden, beyond whose lofty, vine-clad walls I heard the confused murmuring of the great city called Kalood.

Above me, at their vernal zenith, were the four small suns that illumed the planet Hestan. Jewel-colored insects fluttered about me, lighting without fear on the rich habiliments of gold and black, enwrought with astronomic symbols, in which I was attired.

Beside me was a dial-shaped altar of zoned agate, carved with the same symbols, which were those of the dreadful omnipotent time-god, Aforgomon, whom I served as a priest.

I had not even the slightest memory of myself as John Milwarp, and the long pageant of my terrestrial lives was as something that had never been—or was yet to be. Sorrow and desolation choked my heart as ashes fill some urn consecrated to the dead; and all the hues and perfumes of the garden about me were redolent only of the bitterness of death.

Gazing darkly upon the altar, I muttered blasphemy against Aforgomon, who, in his inexorable course, had taken away my beloved and had sent no solace for my grief. Separately I cursed the signs upon the altar: the stars, the worlds, the suns, the moons, that meted and fulfilled the processes of time.

Belthoris, my betrothed, had died at the end of the previous autumn: and so, with double maledictions, I cursed the stars and planets presiding over that season.

I became aware that a shadow had fallen beside my own on the altar, and knew that the dark sage and sorcerer Atmox had obeyed my summons.

Fearfully but not without hope I turned toward him, noting first of all that he bore under his arm a heavy, sinister-looking volume with covers of black steel and hasps of adamant. Only when I had made sure of this did I lift my eyes to his face, which was little less somber and forbidding than the tome he carried.

"Greeting, O Calaspa," he said harshly. "I have come against my own will and judgment. The lore that you request is in this volume; and since you saved me in former years from the inquisitorial wrath of the time-god's priests, I cannot refuse to share it with you. But understand well that even I, who have called upon names that are dreadful to utter, and have evoked forbidden presences, shall never dare to assist you in this conjuration.

"Gladly would I help you to hold converse with the shadow of Belthoris, or to animate her still unwithered body and draw it forth from the tomb. But that which you purpose is another matter. You alone must perform the ordained rites, must speak the necessary words: for the consequences of this thing will be direr than you think."

"I care not for the consequences," I replied eagerly, "if it be possible to bring back the lost hours which I shared with Belthoris. Think you that I could content myself with her shadow, wandering thinly back from the Borderland?

"Or that I could take pleasure in the fair clay that the breath of necromancy has troubled and has made to arise and walk without mind or soul? Nay, the Belthoris I would summon is she on whom the shadow of death has never yet fallen!"

It seemed that Atmox, the master of doubtful arts, the vassal of umbrageous powers, recoiled and blenched before my vehement declaration.

"*Bethink you,*" he warned with minatory sternness, "this thing will constitute a breach of the sacred logic of time and a blasphemy against Aforgomon, god of the minutes and the cycles. Moreover, there is little to be gained: for not in its entirety may you bring back the season of your love, but only one single hour, torn with infinite violence from its rightful period in time. . . .Refrain, I adjure you, and content yourself with a lesser sorcery."

"Give me the book," I demanded. "My service to Aforgomon is forfeit. With reverence and devotion I have worshipped the time-god, and have done in his honor the rites ordained from eternity; and for all this the god has betrayed me."

Then, in that high-climbing, luxuriant garden beneath the four suns, Atmox opened the adamantine clasps

of the steelbound volume; and, turning to a certain page, he laid the book reluctantly in my hands.

The page, like its fellows, was of some unholy parchment streaked with musty discolorations and blackening at the margin with sheer antiquity; but upon it shone unquenchably the dread characters a primal archimage had written with ink bright as the new-shod ichor of demons.

Above this page I bent in my madness, conning it over and over till I was dazzled by the fiery runes; and, shutting my eyes, I saw them burn on a red darkness, still legible, and writhing like hellish worms.

Hollowly, like the sound of a far bell, I heard the voice of Atmox: "You have learned, O Calaspa, the unutterable name of that One whose assistance can alone restore the fled hours. And you have learned the incantation that will rouse that hidden power, and the sacrifice needed for its propitiation. Knowing these things, is your heart still strong and your purpose firm?"

The name I had read was that of the chief cosmic power antagonistic to Aforgomon; the incantation and the required offering were those of a foul demonolatry. Nevertheless, I did not hesitate, but gave resolute and affirmative answer to the somber query of Atmox.

PERCEIVING that I was inflexible, he bowed his head, trying no more to dissuade me. Then, as the flame-runed volume had bade me do, I defiled the altar of Aforgomon, blotting certain of its prime symbols with dust and spittle.

While Atmox looked on in silence, I wounded my right arm to its deepest vein on the sharp-tipped gnomon of the dial; and, letting the blood drip from zone to zone, from orb to orb on the graven agate, I made unlawful sacrifice, and intoned aloud, in the name of the Lurking Chaos, Xexanoth, an abominable ritual composed of a backward repetition and jumbling of litanies sacred to the time-god.

Even as I chanted the incantation, it seemed that webs of shadow were woven foully athwart the suns; and the ground shook a little, as if colossal demons trod the world's rim, striding stupendously from abysses beyond.

The garden walls and trees wavered like a wind-blown reflection in a pool; and I grew faint with the loss of that life-blood I had poured out in demonolatrous offering. Then, in my flesh and in my brain, I felt the intolerable racking of a vibration like the long-drawn shock of cities riven by earthquake, and coasts crumbling before some chaotic sea; and my flesh was torn and harrowed, and my brain shuddered with the toneless discords sweeping through me from deep to deep.

I faltered, and confusion gnawed at my inmost being. Dimly I heard the prompting of Atmox, and dimmer still was the sound of my own voice that made answer to Xexanoth, naming the impious necromancy which was to be effected only through its power.

Madly I implored from Xexanoth, in despite of time and its ordered seasons, one hour of that bygone autumn which I had shared with Belthoris; and imploring this, I named no special hour: for all, in memory, had seemed of an equal joy and gladness.

As the words ceased upon my lips, I thought that darkness fluttered in the air like a great wing; and the four suns went out, and my heart was stilled as if in death.

Then the light returned, falling obliquely from suns mellow with full-tided autumn; and nowhere beside me was there any shadow of Atmox; and the altar of zoned agate was bloodless and undefiled.

I, the lover of Belthoris, witting not of the doom and sorrow to come, stood happily with my beloved before the altar, and saw her young hands crown its ancient dial with the flowers we had plucked from the garden.

Dreadful beyond all fathoming are the mysteries of time. Even I, the priest and initiate, though wise in the secret doctrines of Aforgomon, know little enough of that elusive, inelectable process whereby the present becomes the past and the future resolves itself into the present.

All men have pondered the riddles of duration and transience; have wondered, vainly, to what bourn the lost days and the sped cycles are consigned. Some have dreamt that the

past abides unchanged, becoming eternity as it slips from our mortal ken; and others have deemed that time is a stairway whose steps crumble one by one behind the climber, falling into a gulf of nothing.

Howsoever this may be, I know that she who stood beside me was the Belthoris on whom no shadow of mortality had yet descended. The hour was one new-born in a golden season; and the minutes to come were pregnant with all wonder and surprise belonging to the untried future.

Taller was my beloved than the frail, unbowed lilies of the garden. In her eyes was the sapphire of moonless evenings sown with small golden stars. Her lips were strangely curved, but only blitheness and joy had gone to their shaping.

She and I had been betrothed from our childhood, and the time of the marriage-rites was now approaching. Our intercourse was wholly free, according to the custom of that world. Often she came to walk with me in my garden and to decorate the altar of that god whose revolving moons and suns would soon bring the season of our felicity.

The moths that flew about us, winged with aerial cloth-of-gold, were no lighter than our hearts. Making blithe holiday, we fanned our frolic mood to a high flame of rapture. We were akin to the full-hued, climbing flowers, the swift-darting insects, and our spirits blended and soared with the perfumes that were drawn skyward in the warm air.

Unheard by us was the loud murmuring of the mighty city of Kalood lying beyond my garden walls; for us the many-peopled planet known as Hestan no longer existed; and we dwelt alone in a universe of light.

Exalted by love in the high harmony of those moments, we seemed to touch eternity; and even I, the priest of Aforgomon, forgot the blossom-fretting days, the system-devouring cycles.

In the sublime folly of passion, I swore that not death or discord could ever mar the perfect communion of our hearts. After we had wreathed the altar, I sought the rarest, the most delectable flowers: frail-curving cups of wine-washed pearl, of moony azure and white with scrolled purple lips; and these I twined, between kisses and laughter, in the black maze of Belthoris' hair; saying that another shrine than that of time should receive its due offering.

Tenderly, with a lover's delay, I lingered over the wreathing; and, ere I had finished, there fluttered to the ground beside us a great, crimson-spotted moth whose wing had somehow been broken in its airy voyaging through the garden.

Belthoris, ever tender of heart and pitiful, turned from me and took up the moth in her hands; and some of the bright blossoms dropped from her hair unheeded. Tears welled from her deep blue eyes; and seeing that the moth was sorely hurt and would never fly again, she refused to be comforted; and no longer would she respond to my passionate wooing.

I, who grieved less for the moth than she, was somewhat vexed; and between her sadness and my vexation, there grew between us some tiny, temporary rift. . . .

Then, ere love had mended the misunderstanding; then, while we stood before the dread altar of time with sundered hands, with eyes averted from each other, it seemed that a shroud of darkness descended upon the garden.

I heard the crash and crumbling of shattered worlds, and a black flowing of ruinous things that went past me through the darkness. The dead leaves of winter were blown about me, and there was a falling of tears or rain. . . .

Then the vernal suns came back, high-stationed in cruel splendor; and with them came the knowledge of all that had been, of Belthoris' death and my sorrow, and the madness that had led to forbidden sorcery. Vain now, like all other hours, was the resummoned hour; and doubly irredeemable was my loss.

My blood dripped heavily on the dishallowed altar, my faintness grew deathly, and I saw through a murky mist the face of Atmox beside me; and the face was like that of some comminatory demon. . . .

MARCH 13TH, I, John Milwarp, write this date and my name with an odd dubiety. My visionary experience un-

der the drug *souvara* ended with that spilling of my blood on the symboled dial, that glimpse of the terror-distorted face of Atmox. All this was in another world, in a life removed from the present by births and deaths without number; and yet, it seems, not wholly have I returned from the twice-ancient past.

Memories, broken but strangely vivid and living, press upon me for the existence of which my vision was a fragment; and portions of the lore of Hestan, and scraps of its history, and words from its lost language, arise unbidden in my mind.

Above all, my heart is still shadowed by the sorrow of Calaspa. His desperate necromancy, which would seem to others no more than a dream within a dream, is stamped as with fire on the black page of recollection.

I know the awfulness of the god he had blasphemed; and the foulness of the demonolatry he had done, and the sense of guilt and despair under which he swooned. It is *this* that I have striven all my life to remember, this which I have been doomed to re-experience. And I fear with a great fear the farther knowledge which a second experiment with the drug will reveal to me.

THE NEXT ENTRY *of Milwarp's diary begins with a strange dating in English script: "The second day of the moon Occalat, in the thousand-and-ninth year of the Red Eon." This dating, perhaps, is repeated in the language of Hestan: for, directly beneath it, a line of unknown ciphers is set apart.*

Several lines of the subsequent text are in the alien tongue; and then, as if by an unconscious reversion, Milwarp continues the diary in English. There is no reference to another experiment with souvara: but apparently such had been made, with a continued revival of his lost memories.

. . . WHAT GENIUS of the nadir gulf had tempted me to this thing and had caused me to overlook the consequences? Verily, when I called up for myself and Belthoris an hour of former autumn, with all that was attendant upon the hour, *that bygone interim was likewise evoked and repeated for the whole world Hestan, and the four suns of Hestan.*

From the full midst of spring, all men had stepped backward into autumn, keeping only the memory of things prior to the hour thus resurrected, and knowing not the events future to the hour.

For a brief period, the dead had lived again; the fallen leaves had returned to the bough; the heavenly bodies had stood at a long-abandoned station; the flower had gone back into the seed, the plant into the root.

Then, with eternal disorder set among all its cycles, time had resumed its delayed course.

No movement of any cosmic body, no year or instant of the future, would be precisely as it should have been.

The error and discrepancy I had wrought would bear fruit in ways innumerable. The suns would find themselves at fault; the worlds and atoms would go always a little astray from their appointed bourn.

It was of these matters that Atmox spoke, warning me, after he had stanched my bleeding wound. For he too, in that relumined hour, had gone back and had lived again through a past happening.

For him the hour was one in which he had descended into the nether vaults of his house. There, standing in a many-pentacled circle, with burning of unholy incense and uttering of accurst formulae, he had called upon a malign spirit from the bowels of Hestan and had questioned it concerning the future.

But the spirit, black and voluminous as the fumes of pitch, refused to answer him directly and pressed furiously with its clawed members against the confines of the circle. It said only:

"Thou hast summoned me at thy peril. Potent are the spells thou hast used, and strong is the circle to withstand me, and I am restrained by time and space from the wreaking of my anger upon thee. *But haply thou shalt summon me again, albeit in the same hour of the same autumn;* and in that summoning the laws of time shall be broken, and a rift shall be made in space; and through the rift, though with some delay and divagation, I will yet win to thee."

As he told me this tale in the garden, Atmox trembled; and his eyes searched the narrow shadows wrought by the high suns; and he seemed to listen for the noise of some evil thing that burrowed toward him beneath the earth.

FOURTH DAY of the moon Occalat. Striken with terrors beyond those of Atmox, I kept apart in my mansion amid the city of Kalood. I was still weak with the loss of blood I had yielded to Xexanoth; my senses were full of strange shadows; my servitors, coming and going after me, were as phantoms.

Madness and chaos, they told me, were abroad in Kalood; the divinity of Aforgomon was angered. All men thought that some baleful doom impended because of that unnatural confusion which had been wrought among the hours of time.

This afternoon they brought me the story of Atmox's death. In bated tones they told me how his neophytes had heard a roaring as of a loosed tempest in the chamber where he sat alone with his wizard volumes and paraphernalia.

Above the roaring, for a little, human screams had sounded, together with a clashing as of hurled censers and braziers, a crashing as of overthrown tables and tomes. Blood rilled from under the shut door of the chamber, and, rilling, it took from instant to instant the form of dire ciphers that spelt an unspeakable name.

After the noises had ceased, the neophytes waited a long while ere they dared to open the door. Entering at last, they saw the floor and the walls heavily bespattered with blood, and rags of the sorcerer's raiment mingled everywhere with the sheets of his torn volumes of magic, and the shreds and manglings of his flesh strewn amid broken furniture, and his brains daubed in a horrible paste on the high ceiling.

Hearing this tale, I knew that the earthly demon feared by Atmox had found him somehow and had wreaked its wrath upon him.

In ways unknowable, it had reached him through the chasm made in time and space by one hour repeated through necromancy. Because of that lawless chasm, the magician's power and lore had utterly failed to defend him from the demon. . . .

FIFTH DAY of the moon Occalat. Atmox, I am sure, had not betrayed me: for in so doing, he must have betrayed his own implicit share in my crime. . . .

Howbeit, this evening the priests came to my house ere the setting of the western most sun: silent, grim, with eyes averted as if from a foulness innominable. Me, their fellow, they enjoined with loth gestures to accompany them. . . .

Down the avenue of gnomon-shaped pillars, I was led to the portals of Aforgomon's fane: those awfully gaping portals arched in the likeness of some devouring chimera's mouth. . . .

SIXTH DAY of the Moon Occalat. They had thrust me into an oubliette beneath the temple, dark, noisome and soundless except for the maddening, measured drip of water beside me.

There I lay and knew not when the night passed and the morning came. Light was admitted only when my captors opened the iron door, coming to lead me before the tribunal . . .

Thus the priests condemned me, speaking with one voice in whose dreadful volume the tones of all were indistinguishably blended.

Then the aged high-priest Helpenor called aloud upon Aforgomon, offering himself as a mouthpiece to the god, and asking the god to pronounce through him the doom that was adequate for such enormities as those of which I had been judged guilty by my fellows.

Instantly, it seemed, the god descended into Helpenor; and the figure of the highpriest appeared to dilate prodigiously beneath his mufflings; and the accents that issued from his mouth were like thunders of the upper heaven:

"O Calaspa, thou hast set disorder amid all future hours and eons through this evil necromancy. Thereby, moreover, thou has wrought thine own doom: fettered art thou for ever to the hour thus unlawfully repeated, apart from its due place in time.

"According to Hieratic rule, thou shalt meet the death of the fiery chains: but deem not that this death is more than the symbol of thy true punishment. Thou shalt pass hereafter through other lives in Hestan, and shalt climb midway in the cycles of the world subsequent to Hestan in time and space.

"But through all thine incarnations the chaos thou hast invoked will attend thee, widening ever like a rift.

"And always, in all thy lives, the rift will bar thee from reunion with the soul of Belthoris; and always, though merely by an hour, thou shalt miss the love that should otherwise have been oftentimes regained.

"At last, when the chasm has widened overmuch, thy soul shall fare no farther in the onward cycles of incarnation. At that time it shall be given thee to remember clearly thine ancient sin; and remembering, thou shalt perish out of time.

"Upon the body of that latter life shall be found the charred imprint of the chains, as the final token of thy bondage. But they that knew thee will soon forget, and thou shalt belong wholly to the cycles limited for thee by thy sin."

MARCH 29TH. I write this date with infinite desperation, trying to convince myself that there is a John Milwarp who exists on Earth, in the Twentieth Century. For two days running, I have not taken the drug *souvara:* and yet I have returned twice to Aforgomon's temple, in which the priest Calaspa awaits his doom.

Twice I have been immersed in its stagnant darkness, hearing the slow drip of water beside me, like a clepsydra that tells the black ages of the damned.

Even as I write this at my library table, it seems that an ancient midnight plucks at the lamp. The bookcases turn to walls of oozing, nighted stone. There is no longer a table. . .nor one who writes. . .and I breathe the noisome dankness of a dungeon lying unfathomed by any sun, in a lost world.

