THE OCCULT — THE SUPERNATURAL — THE BIZARRE

Weird Tales

47961

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WINTER

A. MERRITT
ALBERT PAGE MITCHELL
AUGUST DERLETH
ROBERT W. CHAMBERS
LIN CARTER
MARK SCHORER
H. P. LOVECRAFT
WILLIAM HOPE HODGSON

50th Anniversary Year

IN THE BEGINNING . . .

Weird Tales enjoys a literary history that can compare favorably with the finest of American magazines and many illustrious names appear in that history—H. P. Lovecraft, A. Merritt, Tennessee Williams (discovered by this magazine), Robert E. Howard, Clark Ashton Smith, Ray Bradbury—to name only a very few.

Ironically, the man who literally conceived and created the magazine, who sacrificed his financial stability to keep it alive, was until recently just about forgotten. That man was the original publisher, Jacob Clark Henneberger. The editor had several interviews with Mr. Henneberger before his death as well as a number of telephone conversations.

One letter I have of his contains some fascinating material: "Sometime during the year 1922," he wrote, "I happened upon a copy of a small, humorous (supposedly) magazine entitled HOME BREW. H. P. Lovecraft had been running a series of yarns therein whose style and craft were, in the writer's opinion, the equal of Edgar Allan Poe. From this magazine I learned that Lovecraft was residing in Brooklyn.

"Meeting Lovecraft in Brooklyn was a rare experience, despite the fact that he was weighted down with marriage problems. He was married to a beautiful White Russian girl and it seems his work of reviewing and an occasional editing job did not provide the means to support her as she desired. The union was short lived. I tried in vain to get Lovecraft to come to Chicago but he was tradition bound to New England, especially Rhode Island in which state I called on him a few months before his death.

"The first story I bought from Howard was *The Rats in the Walls*, and I think it was one of his finest. However, I sat down with Howard and Harry Houdini one evening while Houdini recounted an experience in Egypt or rather the Giza plateau. A few weeks later Howard submitted the manuscript *Imprisoned with the Pharoahs*. It was published at my insistence, although Baird did not like it and Wright was not then at the helm of WEIRD TALES.

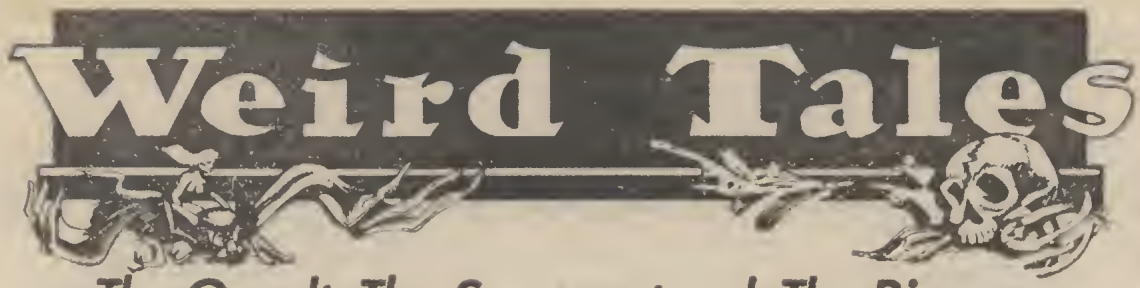
"During this time I was publishing COLLEGE HUMOR and THE MAGAZINE OF FUN, successfully . . . I never made any money with Weird Tales but the few headaches it caused were compensated by the association with men like William Sprenger (business manager), Farnsworth Wright, Frank Belknap Long, Seabury Quinn (who ran an undertakers magazine) and many prominent men like Harry Houdini who swore by the publication.

"Farnsworth Wright was the ideal editor. He combined a rare wit with a thorough knowledge of literature and understanding of writers, especially those in whom he sensed a promise."

Problems with the printer, more than lack of circulation, plunged the early WEIRD TALES into debt. In order to pay it off, Henneberger sold his profitable DETECTIVE TALES. He made an arrangement with the new printer to guarantee Wright's salary and that of the business manager Sprenger. He was to share in any profits, but there never were any. Until circumstances forced the sale of the magazine in 1939, he had made possible the circumstances that were to bring to light the scores of fine authors who have graced the pages of WEIRD TALES.

When Henneberger died November 14, 1969, there was little tribute paid to his contribution to the cause of fantasy fiction. Let this serve as his tribute and memorial.

SAM MOSKOWITZ
Editor



The Occult • The Supernatural • The Bizarre

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CONTENTS

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WHAT WOULD THE readers of this magazine say if they were told that there was an author of science fiction, fantasy and the supernatural who wrote the earliest known story utilizing a theory suitable for faster-than-light travel in 1874; wrote a time machine story in 1881, seven years before the earliest version by H. G. Wells; presented the first fiction concept of a neo-electronic thinking computor in 1879; published the premier science fiction of breaking matter into energy and reforming into matter again; preceded H. G. Wells by 16 years on the invisible man, and was among the first on record to use the concept of freezing a person by mechanical process so they could be revived in the future?

Startling? Even more startling is the fact that his stories were widely syndicated in the United States and appeared in Europe, that for 50 years he was editor of possibly the greatest newspaper in the United States, and that on his retirement he was honored by a dinner attended by the 650 leading newspaper editors of the east coast.

The man was Edward Page Mitchell and the facts about him, previously never published, were researched by the editor of this magazine and are to appear in a book from Doubleday titled *The Crystal Man, Landmark Science Fiction,* edited with a biographical per spective by Sam Moskowitz. Because of the importance of this discovery, it has been one of the most carefully kept publishing secrets in science fiction. Its appearance radically alters the history of fantasy fiction in the United States and may possibly reveal a previously unknown influence on H. G. Wells.

WEIRD TALES has received permission from Doubleday to present one of Mitchell's most engaging stories, *The Balloon Tree* prior to book publication. It is probably the closest thing to a friendly alien story to appear in science fiction and the mood of the story makes it especially suitable for this magazine. There is no question that this story is one of the finest and most literary pieces of science fiction of the nineteenth century and its re-publication is an event.

The Balloon Tree

By ALBERT PAGE MITCHELL

THE COLONEL SAID:

We rode for several hours straight from the shore toward the heart of the island. The sun was low in the western sky when we left the ship. Neither on the water nor on the land had we felt a breath of air stirring. The glare was upon everything. Over the low range of hills miles away in the interior hung a few copper-colored clouds. "Wind," said Briery. Kilooa shook his head.

Vegetation af all kinds showed the effects of the long continued drought. The eye wandered without relief from the sickly russet of the undergrowth, so dry in places that leaves and stems cracked under the horses' feet, to the yellowish-brown of the thirsty trees that skirted the bridle path. No growing thing was green except the bell-top cactus, fit to flourish in the crater of a living volcano.

Kilooa leaned over in the saddle and tore from one of these plants its top, as big as a California pear and bloated with juice. He crushed the bell in his fist, and, turning, flung into our hot faces a few grateful drops of water.

Then the guide began to talk rapidly in his language of vowels and liquids. Briery translated for my benefit.

The god Lalala loved a woman of the island. He came in the form of fire. She, accustomed to the ordinary temperature of the clime, only shivered before his approaches. Then he wooed her as a shower of rain and won her heart. Kakal was a divinity much more powerful than Lalala, but malicious to the last degree. He also coveted this woman, who was very beautiful. Kakal's importunities were in vain. In spite, he changed her to a

cactus, and rooted her to the ground under the burning sun. The god Lalala was powerless to avert this vengeance but he took up his abode with the cactus woman, still in the form of a rain shower, and never left her, even in the driest seasons. Thus it happens that the bell-top cactus is an unfailing reservoir of pure cool water.

Long after dark we reached the channel of a vanished stream, and Kilooa led us for several miles along its dry bed. We were exceedingly tired when the guide bade us dismount. He tethered the panting horses and then dashed into the dense thicket on the bank. A hundred yards of scrambling, and we came to a poor thatched hut. The savage raised both hands above his head and uttered a musical falsetto, not unlike the yodel peculiar to the Valais. This call brought out the occupant of the hut, upon whom Briery flashed the light of his lantern. It was an old woman, hideous beyond the imagination of a dyspeptic's dream.

"*Omanana gelaal!*" exclaimed Kilooa.

"Hail, holy woman," translated Briery.

Between Kilooa and the holy hag there ensued a long colloquy, respectful on his part, sententious and impatient on hers. Briery listened with eager attention. Several times he clutched my arm, as if unable to repress his anxiety. The woman seemed to be persuaded by Kilooa's arguments, or won by his entreaties. At last she pointed toward the southeast, slowly pronouncing a few words that apparently satisfied my companions.

The direction indicated by the holy woman was still toward the hills, but twenty or thirty degrees to the left of the general course which we had pursued since leaving the shore.

"Push on! Push on!" cried Briery. "We can afford to lose no time."

WE RODE all night. At sunrise there was a pause of hardly ten minutes for the scanty breakfast supplied by our haversacks. Then we were again in the saddle, making our way through a thicket that grew more and more difficult, and under a sun that grew hotter.

"Perhaps," I remarked finally to my taciturn friend, "you have no objection telling me now why two civilized beings and one amiable savage should be plunging through this

infernal jungle, as if they were on an errand of life or death?"

"Yes," said he, "it is best you should know."

Briery produced from an inner breast pocket a letter which had been read and reread until it was worn in the creases. "This," he went on, "is from Professor Quakversuch of the University of Upsala. It reached me at Valparaiso."

Glancing cautiously around, as if he feared that every tree fern in that tropical wilderness was an eavesdropper, or that the hood-like spathes of the giant caladiums overhead were ears waiting to drink in some mighty secret of science, Briery read in a low voice from the letter of the great Swedish botanist:

"You will have in these islands," wrote the professor, "a rare opportunity to investigate certain extraordinary accounts given me years ago by the Jesuit missionary Buteaux concerning the Migratory Tree, the *cereus ragrans* of Jansenius and other speculative physiologists.

"The explorer Spohr claims to have beheld it; but there is reason, as you know, for accepting all of Spohr's statements with caution.

"That is not the case with the assertions of my late valued correspondent, the Jesuit missionary. Father Buteaux was a learned botanist, an accurate observer, and a most pious and conscientious man. He never saw the Migratory Tree; but during the long period of his labors in that part of the world he accumulated, from widely different sources, a mass of testimony as to its existence and habits.

"It is quite inconceivable, my dear Briery, that somewhere in the range of nature there is a vegetable organization as far above the cabbage, let us say, in complexity and potentiality as the ape is above the polyp? Nature is continuous. In all her schemes we find no chasms, no gaps. There may be missing links in our books and classifications and cabinets, but there are none in the organic world. Is not all of lower nature struggling upward to arrive at the point of self-consciousness and volition? In the unceasing process of evolution, differentiation, improvement in special functions, why may not a plant arrive at this point and feel, will, act, in short, possess and exercise the characteristics of the true animal?"

Briery's voice trembled with enthusiasm as he read this.

"I have no doubt," continued Professor Quakversuch, "that if it shall be your great good fortune to encounter a specimen of the Migratory Tree described by Buteaux, you will find that it possesses a well-defined system of real nerves and ganglia, constituting, in fact, the seat of vegetable intelligence. I conjure you to be very thorough in your dissections.

"According to the indications furnished me by the Jesuit, this extraordinary tree should belong to the order of *Cactaceae*. It should be developed only in conditions of extreme heat and dryness. Its roots should be hardly more than rudimentary, affording a precarious attachment to the earth. This attachment it should be able to sever at will, soaring up into the air and away to another place selected by itself, as a bird shifts its habitation. I infer that these migrations are accomplished by means of the property of secreting hydrogen gas, with which it inflates at pleasure a bladder-like organ of highly elastic tissue, thus lifting itself out of the ground and off to a new abode.

"Buteaux added that the Migratory Tree was invariably worshiped by the natives as a supernatural being, and that the mystery thrown by them around its cult was the greatest obstacle in the path of the investigator."

"There!" exclaimed Briery, folding up Professor Quakversuch's letter. "Is not that a quest worthy the risk or sacrifice of life itself!? To add to the recorded facts of of vegetable morphology the proved existance of a tree that wanders, a tree that wills, a tree, perhaps, that thinks—this is glory to be won at any cost! The lamented Decandolle of Geneva—"

"Confound the lamented Decandolle of Geneva!" shouted I, for it was excessively hot, and I felt that we had come on a fool's errand.

IT WAS near sunset on the second day of our journey, when Kilooa, who was riding several rods in advance of us, uttered a quick cry, leaped from

his saddle, and stooped to the ground.

Briery was at his side in an instant. I followed with less agility; my joints were very stiff and I had no scientific enthusiasm to lubricate them. Briery was on his hands and knees, eagerly examining what seemed to be a recent disturbance of the soil. The savage was prostrate, rubbing his forehead in the dust, as if in a religious ecstasy, and warbling the same falsetto notes that we had heard at the holy woman's hut.

"What beast's trail have you struck?" I demanded.

"The trail of no beast," answered Briery, almost angrily. "Do you see this broad round abrasion of the surface, where a heavy weight has rested? Do you see these little troughs in the fresh earth, radiating from the center like the points of a star? They are the scars left by slender roots torn up from their shallow beds. Do you see Kilooa's hysterical performance? I tell you we are on the track of the Sacred Tree. It has been here, and not long ago."

Acting under Briery's excited instructions we continued the hunt on foot. Kilooa started toward the east, I toward the west, and Briery took the southward course.

To cover the ground thoroughly, we agreed to advance in gradually widening zigzags, communicating with each other at intervals by pistol shots. There could have been no more foolish arrangement. In a quarter of an hour I had lost my head and my bearings in a thicket. For another quarter of an hour I discharged my revolver repeatedly, without getting a single response from east or south. I spent the remainder of daylight in a blundering effort to make my way back to the place where the horses were; and then the sun went down, leaving me in sudden darkness, alone in a wilderness of the extent and character of which I had not the faintest idea.

I will spare you the history of my sufferings during the whole of that night, and the next day, and the next night, and another day. When it was dark I wandered about in blind despair, longing for daylight, not daring to sleep or even to stop, and in continual terror of the unknown dangers that surrounded me. In the daytime I longed for night, for the sun scorched its way through the thickest roof that the luxuriant foliage afforded, and drove me nearly mad. The provisions in my haversack were exhausted. My canteen was on my saddle; I should have died of thirst had it not been for the bell-top cactus, which I found twice. But in that horrible experience neither the torture of hunger and thirst nor the torture of heat equaled the misery of the thought that my life was to be sacrificed to the delusion of a crazy botanist, who had dreamed of the impossible.

The impossible?

On the second afternoon, still staggering aimlessly on through the jungle, I lost my last strength and fell to the ground. Despair and indifference had long since given way to an eager desire for the end. I closed my eyes with indescribable relief; the hot sun seemed pleasant on my face as consciousness departed.

Did a beautiful and gentle woman come to me while I lay unconscious, and take my head in her lap, and put her arms around me? Did she press her face to mine and in a whisper bid me have courage? That was the belief that filled my mind when it struggled back for a moment into consciousness; I clutched at the warm, soft arms, and swooned again.

Do not look at each other and smile, gentlemen; in that cruel wilderness, in my helpless condition, I found pity and benignant tenderness. The next time my senses returned I saw that Something *was* bending over me —something majestic if not beautiful, humane if not human, gracious if not woman. The arms that held me and drew me up were moist, and they throbbed with the pulsation of life. There was a faint, sweet odor, like the smell of a woman's perfuned hair. The touch was a caress, the clasp an embrace.

Can I describe its form? No, not with the definiteness that would satisfy the Quakversuches and the Brierys. I saw that the trunk was massive. The branches that lifted me from the ground and held me carefully and gently were flexible and symmetrically disposed. Above my head there was

a wreath of strange foliage, and in the midst of it a dazzling sphere of scarlet. The scarlet globe grew while I watched it but the effort of watching was too much for me.

Remember, if you please, that at this time, physical exhaustion and mental torture had brought me to the point where I passed to and fro between consciousness and unconsciousness as easily and as frequently as one fluctuates between slumber and wakefulness during a night of fever. It seemed the most natural thing in the world that in my extreme weakness I should be loved and cared for by a cactus. I did not seek an explanation of this good fortune, or try to analyze it; I simply accepted it as a matter of course, as a child accepts a benefit from an unexpected quarter. The one idea that possessed me was that I had found an unknown friend, instinct with womanly sympathy and immeasurably kind.

And as night came on it seemed to me that the scarlet bulb overhead became enormously distended so that it almost filled the sky. Was I gently rocked by the supple arms that still held me? Were we floating off into the air? I did not know, or care. Now I fancied that I was in my berth on board ship, cradled by the swell of the sea; now, that I was sharing the flight of some great bird; now, that I was borne on with prodigious speed through the darkness by my own volition. The sense of incessant motion affected all my dreams. Whenever I awoke I felt a cool breeze steadily beating against my face—the first breath of air since we had landed. I was vaguely happy, gentlemen. I had surrendered all responsibility for my own fate. I had gained the protection of a being of superior powers.

"THE BRANDY flask Kilooa!"

It was daylight. I lay upon the ground and Briery was supporting my shoulders. In his face was a look of bewilderment that I shall never forget.

"My God!" he cried, "and how did you get here? We gave up the search two days ago."

The brandy pulled me together. I staggered to my feet and looked around. The cause of Briery's extreme amazement was apparent at glance. We were not in the wilderness. We were at the shore. There was the bay, and the ship at anchor, half a mile off. They were already lowering a boat to send for us.

And there to the south was a bright red spot on the horizon, hardly larger than the morning star—the Balloon Tree returning to the wilderness. I saw it, Briery saw it, the savage Kilooa saw it. We watched it till it vanished. We watched it with very different emotions, Kilooa with superstitious reverence, Briery with scientific interest and intense disappointment, I with a heart full of wonder and gratitude.

I clasped my forehead with both hands. It was no dream, then. The Tree, the caress, the embrace, the scarlet bulb, the night journey through the air, were not creations and incidents of delirium. Call it tree, or call it plant-animal—there it was! Let men of science quarrel over the question of its existance in nature; this I know: *It had found me dying and had brought me more than a hundred miles straight to the ship where I belonged.* Under Providence, gentlemen, that sentient and intelligent vegetable organism had saved my life.

AT THIS POINT the colonel got up and left the club. He was very much moved. Pretty soon Briery came in, briskly as usual. He picked up an uncut copy of Lord Bragmuch's *Travels in Kerguellon's Land*, and settled himself in an easy chair at the corner of the fireplace.

Young Traddies timidly approached the veteran globetrotter. "Excuse me, Mr. Briery," said he, "but I should like to ask you a question about the Balloon Tree. Were there scientific reasons for believing that its sex was—"

"Ah," interrupted Briery, looking bored; "the colonel has been favoring you with that extraordinary narrative? Has he honored me again with a share in the adventure? Yes? Well, did we bag the game this time?"

"Why, no," said young Traddies. "You last saw the Tree as a scarlet spot against the horizon."

"By Jove, another miss!" said Briery, calmly beginning to cut the leaves of his book.

Elements of the lusty style which became so much a part of a Robert E. Howard story as he hit his stride, were evidenced early in his career. You will find them in *Sea Curse* which first appeared in the May, 1928 issue of WEIRD TALES, but you will also find other elements which lend a more emotionally charged feeling to this story than found in Howard's later works: This tale provides moral justification for the supernatural horror evoked by the old woman Moll Farrell in seeking vengeance.

Howard's ending here seems a juxtaposition of the memorable close of John Buchan's horror masterpiece *The Outgoing of the Tide,* initially published in bookform in the United States by George H. Doran Company in 1918. Indeed there are indications throughout the story that he had selected an excellent model. The result in *Sea Curse* is a wild and potent literary brew which the readers will almost certainly chill to.

Sea Curse

BY ROBERT E. HOWARD

And some return by the failing light
And some in the waking dream,
For she hears the heels of the dripping ghosts
That ride the rough roofbeam.
— Kipling.

THEY were the brawlers and braggarts, the loud boasters and hard drinkers, of Faring town, John Kulrek and his crony Lie-lip Canool. Many a time have I, a tousled-haired lad, stolen to the tavern door to listen to their curses, their profane arguments and wild sea songs; half fearful and half in admiration of these wild rovers. Aye, all the people of Faring town gazed on them with fear and admiration, for they were not like the rest of the Faring men; they were not content to ply their trade along the coasts and among the shark-teeth shoals. No yawls, no skiffs for them! They fared far, farther than any other man in the village, for they shipped on the great sailing-ships that went out on the white tides to brave the restless grey ocean and make ports in strange land.

Ah, I mind it was swift times in the little sea-coast village of Faring when John Kulrek came home, with the furtive Lie-lip at his side, swaggering down the gang-plank, in his tarry sea-clothes, and the broad leather belt that held his ever-ready dagger; shouting condescending greeting to some favored acquaintance, kissing some maiden who ventured too near; then up the street, roaring some scarcely decent song of the sea. How the cringers and the idlers, the hangers-on, would swarm about the two desperate heroes, flattering and smirking, guffawing hilariously at each nasty jest. For to the tavern loafers and to some of the weaker among the straight-forward villagers, these men with their wild talk and their brutal deeds, their tales of the Seven Seas and the far countries, these men, I say, were valiant knights, nature's noblemen who dared to be men of blood and brawn.

And all feared them, so that when a man was beaten or a woman insulted, the villagers muttered—and did nothing. And so when Moll Farrell's niece was put to shame by John Kulrek, none dared even to put into words what all thought. Moll had never married, and she and the girl lived alone in a little hut down close to the beach, so close that in high tide the waves came almost to the door.

The people of the village accounted old Moll something of a witch, and she was a grim, gaunt old dame who had little to say to anyone. But she minded her own business, and eked out a slim living by gathering clams, and picking up bits of driftwood.

The girl was a pretty, foolish little thing, vain and easily befooled, else she had never yielded to the shark-like blandishments of John Kulrek.

I mind the day was a cold winter day with a sharp breeze out of the

east when the old dame came into the village street shrieking that the girl had vanished. All scattered over the beach and back among the bleak inland hills to search for her—all save John Kulrek and his cronies who sat in the tavern dicing and toping. All the while beyond the shoals, we heard the never-ceasing droning of the heaving, restless grey monster, and in the dim light of the ghostly dawn Moll Farrell's girl came home.

The tides bore her gently across the wet sands and laid her almost at her own door. Virgin-white she was, and her arms were folded across her still bosom; calm was her face, and the grey tides sighed about her slender limbs. Moll Farrell's eyes were stones, yet she stood above her dead girl and spoke no word till John Kulrek and his crony came reeling down from the tavern, their drinking-jacks still in their hands. Drunk was John Kulrek, and the people gave back for him, murder in their souls; so he came and laughed at Moll Farrell across the body of her girl.

"Zounds!" swore John Kulrek; "the wench has drowned herself, Lie-lip!"

Lie-lip laughed, with the twist of his thin mouth. He always hated Moll Farrell, for it was she that had given him the name of Lie-lip.

Then John Kulrek lifted his drinking-jack, swaying on his uncertain legs. "A health to the wench's ghost!" he bellowed, while all stood aghast.

Then Moll Farrell spoke, and the words broke from her in a scream which sent ripples of cold up and down the spines of the throng.

"The curse of the Foul Fiend upon you, John Kulrek!" she screamed. "The curse of God rest upon your vile soul throughout eternity! May you gaze on sights that shall sear the eyes of you and scorch the soul of you! May you die a bloody death and writhe in hell's flames for a million and a million and yet a million years! I curse you by sea and by land, by earth and by air, by the demons of the swamplands, the fiends of the forest and the goblins of the hills! And you"—her lean finger stabbed at Lie-lip Canool and he started backward, his face paling—"you shall be the death of John Kulrek and he shall be the death of you! You shall bring John Kulrek to the doors of hell and John Kulrek shall bring you to the gallows-tree! I set the seal of death upon your brow, John Kulrek! You shall live in terror and die in horror far out upon the cold grey sea! But the sea that took the soul of innocence to her bosom shall not take you, but shall fling forth your vile carcass to the sands! Aye, John Kulrek"—and she spoke with such a terrible intensity that the drunken mockery on the man's face changed to one of swinish stupidity—"the sea roars for the victim it will not keep! There is snow upon the hills, John Kulrek, and ere it melts your corpse will lie at my feet. And I shall spit upon it and be content."

Kulrek and his crony sailed at dawn for a long voyage, and Moll went back to her hut and her clam gathering. She seemed to grow leaner and more grim than ever and her eyes smoldered with a light not sane. The days glided by and people whispered among themselves that Moll's days were numbered, for she faded to a ghost of a woman; but she went her way, refusing all aid.

That was a short, cold summer and the snow on the barren inland hills never melted; a thing very unusual, which caused much comment among the villagers. At dusk and at dawn Moll would come up on the beach, gaze up at the snow which glittered on the hills, then out to sea with a fierce intensity in her gaze.

Then the days grew shorter, the nights longer and darker, and the cold grey tides came sweeping along the bleak strands, bearing the rain and sleet of the sharp east breezes.

And upon a bleak day a trading-vessel sailed into the bay and anchored. And all the idlers and the wastrels flocked to the wharfs, for that was the ship upon which John Kulrek and Lie-lip Canool had sailed. Down the gang-plank came Lie-lip, more furtive than ever, but John Kulrek was not there.

To shouted quieries, Canool shook his head. "Kulrek deserted ship at a port of Sumatra," said he. "He had a row with the skipper, lads; wanted me

to desert, too, but no! I had to see you fine lads again, eh, boys?"

Almost cringing was Lie-lip Canool, and suddenly he recoiled as Moll Farrell came through the throng. A moment they stood eyeing each other; then Moll's grim lips bent in a terrible smile.

"There's blood on your hand, Canool!" she lashed out suddenly—so suddenly that Lie-lip started and rubbed his right hand across his left sleeve.

"Stand aside, witch!" he snarled in sudden anger, striding through the crowd which gave back for him. His admirers followed him to the tavern.

Now, I mind that the next day was even colder; grey fogs came drifting out of the east and veiled the sea and the beaches. There would be no sailing that day, and so all the villagers were in their snug houses or matching tales at the tavern. So it came that Joe, my friend, a lad of my own age, and I, were the ones who saw the first of the strange thing that happened.

Being harum-scarum lads of no wisdom, we were sitting in a small rowboat, floating at the end of the wharfs, each shivering and wishing the other would suggest leaving, there being no reason whatever for our being there, save that it was a good place to build air-castles undisturbed.

Suddenly Joe raised his hand. "Say," he said, "d'ye hear? Who can be out on the bay upon a day like this?"

"Nobody. What d'ye hear?"

"Oars. Or I'm a lubber. Listen."

There was no seeing anything in that fog, and I heard nothing. Yet Joe swore he did, and suddenly his face assumed a strange look.

"Somebody rowing out there, I tell you! The bay is alive with oars from the sound! A score of boats at the least! Ye dolt, can ye not hear?"

Then, as I shook my head, he leaped and began to undo the painter.

"I'm off to see. Name me liar if the bay is not full of boats, all together like a close fleet. Are you with me?"

Yes, I was with him, though I heard nothing. Then out in the greyness we went, and the fog closed behind and before so that we drifted in a vague world of smoke, seeing naught and hearing naught. We were lost in no time, and I cursed Joe for leading us upon a wild goose chase that was like to end with our being swept out to sea. I thought of Moll Farrell's girl and shuddered.

How long we drifted I know not. Minutes faded into hours, hours into centuries. Still Joe swore he heard the oars, now close at hand, now far away, and for hours we followed them, steering our course toward the sound, as the noise grew or receded. This I later thought of, and could not understand.

Then, when my hands were so numb that I could no longer hold the oar, and the forerunning drowsiness of cold and exhaustion was stealing over me, bleak white stars broke through the fog which glided suddenly away, fading like a ghost of smoke, and we found ourselves afloat just outside the mouth of the bay. The waters lay smooth as a pond, all dark green and silver in the starlight, and the cold came crisper than ever. I was swinging the boat about, to put back into the bay, when Joe gave a shout, and for the first time I heard the clack of oar-locks. I glanced over my shoulder and my blood went cold.

A great beaked prow loomed above us, a weird, unfamiliar shape against the stars, and as I caught my breath, sheered sharply and swept by us, with a curious swishing I never heard any other craft make. Joe screamed and backed oars frantically, and the boat walled out of the way just in time; for though the prow missed us, still otherwise we had died. For from the sides of the ship stood long oars, bank upon bank which swept her along. Though I had never seen such a craft, I knew her for a galley. But what was she doing upon our coasts? They said, the far-farers, that such ships were still in use among the heathens of Barbary; but it was many a long, heaving mile to Barbary, and even so she did not resemble the ships described by those who had sailed far.

We started in pursuit, and this was strange, for though the waters broke about her prow, and she seemed fairly to fly through the waves, yet she was making little speed, and it was no time before we caught up with her. Making our painter fast to a chain far back beyond the reach of the swishing oars,

we hailed those on deck. But there came no answer, and at last, conquering our fears, we clambered up the chain and found ourselves upon the strangest deck man has trod for many a long, roaring century.

Joe muttered fearsomely. "Look, how old it seems! Almost ready to fall to pieces. Why, 'tis fairly rotten!"

There was no one on deck, no one at the long sweep with which the craft was steered. We stole to the hold and looked down the stair. Then and there, if ever men were on the verge of insanity, it was we. For there were rowers there, it is true; they sat upon the rowers' benches and drove the creaking oars through the grey waters. *And they that rowed were skeletons!*

Shrieking, we plunged across the deck, to fling ourselves into the sea. But at the rail I tripped upon something and fell headlong, and as I lay, I saw a thing which vanquished my fear of the horrors below for an instant. The thing upon which I had tripped was a human body, and in the dim grey light that was beginning to steal across the eastern waves I saw a dagger hilt standing up between his shoulders. Joe was at the rail, urging me to haste, and together we slid down the chain and cut the painter.

Then we stood off into the bay. Straight on kept the grim galley, and we followed, slowly, wondering. She seemed to be heading straight for the beach beside the wharfs, and as we approached, we saw the wharfs thronged with people. They had missed us, no doubt, and now they stood, there in the early dawn light, struck dumb by the apparition which had come up out the night and the grim ocean.

Straight on swept the galley, her oars a-swish; then ere she reached the shallow water — crash! — a terrific reverberation shook the bay. Before our eyes the grim craft seemed to melt away; then she vanished, and the green waters seethed where she had ridden, but there floated no driftwood there, nor did there ever float any ashore. Aye, something floated ashore, but it was grim driftwood!

WE MADE the landing amid a hum of excited conversation that stopped suddenly. Moll Farrell stood before her hut, limned gauntly against the ghostly dawn, her lean hand pointing seaward. And across the sighing wet sands, borne by the grey tide, something came floating; something that the waves dropped at Moll Farrell's feet. And there looked up at us, as we crowded about, a pair of unseeing eyes set in a still, white face. John Kulrek had come home.

Still and grim he lay, rocked by the tide, and as he lurched sideways, all saw the dagger hilt that stood from his back—the dagger all of us had seen a thousand times at the belt of Lie-lip Canool.

"Aye, I killed him!" came Canool's shriek, as he writhed and groveled before our gaze. "At sea on a still night in a drunken brawl I slew him and hurled him overboard! And from the far seas he has followed me"—his voice sank to a hideous whisper—"because—of—the—curse—the—sea—would—not—keep—his—body!"

And the wretch sank down, trembling, the shadow of the gallows already in his eyes.

"Aye!" Strong, deep and exultant was Moll Farrell's voice. "From the hell of lost craft Satan sent a ship of bygone ages! A ship red with gore and stained with the memory of horrid crimes! None other would bear such a vile carcass! The sea has taken vengeance and has given me mine. See now, how I spit upon the face of John Kulrek."

And with a ghastly laugh, she pitched forward, the blood starting to her lips. And the sun came up across the restless sea.

WILLIAM HOPE HODGSON was one of the supreme masters of the horror story, but he was by no means limited to writing only that type. During his all-too-brief career, he handily and with immense proficiency also wrote detective, science fiction, supernatural, sea stories, historicals, love stories, straight adventure, humor and even westerns. *The Terror of the Water-Tank* is special since it is a combination of detective, horror and science fiction. It is special on several other counts. This story's only publication was in the United States and it never appeared in England or was collected in a book.

The Terror of the Water-Tank appeared in THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE for September, 1907. It was the third story by Hodgson to appear in that publication. The previous two had been the bizarre sea masterpieces of a family lost in the Sargasso Sea, *From the Tideless Sea* (April, 1906) and its sequel, *More News From the Homebird* (August, 1907). It was followed by another superb short story, *The Voice in the Night* (November, 1907).

This excellent yarn builds like a carefully planned murder mystery up to the close, when Hodgson suddenly takes his literary gloves off and moves in for a fantastic finish.

The appearance of this story marks the last of those Willian Hope Hodgson stories virtually unknown to our times that WEIRD TALES is presenting as a special supplement to the biography of the author.

The Terror of the Water-Tank

By WILLIAM HOPE HODGSON

CROWNING THE HEIGHTS on the outskirts of a certain town on the east coast is a large, iron water-tank from which an isolated row of small villas obtains its supply. The top of this tank has been cemented, and round it have been placed railings, thus making of it a splendid "look-out" for any of the townspeople who may choose to promenade upon it. And very popular it was until the strange and terrible happenings of which I have set out to tell.

Late one evening, a party of three ladies and two gentlemen had climbed the path leading to the tank. They had dined, and it had been suggested that a promenade upon the tank in the cool of the evening would be pleasant. Reaching the level, cemented surface, they were proceeding across it, when one of the ladies stumbled and almost fell over some object lying near the railings on the town-side.

A match having been struck by one of the men, they discovered that it was the body of a portly old gentleman lying in a contorted attitude and apparently quite dead. Horrified, the two men drew off their fair companions to the nearest of the aforementioned houses. Then, in company with a passing policeman, they returned with all haste to the spot.

By the aid of the officer's lantern, they ascertained the grewsome fact that the old gentleman had been strangled. In addition, he was without watch or purse. The policeman was able to identify him as an old, retired mill-owner, living some little distance away at a place named Revenge End.

At this point the little party was joined by a stranger, who introduced himself as Dr. Tointon, adding the information that he lived in one of the villas close at hand, and had run across as soon as he had heard there was something wrong.

Silently, the two men and the policeman gathered round, as with deft, skillful hands the doctor made his short examination.

"He's not been dead more than about half an hour," he said at its completion.

He turned towards the two men.

"Tell me how it happened—all you know?"

They told him the little they knew.

"Extraordinary," said the doctor. "And you saw no one?"

"Not a soul, doctor!"

The medical man turned to the officer.

"We must get him home," he said. "Have you sent for the ambulance?"

"Yes, sir," said the policeman. "I whistled to my mate on the lower beat, and 'e went straight off."

The doctor chatted with the two men, and reminded them that they would have to appear at the inquest.

"It's murder?" asked the younger of them in a low voice.

"Well," said the doctor. "It certainly looks like it."

And then came the ambulance.

AT THIS POINT, I come into actual contact with the story; for old Mr. Marchmount, the retired mill-owner, was the father of my *fiancee*, and I was at the house when the ambulance arrived with its sad burden.

Dr. Tointon had accompanied it along with the policeman, and under his directions the body was taken upstairs, while I broke the news to my sweetheart.

Before he left, the doctor gave me a rough outline of the story as he knew it. I asked him if he had any theory as to how and why the crime had been committed.

"Well," he said, "the watch and chain are missing, and the purse. And then he has undoubtedly been strangled; though with what, I have been unable to decide."

And that was all he could tell me.

The following day there was a long account in the *Northern Daily Telephone* about the "shocking murder." The column ended, I remember, by remarking that people would do well to beware, as there were evidently some very desperate characters about, and added that it was believed the police had a clew.