EIGHTEENTH DAY of the moon Occalat. Today, for the last time, they took me from my prison. Helpenor, together with three others, came and led me to the adytum of the god. Far beneath the outer temple we went, through spacious crypts unknown to the common worshippers.

There was no word spoken, no glance exchanged between the others and me.

We came ultimately to that sheer-falling gulf in which the spirit of Aforgomon is said to dwell. Lights, feeble and far-scattered, shone around it like stars on the rim of cosmic vastness, shedding no ray into the depths.

There, in a seat of hewn stone overhanging the frightful verge, I was placed by the executioners; and a ponderous chain of black unrusted metal, stapled in the solid rock, was wound about and about me, circling my naked body and separate limbs, from head to foot.

To this doom, others had been condemned for heresy or impiety. . . though never for a sin such as mine. After the chaining of the victim, he was left for a stated interim, to ponder his crime—and haply to confront the dark divinity of Aforgomon.

At length, from the abyss into which his position forced him to peer, a light would dawn, and a bolt of strange flame would leap upward, striking the many-coiled chain about him and heating it instantly to the whiteness of candescent iron.

Even thus they have left me, and have gone away. Long since the burden of the massy links, cutting deeper and deeper into my flesh, has become an agony. I am dizzy from gazing downward into the abyss—and yet I cannot fall. Beneath, immeasurably beneath, at recurrent intervals, I hear a hollow and solemn sound.

Eons have passed by and all the worlds have ebbed into nothingness, like wreckage borne on a chasm-falling stream, taking with them the lost face of Belthoris. I am poised above the gaping maw of the Shadow. . . .

Somehow, in another world, an exile phantom has written these words. . .a phantom who must fade utterly from time and place, even as I, the doomed priest Calaspa. I cannot remember the name of the phantom.

Beneath me, in the black depths, there is an awful brightening. . . .

BACK IN THE days when more new fine stories of the weird and supernatural came in every month than one magazine could possibly print, WEIRD TALES, as a matter of policy, ran one masterpiece of the past in each issue. For stories that originally appeared elsewhere, it was the closest thing to a "Hall of Fame" then extant. To an old contributor of WEIRD TALES, it was like receiving the equivalant of a special award to be reprinted in that department.

W. C. Morrow died in 1923, the very year that WEIRD TALES was founded, but as the friend and at one time seemingly heir-apparent to Ambrose Bierce, he had gained critical acclaim for a collection titled *The Ape, The Idiot, & Other People* published by Lippincott in 1897. *Weird Tales* reprinted four stories from that book—*His Unconquerable Enemy, The Monster-Maker, Over an Absinthe Bottle* and *The Permanent Stiletto*—all masterpieces of horror, science fiction and the supernatural. The book containing those stories was reprinted in England and France, with acclaim even greater than that in the United States. Stories from the volume have been reprinted frequently, but such is the difficulty of making a living by writing short stories, that W. C. Morrow finished out his life teaching courses in fiction writing.

Since Morrow's death, no one has seen a story of his reprinted that was not from *The Ape, The Idiot, & Other People*, yet the question might be reasonably asked: "Didn't the man ever write anything else?" The answer is "Yes," and some of it of superlative quality, but buried uncollected in old publications.

The present story here has never been reprinted since its original publication in *Lippincott's Magazine* for July, 1897. It was probably printed to promote the sale of his book which had been published the same year by the same company. The story, *The Haunted Burglar*, is a tale of psychiatric obsession far in advance of its time, carrying a tremendous impact. Morrow, purely on the basis of the stories in *The Ape, The Idiot & Other People*, ranks with Poe, Hawthorne, Bierce, Chambers, and Crawford as one of the truly great American masters of the horror story. The search will be pressed to locate more of his uncollected short stories.

The Haunted Burglar

By W. C. MORROW

ANTHONY ROSS doubtless had the oddest and most complex temperament that ever assured the success of burglary as a business. This fact is mentioned in order that those who choose may employ it as an explanation of the extraordinary ideas that entered his head and gave a strangely tragic character to his career.

Though ignorant, the man had an uncommonly fine mind in certain aspects. Thus it happened that, while lacking moral perception, he cherished an artistic pride in the smooth, elegant, and finished conduct of his work. Hence a blunder on his part invariably filled him with grief and humiliation; and it was the steadily increasing recurrence of these errors that finally impelled him to make a deliberate analysis of his case.

Among the stupid acts with which he charged himself was the murder of the banker Uriah Mattson, a feeble old man whom a simple choking or a sufficient tap on the skull would have rendered helpless. Instead of that, he had choked his victim to death in the most brutal and unnecessary manner, and in doing so had used the fingers of his left hand in a singularly sprawled and awkward fashion. The whole act was utterly unlike him; it appalled and horrified him,—not for the sin of taking human life, but because it was unnecessary, dangerous, subversive of the principles of skilled burglary, and monstrously inartistic.

A similar mishap had occurred in the case of Miss Jellison, a wealthy

spinster, merely because she was in the act of waking, which meant an ensuing scream. In this case, as in the other, he was unspeakably shocked to discover that the fatal choking had been done by the left hand, with sprawled and awkward fingers, and with a savage ferocity entirely uncalled for by his peril.

In setting himself to analyze these incongruous and revolting things he dragged forth from his memory numerous other acts, unlike those two in detail, but similar to them in spirit. Thus, in a fit of passionate anger at the whimpering of an infant, he had flung it brutally against the wall. Another time he was nearly discovered through the needless torturing of a cat, whose cries set pursuers at his heels. These and other insane, inartistic, and ferocious acts he arrayed for serious analysis.

Finally the realization burst upon him that all his aberrations of conduct had proceeded from his left hand and arm. Search his recollection ever so diligently, he could not recall a single instance wherein his right hand had failed to proceed on perfectly fine, sure, and artistic lines. When he made this discovery he realized that he had brought himself face to face with a terrifying mystery; and its horrors were increased when he reflected that while his left hand had committed acts of stupid atrocity in the pursuit of his burglarious enterprises, on many occasions when he was not so engaged it had acted with a less harmful but none the less coarse, irrational, and inartistic purpose.

It was not difficult for such a man to arrive at strange conclusions. The explanation that promptly suggested itself, and that his coolest and shrewdest wisdom could not shake, was that his left arm was under the dominion of a perverse and malicious spirit, that it was an entity apart from his own spirit, and that it had fastened itself upon that part of his body to produce his ruin. It were useless, however inviting, to speculate upon the order of mind capable of arriving at such a conclusion; it is more to the point to narrate the terrible happenings to which it gave rise.

About a month after the burglar's mental struggle a strange-looking man applied for a situation at a saw-mill a hundred miles away. His appearance was exceedingly distressing. Either a grievous bodily illness or fearful mental anguish had made his face wan and haggard and filled his eyes with the light of a hard desperation that gave promise of dire results. There were no marks of a vagabond on his clothing or in his manner. He did not seem to be suffering for physical necessities. He held his head aloft and walked like a man, and an understanding glance would have seen that his look of determination meant something profounder and more far-reaching than the ordinary business concerns of life.

He gave the name of Hope. His manner was so engaging, yet withal so firm and abstracted, that he secured a position without difficulty; and so faithfully did he work, and so quick was his intelligence, that in good time his request to be given the management of a saw was granted. It might have been noticed that his face thereupon wore a deeper and more haggard look, but that its rigors were softened by a light of happy expectancy. As he cultivated no friendships among the men, he had no confidants; he went his dark way alone to the end.

He seemed to take more than the pleasure of an efficient workman in observing the products of his skill. He would stealthily hug the big brown logs as they approached the saw, and his eyes would blaze when the great tool went singing and roaring at its work. The foreman, mistaking this eagerness for carelessness, quietly cautioned him to beware; but when the next log was mounted for the saw the stranger appeared to slip and fall. He clasped the moving log in his arms, and the next moment the insatiable teeth had severed his left arm near the shoulder, and the stranger sank with a groan into the soft sawdust that filled the pit.

There was the usual commotion attending such accidents, for the faces of the workmen turn white when they see one of their number thus maimed for life. But Hope received good surgical care, and in due time was able to be abroad. Then the men observed that a remarkable change had come over him. His moroseness had disappeared, and in its stead was a hearty

cheer of manner that amazed them. Was the losing of a precious arm a thing to make a wretched man happy? Hope was given light work in the office, and might have remained to the end of his days a competent and prosperous man; but one day he left, and was never seen thereabout again.

Then Anthony Ross, the burglar, reappeared upon the scenes of his former exploits. The police were dismayed to note the arrival of a man whom all their skill had been unable to convict of terrible crimes which they were certain he had committed, and they questioned him about the loss of his arm; but he laughed them away with the fine old *sang-froid* with which they were familiar, and soon his handiwork appeared in reports of daring burglaries.

A watch of extraordinary care and minuteness was set upon him, but that availed nothing until a singular thing occurred to baffle the officers beyond measure: Ross had suddenly become wildly reckless and walked red-handed into the mouth of the law. By evidence that seemed indisputable a burglary and atrocious murder were traced to him. Stranger than all else, he made no effort to escape, though leaving a hanging trail behind him. When the officers overhauled him, they found him in a state of utter dejection, wholly different from the lighthearted bearing that had characterized him ever since he had returned without his left arm. Neither admitting nor denying his guilt, he bore himself with the hopelessness of a man already condemned to the gallows.

Even when he was brought before a jury and placed on trial, he made no fight for his life. Although possessed of abundant means, he refused to employ an attorney, and treated with scant courtesy the one assigned him by the judge. He betrayed irritation at the slow dragging of the case as the prosecution piled up its evidence against him. His whole manner indicated that he wished the trial to end as soon as possible and hoped for a verdict of guilty.

This incomprehensible behavior placed the young and ambitious attorney on his mettle. He realized that some inexplicable mystery lay behind the matter, and this sharpened his zeal to find it. He plied his client with all manner of questions, and tried in all ways to secure his confidence: Ross remained sullen, morose, and wholly given over to despairing resignation. The young lawyer had made a wonderful discovery, which he at first felt confident would clear the prisoner, but any mention of it to Ross would only throw him into a violent passion and cause him to tremble as with a palsy. His conduct on such occasions was terrible beyond measure. He seemed utterly beside himself, and thus his attorney had become convinced of the man's insanity. The trouble in proving it was that he dared not mention his discovery to others, and that Ross exhibited no signs of mania unless that one subject was broached.

The prosecution made out a case that looked impregnable, and this fact seemed to fill the prisoner with peace. The young lawyer for the defence had summoned a number of witnesses, but in the end he used only one. His opening statement to the jury was merely that it was a physical impossibility for the prisoner to have committed the murder,—which was done by choking. Ross made a frantic attempt to stop him from putting forth that defence, and from the dock wildly denounced it as a lie.

The young lawyer nevertheless proceeded with what he deemed his duty to his unwilling client. He called a photographer and had him produce a large picture of the murdered man's face and neck. He proved that the protrait was that of the person whom Ross was charged with having killed. As he approached the climax of the scene, Ross became entirely ungovernable in his frantic efforts to stop the introduction of the evidence, and so it became necessary to bind and gag him and strap him to the chair.

When quiet was restored, the lawyer handed the photograph to the jury and quietly remarked:

"You may see for yourselves that the choking was done with the left hand, and you have observed that my client has no such member."

He was unmistakably right. The imprint of the thumb and fingers, forced into the flesh in a singularly

ferocious, sprawling, and awkward manner, was shown in the photograph with absolute clearness. The prosecution, taken wholly by surprise, blustered and made attempts to assail the evidence, but without success. The jury returned a verdict of not guilty.

Meanwhile the prisoner had fainted, and his gag and bonds had been removed; but he recovered at the moment when the verdict was announced. He staggered to his feet, and his eyes rolled; then with a thick tongue he exclaimed:

"It was the left arm that did it! This one"—holding his right arm as high as he could reach—"never made a mistake. It was always the left one. A spirit of mischief and murder was in it. I cut it off in a saw-mill, but the spirit stayed where the arm used to be, and it choked this man to death. I didn't want you to acquit me. I wanted you to hang me. I can't go through life having this thing haunting me and spoiling my business and making a murderer of me. It tries to choke me while I sleep. There it is! Can't you see it?" And he looked with wide-staring eyes at his left side.

"Mr. Sheriff," gravely said the judge, "take this man before the Commissioners of Lunacy to-morrow."

A MAN FROM GENOA

By FRANK BELKNAP LONG, Jr.

I saw a man from Genoa
  Who turned and smiled at me;
And something in his wistful gaze
  Was like a blasted tree.

He told me then that he had come
  With flaming plumes and viar,
And cloths of saffron and of gold
  And vests of camel's hair.

And he had beads from Carthage,
  And silks from windy Tyres,
And tiny chests of spikenard
  Preserved from Ilium's fires.

And once in gracious Babylon
  Where virtue is not known
He bought a girl from distant Ind
  For bits of coloured stone.

The man who came from Genoa
  Had sorrow in his eyes;
And yet he turned and smiled at me,
  And made a stout surmise:

"The Lords of War have laughed at me
  And will not take my bests,
They are too small and fibreless
  To span their thunderous chests.

My silks, they say, are water logged
  My spears and helmets worn;
And yet I came from Genoa,
  Around the southern horn."

And then I somehow pitied him
  And bought the worthless things:
The silks and grails and parrakeets
  And gold and copper rings.

I have them yet, and know quite well
  Their uselessness to me;
And yet the man from Genoa—
  His eyes were like the sea.

I saw him go upon the quay
  And whistle through his hands;
I saw his galley swing to port
  Above the yellow sands.

The ship that veered before the wind
  Had green and silver sails,
And turbaned prophets paced the poop,
  And Nubians thronged the rails.

He jumped aboard and waved his hand,
  And danced upon the deck,
And then I saw him take command
  And clear the harbour wreck.

He passed a town with marble streets
  And spires of malachite
Where centaurs worshipped headless gods
  Whose limbs were zoned with light.

I saw him sail into the East—
  And now in far Cathay
I seek the man from Genoa
  Who bore my gold away.

AMONG THE SHORT STORIES regarded as supreme classics in the weird field, *The Upper Berth* by Francis Marion Crawford ranks among the top half-dozen in frequency of reprinting. It has become a "standard" in anthologies of the supernatural and in collections of great short stories, being reprinted so widely and so frequently that it is doubtful if a complete bibliography of its appearances would be possible.

Though seen less frequently, *The Screaming Skull* by the same author is also well-known to lovers of the supernatural and horror, having been included in anthologies and as one part in a series for television.

F. Marion Crawford, was born of American parents in Italy, and spent most of his life abroad, though he was a frequent contributor to American publications. His father, Thomas Crawford, was a sculptor of some renown. He was the nephew of the noted writer and woman suffragette Julia Ward Howe.

During the last two decades of the nineteenth century Marion Crawford ranked among the leading and most popular novelists. Among his successes in this literary form were *Mr. Isaacs* (1882), a novel of India; *Dr. Cladius* (1883); and *Via Crucis* (1898). The year of his death 1909, saw the publication of his very popular *The White Sister.*

Though his forty-five novels possessed authenticity of background and were fast-paced, none of them have retained the standing of his best ghost stories, with the possible exception of *The Witch of Prague* (1891), wherein through hypnotism, a man is made to endure the mental and physical horrors of a young Jew killed for converting to Christianity.

"Few writers have equaled F. Marion Crawford in the modern ghost story," states Dorothy Scarborough in her outstanding critical work *The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction.* "His tales have a curdling intensity, a racking horror that set them far above the ordinary supernatural fiction."

The Dead Smile is no exception to that appraisal. It initially appeared in the August, 1899, issue of Street and Smith's *AINSLEE'S* magazine, a number doubly noteworthy for the inclusion of *The Harbour Master,* one of Robert W. Chambers' most extraordinary tales.

With its haunting style and grotesque imagery, *The Dead Smile* clutches at the reader's heart from the very first, and it is evidence of Crawford's genius that the mood is sustained with every word throughout the story's progress. It is a masterful tale, certain to horrify.

The Dead Smile

By F. MARION CRAWFORD

SIR HUGH OCKRAM smiled as he sat by the open window of his study, in the late August afternoon; and just then a curiously yellow cloud obscured the low sun, and the clear summer light turned lurid, as if it had been suddenly poisoned and polluted by the foul vapors of a plague.

Sir Hugh's face seemed, at best, to be made of fine parchment drawn skin-tight over a wooden mask, in which two eyes were sunk out of sight, and peered from crevices under the slanting, wrinkled lids, alive and watchful like two toads in their holes, side by side and exactly alike.

Nurse Macdonald said once that when Sir Hugh smiled he saw the faces of two women in hell—two dead women he had betrayed. Nurse Macdonald was a hundred years old.

Sir Hugh's smile widened, stretching the pale lips across the discolored teeth in an expression of profound

self-satisfaction, blended with the most unforgiving hatred and contempt. The hideous disease of which he was dying had touched his brain.

His son stood beside him, tall, white and delicate as an angel in a primitive picture; and though there was deep distress in his violet eyes, as he looked at his father's face, he felt the shadow of that sickening smile stealing across his own lips and parting them and drawing them against his will. It was like a bad dream, for he tried not to smile, and smiled the more.

Beside him, strangely like him in her wan, angelic beauty, with the same shadowy golden hair, the same sad violet eyes, the same luminously pale face, Evelyn Warburton rested one hand upon his arm. As she looked into her uncle's eyes, and could not turn her own away, she knew that the deathly smile was hovering on her own red lips, drawing them tightly across her little teeth—and the smile was like the shadow of death and the seal of damnation upon her pure young face.

"Of course," said Sir Hugh very slowly, and still looking out at the trees, "if you have made up your mind to be married, I can not hinder you, and I don't suppose you attach the smallest importance to my consent—"

"Father!" exclaimed Gabriel, reproachfully.

"No, I do not deceive myself," continued the old man, smiling terribly. "You will marry when I am dead, though there is a very good reason why you had better not—why you had better not," he repeated very emphatically, and he slowly turned his toad eyes upon the lovers.

"What reason?" asked Evelyn in a frightened voice.

"Never mind the reason, my dear. You will marry just as if it did not exist." There was a long pause.