During the afternoon, I myself went up to the tank. There was a large crowd of people standing in the road that runs past at some little distance; but the tank itself was in the hands of the police officer being stationed at the top of the steps leading up to it. On learning my connection with the deceased, he allowed me up to have a look round.

I thanked him, and gave the whole of the tank a pretty thorough scrutiny, even to the extent of pushing my cane down through lock-holes in the iron manhole lids, to ascertain whether the tank were full or not, and whether there was room for someone to hide.

On pulling out my stick, I found that the water reached to within a few inches of the lid, and that the lids were securely locked. I at once dismissed a vague theory that had formed in my mind that there might be some possibility of hiding within the tank itself and springing out upon the unwary. It was evidently a common, brutal murder, done for the sake of my prospective father-in-law's purse and gold watch.

One other thing I noticed before I quitted the tank top. It came to me as I was staring over the rail at the surrounding piece of waste land. Yet at the time, I thought little of it, and attached to it no importance whatever. It was that the encircling piece of ground was soft and muddy and quite smooth. Possibly there was a leakage from the tank that accounted for it. Anyhow, that is how it seemed to be.

"There ain't nothin' much to be seen, sir," volunteered the policeman, as I prepared to descend the steps on my way back to the road.

"No," I said. "There seems nothing of which to take hold."

And so I left him, and went on to the doctor's house. Fortunately, he was in, and I at once told him the result of my investigations. Then I asked him whether he thought that the police were really on the track of the criminal.

He shook his head.

"No," he answered. "I was up there this morning having a look round, and since then, I've been thinking. There are one or two points that completely stump me—points that I believe the police have never even stumbled upon."

Yet, though I pressed him, he would say nothing definite.

"Wait!" was all he could tell me.

Yet I had not long to wait before something further happened, something that gave an added note of mystery and terror to the affair.

ON THE TWO days following my visit to the doctor, I was kept busy arranging for the funeral of my *fiancee's* father, and then on the very morning of the funeral came the news of the death of the policeman who had been doing duty on the tank.

From my place in the funeral procession, I caught sight of large local posters announcing the fact in great letters, while the newsboys constantly cried:

"Terror of the Tank—
Policeman Strangled."

Yet, until the funeral was over, I could not buy a paper to gather any of the details. When at last I was able, I found that the doctor who had attended him was none other than Tointon, and straightway I went up to his place for such further particulars as he could give.

"You've read the newspaper account?" he asked when I met him.

"Yes," I replied.

"Well, you see," he said, "I was right in saying that the police were off the track. I've been up there this morning, and a lot of trouble I had to be allowed to make a few notes on my own account. Even then it was only through the influence of Inspector Slago with whom I have once or twice done a little investigating. They've two men and a sergeant now on duty to keep people away."

"You've done a bit of detective-work, then?"

"At odd times," he replied.

"And have you come to any conclusion?"

"Not yet."

"Tell me what you know of the actual happening," I said. "The newspaper was not very definite. I'm rather mixed up as to how long it was before they found that the policeman had been killed. Who found him?"

"Well, so far as I have been able to gather from Inspector Slago, it was like this. They had detailed one of their men for duty on the tank until two A.M., when he was to be relieved by the next man. At about a minute or so to two, the relief arrived simultaneously with the inspector, who was going his rounds. They met in the road below the tank, and were proceeding up the little side-lane towards the passage, when, from the top of the tank, they heard someone cry out suddenly. The cry ended in a sort of gurgle, and they distinctly heard something fall with a heavy thud.

"Instantly, the two of them rushed up the passage, which as you know is fenced in with tall, sharp, iron railings. Even as they ran, they could hear the beat of struggling heels on the cemented top of the tank, and just as the inspector reached the bottom of the steps there came a last groan. The following moment they were at the top. The policeman threw the light of his lantern around. It struck on a huddled heap near by the right-hand railings—something limp and inert. They ran to it, and found that it was the dead body of the officer who had been on duty. A hurried examination showed that he had been strangled.

"The inspector blew his whistle, and soon another of the force arrived on the scene. This man they at once dispatched for me, and in the meantime they conducted a rapid but thorough search, which, however, brought to light nothing. This was the more extraordinary in that the murderer must have been on the tank even as they went up the steps."

"Jove!" I muttered. "He must have been quick."

The doctor nodded.

"Wait a minute," he went on, "I've not finished yet. When I arrived I found that I could do nothing; the poor fellow's neck had been literally crushed. The power used must have been enormous.

" 'Have you found anything?' I asked the inspector.

" 'No,' he said, and proceeded to tell me as much as he knew, ending by saying that the murderer, whoever it was, had got clean away.

" 'But,' I exclaimed, 'he would have to pass you, or else jump the railings. There's no other way.'

" 'That's what he's done,' replied Slago rather testily. 'It's no height.'

" 'Then in that case, inspector,' I answered, 'he's left something by which we may be able to trace him.' "

"You mean the mud round the tank, doctor?" I interrupted.

"Yes," said Doctor Tointon. "So you noticed that, did you? Well, we took the policeman's lamp, and made a thorough search all round the tank

—but the whole of the flat surface of mud-covered ground stretched away smooth and unbroken by even a single footprint!"

The doctor stopped dramatically.

"Good God!" I exclaimed, excitedly. "Then how did the fellow get away?"

Doctor Tointon shook his head.

"That is a point, my dear sir, on which I am not yet prepared to speak. And yet I believe I hold a clew."

"What?" I almost shouted.

"Yes," he replied, nodding his head thoughtfully. "To-morrow I may be able to tell you something."

He rose from his chair.

"Why not now?" I asked, madly curious.

"No," he said, "the thing isn't definite enough yet."

He pulled out his watch.

"You must excuse me now. I have a patient waiting."

I reached for my hat, and he went and opened the door.

"To-morrow," he said, and nodded reassuringly as he shook hands. "You'll not forget."

"Is it likely," I replied, and he closed the door after me.

THE FOLLOWING morning I received a note from him asking me to defer my visit until night, as he would be away from home during the greater portion of the day. He mentioned 9:30 as a possible time at which I might call—any time between then and ten P.M. But I was not to be later than that.

Naturally, feeling as curious as I did, I was annoyed at having to wait the whole day. I had intended calling as early as decency would allow. Still, after that note, there was nothing but to wait.

During the morning, I paid a visit to the tank, but was refused permission by the sergeant in charge. There was a large crowd of people in the road below the tank, and in the little side lane that led up to the railed-in passage. These, like myself, had come up with the intention of seeing the exact spot where the tragedies had occurred; but they were not allowed to pass the men in blue.

Feeling somewhat cross at their persistent refusal to allow me upon the tank, I turned up the lane, which presently turns off to the right. Here, finding a gap in the wall, I clambered over, and disregarding a board threatening terrors to trespassers, I walked across the piece of waste land until I came to the wide belt of mud that surrounded the tank. Then, skirting the edge of the marshy ground, I made my way round until I was on the town-side of the tank. Below me was a large wall which hid me from those in the road below. Between me and the tank stretched some forty feet of smooth, mud-covered earth. This I proceeded now to examine carefully.

As the doctor had said, there was no sign of any footprint in any part of it. My previous puzzlement grew greater. I think I had been entertaining an idea somewhere at the back of my head that the doctor and the police had made a mistake—perhaps missed seeing the obvious, as is more possible than many think. I turned to go back, and at the same moment, a little stream of water began to flow from a pipe just below the edge of the tank top. It was evidently the "overflow." Undoubtedly the tank was brim full.

How, I asked myself, had the murderer got away without leaving a trace?

I made my way back to the gap, and so into the lane. And then, even as I sprang to the ground, an idea came to me—a possible solution of the mystery.

I hurried off to see Dufirst, the tank-keeper, who I knew lived in a little cottage a few hundred feet distant. I reached the cottage, and knocked. The man himself answered me, and nodded affably.

"What an ugly little beast!" I thought. Aloud, I said: "Look here, Dufirst, I want a few particulars about the tank. I know you can tell me what I want to know better than anyone else."

The affability went out of the man's face. "Wot do yer want to know?" he asked surlily.

"Well," I replied. "I want to know if there is any place about the tank where a man could hide."

The fellow looked at me darkly. "No," he said shortly.

"Sure?" I asked.

"Course I am," was his sullen reply.

"There's another thing I want to know about," I went on. "What's the tank built upon?"

"Bed er cerment," he answered.

"And the sides—how thick are they?"

"About 'arf-inch iron."

"One thing more," I said, pulling half-a-crown from my pocket (whereat I saw his face light up). "What are the inside measurements of the tank?" I passed him over the coin.

He hesitated a moment; then slipped it into his waistcoat-pocket. "Come erlong a minnit. I 'ave ther plan of ther thing upstairs, if yer'll sit 'ere an' wait."

"Right," I replied, and sat down, while he disappeared through a door, and presently I heard him rummaging about overhead.

"What a sulky beast," I thought to myself. Then, as the idea passed through my mind, I caught sight of an old bronze luster jug on the opposite side of the room. It stood on a shelf high up; but in a minute I was across the room and reaching up to it; for I have a craze for such things.

"What a beauty," I muttered, as I seized hold of the handle. "I'll offer him five dollars for it."

I had the thing in my hands now. It was heavy. "The old fool!" thought I. "He's been using it to stow odds and ends in." And with that, I took it across to the window. There, in the light, I glanced inside—and nearly dropped it; for within a few inches of my eyes, reposed the old gold watch and chain that had belonged to my murdered friend. For a moment, I felt dazed. Then I knew.

"The little fiend!" I said. "The vile little murderer!"

I put the jug down on the table, and ran to the door. I opened it and glanced out. There, not thirty paces distant was Inspector Slago in company with a constable. They had just gone past the house, and were evidently going up on to the tank.

I did not shout; to do so would have been to warn the man in the room above. I ran after the inspector and caught him by the sleeve.

"Come here, inspector," I gasped. "I've got the murderer."

He twirled round on his heel. "What?" he almost shouted.

"He's in there," I said. "It's the tank-keeper. He's still got the watch and chain. I found it in a jug."

At that the inspector began to run towards the cottage, followed by myself and the policeman. We ran in through the open door, and I pointed to the jug. The inspector picked it up, and glanced inside.

He turned to me. "Can you identify this?" he asked, speaking in a quick, excited voice.

"Certainly I can," I replied. "Mr. Marchmount was to have been my father-in-law. I can swear to the watch being his."

At that instant there came a sound of footsteps on the stairs and a few seconds later the black bearded little tank-keeper came in through an inner door. In his hand he held a roll of paper—evidently the plan of which he had spoken. Then, as his eyes fell on the inspector holding the watch of the murdered man, I saw the fellow's face suddenly pale.

He gave a sort of little gasp, and his eyes flickered round the room to where the jug had stood. Then he glanced at the three of us, took a step backwards, and jumped for the door through which he had entered. But we were too quick for him, and in a minute had him securely handcuffed.

The inspector warned him that whatever he said would be used as evidence; but there was no need, for he spoke not a word.

"How did you come to tumble across this?" asked the inspector, holding up the watch and guard. "What put you on to it?"

I explained and he nodded.

"It's wonderful," he said. "And I'd no more idea than a mouse that it was him;" nodding towards the prisoner.

Then they marched him off.

THAT NIGHT, I kept my appointment at the doctor's. He had said that he would be able to say something; but I rather fancied that the boot was going to prove on the other leg. It was I who would be able to tell him a great deal more than "something." I had solved the whole mystery in a single morning's work. I rubbed my hands, and wondered what the doctor

would have to say in answer to my news. Yet, though I waited until 10:30, he never turned up, so that I had at last to leave without seeing him.

The next morning, I went over to his house. There his housekeeper met me with a telegram that she had just received from a friend of his away down somewhere on the South coast. It was to say that the doctor had been taken seriously ill, and was at present confined to his bed, and was unconscious.

I returned the telegram and left the house. I was sorry for the doctor; but almost more so that I was not able personally to tell him the news of my success as an amateur detective.

It was many weeks before Dr. Tointon returned, and in the meantime the tank-keeper had stood his trial and been condemned for the murder of Mr. Marchmount. In court he had made an improbable statement that he had found the old gentleman dead, and that he had only removed the watch and purse from the body under a momentary impulse. This, of course, did him no good, and when I met the doctor on the day of his return, it wanted only three days to the hanging.

"By the way, doctor," I said, after a few minutes' conversation, "I suppose you know that I spotted the chap who murdered old Mr. Marchmount and the policeman?"

For answer the doctor turned and stared.

"Yes," I said, nodding, "it was the little brute of a tank-keeper. He's to be hanged in three days' time."

"What—" said the doctor, in a startled voice. "Little black Dufirst?"

"Yes," I said, yet vaguely damped by his tone.

"Hanged!" returned the doctor. "Why the man's as innocent as you are!"

I stared at him.

"What do you mean?" I asked. "The watch and chain were found in his possession. They proved him guilty in court."

"Good heavens!" said the doctor. "What awful blindness!"

He turned on me. "Why didn't you write and tell me?"

"You were ill—afterwards I thought you'd be sure to have read about it in one of the papers."

"Haven't seen one since I've been ill," he replied sharply. "By George! You've made a pretty muddle of it. Tell me how it happened."

This I did, and he listened intently.

"And in three days he's to be hanged?" he questioned when I had made an end.

I nodded.

He took off his hat and mopped his face and brow.

"It's going to be a job to save him," he said slowly. "Only three days. My God!"

He looked at me, and then abruptly asked a foolish question.

"Have there been any more—murders up there while I've been ill?" He jerked his hand toward the tank.

"No," I replied. "Of course not. How could there be when they've got the chap who did them!"

He shook his head.

"Besides," I went on, "no one ever goes up there now, at least, not at night, and that's when the murders were done."

"Quite so, quite so," he agreed, as if what I had said fell in with something that he had in his mind.

He turned to me. "Look here," he said, "come up to my place to-night about ten o'clock, and I think I shall be able to prove to you that the thing which killed Marchmount and the policeman was not—well, it wasn't little black Dufirst."

I stared at him.

"Fact," he said.

He turned and started to leave me.

"I'll come," I called out to him.

AT THE TIME mentioned, I called at Dr. Tointon's. He opened the door himself and let me in, taking me into his study. Here, to my astonishment, I met Inspector Slago. The inspector wore rather a worried look, and once when Tointon had left the room for a minute, he bent over towards me.

"He seems to think," he said in a hoarse whisper, and nodding towards the doorway through which the doctor had gone, "that we've made a silly blunder and hooked the wrong man."

"He'll find he's mistaken," I answered.

The inspector looked doubtful, and

seemed on the point of saying something further, when the doctor returned.

"Now then," Dr. Tointon remarked, "we'll get ready. Here," he tossed me a pair of rubbers, "shove those on.

"You've got rubber heels, inspector?"

"Yes, sir," replied Slago. "Always wear 'em at night."

The doctor went over to a corner, and returned with a double-barreled shotgun which he procceded to load. This accomplished, he turned to the inspector.

"Got your man outside?"

"Yes, sir," replied Slago.

"Come along, then, the two of you."

We rose and followed him into the dark hall and then out through the front doorway into the silent road. Here we found a plain-clothes policeman waiting, leaning up against a wall. At a low whistle from the inspector, he came swiftly across and saluted. Then the doctor turned and led the way towards the tank.

Though the night was distinctly warm, I shuddered. There was a sense of danger in the air that got on one's nerves. I was quite in the dark as to what was going to happen. We reached the lower end of the railed passage. Here the doctor halted us, and began to give directions.

"You have your lantern, inspector?"

"Yes, sir."

"And your man, has he?"

"Yes, sir," replied the man for himself.

"Well, I want you to give yours to my friend for the present."

The man in plain-clothes passed me his lantern, and waited further commands.

"Now," said Dr. Tointon, facing me, "I want you and the inspector to take your stand in the left-hand corner of the tank top, and have your lanterns ready, and mind, there must not be a sound, or everything will be spoiled."

He tapped the plain-clothes man on the shoulder. "Come along," he said.

Reaching the tank top, we took up positions as he had directed, while he went over with the inspector's man to the far right-hand corner. After a moment, he left the officer, and I could just make out the figure of the latter leaning negligently against the railings.

The doctor came over to us, and sat down between us.

"You've put him just about where our man was when we found him," said the inspector in a whisper.

"Yes," replied Dr. Tointon. "Now, listen, and then there mustn't be another sound. It's a matter of life and death."

His manner and voice were impressive. "When I call out 'ready,' throw the light from your lanterns on the officer as smartly as you can. Understand?"

"Yes," we replied together, and after that no one spoke.

The doctor lay down between us on his stomach, the muzzle of his gun directed a little to the right of where the other man stood. Thus we waited. Half an hour passed—an hour, and a sound of distant bells chimed up to us from the valley; then the silence resumed sway. Twice more the far-off bells told of the passing hours, and I was getting dreadfully cramped with staying in one position.

Then, abruptly, from somewhere across the tank there came a slight, very slight, slurring, crawling sort of noise. A cold shiver took me, and I peered vainly into the darkness till my eyes ached with the effort. Yet I could see nothing. Indistinctly, I could see the lounging figure of the constable. He seemed never to have stirred from his original position.

The strange rubbing, slurring sound continued. Then came a faint clink of iron, as if someone had kicked against the padlock that fastened down the iron trap over the manhole. Yet it could not be the policeman, for he was not near enough. I saw Dr. Tointon raise his head and peer keenly. Then he brought the butt of his gun up to his shoulder.

I got my lantern ready. I was all tingling with fear and expectation. What was going to happen? There came another slight clink, and then, suddenly, the rustling sound ceased.

I listened breathlessly. Across the tank, the hitherto silent policeman stirred almost, it seemed to me, as if

someone or something had touched him. The same instant, I saw the muzzle of the doctor's gun go up some six inches. I grasped my lantern firmly, and drew in a deep breath.

"Ready!" shouted the doctor.

I flashed the light from my lantern across the tank simultaneously with the inspector. I have a confused notion of a twining brown thing about the rail a yard to the right of the constable. Then the doctor's gun spoke once—twice, and it dropped out of sight over the edge of the tank. In the same instant the constable slid down off the rail on to the tank top.

"My God!" shouted the inspector, "has it done for him?"

The doctor was already beside the fallen man, busy loosening his clothing.

"He's all right," he replied. "He's only fainted. The strain was too much. He was a plucky devil to stay. That thing was near him for over a minute."

From somewhere below us in the dark there came a thrashing, rustling sound. I went to the side and threw the light from my lantern downwards. It showed me a writhing yellow something, like an eel or a snake, only the thing was flat like a ribbon. It was twining itself into knots. It had no head. That portion of it seemed to have been blown clean away.

"He'll do now," I heard Dr. Tointon say, and the next instant he was standing beside me. He pointed downwards at the horrid thing. "There's the murderer," he said.

IT WAS A FEW evenings later, and the inspector and I were sitting in the doctor's study.

"Even now, doctor," I said. "I don't see how on earth you got at it."

The inspector nodded a silent agreement.

"Well," replied Dr. Tointon, "after all it was not so very difficult. Had I not been so unfortunately taken ill while away, I should have cleared the matter up a couple of months ago. You see, I had exceptional opportunities for observing things, and in both cases I was very soon on the spot. But all the same, it was not until the second death occurred that I knew that the deed was not due to a human hand. The fact that there were no footprints in the mud proved that conclusively, and having disposed of that hypothesis, my eyes were open to take in details that had hitherto seemed of no moment. For one thing, both men were found dead almost in the same spot, and that spot is just over the over-flow pipe."

"It came out of the tank?" I questioned.

"Yes," replied Dr. Tointon. "Then on the railings near where the thing had happened, I found traces of slime; and another matter that no one but myself seems to have been aware of, the collar of the policeman's coat was wet, and so was Mr. Marchmount's. Lastly, the shape of the marks upon the necks, and the tremendous force applied, indicated to me the kind of thing for which I must look. The rest was all a matter of deduction.

"Naturally, all the same, my ideas were somewhat hazy; yet before I saw the brute, I could have told you that it was some form of snake or eel, and I could have made a very good guess at its size. In the course of reasoning the matter out, I had occasion to apply to little black Dufirst. From him, I learned that the tank was supposed to be cleaned out annually, but that in reality it had not been seen to for some years."

"What about Dufirst?" I asked.

"Well," said Dr. Tointon dryly, "I understand he is to be granted a free pardon. Of course the little beast stole those things; but I fancy he's had a fair punishment for his sins."

"And the snake, doctor?" I asked. "What was it?"

He shook his head. "I cannot say," he explained. "I have never seen anything just like it. It is one of those abnormalities that occasionally astonish the scientific world. It is a creature that has developed under abnormal conditions, and, unfortunately, it was so shattered by the heavy charges of shot, that the remains tell me but little—its head, as you saw, was entirely shot away."

I nodded. "It's queer—and frightening," I replied. "Makes a chap think a bit."

"Yes," agreed the doctor. "It certainly ought to prove a lesson in cleanliness."

YOU DON'T HAVE to be Jewish to write a story about chicken soup, as Katherine MacLean with prompting from Mary Kornbluth, magnificently proves. Chicken soup has been credited by comedians and wise men alike as being the equivalant of "Jewish Penicillin"—good for anything that ails you. It is possible that with a few special ingredients and a soft incantation or two it might have even more remarkable properties.

Kathering MacLean has since 1949 been a much admired and much anthologized writer of science fiction, but her ventures into fantasy fiction have been rare. Possibly one of the reasons is that there is small market for weird fiction today or even in the last two decades. Possibly a better reason was that she did not have an authority on the potentialities of chicken soup like Mary Kornbluth to urge her on.

As might be obvious from the name, Mary Kornbluth was the wife of the late Cyril Kornbluth. She had met him through science fiction, having entered into correspondence with enthusiasts in the field (including your editor) as early as 1938. In recent times she was best known for the anthology *Science Fiction Showcase,* published by Doubleday in 1959 and published as a sort of memorial to Cyril Kornbluth who had died the previous year.

Asked how they came to dream up so deliciously ethnic a brew as *Chicken Soup*, the two authors merely smiled inscrutably and chorused: "Try it! You'll like it!"

Chicken Soup

By KATHERINE MACLEAN and MARY KORNBLUTH

HERBIE'S LAST MORNING class ended at eleven, which left him easily time enough to take the subway and see what his grandmother was having for lunch. You might think a grown man, a student at the university, would be too busy to visit his grandmother, but Herbie was a good boy. He remembered how fondly she used to kiss him, and what wonderful things she and his mother used to cook and serve whenever they visited together.

The minute he entered her house, half past the hour, he smelled a fine rich smell of chicken soup. Taking a firm grip on the books under his arm, he followed the scent through the living room to the kitchen door.

"Grandma," he called, expecting his voice to come out louder than it did.

He could hear her humming inside. That kitchen was a mysterious place, for women only, full of secrets. His mother and grandmother had never let him in there when they cooked together. He pushed open the kitchen door anyhow, and sidled in.

His grandmother was plump and roundshouldered; she was stirring a pot and singing to herself. It was a pleasant little chant, full of repeating sounds.

Herbie came up behind her and gave her a light hug and a kiss on the ear, but she shrugged him off and continued stirring and chanting. He saw that she was stirring the soup with a long bony chicken foot. He had seen chicken feet used to flavor soup but there was something about the way his grandmother did it. Something mediaeval. It reminded him of witches and wattled huts and peasants and the knights in Chapter 3 of his history text. The witches used to make a kind of brew that would let them fly, or something, didn't they?

The idea pleased him. He perched on a tall kitchen stool to watch. She finished the monotonous little song and dropped the chicken foot in the pot.

"What are you doing, Grandma?"

She smiled briefly. "I'm making chicken soup, the way my own grandmother made chicken soup. What's so special?" She came over and gave him a warm hug and a squeezing kiss on

the cheek. "You're getting bigger every day, Herbie. Already last year you're the size of a man, and you keep getting bigger."

He didn't want to talk about that. "What were you singing, Grandma?"

She bridled, as if he had criticized her. "My grandmother used to sing when she made her chicken soup, and the soup was good. People used to come for miles, when someone was sick . . ."

"May I taste, Grandma?"

With the mixture of irritation and self-satisfaction with which artists face their critics, she dipped the ladle into the soup, and held it, steaming, for him to sip.

He sipped. Delicious, and penetrating, and subtly spiced, but not quite what he expected. Nothing tastes just as it did in childhood. He remembered some more from Chapter 3, Volume II of *The Rise of Western Civilization.*

"Was it a white-feathered chicken, Grandma?" He sipped, took the ladle and drank the warm soup that remained. Buttered toast flavor? These spices were subtle.

"A white capon, yes. They are more tender. All the Delaware chickens are white. Your cousin Abner is in the chicken business in Delaware."

"Did a priest let its blood on an altar?"

"Herbie, you're sick maybe?" Her voice was a croon of concern. "It's a good koshered chicken, by a rabbi. Who knows what they do with the blood? Are you worrying it has blood in it? Don't worry, the rabbi can be trusted. Your cousin Abner—"

There was a singing in his ears, a pleasant lightness in his heart. "Grandma, it doesn't taste just right. There's something missing." He heaved The Rise of Western Civilization out from under his arm and opened it on his knee. "There's a recipe here . . . A copper pot, a virgin white-feathered cock, killed—ah, skip that." He skipped down the line and raised his voice. "Well-water, leeks, parsley, henbane, thorn apple, green hemp (cannabis)—"

Herbie stopped talking. His grandmother was pottering about the kitchen throwing out discarded peelings and parings. Her back was stiff, to let him know she was ignoring advice and recipes from an amateur.

He cleared his throat. "Grandma, what are those long-stemmed greens you just threw out?"

She was surprised into answering. "They grow wild in the empty lot at the corner. I put their leaves in the soup, for flavor." She picked up a fallen leaf from the floor and threw it after the stems.

Herbie had seen leaves like that. And he knew what some of the wild students did with them at the university. . .rolled and smoked them. . .but always behind locked doors.

"You pick them? Don't people see you?"

She cleaned the kitchen briskly, her back looking stubborn as outraged virtue again.

He ventured farther. "The policeman at the corner, he stops the traffic for the school children. Have you talked about picking those leaves with him?"

Her back still turned stiffly, she rinsed a pot. "I don't discuss cooking with the Irish! Is that what you learn at school, Herbie?"

"It says here in the book, use henbane, and those tall greens you put into the soup already, and thorn apple."

"Yes?" She dried her hands and came over to him. "Maybe in your book they know a little. Henbane I added already. What about this thorn apple? When do you add it?"

"It doesn't say when to add it, Grandma. What is thorn apple?"

"They don't know how to write a recipe." She went over to the copper kettle and tasted thoughtfully. "Thorn apple? In the rock garden, that green prickly plant, the one your cousin Edmund put his hand on when I sent him out to get some sweet basil. I didn't know thorn apple was good for flavor."

She shrugged. "Herbie, go pick a thorn apple."

"Yes, Grandma." He was out the door to the backyard before she finished asking.

"Be careful; your cousin Edmund pricked his thumb—"

Herbie was back already, bearing a green fruitlike object covered with broad thorns. "Here it is."

Shrugging again she pared it, diced it, and dropped it into the chicken soup, singing a bit more of the doggerel chant. He could not make out the words.

"What is that you're singing, Grandma?"

"Oh." She stopped. She even laughed. "It tells the soup to get inside you and go to heart and head, muscles and toes, you know, like a good soup should."

"Let's taste it."

"Too soon, " she protested, but already was reaching for the big kitchen spoons, one for her, one for Herbie.

They both sat on kitchen stools, their feet on the rungs, watching each other's expression and sipping the hot steaming broth delicately from the edge of the spoons, so as not to burn the lips.

"Herbie, what was that recipe? Is it kosher?"

"No, Grandma," he answered dreamily, as if in childhood.

"Christian then?"

"No, Grandma."

"What then? Let me look in your book, please, Herbie."

He shook his head. "It will be hard to find the page again, Grandma!" He rose. "Let's taste the soup some more. I don't taste anything different."

"I told you we had to wait until the thorn apple cooked."

With pleasure they returned to the pot and the delicately changed aroma of the soup. Like epicures they inhaled the rich steam and dipped their spoons into the boiling broth. With their eyes meeting in the pleasure of experimentation, they each sipped the new flavor.

Whooosh.

The world spun to a blur and stopped, steady again, but had drastically changed.

They found themselves transported. They stood on the side of a mountain with their ladles still in their hands. It must have been the other side of the world, for it was nighttime

there and the wind was whistling around them.

A firelit ceremony was in progress some distance up the hill, with dancing and leaping and prancing.

Herbie had a chance for only a second of delighted gazing before his grandmother covered his eyes with her hands.

"A nudist colony! Oy vey, don't look Herbie, don't peek!"

Instantly they found themselves back in the kitchen.

"Grandma, did you see that giant goat? And the little goats? And girls . . ."

She compressed her lips. "I wouldn't remember."

He reached for the soup with his spoon. "Let's try it again. Let's go back and watch. It is research, scientific research."

She took the spoon and put it in the sink. "Research! Looking at those goyim, dancing and hopping? Where are their mothers, I'd like to know?"

"But Grandma," Herbie protested, his eyes looking into memory, "how can you tell, when they aren't wearing any—"

"I can tell." Her lips shut tightly against further comment. She picked up two potholder cloths and approached the stove.

"What are you doing?" He was dismayed.

"What does it look like?" With a sigh and a grunt she carried the large pot out the back door and poured its contents into a metal bucket. "A spoiled batch you throw away. It's good for the neighbor's dog. Hot soup shouldn't go to waste. It's a skinny dog. The neighbor, him!"

Herbie leaned toward her coaxingly. "Let's try the recipe again, Grandma. This time no garlic. The books say garlic frightens away the spirits."

"Next time, more garlic, and no thorn apple at all," the plump little woman said firmly. "I should know better than to let a man help with cooking! From a history book, even." She looked at him seriously, wrinkling her forehead. "You're getting to be a big boy, Herbie. Your mother and I will find a marriage broker and find for you a nice Jewish girl. You'll like her, you'll see."

"Oh, Grandma, you're so old-fashioned!" He picked up his history book and tucked it under his arm. "I have to get back to class. It takes a half hour on the subway." He kissed her and turned to leave.

Claws clacked on the stairs to the back porch. The neighbor's dog appeared, tail wagging. At first he hesitated over the hot soup. The little old woman, tired from vain labor, sat on the kitched stool and watched with an impartial, almost scientific expression.

Tantalized by the rich aroma, the dog lapped eagerly at the soup. Suddenly he howled, and vanished without having moved a step. Not even a bit of his tail was left.

Herbie's grandmother sighed. "I hope he's happy with those goats."

DURING 1932 and 1933, it seemed to readers of WEIRD TALES that virtually every issue of the magazine carried a collaboration by August W. Derleth and Mark Schorer. Most of these stories were written the Summer of 1931, while the two friends were living in a cottage in Sauk City, Wisconsin, trying to see if it was possible to earn a living by full-time writing. Most of the tales under this collaboration were eventually collected thirty-odd years later in the volume *Colonel Markeson and Less Pleasant People* published by Arkham House in the year, 1966.

August W. Derleth proved it was possible to make a living at full-time writing, creating quite a reputation for himself, though he drove his muse at such a thunderous pace that his heart gave out while he was still in his early sixties. Mark Schorer wrote a much admired and definitive biography of one of America's great literary figures, under the title of *Sinclair Lewis: An American Life.* This work of superb scholarship was honored as a Book-of-the-Month selection.

However, as teenagers, both had collaborated on stories that went into amateur magazines. One of the standby publications of the National Amateur Publishers Association was THE TRYOUT, printed by C. W. Smith. So renowned was the magazine in amateur circles that C. W. was known as "Tryout" Smith. He encouraged much early talent including H. P. Lovecraft and Clark Ashton Smith, among others. He published in the January, 1927 issue *The Figure With the Scythe* by August W. Derleth and Mark Schorer. It is a brief, weird allegory, harbinger of the outstanding later literary achievements of the two collaborators.

The Figure With The Scythe

By AUGUST W. DERLETH and MARK SCHORER

THE STATELY HOUSE on the hill-top was very quiet. There was no sound of merry laughter, no noise of hurrying motor cars, no hum of life that usually emanated from the Mason-Warner home; there was only the majestic serenity which death alone can bring. Outside, the rays of sunlight played on the leaves of the trees and the blades of grass, casting long patches of light and shadow; the breezes skipped lightly from tree to tree and into the garden where they played havoc with the week old roses and the slender lilies that reared their proud heads far above the modest violets clustered below them. The birds sang merrily as if nothing at all had happened, and, indeed, nothing had happened to stop their carolling. In the house servants trod softly to and fro, each wearing the immobile, impassive countenance imposed upon him by the death of the master of the house.

The widow sat in the library. She was attired in a simple, very unostentatious black gown. Her tapering fingers fondled the locket about her neck, and her kindly gaze rested upon her daughter who sat in silence at one end of the room. Her face wore an expression of unutterable sadness, but there was no hint of tears about her eyes. The servants had noticed with surprise and the children with anxiety that she had not shed a single tear since her husband's death. Her sorrow was too deep for mere tears. The soft cooing of a mourning dove broke upon her revery, and her lips quivered ever so slightly.

She stared intently at the portrait of her late husband above the heavy portieres at the door. His beautiful iron gray hair fitted him like a king's crown. And he was smiling. It was so like William, always cheerful. She closed her eyes and sent her ruminative thoughts scurrying backward to the almost forgotten nooks and crannies of her memory. She visualized William, the youth, the lover, and she almost fancied that she felt his lips on hers and that she heard him murmur softly to her. She smiled very lightly. Swiftly her thoughts traveled. She saw William and herself

radiant in their wedding garments. How happy they were then! It was not difficult to remember William's first great success on the exchange. Success followed success. And now . . .

She opened her eyes and allowed them to rest on the picture surrounding the bookcase on the left wall—the grim, malevolent figure with the scythe. William had always liked that picture because it reminded him of the inevitable termination of everything. The soft hum of a motor and the sound of subdued sobbing scattered her thoughts. She rose and walked into the vestibule. Her daughter followed her with her eyes.

In the vestibule the butler was relieving her other daughter and her son-in-law of their wraps. She walked quietly over to them. Calmly she embraced her weeping daughter and touched her lips lightly to her son-in-law's forehead. She murmured an order to her butler with reference to the disposal of their personal things, then summoned a maid and directed her to show her children to their rooms.

She stood and watched them ascend the broad staircase, and, when they had gone beyond her sight, she walked listlessly back to the library and reseated herself.

She thought mutely and imperturbably. This daughter was the last of her children to arrive. There was a solace in having her children about her in this hour, but within a few weeks they would all be gone. Then she would be alone; there would be no William, no children, only the dull servants.

The bitterness of the thought assailed her and she smiled a smile that was not a smile but only a fleeting shadow of a lost hope. She would be so lonely in this house, so lonely. She could not impose upon the hospitality of her children; she was welcome she knew, but she could not. They were all married and happy, and, as the years passed, she would become a burden in their care.

The high room became dim with its own shadows as twilight descended upon her revery. She turned her chair slightly so that she could watch the pale moon rise. The silvery moonlight splashed idly about the room, touching objects here and there, causing them to shimmer brilliantly, and somehow the scene lightened her depressed spirits. It was late before she left the library, and her thoughts had found a culmination.

When would the figure again move the scythe?

THE FUNERAL was almost over. Mrs. Mason-Warner stared dully at the coffin. Her daughters were weeping audibly, and even the eyes of her three sons were moist. She heard the minister deliver a few short lines on the merits of her husband. The beautiful grey casket shone speciously in the sparkling sunlight streaming in through the open windows. It seemed to her that a white vapor hovered strangely above the coffin, and she stared at it wonderingly.

Suddenly she started up and moved a step toward the casket. She raised one arm in a gesture of despair, and cried softly, poignantly, "William." A fitful breeze that had entered dispersed the smoke from the sputtering tapers about the coffin, that had gathered above it, and the widow's hand dropped. She swayed slightly and crumpled to the floor.

The figure had moved its scythe.

In the Next Issue—

VOICES IN THE LIGHT

by JERRY JACOBSON

Pauli Brink didn't just hear voices, they spoke through her, used her own vocal chords to deliver their strange and ghastly messages of disaster—disasters that happened to others but never to her. And then came that special voice. . .personal. . .

The House

By H. P. LOVECRAFT

'Tis a grove-circled dwelling
Set close to a hill,
Where the branches are telling
Strange legends of ill;
Over timbers so old
That they breathe of the dead,
Crawl the vines, green and cold,
By strange nourishment fed;
And no man knows the juices they suck
from the depths of their dank slimy bed.

In the gardens are growing
Tall blossoms and fair,
Each pallid bloom throwing
Perfume on the air;
But the afternoon sun
With its red slanting rays
Makes the picture loom dun
On the curious gaze,
And above the sweet scent of the blossoms
rise odours of numberless days.

The rank grasses are waving
On terrace and lawn,
Dim memories saving
Of things that have gone;
The stones of the walks
Are encrusted and wet,
And a strange spirit stalks
When the red sun has set.
And the soul of the watcher is filled
with faint pictures he fain would forget.

It was in the hot June-time
I stood by that scene
When the gold rays of noon-time
Beat bright on the green.
But I shivered with cold,
Groping feebly for light,
As a picture unrolled—
And my age-spanning sight
Saw the time I had been there before
flash like fulgury out of the night!

THE REAL DEVOTEES of A. Merritt know that during the years he was editor of THE AMERICAN WEEKLY, at a time when it claimed the largest circulation of any periodical in the world, being included in the Sunday edition of every Hearst newspaper, he wrote virtually no fiction. All the stories he completed were done before he became top editor, and even those were relatively few. The appearance of a new A. Merritt story in ARGOSY was an event heralded with the blare of editorial trumpets. Therefore, any valid piece of A. Merritt's writing is cause for considerable interest.

How We Found Circe was originally a chapter in a book of his titled *The Story Behind the Story,* published in 1942 by THE AMERICAN WEEKLY for the purpose of showing prospective advertisers the care that went into the preparation of the features in their publication. In presenting the steps in the thinking by which he arrived at putting together a story on Circe, Merritt also reveals the thought processes he utilized in researching his many remarkable fantasies, *The Moon Pool, The Ship of Ishtar* and *The Snake Mother* among them.

There were other chapters that also would interest fantasy lovers, such as *The Great Stone Dog That Howled King Solomon's Doom* or the more "timely" one on *Planning an Expedition to the Moon.* Lest readers dash out offering fantastic sums of money for the volume, most of the chapters were on subjects like *The Story Behind Our Science Pages* or *The Story Behind the Housewife's Food Almanack.*

In his last years, Merritt was not permitted to retreat into his fictional fantasies, but had to spend even his spare time on the firing line with the sales department, helping to sell the advertisements that paid his salary.

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How We Found Circe

By A. MERRITT

ARCHEOLOGICAL stories are the most difficult of all to present.

The subjects are, as a rule, as dry as the dust the diggers raise. But often beneath that dust lie treasures for thought and imagination as real as the material ones the workers uncover.

Yet although the matter may have its glowing core, it is not easy to siphon the heat out to warm the hearts or stimulate the brains of our readers; draw it through layers of crumbling brick and stone and re-invest it with the glamour of its youth; to make re-echo the voices that once laughed or wept within their walls; re-echo to the very tread of the feet, comely or masterful, that sped to happiness or lagged to sorrow through the time-gnawed chambers.

Without this sorcery, this careful creation of illusion of life, the average archeological article is as dead as those who built the monuments.

Says Omar Khayyam—

> *"They say the Lion and the Lizard keep*
> *The Courts where Jamsyd gloried and drank deep;*
> *And Bahram, that great Hunter—the Wild Ass*
> *Stamps o'er his Head but cannot break his sleep."*

Nobody is much interested in the lion and the lizard; their place is in natural history stories. The trick is to wipe out the intruders and recreate Jamsyd and Bahram.

The value of the article to the reader depends upon how well we can

do this and, of course, upon how interesting the men and women were when they were alive.

Archeological stories are interesting, therefore, in direct proportion to their appeal to the imaginations of the reader, how ably we can open a magic window through which he can peer into the past, the importance of the personages he sees or the historic scenes that we unroll before him.

Particularly appealing are they if they can be linked up with Biblical personages or episodes.

If they interest and entertain the reader, these articles will add considerably to his knowledge.

I select two varying types of such stories to illustrate what I mean. Here are their headlines:

MYSTERY OF THE GREAT STONE DOG THAT HOWLED KING SOLOMON'S DOOM

For Ages the Carven Idol Guarded the Path to Judea, Sounding Its Weird Warnings of Invaders; Lured the Wise Ruler to Desert Jehovah For His Wives' False Gods; Was Torn from Its Pedestal By Fanatic Arabs to Vanish For Centuries Until Modern Army Engineers By Sheer Chance Uncovered It.

CIRCE WHO TURNED MEN INTO SWINE—A MEMORY OF THE HALF BEAST NEANDERTHAL?

A Landslide On the Italian Coast Reveals a Cavern With a 70,000 Year Old Skull Which Throws New and Astonishing Light Upon the Ancient Sorceress of the Greek Poet Homer's Strange Story—And Professor Whitnall, Distinguished Geologist, Suggests What May Be the Real Explanation of That Age-Old Legend, Old Testament and Homer the Greek poet.

Let's discuss the story of the Sorceress Circe.

It is a striking example of the trouble we take to build up one of these archeological features to secure, besides accuracy, the maximum of general human interest. Curiously enough, it didn't start out with the slightest thought of that lady about whom the poet Milton wrote in *Comus:*

"Who knows not Circe,
The daughter of the Sun, whose charmed cup
Whoever tasted lost his upright shape,
And downward fell into a grovelling swine."

We had received from Professor Harold O. Whitnall, distinguished geologist and anthropologist, a manuscript upon the possible reasons for the extinction of the Neanderthal race, curious beast-men who never had a chance to grow up into real men.

There have been several tons of stories printed about the Neanderthals, and I looked at the Professor's manuscript with a certain lack of interest. It did present a new point, however, and I was considering it for a one-page feature.

Then, happening upon a copy of the LONDON ILLUSTRATED NEWS, I saw an account of a very remarkable discovery—that of a cave in Monte Circeo on Capo Circeo, that is, Mount Circe on Cape Circe, in Italy, which a landslip had sealed up some 70,000 years ago and in which had been found the most perfect Neanderthal skulls and the oldest; with evidence that the whole place had been a Neanderthal settlement.

Having a somewhat extensive knowledge of and interest in mythology, if I do say it myself who shouldn't, it immediately occurred to me that there was something peculiar about the naming of that particular spot of land—Cape Circe and Mount Circe.

Were there any legends that this had actually been the home of Homer's enchantress? There was no reference to the ancient lady in the LONDON ILLUSTRATED NEWS article, nor suggestion of any connection between her and the brutish Neanderthal people.

Brutish people? A synonym for "brutish" is "swinish" a place named after the celebrated witch who "turned men into swine" and, in that place, relics of an actually swinish people.

I cabled over to Italy to find out

why the place had been named after Circe. Nobody knew—it had been so called from remote antiquity. But our correspondent dug up the fact that an extraordinary formation of rocks resembling a castle was known by the natives as Circe's Palace, and that curious rites connected with the Spring festival had been practiced there for generations—and still were. Masks were used in these rites and *many of them were masks of pigs.* Between festivals, the place was shunned as being "unlucky."

Well, there *was* something; something that might clothe with life those age-old Neanderthal bones.

Could this have been the legendary "Island of Circe" where Homer's heroic Odysseus was supposed to have landed and where his men were turned into swine?

Homer, it is known, wove many ancient legends into his epics. Could Circe's have been one of them? Might there not be a perfectly factual basis for the myth after all?

To more advanced man, the Neanderthals would have appeared as beasts; maybe swine, since the pig and man have remarkable resemblances. Pig's eyes, for example, are the only eyes of animals which are almost exactly like ours.

Women of advanced races have been captured by men of inferior races and have at times ruled them.

Africa is full of legends of white queens—white women captives who by superior intelligence and force of character governed their captors.

Was it not possible that here was the origin of the whole Circe legend?

I submitted this theory to Dr. E. E. Free, who, until his untimely passing, was our advisor on all scientific matters. He was much struck by it. We made other researches and submitted the whole matter to Professor Whitnall.

So, finally the matter grew into a double-page—I forgot to say that there was the further curious confirmation that Cape Circe and Mount Circe would have been right on the line of Odysseus' journey, as given by Homer.

That it was interest-evoking was shown by the fact that at once we had several requests from scientific digests for permission to reprint parts of it.

To my mind, it was perfect treatment of a subject which ordinarily would have made dry reading. In it, and legitimately, we could combine fascinating myth, woman interest, picturesque information, explain the possible source of a story as world-widely popular as Cinderella or Snow-White, and at the same time give the reader a look-in upon an age whose people have been dust for some seventy millenniums.

WHEN I REPORT that Miriam Allen deFord was professionally selling supernatural fiction forty five years ago, I might be accused of being unkind to a lady by unnecessarily revealing her age. However, when I report she was forty years old at the time, the picture changes. The magazine was TALES OF MAGIC & MYSTERY, a little-known and short-lived pulp magazine edited by Walter Gibson, who later gained fame as the creator of "The Shadow". The story by deFord was *Ghostly Hands* in the January, 1928 number and it was illustrated by E. K. Bergey, the master of well-rounded beautiful women who made a reputation on the covers of THRILLING WONDER STORIES and STARTLING STORIES during the forties. That story explored the ghostly vein of horror that rests in the everyday fixations and attitudes of many of us, in this case an obsession for neatness in life that carries over into death.

Miriam Allen deFord was not to be considered a "regular" to the weird fiction field, though she had one story in WEIRD TALES for July, 1954 titled *Never Stop to Pat a Kitten,* about the unhappy after effects of a man who happens to pat a little kitten who also happens to be a familiar.

Her writing began in 1907, though she later worked as a public stenographer, insurance claims adjuster and staff correspondent for the Federated Press. *The Cats of Rome* is a new work employing one of the oldest devices in fiction, that of having the animals converse as humans. However, the device is turned to especially effective use by the unusual twist at the end of the story.

Together with this story we are also presenting deFord's earlier masterpiece *Ghostly Hands* a tale which originally appeared in so obscure and difficult a publication as to make the likelihood of the average reader of *WEIRD TALES* ever seeing it, zero.

The Cats Of Rome

By MIRIAM ALLEN deFORD

EVERYONE WHO HAS been even briefly in Rome knows about the wild cats—not wildcats, but domestic cats gone wild (and their descendants through generations)—that haunt the ancient ruins. At night compassionate residents come and feed them. For the rest they are free, though in the daytime they hide from the visiting tourists, most of whom, they have learned, are not so kind as their nightly benefactors.

. . .Let me speak in my proper person: could you behold me as my spokesman did, you would know who I am. Or would you, in your anthropoid arrogance, substitute "what" for "who"?

What the benefactors and the tourists alike do not know, although now I am going to tell them and incur the hatred of my kind, is the Secret from which has grown the Prophecy. It has been spoken of among humans, but only obliquely and inaccurately.

Near the Farnese Palace, where once the Holy Office set up its stakes to burn the heretics, He lives. He is the King, and serving him as concubines and attendants are seven other pure white cats. No human being has ever laid eyes on him or them. Not theirs to sally forth at night and rub ingratiatingly against human legs and accept with humility the scraps and leftovers from human tables.

Ah, no: from these leavings, when the humans have gone home again, their hearts warm with complacent ailurophilia, the cats pick out the choicest bits—the chicken wing, the rabbit stew, the well-cooked fish on Fridays—and bearing them carefully in mouths first rinsed with clear water to purify them, the Appointed hasten to the Court with their offerings.

Not that He shows himself even to these chosen ones, except on great occasions; it is honor enough to deliver the feast to the night's delegate

among the seven concubines. It is laid at her feet, and she purrs a benediction, and then when the courtiers have left, stepping backward until they are out of sight, it is borne to the hidden place—did you think all the Catacombs had been excavated?—where He awaits.

That is the nightly ritual. But on dates with deeper meaning—on Midsummer Eve and All Hallows' and New Years Eve and Spring Advent—those who have sacrificed the best of their largesse for the glory and honor of serving Him have their reward. The white concubine leads them silently to the subterranean chamber which is her home and His, and there they are privileged to set green and yellow eyes (and even, for a few with Siamese strain, blue ones) on the King Himself.

And he purrs to them graciously, and they writhe on the stone floor in gratitude, and the seven white concubines lay soothing paws upon them, and then they sit, tails twitching, and through the conjoined minds of all of them, led by Him Himself, run the blessed words of the Prophecy:

"When Rome falls again, each cat in the ruins will find for himself a special man or woman, whom he will call master or mistress but who will really be his slave and servitor. And when each cat has settled comfortably by a warm fire in a house where no wind blows to ruffle the fur and no rain falls to paste it to the shivering skin, where none need wait til night to feed bounteously, and can rely on sleep on a thick rug or a soft pillow—then to each in turn, in the order of caste and degree which he and his ancestors have earned by the frequency and length of time in which they have been privileged to serve Him nightly, He will come (the seven white concubines left discreetly behind in the hiding-place now softly furnished and well provided by forays from their new homes from his former acolytes) and in each house He will stay long enough to communicate mentally with the human of the house and teach him how to govern Rome so that from that time on the Eternal City will live forever."

But, you will say, if the first requirement is that Rome fall once more, how are these tight houses and warm fires and abundant food to be assured? Does not the fall of a city mean ruins and refugees and starvation so dire that—oh, the blasphemy of the thought!—those who in happier days brought food to the wild cats in the ruins contemplate now bringing snares and weapons to seize and destroy them and then to—oh, no, I cannot say the word!

But have no fear. When next Rome falls, it will not fall in such wise. If that were not certain, how then could the Prophecy be fulfilled?

And you who will hate me for what will seem premature revelation to another breed, believe that it is authorized. I am of humble station—not once have I ever borne a drumstick or a fish-head to Court—but I am of the Blood, and my share of the Prophetic Gift is valid. I who have never in life beheld Him nevertheless was once vouchsafed a vision: and in the vision He bade me take this means of unfolding to men and women some adumbration of the truth. Because, his silent voice proclaimed while I lay awestruck, "I have grown weary of waiting. Rome is too long in coming to its next fall. You as My messenger must hasten My moment by arousing their uneasiness, their half-belief, their fear."

Believe me, I speak truly. And I am obeying His word.

How? By this strange method these humans take to communicate with one another, running their eyes along black marks on white paper. But here, in a place far from Rome and where the speech itself means nothing to the Romans? Yes, even so, though the message is slowed. That, I confess, and plead for absolution, is by my own inadequacy: try as I might, I found the minds of the Romans themselves impervious to me, and when at last I penetrated a mind and impressed on it my influence, it belonged to a tourist whose post-hyponotic narration humans of his own provinciality are absorbing now.

But it will spread, my brethren, it will spread, and it will reach Rome.

From Rome will the message reecho until everywhere in this world where once we were gods and now have been degraded to the status of household pets, we shall come once

again into our own! This I know.

May I cite human history to you humans? Be not astounded that I know it: I have ears, and tourists talk; and I have a brain, and I can remember.

Rome has fallen many times. It fell to the Etruscans, to the Goths, to the Austrians, to the Germans, to alien enemies of many lands. But there are other ways by which a city may fall than by war. Do not, humans, as you begin now to believe the Prophecy, take it for granted that when next Rome falls it will be by violence. No, time and your cursed "progress," which has made life so much more difficult for us truly natural beings, can bring a city down to its knees as surely as a ruptured atomic nucleus can.

Once, plague or volcanic eruption or earthquake brought cities low; but is not a city as surely fallen from its high estate to a travesty of its past, when the agent is pollution of the air and water, or the too-great proliferation of its own kind, unchecked by the biological hazards which keep us more favored animals from overrunning Earth and one another?

Do I hear you laughing—alas, I do!—at such portentous words from a non-human? How little you know of the real hierarchy of life!

Ah, well, ignore my emotional outburst. We cats are grandiloquent by nature. I am merely His humble messenger.

So, like all other cities if you humans will not learn in time, Rome will most surely fall again, and soon. But not soon enough for my Master's impatience.

Therefore now, at His behest and to expedite that desirable debacle, I

reconcile you humans to the coming end of your hegemony by revealing to you the means of acquiring the blessings of the new Eternal Rome which will arise: a Rome, true, no longer ruled by mankind to its own disaster, but as pleasing and comfortable to men as the environment in which the most petted of your future rulers lead subservient but luxurious lives today is to them. We are merciful; we shall even let you pretend still to be supreme, knowing well in Whose paws lies the ultimate power.

We shall teach you how to live as we live, how to discipline your unruly selves, how to follow our commands in glad obedience, so that as long as Earth lasts, Rome, the archetypal city, will exist and flourish, and send forth missionaries to bring the same good tidings to all the other great cities which are its children or its imitators.

One by one its citizens will learn, as He brings to them, household by household, the sacred laws known so long only to Him, and by his grace to us. As He sheds on the fortunate humans who have become the unacknowledged slaves of His people the light of His wisdom, He will say to them:

* * *

THIS ABRUPTLY unfinished story was sent to us by a British visitor to Rome, who had found it caught in the back of a desk drawer in his hotel room. The hotel manager professed inability to give him the name of the person who had last occupied the room, but a large tip to a bellboy secured the name and the man's address in New York. Our correspondent then wrote there to ask if the author did not want his manuscript sent to him. Three weeks later, his letter was returned to him, marked "Addressee Deceased."

He himself could not visit the Farnese Palace to try to probe the mystery further. Unfortunately, he is allergic to cats.

He adds: "There was a strange little item on a back page of yesterday's *Giornale*, which I translate. It seems that one Tomasso Spanza, a workman employed by the distinguished archaeologist, Dr. Guiseppe Martinelli, who is excavating a newly discovered Third Century cemetery near the Catacombs, dug into a pile of rubble and suddenly found himself in an arched stone chamber, which he swears was full of white cats. They fled through a narrow tunnel, all but one large feline, which stood its ground and lunged to attack him. 'I had nothing but my pick to defend myself with,' said Spanza, 'but fortunately I was able to brain the animal before it could do me any harm.

" 'Myself, I like dogs,' the man added. 'I was very lucky. In my opinion, the beast was mad.'

"Out of curiosity, this morning I paid a visit to the Registrar's office, where I happen to have an acquaintance. Through him, I learned that the man I had written to had died suddenly of a cerebral hemorrhage in the very room in which I am staying. Obviously, the hotel manager feared a later guest might be squeamish if he knew.

"I then took the trouble—this whole episode has affected me rather oddly—to hunt up Tomasso Spanza and ask him on exactly what date he had experienced his adventure, and killed the great white cat.

"It was the day and the hour when the man had dropped dead."

Ghostly Hands

By MIRIAN ALLEN deFORD

A HOT JULY SUN beat down on the fresh green boards and polished windows of the house within which Jane Rutledge lay dead. It lent a sickening glaze to the well-scrubbed brick pathway; it baked to a hard brown the

trim grass of the border; and it sent unwilling drops of perspiration down the worn forehead and patient cheeks of Uncle Jimmy Whitlow, as he toiled painfully up the steps of his sister's immaculate porch.

Not so much as a knock was needed to bring to the lace-curtained doorway the nervous mouth, the anxious blue eyes, and the straggling gray moustache of Jane Rutledge's husband; and without a word the two old men stepped together into the darkened hall, and thence into the parlor, where the mistress of the house lay in passive reception of her only kinsfolk and her only mourners.

There was no hint of July within that silent parlor; everything was still and spotless and cold as the dead woman's life had been. Jane Rutledge, first to begin her spring cleaning, last to finish that of the fall; Jane the cleanly; Jane the neat; Jane, who had chopped the little finger from her right hand because, said grim jest, she considered it superfluous—this was the woman who lay now in her dustless coffin, dressed in carefully hoarded black silk and jet, her smooth hair tightly braided from her white thin-lipped face, and the worried frown still between her straight gray eyebrows.

The brothers-in-law had not long to wait for the last arrivals. Hardly five minutes passed when the knocker sounded—Jane had suppressed the too noisy bell—and there strode into the room with his usual pomp and ceremony the Reverend Mr. Winifred Murgatroyde Strickland, followed by the timid rotundity of his wife, a small nervous person, who spent her life carrying a figurative incense behind the purple circumstance of her worshipful husband.

"I want everything should be the way Jane liked it," murmured Mr. Rutledge to the unresponsive broadcloth seated beside him. "This house is so danged clean—beg pardon, Mr. Strickland, so tarnation clean—that you couldn't get it dirty if you kept a pig in it; and I didn't eat no breakfast this mornin', so that I shouldn't mess up the kitchen any. Why, dear me suz! you can see yourself in the stove, an' as for—"

But Uncle Jimmy pulled his sleeve. "Hush up brother," he whispered with a strained throatiness. "Can't you see the parson's agoin' to pray?"

The service was short but decorous. One might have fancied a smile on the thin lips that had never said more than they had to. It was only four o'clock, and still blazing hot, when Jane's husband and Jane's brother carried Jane to the shining, decent hearse, and climbed behind the minister and his wife into the worn, black carriage with its two gaunt steeds.

As they rode through the sleepy, elm-shaded streets, clouds began to gather in the copper sky; and the stopping of the hearse at the cemetery was marked by a long thunder growl from the slaty west.

A LITTLE OLD MAN, trembling under the weight of his iron shovel, met them at the moss-grown gate. Further back, by the well-ordered grave where Jane Rutledge was to lie, stood a gawky youth, newly apprenticed to the sexton, his freckled countenance vacillating between fear and curiosity at this, his first funeral.

"G'd afte'noon, Mr. Rutledge," wheezed the old sexton; "g'd afte'noon, Mr. Whitlow; g'd afte'noon, sir; g'd after-noon, ma'am; it's a sad errand brings you here, but many's the one such I see. Mrs. Rutledge was a good woman, sir; I mind her aplayin' with her little apron on, al'ays so clean like, aroun' my stone-cuttin' place when we was all forty years younger, beggin' your pardon, ma'am; an' that reminds me that the stone is all ready, and in my little quarters here in the cimit'ry, bein' real decent like, an' readin' just 'Jane Rutledge, by her husban', an' the year—"

A quick flash of lightning cut short this protracted speech; old Mark's life had been one long sentence, and death alone would bring him to so much as a semicolon. As if warned to hasten, the funeral cortege rolled on up the broad, graveled path to the waiting grave.

As Mr. Strickland spoke the "dust to dust, ashes to ashes," a second flash of lightning just missed the tall poplar by which he stood. The accompanying thunder boomed in great sound waves about them, and the rain began to fall.

The minister threw propriety to the winds, and gabbled his remaining words en route to the carriage. His wife tumbled excitedly after him; and the husband and brother of the dead woman, after one quick look at the still open grave, turned their backs also. For a moment, the gawky boy stood by the drenched and frantic sexton; then as a film of light ran across his metal shovel, he gave one howl of terror, and fled.

With trembling fingers old Mark picked up his own shovel, and, almost overcome by terror of the deafening thunder, the heavy, clogging water, and the really frightful intensity of the lightning, summoned all his feeble powers of exertion to throw haphazard on the lowered coffin the piled-up earth around the grave. In ten minutes it was done, a huge, untidy heap, but safe until the storm was over; and the old man hobbled dizzily away into the little hut whose chief ornament at present was the decorous tombstone of Jane Rutledge.

Five o'clock struck, then six, then seven; and still the storm continued unabated. Nearly all night old Mark sat, his face dangerously close to the rain-pelted window, and saw the drenched, disorderly pile of earth that marked the half-made grave. When at last he fell asleep, it was still to the sound of insistent rain and the clamorous answer of thunder.

By morning, the mid-summer hurricane was over, and trees and grass breathed deeply again under a vanishing blanket of mist. Old Mark, drawn with inevitable rheumatism, groaned and sputtered his way down from his bachelor shack to complete the work on Jane Rutledge's grave.

What he saw sent him reeling and gasping against the tall poplar. The two shovels lay neatly one upon the other at the roots of the tree. All signs of trampling feet had been carefully patted away. And the grave—the grave was very smooth, except that at one side there was a deep crack, and the mark of two grasping hands—

And on the right handprint on the grave the little finger was missing!

TIME

By OLAF STAPLEDON

Wherefore hast thou made the world that it shall die, and the heavens that they shall burn out like a flame?

What wilt thou do when the stars are all extinguished, and there is no place for life?

The sons of men have builded for themselves a house of beauty. It is continually embellished.

The last of the generations shall dwell therein and die; and the beauty that was builded shall be no more.

A lover and his beloved have met together in the evening. Evening shall return, but they return not.

The home that seemed eternal is broken up and scattered. The children remember it; they die; it is no more.

I am heavy of heart because of fleeting time, and because all things come to nought.

WITH THIS ISSUE, *WEIRD TALES* concludes the first important critical, biographical and bibliographical work ever done on William Hope Hodgson. The series has revealed to us his background; the son of an ill-starred clergyman, his years at sea and his work as a strong man and strength and health specialist in Blackburn. It followed his transition from a writer of health articles to one of the world's most brilliant authors of horror and science fiction.

The second installment outlined his effort to make a reputation as a novelist, an effort ending in critical success of considerable dimensions, but precious little money. No longer a youngster, Hodgson knew that the time had come to forget literary pretensions and to use his skills to make a living. Strong, in the prime of life, he had no inkling that the remaining years were to be few, yet already his output was considerable.

Until now, however, the diversity of types of writing he performed, the markets he sold to, have never been set on paper. Considerable research has disclosed for the reader, in fascinating detail, not only the plot outlines of stories never previously listed, but the types of publications they were sold to, the men who ran them, and even the sums he was paid for them. The appearance of his later books and quotes from the reviews they received are included in this final chapter on his all too brief life, as are opinions of him by his friends and excerpts from his letters.

William Hope Hodgson-- The Final Years

By SAM MOSKOWITZ

AS 1909 DREW to a close, William Hope Hodgson knew there would have to be more regular magazine sales, to fatten the so-far small book revenue. The best guarantee of continuous sales was a series of stories. The most popular type of series was the unusual detective. Ever since Sherlock Holmes appeared in that manner in THE STRAND MAGAZINE of the early 1890's, it had been the surest circulation gainer of the popular magazines. Because of his proclivity towards horror, Hodgson struck upon the notion of an occult detective.

He interested Robert Barr, editor of THE IDLER, in the series for which he would be paid about $33 apiece. THE IDLER, founded in 1891 by Jerome K. Jerome and Robert Barr, had for some years been a prestige literary magazine in England, but eventually Jerome broke off from it and Barr carried on alone. It had been sliding down hill, and would not long survive the year's end. Hodgson's stories were hardly designed to lengthen THE IDLER's life span.

The cardinal weakness of Hodgson's Carnacki series was an almost total lack of visualization of the main character and a story frame for the introduction of the stories so weak that they can only be construed as deliberate pot boilers. It is only in a few of the stories that Hodgson regains integrity in the heat of narration.

The first story, *The Gateway of the Monster*, ran in the January, 1910 issue of THE IDLER, and Carnacki, a youthful detective who utilizes the camera in all his cases, is called in to solve the mystery of a mansion in which the door to "The Grey Room" slams every night, without the aid of any apparent human agency. The one supernatural defense Carnacki has, which he constantly employs, is the Pentacle, a circle about himself drawn with a piece of chalk. He gained the secret of the Pentacle from an ancient volume titled the *Sigsand Mss.*, written in the fourteenth century. References to this book are made throughout the series. From another book,

Prof. Gardner's *Experiments with a Medium*, Carnacki claims to have worked up an electrical pentacle, which was remarkably effective against evil spirits. In conjunction with this, he used a five pointed star, each point touching the rim of the pentacle. He sets an electric pentacle about himself in "The Grey Room," lights multitudinous candles, closes himself in at night, and waits for something to happen. The candles flick out one by one, and the resemblance of that sequence to H. G. Wells' *The Red Room*, which had appeared in the *same magazine*, THE IDLER, in the issue of March, 1896, is so close that it would be an affront to the intelligence of any reader to even dare to suggest that the idea came from any other source, or that its use is a coincidence.

A tremendous black hand forms and for hours goes lunging around attempting to force its way through the light of the pentacle, even mentally influencing Carnacki to create a hole in the barrier. When daylight comes, Carnacki discovers a metal ring in the room shaped like a pentagon, and the second night takes it into the pentacle with him. The hand begins to form alongside him, and he leaps out, trapping it there. The following morning, he melts down the ring and destroys the entrance from that other world into this. There are brief moments of suspenseful writing, and it is a bonafide supernatural story, but obviously an ill-concealed pastiche on the genre.

The House Among the Laurels, which appeared in the February issue, takes place in Western Ireland, and starts off like a legitimate ghost story. It is about an old mansion in which two tramps have died. A man with an entire group of villagers who go to test the spooks find blood dripping from the walls, have their giant mastiff mysteriously killed, and finally call in Carnacki. The Occult Detective brings in six police, sets up a pentacle, with a round of human hair, garlic, holy water, and every other available anti-evil device. Candles snuff out as they do in *The Gateway of the Monster*, but it all turns out to be caused by a group of men who improvise the effects for causes unknown. By this time, if anyone had the slightest doubt that Hodgson was writing spoofs, the flip lines which interpose the piece destroy all pretense.

The Whistling Room in the March issue had its locale in Ireland, too. A room in an old castle is the source of a strange and frightening whistling sound: "Picture the room rocking and creaking, in a vile, mad glee to its own filthy piping and whistling and hooning." Carnacki, presaging his investigations, first throws a garland of garlic around his neck, "for, as you all know, it is a wonderful 'protection' against the more usual Aeririi forms of semi-materialisation." As an added precaution he plugs his ears with garlic. Having experienced the whistling, he proceeds to recollect many passages from the *Sigsand Mss.*, which may be useful. Viewing the room from the outside window, Carnacki observes that the floor puckers into gigantic lips and sends out the whistling sound. Lured into the room by the apparent cry of his friend, he finds it is a trap and giant lips extrude from the walls towards him. He is saved when "the Unknown Last Line of the Saaamaaaa Ritual was whispered quite audibly in the room." The story could have been cast as a very effective supernatural yarn, for some of the scenes are excellently done, but Hodgson jokes it up before and aft, curtailing the impact.

The Horse of the Invisible in the April issue dealt with a man who reproduces the sound of a horse galloping as a supernatural phenomenon to frighten a rival suitor, and then upon the moment when his hoax is discovered, the bizarre hoofbeats occur without any assistance from him. The story had possibilities destroyed by the sleight-of-hand wrap-up of events in a hasty, untidy conclusion.

The last story in the series that THE IDLER ran, in the June, 1900 issue, is in certain respects the best. Titled *The Searcher of the End House*, the mystery occurs to Carnacki himself, who is living with his mother in a detached cottage villa on the South Coast. He is working late one night and hears a door slam and two raps, which he interprets as his mother upstairs signaling him to come to bed. As he enters his room, he scents a

"faint, peculiarly disagreeable odour." The next morning his mother denies ever knocking for him to leave his work.

The situation recurs the next night, and he realizes his mother has slept through it all. When he awakens her, she comments on the disagreeable smell.

The third night there is a slamming of doors upstairs and down continuously for a short while. The landlord finally admits that before they rented it the house was empty for years for supernatural reasons. The most common, the sight of a woman going from room to room at night. He agrees to join Carnacki in an all-night vigil, and suddenly there is a violet light and Carnacki sees a naked child come running past him. He realizes that the landlord has seen nothing. The child coyly hides.

The landlord in fright shouts "The woman!" and grips Carnacki's arm. Carnacki does not see any woman, but the child is moving from room to room, peeping out and disappearing. Suddenly it is over, and none of the seals on any doors have been broken.

The landlord has seen a woman searching from room to room and Carnacki has seen the child hiding from her.

The odor arises and they descend to explore the cellar. At the bottom of the steps there are wet spots and prints. A maggot is seen writhing in the dampness of one of the prints. The prints end at a shadowy well, full to the brim, that had once been the water supply to the house, and the cellar reeks of foulness.

A vigil is taken up in the cellar the next night, and the phenomenon of the violet light, child and woman, recur, but a trap has been set over the well and it catches Captain Tobias, a former tenant of the house, with a rotting leg of lamb which has caused the odor. He had been in jail, and had hidden valuables in the house and returned to get them by a little-known passageway. He offers to buy the house back. In the process, he admits that he has seen a woman wandering around the house on two occasions, but attributed it to nerves.

Carnacki suggests that the child was still-born, but that an ego had existed, and that the mother spirit searches for the soul of its still-born child.

Again, Hodgson, with the introduction of humor almost, but not quite, destroys the story. It was the second time he had written of prematurely dead children, this time directly involving his mother. The resemblance of certain sections to Rudyard Kipling's masterpiece of a father who glimpses the spirit of his dead child in *They*, first published in 1904, is self evident.

The reprinting of *The Voice in the Night* in the January, 1910 issue of NASH'S MAGAZINE, sustained Hodgson's reputation as a writer in England. NASH'S MAGAZINE was founded in April, 1909 as a competitor to the all-fiction British pulps, THE STORYTELLER and its later rival THE RED MAGAZINE. It was printed on a high-grade pulp and ran many name authors, including H. Rider Haggard, Rudyard Kipling, William Le Quex, Max Pemberton, E. F. Benson, Algernon Blackwood, R. Austin Freeman, Eden Phillpotts and Oliver Onions. It was sold in Canada and possibly in the United States.

The reprinting of *More News From the Homebird* as *The Fifth Message From the Tideless Sea*, in the May, 1911 issue of THE LONDON MAGAZINE, with five illustrations by Lawson Wood, further enhanced Hodgson's standing in the minds of his literary countrymen. After all, no author is expected to come up with more than one masterpiece a year.

Yet, the fact (as demonstrated by the Carnacki stories) is that Hodgson had begun to "hack" it. The April 6, 1910 issue of *Ideas*, ran a non-fiction feature of his titled *The Peril of the Mine*, an article telling of incidents of disasters and heroism among the miners of England. The article proved only that Hodgson could handle non-fiction extremely well.

The Captain of the Onion Boat, subtitled "A Portuguese Romance," in the December, 1910 NASH'S MAGAZINE, represented a complete departure from what he had been doing, probably because NASH'S MAGAZINE had converted with its February, 1910 issue to a slick-paper women's magazine. It was a short novel-

ette of Big John Carlos, who twice a year for nine years has brought his onion boat beneath a convent, to catch a glimpse of his former love who had entered the order when he had been reported lost at sea. Eventually, love conquers religiosity (Hodgson did not care much for formal religion), and his nun permits herself to be "rescued" by the man she loves. The handling of the situation was very well done, and was the first evidence that Hodgson was capable of writing and selling popular pap when the need arose.

Hodgson's story *Bullion* appears to have been sold to the American publication EVERYBODY'S MAGAZINE through the literary agent Watts, and twenty-eight dollars received for it. Publication was set for the March, 1911 issue, but it does not appear in that magazine, and may never have been published. It opens like a ghost story, with the Captain of a clipper ship between London and Melbourne refusing to sleep in his cabin, because of recurrent whispers which cannot be traced. The sounds are eventually found to emanate from a clever band of thieves, who almost succeed in stealing the gold bullion. Their voices are carried throughout the ship by the ventilator shafts, in which the thieves are working.

A related plot is contained in *The Mystery of the Water-Logged Ship*, which ran in the May, 1911 issue of THE GRAND MAGAZINE. A steel vessel, which apparently is full of water, is actually a dodge for a group of bullion pirates who have a water-tight steel compartment beneath the waterline. They attract ships by appearing to be in distress, and then take over, robbing them of their gold. Ghost-like echoes on the waterlogged ship emanate from the hollow shafts which enable its crew to climb through the water-filled upper portion of the vessel from its dry, water-tight metal compartment.