"Two gone," he said, his voice lowering strangely, "and two more will be four—all together—for ever and

ever, burning, burning, burning bright."

At the last words his head sank slowly back and the little glare of the toad eyes disappeared under the swollen lids; and the lurid cloud passed from the westering sun, so that the earth was green again, and the light pure. Sir Hugh had fallen asleep, as he often did in his last illness, even while speaking.

GABRIEL OCKRAM drew Evelyn away, and from the study they went out into the dim hall, softly closing the door behind them. Each audibly drew breath, as though some sudden danger had been passed.

They laid their hands each in the other's, and their strangely-like eyes met in a long look, in which love and perfect understanding were darkened by the secret terror of an unknown thing. Their pale faces reflected each other's fear.

"It is his secret," said Evelyn at last. "He will never tell us what it is."

"If he dies with it," answered Gabriel, "let it be on his head!"

"On his head," echoed the dim hall. It was a strange echo, and some were frightened by it, for they said that if it were a real echo, it should repeat everything, and not give just a phrase here and there. Nurse Macdonald said that the great hall would never echo a prayer when an Ockram was to die, though it would give back curses ten for one.

"On his head!" it repeated, quite softly, and Evelyn started and looked round.

"It is only the echo," said Gabriel, leading her away.

They went out into the late afternoon light, and sat upon a stone seat behind the chapel. It was very still, not a breath stirred, and there was no sound near them.

"It's very lonely here," said Evelyn, taking Gabriel's hand nervously, and speaking as if she dreaded to disturb the silence. "If it were dark I should be afraid."

"Of what? Of me?" Gabriel turned to her.

"Oh, no! How could I be afraid of you? But of the old Ockrams—they say they are just under our feet here in the north vault outside the chapel, all in their shrouds with no coffins, as they used to bury them."

"As they always will—as they will bury my father, and me. They say an Ockram will not lie in a coffin."

"But it cannot be true—those are fairy tales—ghost stories!" Evelyn nestled nearer to her companion, grasping his hand more tightly, as the sun began to go down.

"Of course. But there is the story of old Sir Vernon, who was beheaded for treason under James the Second. The family brought his body back from the scaffold in an iron coffin with heavy locks, and they put it in the north vault. But ever afterwards, whenever the vault was opened to bury another of the family, they found the coffin wide open and the body standing upright against the wall, the head rolled away in a corner, smiling at it."

"As Uncle Hugh smiles?" Evelyn shivered.

"Yes, I suppose so," answered Gabriel, thoughtfully. "Of course I never saw it, and the vault has not been opened for thirty years—none of us have died since then."

"And if—if Uncle Hugh dies—shall you—" Evelyn stopped, and her beautiful thin face was quite white.

"Yes. I shall see him laid there, too—with his secret, whatever it is." Gabriel sighed and pressed the girl's little hand.

"I do not like to think of it," she said unsteadily. "Oh, Gabriel, what can the secret be? He said we had better not marry—not that he forbade it—but he said it so strangely, and he smiled—ugh!" Her small white teeth chattered with fear, and she looked over her shoulder while drawing still closer to Gabriel. "And somehow, I felt it in my own face—"

"So did I," answered Gabriel in a low, nervous voice. "Nurse Macdonald—" He stopped abruptly.

"What? What did she say?"

"Oh nothing. She told me things—they would frighten you, dear. Come, it is growing chilly." He rose, but Evelyn held his hand in both of hers, still sitting and looking up into his face.

"But we shall be married, just the same—Gabriel! Say that we shall!"

"Of course, darling—of course. But

while my father is so very ill, it is impossible—"

"Oh, Gabriel, Gabriel, dear! I wish we were married now!" cried Evelyn in sudden distress. "I know that something will prevent it and keep us apart."

"Nothing shall!"

"Nothing?"

"Nothing human," said Gabriel Ockram, as she drew him down to her.

And their faces, that were so strangely alike, met, and touched—and Gabriel knew that the kiss had a marvelous savor of evil, but on Evelyn's lips it was like the cool breath of a sweet and mortal fear. Neither of them understood, for they were innocent and young.

"It is as if we loved in a strange dream," she said.

"I fear the waking," he murmured.

"We shall not wake, dear—when the dream is over it will have already turned into death, so softly that we shall not know it. But until then—"

She paused, and her eyes sought his, and their faces slowly came nearer. It was as if they had thoughts in their red lips that foresaw and foreknew the deep kiss of each other.

"Until then—" she said again, very low, and her mouth was nearer to his.

"Dream—till then," murmured his breath.

II.

NURSE MACDONALD was a hundred years old. She slept sitting all bent together in a great old leathern arm-chair with wings, her feet in a bag foot-stool lined with sheepskin, and many warm blankets wrapped about her, even in summer.

Her face was very wrinkled, but the wrinkles were so small and fine and near together that they made shadows instead of lines. Two thin locks of hair, turning from white to a smoky yellow again, were drawn over her temples from under her starched white cap.

Now and then she woke and her eyelids were drawn up in tiny folds, like little pink silk curtains, and her queer blue eyes looked straight before her, through doors and walls and worlds to a far place beyond.

Then she slept again, and her hands lay one upon the other on the edge of the blanket; the thumbs had grown longer than the fingers with age and the joints shone in the low lamplight like polished crabapples.

It was nearly one o'clock in the night, and the summer breeze was blowing the ivy branch against the panes of the window, with a hushing caress. In the small room beyond, with the door ajar, the girl maid who took care of Nurse Macdonald was fast asleep. All was very quiet. The old woman breathed regularly, and her indrawn lips trembled each time as the breath went out, and her eyes were shut.

Outside the closed window there was a face, and violet eyes were looking steadily at the ancient sleeper, for it was like the face of Evelyn Warburton. Yet the cheeks were thinner than Evelyn's, and as white as a gleam, and the eyes stared, and the lips were not red with life; they were dead and painted with new blood.

Slowly Nurse Macdonald's wrinkled eyelids folded themselves back, and she looked straight at the face at the window to the count of ten.

"Is it time?" she asked, in her little old, far-away voice.

The face at the window changed; the eyes opened wider and wider till the white glared all round the bright violet, and the bloody lips opened over gleaming teeth, and stretched and widened and stretched again, and the shadowy golden hair rose and streamed against the window in the night breeze. And in answer to Nurse Macdonald's question came the sound that freezes the living flesh.

The low-moaning voice that rises suddenly, like the scream of storm, from a moan to a wail, from a wail to a howl, from a howl to the fear-shriek of the tortured dead—he who has heard, knows, and can bear witness that the cry of the Banshee is an evil cry to hear alone in the deep night.

When it was over and the face was gone, Nurse Macdonald shook a little in her great chair, and still she looked at the black square of the window, but there was nothing more there, nothing but the night, and the whispering ivy branch. She turned her head to the door that was ajar, and there stood the maid, in her white

gown, her teeth chattering with fright.

"It is time, child," said Nurse Macdonald. "I must go to him, for it is the end."

She rose slowly, leaning her withered hands upon the arms of the chair, and the girl brought her a woolen gown and a great mantle, and her crutch-stick, and made her ready.

Often the girl looked at the window and was unjointed with fear, and often Nurse Macdonald shook her head and said words which the maid could not understand.

"It was like the face of Miss Evelyn," said the girl at last, trembling.

But the ancient woman looked up sharply and angrily, and her queer blue eyes glared. She held herself by the arm of the great chair with her left hand, and lifted up her crutch-stick to strike the maid with all her might. But she did not.

"You are a good girl," she said, "but you are a fool. Pray for wit, child, pray for wit—or else find service in another house than Ockram Hall. Bring the lamp and help me under my left arm."

The crutch-stick clacked on the wooden floor, and the low heels of the old woman's slippers clappered after, in slow triplets, as Nurse Macdonald got toward the door.

Each step she took was a labor in itself, and by the clacking noise the waking servants knew that she was coming long before they saw her.

No one was sleeping now, and there were lights, and whisperings, and pale faces in the corridors near Sir Hugh's bed-room, and now someone went in, and now someone came out, but every one made way for Nurse Macdonald, who had nursed Sir Hugh's father more than eighty years ago.

The light was soft and clear in the room. There stood Gabriel Ockram by his father's bedside, and there knelt Evelyn Warburton her hair lying like a golden shadow down her shoulders, and her hands clasped nervously together. And opposite Gabriel a nurse was trying to make Sir Hugh drink. But he would not, and though his lips were parted his teeth were set. He was very, very thin and yellow now, and his eyes caught the light sideways and were as yellow coals.

"Do not torment him," said Nurse Macdonald to the woman who held the cup, "Let me speak to him, for his hour is come."

"Let her speak to him," said Gabriel, in a dull voice.

So the ancient woman leaned to the pillow and laid the feather weight of her withered hand upon Sir Hugh's yellow fingers, and she spoke to him earnestly, while only Gabriel and Evelyn were left in the room to hear.

"Hugh Ockram," she said, "this is the end of your life, and as I saw you born, and saw your father born before you, I am come to see you die. Hugh Ockram, will you tell me the truth?"

The dying man recognized the little faraway voice he had known all his life, and he very slowly turned his yellow face to Nurse Macdonald; but he said nothing. Then she spoke again.

"Hugh Ockram, you will never see the daylight again. Will you tell the truth?"

His toad-like eyes were not yet dull. They fastened themselves on her face.

"What do you want of me?" he asked and each word struck hollow upon the last. "I have no secrets. I have lived a good life."

Nurse Macdonald laughed—a tiny, cracked laugh, that made her head bob and tremble a little, as if her neck were on a steel spring. But Sir Hugh's eyes grew red, and his pale lips began to twist.

"Let me die in peace," he said, slowly.

Nurse Macdonald shook her head, and her brown, moth-like hand left his and fluttered to his forehead.

"By the mother that bore you and died of grief for the sins you did, tell me the truth!

Sir Hugh's lips tightened on his discolored teeth.

"Not on earth," he answered, slowly.

"By the wife who bore your son and died heart-broken, tell me the truth!"

"Neither to you in life, nor to her in eternal death."

His lips writhed, as if the words were coals between them, and a great drop of sweat rolled across the parchment of his forehead. Gabriel Ockram bit his hand as he watched his father

die. But Nurse Macdonald spoke a third time.

"By the woman whom you betrayed, and who waits for you this night, Hugh Ockram, tell me the truth!"

"It is too late. Let me die in peace."

The writhing lips began to smile across the set yellow teeth, and the toad eyes glowed like evil jewels in his head.

"There is time," said the ancient woman. "Tell me the name of Evelyn Warburton's father. Then I will let you die in peace."

Evelyn started back, kneeling as she was, and stared at Nurse Macdonald, and then at her uncle.

"The name of Evelyn's father?" he repeated, slowly, while the awful smile spread upon his dying face.

NOW THE LIGHT was growing strangely dim in the great room. As Evelyn looked, Nurse Macdonald's crooked shadow on the wall grew gigantic. Sir Hugh's breath came thick, rattling in his throat, as death crept in like a snake and choked it back. Evelyn prayed aloud, high and clear.

Then something rapped at the window, and she felt her hair rise upon her head in a cool breeze, as she looked around, in spite of herself.

And when she saw her own white face looking in at the window, and her own eyes staring at her through the glass, wide and fearful, and her own hair streaming against the pane, and her own lips dashed with blood, she rose slowly from the floor, and stood rigid for one moment, till she screamed once and fell straight back into Gabriel's arms.

The shriek that answered hers was the fear-shriek of the tormented corpse, out of which the soul cannot pass for shame of deadly sins, though the devils fight in it with corruption, each for their due share.

Sir Hugh Ockram sat upright in his deathbed, and saw and cried aloud:

"Evelyn!" His harsh voice broke and rattled in his chest, as he sank down. But still Nurse Macdonald tortured him, for there was a little life left in him still.

"You have seen the mother, as she waits for you, Hugh Ockram. Who was this girl Evelyn's father? What was his name?

For the last time the dreadful smile came upon the twisted lips, very slowly, very surely, now. And the toad eyes glared red, and the parchment face glowed a little in the flickering light. For the last time words came.

"They know it in hell."

Then the glowing eyes went out quickly, the yellow face turned waxen pale and a great shiver ran through the thin body as Hugh Ockram died.

But in death he still smiled, for he knew his secret and kept it still, on the other side, and he would take it with him, to lie with him forever in the north vault of the chapel where Ockrams lie uncoffined in their shrouds—all but one.

Though he was dead, he smiled, for he had kept his treasure of evil truth to the end, and there was none left to tell the name he had not spoken, but there was all the evil he had not undone left to bear fruit.

As they watched—Nurse Macdonald and Gabriel, who held Evelyn still unconscious in his arms while he looked at the father—they felt the dead smile crawling along their own lips—the ancient crone and the youth with the angel's face.

Then they shivered a little, and both looked at Evelyn as she lay with her head on his shoulder, and though she was very beautiful, the same sickening smile was twisting her young mouth, too; and it was like the foreshadowing of a great evil which they could not understand.

They carried Evelyn out and she opened her eyes, and the smile was gone. From far away in the great house the sound of weeping and crooning came up the stairs and echoed along the dismal corridors, for the women had begun to mourn the dead master, after the Irish fashion, and the hall had echoes of its own all that night, like the far-off wail of the Banshee among forest trees.

When the time was come they took Sir Hugh in his winding-sheet on a trestle bier, and bore him to the chapel and through the iron door and down the long descent to the north vault, with tapers, to lay him by his father. Two men went in first to

prepare the place, and came back staggering like drunken men, and white, leaving their lights behind them.

But Gabriel Ockram was not afraid, for he knew. And he went in alone and saw that the body of Sir Vernon Ockram was leaning upright against the stone wall, and that its head lay on the ground near by with the face turned up, and the dried leathern lips smiled horribly at the dried-up corpse, while the iron coffin, lined with black velvet, stood open on the floor.

Then Gabriel took the thing in his hands for it was very light, being quite dried by the air of the vault, and those who peeped in from the door saw him lay it in the coffin again, and it rustled a little, like a bundle of reeds and sounded hollow as it touched the sides and the bottom. He placed the head upon the shoulders, and shut down the lid, which fell to, with a rusty spring that snapped.

After that they laid Sir Hugh beside his father, with the trestle bier on which they had brought him; and they went back to the chapel.

But when they saw one another's faces, master and men, they were all smiling, with the dead smile of the corpse they had left in the vault, so that they could not bear to look at one another until it had faded away.

III.

GABRIEL OCKRAM became Sir Gabriel, inheriting the baronetcy with the half-ruined fortune left by his father, and still Evelyn Warburton lived at Ockram Hall, in the south room that had been hers ever since she could remember anything. She could not go away, ever, for there were no relatives to whom she could have gone, and besides, there seemed to be no reason why she should not stay.

The world would never trouble itself to care what the Ockrams did on their Irish estates, and it was long since the Ockrams had asked anything of the world.

Sir Gabriel took his father's place at the dark old table in the dining-room, and Evelyn sat opposite to him, until such time as their mourning should be over, and they might be married at last.

Their lives went on as before, since Sir Hugh had been a hopeless invalid during the last year of his life, and they had seen him but once a day for the little while, spending most of their time together in a strangely perfect companionship.

Though the late summer saddened into autumn, and autumn darkened into winter, and storm followed storm, and rain poured on rain through the short days and the long nights, yet Ockram Hall seemed less gloomy since Sir Hugh had been laid in the north vault beside his father.

At Christmastide Evelyn decked the great hall with holly and green boughs, and huge fires blazed on every hearth. Then the tenants were all bidden to a New Year's dinner, and they ate and drank well, while Sir Gabriel sat at the head of the table. Evelyn came in when the port wine was brought, and the most respected of the tenants made a speech to propose her health.

"It is long," he said, "since there has been a Lady Ockram." Sir Gabriel shaded his eyes with his hand and looked down at the table, but a faint color came into Evelyn's transparent cheeks.

"But," said the gray-haired farmer, "it is longer still since there has been a Lady Ockram so fair as the next is to be," and he gave the health of Evelyn Warburton.

The tenants all stood up and shouted for her, and Sir Gabriel stood up likewise, beside Evelyn. And when the men gave the last and loudest cheer of all there was a voice not theirs, above them all, higher, fiercer, louder—a scream not earthly, shrieking for the Bride of Ockram Hall. And the holly and the green boughs over the great chimney piece shook and slowly waved as if a cool breeze were blowing over them.

The men turned very pale, and many of them set down their glasses, but others let them fall upon the floor, for fear. And looking into one another's faces, they were all smiling strangely, a dead smile, like dead Sir Hugh's.

One cried out words in Irish, and the fear of death was suddenly upon them all, so that they fled in panic, falling over one another like wild

beasts in the burning forest, when the thick smoke runs along before the flame. Tables were overset, and drinking glasses and bottles were broken in heaps, and the dark red wine crawled like blood upon the polished floor.

Sir Gabriel and Evelyn stood alone at the head of the table before the wreck of the feast, not daring to turn and see each other for each knew that the other smiled. But his right arm held her and his left hand clasped her right as they stared before them. But for the shadows of her hair one might not have told their two faces apart.

They listened long, but the cry came not again, and the dead smile faded from their lips, while each remembered that Sir Hugh Ockram lay in the north vault, smiling in his winding-sheet, in the dark, because he had died with his secret.

So ended the tenants' New Year's dinner.

From that time on Sir Gabriel grew more and more silent, and his face grew even paler and thinner than before.

Often, without warning and without words, he would rise from his seat, as if something moved him against his will. He would go out into the rain, or the sunshine to the north side of the chapel, and sit on the stone bench, staring at the ground as if he could see through it, and through the vault below, and through the white winding-sheet in the dark, to the dead smile that would not die.

Always when he went out in that way Evelyn came out presently and sat beside him. Once, too, as in the summer, their beautiful faces came suddenly near, and their lids drooped, and their red lips were almost joined together.

But as their eyes met, they grew wide and wild, and their teeth chattered, and their hands were like hands of corpses for the terror of what was under their feet, and of what they knew but could not see.

Once, also, Evelyn found Sir Gabriel in the chapel alone, standing before the iron door that led down to the place of death, and in his hand there was the key to the door; but he had not put it into the lock.

Evelyn drew him away, shivering, for she had also been driven in waking dreams to see that terrible thing again, and to find out whether it had changed since it had lain there.

"I am going mad," said Sir Gabriel, covering his eyes with his hand as he went with her. "I see it in my sleep, I see it when I am awake—it draws me to it, day and night—and unless I see it I shall die!"

"I know," answered Evelyn, "I know. It is as if threads were spun from it, like a spider's, drawing us down to it."

She was silent for a moment, and then she started violently and grasped his arm with a man's strength, and almost screamed the words she spoke.

"But we must not go there!" she said. "We must not go!"

Sir Gabriel's eyes were half shut and he was not moved by the agony of her face.

"I shall die, unless I see it again," he said, in a quiet voice not like his own. And all that day and that evening he scarcely spoke, thinking of it, always thinking.

Evelyn Warburton went alone, on a gray winter's morning, to Nurse Macdonald's room in the tower, and sat down beside the great leathern easy chair, laying her thin white hand upon the withered fingers.

"Nurse," she said, "what was it that Uncle Hugh should have told you, that night before he died? It must have been an awful secret—and yet, though you asked him, I feel somehow that you know it, and that you know why he used to smile so dreadfully."

The old woman's head moved slowly from side to side.

"I only guess—I shall never know," she answered slowly in her cracked little voice.

"But what do you guess? Who am I? Why did you ask who my father was? You know I am Colonel Warburton's daughter, and my mother was Lady Ockram's sister, so that Gabriel and I are cousins. My father was killed in Afghanistan. What secret can there be?"

"I do not know. I can only guess."

"Guess what?" asked Evelyn imploringly, and pressing the soft withered hands, as she leaned forward. But Nurse Macdonald's wrinkled lids dropped suddenly over her queer blue

eyes, and her lips shook a little with her breath, as if she were asleep.

Evelyn waited. By the fire the Irish maid was knitting fast, and the needles clicked like three or four clocks ticking against each other.

The real clock on the wall solemnly ticked alone, checking off the seconds of the woman who was a hundred years old, and had not many days left. Outside, the ivy branch beat the window in the wintry wind, as it had beaten against the glass a hundred years ago.

Then as Evelyn sat there she felt the waking of a horrible desire—a sickening wish to go down to the thing in the north vault, and to open the winding sheet, and see whether it had changed, and she held Nurse Macdonald's hands as if to keep herself in her place and fight against the appalling attraction of the evil dead.

The old woman had opened her eyes again, and she touched her cat with the end of her crutch-stick, whereupon its back went down and its tail shrunk, and it sidled back to its place on the bag footstool. But its yellow eyes looked up sideways at Evelyn, between the slits of its lids.

"What is it that you guess, nurse?" asked the young girl again.

"A bad thing—a wicked thing. But I dare not tell you, lest it might not be true, and the very thought should blast your life. For if I guess right, he meant that you should not know, and that you two should marry, and pay for his old sin with your souls."

"He used to tell us that we ought not to marry—"

"Yes—he told you that, perhaps—but it was as if a man put poisoned meat before a starving beast, and said, 'do not eat,' but never raised his hand to take the meat away.

"And if he told you that you should not marry, it was because he hoped you would; for of all men living or dead, Hugh Ockram was the falsest man that ever told a cowardly lie, and the cruelest that ever hurt a woman, the worst that ever loved sin."

"But Gabriel and I love each other," said Evelyn very sadly.

Nurse Macdonald's old eyes looked far away, at sights seen long ago, and that rose in the gray winter air amid the mists of an ancient youth.

"If you love, you can die together," she said, very slowly. "Why should you live, if it is true? I am a hundred years old. What has life given me? The beginning is fire; the end is a heap of ashes; and between the end and the beginning lies all the pain of the world. Let me sleep, since I cannot die."

Then the old woman's eyes closed again, and her head sank a little lower upon her breast.

So Evelyn went away and left her asleep, with the cat asleep on the bag footstool; and the young girl tried to forget Nurse Macdonald's words, but she could not, for she heard them over and over again in the wind, and behind her on the stairs.

And as she grew sick with fear of the frightful unknown evil to which her soul was bound, she felt a bodily something pressing her, and pushing her, and forcing her on, and from the other side she felt the threads that drew her mysteriously; and when she shut her eyes, she saw in the chapel, behind the altar, the low iron door through which she must pass to go to the thing.

Even as she lay awake at night, she drew the sheet over her face, lest she should see shadows on the wall beckoning to her; and the sound of her own warm breath made whisperings in her ears, while she held the mattress with her hands, to keep from getting up and going to the chapel.

It would have been easier if there had not been a way thither through the library, by a door which was never locked. It would be fearfully easy to take her candle and go softly through the sleeping house. And the key of the vault lay under the altar behind a stone that turned. She knew the little secret. She could go alone and see.

But when she thought of it, she felt her hair rise on her head, and first she shivered so that the bed shook, and then the horror went through her in a cold thrill that was agony again, like myriads of icy needles, boring into her nerves.

IV.

THE OLD CLOCK in Nurse Macdonald's tower struck midnight.

Downstairs Sir Gabriel sat straight

up as the clock struck, for he had dreamed a fearful dream of horror, and his heart stood still, till he awoke at its stopping, and it beat again furiously with his breath, like a wild thing set free.

He pressed his hands to his temples as he sat up in bed, and his hands were icy cold, but his head was hot. The dream faded far, and in its place there came the thought that racked his life; with the thought also came the sick twisting of his lips in the dark that would have been a smile.

AND FAR OFF, Evelyn Warburton dreamed that the dead smile was on her mouth, and awoke, starting with a little moan, her face in her hands, shivering.

But Sir Gabriel struck a light and got up and began to walk up and down his great room. It was midnight, and he had barely slept half an hour, and in the north of Ireland the winter nights are long.

"I shall go mad," he said to himself, holding his forehead. He knew that it was true. For weeks and months the possession of the thing had grown upon him like a disease, till he could think of nothing without thinking first of that.

And now, all at once, it outgrew his strength.

He took the candlestick in his hand, the old fashioned heavy candlestick that had always been used by the head of the house. He did not think of dressing, but went as he was in his silk night clothes and his slippers, and he opened the door.

Everything was very still in the great old house. He shut the door behind him and walked noiselessly on the carpet through the long corridor. A cool breeze blew over his shoulder, and blew the flame of his candle straight out from him.

Instinctively he stopped and looked round, but all was still, and the upright flame burned steadily. He walked on, and instantly a strong draught was behind him, almost extinguishing the light. It seemed to blow him on his way, ceasing whenever he turned, coming again when he went on—invisible, icy.

Down the great staircase to the echoing hall he went, seeing nothing but the flaring flame of the candle standing away from him over the guttering wax, while the cold wind blew over his shoulder and through his hair.

On he passed through the open door into the library, dark with old books and carved bookcases; on through the door in the shelves, with painted shelves on it, and the imitated backs of books, so that one needed to know where to find it—and it shut itself after him with a soft click. He entered the low arched passage, and, though the door was shut behind him and fitted tightly in its frame, still the cold breeze blew the flame forward as he walked.

And he was not afraid; but his face was very pale, and his eyes were wide and bright, looking before him, seeing already in the dark air the picture of the thing beyond. But in the chapel he stood still, his hand on the little turning stone tablet in the back of the stone altar.

On the tablet were engraved words: "*Clavis sepulchri Clarissimorum Dominorum De Ockram*"—"the key to the vault of the most illustrious Lords of Ockram."

Sir Gabriel paused and listened. He fancied that he heard a sound far off in the great house where all had been so still, but it did not come again. Yet he waited, at the last, and looked at the low iron door. Beyond it, down the long descent, lay his father, uncoffined, six months dead, corrupt, terrible in the enveloping, clinging shroud.

The strangely preserving air of the vault could not yet have done its work completely. But on the thing's ghastly features, with their half dried, open eyes, there would still be the frightful smile with which the man had died—the smile that haunted—

As the thought crossed Sir Gabriel's mind, he felt his lips writhing, and he struck his own mouth in wrath with the back of his hand so fiercely that a drop of blood ran down to his chin, and another, and more, falling black in the gloom upon the chapel pavement. But still his bruised lips twisted themselves.

He turned the tablet by the simple secret.

He took the great old key and set it

into the lock of the iron door; and the heavy rattling noise echoed down the descent beyond like footsteps, as if a watcher had stood behind the iron and were running away within, with heavy dead feet.

Sir Gabriel saw that his candle was short. There were new ones on the altar, with long candlesticks, and he lit one, and left his own burning on the floor. As he set it down on the pavement his lip began to bleed again and another drop fell upon the stones.

He drew the iron door open and pushed it back against the chapel wall, so that it should not shut of itself, while he was within; and the horrible draught of the sepulchre came up out of the depths in his face, foul and dark.

He went in, but though the fetid air met him, yet the flame of the tall candle was blown straight from him against the wind while he walked down the easy incline with steady steps, his loose slippers slapping the pavement as he trod.

He shaded the candle with his hand, and his fingers seemed to be made of wax and blood as the light shone through them. And in spite of him the unearthly draught forced the flame forward, till it was blue over the black wick, and it seemed as if it must go out. But he went straight on, with shining eyes.

The downward passage was wide, and he could not always see the walls, by the struggling light, but he knew when he was in the place of death by the larger, drearier echo of his steps in the greater space, and by the sensation of a distant blank wall.

He stood still, almost enclosing the flame of the candle in the hollow of his hand. He could see a little, for his eyes were growing used to the gloom. Shadowy forms were outlined in the dimness, where the biers of the Ockrams stood crowded together, side by side, each with its straight, shrouded corpse, strangely preserved by the dry air, like the empty shell that the locust sheds in summer.

And a few steps before him he saw clearly the dark shape of headless Sir Vernon's iron coffin, and he knew that nearest to it lay the thing he sought.

He was as brave as any of those dead men had been, and they were his fathers, and he knew that sooner or later he should lie there himself, beside Sir Hugh, slowly drying to a parchment shell. He closed his eyes a moment, and three great drops stood on his forehead.

Then he looked again, and by the whiteness of the winding sheet he knew his father's corpse, for all the others were brown with age; and, moreover, the flame of the candle was blown toward it.

He made four steps till he reached it, and suddenly the light burned straight and high shedding a dazzling yellow glare upon the fine linen that was all white, save over the face, and where the joined hands were laid on the breast. And at those places ugly stains had spread, darkened with outlines of the features and of the tight-clasped fingers. There was a frightful stench of drying death.

As Sir Gabriel looked down, something stirred behind him, softly at first, then more noisily, and something fell to the stone floor with a dull thud and rolled up to his feet; he started back, and saw a withered head lying almost face upward on the pavement grinning at him. He felt the cold sweat standing on his face, and his heart beat painfully.

For the first time in all his life that evil thing which men call fear was getting hold of him, checking his heart-strings as a cruel driver checks a quivering horse, clawing at his backbone with icy hands, lifting his hair with freezing breath, climbing up and gathering in his midriff with leaden weight.

Yet presently he bit his lip and bent down, holding the candle in one hand, to lift the shroud back from the head of the corpse with the other. Slowly he lifted it.

It clove to the half-dried skin of the face, and his hand shook as if some one had struck him on the elbow, but half in fear and half in anger at himself, he pulled it, so that it came away with a little ripping sound. He caught his breath as he held it, not yet throwing it back, and not yet looking.

The horror was working in him, and he felt that old Vernon Ockram was standing up in his iron coffin,

headless, yet watching him with the stump of his severed neck.

While he held his breath he felt the dead smile twisting his lips. In sudden wrath at his own misery, he tossed the death-stained linen backward, and looked at last. He ground his teeth lest he should shriek aloud.

There it was, the thing that haunted him, that haunted Evelyn Warburton, that was like a blight on all that came near him.

The dead face was blotched with dark stains, and the thin gray hair was matted about the discolored forehead. The sunken lids were half open, and the candle light gleamed on something foul where the toad eyes had lived.

But yet the dead thing smiled, as it had smiled in life; the ghastly lips were parted and drawn wide and tight upon the wolfish teeth, cursing still, and still defying hell to do its worst—defying, cursing, and always and forever smiling alone in the dark.

Sir Gabriel opened the winding sheet where the hands were, and the blackened, withered fingers were closed upon something stained and mottled. Shivering from head to foot, but fighting like a man in agony for his life he tried to take the package from the dead man's hold.

But as he pulled at it the clawlike fingers seemed to close more tightly, and when he pulled harder the shrunken hands and arms rose from the corpse with a horrible look of life following his motion—then as he wrenched the sealed packet loose at last the hands fell back into their place still folded.

He set down the candle on the edge of the bier to break the seals from the stout paper. And kneeling on one knee, to get a better light, he read what was within, written long ago in Sir Hugh's queer hand.

He was no longer afraid.

He read how Sir Hugh had written it all down that it might perchance be a witness of evil and of his hatred; how he had loved Evelyn Warburton, his wife's sister; and how his wife had died of a broken heart with his curse upon her, and how Warburton and he had fought side by side in Afghanistan and Warburton had fallen; but Ockram had brought his comrade's wife back a full year later, and little Evelyn, her child, had been born in Ockram Hall.

And next, how he had wearied of the mother and she had died like her sister with his curse on her. And then, how Evelyn had been brought up as his niece, and how he trusted that his son Gabriel and his daughter, innocent and unknowing, might love and marry, that the souls of the women he had betrayed might suffer another anguish before eternity was out.

And last of all, he hoped that some day, when nothing could be undone, the two might find his writing and live on, not daring to tell the truth for their children's sake and the world's word, man and wife.

This he read, kneeling beside the corpse in the north vault, by the light of the altar candle; and when he had read it all, he thanked God aloud that he had found the secret in time. But when he rose to his feet and looked down at the dead face it was changed, and the smile was gone from it forever, and the jaw had fallen a little, and the tired dead lips were relaxed.

And then there was a breath behind him and close to him, not cold like that which had blown the flame of the candle as he came, but warm and human. He turned suddenly.

There she stood, all in white, with her shadowy golden hair—for she had risen from her bed and had followed him noiselessly, and had found him reading, and had herself read over his shoulder. He started violently when he saw her, for his nerves were unstrung—and then he cried out her name in the still place of death:

"Evelyn!"

"My brother!" she answered, softly and tenderly, putting out both hands to meet his.

"WEIRD TALES" NEEDS FRIENDS — TALK ABOUT US TO YOURS

THE PURPOSE of a supernatural tale is usually to frighten, but with the increasing difficulty in accepting some of the superstitious past tenets on faith, twists of psychological horror have begun to take the place of the psychic and unknown. This story is in the modern tradition of Ray Bradbury and Richard Matheson and works towards its effects by raising a doubt in the reader's mind, through the mood of the narration, as to whether what is occurring is normal or supernormal.

The author sold her first story, *Merari,* just this past year to COSMOPOLITAN. Her second will appear in Harlan Ellison's upcoming anthology, *The Last Dangerous Visions.* Ellison is sold on her potential and having seen this story wrote: "While reading *Timmy* I had the same soft chill and uneasy crawling of nape-hair that I remember I got from Bradbury's *Small Assassin* years ago. Without styles remotely resembling each other, I think Susan Lette has much of the tone of darkness and the-familiar-turned-ominous that Ray poured into his early fiction."

Let us hope we are reading an early story in the career of a future writing star.

Timmy

By SUSAN C. LETTE

TIMMY IS OUT behind the garage again, playing with the vacuum cleaner. The big fat vacuum cleaner Daddy got to clean up the yard. Daddy sucks up leaves and stuff with it instead of raking. I don't think it's much fun. I like to run and jump in big piles of crispy leaves. But Timmy is funny about vacuum cleaners.

Timmy is my twin, but we don't look alike. Daddy says it's because we're fraternal instead of identical. That means we don't have to look alike. Timmy is bigger than me and has blond hair and blue eyes like Daddy. Mama calls him her little angel. My hair and eyes are sorta brown and she doesn't like me very much. Timmy isn't supposed to play with the vacuum cleaner, but if I tell on him Mama will get mad at me. So will Timmy.

Mama doesn't know it, but Timmy's crazy. I'm scared of him.

He says he wants to be a vacuum cleaner when he grows up. Mama thinks it's cute and Daddy thinks it's silly. They think he's just showing off, but he isn't. He means it.

Daddy found out about Timmy playing with the vacuum cleaner. He found it full of dirt and rocks that Timmy vacuumed up behind the garage. Daddy was real mad and said why didn't I tell Mama about it. I said because Mama would get mad if I told on Timmy, but Daddy didn't believe me and gave me a spanking. Nobody did anything to Timmy. Mama says he can vacuum the living room rug every day if he wants to.

Daddy told me once that they're nice to Timmy because he's sick, but I don't believe it. If he was sick he couldn't beat me up, but he did the last time I told on him. He's a lot stronger than I am when he's mad. I wish he really was sick. I wish he'd die.

I asked Daddy if Timmy is sick in the head because he likes vacuum cleaners so much. Daddy said no, Timmy isn't any sicker in the head than I am. He has something wrong with his muscles or something. Daddy explained it for a long time, but I don't understand.

He says it's nice that Timmy likes vacuum cleaners. Boys are supposed to like machines. Daddy wants me to like machines, but I hate them. Especially vacuum cleaners.

Timmy was vacuuming the carpet on the stairs yesterday and fell down the stairs. It didn't hurt him much, though, because he is busy vacuuming the rug in the hall today and making an awful lot of noise. I'm glad I was outside playing when it happened, or

they would have said I pushed him or something. I'd like to, but I don't dare.

It's raining today, so I can't go outside. I wish he'd turn that thing off. It makes my head hurt.

Timmy isn't vacuuming today. He's doing something worse. He has the vacuum cleaner in our bedroom and he's snuggled up to it on the rug, talking to it and singing to it. Mama looked in a while ago and thought it was real cute, like he was playing with a teddy bear or something. I don't think it's cute. It gives me cold shivvers and a funny feeling in my stomach, like when the baby sitter let us stay up late and watch that scary movie on TV. Only this isn't just a movie.