My House Shall be Called the House of Prayer, first published in the May, 1911 CORNHILL MAGAZINE, and then reprinted in the United States in the June, 1911 TODAY'S MAGAZINE was bathed in buttery sentiment, but was a very superior story on a number of counts. First, it presaged by half-a-century the fictional vogue in Catholic priests who interpreted the precepts of their religion for the best interests of their parishioners, and who stretched the scriptures to make them conform with reality. Hodgson's mother had a sister in Ardrahan, Ireland, and for a short time his father had a parish there. The village in this story was drawn from the scenes of Ardrahan. *My House Shall be Called the House of Prayer* is "an incident in the life of Father Johnson, Roman Catholic priest." In the priest's town, an old man is auctioning off a pitiful few belongings following the death of his wife. Townsmen bid small sums for them, and each item he surrenders tears him apart, because it is impregnated with the only thing he has left, his memories. A stranger, in pity, attempts to outbid the villagers, but his voice is ignored and lower offers accepted. Finally, the priest takes him to the house of the man, who has been auctioning off his belongings to save himself from eviction. Each item purchased has been returned by the villagers to its place. "He would not take the money from us," said the priest, later. "But do ye think the heart av him would let him sind back the gear!"

It is a beautiful story, told with consummate literary skill and indicates great human sensitivity on the part of the author.

Back in the horror tradition was *The Albatross*, which appeared in the July, 1911 issue of the great American pulp magazine, ADVENTURE. A sailor catches an albatross with a message in oilskin tied to it, telling of a girl alone on a sinking ship, with rats forced up by the water threatening her. She gives her location. The sailor sets out from his ship in a small boat and locates her. She is in a steel-lined cabin, besieged by rats. After a few desperate encounters with the rats, he finally kills most of them with shotgun pellets and sends the others into hiding.

The story had originally been placed with THE LONDON MAGAZINE and had been scheduled for the October, 1907 issue, under the title of *The Cry of the Albatross*. When the editor read *The Mystery of the Dere-*

lict in the July, 1907 THE STORY-TELLER, which also utilized the ship's rat menace, he balked, even though he had already paid fifty-three dollars for the story. To pacify him, Hodgson substituted *Further News of the Homebird* (and received twenty-five dollars more). The fact that even then it was held for four years, and no other Hodgson material appeared in the magazine during that period, indicates that Hodgson had temporarily antagonized the Harmsworth publication group, though it would eventually prove his best market.

The Mystery of the Derelict is a great sea horror classic, and though the story line of *The Albatross* is a good one and the writing excellent, the stress on the menace of the rats understandably makes it appear to be the reworking of a theme. It would eventually be printed in England in the October, 1912 issue of NEW MAGAZINE, another all-fiction periodical that had issued its first number dated April, 1909.

It was this same NEW MAGAZINE that in its January, 1912 issue saw the printing of the final Carnacki story to appear during Hodgson's lifetime, *The Thing Invisible.* Carnacki is called in to investigate a haunted chapel on an estate in South Kent, where a butler has been stabbed, but not fatally, with "a peculiar old dagger." It is the dagger which is really "haunted," and it is alleged to stab to death any enemy of the family. Carnacki spends a night in the chapel, with camera and gun, but protected by a coat of armor. The dagger, launched by some invisible agency, almost drives itself through the armor, and sends him streaking, galvanized with fear, from the chapel. He discovers, through a clue in the photograph, that the opening of the chancel gate launches the dagger by mechanical means. It has been preset by the aging owner to protect his late wife's jewels which he keeps hidden in the chapel.

Were it not for the planting of false clues, as a non-supernatural mystery this would be the only one of the series not tainted by cynical humor. Its chief merit rests in the superb suspense which Hodgson invests in Carnacki's night vigil in the chapel. This story had been scheduled for the June, 1910 THE IDLER, but for some reason was not published by that magazine.

A strange Carnacki volume had been published in pamphlet form in the United States in 1910 by Paul H. Reynolds, a publisher who specialized in low priced books, his most popular the Famous Authors Handy Library, ninety-six-paged pocket-sized books, bound in soft cover in brown simulated leather. It contained only fourteen pages, paper cover, sold for twenty-five cents, and was titled *Carnacki, The Ghost Finder, and a Poem.* An excellent condensation of *all* of the Carnacki stories was presented forming them into a single unit and the poem was a three-stanza supernatural imitation of Edgar Allan Poe's Annabel Lee, with strong rhythmic intonations of *The Bells,* and was titled *Lost.* The first stanza presents the idea:

"And, aye, I set to search the grey, lone plains
For my love out in the gloaming—
For my maiden, whence sad strains
Came o'er the waters moaning—
Moaning, moaning, moaning—
O'er the sea-hells wildly roaming."

Hodgson sold relatively few poems in his lifetime, one of the most vigorous *The Song of the Great Bull Whale,* to THE GRAND MAGAZINE, (March, 1912) which was now entirely a fiction pulp. He used the poem as a preface to his 1914 collection of short stories, *Men of the Deep Waters.* THE LONDON MAGAZINE carried his little poem, *Sobbing of the Water,* in its May, 1912 number, the happy lament of a stream flowing to the sea and leaving behind the familiar beauty "And pass to the Unknown Sea."

Briefly, Hodgson ventured back into the Sargasso Sea framework with his short story *The Thing in the Weeds,* published in the January, 1912 issue of THE STORYTELLER. Men aboard a sailing ship are hit with a strange odor that emanates from the sea around them at night. Then the mate disappears amidst a struggle and blood. Some tremendous thing attacks the ship, and by the light of the morning they see they are surrounded by weed, and an incredibly mammoth

octopus is floating alongside, A volley of bullets capped with some blasting powder disables the monster, and they float out of the weed. The story is ordinary, compared to the more imaginative plots of other of Hodgson's Sargasso adventures, but the handling, the building of horror, the action, and the writing techniques are little short of superb.

George Newnes, publisher of THE STRAND MAGAZINE, had launched a publication titled THE WIDE WORLD MAGAZINE in April, 1898. This magazine was composed entirely of true adventures, most illustrated with photos. It probably was the first of the men's true adventure publications and proved immediately successful. One of Hodgson's most unusual contributions was a three-part "true" expose of the sea, titled *Prentices' Mutiny* (shortened from *The Mutiny of the 'Prentices of the "Lady Morgan"),* which ran in the issues February to April, 1912, for which he recieved about sixty dollars per installment. The editor said of it: "Mr. Hodgson is well known as a writer of fiction, but in this remarkable story he has drawn his material from actual facts that occurred within his own experience. It is the history of what is perhaps the most amazing mutiny that ever happened—the revolt of eight mercantile marine apprentices against brutal officers. Every imaginable device was used to subdue them, even to firing a cannon against their stronghold."

The story told how eight apprentices were brutalized, how they barricaded themselves in a steel cabin, fortified with food, water and firearms. It outlined the days and nights of conflict when attempts were made to force them out by flooding, firearms, drilling, explosives, and cannon, and their final triumph after blinding one of the officers, shooting the Captain, and injuring many crew members, thus forcing a deal where everything returns to status quo. It reads precisely like the sieges in *Tropical Horror, From the Tideless Sea, The Albatross,* and *The Boats of the "Glen Carrig,"* down to the identical steel enclosed cabins. Only a few months earlier, the Octopus in *The Thing from the Weeds* had broken into a pen of sheep and killed some. Sheep in a pen aboard ship are injured from firing in *Prentices' Mutiny* also.

Hodgson, now a man of thirty-five, was like a child reliving forever the hurts of his youth. The cruel mate is blinded, the drunken, brutal Captain is shot, even the sympathetic seamen are characterized as ignorant, mentally retarded, and less than human. Only the 'prentices are brave, noble, intelligent and resourceful. His hatred and contempt for ships and the men who sail them was obsessive in its intensity.

All these stories were obviously cranked out to supply bread money. Somewhere, somehow, during 1910 and 1911, Hodgson whipped into final shape the 200,000 words of his epic, *The Night Land.* It is possible this novel may have been in the works as far back as 1906. A. St. John Adcock stated that: "He (Hodgson) ranked it as his highest achievement." In many other letters, notes, and interviews there is no question that in *The Night Land,* Hodgson laid his greatest hope of fame.

What his difficulties were in gaining publication is not known, but a contract was finally signed with Everleigh Nash, London, the publisher of NASH'S MAGAZINE, on July 19, 1911. Hodgson would receive *nothing* on the first 700 copies sold, then 25% royalties on sales above that figure.

The book sold for six shillings, which was a bargain considering his first three novels were that price and this one was three times as long as any of them. It was released April, 1912. Never previously listed in any bibliography was the special edition under the G. Bell & Sons Ltd. imprint, turned out simultaneously for "Bell's Indian and Colonial Library," under arrangement in the contract and distributed in the colonies at three shillings and sixpence each. Paperbound copies were two shillings, sixpence. Besides having a different publisher's imprint, the Colonial edition was bound in blue instead of red, omitted the notice on the back of the title page "Copyrighted 1912 by W. H. Hodgson in U.S. of America, all rights reserved," and carried on the page before the preface the single phrase: "The Dreams that are only Dreams," which does not appear in those bound

under the Everleigh Nash colophon. The Bell clothbound imprint was in no way inferior in quality of the binding and paper to that of Everleigh Nash. The Bell imprint also carried sixteen pages of listings of its other books in the rear of the volume.

The Night Land is a difficult book to read because of the insipidness of its opening seventeenth century love sequence, its length and small type. Nevertheless, the reviews were astonishingly favorable and perceptive. THE BOOKMAN for June, 1912, while aware of its weaknesses——"You may say that in The Night Land Mr. Hope Hodgson's reach exceeds his grasp, that his story in some of its details is obscure and difficult to follow, that he tells it in a quaint, archaic language that does not make for easy reading, but at least you cannot say that he has not aimed at doing a big thing,"——still carefully acknowledged its strengths: "Whatever Mr. Hodgson lacks it is not imagination, and his description of that fearsome journey by trackless ways and through perils undreamt of before, and of the meeting of the two lovers, and the adventures by turns grim, terrible, charmingly idyllic, through which they passed together give him scope for painting some of the most eerie, wildly horrible and pleasantly dainty pictures that have ever come from his pen. . . .a very original and sufficiently remarkable book."

"Quotable Quotes" were picked up from reviews all over the country. From THE MORNING LEADER: "A remarkably fine piece of narrative. . .a *tour de force.*" THE MORNING POST repeated the impression: "Mr. Hodgson has achieved a *tour de force.*" VANITY FAIR stated: "The book is in every sense remarkable . . .the style in which it is written, the theme of which it treats, and the eerie imaginative quality which abounds in it are all exceedingly rare and fascinating, so that when once it has been taken up one cannot leave it for any length of time." COUNTRY LIFE asserted: "The story is one that claims and holds the attention from start to finish of a novel of considerable imaginative power and striking originality."

The editor of THE LONDON MAGAZINE, in his brief sketch of William Hope Hodgson in the July, 1912 issue, gave a contemporary view that is beginning to prevail: "Of his books, the last is by far the most notable. 'The Night Land' is in its way, its own peculiar way—the most notable book that has seen the light of day for many years. Only Hodgson could have written it, and while the reviewers have tried to assimilate it with consequences disasterous to themselves, it is still awaiting understanding."

Following his death, THE SPHERE for June 8, 1918, summed up by saying: "One at least of his books, The Night Land, may eternally secure the interest of the public."

The Night Land, cut and revised by Hodgson to a novelette of 20,000 words was published as "*The Rescued Fragments of The Dream of X.* Edited by William Hope Hodgson" and appeared in a rare paper bound book of eighty-four pages from R. H. Paget, New York in 1912 as "*Poems*" *and* "*A Dream of X.*" Like Carnacki, this may have been a vanity or a promotion publication. "*A Dream of X*" took up only forty-two pages of the volume, the rest was filled with a reprint of *Prentice's Mutiny* under the title of *Mutiny* and twelve poems including *The Song of the Great Bull Whale* and *The Sobbing of the Freshwater.*

If we are to speak only in a technical sense, *The Boats of the "Glen Carrig"* is Hodgson's best novel. But skillful and literary as that work is, only another outstanding adventure story would have been lost if it had never been published. *The Night Land* is an imaginative achievement, standing uniquely alone. Nothing like it had ever been previously written. Fantastic literature specifically would be unquestionably poorer without it. Hodgson was undoubtedly right in regarding it as his supreme achievement.

By 1912, William Hope Hodgson had become a well-liked eccentric in the London editorial offices. The editor of *THE LONDON MAGAZINE* said of him, as background for his short story, *Judge Barclay's Wife*, in the July, 1912 issue: "In spite of

being an author who likes the night hours for working, and in spite of his cadaverous looks and abnormally fluid imagination, Hodgson is terribly muscular and takes as much pride in his biceps as he does in his stories. He is a confirmed egotist, who loves to talk about himself, and he is as argumentative as a Scotchman. He has been, amongst ten thousand other things, a sailor, and is sometimes not unnaturally mistaken for a pugilist. He can write horrors in a way to frighten editors out of their wits, but he also writes effectively of nice things."

Judge Barclay's Wife was, of all things, a *western* story. The sixty-year-old wife of a frontier judge had always urged him "to stiffen his backbone" in sentencing. She comes upon the sheriff's party about to hang a teen-age boy, with his mother furiously fighting the men who are holding her. The boy has escaped from jail with his mother's help, after being sentenced to die for a questionable murder. The Judge's wife had despised her husband for his clemency, but now is sickened by what she sees. She pulls the sheriff's gun from its holster, sends a shot through her husband's hat, another at the sheriff which is deflected by his belt buckle, cuts the boy free and permits him to escape on a fast horse. The story is effective, but awkward and oversentimentalized. It was still good enough to be printed in the United States by ADVENTURE in its October, 1912 number.

The extent of Hodgson's literary diversification was apparent, and it became even more evident when THE RED MAGAZINE became one of his best markets. THE RED MAGAZINE was also published by Alfred Harmsworth, who edited THE LONDON MAGAZINE. It was intended to compete with THE STORYTELLER, NASH'S MAGAZINE, NEW MAGAZINE, and other all-fiction pulps that had become increasingly the vogue in England. It would become the most popular of all of them, occupying a position comparable with THE ARGOSY in the United States. It had begun publication in June, 1908 as a thick, octavo-sized pulp of 184 pages. In February, 1910 it went twice a month, featuring names as prominent as Jack London, J. S. Fletcher, Jacques Futrelle, Rafael Sabatini, Maurice Leblanc and E. Charles Vivian, and was selling for 4½ pence, something equivalent to seven cents a copy. THE RED MAGAZINE was to become, with THE LONDON MAGAZINE, Hodgson's primary market. He sold twenty-four stories to THE RED MAGAZINE and seventeen stories and one poem to THE LONDON MAGAZINE.

The first story for THE RED MAGAZINE was *Jock Damplank* (originally titled *The Secret of the Hiding Place)* in the April 1, 1912 issue. It was a light tale of a man who is left the equivalent of $500,000 by an Uncle, who has not lived to give its location. The battle of wits between the heir and his brother to locate the treasure from the cryptic clues available, and its final unearthing in the rose garden of one of his uncle's cottages, provide an inconsequential bit of fiction, interesting only for the clever utilization of photography in the story.

Captain Jat—Island of Ud, in the May 15, 1912 number, was an unusual combination of humor and horror, and creates two of Hodgson's best characters, the six foot seven, thin, leathery-skinned, hard-drinking, adventurous Captain Jat, with his friend the cabin boy Pibby Tawles. On the Island of the Ud, they discover the flat-faced brown women who wear gigantic claws in obeisance to a monstrous crab which they worship. Both crack shots, Captain Jat and Pibby have several encounters in which they kill a score of the natives, harpoon the mammoth crab as it leaves the water to eat a woman tied as a sacrifice to a pole covered with pearls, and take off with the precious jewels. The boy, through his own devices, secures many of the pearls for himself without Captain Jat's knowledge.

A sequal, *Captain Jat—Adventure of the Headland*, appeared in the November 1, 1912 issue. It is a colorful adventure of the half-drunken Jat, who cuffs Pibby around for kicks, in search of gold on an island run by native priests who run on all fours among packs of giant white man-eating dogs. Safely back aboard the ship, Pibby stashes a cache of gold coins which he has dug up after Jat

had given up the treasure as lost. The first of the Captain Jat stories was reprinted in the October, 1912 issue of SHORT STORIES in the United States.

In *The Getting Even of Tommy Dodd* in THE RED MAGAZINE, August 15, 1912, one of the ship's 'prentices, much abused by the officers, picks up a girl's disguise ashore, pretends to be a stowaway, and playing the Captain against the various other officers, revenges himself for many kicks, cuffs and pig-sty cleanings. The plot is highly unlikely, but the almost childish delight Hodgson took in abusing ship's officers in fiction continues to be revealing.

Then, amidst the lighter material, he produced for the December 1, 1912 issue a short science fiction sea horror tale of near-genius inspiration, titled *The Derelict.* He lays the foundation for his imaginative concept with the claim that given the proper chemistry of materials, life automatically can come into being without any external factors. The good ship *Bheotpe* sights a derelict and crew members put out in a small boat to investigate. They are forced to row their way through a thick scum in the water. Aboard the derelict, they find it completely coated with a white, gummy substance which gives under their weight. There is an animal odor about the ship, a vessel which they estimate is about 300 years old. Giant sea lice, some of them a foot long and capable of jumping twenty feet, are found aboard. When they kick the soft substance coating the ship, a purple fluid issues forth.

Then, perceptably, they become aware of a faint sound, a sort of a "thud, thud, thud," constant and regular. Purple liquid squirts from the breaks in the substance they have kicked, and suddenly the decks beneath them go into convulsion and a mass of white substance inundates one of the men. Great veins appear in the substance, and the men dash for the side of the ship with their shoes literally being sucked from their feet. The "thud, thud, thud" grows ever louder. They jump into a boat alongside, but a great lippet from the mass of the old ship comes over the bow at them. They suddenly become aware that the strange material is alive!

Their crew comes up in a small boat and with a superhuman effort they attempt to extricate themselves from the scum, but they make only painstaking progress. Finally they clear it, and the realization strikes them that the "thud, thud, thud," was *the heart of a living organism.* That somehow the chemicals and materials aboard this old ship had centuries past formed the right combination for the creation of life. "If I could have had her bill of lading," the ship's doctor says with regret. . . ."What a chance—eh?" *The Derelict* was later reprinted in the February, 1916 issue of *All Around* in the United States and has been reprinted many times since, as one of the great masterpieces of horror science fiction.

Two of the stories that William Hope Hodgson had published in early 1913 were out-and-out love stories. *The Girl with the Grey Eyes* (THE RED MAGAZINE, January 15, 1913) tells of a young Briton in Australia, waiting to return to England for his legacy, who falls in love with the grey, honest eyes of a girl who is seen only with a handsome red-headed chap. His most extraordinary efforts fail to attract her affection, until finally, in utter exasperation, he drubs her red-headed companion with his fists, only to learn that the man is her brother! *Kind, Kind of Gentle is She* (THE RED MAGAZINE, April 1, 1913) is the story of Jell Murphy, a young, powerful, handsome trooper in the colonial army who is asked to sing at a performance arranged by the colonel's daughter. He falls in love with her during practice, and she apparently responds to his appearance and voice. He is killed in a native uprising after making an epic defense of the station. When, after his death, the men are observed putting flowers on his grave, the colonel's daughter, who has married the Captain, states: "He deserved it. Is your coffee right, dear?"

These stories were probably symptomatic of Hodgson's own state of mind. The Alfred Harmsworth magazines, THE LONDON MAGAZINE and THE RED MAGAZINE, were his primary markets. Among the other publications issued by the company were several women's magazines, in-

cluding a weekly, HOME NOTES. Betty Farnworth, a member of the staff of the woman's magazine, where she gave advice on many everyday matters, caught Hodgson's fancy. She was just about the same age as he, 36, having been born the same year, 1877. Her home was not far from Hodgson's, in Cheadle, Hulme, a farm town which enjoyed a large professional population commuting to Manchester daily. Friends still living in the town state that "the Farnworths were a charming Victorian family—talented in many fields—respected and known in the area."

They married in 1913 and went on a honeymoon to Southern France, which proved such a pleasant and economical place to live at the time that they decided to take up residence in Chalet Mathilda, Sanary (Var). Writing to his brother Frank, Hodgson stated: "However, I'm managing to keep my old friend (the Wolf!) from the door by means of my short stories; and, here in the sunshine our wants are simple, so that I am happy —shall I go further and say we are happy." Most important for family relations, his sister Lissie, the family sparkplug, liked his wife.

It was in March, 1913 that his Carnacki stories, under the title of *Carnacki The Ghost Finder*, were published by Everleigh Nash. The book contained the five stories in THE IDLER and the one in NEW MAGAZINE. Hodgson received no advance on the book, so it did nothing to finance the honeymoon. Critical reception was immensely good. THE BOOKMAN for June, 1913, in a long, favorable review, said: "Mr. Hope Hodgson's new novel comprises half-a-dozen of the 'creepiest' experiences imaginable. Carnacki, the hero or victim of these experiences, narrates them to a privileged circle of friends with an artistic sense of cumulative horror calculated to create the sensation known as gooseflesh in your veriest skeptic. . . .Mr. Hope Hodgson plays deftly on the strings of fear, and his new novel stamps him a fascinating panic-monger with a quick eye for all the sensational possibilities of ghost lore." THE LIVERPOOL COURIER stated: "Mr. Hodgson is probably our best writer of Ghost stories whether he finds them afloat or ashore." THE GLOBE reviewer felt: "There is not one of this collection of ghostly episodes which does not grip with its weird fascination."

Hodgson was beginning to write every type of fiction now—detective, love, westerns, historical, humor, war (for World War I had begun) and for many stories he was now getting one hundred dollars and better. The novel writing had ceased and with it his greatest flights of imagination. He had a wife to support, and money must be brought in on a regular basis. There was some indication that he may have begun a novel, in the form of a 12,000 word beginning of a story titled *Captain Dang (An account of certain peculiar and somewhat memorable adventures).* This would definitely have been another fantasy, though Hodgson spent a great deal of wordage building up the character of Captain Dang, an officer of seemingly great reserve and culture, possessed of immense physical strength, who changes to an idiosyncratic man of deceptive affability, piercing intelligence and human likeableness at sea. Captain Dang tells the Second Mate (obviously William Hope Hodgson) of a strange Pacific island lagoon, in which floats the derelict of an old American wooden ship. The story he was told by a friend is that while their ship was anchored in this lagoon, the face of a beautiful woman suddenly appeared at one port, and then disappeared, to be replaced by the face of an old hag at another. On shore, the beautiful face appears from behind a tree, and a sailor throws a harpoon at it. It disappears, but beyond he finds the body of one of the crewmen mangled and dead. Back aboard ship, he keeps an all-night vigil while the other men sleep. He dozes off and wakes to see the faces of two beautiful women at one port, then the old hag at the other. He tosses another harpoon through the port at them, but on investigation no one else is aboard ship. Returning to the cabin he finds all his mates dead from no discernable cause.

Captain Dang is searching for that lost lagoon, and appears to have sighted it just as the "uncompleted" manuscript comes to an end.

There were still more fantasies to come from William Hope Hodgson, but they were growing fewer and further between.

The Finding of the Graiken (THE RED MAGAZINE, February 15, 1913), returns to the locale of the Sargasso Sea, to which Ned Barlow is guided almost by telepathic impulses to find his betrothed who has been trapped for a year aboard a ship. Besides the weed, the main deterrents are the innumerable giant octopi, the battle against which to achieve the ultimate rescue makes thrilling reading.

THE LONDON MAGAZINE for March, 1913 had J. Scott Williams superbly illustrate Hodgson's heavily sentimental story, *Sea Horses*, which tells of the relationship between old salt Granfer Zacchy, his Grandson Nebby, and a wooden sea horse with a Unicorn-shaped head built for the boy. The grandfather, who is a diver, has tethered the sea horse to the bottom of the sea, and tells the boy it has swum away. The boy takes only the helmet and the air hose and attempts to descend into the depths after the sea horse but drowns. When the grandfather discovers the boy is missing, he organizes a search for the body, but nothing is found. When the sea is calm, he descends and finds the sea horse tied where he left it. Day after day he lowers himself to the ocean bottom and just stares at the sea horse, consumed in grief. One spell below, he thinks he hears singing, and sees a tiny agile figure mount and untether the sea horse, and ride round and round him, gleefully singing a song of his own composition. And the boy speaks to the old man. The story ends: "And so passed Granfer Zacchy and Nebby into the Land where little boys may ride Sea-Horses for Ever, and where Parting becomes one of the Lost Sorrows."

The similarity of this story to *The Valley of Lost Children* is obvious, and one wonders if Hodgson as well as his mother did not mourn for the spirits of his lost brothers and sisters.

Probably the last science fiction of truly classic stature that Hodgson would write was *The Mystery of the Ship in the Night*, published as *The Stone Ship* in THE RED MAGAZINE for July 1, 1914. Mailed March 21, 1914, it was accepted March 30 and eighty-five dollars paid for it. It would later be printed as *Silent Ship* in America's SHORT STORIES for August, 1918. The version in THE RED MAGAZINE was cut, but subsequent printings were the original length of approximately 13,000 words.

About 1,000 miles east of Africa, twenty days out of London, one windless night the crew of the barque *Alfred Jessop* is startled to hear the sound of running water, like a brook running downhill, in the middle of the Atlantic. They see a large indistinct object in the mist, and row out in a small boat towards it, but their oars are tugged at by gigantic sea eels, while there are sounds like muffled explosions. A mast emerges and before them is a ship with water streaming down her sides, which is literally of solid stone, covered with slime. What appears to be a shaggy red head of hair emerges from a port, then disappears. They board the ship, break through stone doors of a cabin, slosh through floors cloaked in water, and see seated at a stone table a man of stone. A mass of red hair seems to rise from him, and they fire at the red mass and flee from the ship. As they move away, the ship founders and sinks, and a reef slowly rises from the ocean, with a number of huge, red crawling things on it. They realize the red crawlies are giant sea caterpillars, and the ship had mineralized at the bottom of the sea and risen as the result of a slow quake. The bursting of giant deep-sea creatures cast up from the depths had made the strange noises.

Hodgson's infallible feel for the right combination of occurances and objects to arouse mystery and wonder is admirably demonstrated in this story told with logical imagination and unsurpassed sureness of technique.

But the opportunity and market for the horror science fiction and fantasy he did best was narrowing, and he ground out dozens of adventure stories, redeemed predominately by a natural storyteller's sense and a gift of narrative.

On June 14, 1914 he wrote from

Southern France to congratulate his brother Frank in America on his marriage, and the letter is revealing both in its initial overdone opening: "My Dear Old Frank. This is just to give you a good old grip-o-the fist and a bottom-of-the-heart mixture of prayer and good wishes for the real jolly fine big burning happiness that I feel is both your due and what is coming to you," with its hearty sailor-like warmth, but even more revealing about his own thinking appears as the letter continues: "My sixth book *Men of Deep Waters* comes out next month. [It would not appear until September.] Wish it luck for me, old boy, for I've not made one single penny piece out of my last books [*The Night Land* and *Carnacki the Ghost Finder*]—just a lot of quite genuine admiration; but no cash at all, &, ye ken, admiration's no great filler of an empty tummy!!!. . .All the same old man, I just *would* like to reap some of the rewards of nearly twelve years of solid labour and hopes and longings and any amount of ink and midnight oil. So pray; both of ye, that my sixth book may bring me shekels as well as kudos. I've great hopes for it. It contains the pick of my short stories. Whirroo! What'd I do if very rich? I'd dig a hole twelve miles deep, to see what the world's made of inside!"

There was a friendly addenda by his wife: "The Boss seems to have left me out altogether, but I don't see why I shouldn't add my good wishes for the future to you both."

Though 1914 was one of his best years, he had made only approximately $1,100 from magazine sales. That had to be the bulk of his income, for there were not likely to be any slide lectures in France.

The fate of *Men of the Deep Waters*, which did indeed contain some of his most superlative short stories—*The Derelict*, *From the Tideless Sea* (and its sequel), *The Voice in the Night*, *The Mystery of the Derelict*, and *The Shamraken Homeward-Bounder* six of the finest horror classics of the sea in all literature, received the same reception as the other books. Fulsome critical appreciation and small sales.

Speaking of Hodgson's selections, THE BOOKMAN for November, 1914 said they "are stories that, in their kind would add something to the reputation of any living novelist. They grip you, as Poe's grim stories do, by their subtle artistry and sheer imaginative power. . .and of the mystery, the perils, the loneliness of the sea, the almost unthinkable horrors that lurk waiting for the castaway in unknown places, we have read few stories equal to the others named." His opinion was echoed by virtually every other review. THE LONDON TIMES said: "A serious contribution to literature. Its quality is excellent." THE LIVERPOOL COURIER: "These stories of the sea are enthralling. . .Mr. Hodgson is a writer on whom the mantle of Poe has fallen," and THE GLASGOW HERALD: "In these stories of the sea Mr. Hodgson worthily maintains a well-won reputation of strength in the qualities of imagination, mystic beauty and spiritual force."

Under the terms of contract, Hodgson did not receive a penny advance or anything on the first three hundred copies, and while he conceivably might have made something on the book, every indication is that the amount was extremely modest.

With World War I under way, William Hope Hodgson returned to England with his wife and joined The University of London's Officer's Training Corps. Because of his Third Mate's certificate, they tried to talk him into going into the navy, but he grew livid with anger at the very suggestion. He wanted nothing remotely connected with sailors, ships or the sea. He got a commission as a Lieutenant in the Royal Field Artillery, entering the service in 1915, and his wife went to live at 14 Queens Road, Cheadle Hulme, Chesire, G.P.

He was thrown from a horse in 1916 and suffered a head injury so severe that his discharge from the armed service was mandatory, and so he returned to his writing.

His book *Luck of the Strong* was published May, 1916, and was predominantly made up of adventure stories, including the two Captain Jat yarns, but was most notable for the inclusion of *The Stone Ship*, which was singled out as "an excellent example of the author's skill!" by THE

BOOKMAN for August, 1916. "Mr. Hodgson more than once has been paid the compliment of being likened to Poe. It is a compliment not carelessly paid," said THE DAILY TELEGRAPH. Since the British first edition of this book is rarely ever seen, its sales could not have been extraordinary.

A particularly successful series written before his entry into the service was that about Captain Gault, a seaman whose specialty is getting illegal goods past the American customs, and a number of stories concerning his exploits appeared in THE LONDON MAGAZINE in 1914 and 1915. Ten of them were gathered for publication in a book titled *Captain Gault* from Everleigh Nash in England in September, 1917 and was dedicated to the brother of his wife, Gilbert K. Farnworth (killed in action, May 8th, 1917), "This simple, cheerful tale which was always so much to your liking: in affectionate memory." An American edition of the book was published by MacBride in 1918, but omitted two poems that are included in the British printing.

Rallying his knowledge of physical conditioning and drawing upon his immense strength and vitality, William Hope Hodgson made a dramatic recovery and convinced the R. F. A. that they should permit him to reenlist. Back in the service he was sent into action, and a series of published articles and stories reflect his war experiences. One letter he sent his mother in 1918 tells vividly of his impressions:

> "The sun was pretty low as I came back, and far off across that desolation, here and there they showed—just formless, squarish, cornerless masses erected by man against the infernal Storm that sweeps for ever, night and day, day and night, across that most atrocious Plain of Destruction. My God! talk about a Lost World—talk about the END of the World; talk about the 'Night Land'—it is all here, not more than two hundred odd miles from where you sit infinitely remote. And the infinite, monstrous, dreadful pathos of the things one sees—the great shell-hole with over thirty crosses sticking in it; some just up out of the water—and the dead below them, submerged. . . .If I live and come somehow out of this (and certainly, please God, I shall and hope to), *what* a book I shall write if my old 'ability' with the pen has not forsaken me."

His friend, A. St. John Adcock of THE BOOKMAN, described Hodgson's last army days: "He put aside all literary work and threw himself heart and soul into his new duties. With characteristic simple frankness, he said his only fear was lest he should feel any shrinking when his time came—a fear that nobody who knew him could ever have had for him. In October, 1917, he went to France with his battery, and was soon in the thick of the fighting. Early in April, 1918, he and a brother officer with a few N.C.O.'s successfully stemmed the rush of an overwhelming number of the enemy who had broken through their line right up to the guns; they fought a gallantly stubborn rear-guard action, under a hail of rifle and machine-gun fire, for three miles across country. A week or two later, on the 17th of April, 1918, he was killed in action, whilst acting as an observation officer."

His death near Ypres of a shell burst was reported May 2, 1918 in THE TIMES of London. His Commanding Officer described him as "Willing, cheerful and courageous." He had been a popular officer with his men.

All of his life William Hope Hodgson had written poetry, ranging in quality from amateurish to excellent. He managed to slip samples of it into many of his books. As a memorial to him after his death, his wife paid to have two books of verse published by Selwyn & Blount in 1920, *The Calling of the Sea* and *The Voice of the Ocean*, both in editions of 500.

Two other proposed volumes were *More Deorum and Other Poems* and *Spume*. Virtually all of the poems planned for both those volumes are on the subject of death. There are also enough miscellaneous to make a third volume, some of which are also on death, and among them is one titled

To God, which asks an unanswerable question:

I am dying, and my work is all before me;
As a pencil that doth break beneath the knife
So have I brake before the bitter sharping
Of the grim blades of thought that shaped my life,
And made me fit and keen to speak before Thee,
And now I die, just trained enough to sing.

Why must I die when I was fit to speak?
And why the bitter training of these years—
That bred expression's need, and the live promise
That I should sing my song? And now, too weak,
I see my glories through a mist of tears,
As a dumb seer that dies beneath death's kiss,
Seeing great visions from a cask of iron.

O Thou Who Art; but not by man described—
A Force all hidden from the eyes of Proof,
Believed in dumbly, or with foolish word,
By man whose thoughts are by emotions bribed,
If Thou art there, so utter and aloof,
Answer my heart that flutters, here, absurd,
Asking unguided questions of the Dark—
Hope asking— Hope that can but Hark.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION by LIN CARTER

AFTER THE DEATH of Clark Ashton Smith in 1961, there were found among his papers the notes and outlines of many unwritten stories; some of these were raw, fragmentary ideas only a dozen or fifteen words long, lacking titles, lacking the names of any characters. Others, however, were very complete and detailed plot-outlines running to three hundred or even five hundred words, with titles, characters and everything.

I am interested in problems of pure style and technique, and find immense pleasure in the exacting task of really trying to pastiche a style I admire. Smith's style is a tremendous job to tackle—elaborate, sonorous, bejewelled, filled with unusual names and rare, exotic words. I asked Smith's widow permission to attempt a series of "posthumous collaborations," and received it. Since her recent death, this permission has been reaffirmed by the Estate, on whose behalf I am agenting and marketing these stories.

These stories are much more validly to be termed "posthumous collaborations" than are the yarns Derleth did in a similar vein. Derleth—perhaps wisely—refrained from making the slightest attempt at any imitation of Lovecraft's convoluted, adjectival prose. On the other hand, I am making every conceivable effort to duplicate exactly Smith's very individualistic and "gorgeous" prose style, even to computing the average number of words in a Klarkash-Tonian sentence, the average number of sentences in a Klarkash-Tonian paragraph, and the average word-length of a Klarkash-Tonian story.

I am also trying very hard to avoid inventing anything of my own for these stories, or, at least, I am trying to keep the Carterian contribution to the irreductible minimum. For example, even the titles of these stories were of Smith's own coinage, selected from a list of unused titles found in his "Black Book." As for the invented names, there are exactly twenty-three proper nouns in "The Utmost Abomination;" twelve of these come from extant stories in his Hyperborean cycle (such as Eibon, Yhoundeh, Iqqua, Mhu Thulan, etc.), five others come from the Cthulhu Mythos in general (like Yig, Byatis, Thuria, the Valusians), and of the six names which appear here in print for the first time, four of them come from lists of invented names found among Smith's papers (Milaab, Uori, Xactura, and Zylac).

I hope these new stories find favor in the eye of the readers, and, perhaps even more, I hope they possess the flavor and color and mood of genuine, authentic Klarkash-Toniana. How many of these posthumous collaborations time, chance and circumstances will permit me to publish is a question which remains unanswerable at this time. But it is my hope and my intention that eventually they will make up a book of their own.

The Double Tower

By CLARK ASHTON SMITH and LIN CARTER

REQUIRING SOLITUDE wherein to pursue his study of the antique goeties, Zloigm, premier archimage of the race of sentient ophidians which immediately preceded man in the dominion of this planet, turned from the teeming, basaltic warrens of his kind to the desolate and uninhabitated plateaux of the interior of the primordial continent of the serpent-men. There, among steep scarps of glittering obsidian, cleft by vertiginous chasms whose silence was riven only by the intermitten spouting of geysers, he found at last the solitude which he desired. Where fuming volcanic peaks soared to pierce the zenith, on a flint-strewn plain which shuddered ever to interminable subterranean convulsions, he caused to be raised his lonely tower of ebon glass by the bitter shores of a black tarn, and commenced his studious inquiries into the most abstruse and recondite

of the elder ophidian thaumaturgies.

Fundamental to the acquisition of this wisdom was the forbidden science of necromancy, and in the practice of this penumbral and gruesome craft had Zloigm become proficient to a superlative degree. From the indistinct lips of the spectres of the most celebrated of primordial mages, conjured hence by his art from remote and fabulous bourns, he wrung the most jealously-guarded formulae and litanies, and the secrets of the most legendary of the pentacles and sigils of lost antiquity which had lapsed from mundane knowledge aeons before. Those phantoms which proved stubborn or disobedient to his will he cowed with the threat of certain spiritual rigors and torments, or else prisoned within the surface of a mirror of black steel where they must dwell forever, trapped in a hell of two dimensions only, until they repented of their obduracies and yielded up to Zloigm the cantrips or invocations or liturgies of which he required knowledge.

Betimes, for greater convenience, he fleshed such phantasms within gaunt and umber mummies transported to his lone and solitary abode from many a hidden crypt, or buried vault, or lost and immemorial necropolis, by powerful genii bound subservient to his word. And many the frightful secret of an age-forgotten demonology was hoarsely whispered to him by the dry, worm-fretted lips of some withered lich, wrapped in dusty cerements redolent of ancient spices and the sharp mineral stench of tomb-natron, which housed the captive ghost of some prehistoric wizard of repute. On yet other such occasions, a spirit thus conjured up from the depths of time was forced to vivify a cunningly-contrived automaton of sparkling brass, or grotesque idols of rough-hewn and porous lava, magically rendered capable of audible speech.

Over the lapse of interminable years, having by these means exhausted the arcana of the purely mundane sorcerers of extinct civilizations of the forgotten prime, Zloigm eventually came to cast his questing spells yet further afield. And into his conjurational circle he summoned the spiritual essences of weird and monstrous beings—ultra-telluric magi which dwelt on distant planets remote in either time or space, or made their abode in the husks of burnt-out stars, or within the radioactive nuclei of certain far-wandering comets. So adept had the ophidian necromancer become by this time in the tedious and exacting art of the invocation of spirits, and to so adroit and subtle and profound a magistry had he attained, that it was not only within his power to summon up the apparitions of the dead, but of the living as well, whose astral or spectral counterparts he could force to him even across the untold distances of inter-stellar or trans-galactic space. And many and unthinkably alien were the bizarre abnormalities he called to his circle for due questioning. Some there were who, in their normal sphere, were accustomed to go about on two legs, or four, or six; and some that lacked the pedal extremities entire, and slithered on their bellies in the quaking slime like unto gigantic worms, or swam in the perpetual night that reigns it the uttermost depths of nameless seas, or drifted aloft forever on the eternal winds of storm-lashed worlds upon untiring and rigid pinions of animate crystal.

With one extra-terrestrial intelligence in particular did the necromancer desire to hold converse. He had learned of its existence from a race of sagacious arthropods who dwelt in caverns beneath the crust of a frozen satellite which revolved about the double star Pornox in the constellation of the Mantichora. The insectoid sages spoke of this being (whom they knew by the unpronouncable name, Crxyxll) in the most enthusiastic terms, for they held its attainments in the arcane philosophies in the highest esteem. They described it to Zloigm as an intelligent crawling white mould, which was the lone and solitary denizen of an otherwise deserted world circumambulant to a dim and nigh-extinguished sun called Klr, which was situated in the very remotest of the spiral nebulae, in those regions adjacent to ominously-rumored Shaggai which lies near the ultimate verge of angled space.

The sentient Crxyxll, however,

proved obdurate in the extreme and Zloigm was forced to employ the most dire and stringent modes of persuasion at his command; but the philosophic mould succeeded in resisting every conjuration in the grimoire of the necromancer. At length, grown frustrate by the obstinacy of the mould-entity, Zloigm cast aside all prudence and sonorously intoned a ritual of such supernal and transcendent authority as to command even the presence of one of the Elder Gods. As he enunciated the monstrous cacophonies of this frightful incantation, the heavens darkened ominously; the ivory moon veiled her pallid visage in mist, as if reluctant to attend the ultimate blasphemy, and the wan and timid stars fled, one by one, from the nocturnal zenith. Beneath the audacious necromancer the earth shuddered and the very foundations of his tower groaned aloud as if in protest: but naught detered the ophidian from the consummation of the ritual.

There soon materialized before Zloigm a dim luminance, a haze of light, a blur of phosphoric ectoplasm which floated, insubstantial as a vapor, within the triply-drawn Circle of Power. But albeit his endeavors at invoking the spirit of the mould-savant had at last eventuated in success, naught Zloigm could do would force the apparition into speech. To his several attempts to extract from the recalcitrant Crxyxll the ultimate arcana of his magistry, the phosphorescent spectre preserved a truculent and adamantine silence.

In vain did the ireful necromancer threaten the entity with the Yggrr incantation, the Nn'gao elixir, and with nine periapts carven from the ivory teeth of pterodactyls. Likewise did it remain obdurately silent before the Scarlet Sign, the Z light, and the Chian games. Even the curse-litany of Glorgne, which he recited in the Xu language, failed to excite it to speech. Wearying at last of his pointless inquisition, Zloigm uttered the Greater Dismissal, and, obliterating the nine pentacles of Sgandrom and extinguishing the sanguinary luminance of the seven lamps of hollowed ruby, he broke at the four cardinal points the triply-drawn circle of phosphoric powder, and closed his Book.

Fatigued to the extremities of his vigor by his unremitting thaumaturgical labors, the ophidian necromancer glided from the conjurational chamber and sought to recreate himself by a stroll through the gardens adjacent to his tower. This pleasaunce, however, to his surprise and consternation, he discovered no longer to exist. Instead of his topiary garden of bizarre Mesozoic flora, he found himself amidst a foetid grove of loathsome and tumescent fungi, whose swollen and phallic and hooded crests soared swaying to every side, exhuding a singularly vile and noxious putrescence, even as their glistening and spongy boles were stained and blotched with the rancid cankers of oozing and liquescent decay.

Unable to easily account for this cryptic phenomenon, Zloigm traversed the fungus-grove with the boneless and undulant grace of his kind, fastidiously avoiding the slightest contact with the pustulant and sickening growths. He sought instead the peaceful shores of the bitter and lonely tarn, where it was oft his wont to stroll the crystalline strand in melancholy reverie. But the tarn, as well, had inexplicably vanished, and in its place he found himself gliding the giddy verge of a precipitous chasm. And within the depths of this abyss he glimpsed scarlet horrors of indefinite shape that writhed and slithered in the most noxiously suggestive manner amidst miasmic and bubbling slime.

It became indubitable that some malign transformation had been worked upon Zloigm's solitary demesne, doubtless through the enchantments of an insidious and vindictive rival. Turning from the lip of the shadowy gulf, wherein whose deeps the half-glimpsed horrors had not ceased from their repugnant and profoundly disquieting wrigglings, the necromancer sought again the sanctuary of his lone and solitary citadel—only to find a further encroachment of the metamorphosis, which he now saw to be progressive. For in the place of his somber and majestic tower there now rose an atrocious structure of virulent and nauseous hues, constructed according to the haphazard principals of some weird and prodigiously alien geometry. The eye-

wrenching colors and dizzying, impossible curves and angles of the architectural abomination were utterly repugnant to one of his race and temperament.

As he contemplated the loathsome spire with commingled bewilderment and ire, there slowly rose into view behind it an immense and dimly luminous orb of ghastly and leprous hue. Zloigm at once recognized the mottled and ebbing luminary for that wan, demising star about which the insect-sages had informed him the else-deserted world of the philosophic mould revolved. And there came to him there, as he stood amidst the festering grove of stalked and nodding fungi, some intimation of the extent of his predicament. It was not, as he had first conjectured, the malison of some iniquitous rival sorcerer which had worked this malevolent metamorphosis—*but his own temerity in uttering the forbidden and blasphemic ritual.*

Indeed, so titanic had been his efforts to force the obdurate Crxyxll hither, that he had bent awry the very fabric of space itself, and his own somber spire and the garish and atrocious abode of the alien entity now simultaneously occupied the same point in space and time. The fullest implications of this uncanny simultaneity did not at once dawn upon the cold intelligence of the ophidian: neither did he suffer undue dismay or perturbation at the *ominous tendency* of this sequence of transmutations, for he knew that the texture of space is pliable and resilient only to a degree, and that this unnatural condition could not long endure and would soon terminate, the superimposed towers returning each to its customary coign at opposite poles of the universe. As well, his memory retained spells and cantrips of prodigious and transcendent magnitude, the very utterance of which would summon to his aid, across the breadth of the cosmos itself if need be, daemons and genii and elementals of awful and terrific mightiness, bound to his servitude by unsunderable vows.

Therefore it was with a certain chill amusement than with any trepedation that he traversed the loathsome garden towards the alien spire of revolting configuration and nauseating hues, but, of a sudden, found the undulant, gliding perambulation of his serpentkind now altered to a mode of peculiar and unseemly locomotion. In a word, he now moved forward by a singular crepitation of innumerous segmentations, and, turning his astounding vision upon his own person, he saw, by a sense of perception in no wise identical with sight, that the sequential transformation was now, presumably, complete: and that he had *himself* become interchanged with the being of the recalcitrant Crxyxll, and was now become a squirming and disgusting thing like unto a white and crawling mould.

The matrix of space and time shimmered and then grew stable again, but the alien panorama remained unchanged. He realized by this that the innate resilience of space had, as anticipated, re-asserted itself, the unnatural simultaneity of the double tower had terminated—but that he remained trapped in this hideous travesty of a form, while, presumably, the mind and spirit of the mould-philosopher currently resided in his own superior and comely body, doubtless even at this moment sampling the elaborate spectrum of sensuous and aesthetic pleasures the unique accomodations of his tower afforded.

Even before the whelming realization, Zloigm did not deign to yield to despair: for the metamorphosed ophidian knew that to give utterance to the name of but one of the potent genii who served him would undo this dreadful and nightmarish transmutation.

He thought, therefore, to open his lipless mouth in order to cry aloud, in the hissing and sibilant speech of his kind, upon Marbar or Focalor or Zepar or Bifrons. But no outward physical manifestation accompanied the mental command. Then, and then only, did the misfortunate necromancer taste the full bitterness of despair and horror, and savor the gall of the knowledge of his peculiar doom.

For the sentient crawling white mould, whose body he now inhabited forever, quite naturally, alike all of its extinct kind, possessed no slightest vestige of the organs of speech.

Minor literary reputations—and many rated major in the span of their fluorescence—have a vanishing rate that at least matches that of Francois Villon's lamented "snows of yesteryear." Who, apart from Ph.D. thesis research grubbers, remembers such titans of their times as Robert W. Chambers, Clyde Fitch, Paul Leicester Ford, Paul Armstrong or the American Winston Churchill?

Who remembers Herman D. Umbstaetter? Who indeed? And how many modern fanciers of fantasy react with ringing bells to the name of Cleveland Moffett? So be it! Yet both Umbstaetter and Moffett were names of some renown at the turn of the century and afterward, and if neither had existed the double header that follows might never have appeared at all.

An erstwhile advertising pioneer, Umbstaetter made literary headway as publisher of THE BLACK CAT, in 1895, one of the very first American monthly magazines devoted wholly to the short story. His publication, in the February, 1896, edition of TBC, of Moffett's *The Mysterious Card* was a vital factor in the magazine's early success.

The story created something of a furor among Umbstaetter's readers, was reprinted (and pirated) widely both here and abroad and called for a sequel, *The Mysterious Card Revealed,* which appeared in the August, 1896, issue of Cat. So long-lingering was their impact that, in 1912, both stories were printed together in small hardcover book form by Small Maynard & Co. of Boston.

Moffett, a Yale graduate and former Paris correspondent for James Gordon Bennett's New York *Herald,* had a long and near-illustrious career as a novelist, journalist and playwright. A second-echelon muckraking reformer of the Theodore Roosevelt era, his 1907 novel, *King in Rags,* led to widespread baking industry improvements, and his long-running Broadway play, *The Battle,* crusaded for the working man.

His was an extraordinary scoop when he foresaw colored television in reporting in an article on the transmission of moving pictures in full color by a young Polish inventor called *Seeing by Wire,* PEARSON'S MAGAZINE, October, 1899. And twenty years later won interest and approval with a novel, *Possessed,* in which beneficent influences from beyond the grave help keep a young woman sexually *straight*—sort of an immorality versus immortality theme.

But, for WEIRD TALES, Moffett's *Mysterious Card* duo represents a back-to-back winning pair—and here they are, both of them, as they appeared separately in Mr. Umbstaetter's BLACK CAT in 1896 and in Small Maynard hardcover sixteen years later. . .

The Mysterious Card

By CLEVELAND MOFFETT.

RICHARD BURWELL, of New York, will never cease to regret that the French language was not made a part of his education.

On the second evening after Burwell arrived in Paris, feeling lonely without his wife and daughter, who were still visiting a friend in London, his mind naturally turned to the theater. So, after consulting the daily amusement calendar, he decided to visit the *Folies Bergere*, which he had heard of as one of the notable sights. During an intermission he went into the beautiful garden, where gay crowds were strolling among the flowers and lights and fountains. He had just seated himself at a little three-legged table, with a view to enjoying the novel scene, when his attention was attracted by a lovely woman, gowned strikingly, though in perfect taste, who passed near him, leaning on the arm of a gentleman. The only thing that he noticed about this gentleman was that he wore eyeglasses.

Now Burwell had never posed as a captivator of the fair sex, and could scarcely credit his eyes when the lady left the side of her escort and, turning

back as if she had forgotten something, passed close by him, and deftly placed a card on his table. The card bore some French words written in purple ink, but, not knowing that language, he was unable to make out their meaning. The lady paid no further heed to him, but, rejoining the gentleman with the eye-glasses, swept out of the place with the grace and dignity of a princess. Burwell remained staring at the card.

Needless to say, he thought no more of the performance or of the other attractions about him. Everything seemed flat and tawdry compared with the radiant vision that had appeared and disappeared so mysteriously. His one desire now was to discover the meaning of the words written on the card.

Calling a fiacre, he drove to the Hotel Continental, where he was staying. Proceeding directly to the office and taking the manager aside, Burwell asked if he would be kind enough to translate a few words of French into English. There were no more than twenty words in all.

"Why, certainly," said the manager, with French politeness, and cast his eyes over the card. As he read, his face grew rigid with astonishment, and, looking at his questioner sharply, he exclaimed: "Where did you get this, monsieur?"

Burwell started to explain, but was interrupted by: "That will do, that will do. You must leave the hotel."

"What do you mean?" asked the man from New York, in amazement.

"You must leave the hotel now—to-night—without fail," commanded the manager excitedly.

Now it was Burwell's turn to grow angry, and he declared heatedly that if he wasn't wanted in this hotel there were plenty of others in Paris where he would be welcome. And, with an assumption of dignity, but piqued at heart, he settled his bill, sent for his belongings, and drove up the Rue de la Paix to the Hotel Bellevue, where he spent the night.

The next morning he met the proprietor, who seemed to be a good fellow, and, being inclined now to view the incident of the previous evening from its ridiculous side, Burwell explained what had befallen him, and was pleased to find a sympathetic listener.

"Why, the man was a fool," declared the proprietor. "Let me see the card; I will tell you what it means." But as he read, his face and manner changed instantly.

"This is a serious matter," he said sternly. "Now I understand why my confrère refused to entertain you. I regret, monsieur, but I shall be obliged to do as he did."

"What do you mean?"

"Simply that you cannot remain here."

With that he turned on his heel, and the indignant guest could not prevail upon him to give any explanation.

"We'll see about this," said Burwell, thoroughly angered.

It was now nearly noon, and the New Yorker remembered an engagement to lunch with a friend from Boston, who, with his family, was stopping at the Hotel de l'Alma. With his luggage on the carriage, he ordered the *cocher* to drive directly there, determined to take counsel with his countryman before selecting new quarters. His friend was highly indignant when he heard the story—a fact that gave Burwell no little comfort, knowing, as he did, that the man was accustomed to foreign ways from long residence abroad.

"It is some silly mistake, my dear fellow; I wouldn't pay any attention to it. Just have your luggage taken down and stay here. It is a nice, homelike place, and it will be very jolly, all being together. But, first, let me prepare a little 'nerve settler' for you."

After the two had lingered a moment over their Manhattan cocktails, Burwell's friend excused himself to call the ladies. He had proceeded only two or three steps when he turned, and said: "Let's see that mysterious card that has raised all this row."

He had scarcely withdrawn it from Burwell's hand when he started back, and exclaimed:

"Great God, man! Do you mean to say—this is simply—"

Then, with a sudden movement of his hand to his head, he left the room.

He was gone perhaps five minutes,

and when he returned his face was white.

"I am awfully sorry," he said nervously; "but the ladies tell me they—that is, my wife—she has a frightful headache. You will have to excuse us from the lunch."

Instantly realizing that this was only a flimsy pretense, and deeply hurt by his friend's behavior, the mystified man arose at once and left without another word. He was now determined to solve this mystery at any cost. What could be the meaning of the words on that infernal piece of pasteboard?

Profiting by his humiliating experiences, he took good care not to show the card to any one at the hotel where he now established himself, a comfortable little place near the Grand Opera House.

All through the afternoon he thought of nothing but the card, and turned over in his mind various ways of learning its meaning without getting himself into further trouble. That evening he went again to the *Folies Bergere* in the hope of finding the mysterious woman, for he was now more than ever anxious to discover who she was. It even occurred to him that she might be one of those beautiful Nihilist conspirators, or, perhaps, a Russian spy, such as he had read of in novels. But he failed to find her, either then or on the three subsequent evenings which he passed in the same place.

Meanwhile the card was burning in his pocket like a hot coal. He dreaded the thought of meeting any one that he knew, while this horrible cloud hung over him. He bought a French-English dictionary and tried to pick out the meaning word by word, but failed. It was all Greek to him. For the first time in his life, Burwell regretted that he had not studied French at college.

After various vain attempts to either solve or forget the torturing riddle, he saw no other course than to lay the problem before a detective agency. He accordingly put his case in the hands of an *agent de la surete* who was recommended as a competent and trustworthy man. They had a talk together in a private room, and, of course, Burwell showed the card. To his relief, his adviser at least showed no sign of taking offense. Only he did not and would not explain what the words meant.

"It is better," he said, "that monsieur should not know the nature of this document for the present. I will do myself the honor to call upon monsieur to-morrow at his hotel, and then monsieur shall know everything."

"Then it is really serious?" asked the unfortunate man.

"Very serious," was the answer.

The next twenty-four hours Burwell passed in a fever of anxiety. As his mind conjured up one fearful possibility after another he deeply regretted that he had not torn up the miserable card at the start. He even seized it, prepared to strip it into fragments, and so end the whole affair. And then his Yankee stubbornness again asserted itself, and he determined to see the thing out, come what might.

"After all," he reasoned, "it is no crime for a man to pick up a card that a lady drops on his table."

Crime or no crime, however, it looked very much as if he had committed some grave offense when, the next day, his detective drove up in a carriage, accompanied by a uniformed official, and requested the astounded American to accompany them to the police headquarters.

"What for?" he asked.

"It is only a formality," said the detective; and when Burwell still protested the man in uniform remarked: "You'd better come quietly, monsieur; you will have to come, anyway."

An hour later, after severe cross-examination by another official, who demanded many facts about the New Yorker's age, place of birth, residence, occupation, the bewildered man found himself in the *Conciergerie* prison. Why he was there or what was about to befall him Burwell had no means of knowing; but before the day was over he succeeded in having a message sent to the American Legation, where he demanded immediate protection as a citizen of the United States.

It was not until evening, however, that the Secretary of Legation, a

consequential person, called at the prison. There followed a stormy interview, in which the prisoner used some strong language, the French officers gesticulated violently and talked very fast, and the Secretary calmly listened to both sides, said little, and smoked a good cigar.

"I will lay your case before the American minister," he said as he rose to go, "and let you know the result to-morrow."

"But this is an outrage. Do you mean to say—" Before he could finish, however, the Secretary, with a strangely suspicious glance, turned and left the room.

That night Burwell slept in a cell.

The next morning he received another visit from the noncommital Secretary, who informed him that matters had been arranged, and that he would be set at liberty forthwith.

"I must tell you, though," he said, "that I have had great difficulty in accomplishing this, and your liberty is granted only on condition that you leave the country within twenty-four hours, and never under any conditions return."

Burwell stormed, raged, and pleaded; but it availed nothing. The Secretary was inexorable, and yet he positively refused to throw any light upon the causes of this monstrous injustice.

"Here is your card," he said, handing him a large envelope closed with the seal of Legation. "I advise you to burn it and never refer to the matter again."

That night the ill-fated man took the train for London, his heart consumed by hatred for the whole French nation, together with a burning desire for vengeance. He wired his wife to meet him at the station, and for a long time debated with himself whether he should at once tell her the sickening truth. In the end he decided that it was better to keep silent. No sooner, however, had she seen him than her woman's instinct told her that he was laboring under some mental strain. And he saw in a moment that to withhold from her his burning secret was impossible, especially when she began to talk of the trip they had planned through France.

Of course no trivial reason would satisfy her for his refusal to make this trip, since they had been looking forward to it for years; and yet it was impossible now for him to set foot on French soil.

So he finally told her the whole story, she laughing and weeping in turn. To her, as to him, it seemed incredible that such overwhelming disasters could have grown out of so small a cause, and, being a fluent French scholar, she demanded a sight of the fatal piece of pasteboard. In vain her husband tried to divert her by proposing a trip through Italy. She would consent to nothing until she had seen the mysterious card which Burwell was now convinced he ought long ago to have destroyed. After refusing for awhile to let her see it, he finally yielded. But, although he had learned to dread the consequences of showing that cursed card, he was little prepared for what followed. She read it, turned pale, gasped for breath, and nearly fell to the floor.

"I told you not to read it," he said; and then, growing tender at the sight of her distress, he took her hand in his and begged her to be calm. "At least tell me what the thing means," he said. "We can bear it together; you surely can trust me."

But she, as if stung by rage, pushed him from her and declared, in a tone such as he had never heard from her before, that never, never again would she live with him. "You are a monster!" she exclaimed. And those were the last words he heard from her lips.

Failing utterly in all efforts at reconciliation, the half-crazed man took the first steamer for New York, having suffered in scarcely a fortnight more than in all his previous life. His whole pleasure trip had been ruined, he had failed to consummate important business arrangements, and now he saw his home broken up and his happiness ruined. During the voyage he scarcely left his stateroom, but lay there prostrated with agony.

In this black despondency the one thing that sustained him was the thought of meeting his partner, Jack Evelyth, the friend of his boyhood, the sharer of his success, the bravest, most loyal fellow in the world. In the

face of even the most damning circumstances, he felt that Evelyth's rugged common sense would evolve some way of escape from this hideous nightmare. Upon landing at New York he hardly waited for the gang-plank to be lowered before he rushed on shore and grasped the hand of his partner, who was waiting on the wharf.

"Jack," was his first word, "I am in dreadful trouble, and you are the only man in the world who can help me."

An hour later Burwell sat at his friend's dinner table, talking over the situation.

Evelyth was all kindness, and several times as he listened to Burwell's story his eyes filled with tears.

"It does not seem possible, Richard," he said, "that such things can be; but I will stand by you; we will fight it out together. But we cannot strike in the dark. Let me see this card."

"There is the damned thing," Burwell said, throwing it on the table.

Evelyth opened the envelope, took out the card, and fixed his eyes on the sprawling purple characters.

"Can you read it?" Burwell asked excitedly.

"Perfectly," his partner said. The next moment he turned pale, and his voice broke. Then he clasped the tortured man's hand in with his with a strong grip. "Richard," he said slowly, "if my only child had been brought here dead it would not have caused me more sorrow than this does. You have brought me the worst news one man could bring another."

His agitation and genuine suffering affected Burwell like a death sentence.

"Speak, man," he cried; "do not spare me. I can bear anything rather than this awful uncertainty. Tell me what the card means."

Evelyth took a swallow of brandy and sat with head bent on his clasped hands.

"No, I can't do it; there are some things a man must not do."

Then he was silent again, his brows knitted. Finally he said solemnly:

"No, I can't see any other way out of it. We have been true to each other all our lives; we have worked together and looked forward to never separating. I would rather fail and die than see this happen. But we have got to separate, old friend; we have got to separate."

They sat there talking until late into the night. But nothing that Burwell could do or say availed against his friend's decision. There was nothing for it but that Evelyth should buy his partner's share of the business or that Burwell buy out the other. The man was more than fair in the financial proposition he made; he was generous, as he always had been, but his determination was inflexible; the two must separate. And they did.

With his old partner's desertion, it seemed to Burwell that the world was leagued against him. It was only three weeks from the day on which he had received the mysterious card; yet in that time he had lost all that he valued in the world—wife, friends, and business. What next to do with the fatal card was the sickening problem that now possessed him.

He dared not show it; yet he dared not destroy it. He loathed it; yet he could not let it go from his possession. Upon returning to his house he locked the accursed thing away in his safe as if it had been a package of dynamite or a bottle of deadly poison. Yet not a day passed that he did not open the drawer where the thing was kept and scan with loathing the mysterious purple scrawl.

In desperation he finally made up his mind to take up the study of the language in which the hateful thing was written. And still he dreaded the approach of the day when he should decipher its awful meaning.

One afternoon, less than a week after his arrival in New York, as he was crossing Twenty-third Street on the way to his French teacher, he saw a carriage rolling up Broadway. In the carriage was a face that caught his attention like a flash. As he looked again he recognized the woman who had been the cause of his undoing. Instantly he sprang into another cab and ordered the driver to follow after. He found the house where she was living. He called there several times; but always received the same reply, that she was too much engaged to see any one. Next he was told that she was ill, and on the following day the servant said she was much worse.

Three physicians had been summoned in consultation. He sought out one of these and told him it was a matter of life or death that he see this woman.

The doctor was a kindly man and promised to assist him. Through his influence, it came about that on that very night Burwell stood by the bedside of this mysterious woman. She was beautiful still, though her face was worn with illness.

"Do you recognize me?" he asked tremblingly, as he leaned over the bed, clutching in one hand an envelope containing the mysterious card. "Do you remember seeing me at the *Folies Bergere* a month ago?"

"Yes," she murmured, after a moment's study of his face; and he noted with relief that she spoke English.

"Then, for God's sake, tell me, what does it all mean?" he gasped, quivering with excitement.

"I gave you the card because I wanted you to— to—"

Here a terrible spasm of coughing shook her whole body, and she fell back exhausted.

An agonizing despair tugged at Burwell's heart. Frantically snatching the card from its envelope, he held it close to the woman's face.

"Tell me! Tell me!"

With a supreme effort, the pale figure slowly raised itself on the pillow, its fingers clutching at the counterpane.

Then the sunken eyes fluttered—forced themselves open—and stared in stony amazement upon the fatal card, while the trembling lips moved noiselessly, as if in an attempt to speak. As Burwell, choking with eagerness, bent his head slowly to hers, a suggestion of a smile flickered across the woman's face. Again the mouth quivered, the man's head bent nearer and nearer to hers, his eyes riveted upon the lips. Then, as if to aid her in deciphering the mystery, he turned his eyes to the card.

With a cry of horror he sprang to his feet, his eyeballs starting from their sockets. Almost at the same moment the woman fell heavily upon the pillow.

Every vestige of the writing had faded! The card was blank!

The woman lay there dead.

The Mysterious Card Unveiled

THE REMARKABLE *SEQUEL* TO THE FAMOUS

The Mysterious Card

NO PHYSICIAN was ever more scrupulous than I have been, during my thirty years of practice, in observing the code of professional secrecy. It is only for grave reasons, partly in the interests of medical science, largely as a warning to intelligent people, that I place upon record the following statements.

One morning a gentleman called at my offices to consult me about some nervous trouble. From the moment I saw him, the man made a deep impression on me, not so much by the pallor and worn look of his face as by a certain intense sadness in his eyes, as if all hope had gone out of his life. I wrote a prescription for him, and advised him to try the benefits of an ocean voyage. He seemed to shiver at the idea, and said that he had been abroad too much, already.

As he handed me my fee, my eye fell upon the palm of his hand, and I saw there, plainly marked on the Mount of Saturn, a cross surrounded by two circles. I should explain that for the greater part of my life I have been a constant and enthusiastic student of palmistry. During my

travels in the Orient, after taking my degree, I spent months studying this fascinating art at the best sources of information in the world. I have read everything published on palmistry in every known language, and my library on the subject is perhaps the most complete in existence.

In my time I have examined at least fourteen thousand palms, and taken casts of many of the more interesting of them. But I had never seen such a palm as this; at least, never but once, and the horror of the case was so great that I shudder even now when I call it to mind.

"Pardon me," I said, keeping the patient's hand in mine, "would you let me look at your palm?"

I tried to speak indifferently, as if the matter were of small consequence, and for some moments I bent over the hand in silence. Then, taking a magnifying glass from my desk, I

looked at it still more closely. I was not mistaken; here was indeed the sinister double circle on Saturn's mount, with the cross inside—a marking so rare as to portend some stupendous destiny of good or evil, more probably the latter.

I saw that the man was uneasy under my scrutiny, and presently, with some hesitation, as if mustering courage, he asked: "Is there anything remarkable about my hand?"

"Yes," I said, "there is. Tell me, did not something very unusual, something very horrible, happen to you about ten or eleven years ago?"

I saw by the way the man started that I had struck near the mark, and, studying the stream of fine lines that crossed his lifeline from the mount of Venus, I added: "Were you not in some foreign country at that time?"

The man's face blanched, but he only looked at me steadily out of those mournful eyes. Now I took his other hand, and compared the two, line by line, mount by mount, noting the short square fingers, the heavy thumb, with amazing will-power in its upper joint, and gazing again and again at that ominous sign on Saturn.

"Your life has been strangely unhappy, your years have been clouded by some evil influence."

"My God," he said weakly, sinking into a chair, "how can you know these things?"

"It is easy to know what one sees," I said, and tried to draw him out about his past, but the words seemed to stick in his throat.

"I will come back and talk to you again," he said, and he went away without giving me his name or any revelation of his life.

Several times he called during subsequent weeks, and gradually seemed to take on a measure of confidence in my presence. He would talk freely of his physical condition, which seemed to cause him much anxiety. He even insisted upon my making the most careful examination of all his organs, especially of his eyes, which, he said, had troubled him at various times.

Upon making the usual tests, I found that he was suffering from a most uncommon form of color blindness, that seemed to vary in its manifestations, and to be connected with certain hallucinations or abnormal mental states which recurred periodically, and about which I had great difficulty in persuading him to speak. At each visit I took occasion to study his hand anew, and each reading of the palm gave me stronger conviction that here was a life mystery that would abundantly repay any pains taken in unravelling it.

While I was in this state of mind, consumed with a desire to know more of my unhappy acquaintance and yet not daring to press him with questions, there came a tragic happening that revealed to me with startling suddenness the secret I was bent on knowing. One night, very late—in fact it was about four o'clock in the morning—I received an urgent summons to the bedside of a man who had been shot.

As I bent over him I saw that it was my friend, and for the first time I realized that he was a man of wealth and position, for he lived in a beautifully furnished house filled with art treasures and looked after by a retinue of servants. From one of these I learned that he was Richard Burwell, one of New York's most respected citizens—in fact, one of her best-known philanthropists, a man who for years had devoted his life and fortune to good works among the poor.

But what most excited my surprise was the presence in the house of two officers, who informed me that Mr. Burwell was under arrest, charged with murder. The officers assured me that it was only out of deference to his well-known standing in the community that the prisoner had been allowed the privilege of receiving medical treatment in his own home; their orders were peremptory to keep him under close surveillance.

Giving no time to further questionings, I at once proceeded to examine the injured man, and found that he was suffering from a bullet wound in the back at about the height of the fifth rib. On probing for the bullet, I found that it had lodged near the heart, and decided that it would be exceedingly dangerous to try to remove it immediately. So I contented myself with a sleeping potion.

As soon as I was free to leave

Burwell's bedside I returned to the officers and obtained from them details of what had happened. A woman's body had been found a few hours before, shockingly mutilated, on Water Street, one of the dark ways in the swarming region along the river front. It had been found at about two o'clock in the morning by some printers from the office of the *Courier des Etats Unis*, who, in coming from their work, had heard cries of distress and hurried to the rescue. As they drew near they saw a man spring away from something huddled on the sidewalk, and plunge into the shadows of the night, running from them at full speed.

Suspecting at once that here was the mysterious assassin so long vainly sought for many similar crimes, they dashed after the fleeing man, who darted right and left through the maze of dark streets, giving out little cries like a squirrel as he ran. Seeing that they were losing ground, one of the printers fired at the fleeing shadow, his shot being followed by a scream of pain, and hurrying up they found a man writhing on the ground. The man was Richard Burwell.

The news that my sad-faced friend had been implicated in such a revolting occurrence shocked me inexpressibly, and I was greatly relieved the next day to learn from the papers that a most unfortunate mistake had been made. The evidence given before the coroner's jury was such as to abundantly exonerate Burwell from all shadow of guilt. The man's own testimony, taken at his bedside, was in itself almost conclusive in his favor.

When asked to explain his presence so late at night in such a part of the city, Burwell stated that he had spent the evening at the Florence Mission, where he had made an address to some unfortunates gathered there, and that later he had gone with a young missionary worker to visit a woman living on Frankfort Street, who was dying of consumption. This statement was borne out by the missionary worker himself, who testified that Burwell had been most tender in his ministrations to the poor woman and had not left her until death had relieved her sufferings.

Another point which made it plain that the printers had mistaken their man in the darkness, was the statement made by all of them that, as they came running up, they had overheard some words spoken by the murderer, and that these words were in their own language, French. Now it was shown conclusively that Burwell did not know the French language, that indeed he had not even an elementary knowledge of it.

Another point in his favor was a discovery made at the spot where the body was found. Some profane and ribald words, also in French, had been scrawled in chalk on the door and doorsill, being in the nature of a coarse defiance to the police to find the assassin, and experts in handwriting who were called testified unanimously that Burwell, who wrote a refined, scholarly hand, could never have formed those misshapen words.