Timmy doesn't vacuum much any more. He sits by the vacuum cleaner and talks to it all the time. Except when Mama is using it and then he follows her around and sits in the same room and watches her vacuum. Daddy says Timmy is getting sicker and isn't strong any more.

Timmy is getting crazier, too. The baby sitter let us watch another scary movie on TV the other night. It was about transmigration of souls. (I had to look up transmigration so I could spell it.) Now Timmy doesn't say he's going to be a vacuum cleaner when he grows up. He says he's going to be one when he dies. Mama doesn't think that's cute. She cries a lot.

They took Timmy to the hospital today. I guess he really was sick, after all. He's still mean, though. He said he was going to come back and vacuum me up. Mama and Daddy are still down at the hospital, so I made a peanut butter and jelly sandwich for supper. Strawberry jelly. Yummy.

I'm glad Timmy's not here. I wonder if he'll die?

Mama and Daddy are gone all the time. I'm not supposed to go outside or anything while they're gone, so I don't. I'm sorta scared to.

I'm getting awful tired of TV and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. I keep thinking about Timmy, too. Will it be my fault if he dies, because I wanted him to?

The rug is getting dirty because Timmy hasn't vacuumed it in a long time, and Mama hasn't, either. I wonder if she would like me better if I vacuumed it?

Mama came home real late. She cried and kissed me when I told her I vacuumed the rug. Then she put me to bed and went out again. I was happy when she kissed me, but now I'm alone again because they couldn't get a baby sitter tonight. It's real dark and I keep hearing something creak, like a door or footsteps, maybe. Daddy told

me it was just the house settling, but it's dark and I'm here all alone. Why do they *both* have to stay with Timmy all the time?

I wish Mama was here.

I was awful bored today, so I vacuumed the whole house. It's sorta fun running the vacuum cleaner around and watching all the dirt and stuff getting sucked up inside it. Maybe that's why Timmy likes it.

Timmy's dead. Mama and Daddy came home and Mama was crying. Daddy took her upstairs and put her to bed and then he came back down and told me Timmy is in Heaven. That's not where Timmy is, though.

I got to thinking about what he said about coming back and vacuuming me up, like maybe he knew I wanted him to die and he was going to make sure that I died, too. I thought about that for a long time, and the more I thought, the scareder I got. So I sneaked into the hall closet and looked at the vacuum cleaner.

It has this little white light in front so you can see to vacuum in dark places like under furniture. When I opened the closet door, the light turned on, and it wasn't even plugged in!

The light was bright red, too! I was awful scared so I ran out of the closet and slammed the door and then I ran and told Mama that Timmy is in the vacuum cleaner and wants to get me.

Mama shoved me away and started crying again, and Daddy grabbed me and whipped me.

I'm staying in my room with the door locked. What can I do? They don't believe me and nobody will help me.

They took me to a psychiatrist and I told him about Timmy and how scared I am. He looked nice and I thought at first he would help me. He acted like he believed me, and he *said* he would help me.

He lied. I heard him tell Mama and Daddy that I had guilt feelings because of sibling rivalry, whatever that is, and that it was normal. He said it would go away if they'd be nice to me.

Now they're being nice to me, but I know they don't mean it, and I never talk about Timmy and the vacuum cleaner.

But I know he's there.

Can machines grow? I don't vacuum the rugs any more, because I won't touch the vacuum cleaner. Mama vacuums a lot, but she never has to empty the bag any more.

And I was sure the handle only used to come up to my chest when it was standing straight up, but I had to sneak past it where Mama had it parked in the hall yesterday and the handle came up to my chin.

Mama says it's getting harder to push, like it was getting heavier. I'm scared to go in the same room with it alone, because when Mama and Daddy aren't there the little light turns red and it makes an awful noise.

Mama heard it this morning and thought I was playing with it like I'm not supposed to. She got real mad and yelled at me and didn't believe me when I said I didn't do it.

But I don't care what *she* thinks, it's Timmy I'm scared of. He really meant it when he said he'd vacuum me up!

Mama's sort of sick, but I don't think it's what Timmy had. Daddy said it's not dangerous. It's just that Mama is awful tired and has to rest instead of working so hard around the house. He says we can't afford a maid because we have to pay Timmy's hospital bills and everything, so he does the dishes and sometimes he cooks supper.

He wants me to help her, too. Why should I? She doesn't even like me, even if she does pretend like the psychiatrist said to. She wants me to vacuum the rugs like Timmy used to, and Daddy says I have to do it, starting tomorrow. He says he'll make sure I do, so I'll get over this silly business about the vacuum cleaner.

I won't do it, though. I don't dare!

I have my pocket knife and Greedy, my pet gerbil, all tied up in one of Daddy's old handkerchiefs, and I'm running away as soon as it gets dark. I don't know where I'll go, but anywhere is better than here.

Oh gosh, I wonder if Timmy can follow me?

WHEN *THE BALLOON TREE* by Albert Page Mitchell led off the Winter, 1973 issue of WEIRD TALES, the author was all but forgotten. Since then, the collection of his stories *The Crystal Man* has appeared, and his leterary efforts in writing some of the earliest science fiction themes such as time travel, speeds faster than light, matter transmission, thinking computors, and preservation of the human body through freezing, has been widely acknowledged and appreciated.

Still due him is credit for his pioneering role as a creator of a particularly sardonic form of supernatural fiction, generally believed to have originated in modern times. He has written many such stories, but certainly *The Devilish Rat* which first appeared anonymously in the New York SUN for January 27, 1878, is one of the most diabolical tales of rollicking evil ever written. Read this, and see if you don't agree that Albert Page Mitchell is a master of the weird and terrible.

The Devilish Rat

By ALBERT PAGE MITCHELL

YOU KNOW that when a man lives in a deserted castle on the top of a great mountain by the side of the river Rhine, he is liable to misrepresentation. Half the good people of the village of Schwinkenschwank, including the burgomaster and the burgomaster's nephew, believed that I was a fugitive from American justice.

The other half were just as firmly convinced that I was crazy, and this theory had the support of the notary's profound knowledge of human character and acute logic.

The two halves to the interesting controversy were so equally matched that they spent all their time in confronting each other's arguments, and I was left, happily, pretty much to myself.

As everybody with the slightest pretension to cosmopolitan knowledge is already aware, the old Schloss Schwinkenschwank is haunted by the ghosts of twenty-nine mediaeval barons and baronesses. The behavior of these ancient spectres was very considerate. They annoyed me, on the whole, far less than the rats, which swarmed in great numbers in every part of the castle.

When I first took possession of my quarters, I was obliged to keep a lantern burning all night, and continually to beat about me with a wooden club in order to escape the fate of Bishop Hatto. Afterward I sent to Frankfort and had made for me a wire cage in which I was able to sleep with comfort and safety as soon as I became accustomed to the sharp gritting of the rats' teeth as they gnawed the iron in their impotent attempts to get in and eat me.

Barring the spectres and the rats, and now and then a transient bat or owl, I was the first tenant of the Schloss Schwinkenschwank for three or four centuries.

After leaving Bonn, where I had greatly profited by the learned and ingenious lectures of the famous Calcarius, Herr Professor of Metaphysical Science in that admirable university, I had selected this ruin as the best possible place for the trial of a certain experiment in psychology.

The Hereditary Landgraf, von Toplitz, who owned Schloss Schwinkenschwank, showed no signs of surprise when I went to him and offered six thalers a month for the privilege of lodging in his ramshackle castle. The clerk of a hotel could not have taken my application more coolly or my money in a more business-like spirit.

"It will be necessary to pay the first month's rent in advance," said he.

"That I am fortunately prepared to do, my well-born Hereditary Landgraf," I replied, counting out six thalers. He pocketed them, and gave me a receipt for the same. I wondered

whether he ever tried to collect rent from his ghosts.

The most inhabitable room in the castle was that in the northwest tower, but it was already occupied by the Lady Adelaide Maria, eldest daughter of the Baron von Schotten, who was starved to death in the thirteenth century by her affectionate papa for refusing to wed a one-legged freebooter from over the river.

As I could not think of intruding upon a lady, I took up my quarters at the head of the south turret stairway, where there was nobody in possession except a sentimental monk, who was out a good deal nights and gave me no trouble at any time.

In such calm seclusion as I enjoyed in the Schloss it is possible to reduce physical and mental activity to the lowest degree consistent with life. Saint Pedro of Alcantara, who passed forty years in a convent cell, schooled himself to sleep only an hour and a half a day, and to take food but once in three days.

While diminishing the functions of his body to such an extent, he must also, I firmly believe, have reduced his soul almost to the negative character of an unconscious infant's. It is exercise, thought, friction, activity, that brings out the individuality of a man's nature. Prof. Calcarius's pregnant words remained burned into my memory:

"What is the mysterious link that binds soul to the living body? Why am I Calcarius, or rather why does the soul called Calcarius inhabit this particular organism? (Here the learned professor slapped his enormous thigh with his pudgy hand.) Might not I as easily be another, and might not another be I? Loosen the individualized Ego from the fleshy surroundings to which it coheres by force of habit and by reason of long contact, and who shall say that it may not be expelled by an act of volition, leaving the living body receptive, to be occupied by some non-individualized Ego, worthier and better than the old?"

This profound suggestion made a lasting impression upon my mind. While perfectly satisfied with my body, which is sound, healthy, and reasonably beautiful, I had long been discontented with my soul, and constant contemplation of its weakness, its grossness, its inadequacy, had intensified discontentment to disgust.

Could I but escape myself, could I but tear this paste diamond from its fine casket and replace it with a genuine jewel, what sacrifices would I not consent to, and how fervently would I bless Calcarius and the hour that took me to Bonn!

It was to try this untried experiment that I shut myself up in the Schloss Schwinkenschwank.

Excepting little Hans, the innkeeper's son, who climbed the mountain three times a week from the village to bring me bread and cheese and white wine, and afterward Hans's sister, my only visitor during the period of my retirement was Professor Calcarius. He came over from Bonn twice to cheer and encourage me.

On the occasion of his first visit night fell while we were still talking of Pythagoras and metempsychosis. The profound metaphysicist was a corpulent man and very short-sighted.

"I can never get down the hill alive," he cried, wringing his hands anxiously. "I should stumble, and, Gott im Himmel, precipitate myself peradventure upon some jagged rock."

"You must stay all night, Professor," said I, "and sleep with me in my wire cage. I should like you to meet my room mate, the monk."

"Subjective entirely, my dear young friend," he said. "Your apparition is a creature of the optic nerve and I shall contemplate it without alarm, as becomes a philosopher."

I put my Herr Professor to bed in the wire cage and with extreme difficulty crowded myself in by his side. At his especial request I left the lantern burning. "Not that I have any apprehension of your subjective spectres," he explained. "Mere figments of the brain they are. But in the dark I might roll over and crush you."

"How progresses the self-suppression?" he asked at length— "the subordination of the individual soul? Eh! What was that?"

"A rat, trying to get in at us," I replied. "Be calm: you are in no peril. My experiment proceeds satisfactorily. I have quite eliminated all interest in the outside world. Love, gratitude, friendship, care for my own welfare

and the welfare of my friends have nearly disappeared. Soon, I hope, memory will also fade away, and with my memory my individual past."

"You are doing splendidly!" he exclaimed with enthusiasm, "and rendering to psychologic science an inestimable service. Soon your psychic nature will be a blank, a vacuum, ready to receive—God preserve me! What was that?"

"Only the screech of an owl," said I, reassuringly, as the great grey bird with which I had become familiar fluttered noisily down through an aperture in the roof and lit upon the top of our wire cage.

Calcarius regarded the owl with interest, and the owl blinked gravely at Calcarius.

"Who knows," said the Herr Professor, "but what that owl is animated by the soul of some great dead philosopher? Perhaps Pythagoras, perhaps Plotinus, perhaps the spirit of Socrates himself, abides temporarily beneath those feathers."

I confessed that some such idea had already occurred to me.

"And in that case," continued the Professor, "you have only to negate your own nature, to nullify your own individuality, in order to receive into your body this great soul, which, as my intuitions tell me, is that of Socrates, and is hovering around your physical organization, hoping to effect an entrance. Persist, my worthy young student, in your most laudable experiment, and metaphysical science—Merciful Heaven! Is that the devil?"

It was the huge gray rat, my nightly visitor. This hideous creature had grown in his life, perhaps of a century, to the size of a small terrier. His whiskers were perfectly white and very thick. His immense tushes had become so long that they curved over till the points almost impaled his skull. His eyes were big and blood red. The corners of his upper lip were so shrivelled and drawn up that his countenance wore an expression of diabolical malignity, rarely seen except in some human faces.

He was too old and knowing to gnaw at the wires; but he sat outside on his haunches, and gazed in at us with an indescribable look of hatred. My companion shivered. After a while the rat turned away, rattled his callous tail across the wire netting, and disappeared in the darkness. Professor Calcarius breathed a deep sigh of relief, and soon was snoring so profoundly that neither owls, rats, nor spectres ventured near us till morning.

I HAD SO FAR succeeded in merging my intellectual and moral qualities in the routine of mere animal existence that when it was time for Calcarius to come again, as he had promised, I felt little interest in his approaching visit. Hansel, who constituted my commissariat, had been taken sick of the measels, and I was dependent for my food and wine upon the coming of his pretty sister Emma, a flaxen-haired maiden of eighteen, who climbed the steep path with the grace and agility of a gazelle.

She was an artless little thing, and told me of her own accord the story of her simple love. Fritz was a soldier in the Emperor Wilhelm's army. He was now in garrison at Cologne. They hoped that he would soon get a lieutenancy, for he was brave and faithful, and then he would come home and marry her.

She had saved up her dairy money till it amounted to quite a little purse, which she had sent him that it might help purchase his commission. Had I ever seen Fritz? No? He was handsome and good, and she loved him more than she could tell.

I listened to this prattle with the same amount of romantic interest that a proposition in Euclid would excite, and congratulated myself that my old soul had so nearly disappeared.

Every night the gray owl perched above me. I knew that Socrates was waiting to take possession of my body, and I yearned to open my bosom and receive that grand soul.

Every night the detestable rat came and peered through the wires. His cool, contemptuous malice exasperated me strangely. I longed to reach out from beneath my cage and seize and throttle him, but I was afraid of the venom of his bite.

My own soul had by this time nearly wasted away through disciplined disuse. The owl looked down lovingly at me with his great placid eyes. A noble spirit seemed to shine

through them and to say, "I will come when you are ready." And I would look back into their lustrous depths and exclaim with infinite yearning, "Come soon O Socrates, for I am almost ready!"

Then I would turn and meet the devilish gaze of the monstrous rat, whose sneering malevolence dragged me back to earth and to earth's concerns.

My detestation of the abominable beast was the sole lingering trace of the old nature. When he was not by, my soul seemed to hover around and above my body, ready to take wing and leave it free forever. At his appearance, an unconquerable disgust and loathing undid in a second all that had been accomplished, and I was still myself. To succeed in my experiment I felt that the hateful creature whose presence barred out the grand old philosopher's soul must be dispatched at any cost of sacrifice or danger.

"I will kill you, you loathsome animal!" I shouted to the rat, "and then to my emancipated body will come the soul of Socrates which awaits me yonder."

The rat turned on me his leering eyes and grinned more sardonically than ever. His scorn was more than I could bear. I threw up the side of the wire cage and clutched desperately at my enemy.

I caught him by the tail. I drew him close to me. I crunched the bones of his slimy legs, felt blindly for his head, and when I got both hands to his neck, fastened upon his life with a terrible grip.

With all the strength at my command, and with all the recklessness of a desperate purpose, I tore and twisted the flesh of my loathsome victim. He gasped, uttered a horrible cry of wild pain, and at last lay limp and quiet in my clutch. Hate was satisfied, my last passion was at an end, and I was free to welcome Socrates.

When I awoke from a long and dreamless sleep, the events of the night before and, indeed, of my whole previous life were as the dimly remembered incidents in a story read years ago.

The owl was gone but the mangled corpse of the rat lay by my side. Even in death his face wore its horrible grin. It now looked like a Satanic smile of triumph.

I arose and shook off my drowsiness. A new life seemed to tingle in my veins. I was no longer indifferent and negative. I took a lively interest in my surroundings and wanted to be out in the world among men, to plunge into affairs and exult in action.

Pretty Emma came up the hill bringing her basket. "I am going to leave you," said I. "I shall seek better quarters than the Schloss Schwinkenschwank."

"And shall you go to Cologne," she eagerly asked; "to the garrison where the emperor's soldiers are?"

"Perhaps so—on my way to the world."

"And will you go for me to Fritz?" she continued, blushing. "I have good news to send him. His uncle, the mean old notary, died last night. Fritz now has a small fortune and he must come home to me at once."

"The notary," said I slowly, "died last night?"

"Yes sir; and they say he is black in the face this morning. But it is good news for Fritz and me."

"Perhaps," continued I, still more slowly—"perhaps Fritz would not believe me. I am a stranger, and men who know the world, like your young soldier, are given to suspicion."

"Carry this ring," she quickly replied, taking from her finger a worthless trinket. "Fritz gave it to me and he will know by it that I trust you."

My next visitor was the learned Calcarius. He was quite out of breath when he reached the apartment I was preparing to leave.

"How goes our metempsychosis, my worthy pupil?" he asked. "I arrived last evening from Bonn, but rather than spend another night with your horrible rodents, I submitted my purse to the extortion of the village innkeeper. The rogue swindled me," he continued taking out his purse and counting over a small treasure of silver. "He charged me forty groschen for a bed and breakfast."

The sight of the silver, and the sweet clink of the pieces as they came in contact in Professor Calcarius's palm, thrilled my new soul with an emotion it had not yet experienced.

Silver seemed the brightest thing in

the world to me at that moment, and the acquisition of silver, by whatever means, the noblest exercise of human energy. With a sudden impulse that I was unable to resist, I sprang upon my friend and instructor and wrenched the purse from his hands. He uttered a cry of surprise and dismay.

"Cry away!" I shouted; "it will do no good. Your miserly screams will be heard only by rats and owls and ghosts. The money is mine."

"What's this?" he exclaimed. "You rob your guest, your friend, your guide and mentor in the sublime walks of metaphysical science? What perfidy has taken possession of your soul?"