Furthermore, at the time of his arrest no evidence was found on the clothes or person of Burwell, nothing in the nature of bruises or bloodstains that would tend to implicate him in the crime. The outcome of the matter was that he was honorably discharged by the coroner's jury, who were unanimous in declaring him innocent, and who brought in a verdict that the unfortunate woman had come to her death at the hand of some person or persons unknown.

On visiting my patient late on the afternoon of the second day I saw that his case was very grave, and I at once instructed the nurses and attendants to prepare for an operation. The man's life depended upon my being able to extract the bullet, and the chance of doing this was very small. Mr. Burwell realized that his condition was critical, and, beckoning me to him, told me that he wished to make a statement he felt might be his last. He spoke with agitation which was increased by an unforeseen happening. For just then a servant entered the room and whispered to me that there was a gentleman downstairs who insisted upon seeing me, and who urged business of great importance. This message the sick man overheard, and lifting himself with an effort, he said excitedly: "Tell me, is he a tall man with glasses?"

The servant hesitated.

"I knew it; you cannot deceive me; that man will haunt me to my grave. Send him away, doctor; I beg of you not to see him."

Humoring my patient, I sent word to the stranger that I could not see him, but, in an undertone, instructed the servant to say that the man might call at my office the next morning. Then, turning to Burwell, I begged him to compose himself and save his strength for the ordeal awaiting him.

"No, no," he said, "I need my strength now to tell you what you must know to find the truth. You are the only man who has understood that there has been some terrible influence at work in my life. You are the only man competent to study out what that influence is, and I have made provision in my will that you shall do so after I am gone. I know that you will heed my wishes?"

The intense sadness of his eyes made my heart sink; I could only grip his hand and remain silent.

"Thank you; I was sure I might count on your devotion. Now, tell me, doctor, you have examined me carefully, have you not?"

I nodded.

"In every way known to medical science?"

I nodded again.

"And have you found anything wrong with me. I mean, besides this bullet, anything abnormal?"

"As I have told you, your eyesight is defective; I should like to examine your eyes more thoroughly when you are better."

"I shall never be better; besides it isn't my eyes; I mean myself, my soul—you haven't found anything wrong there?"

"Certainly not; the whole city knows the beauty of your character and your life."

"Tut, tut; the city knows nothing. For ten years I have lived so much with the poor that people have almost forgotten my previous active life when I was busy with money-making and happy in my home. But there is a man out West, whose head is white and whose heart is heavy, who has not forgotten, and there is a woman in London, a silent, lonely woman, who has not forgotten.

"The man was my partner, poor Jack Evelyth; the woman was my wife. How can a man be so cursed, doctor, that his love and friendship bring only misery to those who share it? How can it be that one who has in his heart only good thoughts can be constantly under the shadow of evil? This charge of murder is only one of several cases in my life where, through no fault of mine, the shadow of guilt has been cast upon me.

"Years ago, when my wife and I were perfectly happy, a child was born to us, and a few months later, when it was only a tender, helpless little thing that its mother loved with all her heart, it was strangled in its cradle, and we never knew who strangled it, for the deed was done one night when there was absolutely no one in the house but my wife and myself. There was no doubt about the crime, for there on the tiny neck were the finger marks where some cruel hand had closed until life went.

"Then a few years later, when my partner and I were on the eve of fortune, our advance was set back by the robbery of our safe. Some one opened it in the night, some one who knew the combination, for it was the work of no burglar, and yet there were only two persons in the world who knew that combination, my partner and myself. I tried to be brave when these things happened, but as my life went on it seemed more and more as if some curse were on me.

"Eleven years ago I went abroad with my wife and daughter. Business took me to Paris, and I left the ladies in London, expecting to have them join me in a few days. But they never did join me, for the curse was on me still, and before I had been forty-eight hours in the French capital something happened that completed the wreck of my life. It doesn't seem possible, does it, that a simple white card with some words scrawled on it in purple ink could effect a man's undoing? And yet that was my fate. The card was given me by a beautiful woman with eyes like stars. She is dead long ago, and why she wished to harm me I never knew. You must find that out.

"You see I did not know the language of the country, and, wishing to have the words translated—surely

that was natural enough—I showed the card to others. But no one would tell me what it meant. And, worse than that, wherever I showed it, and to whatever person, there evil came upon me quickly. I was driven from one hotel after another; an old acquaintance turned his back on me; I was arrested and thrown into prison; I was ordered to leave the country."

The sick man paused for a moment in his weakness, but with an effort forced himself to continue:

"When I went back to London, sure of comfort in the love of my wife, she too, on seeing the card, drove me from her with cruel words. And when finally, in deepest despair, I returned to New York, dear old Jack, the friend of a lifetime, broke with me when I showed him what was written. What the words were I do not know, and suppose no one will ever know, for the ink has faded these many years. You will find the card in my safe with other papers. But I want you, when I am gone, to find out the mystery of my life; and—and—about my fortune, that must be held until you have decided. There is no one who needs my money as much as the poor in this city, and I have bequeathed it to them unless—"

In an agony of mind, Burwell struggled to go on, I soothing and encouraging him.

"Unless you find what I am afraid to think, but—but—yes, I must say it—that I have not been a good man, as the world thinks, but have—O doctor, if you find that I have unknowingly harmed any human being, I want that person, or these persons to have my fortune. Promise that."

Seeing the wild light in Burwell's eyes, and the fever that was burning him, I gave the promise asked of me, and the sick man sank back calmer.

A little later, the nurse and attendants came for the operation. As they were about to administer the ether, Burwell pushed them from him, and insisted on having brought to his bedside an iron box from the safe.

"The card is here," he said, laying his trembling hand upon the box, "you will remember your promise!"

Those were his last words, for he did not survive the operation.

Early the next morning I received this message: "The stranger of yesterday begs to see you;" and presently a gentleman of fine presence and strength of face, a tall, dark-complexioned man wearing glasses, was shown into the room.

"Mr. Burwell is dead, is he not?" were his first words.

"Who told you?"

"No one told me, but I know it, and I thank God for it."

There was something in the stranger's intense earnestness that convinced me of his right to speak thus, and I listened attentively.

"That you may have confidence in the statement I am about to make, I will first tell you who I am." He handed me a card that caused me to lift my eyes in wonder, for it bore a very great name, that of one of Europe's most famous savants.

"You have done me much honor, sir," I said with respectful inclination.

"On the contrary you will oblige me by considering me in your debt, and by never revealing my connection with this wretched man. I am moved to speak partly from considerations of human justice, largely in the interest of medical science. It is right for me to tell you, doctor, that your patient was beyond question the Water Street assassin."

"Impossible!" I cried.

"You will not say so when I have finished my story, which takes me back to Paris, to the time, eleven years ago, when this man was making his first visit to the French capital."

"The mysterious card!" I exclaimed.

"Ah, he has told you of his experience, but not of what befell the night before, when he first met my sister."

"Your sister?"

"Yes, it was she who gave him the card, and, in trying to befriend him, made him suffer. She was in ill health at the time, so much so that we had left our native India for extended journeyings. Alas! we delayed too long, for my sister died in New York, only a few weeks later, and I honestly believe her taking off was hastened by anxiety inspired by this man."

"Strange," I murmured, "how the life of a simple New York merchant

could become entangled with that of a great lady of the East."

"Yet so it was. You must know that my sister's condition was due mainly to an over fondness for certain occult investigations, from which I had vainly tried to dissuade her. She had once befriended some adepts, who, in return, had taught her things about the souls she had better have left unlearned. At various times while with her I had seen strange things happen, but I never realized what unearthly powers were in her until that night in Paris.

"We were returning from a drive in the Bois; it was about ten o'clock, and the city lay beautiful around us as Paris looks on a perfect summer's night. Suddenly my sister gave a cry of pain and put her hand to her heart. Then, changing from French to the language of our country, she explained to me quickly that something frightful was taking place there, where she pointed her finger across the river, that we must go to the place at once—the driver must lash his horses—every second was precious.

"So affected was I by her intense conviction, and such confidence had I in my sister's wisdom, that I did not oppose her, but told the man to drive as she directed. The carriage fairly flew across the bridge, down the Boulevard St. Germain, then to the left, threading its way through the narrow streets that lie along the Seine. This way and that, straight ahead here, a turn there, she directing our course, never hesitating, as if drawn by some unseen power, and always urging the driver on to greater speed. Finally, we came to a black-mouthed, evil-looking alley, so narrow and roughly paved that the carriage could scarcely advance.

" 'Come on!' my sister cried, springing to the ground; 'we will go on foot, we are nearly there. Thank God, we may yet be in time.'

"No one was in sight as we hurried along the dark alley, and scarcely a light was visible, but presently a smothered scream broke the silence, and, touching my arm, my sister exclaimed:

" 'There, draw your weapon, quick, and take the man at any cost!'

"So swiftly did everything happen after that that I hardly know my actions, but a few minutes later I held pinioned in my arms a man whose blows and writhings had been all in vain; for you must know that much exercise in the jungle had made me strong of limb. As soon as I had made the fellow fast I looked down and found moaning on the ground a poor woman, who explained with tears and broken words that the man had been in the very act of strangling her. Searching him I found a long-bladed knife of curious shape, and keen as a razor, which had been brought for what horrible purpose you may perhaps divine.

"Imagine my surprise, on dragging the man back to the carriage to find, instead of the ruffianly assassin I expected, a gentleman as far as could be judged from face and manner. Fine eyes, white hands, careful speech, all the signs of refinement, and the dress of a man of means.

"How can this be?" I said to my sister in our own tongue as we drove away, I holding my prisoner on the opposite seat where he sat silent.

" 'It is a *kulos*-man,' she said, shivering, 'it is a fiend-soul. There are a few such in the whole world, perhaps two or three in all.'

"But he has a good face."

" 'You have not seen his real face yet; I will show it to you, presently.'

"In the strangeness of these happenings and the still greater strangeness of my sister's words, I had all but lost the power of wonder. So we sat without further word until the carriage stopped at the little chateau we had taken near the Parc Monteau.

"I could never properly describe what happened that night; my knowledge of these things is too limited. I simply obeyed my sister in all that she directed, and kept my eyes on this man as no hawk ever watched his prey. She began by questioning him, speaking in a kindly tone which I could ill understand. He seemed embarrassed, dazed, and professed to have no knowledge of what had occurred, or how he had come where we found him. To all my inquiries as to the woman or the crime he shook his head blankly, and thus aroused my wrath.

" 'Be not angry with him, brother;

he is not lying, it is the other soul."

"She asked him about his name and country, and he replied without hesitation that he was Richard Burwell, a merchant from New York, just arrived in Paris, traveling for pleasure in Europe with his wife and daughter. This seemed reasonable, for the man spoke English, and, strangely enough, seemed to have no knowledge of French, although we both remembered hearing him speak French to the woman.

" 'There is no doubt,' my sister said, 'It is indeed a *kulos*-man; It knows that I am here, that I am Its master. Look, look!' she cried sharply, at the same time putting her eyes so close to the man's face that their fierce light seemed to burn into him. What power she exercised I do not know, nor whether some words she spoke, unintelligible to me, had to do with what followed, but instantly there came over this man, this pleasant-looking, respectable American citizen, such a change as is not made by death worms gnawing in a grave. Now there was a fiend grovelling at her feet, a foul, sin-stained fiend.

" 'Now you see the demon-soul,' said my sister. 'Watch It writhe and struggle; it has served me well, brother, sayest thou not so, the lore I gained from our wise men?'

"The horror of what followed chilled my blood; nor would I trust my memory were it not that there remained and still remains plain proof of all that I affirm. This hideous creature, dwarfed, crouching, devoid of all resemblance to the man we had but now beheld, chattering to us in curious old-time French, poured out such horrid blasphemy as would have blanched the cheek of Satan, and made recital of such evil deeds as never mortal ear gave heed to. And as she willed my sister checked It or allowed It to go on. What it all meant was more than I could tell. To me it seemed as if these tales of wickedness had no connection with our modern life, or with the world around us, and so I judged presently from what my sister said.

" 'Speak of the later time, since thou wast in this clay.'

"Then I perceived that the creature came to things of which I knew: It spoke of New York, of a wife, a child, a friend. It told of strangling the child, of robbing the friend; and was going on to tell God knows what other horrid deeds which my sister stopped.

" 'Stand as thou didst in killing the little babe, stand, stand!' and once more she spoke some words unknown to me. Instantly the demon sprang forward, and, bending Its clawlike hands, clutched them around some little throat that was not there—but I could see it in my mind. And the look on its face was a blackest glimpse of hell.

" 'And now stand as thou didst in robbing the friend, stand, stand;' and again came the unknown words, and again the fiend obeyed.

" 'These we will take for future use,' said my sister. And bidding me watch the creature carefully until she should return, she left the room, and, after none too short an absence, returned bearing a black box that was an apparatus for photography, and something more besides—some newer, stranger kind of photography that she had learned. Then, on a strangely fashioned card, a transparent white card, composed of many layers of finest Oriental paper, she took the pictures of the creature in those two creeping poses. And when it all was done, the card seemed as white as before, and empty of all meaning until one held it up and examined it intently. Then the pictures showed. And between the two there was a third picture, which somehow seemed to show, at the same time, two faces in one, two souls, my sister said, the kindly visaged man we first had seen, and then the fiend.

"Now my sister asked for pen and ink and I gave her my pocket pen which was filled with purple ink. Handing this to the *kulos*-man she bade him write under the first picture: 'Thus I killed my babe.' And under the second picture: 'Thus I robbed my friend.' And under the third, the one that was between the other two: 'This is the soul of Richard Burwell.' An odd thing about this writing was that it was in the same old French the creature had used in speech, and yet Burwell knew no French.

"My sister was about to finish with

the creature when a new idea took her, and she said, looking at It as before: 'Of all thy crimes which one is the worst? Speak, I command thee!'

"Then the fiend told how once It had killed every soul in a house of holy women and buried the bodies in a cellar under a heavy door.

" 'Where was the house?'

" 'At No. 19 Rue Picpus, next to the old graveyard.'

" 'And when was this?'

"Here the fiend seemed to break into fierce rebellion, writhing on the floor with hideous contortions, and pouring forth words that meant nothing to me, but seemed to reach my sister's understanding, for she interrupted from time to time, with quick, stern words that finally brought It to subjection.

" 'Enough,' she said, 'I know all,' and then she spoke some words again, her eyes fixed as before, and the reverse change came. Before us stood once more the honest-looking, fine-appearing gentleman, Richard Burwell, of New York.

" 'Excuse me, madame,' he said, awkwardly, but with deference; 'I must have dozed a little. I am not myself to-night.'

" 'No,' said my sister, 'you have not been yourself to-night.'

"A little later I accompanied the man to the Continental Hotel, where he was stopping, and, returning to my sister, I talked with her until late into the night. I was alarmed to see that she was wrought to a nervous tension that argued ill for her health. I urged her to sleep, but she would not.

" 'No,' she said, 'think of the awful responsibility that rests upon me.' And then she went on with her strange theories and explanations, of which I understood only that here was a power for evil more terrible than a pestilence, menacing all humanity.

" 'Once in many cycles it happens,' she said, 'that a *kulos*-soul pushes itself within the body of a new-born child, when the pure soul waiting to enter is delayed. Then the two live together through that life, and this hideous principle of evil has a chance upon the earth. It is my will, as I feel it my duty, to see this poor man again. The chances are that he will never show us, for the shock of this night to his normal soul is so great as to wipe out memory.'

"The next evening about the same hour, my sister insisted that I should go with her to the *Folies Bergere*, a concert garden, none too well frequented, and when I remonstrated, she said: 'I must go—It is there,' and the words sent a shiver through me.

"We drove to this place, and passing into the garden, presently discovered Richard Burwell seated at a little table, enjoying the scene of pleasure, which was plainly new to him. My sister hesitated a moment what to do, and then, leaving my arm, she advanced to the table and dropped before Burwell's eyes the card she had prepared. A moment later, with a look of pity on her beautiful face, she rejoined me and we went away. It was plain he did not know us."

To so much of the savant's strange recital I had listened with absorbed interest, though without a word, but now I burst in with questions.

"What was your sister's idea in giving Burwell the card?" I asked.

"It was in the hope that she might make the man understand his terrible condition, that is, teach the pure soul to know its loathsome companion."

"And did her effort succeed?"

"Alas! it did not; my sister's purpose was defeated by the man's inability to see the pictures that were plain to every other eye. It is impossible for the *kulos*-man to know his own degradation."

"And yet this man has for years been leading a most exemplary life?"

My visitor shook his head. "I grant you there has been improvement, due largely to experiments I have conducted upon him according to my sister's wishes. But the fiend soul was never driven out. It grieves me to tell you, doctor, that not only was this man the Water Street assassin, but he was the mysterious murderer, the long-sought-for mutilator of women, whose red crimes have baffled the police of Europe and America for the past ten years."

"You know this," said I, starting up, "and yet did not denounce him?"

"It would have been impossible to prove such a charge, and besides, I had made oath to my sister that I would use the man only for these

soul-experiments. What are his crimes compared with the great secret of knowledge I am now able to give the world?"

"A secret of knowledge?"

"Yes," said the savant, with intense earnestness, "I may tell you now, doctor, what the whole world will know, ere long, that it is possible to compel every living person to reveal the innermost secrets of his or her life, so long as memory remains, for memory is only the power of producing in the brain material pictures that may be projected externally by the thought rays and made to impress themselves upon the photographic plate."

"You mean," I exclaimed, "that you can photograph the two principles of good and evil that exist in us?"

"Exactly that. The great truth of a dual soul existence, that was dimly apprehended by one of your Western novelists, has been demonstrated by me in the laboratory with my camera. It is my purpose, at the proper time, to entrust this precious knowledge to a chosen few who will perpetuate it and use it worthily."

"Wonderful, wonderful!" I cried, "and now tell me, if you will, about the house on the Rue Picpus. Did you ever visit the place?"

"We did, and found that no buildings had stood there for fifty years, so we did not pursue the search."*

"And the writing on the card, have you any memory of it, for Burwell told me that the words have faded?"

"I have something better than that; I have a photograph of both card and writing, which my sister was careful to take. I had a notion that the ink in my pocket pen would fade, for it was a poor affair. This photograph I will bring you to-morrow."

"Bring it to Burwell's house."

The next morning the stranger met me there exactly as agreed upon.

"Here is the photograph of the card," he said.

"And here is the original card," I answered, breaking the seal of the envelope I had taken from Burwell's iron box. "I have waited for your arrival to look at it. Yes, the writing has indeed vanished; the card seems quite blank."

"Not when you hold it this way," said the stranger, and as he tipped the card I saw such a horrid revelation as I can never forget. In an instant I realized how the shock of seeing that card had been too great for the soul of wife and friend to bear. In these pictures was the secret of a cursed life. The resemblance to Burwell was unmistakable, the proof against him was overwhelming. In looking upon that piece of pasteboard the wife had seen a crime which the mother could never forgive. Think of a loved face suddenly melting before your eyes into a grinning skull, then into a mass of putrefaction, then into the ugliest fiend of hell, leering at you, distorted with all the marks of vice and shame. That is what I saw, that is what they had seen!

"Let us lay these two cards in the coffin," said my companion impressively, "we have done what we could."

Eager to be rid of the hateful piece of pasteboard (for who could say that the curse was not still clinging about it?), I took the strange man's arm, and together we advanced into the adjoining room where the body lay. I had seen Burwell as he breathed his last, and knew that there had been a peaceful look on his face as he died. But now, as we laid the two white cards on the still breast, the savant suddenly touched my arm, and pointing to the dead man's face, now frightfully distorted, whispered: "See, even in death It followed him. Let us close the coffin quickly."

* Years later, some workmen in Paris, making excavations in the Rue Picpus, came upon a heavy door buried under a mass of debris, under an old cemetery. On lifting the door they found a vault-like chamber in which were a number of female skeletons, and graven on the walls were blasphemous words written in French, which experts declared dated from fully two hundred years before. They also declared this handwriting identical with that found on the door at the Water Street murder in New York. Thus we may deduce a theory of fiend reincarnation; for it would seem clear, almost to the point of demonstration, that this murder of the seventeenth century was the work of the same evil soul that killed the poor woman on Water Street towards the end of the nineteenth century.

CAN A STORY for a weird magazine be written in a light style, with a high note of humor and still overcome those elements to create a note of impending horror, of awesome mystery in a successful fashion? If so, then certainly one of the masters of that technique was Robert W. Chambers. How that man could write! He was well on his way towards becoming an artist, when at the age of twenty-eight he decided to shift into fiction writing. When his second book, *The King in Yellow* (1895) became a critical success and a popular bestseller his course was sure.

Undoubtedly the purest of his weird efforts appeared in that early volume, such classic short stories as *The Yellow Sign, The Demoiselle D'ys* and *The Mask*. Many of his later works of fantasy have been neglected because they do not conjure the same mood. This has been a mistake, because most of the later works of fantasy also have richly rewarding elements.

The Splendid Apparition is one of a group of stories previously published in leading magazines of the United States and England, that we collected under the title of *Search of the Unknown*. Connecting matter was added by Chambers to give the impression that they were all told by a single young man who becomes involved in a series of zoological adventures. The brief preface was completely tongue-in-cheek: "It appears to the writer that there is urgent need of more 'nature books'--books that are scraped clear of fiction and which display only the carefully articulated skeleton of fact. Hence this little volume, presented with some hesitation and more modesty. Various chapters have, at intervals, appeared in the pages of various publications. The continued narrative is now published for the first time; and the writer trusts that it may inspire enthusiasm for natural and scientific research, and inculcate a passion for accurate observation among the young."

The early part of this story tells the reader that it will concern "the dingue, the mammoth, and—*something else*." The entire thrust of the story seems to be the search for a little animal with a bell-like cry, called the dingue, that is not unlike an alien out of one of Stanley G. Weinbaum's stories. Though the story seems to be lightly taken, there is careful plot construction from the beginning where it is established that the guide fears something far beyond wilds or the mammoth.

Just when it seems the story will close as a light farce, with almost contemptuous ease, Chambers converts the sound of the lovable dingue into a tolling note of fear in the foggy swamps of the north and the story quickly brings the reader to the awesome confrontation with that "something else." This is a highly unusual story.

The Splendid Apparition

By ROBERT W. CHAMBERS

TO SEPARATE fact from fancy has always been difficult for me, but now that I have had the honor to be chosen secretary of the Zoological Gardens in Bronx Park, I realize keenly that unless I give up writing fiction nobody will believe what I write about science. Therefore it is to a serious and unimaginative public that I shall hereafter address myself; and I do it in the modest confidence that I shall neither be distrusted nor doubted, although unfortunately I still write in that irrational style which suggests covert frivolity, and for which I am undergoing a course of treatment in English literature at Columbia College. Now, having promised to avoid originality and confine myself to facts, I shall tell what I have to tell concerning the dingue, the mammoth, and—*something else*.

For some weeks it had been rumored that Professor Farrago, president of the Bronx Park Zoological Society, would resign, to accept an

enormous salary as manager of Barnum & Bailey's circus. He was now with the circus in London, and had promised to cable his decision before the day was over.

I hoped he would decide to remain with us. I was his secretary and particular favorite, and I viewed, without enthusiasm, the advent of a new president, who might shake us all out of our congenial and carefully excavated ruts. However, it was plain that the trustees of the society expected the resignation of Professor Farrago, for they had been in secret session all day, considering the names of possible candidates to fill Professor Farrago's large, old-fashioned shoes. These preparations worried me, for I could scarcely expect another chief as kind and considerate as Professor Farrago.

That afternoon in June I left my office in the Administration Building in Bronx Park and strolled out under the trees for a breath of air. But the heat of the sun soon drove me to seek shelter under a little square arbor, a shady retreat covered with purple wistria and honeysuckle. As I entered the arbor I noticed that there were three other people seated there—an elderly lady with masculine features and short hair, a younger lady sitting beside her, and, farther away, a rough-looking young man reading.

For a moment I had an indistinct impression of having met the elder lady somewhere, and under circumstances not entirely agreeable, but beyond a stony and indifferent glance

she paid no attention to me. As for the younger lady, she did not look at me at all. She was very young, with pretty eyes, a mass of silky-brown hair, and a skin as fresh as a rose which had just been rained on.

With that delicacy peculiar to lonely scientific bachelors, I modestly sat down beside the rough young man, although there was more room beside the younger lady. "Some lazy loafer reading a penny dreadful," I thought, glancing at him, then at the title of his book. Hearing me beside him, he turned around and blinked over his shabby shoulder, and the movement uncovered the page he had been silently conning. The volume in his hands was Darwin's famous monograph on the monodactyl.

He noticed the astonishment on my face and smiled uneasily, shifting the short clay pipe in his mouth.

"I guess," he observed, "that this here book is too much for me mister."

"It's rather technical," I replied, smiling.

"Yes," he said, in vague admiration; "it's fierce, ain't it?"

After a silence I asked him if he would tell me why he had chosen Darwin as a literary pastime.

"Well," he said, placidly, "I was tryin' to read about annermals, but I'm up against a word-slinger this time all right. Now here's a gum-twister," and he painfully spelled out m-o-n-o-d-a-c-t-y-l, breathing hard all the while.

"Monodactyl," I said, "means a single-toed creature."

He turned the page with alacrity. "Is that the beast he's talkin' about?" he asked.

The illustration he pointed out was a wood-cut representing Darwin's reconstruction of the dingue from the fossil bones in the British Museum. It was a well-executed wood-cut, showing a dingue in the foreground and, to give scale, a mammoth in the middle distance.

"Yes," I replied, "that is the dingue."

"I've seen one," he observed, calmly.

I smiled and explained that the dingue had been extinct for some thousands of years.

"Oh, I guess not," he replied, with cool optimism. Then he placed a grimy forefinger on the mammoth.

"I've seen them things, too," he remarked.

Again I patiently pointed out his error, and suggested that he referred to the elephant.

"Elephant be blowed!" he replied, scornfully. "I guess I know what I seen. An' I seen that there thing you call a dingue, too."

Not wishing to prolong a futile discussion, I remained silent. After a moment he wheeled around, removing his pipe from his hard mouth.

"Did you ever hear tell of Graham's Glacier?" he demanded.

"Certainly," I replied, astonished; "it's the southern-most glacier in British America."

"Right," he said. "And did you ever hear tell of the Hudson Mountings, mister?"

"Yes," I replied.

"What's behind 'em?" he snapped out.

"Nobody knows," I answered. "They are considered impassable."

"They ain't, though," he said, doggedly; "I've been behind 'em."

"Really!" I replied, tiring of his yarn.

"Ya-as, reely," he repeated, sullenly. Then he began to fumble and search through the pages of his book until he found what he wanted. "Mister," he said, "jest read that out loud, please."

The passage he indicated was the famous chapter beginning:

"Is the mammoth extinct? Is the dingue extinct? Probably. And yet the aborigines of British America maintain the contrary. Probably both the mammoth and the dingue are extinct; but until expeditions have penetrated and explored not only the unknown region in Alaska but also that hidden tableland beyond the Graham Glacier and the Hudson Mountains, it will not be possible to definitely announce the total extinction of either the mammoth or the dingue."

When I had read it, slowly, for his benefit, he brought his hand down smartly on one knee and nodded rapidly.

"Mister," he said, "that gent knows

a thing or two, and don't you forgit it!" Then he demanded, abruptly, how I knew he hadn't been behind the Graham Glacier.

I explained.

"Shucks!" he said; "there's a road five miles wide inter that there table-land. Mister, I ain't been in New York long; I come inter port a week ago on the *Arctic Belle*, whaler. I was in the Hudson range when that there Graham Glacier bust up—"

"What!" I exclaimed.

"Didn't you know it?" he asked. "Well, mebbe it ain't in the papers, but it busted all right—blowed up by a earthquake an' volcano combine. An', mister, it was oreful. My, how I did run!"

"Do you mean to tell me that some convulsion of the earth has shattered the Graham Glacier?" I asked.

"Convulsions? Ya-as, an' fits, too," he said, sulkily. "The hull blame thing dropped inter a hole. An' say, mister, home an' mother is good enough fur me now."

I stared at him stupidly.

"Once," he said, "I ketched pelts fur them sharps at Hudson Bay, like any yaller husky, but the things I seen arter that convulsion-fit—the *things I seen behind the Hudson Mountings* —don't make me hanker arter no life on the pe-rarie wild, lemme tell yar. I may be a Mother Carey chicken, but this chicken has got enough."

After a long silence I picked up his book again and pointed at the picture of the mammoth.

"What color is it?" I asked.

"Kinder red an' brown," he answered, promptly. "It's woolly, too."

Astounded, I pointed to the dingue.

"One-toed," he said quickly; "makes a noise like a bell when scutterin' about."

Intensely excited, I laid my hand on his arm. "My society will give you a thousand dollars," I said, "if you pilot me inside the Hudson table-land and show me either a mammoth or a dingue!"

He looked me calmly in the eye.

"Mister," he said slowly, "have you got a million to squander on me?"

"No," I said, suspiciously.

"Because," he went on, "it wouldn't be enough. Home an' mother, that is what suits me now."

He picked up his book and rose. In vain I asked his name and address; in vain I begged him to dine with me—to become my honored guest.

"Nit," he said, shortly, and shambled off down the path.

But I was not going to lose him like that. I rose and deliberately started to stalk him. It was easy. He shuffled along, pulling on his pipe, and I after him.

It was growing a little dark, although the sun still reddened the tops of the maples. Afraid of losing him in the falling dusk, I once more approached him and laid my hand upon his ragged sleeve.

"Look here," he cried, wheeling about, "I want you to quit follerin' me. Don't I tell you money can't make me go back to them mountings!" And as I attempted to speak, he suddenly tore off his cap and pointed to his head. His hair was white as snow.

"That's what come of monkeyin' inter your cursed mountings," he shouted, fiercely. "There's things in there what no Christian oughter see. Lemme alone er I'll bust yer."

He shambled on, doubled fists swinging by his side. The next moment, setting my teeth obstinately, I followed him and caught him by the park gate. At my hail he whirled around with a snarl, but I grabbed him by the throat and backed him violently against the park wall.

"You invaluable ruffian," I said, "now you listen to me. I live in that big stone building, and I'll give you a thousand dollars to take me behind the Graham Glacier. Think it over and call on me when you are in a pleasanter frame of mind. If you don't come by noon to-morrow I'll go to the Graham Glacier without you."

He was attempting to kick me all the time, but I managed to avoid him, and when I had finished I gave him a shove which almost loosened his spinal column. He went reeling out across the sidewalk, and when he had recovered his breath and his balance he danced with displeasure and displayed a vocabulary that astonished me. However, he kept his distance.

As I turned back into the park, satisfied that he would not follow, the

first person I saw was the elderly, stonyfaced lady of the wistria arbor advancing on tiptoe. Behind her came the younger lady with cheeks like a rose that had been rained on.

Instantly it occurred to me that they had followed us, and at the same moment I knew who the stony-faced lady was. Angry, but polite, I lifted my hat and saluted her, and she, probably furious at having been caught tiptoeing after me, cut me dead. The younger lady passed me with face averted, but even in the dusk I could see the tip of one little ear turn scarlet.

II.

WALKING ON hurriedly, I entered the Administration Building, and found Professor Lesard, of the reptilian department, preparing to leave.

"Don't you do it," I said, sharply; "I've got exciting news."

"I'm only going to the theatre," he replied. "It's a good show—Adam and Eve; there's a snake in it, you know. It's in my line."

"I can't help it," I said; and I told him briefly what had occured in the arbor.

"But that's not all," I continued, savagely. "Those women followed us, and who do you think one of them turned out to be? Well, it was Professor Smawl, of Barnard College, and I'll bet every pair of boots I own that she starts for the Graham Glacier within a week. Idiot that I was!" I exclaimed, smiting my head with both hands. "I never recognized her until I saw her tiptoeing and craning her neck to listen. Now she knows about the glacier; she heard every word that young ruffian said, and she'll go to the glacier if it's only to forestall me."

Professor Lesard looked anxious. He knew that Miss Smawl, professor of natural history at Barnard College, had long desired an appointment at the Bronx Park gardens. It was even said she had a chance of succeeding Professor Farrago as president, but that, of course, must have been a joke. However, she haunted the gardens, annoying the keepers by persistently poking the animals with her umbrella. On one occasion she sent us word that she desired to enter the tigers' enclosure for the purpose of making experiments in hypnotism.

Professor Farrago was absent, but I took it upon myself to send back word that I feared the tigers might injure her. The miserable small boy who took my message informed her that I was afraid she might injure the tigers, and the unpleasant incident almost cost me my position.

"I am quite convinced," said I to Professor Lesard, "that Miss Smawl is perfectly capable of abusing the information she overheard, and of starting herself to explore a region that, by all the laws of decency, justice, and prior claim, belongs to me."

"Well," said Lesard, with a peculiar laugh, "it's not certain whether you can go at all."

"Professor Farrago will authorize me," I said, confidently.

"Professor Farrago has resigned," said Lesard. It was a bolt from a clear sky.

"Good Heavens!" I blurted out. "What will become of the rest of us, then?"

"I don't know," he replied. "The trustees are holding a meeting over in the Administration Building to elect a new president for us. It depends on the new president what becomes of us."

"Lesard," I said hoarsely, "you don't suppose that they could possibly elect Miss Smawl as our president, do you?"

He looked at me askance and bit his cigar.

"I'd be in a nice position, wouldn't I?" said I, anxiously.

"The lady would probably make you walk the plank for that tiger business," he replied.

"But I didn't do it," I protested, with sickly eagerness. "Besides, I explained to her—"

He said nothing, and I stared at him, appalled by the possibility of reporting to Professor Smawl for instructions next morning.

"See here, Lesard," I said nervously, "I wish you would step over to the Administration Building and ask the trustees if I may prepare for this expedition. Will you?"

He glanced at me sympathetically. It was quite natural for me to wish to secure my position before the new

president was elected—especially as there was a chance of the new president being Miss Smawl.

"You are quite right," he said; "the Graham Glacier would be the safest place for you if our next president is to be the Lady of the Tigers." And he started across the park puffing his cigar.

I sat down on the doorstep to wait for his return, not at all charmed with the prospect. It made me furious, too, to see my ambition nipped with the frost of a possible veto from Miss Smawl.

"If she is elected," thought I, "there is nothing for me but to resign—to avoid the inconvenience of being shown the door. Oh, I wish I had allowed her to hypnotize the tigers!"

Thoughts of crime flitted through my mind. Miss Smawl would not remain president—or anything else very long—if she persisted in her desire for the tigers. And then when she called for help I would pretend not to hear.

Aroused from criminal mediation by the return of Professor Lesard, I jumped up and peered into his perplexed eyes. "They've elected a president," he said, "but they won't tell us who the president is until tomorrow."

"You don't think—" I stammered.

"I don't know. But I know this: the new president sanctions the expedition to the Graham Glacier, and directs you to choose an assistant and begin preparations for four people."

Overjoyed, I seized his hand and said, "Hurray!" in a voice weak with emotion. "The old dragon isn't elected this time," I added, triumphantly.

"By-the-way," he said, "who was the other dragon with her in the park this evening?"

I described her in a more modulated voice.

"Whew!" observed Professor Lesard, "that must be her assistant, Professor Dorothy Van Twiller! She's the prettiest blue-stocking in town."

With this curious remark my confrère followed me into my room and wrote down the list of articles I dictated to him. The list included a complete camping equipment for myself and three other men.

"Am I one of those other men?" inquired Lesard, with an unhappy smile.

Before I could reply my door was shoved open and a figure appeared at the threshold, cap in hand.

"What do you want?" I asked, sternly; but my heart was beating high with triumph.

The figure shuffled; then came a subdued voice:

"Mister, I guess I'll go back to the Graham Glacier along with you. I'm Billy Spike, an' it kinder scares me to go back to them Hudson Mountains, but somehow, mister when you choked me and kinder walked me off on my ear, why, mister, I kinder took to you like."

There was absolute silence for a minute; then he said:

"So if you go, I guess I'll go, too, mister."