I seized the Herr Professor by the legs and threw him violently to the floor. He struggled as the grey rat had struggled. I tore pieces of wire from my cage, and bound him hand and foot so tightly that the wire cut deep into his fat flesh.

"Ho! Ho!" said I, standing over him; "what a feast for the rats your corpulent carcass will make," and I turned to go.

"Good Gott!" he cried. "You do not intend to leave me: No one ever comes here."

"All the better," I replied, gritting my teeth and shaking my fist in his face; "the rats will have uninterrupted opportunity to relieve you of your superfluous flesh. Oh, they are very hungry, I assure you, Herr Metaphysician, and they will speedily help you to sever the mysterious link that binds soul to living body. They will know how to loosen the individualized Ego from the fleshly surroundings. I congratulate you on the prospect of a rare experiment."

The cries of Professor Calcarius grew fainter and fainter as I made my way down the hill. Once out of hearing I stopped to count my gains. Over and over again, with extraordinary joy, I told the thalers in his purse, and always with the same result. There were just thirty pieces of silver.

My way into the world of barter and profit led me through Cologne. At the barracks I sought out Fritz Schneider of Schwinkenschwank.

"My friend," said I, putting my hand upon his shoulder, "I am going to do you the greatest service which one man may do another. You love little Emma the inkeeper's daughter?"

"I do indeed," he said. "You bring news of her?"

"I have just now torn myself away from her too ardent embrace."

"It is a lie!" he shouted. "The little girl is as true as gold."

"She is as false as the metal in this trinket," said I with composure, tossing him Emma's ring. "She gave it to me yesterday when we parted."

He looked at the ring, and then put both hands to his forehead. "It is true," he groaned. "Our bethrothal ring!" I watched his anguish with philosophical interest.

"See here," he continued, taking a neatly knitted purse from his bosom. "Here is the money she sent to help me buy promotion. Perhaps that belongs to you?"

"Quite likely," I replied, very coolly. "The pieces have a strangely familiar look."

Without another word the soldier flung the purse at my feet and turned away. I heard him sobbing, and the sound was music. Then I picked up the purse and hastened to the nearest cafe to count the silver.

There were just thirty pieces again.

To acquire silver, that is the chief joy possible to my new nature. It is a glorious pleasure, is it not? How fortunate that the soul, which took possession of my body in the Schloss, was not Socrates's, which would have made me, at best, a dismal ruminator like Calcarius; but the soul that had dwelt in the grey rat till I strangled him.

At one time I thought that my new soul came to me from the dead notary in the village. I know, now, that I inherited it from the rat, and I believe it to be the soul that once animated Judas Iscariot, that prince of men of action.

COMING SOON: ANOTHER RAY BRADBURY HAUTING CLASSIC

THOSE OF YOU WHO READ Edison Marshall's spine-chilling horror tale *The Serpent City* in the Summer, 1973 issue of WEIRD TALES, need only be told that *The Son of the Wild Things* is another in his superb series "From a Frontiersman's Diary," a series which originally appeared in THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE.

The Son of the Wild Things swings away from the horror, more towards the strange, unusual and unique. It has powerful elements of the Tarzan theme and takes place in the wild land of the Eskimos, the musk ox, the caribou and the polar bear. The imagery of the struggle for survival that Marshall creates for us in this setting is literally eerie in the bizarre elements of its authenticity. He deftly inserts a remarkable event that contributes to the creation of a bonafide hero who arises logically out of the background of the story.

This is a story to delight the hearts of those who read magazines like *WEIRD TALES* for something different, unusual and exotic. This is a story which will set the oldtimers to reminiscing of a time when the turn of a page of a pulp magazine far exceeded in magic and wonder the turn of a dial on a television set today.

The Son of the Wild Things

By EDISON MARSHALL

"Often among the nations a child is born seemingly with the blessings of the wild upon him."—*From a Frontiersman's Diary.*

BEYOND THE CITIES and the farmlands and the forests, beyond the last trap lines and the farthest trading posts, in a region where white men do not go and the North Star almost seems no longer in the north, a long bright inlet stretches from the uttermost waters of Baffin Bay. It stretches an arm into a strange gray land that in the minds of white men is simply "the Unknown."

It is not charted on the mariner's maps. You won't find it named in any geography. It is too cold for the forests to grow, and the rocky valleys and the towering crags are drear and bare beyond the power of words to describe.

The green ice locks down on the waters for most of the year. The snow comes, foot after foot, till the meager shrubbery and the reindeer moss and lichens are out of sight. There is never any sound, in winter, except now and then the soft step of the wild creatures on the snow. In the spring the ice breaks and churns and crashes with a noise more terrible than a hundred thunderclaps at once; but spring does not mean warm weather and flowers.

Every day in the spring the sun rises somewhat higher in the south, and the snows begin to run away in clear rivulets, and small avalanches rumble on the crags, and here and there the mosses begin to show above the snow.

But not until summer do the flowers come, and then they only stay a little while. They are hardy, starlike blossoms that sprinkle the floors of the valleys with color; and they blossom very bravely and gayly until the frost comes again. The grass starts up too—for Nature is a persevering, tireless spirit. Except for the weary waste of crags, the region in summer is almost beautiful. But summer is just a breath that is soon gone. The soft rain turns to sifting snow in early September, and the winter closes down on land and sea.

And with the winter comes the night that never seems to end. It is not the kind of night that most people know, black so that you cannot see your hand before your face. Mostly it is a sort of deep twilight, wherein a snow-covered shrub can look exactly like a ghost, and a wandering caribou is a monster.

Nothing seems to appear in the correct perspective,—always too large or too small, or too near or too far. Sounds seem too loud, or else a whisper much too soft. It is easy to imagine all kinds of things, those winter nights. It is a gray land of ghosts and strangeness; and any dream—except that of warmth and comfort and mercy—can come true.

The Northern Lights play above, and they are never the same. Sometimes they are a ruddy glare in the sky, and sometimes they waver and shimmer like a silk flag in the wind, and often they send queer streams and splashes of fire out across the bowl of the sky. They are red and purple and yellow; and sometimes they throw a green glamor over all the land.

This is the worst time: when the green light is on the snow, the Innuits know that starvation and death and maybe worse things are coming in the morning.

It is very easy to die, in this place. To live at all means constant battle—not six or eight hours out of twenty-four—but every moment not spent in sleep. The cold knows no mercy. To be caught in it, unprotected, means death, very quickly and comparatively

gently. There is a moment when the blood feels oddly warm, and then the Innuit spirit goes slipping away over the snow to the dwellings of the Arsissut. When one goes there, he is never cold or hungry any more.

Even the Innuits know it is a strange land, and it is their home. They say that good and wicked gods are always battling in the mists just beyond their sight, and if the wicked gods win, the people will die. Then there are the *torno* that take the form of bears and seals—they ordinarily live in the rocks and trees—and often, in the twilight when the winter air is electric and Aurora Borealis dances in the sky, they seem to move. Then there is *Kusiunek*, that can cause sudden sickness or death.

But not only the Innuits know this land. There are a number of creatures that know this land very well.

The wild geese, for instance, that come in such queer wedges from out of the South, have a very good knowledge of the district. They know which ponds are half-choked with tender wild rice, and which have only pebbly bottoms not worth exploring.

Even the puffins have a fair idea of the place. They sit all day on the rocks, and they always seem very wise with their heads erect and in their judicial attitudes. In reality they are very foolish. Even the women—the placid *hennelay* that chew the skins all day in the huts—can fill their sealskin sacks with puffin whenever they choose.

What the wolves know of the place would fill many volumes the size of this book, and the Innuit respect is enough to follow the wolf pack when his tribe is starving; the wolves nearly always take him to game. Darkness means nothing to the wolves. They can kill a seal beside one of ten thousand inlets that look exactly the same, sing through the valleys for forty miles that night, and return to it straight as a light-shaft the next day.

The polar bear knows the region too; and he has an advantage over the wolves in that he is a marvelous swimmer. He can swim out and explore the many crags and islands that outcrop in the straits; and it is true that human explorers often find him riding like a castaway on a great fragment of iceberg far from any shore.

Then there are the caribou, wandering for endless miles over uncharted roads and never going astray; the long-haired musk-ox, seemingly very awkward and slow, but nimble and fleet as a mountain goat when he wishes to be; the seal that come up out of the sea and breed and fight on the beaches; and the bewhiskered, cross old walrus that can't ever quite make up his mind whether he is a land animal gone to sea, or a marine creature that now and then likes the feel of solid earth beneath his flippers. These creatures are no strangers in the land.

But it takes time to acquire knowledge; and the female musk-ox that came browsing along a snow river with her calf was too young to know many of the wiles of the Innuits. He was her first calf, and she was filled with delight at the sight of him.

They were browsing along a rivulet that had sprung from a melting snow bank farther up the slope; and in the magic of the May sunlight they had forgotten that there could be such a thing as danger. The cow cropped the new grass, and now and then browsed at the moss that grew in the shelter of the rocks. The calf romped about her, now and then nosing at her udder and trying to squeeze beneath her belly.

Then the thing occurred. What had seemed a firm rich bed of moss and lichens suddenly gave way under her feet, and she went down with a bellow of terror. She had stepped squarely into a reindeer pit.

These pits are dug by the Innuits and covered with a fragile netting of twigs and moss. They differ from the pits used in taking bear and wolf only so far that they have no impaling stake at the bottom, for sometimes it is well to take a reindeer alive.

In an instant the ox was lying, shaken but unhurt, on the floor of the pit, and an escape from its depths was impossible.

II

DEATH WAS COMMON in the little Innuit settlement beside the inlet; and the women took the news of what was happening in Tweegock's hut of skins without astonishment or comment.

A few nights before, the Northern Lights had been green, and they might have known some evil would befall. It had been an unhappy spring. They were just a fragment of a tribe, and they had become separated from the remainder in the preceding autumn.

They had been going south in their great *oomiacs*, or skin boats, and by the circumstances of a sudden gale and freeze, one of the boats had been compelled to make a landing apart from the rest. In it were perhaps ten adults. Only by utmost cooperation can life be sustained in that frozen country, and ten were too few to achieve the best results.

And now one of the ten was dying.

It was Tweegock's wife. She lay on a pile of skins in his hut, and a little brown newborn baby was in her arms.

"I am going to the land of the Arsissut—very quickly," she told her husband. "But I leave you a child—a man child, such as was never born in this place before."

She showed him the brown-skinned baby. It was a virile, active little creature, and Tweegock could see that it was physically perfect. Never did a newborn have such sturdy legs and arms, such a strong little back. The man looked at it with pride.

"But you will take him too," Tweegock replied in sorrow. "There is no milk. None of the women have young babies. He will die in a day."

Suddenly her black eyes seemed to be full of light, and she half raised herself on her elbow.

"He will live," she told him. "The blessings of a *tornac* is upon his head. I know. I have seen.

By that she meant that there was a guardian spirit that would take care of her little son. The man bent down lower, and his little eyes seemed very, very wide. He believed her wholly. Surely, at the border of the realm of Arsissut, she could tell him only the truth.

"The *tornac* came in the shape of a bear," she told him. "A white bear—for he sniffed at the tent just as the babe was born."

This fact did not surprise Tweegock in the least. As all Innuits believe, a *tornac* can take the shape of any animal, or a stone or tree, for that matter, at will.

"The bear came up from the coast and sniffed at the tent," the woman went on. "It means that the wild things are his friends. They will not kill him when they meet him on the snow. They will find his milk for him too. He is born to be the brother of the bear—and the wolf—and the musk-ox. And we will name him *Nenook*—the bear.

"I know it, Tweegock! The bear sniffed, and I—I heard it speak," her voice ebbed away; and she had but a moment more of life. The man bent so that his ear was close to the woman's lips.

Of course, she had heard the bear speak—for did not often the *tornac* speak through the lips of beasts? And the woman, in the delirium that is the frontier of death, believed she was telling him the truth.

" 'This,' the bear said, 'is the son of the wild things,' " the woman whispered. "Those were the words: 'This is the son of the wild things. He is a child of the ice floe—and the mountains—and the caribou on the plains, and the musk-ox in the valleys. He will know their secrets, and the wild will suckle him.' These were the white bear's words, my husband.—And I die!"

Even as Tweegock knelt beside her, her life sped away. And he soberly went to tell the other members of the little settlement what his wife had said.

They nodded their heads very wisely. "Follow the tracks of the *tornac* that came as a bear—and he will find milk for the child," they said. "Without milk the babe will die, for none of our wives have young at their breasts. Go into the wild, Tweegock, before hunger comes on the babe."

Tweegock and his older son, a boy of twelve, started out together. There seemed nothing strange to anyone in the departure. The two would find the *tornac*—the spirit that had spoken through the lips of the bear; and somewhere in the rocky waste they would find substance to keep the child alive.

They carried their spears and bird-darts, for although the *tornac* was friendly, they did not feel like meeting him unarmed. Both were rather wide-eyed and silent, and their cheeks

were flushed so that their fellow tribesmen could see the red through the brown. It is an exciting thing to seek spirits. Anything in the world might befall them before they returned.

"We may go to the Arsissut too," they said.

They followed the track of the bear that had spoken to Tweegock's wife, and the trail led them over a ridge and into a valley. They walked in silence, one behind the other. They held their harpoons ready to fling at an instant's notice. The snow was mostly gone, and the tracking was all but impossible. But the two brown Innuits followed it with ease.

"We are getting nearer," Tweegock said at last. "Soon we will find him waiting—and perhaps he will talk to me too."

His son nodded gravely; and they began to follow up a little snow river that rippled down from a snow bank to the sea.

And then they came in sight of the bear.

Both of them gasped a little; and Tweegock's hand trembled as he pointed.

"It is waiting," he said. "I will go."

For the bear did seem to be standing still as if undecided which of two impulses to obey. Usually the white bears fled at first sight of an Innuit, but on this occasion there was a particular reason why he wanted to remain.

A hundred feet distant a very large and attractive dinner was lying in a pit in the ground. Musk-oxen with calves as a rule are game too dangerous to be attractive; but this time the ox seemed helpless to protect herself or her calf. But the two Innuits were drawing nearer; and the bear decided that the musk-ox would have to wait till later. So he fled on, up the stream, and vanished about the white shoulder of the snow-bank.

In a moment more the Innuits were beside the pit. Within it was a young cow musk-ox with a calf; and for a long time they gazed with glowing eyes.

"A musk-ox—with milk in her udder!" the man cried at last. "Milk for my son—just as the *tornac* said. I will stand guard, and you will bring the men of the tribe with ropes. And the babe shall live to rule all this land—and the wolf will lick his leggings, and the reindeer will kneel at his feet." Then his gaze fell on the little musk-ox calf that bleated pitifully from the other side of the pit.

"And see," the man cried, "this little one shall be his brother—nursed at the same breast."

III

"I WILL NAME him Kayak—because he can be ridden like a boat," said little Nenook to his father.

Old Tweegock nodded gravely. He never disputed his little son. He was always just a little bit afraid of him. Every member of the tribe—for several years before, the little band of Innuits had become united with the remainder of the tribe—knew the story of Nenook, how he had thrived on musk-ox milk, and how the creatures of the wild were his friends.

Even the priest, who claimed to talk with spirits daily, watched the boy's growth with some measure of awe. For never in the history of the people had there been such a thing as an Innuit boy and a musk-ox calf being brothers at the same breast.

The cow had never really submitted to domestication, and in a hard winter of six years before she had been slain for food. It had been the occasion of a sacred feast, wherein the priest had marked the child's breast with her blood.

Her bull calf Kayak was not domesticated either. Indeed, he was just as wild a musk-ox as ever ranged the region of the inlet. But he was none the less little Nenook's companion and slave.

They had grown up together. They had drunk of the same strong milk, and almost died together in one of the "starving times" that every so often come upon the Innuits. They had been playmates when Kayak was a wobbly calf and Nenook had not yet learned to walk. They had romped together through the summer days, and in the fall the calf had been taken with the dogs in the southerly expeditions after salmon and birds.

He was a wild creature, and so was Nenook. In the very beginning the

people saw that his mother's prophecy was coming true. He did not play with other Innuit boys—slow, chubby little fellows in sealskins, who had patient, uninteresting games outside their mothers' huts. In the first place they were all afraid of him.

His daily rompings with the powerful calf had developed his muscles far beyond all natural limits of a boy of his age, and he soon learned that he must play gently with them. They were not even strong enough to afford him sport. Nor did he remain in huts and help chew the skins with the other children.

They were outlaws from the very first, the ox and the boy. Both were magnificent specimens. Of course, the beast was full-grown when Nenook was still a slender boy; but for all that, Nenook was the master. The little touch of domestication in the life of the ox had strengthened rather than weakened him. Perhaps he kept in better condition because of more regular food. In the winter, particularly, the musk-ox suffer from hunger, as every mouthful of reindeer moss must be probed for in the snow.

Kayak had a man calf with a man's keen and crafty brain to look after him, and he gained weight in winters wherein many of his breed had died. Every year he had grown heavier, stronger, longer of hair and surer of foot. He stood four feet at the shoulders, and was nine feet long from the end of his three-inch sheeplike tail to the extremity of his nose.

When he stood off in the wind, and his long hair blew about him, he seemed like a ragged, fringed thing of no shape at all.

Most of the Innuit boys are thickly built and short and awkward; and they have fat little stomachs always calling for more *tuck-tu* or seal blubber. Nenook was not like this at all. He was proportioned like a Greek athlete, and his muscles did not knot and bunch.

They were smooth and rippling and scarcely noticeable; and they were strong as steel wires. He had such muscles as may be found in the thigh of a wolf, or the jaws of a hyena. He had black hair that grew long about his shoulders, and his skin was a deep chestnut, rather than red or copper. And he was taller than any boy of his age by half a foot.

He was a wild creature, and he had the strength and stealth and cunning that the wild creatures have. From the very first he had no interest in the circle of huts where his people lived. In the summer he would sooner have gone to sleep in the cold sea than in the huts of his people.

He couldn't breathe at all in the sweat-box tents. For the Innuit people light lamps and carefully cut out the least bit of air. They lie half-asphyxiated in the carbon dioxide from the lamps, and they gasp all night like fish out of the water.