"For a thousand dollars?"

"Fur nawthin'," he muttered—"or what you like."

"All right, Billy," I said, briskly; "just look over those rifles and ammunition and see that everything's sound."

He slowly lifted his tough young face and gave me a doglike glance. They were hard eyes, but there was gratitude in them.

"You'll get your throat slit," whispered Lesard.

"Not while Billy's with me," I replied, cheerfully.

Late that night, as I was preparing for pleasant dreams, a knock came on my door and a telegraph-messenger handed me a note, which I read, shivering in my bare feet, although the thermometer marked eighty degrees.

"You will immediately leave for the Hudson Mountains via Wellman Bay, Labrador, there to await further instructions. Equipment for yourself and one assistant will include following articles" [here began a list of camping utensils, scientific paraphernalia, and provisions]. "The steamer Penguin sails at five o'clock to-morrow morning. Kindly find yourself on board at that hour. Any excuse for not complying with these orders will be accepted as your resignation.

"SUSAN SMAWL,
"President Bronx Zoological Society."

"Lesard!" I shouted, trembling with fury.

He appeared at his door, chastely draped in pajamas; and he read the insolent letter with terrified alacrity.

"What are you going to do—resign?" he asked, much frightened.

"Do!" I snarled, grinding my teeth; "I'm going—that's what I'm going to do!"

"But—but you can't get ready and catch that steamer, too," he stammered.

He did not know me.

III.

AND SO IT came about that one calm evening towards the end of June, William Spike and I went into camp under the southerly shelter of that vast granite wall called the Hudson Mountains, there to await the promised "further instructions."

It had been a tiresome trip by steamer to Anticosti, from there by schooner to Widgeon Bay, then down the coast and up the Cape Clear River to Port Porpoise. There we bought three pack-mules and started due north on the Great Fur Trail. The second day out we passed Fort Boisé, the last outpost of civilization, and on the sixth day we were travelling eastward under the granite mountain parapets.

On the evening of the sixth day out from Fort Boisé we went into camp for the last time before entering the unknown land.

I could see it already through my field-glasses, and while William was building the fire I climbed up among the rocks above and sat down, glasses levelled, to study the prospect.

There was nothing either extraordinary or forbidding in the landscape which stretched out beyond; to the right the solid palisade of granite cut off the view; to the left the palisade continued, an endless barrier of sheer cliffs crowned with pine and hemlock. But the interesting section of the landscape lay almost directly in front of me—a rent in the mountain-wall through which appeared to run a level, arid plain, miles wide, and as smooth and even as a highroad.

There could be no doubt concerning the significance of that rent in the solid mountain-wall; and, moreover, it was exactly as William Spike had described it. However, I called him and he came up from the smoky camp-fire, axe on shoulder.

"Yep," he said, squatting beside me; "the Graham Glacier used to meander through that there hole, but somethin' went wrong with the earth's in'ards an' there was a bust-up."

"And you saw it, William?" I said, with a sigh of envy.

"Hey? Seen it? Sure I seen it! I was to Spoutin' Springs, twenty mile west, with a bale o' blue fox an' otter pelt. Fust I knew them geysers begun for to groan egregious like, an' I seen the caribou gallopin' hell-bent south. 'This climate,' sez I, 'is too bracin' for me,' so I struck a back trail an' landed onto a hill. Then them geysers blowed up, one arter the next, an' I heard somethin' kinder cave in between here an' China. I disremember things what happened. Somethin' throwed me down, but I couldn't stay there, for the blamed ground was runnin' like a river—all wavy-like, an' the sky hit me on the back o' me head."

"And then?" I urged, in that new excitement which every repetition of the story revived. I had heard it all twenty times since we left New York, but mere repetition could not apparently satisfy me.

"Then," continued William, "the whole world kinder went off like a fire-cracker, an' I come too, an' ran like—"

"I know," said I, cutting him short, for I had become wearied of the invariable profanity which lent a lurid ending to his narrative.

"After that," I continued, "you went through the rent in the mountains?"

"Sure."

"And you saw a dingue and a creature that resembled a mammoth?"

"Sure," he repeated, sulkily.

"And you saw something else?" I always asked this question; it fascinated me to see the sullen fright flicker in William's eyes, and the mechanical backward glance, as though what he had seen might still be behind him.

He had never answered this third question but once and that time he fairly snarled in my face as he growled: "I seen what no Christian

man oughter be allowed to ever see."

So when I repeated: "And you saw something else, William?" he gave me a wicked, frightened leer, and shuffled off to feed the mules. Flattery, entreaties, threats left him unmoved; he never told me what the third thing was that he had seen behind the Hudson Mountains.

William had retired to mix up with his mules; I resumed my binoculars and my silent inspection of the great, smooth path left by the Graham Glacier when something exploded that vast mass of ice into vapor.

The arid plain wound out from the unknown country like a river, and I thought then, and think now, that when the glacier was blown into vapor the vapor descended in the most terrific rain the world has ever seen, and poured through the newly blasted mountain-gateway, sweeping the earth to bed-rock. To corroborate this theory, miles to the southward I could see the debris winding out across the land towards Wellman Bay, but as the terminal moraine of the vanished glacier formerly ended there I could not be certain that my theory was correct. Owing to the formation of the mountains I could not see more than half a mile into the unknown country. What I could see appeared to be nothing but the continuation of the glacier's path, scored out by the cloud-burst, and swept as smooth as a floor.

Sitting there, my heart beating heavily with excitement, I looked through the evening glow at the endless, pine-crowned mountain-wall with its giant's gateway pierced for me! And I thought of all the explorers and the unknown heroes—trappers, Indians, humble naturalists, perhaps—who had attempted to scale that sheer barricade and had died there or failed, beaten back from those eternal cliffs. Eternal? No! For the Eternal Himself had struck the rock, and it had sprung asunder, thundering obedience.

In the still evening air the smoke from the fire below mounted in a straight, slender pillar, like the smoke from those ancient altars builded before the first blood had been shed on earth.

The evening wind stirred the pines; a tiny spring brook made thin harmony among the rocks; a murmur came from the quiet camp. It was William adjuring his mules. In the deepening twilight I descended the hillock, stepping cautiously among the rocks.

Then, suddenly, as I stood outside the reddening ring of firelight, far in the depths of the unknown country, far behind the mountain-wall, a sound grew on the quiet air. William heard it and turned his face to the mountains. The sound faded to a vibration which was felt, not heard. Then once more I began to divine a vibration in the air, gathering in distant volume until it became a sound, lasting the space of a spoken word, fading to vibration, then silence.

Was it a cry?

I looked at William inquiringly. He had quietly fainted away.

I got him to the little brook and poked his head into the icy water, and after a while he sat up pluckily.

To an indignant question he replied: "Naw, I ain't a-cussin' you. Lemme be or I'll have fits."

"Was it that sound that scared you?" I asked.

"Ya-as," he replied with a dauntless shiver.

"Was it the voice of the mammoth?" I persisted, excitedly. "Speak, William, or I'll drag you about and kick you!"

He replied that it was neither a mammoth nor a dingue, and added a strong request for privacy, which I was obliged to grant, as I could not torture another word out of him.

I slept little that night; the exciting proximity of the unknown land was too much for me. But although I lay awake for hours, I heard nothing except the tinkle of water among the rocks and the plover calling from some hidden marsh. At daybreak I shot a ptarmigan which had walked into camp, and the shot set the echoes yelling among the mountains.

William, sullen and heavy-eyed, dressed the bird, and we broiled it for breakfast.

Neither he nor I alluded to the sound we had heard the night before; he boiled water and cleaned up the mess-kit, and I pottered about among the rocks for another ptarmigan. Wearying of this, presently, I returned

to the mules and William, and sat down for a smoke.

"It strikes me," I said, "that our instructions to 'await further orders' are idiotic. How are we to receive 'further orders' here?"

William did not know.

"You don't suppose," said I, in sudden disgust, "that Miss Smawl believes there is a summer hotel and daily mail service in the Hudson Mountains?"

William thought perhaps she did suppose something of the sort.

It irritated me beyond measure to find myself at last on the very border of the unknown country, and yet checked, held back, by the irresponsible orders of a maiden lady named Smawl. However, my salary depended upon the whim of that maiden lady, and although I fussed and fumed and glared at the mountains through my glasses, I realized that I could not stir without the permission of Miss Smawl.

At times this grotesque situation became almost unbearable, and I often went away by myself and indulged in fantasies, firing my gun off and pretending I had hit Miss Smawl by mistake. At such moments I would imagine I was free at last to plunge into the strange country, and I would squat on a rock and dream of bagging my first mammoth.

The time passed heavily; the tension increased with each new day. I shot ptarmigan and kept our table supplied with brook-trout. William chopped wood, conversed with his mules, and cooked very badly.

"See here," I said, one morning; "we have been in camp a week to-day, and I can't stand your cooking another minute!"

William, who was washing a saucepan, looked up and begged me sarcastically to accept the *cordon bleu*. But I know only how to cook eggs, and there were no eggs within some hundred miles.

To get the flavor of the breakfast out of my mouth I walked up to my favorite hillock and sat down for a smoke. The next moment, however, I was on my feet, cheering excitedly and shouting for William.

"Here comes 'further instructions' at last!" I cried, pointing to the southward, where two dots on the grassy plain were imperceptibly moving in our direction.

"People on mules," said William, without enthusiasm.

"They must be messengers for us!" I cried, in chaste joy. "Three cheers for the northward trail, William, and the mischief take Miss— Well, never mind now," I added.

"On them approachin' mules," observed William, "there is wimmen."

I stared at him for a second, then attempted to strike him. He dodged wearily and repeated his incredible remark: "Ya-as, there is—wimmen—two female ladies onto them there mules."

"Bring me my glasses!" I said, hoarsely; "bring me those glasses, William, because I shall destroy you if you don't!"

Somewhat awed by my calm fury, he hastened back to camp and returned with the binoculars. It was a breathless moment. I adjusted the lenses with a steady hand and raised them.

Now, of all unexpected sights my fate may reserve for me in the future, I trust—nay, I know—that none can ever prove as unwelcome as the sight I perceived through my binoculars. For upon the backs of those distant mules were two women, and the first one was Miss Smawl!

Upon her head she wore a helmet, from which fluttered a green veil. Otherwise she was clothed in tweeds; and at moments she beat upon her mule with a thick umbrella.

Surfeited with the sickening spectacle, I sat down on a rock and tried to cry.

"I told yer so," observed William; but I was too tired to attack him.

IV

WHEN THE CARAVAN rode into camp I was myself again, smilingly prepared for the worst, and I advanced, cap in hand, followed furtively by William.

"Welcome," I said, violently injecting joy into my voice. "Welcome, Professor Smawl, to the Hudson Mountains!"

"Kindly take my mule," she said, climbing down to mother earth.

"William," I said, with dignity, "take the lady's mule."

Miss Smawl gave me a stolid glance, then made directly for the camp-fire, where a kettle of game-broth simmered over the coals. The last I saw of her she was smelling it, and I turned my back and advanced towards the second lady pilgrim, prepared to be civil until snubbed.

Now, it is quite certain that never before had William Spike or I beheld so much feminine loveliness in one human body on the back of a mule. She was clad in the daintiest of shooting-kilts, yet there was nothing mannish about her except the way she rode the mule, and that only accentuated her adorable femininity.

I remembered what Professor Lesard had said about blue stockings—but Miss Dorothy Van Twiller's were gray, turned over at the tops, and disappearing into canvas spats buckled across a pair of slim shooting-boots.

"Welcome," said I, attempting to restrain a too violent cordiality. "Welcome, Professor Van Twiller, to the Hudson Mountains."

"Thank you," she replied, accepting my assistance very sweetly; "it is a pleasure to meet a human being again."

I glanced at Miss Smawl. She was eating game-broth, but she resembled a human being in a general way.

"I should very much like to wash my hands," said Professor Van Twiller, drawing the buckskin gloves from her slim fingers.

I brought towels and soap and conducted her to the brook.

She called to Professor Smawl to join her, and her voice was crystalline; Professor Smawl declined, and her voice was batrachian.

"She is so hungry!" observed Miss Van Twiller. "I am very thankful we are here at last, for we've had a horrid time. You see, we neither of us know how to cook."

I wondered what they would say to William's cooking, but I held my peace and retired, leaving the little brook to mirror the sweetest face that was ever bathed in water.

That afternoon our expedition, in two sections, moved forward. The first section comprised myself and all the mules; the second section was commanded by Professor Smawl, followed by Professor Van Twiller, armed with a tiny shot-gun. William, loaded down with the ladies' toilet articles, skulked in the rear. I say skulked; there was no other word for it.

"So you're a guide, are you?" observed Professor Smawl when William, cap in hand, had approached her with well-meant advice. "The woods are full of lazy guides. Pick up those Gladstone bags! I'll do the guiding for this expedition."

Made cautious by William's humiliation, I associated with the mules exclusively. Nevertheless, Professor Smawl had her hard eyes on me, and I realized she meant mischief.

The encounter took place just as I, driving the five mules, entered the great mountain gateway, thrilled with anticipation which almost amounted to foreboding. As I was about to set foot across the imaginary frontier which divided the world from the unknown land, Professor Smawl hailed me and I halted until she came up.

"As commander of this expedition," she said, somewhat out of breath, "I desire to be the first living creature who has ever set foot behind the Graham Glacier. Kindly step aside, young sir!"

"Madam," said I, rigid with disappointment, "my guide, William Spike, entered that unknown land a year ago."

"He *says* he did," sneered Professor Smawl.

"As you like," I replied; "but it is scarcely generous to forestall the person whose stupidity gave you the clew to this unexplored region."

"You mean yourself?" she asked, with a stony stare.

"I do," said I, firmly.

Her little, hard eyes grew harder, and she clutcher her umbrella until the steel ribs crackled.

"Young man," she said, insolently; "if I could have gotten rid of you I should have done so the day I was appointed president. But Professor Farrago refused to resign unless your position was assured, subject, of course, to your good behavior. Frankly, I don't like you, and I consider your views on science ridic-

ulous, and if an opportunity presents itself I will be most happy to request your resignation. Kindly collect your mules and follow me."

Mortified beyond measure, I collected my mules and followed my president into the strange country behind the Hudson Mountains—I who had aspired to lead, compelled to follow in the rear, driving mules.

The journey was monotonous at first, but we shortly ascended a ridge from which we could see, stretching out below us, the wilderness where, save the feet of William Spike, no human feet had passed.

As for me, tingling with enthusiasm, I forgot my chagrin, I forgot the gross injustice, I forgot my mules. "Excelsior!" I cried, running up and down the ridge in uncontrollable excitement at the sublime spectacle of forest, mountain, and valley all set with little lakes.

"Excelsior!" repeated an excited voice at my side, and Professor Van Twiller sprang to the ridge beside me, her eyes bright as stars.

Exalted, inspired by the mysterious beauty of the view, we clasped hands and ran up and down the grassy ridge.

"That will do," said Professor Smawl, coldly, as we raced about like a pair of distracted kittens. The chilling voice broke the spell; I dropped Professor Van Twiller's hand and sat down on a boulder, aching with wrath.

Late that afternoon we halted beside a tiny lake, deep in the unknown wilderness, where purple and scarlet bergamot choked the shores and the spruce-partridge strutted fearlessly under our very feet. Here we pitched our two tents. The afternoon sun slanted through the pines; the lake glittered; acres of golden brake perfumed the forest silence, broken only at rare intervals by the distant thunder of a partridge drumming.

Professor Smawl ate heavily and retired to her tent to lie torpid until evening. William drove the unloaded mules into an intervale full of sun-cured, fragrant grasses; I sat down beside Professor Van Twiller.

The wilderness is electric. Once within the influence of its currents, human beings become positively or negatively charged, violently attracting and then repelling each other.

"There is something the matter with this air," said Professor Van Twiller. "It makes me feel as though I were desperately enamoured of the entire human race."

She leaned back against a pine, smiling vaguely, and crossing one knee over the other.

Now I am not bold by temperament, and, normally, I fear ladies. Therefore it surprised me to hear myself begin a frivolous *causerie*, replying to her pretty epigrams with epigrams of my own, advancing to the borderland of badinage, fearlessly conducting her and myself over that delicate frontier to meet upon the terrain of undisguised flirtation.

It was clear that she was out for a holiday. The seriousness and restraints of twenty-two years she had left behind her in the civilized world, and now, with a shrug of her young shoulders, she unloosened her burden of reticence, dignity, and responsibility and let the whole load fall with a discreet thud.

"Even hares go mad in March," she said, seriously. "I know you intend to flirt with me—and I don't care. Anyway, there's nothing else to do, is there?"

"Suppose," said I, solemnly, "I should take you behind that big tree and attempt to kiss you!"

The prospect did not appear to appall her, so I looked around with that sneaking yet conciliatory caution peculiar to young men who are novices in the art. Before I had satisfied myself that neither William nor the mules were observing us, Professor Van Twiller rose to her feet and took a short step backward.

"Let's set traps for a dingue," she said, "will you?"

I looked at the big tree, undecided. "Come on," she said; "I'll show you how." And away we went into the woods, she leading, her kilts flashing through the golden half-light.

Now I had not the faintest notion how to trap the dingue, but Professor Van Twiller asserted that it formerly fed on the tender tips of the spruce, quoting Darwin as her authority.

So we gathered a bushel of spruce-tips, piled them on the bank of a little stream, then built a miniature stock-

ade around the bait, a foot high. I roofed this with hemlock, then laboriously whittled out and adjusted a swinging shutter for the entrance, setting it on springy twigs.

"The dingue, you know, was supposed to live in the water," she said, kneeling beside me over our trap.

I took her little hand and thanked her for the information.

"Doubtless," she said, enthusiastically, "a dingue will come out of the lake to-night to feed on our spruce-tips. Then," she added, "we've got him."

"True!" I said, earnestly, and pressed her fingers very gently.

Her face was turned a little away; I don't remember what she said; I don't remember that she said anything. A faint rose-tint stole over her cheek. A few moments later she said: "You must not do that again."

It was quite late when we strolled back to camp. Long before we came in sight of the twin tents we heard a deep voice bawling our names. It was Professor Smawl, and she pounced upon Dorothy and drove her ignominiously into the tent.

"As for you," she said, in hollow tones, "you may explain your conduct at once, or place your resignation at my disposal."

But somehow or other I appeared to be temporarily lost to shame, and I only smiled at my infuriated president, and entered my own tent with a step that was distinctly frolicsome.

"Billy," said I to William Spike, who regarded me morosely from the depths of the tent, "I'm going out to bag a mammoth to-morrow, so kindly clean my elephant-gun and bring an axe to chop out the tusks."

That night Professor Smawl complained bitterly of the cooking, but as neither Dorothy nor I knew how to improve it, she revenged herself on us by eating everything on the table and retiring to bed, taking Dorothy with her.

I could not sleep very well; the mosquitoes were intrusive, and Professor Smawl dreamed she was a pack of wolves and yelped in her sleep.

"Bird, ain't she?" said William, roused from slumber by her weird noises.

Dorothy, much frightened, crawled out of her tent, where her blanket-mate still dreamed dyspeptically, and William and I made her comfortable by the camp-fire.

It takes a pretty girl to look pretty half asleep in a blanket.

"Are you sure you are quite well?" I asked her.

To make sure, I tested her pulse. For an hour it varied more or less, but without alarming either of us. Then she went back to bed and I sat alone by the campfire.

V

TOWARDS MIDNIGHT I suddenly began to feel that strange, distant vibration that I had once before felt. As before, the vibration grew on the still air, increasing in volume until it became a sound, then died out into silence.

I rose and stole into my tent.

William, white as death, lay in his corner, weeping in his sleep.

I roused him remorselessly, and he sat up scowling, but refused to tell me what he had been dreaming.

"Was it about that third thing you saw—" I began. But he snarled up at me like a startled animal, and I was obliged to go to bed and toss about and speculate.

The next morning it rained. Dorothy and I visited our dingue-trap but found nothing in it. We were inclined, however, to stay out in the rain behind a big tree, but Professor Smawl vetoed that proposition and sent me off to supply the larder with fresh meat.

I returned, mad and wet, with a dozen partridges and a white hare—brown at that season—and William cooked them vilely.

"I can taste the feathers!" said Professor Smawl, indignantly.

"There is no accounting for taste," I said, with a polite gesture of deprecation; "personally, I find feathers unpalatable."

"You may hand in your resignation this evening!" cried Professor Smawl, in hollow tones of passion.

I passed her the pancakes with a cheerful smile, and flippantly pressed the hand next to me. Unexpectedly it proved to be William's sticky fist, and Dorothy and I laughed until her tears

ran into Professor Smawl's coffee-cup—an accident which kindled her wrath to red heat, and she requested my resignation five times during the evening.

The next day it rained again, more or less. Professor Smawl complained of the cooking, demanded my resignation, and finally marched out to explore, lugging the reluctant William with her. Dorothy and I sat down behind the largest tree we could find.

I don't remember what we were saying when a peculiar sound interrupted us, and we listened earnestly.

It was like a bell in the woods, ding-dong! ding-dong! ding-dong!—a low, mellow, golden harmony, coming nearer, then stopping.

I clasped Dorothy in my arms in excitement.

"It is the note of the dingue!" I whispered, "and that explains its name, handed down from remote ages along with the names of the behemoth and the coney. It was because of its bell-like cry that it was named! Darling!" I cried, forgetting our short acquaintance, "we have made a discovery that the whole world will ring with!"

Hand in hand we tiptoed through the forest to our trap. There was something in it that took fright at our approach and rushed panic-stricken round and round the interior of the trap, uttering its alarm-note, which sounded like the jangling of a whole string of bells.

I seized the strangely beautiful creature; it neither attempted to bite nor scratch, but crouched in my arms, trembling and eyeing me.

Delighted with the lovely, tame animal, we bore it tenderly back to the camp and placed it on my blanket. Hand in hand we stood before it, awed by the sight of this beast, so long believed to be extinct.

"It is too good to be true," sighed Dorothy, clasping her white hands under her chin and gazing at the dingue in rapture.

"Yes," said I, solemnly, "you and I, my child, are face to face with the fabled dingue—*Dingus solitarius!* Let us continue to gaze at it, reverently, prayerfully, humbly—"

Dorothy yawned—probably with excitement at our recent discovery.

We were still mutely adoring the dingue when Professor Smawl burst into the tent at a hard-gallop, bawling hoarsely for her kodak and note-book.

Dorothy seized her triumphantly by the arm and pointed at the dingue, which appeared to be frightened to death.

"What!" cried Professor Smawl, scornfully; "*that* a dingue? Rubbish!"

"Madam," I said, firmly, "it is a dingue! It's a monodactyl! See! It has but a single toe!"

"Bosh!" she retorted; "it's got four!"

"Four!" I repeated, blankly.

"Yes; one on each foot!"

"Of course," I said; "you didn't suppose a monodactyl meant a beast with one leg and one toe!"

But she laughed hatefully and declared it was a woodchuck.

We squabbled for a while until I saw the significance of her attitude. The unfortunate woman wished to find a dingue first and be accredited with the discovery.

I lifted the dingue in both hands and shook the creature gently, until the chiming ding-dong of its protestations filled our ears like sweet bells jangled out of tune.

Pale with rage at this final proof of the dingue's identity, she seized her camera and note-book.

"I haven't any time to waste over that musical woodchuck!" she shouted, and bounced out of the tent.

"What have you discovered, dear?" cried Dorothy, running after her.

"A mammoth!" bawled Professor Smawl, triumphantly; "and I'm going to photograph him!"

Neither Dorothy nor I believed her. We watched the flight of the infatuated woman in silence.

And now, at last, the tragic shadow falls over my paper as I write. I was never passionately attached to Professor Smawl, yet I would gladly refrain from chronicling the episode that must follow if, as I have hitherto attempted, I succeed in sticking to the unornamented truth.

I have said that neither Dorothy nor I believed her. I don't know why, unless it was that we had not yet made up our minds to believe that the mammoth still existed on earth. So, when Professor Smawl disappeared in

the forest, scuttling through the underbrush like a demoralized hen, we viewed her flight with unconcern. There was a large tree in the neighborhood—a pleasant shelter in case of rain. So we sat down behind it, although the sun was shining fiercely.

It was one of those peaceful afternoons in the wilderness when the whole forest dreams, and the shadows are asleep and every little leaflet takes a nap. Under the still tree-tops the dappled sunlight, motionless, soaked the sod; the forest-flies no longer whirled in circles, but sat sunning their wings on slender twig-tips.

The heat was sweet and spicy; the sun drew out the delicate essence of gum and sap, warming volatile juices until they exhaled through the aromatic bark.

The sun went down into the wilderness; the forest stirred in its sleep; a fish splashed in the lake. The spell was broken. Presently the wind began to rise somewhere far away in the unknown land. I heard it coming, nearer, nearer—a brisk wind that grew heavier and blew harder as it neared us—a gale that swept distant branches—a furious gale that set limbs clashing and cracking, nearer and nearer. Crack! and the gale grew to a hurricane, trampling trees like dead twigs! Crack! Crackle! Crash! Crash!

Was it the wind?

With the roaring in my ears I sprang up, staring into the forest vista, and at the same instant, out of the crashing forest, sped Professor Smawl, skirts tucked up, thin legs flying like bicycle-spokes. I shouted, but the crashing drowned my voice. Then all at once the solid earth began to shake, and with the rush and roar of a tornado a gigantic living thing burst out of the forest before our eyes—a vast shadowy bulk that rocked and rolled along, mowing down trees in its course.

Two great crescents of ivory curved from its head; its back swept through the tossing tree-tops. Once it bellowed like a gun fired from a high bastion.

The apparition passed with the noise of thunder rolling on towards the ends of the earth. Crack! crash! went the trees, the tempest swept away in a rolling volley of reports, distant, more distant, until, long after the tumult had deadened, then ceased, the stunned forest echoed with the fall of mangled branches slowly dropping.

That evening an agitated young couple sat close together in the deserted camp, calling timidly at intervals for Professor Smawl and William Spike. I say timidly, because it is correct; we did not care to have a mammoth respond to our calls. The lurking echoes across the lake answered our cries; the full moon came up over the forest to look at us. We were not much to look at. Dorothy was moistening my shoulder with unfeigned tears, and I, afraid to light the fire, sat hunched up under the common blanket, wildly examining the darkness around us.

Chilled to the spinal marrow, I watched the gray lights whiten in the east. A single bird awoke in the wilderness. I saw the nearer trees looming in the mist, and the silver fog rolling on the lake.

All night long the darkness had vibrated with the strange monotone which I had heard the first night, camping at the gate of the unknown land. My brain seemed to echo that subtle harmony which rings in the auricular labyrinth after sound has ceased.

There are ghosts of sound which return to haunt long after sound is dead. It was these voiceless spectres of a voice long dead that stirred the transparent silence, intoning toneless tones.

I think I make myself clear.

VI

IT WAS AN uncanny night; morning whitened the east; gray daylight stole into the woods, blotting the shadows to paler tints. It was nearly mid-day before the sun became visible through the fine-spun web of mist—a pale spot of gilt in the zenith.

By this pallid light I labored to strike the two empty tents, gather up our equipments and pack them on our five mules. Dorothy aided me bravely, whimpering when I spoke of Professor Smawl and William Spike, but abating nothing of her industry until we had the mules loaded and I was ready to drive them, Heaven knows whither.

"Where shall we go?" quavered Dorothy, sitting on a log with the dingue in her lap.

One thing was certain; this mammoth-ridden land was no place for women, and I told her so.

We placed the dingue in a basket and tied it around the leading mule's neck. Immediately the dingue, alarmed, began dingling like a cowbell. It acted like a charm on the other mules, and they gravely filed off after their leader, following the bell. Dorothy and I, hand in hand, brought up the rear.

I shall never forget that scene in the forest—the gray arch of the heavens swimming in mist through which the sun peered shiftily, the tall pines wavering through the fog, the preoccupied mules marching single file, the foggy bell-note of the gentle dingue in its swinging basket, and Dorothy, limp kilts dripping with dew, plodding through the white dusk.

We followed the terrible tornado-path which the mammoth had left in its wake, but there were no traces of its human victims—neither one jot of Professor Smawl nor one solitary tittle of William Spike.

Towards sunset—or that pale parody of sunset which set the forest swimming in a ghastly, colorless haze—the mammoth's trail of ruin brought us suddenly out of the trees to the shore of a great sheet of water.

It was a desolate spot; northward a chaos of sombre peaks rose, piled up like thunder-clouds along the horizon; east and south the darkening wilderness spread like a pall. Westward, crawling out into the mist from our very feet, the gray waste of water moved under the dull sky, and flat waves slapped the squatting rocks, heavy with slime.

And now I understood why the trail of the mammoth continued straight into the lake, for on either hand black, filthy tamarack swamps lay under ghostly sheets of mist. I strove to creep out into the bog, seeking a footing, but the swamp quaked and the smooth surface trembled like jelly in a bowl. A stick thrust into the slime sank into unknown depths.

Vaguely alarmed, I gained the firm land again and looked around, believing there was no road open but the desolate trail we had traversed. But I was in error; already the leading mule was wading out into the water, and the others, one by one, followed.

How wide the lake might be we could not tell, because the band of fog hung across the water like a curtain. Yet out into this flat, shallow void our mules went steadily, slop! slop! slop! in single file. Already they were growing indistinct in the fog, so I bade Dorothy hasten and take off her shoes and stockings.

She was ready before I was, I having to unlace my shooting-boots, and she stepped out into the water, kilts fluttering, moving her white feet cautiously. In a moment I was beside her, and we waded forward, sounding the shallow water with our poles.

When the water had risen to Dorothy's knees I hesitated, alarmed. But when we attempted to retrace our steps we could not find the shore again, for the blank mist shrouded everything, and the water deepened at every step.

I halted and listened for the mules. Far away in the fog I heard a dull splashing, receding as I listened. After a while all sound died away, and a slow horror stole over me—a horror that froze the little network of veins in every limb. A step to the right and the water rose to my knees; a step to the left and the cold, thin circle of the flood chilled my breast. Suddenly Dorothy screamed, and the next moment a far cry answered—a far, sweet cry that seemed to come from the sky, like the rushing harmony of the world's swift winds. Then the curtain of fog before us lighted up from behind; shadows moved on the misty screen, outlines of trees and grassy shores, and tiny birds flying. Thrown on the vapory curtain, in silhouette, a man and a woman passed under the lovely trees, arms about each other's necks; near them the shadows of five mules grazed peacefully; a dingue gambolled close by.

"It is a mirage!" I muttered, but my voice made no sound. Slowly the light behind the fog died out; the vapor around us turned to rose, then dissolved, while mile on mile of a limitless sea spread away till, like a

quick line pencilled at a stroke, the horizon cut sky and sea in half, and before us lay an ocean from which towered a mountain of snow—or a gigantic berg of milky ice—for it was moving.

"Good Heavens," I shrieked; "it is alive!"

At the sound of my crazed cry the mountain of snow became a pillar, towering to the clouds, and a wave of golden glory drenched the figure to its knees! Figure? Yes—for a colossal arm shot across the sky, then curved back in exquisite grace to a head of awful beauty—a woman's head, with eyes like the blue lake of heaven—ay, a woman's splendid form, upright from the sky to the earth, knee-deep in the sea. The evening clouds drifted across her brow; her shimmering hair lighted the world beneath with sunset. Then, shading her white brow with one hand, she bent, and, with the other hand dipped in the sea, she sent a wave rolling at us. Straight out of the horizon it sped—a ripple that grew to a wave, then to a furious breaker which caught us up in a whirl of foam, bearing us onward, faster, faster, swiftly flying through leagues of spray until consciousness ceased and all was blank.

Yet ere my senses fled I heard again that strange cry—that sweet, thrilling harmony rushing out over the foaming waters, filling earth and sky with its soundless vibrations.

And I knew it was the hail of the Spirit of the North warning us back to life again.

VII

LOOKING BACK, now, over the days that passed before we staggered into the Hudson Bay outpost at Gravel Cove, I am inclined to believe that neither Dorothy nor I were clothed entirely in our proper minds—or, if we were, our minds, no doubt, must have been in the same condition as our clothing. I remember shooting ptarmigan, and that we ate them; flashes of memory recall the steady downpour of rain through the endless twilight of shaggy forests; dim days on the foggy tundra, mud-holes from which the wild ducks rose in thousands; then the stunted hemlocks, then the forest again. And I do not even recall the moment when, at last, stumbling into the smooth path left by the Graham Glacier, we crawled through the mountain-wall, out of the unknown land, and once more into a world protected by the Lord Almighty.

A hunting-party of Elbon Indians brought us in to the post, and everybody was most kind—that I remember, just before going into several weeks of unpleasant delirium mercifully mitigated with unconsciousness.

Curiously enough, Professor Van Twiller was not very much battered, physically, for I had carried her for days, pickaback. But the awful experience had produced a shock which resulted in a nervous condition that lasted so long after she returned to New York that the wealthy and eminent specialist who attended her insisted upon taking her to the Riviera and marrying her. I sometimes wonder—but, as I have said, such reflections have no place in these austere pages.

However, anybody, I fancy, is at liberty to speculate upon the fate of the late Professor Smawl and William Spike, and upon the mules and the gentle dingue. Personally, I am convinced that the suggestive silhouettes I saw on that ghastly curtain of fog were cast by beatified beings in some earthly paradise—a mirage of bliss of which we caught but the colorless shadow-shapes floating 'twixt sea and sky.

At all events, neither Professor Smawl nor William Spike ever returned; no exploring expedition has found a trace of mule or lady, of William or the dingue. The new expedition to be organized by Barnard College may penetrate still farther. I suppose that, when the time comes, I shall be expected to volunteer. But Professor Van Twiller is married, and William and Professor Smawl ought to be, and altogether, considering the mammoth and that gigantic and splendid apparition that bent from the zenith to the ocean and sent a tidal-wave rolling from the palm of one white hand—I say, taking all these various matters under consideration, I think I shall decide to remain in New York and continue writing for the scientific periodicals for some time.

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The Dramatic In My Destiny

By EMMA FRANCES DAWSON

PROLOGUE

"ALCOHOL IS for the brutish body, opium for the divine spirit," said Tong-ko-lin-sing, as he lighted the lamp. "The bliss from wine grows and wanes as the body has its time of growth and loss, but that from opium stays at one height, as the soul knows no youth nor age." He handed me the pipe—flute-like, fit instrument for the divine music of dreamland, though clumsy bamboo—the earthen bowl with the rich coloring of much smoking, like a Chinaman himself. "Dead faces look on us, and dead voices call, for the soul then gains its full stature, can mix with the immortals, and does; when alone and in silence, it can know that Time and Space have no bounds." He took a wire, which he dipped in the jar and held in the flame. The few drops of the paste clinging to the wire bubbled and burned. He smeared it on the rim of the pipe-bowl. "Opium has the power of a god; it can efface or renew the Past, and ignore or foretell the Future."

I drew three or four whiffs of whitish smoke; the bowl was empty. Again he went through the long course of filling. "Though it bring dream within dream, like our Chinese puzzles—mark their meaning, for our Chinese saying is, 'The world's nonsense is the sense of God!' "

I heard. I knew him for my queer teacher of Chinese, who knew French, English, and Sanscrit as well, whom I was wont to muse over here in Chinatown, as over a relic, until oppressed with thought of the age of his country, until San Francisco seemed a town built of a child's toy-houses, and ours but a gad-fly race.