Nenook's lungs hadn't become adapted to that sort of treatment. He was accustomed to running fifteen miles down the valleys in a single afternoon, the ox galloping along beside him, and his lungs absorbing air as a seal consumes fish,—in large quantities. So when the sleep time came, he and the ox would go out to the encircling hills, and they would sleep wherever fancy dictated.

Sometimes it was a soft bed of moss, and sometimes it was simply a hard shelf of a cliff. But if it were too hard, the boy had no scruples whatever against using the great body of the ox as a matress.

They would start together in the dawn; and the air stirred their blood like wine. The people, harnessing for the seal hunts, would see them start away; and the sight always made them utter little wondering grunts and whisper together.

Nenook took a boyish delight in mystifying these good people. He himself wasn't in the least mystified. It was natural to him to run through the valleys beside a lumbering ox. It was natural to him to learn to steal like a shadow over the rocks in search of game, or to trace a polar bear to its lair, or laugh at the wolf pack from a cliff top.

They would run until the boy was tired, and that might be anywhere from ten to twenty miles. Running, for his smooth muscles, took no more effort than walking. There were no cliffs that these companions did not visit, no caverns they did not explore, no steppes that they did not traverse.

They knew the hills as the wolves

knew them. The seal had no more intimate knowledge of the shore than they. They knew the swamps and lakes as the geese knew them. And all the time the boy was growing lither and more graceful and swifter of limb; and the bull was growing heavier and craftier and stronger. And when tired the boy would climb on his broad back, and half go to sleep while the ox loped back with him to the settlement.

But Nenook had enough sense of responsibility to the tribe to learn to be a hunter. They had fed him, in his babyhood, and he must pay the debt. By now he had learned to steal like a wolf upon a flock of geese and strike to the right and left before they could get on their wings; or lie still as a figure of stone above the stream and strike down like a whiplash when a salmon passed beneath.

But he did not permit the other boys of the tribe to learn hunting secrets that he did not know. He would go to the ice floe with the men, and with a little practice he could hurl a harpoon more swiftly, and more accurately, than any Innuit.

Almost before he knew it, he was the best hunter in the tribe. He was still a slender boy; but the craft of hunting came as naturally to him as running or sleeping. What other Innuits had to learn by constant practice, he knew by instinct. He could track a bear where the others could see but a naked stone. He knew just how to operate a long-tailed harpoon, ingeniously equipped with a bladder to wear out the struggling seal and hold him up after death. He could kill more birds with his hands, or with swift pebbles, than could the other Innuits with their darts. And he was a master with the rib-bow—the most deadly weapon the Eskimo possesses.

"You must learn the use of all weapons," his father told him. "Sometime you may meet the Red People, and unless you are swift of limb and strong of arm, the women will never hear you come singing back again."

All his life, so it seemed, Nenook had heard of the Red People. They were the Indians that lived to the south, against whom the Innuits had been at eternal war. The two peoples had a traditional hatred for each other; and when they met on the salmon streams or the caribou trails, they always fought to the death.

The Innuits tried hard not to meet them. The Red People always outnumbered them, three or four to one; so as a rule they contented themselves by praying to the *tornac* to send death and starvation upon them. But the Red People lived in more favorable regions to the south, and always they seemed to increase as the Innuits died.

"But why can we not go and kill them one by one," Nenook would ask. "Are we children—or babies—or simply puffins on the rocks? Must we submit to murder until there are none of us left?"

But the older men would laugh at him a little, and remind him he was but a child. Only his father, the strong heart of the tribe, agreed with him. Yet the others did not like to be reproached on this point. The very name of the Red People filled them with dread.

"Wait till you are as old as we, Nenook, and you will see," they said. "We cannot battle them. They are too many."

But Nenook did not know what the words "too many" meant. He knew enough of the wild to realize that any advantage can be overcome by stealth and planning. And he always raged at the sight of his fellow tribesmen standing in little groups and gazing with frightened eyes and pale faces to the south.

He did not know the runners had reported that a tribe of the Red People were migrating north, with the intention of driving the Innuits from their caribou trails beside the Lower River.

IV

THE WILDERNESS is a book of knowledge with an infinite number of pages, and the more of them Nenook turned over, the more amazed he was at the number that remained.

Every day he learned new lessons of the valleys and hills and waters. The wild things grew accustomed to the sight of him, loping along beside the ox, or else riding on the broad back, and they began to regard him as simply a member of the wilderness clan.

Even the polar bear, great white creature that is one of the nobility if not the king himself of the wild places, regarded him with some measure of tolerance. Nenook had no fear of him; and he pretended to have no fear of Nenook. But nevertheless, somewhere in the back part of his small-sized brain, he was perfectly aware that if it came down to cases, Nenook was his master.

The wolves pursued him only once. There was quite a pack of them,—a half-dozen rangy, gaunt, savage creatures who were accustomed to having men and beasts flee from their path. The boy and the musk-ox ran speedily awhile, and the wolves loped joyfully along on the trail behind. But all at once their prey turned and faced them.

Kayak handled two of the pack. He caught one of them on his horns, and the thing that came down looked more like a rag than a wolf. The other he struck with his forefeet, and churned back and forth.

Nenook's attack had been somewhat different. First he had thrown his harpoon; and one of the gray crowd had been impaled and fastened to the earth like a bird on a thorn. Then before the others could rush or attack, he had driven in two arrows from his rib-bow.

The last wolf leaped aside just in time. The others had died so suddenly and swiftly that they had not even had time to howl. And the only sound he heard as he fled away was a musk-ox bawling his triumph, and a lean Innuit boy hurling savage, laughing taunts at him as he danced among the fallen.

Sometimes the musk-ox went with Nenook on the hunt, and sometimes, while Kayak grazed, they took different trails. Sometimes the two would have sealing parties beside the ice floes, for Kayak had been trained to carry a bleeding seal on his broad back just as swiftly and easily as the dogs could transport it on a sledge. They more than paid for the food and raiment Nenook procured from the tribe.

Nenook learned the secret habits of all the wild creatures. No man in the North knew more of the caribou runs than he. They have certain lanes and passes that they take through the dreary, snow-swept land, and they can usually be counted on to return, year after year. If an Innuit once learns these passes, he knows just where to wait for his winter store of meat.

Every year, in the late summer, they would encounter the musk-ox herds, and day after day Kayak would wander with his breed. At such times his master either hunted at the edge of the herds, or else remained with his tribe. When the breeding season was past, however, Kayak was always content to go back to the old happy life of roaming and hunting with his master.

As yet Nenook had never encountered the Red People; but he had heard enough of them to hate them beyond anything in the world. He did not hate the wolves that hunted him, or the polar bears, or any of the remorseless creatures of the wild.

But these Red People—they did not kill for meat. They murdered for spite. It was their pleasure to catch various Innuits far from their tribe and kill them in terrible ways. Nenook's eyes would light and his strong hands would clench at the tales his people told of them. And he could never understand why they did not take their rib-bows and their harpoons and settle the matter, once for all.

But the time was to come when Nenook should have a personal debt to pay to the Red People. And that was the first great war of Nenook's life.

He had been gone from the encampment a full week. He had been on one of his long, wandering expeditions with Kayak, and all at once he had remembered the smell of the oil lamps and the drone of his father's voice as he sat about a pot of blubber and told ghost stories.

He was not so inured to the wild but that he occasionally suffered from homesickness. And all at once he had sprung up from a bed of moss and loped off homeward. The musk-ox sprang up and followed him.

They ran in silence, mile after mile. And at last they reached the settlement.

The people called to him as ever as he passed their huts; but their voices hardly seemed the same. They had a

hesitant, strained quality that he was at a loss to understand. Usually they flung good-natured gibes at him, but to-night no one laughed at all. Of course some sorrow had come over the village. But yet the lamps were burning brightly, as in times of plenty; and there was no evidence of plague or disaster. They acted as if it concerned him, too.

He drew up to a walk; and it was a queer thing to see him traversing the stretch of beach with bowed head and puzzling eyes, and the hulking ox trailing at his heels.

"What is it?" he asked the first man he saw. "What has happened?"

But the man evaded him and turned his back. Nenook was more bewildered than ever. Then he saw his older brother waiting at the door of the hut.

The man was standing with bowed head, and the customary smile was gone from his lips. His eyes seemed dark, too, and strange.

"What is it?" Nenook demanded. "What has happened, Brother? The people all act so strange."

"You are a wicked son of beasts, or you would have been here to learn," the brother answered. "Tweegock is dead."

For a moment Nenook could not believe that he would never hear his father's droning voice again. Then the tears came. He flung himself down on the bed of skins, weeping inconsolably and miserably. He had not even been in the hut to watch the spirit depart to the realm of the Arsissut!

"And how did he die?" Nenook asked at last. "Did the ice break, or was it the walrus or the wolves or sickness?"

For a long moment, the older brother did not reply. Nenook looked up from the pile of skins. And at once he was on his feet. For the man had turned his back to him and was gazing soberly out the door of the hut. He seemed oddly embarrassed too.

"How did he die?" Nenook demanded again. "Tell me, my brother! If it was the wolves, I will trace them down—one after another—"

All at once the brother turned and spoke with odd, strained tones. "It was not the wolves," he replied. "It was not sickness—or the walrus—or the ice. He was bird snaring in the south."

"The south—" Nenook echoed. His heart seemed to catch fire within him, and he grasped his brother's arms with his strong hands. "Tell me! Was it the Red People?"

The other slowly nodded. "There is a tribe of them—one hundred or more—come up the Lower River, and a dozen of their men came upon him at once. They killed him, and left him lying by the sea."

V

THE BOY WHO WENT from tent to tent and asked that the full-grown men gather with him in the council tent scarcely seemed the same long-haired forest creature that had come loping down into the encampment in the twilight.

All at once he seemed more like a man than a boy. The lines of his face were like black slashes made by a knife; and the placid dark eyes of the Innuits do not usually have such fire in them as burned out of his. The men came, wondering.

They stood in a little group in the tent, and Nenook's older brother talked to them. "This wild son of my father that has come back wants us to go to war," he said. "He has called us cowards, and children and women. He wants us to take our spears and go down into the south—and avenge my father."

The men shuffled and grunted together, but for a while none of them spoke.

"It is useless," the oldest man among them said at last. "What can a handful of us do against a hundred? Our men must stay away from the south. Tweegock went where the wisest of us advised him not to go, and he died. There is nothing that we can do."

Nenook jumped up and down with rage. "Are you women?" he demanded. "Are you not the men who kill the walrus and track the wolf? Bah, even the polar bear would do more than you! Kill his mate, and he will follow you to the hut! Would you sit still and have our men killed one by one?"

"You are just a boy," they told him patiently. "We are men, and we

know we cannot fight against the wind and sea; neither can we combat one hundred to our two-score. You are a boy, and your *tornac* is a demon."

"Men!" Nenook sneered. "If you are men, let me be a beast!" No one can be more scathing than the savage people when they wish; and Nenook's tongue was like a lash. "Even *Nenook*, for whom I was named, would not sit still in his lair and let his breed be slain! Bah! Go back to your women."

They filed away, and for a long time the boy sat beside the lamp. His face worked, his hands clenched and his heart was almost ready to break open with fury and hatred. He trembled as if the cold was on him.

The tribe was at least a score or two against one hundred; and yet the men were afraid even to attempt vengeance. He was only one against a hundred, and he had not yet got his growth.

Yet he had learned the value of craft. He knew what cunning and forethought might do against even tremendous odds. The lessons that he had learned in the wilderness stood him in good stead. And all at once he sprang up.

His brother had been watching him from the doorway; and presently they were face to face. He hardly knew his younger brother. The passion and the madness were gone from him; and he was more like one of the wild creatures on the track of its prey. He seemed singularly lithe and calm, and he moved with peculiar, stealthy grace. His eyes were filled with white light.

The older man fell back a pace. "*Kina?*" he exclaimed. "What is it? You are not a man child, but a wolf!"

Nenook laughed softly, but his older brother did not meet his eyes. "Give me the wolf's strength—just for a single night!" he replied. He laughed again, an odd sound that filled the hut like the chortle of a goblin. "Mark my words, brother. And now tell me—why are the Red People camping by the river?"

His brother did not understand at first, and Nenook had to repeat the question.

"They are waiting for the caribou," the man replied.

It was just as Nenook had thought. He remembered perfectly the Lower River, and he knew that a certain great herd of caribou, out of the waste lands to the west, always followed the source of its water on their southern migrations. The Red People were simply waiting for them to come so as to procure a winter store of meat. The caribou wander in vast, shadowy herds and comprise the Innuits' chief source of meat.

"And what if they did not come?" Nenook whispered. His lips curled, and his brother could see his white teeth.

"But they always do come. They will be there within a day or two at most. You remember, Nenook! The herd comes through the We-we Pass, where the Lower River circles through the narrow gap in the mountains, and from thence they follow the River."

"But if they should not come—the Red People would die!"

"Yes—many would die, and the few that remained would have to move their quarters. It grows late, and it would be a mighty task before the snow comes. But the caribou will be upon them soon. They are due now; and never are they more than five days late."

"And the We-we Pass is over the rocky hills—a trail that no man may go in the cycle of the moon!" Nenook laughed again, savagely, and all at once he seized a seal harpoon from the rack that held it above his head. It had the thong and the inflated bladder at the end.

"Listen, brother," Nenook went on. "Will you help me—just for a single day? I cannot linger to do this thing myself. Perhaps I am too late now. You are skilled with berry juice and brush. I want you to send a message."

The message was to be, of course, a series of pictures; some of the tribesmen possessed considerable skill at drawing these. "There is no joy in vengeance that is not recognized as vengeance," Nenook whispered. "The Red People must know who it is that strikes, or the blow is wasted. That is the message you must send. You must come in the night and throw the spear into their settlement. They will know it is an Innuit spear. And on the

bladder you will portray the murder that they did—beside the sea. And then, with your own skill, let them know that they will pay for it with their own blood!"

The boy began to dance up and down in his hatred. "Every man and every woman and every child. Their dogs will die in the snow. Their lamps will burn out. That is what you must tell them in the letter, brother—and I go!"

Going to his own hut Nenook hacked out a great piece of frozen seal blubber, and swung it in a bird-skin sack over his shoulder. He took his rib-bow, too, and his harpoon. In a moment more he was standing beside the musk-ox, his dark face to the west.

"Where do you go?" his brother asked. "Remember—you are still a boy."

"My manhood has come upon me in a day—but I did not find it here," Nenook answered. "I go to make war on the Red People—just Kayak and I."

The first part of the journey was no trial whatever to the strength of either of them. They were used to running out across the valley; and even the wild creatures that saw them come gave them scarcely a second glance.

The boy ran in front, easily, swiftly; and the ox thundered behind. With his short legs and heavy body, the creature seemed to move with great expenditure of energy; but in reality running was an easier task to him than to his master.

Both man and beast were saving their strength. They rested at intervals; for no one knows better than the wild creatures how much time can be gained by an occasional rest. At such times they relaxed utterly. "My great Kayak!" Nenook cried. "Thank my *tornac* for your muscles and your strength."

The night was still young when they came to the hills where the only trails were narrow, winding pathways made by the feet of the wild creatures. These hills seemed quite impassable.

The two halted, and Nenook stroked the great neck. "It is your work from now on, great Kayak!" he said. "Brother, it all depends on you. I cannot run over these hills. Only your sure feet can carry me."

Then he leaped on the broad shoulders, and the tortuous ascent began.

The hills were strange and still in the darkness. They were inexpressibly bleak; and the two seemed to have all their tremendous spaces to themselves. On other night rides they had felt the constant presence of the wild life in the shrubbery and the grass and over them in the air.

But these hills seemed to be absolutely bare of life. There were no puffins on the rocks. There was only silence, and the Northern Lights in the sky, and the shadow of dreary crags.

The Innuits said that only spirits, and evil ones, at that, inhabited these hills. Nenook could readily believe it.

Yet his mount was especially fitted for such a run as this. Its feet were as sure as a mountain goat's, and it had wonderful agility besides its strength. The many miles they had already come did not seem to affect it.

"Kayak!" he urged. "Brave brother! You will win for me yet!"

The beast was choosing its own trail. Nenook lay close to the broad back, lessening wind resistance as much as he could. The moon was out, and its light blended strangely with the flickering bars of the Aurora Borealis.

They were in the high mountains now. They encircled great beds of snow, and they traversed trails so narrow that it seemed no living feet could cling to them, and they skimmed the edges of great gorges full of the moonlight.

The strength of the creature was ebbing now. The eyes were wide; the horns seemed to flash; the nostrils were red. It had been a test of strength that a musk-ox never endured before. Even the reindeer had not the sure feet and the agile body for such a climb. The musk-ox partook of the qualities of the sheep as well as the oxen clan; and tonight his sheeplike traits stood him in good stead.

But the journey was almost over. They were descending now. The dawn was breaking; they could see the gleam of the waters of the Lower River as they flowed through We-we Pass.

And they were none too soon. For the first thing they saw, when the dawn came out, was what seemed a slow-moving wall of gray shadow advancing down the long valley. The caribou herds were almost to the pass.

Nenook knew his ground. He had been here before, only on previous occasions he had come the long way of the river. The caribou, to follow the river down to the sea, were obliged to traverse a narrow pass scarcely sixty feet wide.

If turned aside, the only way they could go was to skirt the edges of the mountains into another valley—a trail that would ultimately take them nearly one hundred miles from the waiting Red People beside the Lower River.

Nenook had planned every step of his campaign. He leaped down from his mount and swiftly went to work to make a fire.

Working with sure, swift hands he collected armfuls of dry lichens, and with these he started a dozen other fires. And he built them all squarely across the narrow pass between the river and the cliff.

The reindeer had paused by now; and Nenook knew that his only hope of sweeping them about the shoulder of the mountain and into the next valley was to encircle them before his fires burned out. They would never try to break through the wall of fire so long as an open road lay to the left or right. Only one thing more remained to do.

The principal fuel that the Innuits use is seal blubber. It burns with remarkable fierceness and heat, either in lamps or in an open fire. The lichens that made a flaming wall across the pass would burn out in a very few minutes. So just as he had planned to do, Nenook took his lump of seal blubber from his shoulder bag and swiftly cut it into a dozen smaller pieces.

He flung one upon each of the fires; and once more he sprang upon the back of his mount. "Just a little way more," he cried. "Be brave, my Kayak! Just a little way more, and the thing is done."

The beast was fatigued beyond words to tell; but he responded bravely to the voice. They made a wide circle and got in the rear of the herds.

Then raising his voice in wild shout, Nenook charged down upon them. He waved his coat in the air. He was man, and these caribou knew enough of men to fear them worse than any living thing. They broke into a stampede.

But they dared not try to cross the wall of fire. They hesitated, milled for an instant like logs in a stream, then poured about the shoulders of the pass to the valley to the right. And the caribou herds, once stampeded, never retrace their steps.

Two hours later the boy and the musk-ox were still resting beside the river. Kayak stood with lowered head; and the slender Innuit lad sat just at his feet. Far away they watched the dim gray shadow that they knew was the caribou herds plodding steadily down a strange and alien valley. They would never come back now; and the Red People beside the Lower River would wait for them in vain.

All at once Nenook got on his feet, shivering with his hate. "It was two against a thousand—and we turned them," he exulted. "It was one Innuit against one hundred Red People—and I have had vengeance on them. My people would not go with me, so I struck alone. The red murderers will wait in vain beside the river for their winter store of meat. And it won't come! Because of us, Kayak, it won't come.

"Many will die before the winter is out. They will have to change their hunting grounds, and where can they go? They will know the snow, and the starving time, and the ice will come before they can gather any other winter food."

He grew quiet, and his dark eyes scanned the waste of Barren Lands about them. He put his brown arm

"We will be wild things, you and I—from henceforth," he said. "Perhaps we will return in the winter months, but from henceforth you and I will hunt alone. Yesterday I was a boy, and last night I was a man, and tonight I am neither one—but a creature of the wild instead. The people would not come with me and fight my battle; so I wll not go to them again.

"We will live in the wild, you and I, just as it was spoken that I should do. I have come into my heritage at last."

THE EYRIE

WE ARE EXTREMELY PLEASED at the many fine responses we have been receiving from our readers everywhere. Your comments and opinions are always appreciated, and where possible we try to incorporate reader requests in our magazine. To those many readers who have written in suggesting we begin printing new stories, we can only say "Look at this issue!" New stories by some of WEIRDOM'S finest writers! As you can see, your letters do have results! If space permitted, we would print more of the letters we receive between each issue; however, we do try to make a representative selection, and to print as much of each letter as space allows. Many readers are still writing in asking if subscriptions are available, and to them we must answer "not yet." When subscriptions are available, the fact will be announced in this column. In the meantime, let your newsdealer know your interest in the magazine — and don't hesitate to become vociferous if he doesn't show the magazine! Keep after him — that's another way to help WEIRD TALES become a successful venture. And continue writing — this is your column, the same column that first saw Ray Bradbury and H. P. Lovecraft's letters before they became famous writers. Good reading!

Needs Back Issues

One of the many useful services this column can perform is to pass the word among our readers when someone needs back issues or further information relating to stories which appear or have appeared in WEIRD TALES. Mr. Frederick Shroyer, literary editor for the Los Angeles Herald Examiner, *long a collector of* WEIRD TALES, *begins this service to our readers. He writes:* "I have many back issues of WEIRD TALES from 1924 to the present, and though I have several duplicates for trading purposes, there are some issues which I am missing: Specifically, the April, May, September and October 1923 issues, and the January and March, 1926 issues. If any WT readers have copies of these issues which they can part with, I would like to hear from them.

"I hope—believe—that readership of WT will grow, because I *know* that we are entering a new Romantic Age. A year ago I offered a seminar in the Gothic Mode in Literature at Cal. State University of L.A., where I am professor of English, and over fifty people tried to enroll in a class limited to fifteen! Moreover, the best selling status of Gothic romances, and of 'factual' books concerned with the supernatural and mysticism in general shows the direction of the present literary and philosophic currents.

"I thank you for noting my old WT needs in your Eyrie Column. It has become something of an obsession with me to complete my file. . ."

We're only too glad to help, Mr. Shroyer. If any of our readers have copies or know of the whereabouts of copies of the issues he needs, you may write to him at 362 Coral View, Monterey Park, Calif. 91754.

Lin Carter Writes In

From the famed author and long time WT friend, Lin Carter, we read: ". . .Let me say that your decision to revive the greatest pulp magazine of all time is a wonderful gift to all of us who revere its memory and bemoan its passing as the end of an era. I sincerely wish you and the magazine the best,

best luck and success, and will do anything I can to help keep the magazine going. I have been tirelessly talking it up and telling people to hunt for it. . .and buy it whenever I see it for sale. And, just recently, my wife and I have taken to asking for it every time we pass a newsstand, and tell the dealer all about it, suggesting he order it. One weekend of. . .shopping we did this at thirteen different newsstands in the Times Square and Herald Square and Fourteenth Street areas. A young friend of ours, Scott Bizar, has taken to doing the same thing on our prompting. It may not do much good; but it sure can't hurt." *We thank Lin Carter for his comments—and hope other of our readers will continue to "talk up"* WT.

Reprint Suggestions

Canadian reader W. Robert Gibson, belatedly gets in his comments on No. 1 of our new series: "For me, Hodgson's *A Tropical Horror* comes out on top and despite my liking for Simon Ark—*Funeral in the Fog* is bottom. It rates zero or minus one from sheer lack of fantasy content, despite good potential. Suggestions for reprints:

"P. R. Chalmers had a long run of short fantasies in PUNCH during the twenties. Much enjoyed, but mostly dainty. Maurice Richardson's, in LILLIPUT have grim enough touches to their humor, but I believe the ones about Engelbrecht, the dwarf surrealist boxer, were published in a book. Ever hear of the P.R.S. BULLETIN (or Journal or Annual, whatever)? During the course of World War II, the Paint Research Station (London, England), employed a number of science fiction and fantasy fans. They produced a one-copy periodical, and later a six and eight copy edition that travelled by mail from subscriber to subscriber. All fiction, and *some* of it of reasonably high quality or better.

"I saw three or four copies while hospitalized in Italy. Its issues, if any survive, must be among the rarest all-fiction 'publications' in the world, but it would be too bad if any gems among the straw should be lost. . .Back to WEIRD TALES. The Finlay cover was a pleasant surprise. I hadn't thought it was still possible to have any. Finlay did beautiful work without having to cultivate grotesquery. In all his WT work I only once caught a goof. (Illustration for a couplet from *A Wine of Wizardry.*) I remember the lines as: *'The blue-eyed vampire, sated at her feast/Smiles bloodily against the rising moon.'* The moon was full, and it was touching the horizon—so that vampire must have worked fast. Which has nothing to do with the beauty and technical finish of Finlay's work."

Lovecraft Club

A Lovecraft scholar, Dirk W. Mosig, Assistant Professor at Georgia Southwestern College writes: "We have at our college an active Miskatonic Literary Circle with over 50 members interested in Lovecraft and weird fiction in general. . .The best out of the two revived issues was undoubtedly the final condensed version of Lovecraft's *Supernatural Horror in Literature.* I hope you will reprint most of the Lovecraft tales appearing in WEIRD TALES, accompanied by their original illustrations. The few WT from the thirties with Lovecraft material in my collection are among my most cherished finds. I also hope you will publish more new material. An author I would particularly like to see represented in your pages is Joseph Payne Brennan. Also some of Brian Lumley's work should see print."

Chilled Reader

Philip D. Novelli in Far Rockaway, Queens, N.Y. tells us: "I was absolutely chilled to the marrow with joy to suddenly come upon the Summer edition of WEIRD TALES. The issue was breathtaking and only one thing perturbs me since I purchased this and now your Winter edition: The fact that your publication would only be quarterly. This disappointed me greatly for I had hoped for (alas!) monthly or at the very least bi-monthly.

"As for the stories in your magazine; well, what could be said when the likes of R.E. Howard, H.P. Lovecraft, Derleth, Smith, Carter, Etc. and countless other immortals of the fantasy genre, to name a few, adorn its pages!

"I was born in June, 1955, so I never had the chance to get a hold of any of your vintage copies. Now that

you have returned, I assure you that you have my full support, small that it is.

"I sincerely hope that your enterprise prospers and then maybe we can have monthly—bi-monthly? Viva La WEIRD TALES!"

Attention Getter

In Purdin, Missouri, Bruce Moffitt wants us to know that: "I appreciate the introductory notes before each story. Being 40 years of age, I didn't know much about Wm. Hope Hodgson, but now I can refer to WT and convince anyone that I'm a Hodgson expert. I enjoy the reprints as much as anything current. Of course, to achieve contemporary status you will have to get some modern stories for the younger people to identify with. But watch yourself!

"Probably the Bill Edwards cover gives the devil too fine a set of choppers, but it certainly grabs your attention. I wonder how many thousands of us have had nightmares just like this cover? Great.

"The best tale in the Winter WT is Robert W. Chambers' 'The Splendid Apparition'. I like the idea of a good chuckle in each issue, and you more than achieved this.

"Before I forget, I appreciate your regular pulp format (non-digest) and also your letters column, which some others would do well to try. Best wishes for 1974!"

Academia Note

From Richmond, Virginia, M. Thomas Inge, professor in the English Department at Virginia Commonwealth University states: "I was pleasantly surprised to see the Winter, 1973 issue of the recently revived WEIRD TALES on the newsstands today. One of my first publications in a nationally distributed periodical was a letter contributed to "The Eyrie" columns exactly 20 years ago (in the issue for November, 1953), so I have a special fondness for WEIRD TALES.

"I especially wish to approve of your plan to rescue and recognize neglected masters of supernatural fiction from the nineteenth century and would like to bring about some scholarly recognition of your effort. I write a review-essay on criticism and scholarship in nineteenth-century fiction, . . . and will be happy to review your biography of William Hope Hodgson and take note of the reprinted fiction.

"The time is long overdue for the academy to take note of the importance of popular literature to the nation's culture. Best wishes for success in your endeavor."

Orchids From Author

Author and poet Joseph Payne Brennan enthuses: "The reappearance of WEIRD TALES excites me tremendously. Never, in my fifty years plus, have I missed any publication as much as I've missed WEIRD TALES since its unfortunate termination in 1954. As you might recall, my first Arkham book, *Nine Horrors and A Dream*, was dedicated 'To the Memory of Weird Tales, 1923—1954' Incidentally, my *new* Arkham House book, *Stories of Darkness and Dread*, is just out. I've thoroughly enjoyed the biography of William Hope Hodgson—as well as contributions—both stories and verse—too numerous to list. My greatest hope is that you will go on from here."

Notes Enjoyed

Richard Pacello of Tomo River, N.J., is another pleased at the reappearance of WT: "I am certainly happy that you have revived this great magazine of the macabre. My own two favorites from the golden age are H. P. Lovecraft and Clark Ashton Smith. They were both highly original story tellers and marvelous stylists. I would like to see more pastiches of these two giants, such as Lin Carter's *The Double Tower* in the Winter issue (based, in this case, on Smith's notes). The best tale in the Winter issue was Robert W. Chambers' *The Splendid Apparition*, both for its humor and its imagination. The Hodgson tale was also very good and was possibly inspired by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Speckled Band*.

"The other stories were not very impressive, however, and were mainly of historical interest only. Speaking of history, I do enjoy the introductory notes to the stories. They are sometimes more fascinating than the stories themselves."

Teaches Teachers

And from Coon Rapids, Minnesota, Christopher W. Hawes tells us: "I am very pleased with your revival of WEIRD TALES. I am too young (20 years old and a college junior) to have been a reader of the original WEIRD TALES, but have read so much about the magazine that I was absolutely out of my mind with joy when I saw it on the rack.

"I enjoy reading bizarre fiction. . . . The advent of WEIRD TALES is a literal answer to my prayers.

"I have even informed several English instructors at the junior college I had attended, especially the ones that teach 'Fantasy, Fable and Science Fiction' and 'The Occult in Literature' classes. I was amazed to discover that one of the instructors had never even heard of WEIRD TALES. . .

"Let me thank you for fulfilling a dream—to actually have WEIRD TALES back among us."

Cover Suggestions

Andrew D. Smith of Penn Hills, Pennsylvania, thinks: "There are some physical things which could stand improvement. I think the blurb on the cover saying 'The Occult, The Supernatural, The Bizarre' is a bit much. It absolutely destroyed the look of the cover. The name WEIRD TALES speaks for itself. Just like POPULAR SCIENCE or BETTER HOMES AND GARDENS. It rather 'junks up' an otherwise attractive cover.

"Also, your use of type of the story titles is very dull. In the old WT they used a very decorative type which, in my own opinion, added a more 'weird' flavor to the stories. This would be considerably more attractive than dull sans-serif type. Besides it is very much back in vogue.

"Lastly, and I think you know this, more artwork would be much appreciated. Good artwork. Don't make the mistake of COVEN 13 and some of the art in the other new horror magazines. . . Perhaps some of the old WT artists could be persuaded to return, like Lee Brown Coye and Frank Upatel. But, if it comes to the point of using poorer quality art, I would rather see none at all, or the few reprints you have been using.

"Other than that, you have my full support. I sincerely hope you are not forced to fold again or face very limited readership like WITCHCRAFT AND SCORCERY. . .There are several writers around today who could easily help WT attain a new golden era."

Weird Tales Fascinates

David A. Fortunato, of Ossining, N.Y., wants us to know that: "I wasn't around in the '30's and '40's when WEIRD TALES became famous, but I have picked up some back issues from dealers, and find WEIRD TALES the most fascinating magazine of all. . . Please try and make it a bi-monthly at least."

Reprint Request

Darrell Schweitzer of Strafford, Pennsylvania, wants: "some of Frank Owen's Chinese fantasies, and. . . uncollected stories by Lord Dunsany . . . I am sure there are many things of his in smaller magazines that are worth reviving. I'd also like to see some of Lin Carter's Simrana stories."

Strange Discovery

W.R. Gibson of Calgary, Alberta, Canada, discovered us when: "Recently I was checking a 'Carnaki' 'Detective by Gaslight' story in MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY MAGAZINE to see if it was a fantasy, and saw that stories of fantasy were being reprinted in WEIRD TALES Magazine."

(Glad you found us, Mr. Gibson—now that you know about us, don't hesitate to spread the word there in Calgary—maybe we can have a Calgary stampede of our own!)

True Ghost Story

Miriam Allen deFord of San Francisco, writes some fascinating background on her story *Ghostly Hands*, which appeared with her new story *The Cats of Rome*, in our last issue: "Believe me, *Ghostly Hands* is a greater mystery than you know! I never heard of TALES OF MAGIC AND MYSTERY. The story was originally called

The Neatness of Ann Rutledge (they chopped off the final "e"), and it appeared in a defunct magazine called the WESTMINSTER sometime about 1924. TALES OF MAGIC AND MYSTERY apparently just swiped it without notifying them or me—or paying for it. They changed Ann's name to Jane—I'd forgotten about Lincoln's first love. The idea of the self-smoothed grave I used later in a much better story, *Old Man Morgan's Grave*, which was published some years later."

Likes Hodgson

J. Eric Holmes, M.D., Los Angeles, writes: "Certainly those of us who remember the magazine from the 'good old days' are more than delighted to see it back. In particular I want to thank you for printing your articles on William Hope Hodgson. This is a fascinating series on an author whose works—especially *The Boats of the Glen Carrig* and *Carnacki, the Ghost Finder*,—are among my all-time favorites. I have greatly enjoyed his biography, and hope you will make similar articles by yourself or others a regular feature of the magazine."

Reprints Suit Him

From England, W. J. Godrich comments: "As far as I am concerned, if you can continue to reprint from magazines other than WEIRD TALES, stories of such quality and obscurity as to make them almost unobtainable to the average person, you can keep the stories by new writers. With a very few exceptions, such as those authors who have appeared in Arkham House anthologies over the last 15 years (and many of these are not new writers but merely the older ones giving us new stories), the stories I have read in the genre in countless new magazines over this period haven't been worth the paper they were printed on.

"Personally, I hope that you will only use a few new writers per issue, which would be reasonable, and concentrate on making available the work by such master writers as W. H. Hodgson, and many of the others you gave us, and other writers of proven quality, but from the difficult and obscurer magazines "

Smith Pastiches

Tim Salmen, Naperville, Ill., writes "A criticism about your Fall issue. Although Lin Carter is really quite a sword and sorcery writer and a truly erudite editor and informant on the subject of fantasy (as evidenced by his fascinating series in the Ballantine Adulty Fantasy group), I would argue about his capability in writing the stuff, and especially in finishing it. His posthumous collaboration with Clark Ashton Smith got a little unwieldy at times, and at other times downright impossible! Of course, I can't be sure that this was not specifically begun by Smith himself, but judging from Smith's past works, I would just say that it arose from over-zealous attempts to imitate Smith's style."

Long Time Fan

Mrs. Dennis Manasco of Tulsa, Oklahoma, writes to let us know that: "I am an old fan of WEIRD TALES. My greatest joy as a teenager in the latter 30's was to haunt the large old used book/ magazine stores in our city and get back issues of WT. They sold for a dime (all other pulps were 5¢) and they would give you 5¢ back. However, I never resold my issues. I still have them all. As I got older and more affluent, I purchased them new on the newsstands but still kept a lookout for old issues at the used magazine stores.

"I hope WT is back to stay. . ."

Finding Hodgson

A question from Ian Leonard Robertson, Silverhill, Alabama: "You probably do not recall, but I met Sam Moskowitz some time ago in New York City, under the aegis of my father-in-law John W. Campbell. A question. Where can I find copies of Hodgson's (one of my great favorites) 'Carnacki' and 'Deep Waters'? They all seem to be out of print, as is 'Glen Carrig.' "

(Deep Waters may still be in print from Arkham House, Sauk City, Wisconsin at $5.00. The Nightland *and* The Boats of the "Glen Carrig" *are currently in print in paperback from Ballantine. Carnacki is in print in paperback in England. British and Canadian dealers could probably get you a copy.)*

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