I knew the Chinese lily, standing in the pebbles at the bottom of a bowl of clear water on the window-sill, by a globe of gold-fish; and, beyond, the Oriental street (for it was in the region bounded by Kearny, Stockton, Sacramento, and Pacific streets, where fifty thousand aliens make an alien city, a city as Chinese as Peking, except for buildings and landscape, and not unlike the narrow, dirty, thronged streets, with dingy brick piles, of Shanghai); an endless line of dark, mysterious forms with muffling blouse and flaunting queue, the rank, poisonous undergrowth in our forest of men. I was idly aware of all this. I knew that I, Yorke Rhys, quite care-free and happy, had nothing to dread. I calmly dropped down the tide of sleep—but what was this vivid and awful dream?—all in brighter hues and deeper shadows, and more sharply real than dream-land seems, without the magic touches of opium? As if looking in a mirror, like the Lady of Shalott, I saw all past scenes at once as a great whole. Against the mystic gloom of opium everything stood out as the

ABOUT: EMMA FRANCES DAWSON

Ambrose Bierce, as vitriolic a literary critic as ever wrote and rapped in the history of San Francisco's vividly technicolored early journalistic history, once stated in print of the author of this story as follows:

"It is not my custom to set 'the cover of praise' upon every head that is presented, but of Miss Dawson I should like to be understood as affirming with whatever of strength resides in forthright sincerity that in all the essential attributes of literary competence she is head and shoulders above any writer on this coast with whose work I have acquaintance. And on this judgement I gladly hazard my small possession and large hope of reputation for literary sagacity." And, of her fantasies, "Those readers who did not remember them must have minds that are steel to impress and tallow to retain."

Unfortunately, since literary reputations in those long-ago years, with such few exceptions as Mark Twain, Brett Harte and Bierce himself, traveled almost exclusively from East to West, the well accoladed Miss Dawson remained and remains virtually unknown.

Yet she was a woman of wide cultural accomplishments as well as of great graphic talent. Although much of her adult life was burdened with care for a hopelessly invalid mother, Emma Frances Dawson was a gifted and successful concert musician before embracing literature. Her considerable linguistic talents and training enabled her to publish translations of stories, articles and poetry from the French, German, Spanish, Italian and Persian regularly in West Coast periodicals of the era.

The Dramatic in My Destiny appeared originally in THE CALIFORNIAN, *A Western Monthly Magazine,* for January, 1880 and was included in a collection of her works, *An Itinerant House, and Other Stories,* published in 1896.

If that seems long ago, worry not in mournful or any other numbers. Miss Dawson's description of a trip, via an opium pipe, with which her story opens, will ring gongs and bring reminiscent shudders to the most modern addict of synthetic mind-blowing hallucinogins. Nor need one be an addict of anything stronger than tincture of benzoine to receive the full impact.

Emma Frances Dawson belonged with the great turn-of-the century figures like Ambrose Bierce, Robert W. Chambers, F. Marion Crawford, Ralph Adams Cram, W. C. Morrow, Gertrude Atherton, Edith Wharton, Mary Wilkins Freeman to name but a few—who created great tales of the strange, the unknown and the horrible.

Now, enjoy this haunting yarn by an undeservedly forgotten master of the ghost story.

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night shows the stars: the soul had a mood that could focus All since the making of the world, and only then knew how far off, fading, stretch the bounds of Time, the untold reach of the Universe, which we wrongly think we daily see and know. I saw into it all as a leader reads an opera-score.

In the vast poppy-fields of Bengal, likened to green lakes where lilies bloom, near the holy city of Benares, which dates itself back to creation, I idly plucked a white blossom on a lonely stalk, and flung it down, when it at once changed to a shapeless form, which chased me. Then it seemed it had been my curse through far-off ages, the frost that chilled me when I was a flower, the white cat that killed me when I was a bird, the white shark that caught me when I was a fish—in all places a white cloud between me and my sunshine. My horse, in gold armor, thickly gemmed, bore me from the field where a silk tent held my love, with others of King Arthur's court, to a gloomy-raftered cob-webbed hall, where shield and battle-axe were given me, and soon I wept over the shattered helm of one whom I had loved—yet killed.

Now, at a masked ball in some old palace, where I was dogged by a white domino with whom I must fight a

duel; then, in the red glare of the southern moon in the Arizona desert, through stillness overwhelming as noise, I fled from a figure in a Moqui blanket. By huge fires, I too, waited the coming of Montezuma. I was Montezuma, held down by weight of the mountain which bears his profile at Maricopa Wells. My great white shadow flitted after me across the red and yellow of Colorado scenery. In the awful depths of Gypsum Canon, I gazed in despair up at the round, well-like heights for chance to flee from it. At the Royal Gorge, peering from the cliff straight down for over two thousand feet, I gladly saw It at the base. Eased, I stood on a mountain-top, where, as I turned, I saw the four seasons—most wonderful view that could be brought by a wizard of old to a king's windows; but here I suddenly found a white mist that turned as I did, and strove to shape itself to my form. Crossing the plains of Nevada, It was the white dust which choked and blinded me from sight of the purple mist-veiled peaks.

Lost in the jungle of a Chinese forest, I suddenly came to a clearing where beetle and glow-worm were staking out a grave for some one near and dear to me, whose death I could not hinder. I watched until they began to mark a second grave—oh, for whom? But I was torn from this sight, and thrust in the heart of a Chinese city. I wound through its crooked streets to a dark flight of steps, which came to an end; no rail, no step, darkness before I could get quite down; and I was again creeping from the top of a like staircase. Over and over I tried to go down these vanishing stairs. At last, I was faced suddenly, as if he sprang through a trapdoor, by a huge white form that tried to tell me something, some strange fact linked with my fate, which would explain a secret that had long chafed me. But what? I shook with fear—Tong-ko-lin-sing spoke to me. I woke.

I

"'WAS IT not Fate, whose name is also Sorrow?'" said Elinor.

We were looking at Randolph Rogers' "Lost Pleiad," in the inner room of Morris & Schwab's picture-store.

"No," said I, kindling at a glance from her fine eyes; "Fate is well named when in one's favor, but can not be truly against one. I could master it; so could others. Man rules his own life—it need not depend on others—he gains what he strives for, and need never yield to evil forces."

"Then you have no pity for the man who killed another here yesterday?"

"None. That is the worst of crimes. I respect the Brahmins, who hold life sacred even in an insect. No. Heaven may keep me from other sin—I will hold myself from murder."

"Your friend, Noel Brande, does not think as you do."

"No; but he gains his wishes because he is brave enough to fight what he calls doom."

"That is not the only point on which you differ."

"No; but we are too fond of each other to quarrel."

"Even Fate could not break your friendship?"

"Never. I defy it."

"It is as good as a fortune to be sure of one's self," she said, looking at me for an instant.

Her shy, brief glances stirred my brain like wine. As we went up our boarding-house steps, I felt that the world was made for me. As she passed through the storm-door before me, I stayed for mere lightness of heart to drop a gold piece in the apron of Nora, the neat Irish nurse-girl, sitting outside with Elinor's little cousins. Elinor had glided so far alone that Si-ki, coming toward her with a card that had been left for her, did not see me. I watched him, thinking of what Nora had told of his skill in making melon-seed fowls, and carving flowers from vegetables, and of her dislike for his hue—"like an old green copper coin," she said.

He did have an odd sort of tea-color to his skin, not unlike that of morphine-lovers, but I thought he looked no worse than Nora with her face like a globe fish. Elinor, with hand on the newel, paused to look at the card. Amazed and angry, I saw Si-ki dare to lay his hand on hers.

The sight filled me with such rage, that, just as I would have brushed a gnat out of the world, I sprang on Si-ki and began beating him. I was in such fury that I scarcely knew when Elinor and Nora fled, or that the French lady hung over the railing up-stairs, in her white frilled wrapper, with but one of her diamond sparks in her ears, and her hair half dressed, crying to heaven; that the Spanish lady stood in the parlor-door, clapping her hands; that the German professor opening his door, the Italian merchant running down-stairs, the English banker, the American broker, and my friend Brande, coming in from the street, all tried to stop me.

"Keep back! It is a matter between us two!" I answered them all. "Between us two!" timing my blows to my words. I thrashed him till my cane snapped in two. "Between us two!" I turned him out. "Between us two!" I cried, and flung him down the steps. "Between us two!" I muttered to myself as I went up-stairs to my room, with a passing glimpse of Elinor, disturbed and blushing, in the doorway of her aunt's room.

She did not come to dinner. I was filled with shame to have spent so much force and feeling on such a wretch, and to have distressed Elinor by setting all these tongues in motion about her. But, as I told Brande that night in my room, I had a strange dislike for Si-ki.

"He is too cat-like," I said.

"Yes," said Brande; "our rough classes are like the larger kind of beast. But that Chinese teacher of yours is worse, dark as if the gloom of ages had taken man's shape. It is like dealing with a ghost or sphinx."

"He shows the effect of inherited civilization," said I; "dignified, priestly, close-mouthed as if his millions of ancestors in him frowned at me as one of a short-lived race, a sort of Mormon-fly with its life one night."

"He and the Chinese grammar both would be too much for me to meet," said Brande.

"But they have each their charm," I said.

"That early hieroglyphic you told me about," said he, "of folding-doors and an ear, which meant 'to listen,' shows the same law of thought that our landlady has. What hidden force let her have only raw coolies for months after she sent off a trained servant for his thefts? We hear of their 'high-binders' and other secret societies. You have not known the last of that cur you whipped."

"Pshaw! I soon start for China anyway," said I, "glad of the pay promised me there for three years, and tired of roughing it in Nevada, Colorado, and Arizona; but I wish—I wish I could have had a chance with your friends on California Street."

"I wish you had," Brande said; "but never mind. You will have gained the Chinese language, and, judging by your feat of to-day, the Chinamen had better not cross your path."

"For this," I answered, glumly. "Why did we move?" For we were scarcely settled. I came to be near Elinor, and Brande because he wished to be with me.

"There is the cause," he said, nodding toward the window as a gust

of wind swept by. "People wonder at the roving impulse of the San Franciscans. It is the wind which urges and compels them to arise and go; it has even driven me to try and mock the monotone of its chant."

He took from his pocket and read to me these lines:

Refrain, refrain, O Wind! from such complaining,
Or deign at least to make thy murmurs sane.
Explain, explain thy pathos ever paining—
Thy vain desire torments and tires my brain.
Refrain! Refrain!

At last reveal how vanished ages freighted
Thy voices with their added woe and pain;
Forbear to mutter—I feel execrated.
Urge not, for naught impatience can attain.
Refrain! Refrain!

At last, at last, cease all thy raging clamor,
Nor beat and pant against my window-pane.
I listen Now; at last thine eerie hammer
Mine ear hath welded for thy mystic strain— Nay, crouch not nigh with clank of heavy chain
Refrain! Refrain!

As he ceased, the wind, which had thrust in an undertone of sympathy, rose so strongly that the house trembled like a boat, and in the close, sweeping fog we might have been far out at sea not any sign to be seen of the city below us. We sat in silence, broken suddenly by a quick, intent knocking. Brande opened the door. Elinor's aunt stood there, looking wild. Without heeding him, she called to me:

"How *could* you do it? *Why* did you do it?"

"Because he insulted her," I stammered.

"He has done worse now!" she said.

"What do you mean?" asked Brande, while I stood in speechless wonder, amazed at her strange words.

"I mean," said she, still looking at me, "that Nora brought some Chinese sweetmeats that she said you had sent Elinor, but it seems they were given her by Si-ki."

"Well?" I gasped.

"Elinor, poor girl, at once tasted them—"

"And—"

"—and now lies senseless!"

"Poisoned!" I moaned.

II

CHASED by Brande as by a shadow, I in turn tracked two policemen, through a network of horror like a nightmare—through the foreign city in the heart of San Francisco like a clingstone in its peach. In single file, dropping story below story under the side-walks, we slipped and stumbled in mildew, damp, and dirt, where the coolies flitted round like gnomes, where no window let in light, no drain bore off bad air.

We searched narrow galleries running everywhere, often bridging each other like those of an ant-hill, and dark ways where but one could pass. We bent at door-ways that barred our path at sudden turns, peered into vile dens that lined the way, and, choking and strangling, climbed above ground, where we scanned the thousands of workmen in the many boot and shoe factories and cigar-works; hunted through the numberless gambling-hells, but could not pass the old watchman, with wrinkled face like a baked apple, sitting on a stool in front of a red curtain (the color for luck), before he jerked the cord dangling near him, when bells warned, doors were barred, bolts shot like lightning, door upon door suddenly thrust itself across our path, or a screen slyly slid before us, turning us unaware into another passage.

Worn-out, Brande and I started for home, but on the way stopped to see Tong-ko-lin-sing. He had been playing chess with his friend Si Hung Chang, who left as we went in, and he packed the chess-men in their box while he heard our tale, but said nothing. His face was a clear blank when Brande asked about secret societies. I tried all forms of begging and urging I could

think of. He would not know what we meant. He offered us cigars, and took his pipe as if he wished us to go—his own pipe, with a small tube on one side in which to burn an opium-pill.

I opened the door, and signed to Brande to follow me. He did so, swearing at the Chinese as sly fools. We were half way down-stairs, when Tong-ko-lin-sing shuffled out on the landing and called after us, the English words having a queer effect of centred force when intoned like Chinese:

"Red-haired devils! barbarians! all of you! Like bears beating their stupid heads against the Great Wall. Are the black-haired people not your betters? Great in mind as in numbers, did we not make paper and ink, and print, a thousand years before your time?—and travel by a compass more than twenty-five hundred years before your Christ?" He shuffled back, but swung out again to add, "Do we not excel in dyes, in sugar, in porcelain, gun-powder, and fire-works?"

"Who could have foreseen such a lecture from a jumping-jack in brocade drawers, tight to the ankle, and a loose blouse?" said Brande, as we hurried home. "He has the wholly irresponsible air of a clothier's sign-suit swinging in the wind, but he knows the points of the compass!"

We found Elinor seemed to have changed for the worse and still senseless. After Brande left me I sat in my window, too sad and too tired to go to rest. I only thought of her.

"Oh!" I groaned, "if I could have had some proof that she loved me!" As I sat, I saw in a long mirror the door behind me open, and—Elinor come! In misty white trailing robe, she looked unreal. Could it be, I thought, that they had left her alone to leave her room in a trance? A thrill of joy shot through me that she should even unconsciously come straight to me. I sprang to my feet and turned toward her—to find I was alone! I sank again in my chair. Was I losing my wits? No—she was there, there in the mirror, looking at me with the deepest woe in her face!

"Did I stay with Tong-ko-lin-sing, and take opium again?" I murmured.

She made a gesture of farewell and half turned to go.

"Elinor! Elinor!" I cried.

A spasm of grief crossed her face. Filled with wonder, sorrow, and surprise, I rose again, but she made a motion of despair and left the room before I could turn. Did she go? Was she there, or was my brain wild? My own shadow, crossing the ceiling toward the door as I moved, startled me. The dim hall was still and vacant. I went to Elinor's door. Her aunt said for the last half hour they had not felt sure she was not dead, but there had just come back signs of life; they could see that she breathed again. The doctor had slight hope. She gave me a slip of paper covered with Elinor's dainty penciling.

"I found that in Elinor's pocket," she said, "in the dress she wore when out with you yesterday. I thought you would like to read it."

I wrung her hand, and rushed to my room to read:

THE LOST PLEIAD.

Spell-bound, by planet that I fain would spurn,
To circle like the forms in poet's soul,
Like them for starry heights to madly yearn,
Yet feel the tension of the Earth's control,
And ever drifting seem
Like blossom floating down restraining stream.

Through vast cloud-spaces up and down I wheel,
While years like vagrant winds shift far below;
The stillness of the upper air I feel
Is like the rest the immortals ever know.
Here I forget how man
Through haste and strife his life can merely plan.

His life, like that reflected in a glass,
Knows not the sweep of that among the gods—
Has its set limits that he may not pass
Except he vow himself to Art's long odds,
And Sorrow's eyes of woe
Must some time fix on each with baleful glow.

More wise than man the acts of

Nature are—
The little dew-drop pearling twilight leaf
Will take unto its inmost heart a star.
Which mortals give but careless glance and brief,
Nor heed when slants the sun
What mystic signs gleam red, gold clouds upon.

Forlorn, I fall for ever Pleiad height —
Float downward just above the plantom realm
Where Fame and Beauty, Love and Power, take flight,
Fate ever whirling after to o'erwhelm.
See rise the Day's bold crown,
Or muffled Night with stolen stars slink down!

With slow pulse poise while moonless midnights pass,
And vivid on the velvet dark is lain,
By memory painted, that sweet time—alas!—
When yet I knew, as nymph in Dian's train,
The gods, the stars, the tides,
The sylvan fauns and satyrs—naught besides.

Not for the goddess, stag, and hunt, I sigh,
Nor for my sister Pleiades above,
As for the blissful moments long gone by
In rapture and despair of mortal love.
This is the potent spell
Which sends me drifting down the cloud-sea's swell!

"It can not be!" I cried, with bursting heart. "Our drama is not ended."

III

THE NEXT DAY found no change in Elinor, and found us again with the policemen, hunting Chinatown. One Chinaman we saw everywhere; on a corner across the way; at the head of steps as we were coming up; at the foot of the stairs when we were on a roof; bowing at a shrine with gold and saffron legends and scarlet streamers round the door, and through the dim inner light and scent of burning sandalwood, the gleam of tinsel and flare of lamp, before an ugly image; even in the theatre, watching the ground and lofty tumbling, until the crowd and noise and bad air forced us to leave, when as I came out last of our party I nearly fell over him.

"Tong-ko-lin-sing!"

"Why all this trouble for a woman?" he asked, gravely. "Women are plenty, for to become one is a future punishment of ours for sin when men. I have seen her with you; she wore the tiger's-claw jewelry you got through me."

"Where is Si-ki?" I cried, making a vain clutch at Tong-ko-lin-sing's sleeve. But the others had turned back for me, and my Chinese teacher's jacket and cap of black astrakhan fur soon melted into the darkness of some too near alley. Disheartened, we went home. Elinor had not changed. We could not try to sleep, but sat in my room.

"I wish," said Brande, "you looked as full of life and joy as you did the last time I saw you come home with Miss Elinor."

"O Noel!" I cried, "if I could but live over that last happy day!"

"Like Socrates under the plane-tree," he mused, " 'borne away by a divine impression coming from this lovely place.' "

" 'Spirits in prison,' " said I; "where do you think they go when first set free?—to another world, or to the dearest friend in this?"

"That would depend," he answered, "upon the kind of spirit that goes. One like Miss Elinor now—"

"Do not speak of her death," I cried, "though I have thought before that you did not like her."

"No," said he, "I do not, but with no reason."

I started. Elinor had come in at the door behind him, and stood looking at me, making a sign of caution as if she did not wish Brande to know of her presence.

"What is it?" he asked. "You look as if you saw a ghost."

"Nothing," I faltered. While I wondered what was best to do, she looked anxiously at me, and made motions toward Brande as if I meant to do him mortal harm, as if warning me back from a crime.

"What do you see?" Brande cried, and to my horror added, "there is nothing here!"

"Don't you see her?" I gasped, hardly able to get on my feet, for a sinking at my heart seemed to root me to my chair.

"Poor fellow!" he said to himself in pity. "He has lost his wits! See, my boy," he said to me, rising and walking toward her. "Empty space, all empty space."

"Elinor! What is it? Speak!" I cried.

But Brande caught me in his arms, and by main force bore me to a chair in spite of my struggles and prayers.

"Let me go!" I panted.

"I can not let you dash your brains out against the wall," he said.

I made one more vain effort to leave my seat. He held me in a grasp of iron.

"What shall I do?" he groaned to himself, and turned white about the lips, for unseen I had made out to draw my pistol from my pocket, and now suddenly held it toward him.

"Yorke Rhys!" he shouted, but did not let go his hold.

How can I tell it? The room turned black to me. Then I found Elinor had fled, and my friend lay at my feet with a bullet through his heart!

I have a confused remembrance of the boarders rushing in. They thought Brande had shot himself, for I sat there vaguely asking over and over:

"Why did he do it?"

There was a murmur of "Don't tell him." The crowd gave way for Elinor's aunt, who came and laid my head against her breast in motherly fashion.

"What does Elinor want?" I asked. "She has just been here."

She only said, "Poor boy!" and smoothed my hair.

"Elinor died just now!"

IV

I LAY ON MY BED, dimly aware of a long, slow lapse of time. Was it of weeks, months or years? I could not tell. One day Nora brought me a folded page of note-paper, which, she said, fell from my clothes when I was undressed the night I fainted, and she had kept it for me, "because it had Miss Elinor's writing on it." It was "The Lost Pleiad." All my weight of woe dropped on me anew. I knew what star had fallen from my sky.

"You kept it for me all this time?" I said, as I gave her some money. "I suppose I was sick some weeks."

"Months," she answered.

I sighed. How much in debt such long idleness and illness must have brought me! And I must have lost my chance for work in China. Letters must be written. I opened my desk. It had not been locked, and a pile of receipted board and doctor's bills I had never seen lay in it, with a letter dated the very day that Elinor—that Noel—that I fell ill, from Brande's friends on California Street. It told me that through his strong efforts I was given a place with them, which made sure the income I had longed for to let me marry and stay in my own country. They had kept the place waiting for me, and meanwhile paid my bills. Through Brande's influence! And I had killed my best friend! I could trace my troubles all back to that infernal Si-ki. Hastily making ready, I stole out unseen, and rushed to Tong-ko-lin-sing. He was struck with the change in me, and wished to talk of it.

"I must find Si-ki," I said.

"In a field of melons do not pull up your shoes," said he; "under a plum-tree do not adjust your cap. If I go with you, it will look as if I knew where to find him. I do not."

"You can find him. You must hunt for him," I persisted.

"The lady—?"

"Is dead," I told him. I piled a small heap of gold and silver on the table.

We searched parts of Chinatown which would have been barred to me without a Chinese comrade; underground depths like the abysses after death, upper stories and roofs of buildings that towered in air as if striving for space to breathe, narrow, crooked alleys where loungers talked across from windows about the American straying there, and seemed to think I was led by Tong-ko-lin-sing because in some way his prisoner.

At last, the cobbler who always sits on the south side of Clay Street, just below Dupont, told him something which I did not catch, but he heard

with a start. He wavered and urged me to give up the search. I would not. He set off a new way, and soon darted into an alley full of the grimy, blackened buildings which can never be used after the Chinese have lived in them, whose dark horrors recalled some scene elsewhere known—in what past age? I saw round me only the signs of a civilization older than the Pharaohs.

As Tong-ko-lin-sing started down some break-neck steps, I stopped a moment for breath, and looked around me. I felt the crook of this under-world soon shut all out like a coffin-lid. My love was dead. My friend was murdered. I cursed aloud. I followed Tong-ko-lin-sing only by the strained tension of my nerves.

He went in at a door, through a long passage that had a strange smell that made me feel faint, a smell of death—till, after a moment's pause as if to make sure he was right, and giving me a warning touch he opened a door into a dimly lighted den, where the sickening scent grew worse.

"Si-ki!" he called.

What was this ghostly form, white as a skeleton, which slowly glimmered through the gloom before my amazed eyes? Dizzy from the fetid scent, yet held by my horror as by transfixed spear, with failing heart and quaking limbs I saw the ghastly figure cross the rotten, slimy floor toward us.

"My dream! My dream!" I murmured as I clung to Tong-ko-lin-sing for support.

An awful voice, discordant as a Chinese gong, the hollow voice of a leper, a voice unearthly as if we had been shades met in another world cried,

"Between us two! *Between us.*"

Challenge

By VIRGIL FINLAY

Weird flashes of fire in a raging sky,
Dart forth from storm-rent chasms,
To light up the waves in foamy spasms,
As they rise and break and go rushing by.
Scudding sails in the raging night,
Dip and rise in the maw of the whirling sea,
Driven on thru that which they seek to flee,
Their battle with each billow a losing fight.

Then at the height of the shrieking storm,
A host of wild creatures with challenging cries,
Burst forth in their ships of Gorgon-foam,
And bellow their anger to the sullen skies.
So through the ages their spirits sail out,
And on rampant seas the Vikings still shout.

THE EYRIE

WE KNEW YOU'D be glad to have us back again—for "The Eyrie" is your forum. It belongs to you. How else could you tell us—and the weird world—how good we are; or, more to the point, how we could improve. Always remember—to name just two—Ray Bradbury and H. P. Lovecraft were letter writers before they became world-famed authors; right here in this department. We know in what direction we are going, but your opinions and suggestions will also help shape the way of things to come. We're truly sorry that space limits the number of letters we are able to print. To those readers (and they are seemingly legion) who have asked for subscriptions, we still are not taking any, and when we do it will be announced in this column. Better yet, become vociferous, if your newsdealer doesn't show the magazine. Keep after him until he displays us or maybe the great experiment will have been for naught. Good reading—and keep writing.

The Good News Is Still Spreading

Lester Del Rey responds to reading the first issue of the newly-revived WEIRD TALES: "I hope it does well. There are so many stories that need the light of day again—Heald's 'Horror in the Museum', Hamilton's 'He That Hath Wings'—hundreds. And, of course, stories from other sources. But I hope you'll be able to develop new stories fairly soon; surely, once they know there's a market, they'll turn up. I feel that more than a 50% lineup of reprints isn't good for the magazine, in the long run.

"I enjoyed the article on Hodgson. In fact, after reading it, I went back and reread 'The Night Land' again; quite a piece of science fiction for its time, really. Talk about ecology stories!"

Paul Berriault makes a confession: "I was rather wary of another reprint magazine using such a noble title. Thank you very much for not letting WEIRD TALES, and myself, down. It is simply wonderful to have a new, alive copy of the magazine in my hands. I really hope this is a sign of the further increase in quantity, and quality, of the magazine market.

"I bought two copies, and the data preceding each tale, and of course the biography, are superb, and are quite an aid to one like myself who is not knowledgeable in the lives of these writers. I make only one request and that is to begin a letters column in WT. I think readers relate more to a magazine that has a human touch in it. The comments on each story are a great help in breaching this coldness. With the addition of letters, a service will be rendered to the people who write, those who wish to correspond with one another, and I believe it will aid in the survival of WEIRD TALES."

David Bates writes: "I want to thank you for the revived WEIRD TALES. It is a most welcome renewal for me, as I was just old enough to get the last few years' issues of the original WEIRD TALES. I am also lucky that my wife shares my interests and my hobbies. Her interests are in A. Merritt style fantasy. She has devoured my material by Brackett and

C. L. Moore, as well as too many others. I think we both were pleased you would be using other than just reprints from WEIRD TALES, including original material.

"There were some expected and many unexpected items. Your notes are always worth several times the price. For fiction, particularly, let me mention Bradbury, Howard, Swet, Marshall and William Hope Hodgson. We are *most* interested in your three-part article on Hodgson. The cover illustration was quite good. Reproduction may have been slightly unclear but not too pronounced. The two figures in the fore-center were certainly clear, only the third figure, rear, seemed slightly indistinct. Still, well worth the printing, though.

"I was quite impressed with the short story *The Medici Boots* by Pearl Norton Swet. A most excellent choice.

"Also the poetry was excellent. I wonder if you are considering more of A. Merritt. Such as some of his short stories? Also I hope you may locate some more of Robert W. Chamber's short fiction."

Joseph Kankowski, a veteran of 40 years of fantasy reading, wastes no time in plunging into his evaluation of the stories in the Summer WEIRD TALES: "*The Watchers*—There's no other author who can write like Bradbury. His unique characterizations are like figments of some lunatic's imagination, crossing the borderline of schizophrenia and merging, with a kaleidoscopic flash, into weird reality . . . *Perdita*—A most hauntingly touching and poignantly beautiful tale . . . *Spear and Fang*—This first one, crude as it may read in spots, always will remind me of a 'diamond in the rough' that needs only polishing . . . *Funeral in the Fog*—The author, in his cunning reversal of suspicion to another character, gave the plot a bizarre twist . . . *The Guest of Honor*—An interesting story, that keeps a reader in suspense. The author himself, met death face to face prematurely, at the age of 32 . . . *The Sign of Venus*—A smooth flowing narration evincing literary skill . . . *William Hope Hodgson—The Early Years*—Takes top prize for excellence of research . . . *The Woman in Red* and *Unmasked*—Both of these stories are priceless gems, whose lustrous brilliancy seems all the more enhanced, with the passing of time . . . *The Serpent City*—The story I liked best of all . . . *A Tropical Horror*—Few can surpass this author for sustained mood of horror, and I eagerly await his other unknowns that you have scheduled for publication in future issues . . . *The Man With the Brown Beard*—The plot has been used scores of times; although seemingly a bit awkward in writing style, it was nonetheless a good story . . . *The Black Hands*—Interesting little 'tale' in the handling . . . *The Medici Boots*—Passable as a story and my deepest sympathy rests with that poor little 'puthy-cat'."

James Hanson is not quite so pleased: "Ordinarily, I do not write letters to editors of publications, but in the case of your revived WEIRD TALES I wish to make an exception. As I started reading the old WEIRD TALES in the mid 40's and read until they ceased publication, I am extremely disappointed with the revised version. I will admit, however, that you did accomplish something in publishing a totally bad issue. If I remember correctly, there were a number of quite competent writers of WEIRD TALES, and I would like to see some of them brought back rather than the creaky antiquated period pieces that we are offered in this first issue. Also, I object strenuously to the extensive notes accompanying most of the "stories." My purpose is to be entertained, not to be edified . . . Perhaps a more discreet course of action on your part would be to start with Volume I Number 1 of the old issues, gather a half year of those under one cover in paperback format, and sell it to the reading public at $2.00 to $3.00 per collection."

Gary Shaheen likes us: "You have done a tremendous job. I approve wholeheartedly of the 'pulp' size—it suits WT much better than the digest size. To me, the pulp size is a

reminder of the early great WT and the digest size a reminder of its last, uninspired year of publication . . . Contentswise this new product is very pleasing—especially so is the Hodgson biography and story. What might be *very* interesting is a running biographical feature on the WEIRD TALES Editors, authors and artists."

Quarterly Painful

Jerry Nagle of Howell, Michigan, tells us: "I was born in Feb. of '55 so I was a little late for WEIRD TALES. I learned of the magazine through reading of Lancer's 'Conan' series and its quality began to seem legendary in an almost unreal sense. It's great to be given a second chance at enjoying it (I dreamed about it often).

"Yes—quarterly is painful; at least bi-monthly soon alright? You don't know how much evolution a personality goes through in just three months. I never know who I'll be or what I'll be doing by the next issue.

"Anyway I'm fanatical over your revival (Now if you could only get rights for THE SHADOW!!!

Marti-Ibanez Friend

From Fredric Wertham, M.D., of Kempton, Pa. we hear that he: "Just came across WEIRD TALES, Fall 1973. I was much impressed with the fact that you introduced a full letter column. In my book THE WORLD OF FANZINES, A Special Form of Communication (coming out this Fall), I point out the importance of letter columns in professional magazines for the original fanzines. The book is in press, so unfortunately it is not possible for me to include mention of your WEIRD TALES. As a matter of fact I mentioned in the book one of Sam Moskowitz' very early writings, namely a guest editorial in *Fantasy News* where he in 1940 advocated larger and not merely local conventions for science fiction.

"Also I would have liked to include reference to the Lovecraft essay in my section on Lovecraft. It is interesting that twice in his essay he speaks of the Arabian nights influence, for the first two illustrations in my book are taken from an Arabian-nights-like animated film—the first full length one in movie history.

"What I am particularly pleased with is that in WEIRD TALES you have an obituary on Felix Marti-Ibanez giving credit to a much-neglected author of stories. I happen to have been a fan and friend of his . . .

"Good luck with WEIRD TALES and best wishes."

Disappointed

Daniel Roberts of Tiffin Ohio offers some criticism: "Of course I am delighted about the new WEIRD TALES for I am 19 and have heard a lot about the past mag. But I must say that I am disappointed.

"Your illustrations new and reprint are better left unprinted. Haven't you heard of WITCHCRAFT AND SORCERY's D. Bruce Berry? Too bad your mag is not done in the style of the deceased FORGOTTEN FANTASY! Hopefully as time progresses your mag will improve. And when you use reprint illos please say where they're from.

"I do hope my comments are well taken. Best of luck and I will always buy."

Poetry Enjoyed

Tom Lira in Syracuse, N.Y. has this to say: "I have just finished the second issue of the new WEIRD TALES. First of all you don't have any distribution problem in my area; I saw the magazine everywhere I looked in many stores that never carry fantasy magazines or even SF magazines for that matter . . .

"Another thing, too, I'm glad that you will be using poetry in the new magazine. There really is not much of a market for fantasy poetry these days, maybe this is why one doesn't see too many poets these days at least in this branch of fiction. Of course there are a few excellent poets around such as Donald Fryer, and L. Sprague DeCamp and Lin Carter write some good stuff now and then. But usually all we see are reprints by the older

authors; Howard, Smith, etc. Not that I don't enjoy reading theirs, it's just that they are no longer writing and someone will have to take their place. And up until now there was no place where you could really send it, except maybe *The Arkham Collector* but even that is gone now. By the way I just mentioned Lin Carter: I think the C. A. Smith collaborations are a good idea.

"I agree with one reader who suggested stories by some of the newer authors in the tradition; Campbell, Lumley, etc. I think some work by Manly Wellman and Joseph Payne Brennan would be a good idea too. Perhaps now that WEIRD TALES has revived some of the older authors will contribute a few stories out of the many of those still alive who no longer write.

"Which brings me to another question: when you get WEIRD TALES going on a monthly (or bi-monthly) basis why don't you revive "The Magic Carpet" devoting it to mainly fantasy or the fantastic adventure type story? I think it's worth some consideration."

"Rebirth" Issue Missed

Steven D. Scheibner of Jackson Heights, N.Y. tells us: "It was with deep pleasure that I purchased WEIRD TALES Fall '73 issue. My only regret was missing your 'rebirth' issue a couple of months back . . .

"I'm not much of a horror fantasy fan but R. E. Howard and his characters have become known to me from Marvel Comics' use of Howard-esque stories these past three years. Is there any chance you could arrange a Conan story to see print in WEIRD TALES??"

No Longer Lamented

From Des Plaines, Illinois Richard Weinstock informs us: "While making the rounds at the local bookstores I spotted a copy of your magazine, the second issue. I read it, enjoyed it, and intend to spread the news of WEIRD TALES' revival. I've only read about WEIRD TALES in the anthologies. I never had the chance before to read the magazine itself. And after all, reading about it in the anthologies is like reading the obituaries ('That great lamented magazine of the unusual . . .' etc.). So I'm glad to see the real thing back on the stands with quality pieces like Lovecraft's essay and the Carter-Smith collaboration. Two things need mention however: one, add my name to the list of people who want completely new original material intermingled with the old, and two, as I have gotten the second issue and am missing the first, is there any way I can be sent the first issue?"

Thanks Expressed

Carmen Minchella in East Detroit, Michigan, wrote in to say: "Your magazine is the greatest news for lovers of fantastic fiction since Ballentine Books and Lin Carter started the 'Adult Fantasy Series.'

"I want to thank Mr. Moskowitz for introducing me to the brilliant works of William Hope Hodgson through the wonderfully written three-part installment on this author!

"I've read his masterpiece *The Night Land* and since reading the first two parts of your article I've ordered *The Boats of the 'Glen Carrig'*. I hope that you will continue to publish his stories in each issue of your magazine particularly stories like 'The Goddess of Death' 'From the Tideless Sea' and 'More News From The Homebird' . . .

"I (and I'm sure many other fans) would like to read stories of supernatural detection such as Hodgson's Carnacki, Seabury Quinn's Jules de Grandin, and Dion Fortune's Dr. Taverner. Many of these tales have been collected in rare editions by Arkham House and other publishing companies which are not generally accessible to us fans.

"A real coup for your magazine would be to publish H. P. Lovecraft's rare novel which has yet to be published in paperback form: *Herbert West: Reanimator*, a spoof of the Frankenstein Theme.

"One more request: try to get Fritz Leiber to write more grisly tales of the type he did so well in the days of the pulps: 'Smoke Ghost', 'The Hound', 'The Hill and the Hole' etc."

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