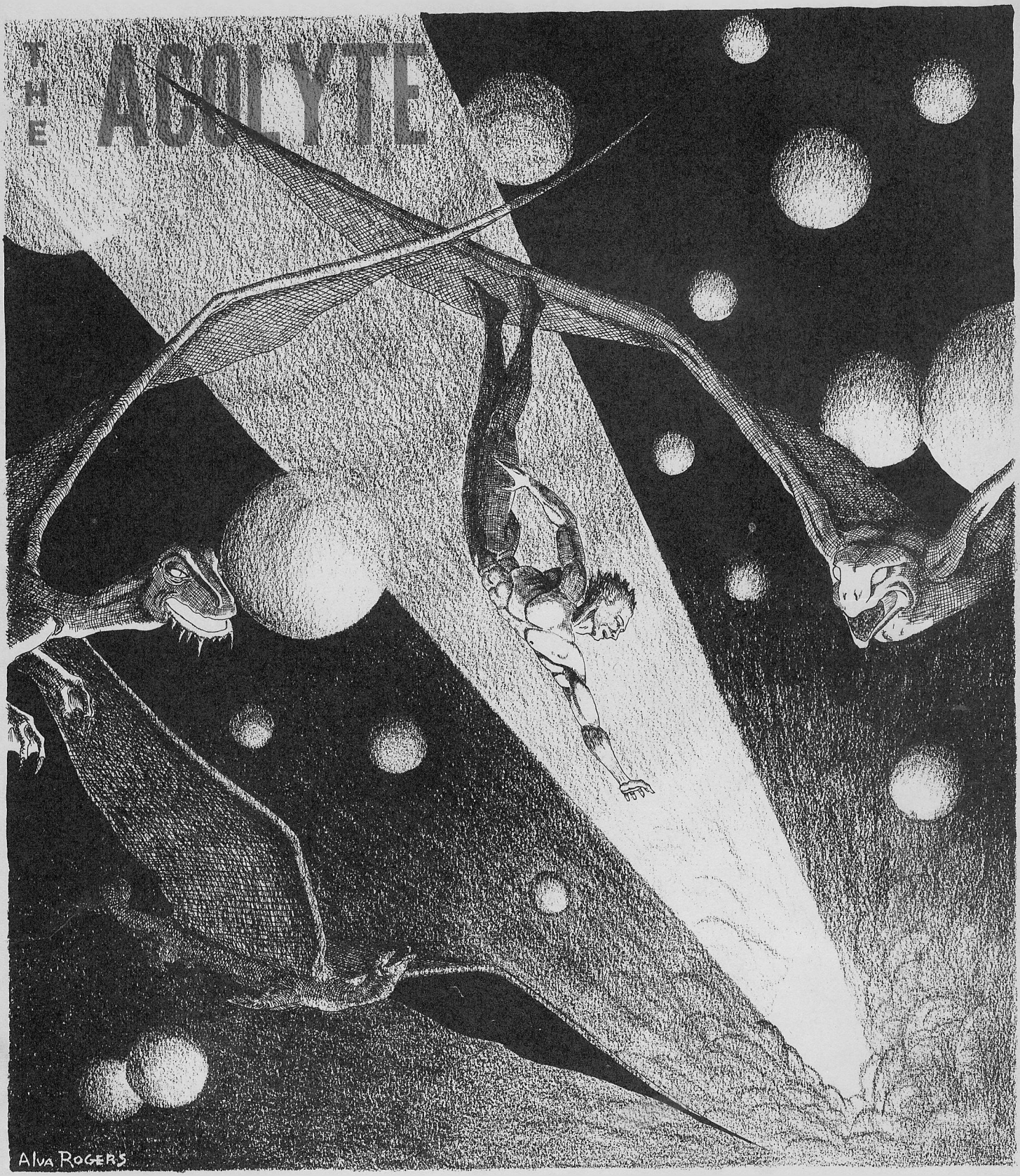
THE ACOLYTE
ALVA ROGERS

THE ACOLYTE

AN AMATEUR MAGAZINE OF FANTASY AND SCIENTIFICTION

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The next issue will be published about July 15, 1945.

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EDITORIALLY SPEAKING

A Word to Laney's Correspondents. My participation in this lovely hobby of ours is fast reaching such a point that I'm having to make a choice between continuing to make a living, and continuing fan activity at its present rate. Such a choice is not difficult to make, except that it involves the cutting out of a number of things that are sources of genuine pleasure to me.

One thing that positively has to get the axe is about 75% of my personal letter writing. I have tried in every way I can imagine to cope with this problem, and I've given up. Prior to starting this issue of The Acolyte, I made a heroic effort to get caught up with my unanswered letters. Virtually all my spare time for over a month went to this purpose, with the result that the pile was cut down to only about 30. Then I started to stencil! Within two weeks, the incoming mail had swelled the stack to even more than its previous gargantuan proportions. I've not counted them, but estimate I have over 100 unanswered letters! There are definite limits to my time and strength.

So, commencing now, I'm going to attempt to answer all letters on a basis of importance. Here is a table of priorities which seems a reasonably fair basis:

(1) Communications dealing with contributions or possible contributions of material for The Acolyte. (Under the new system, this type of matter, often horribly neglected in the past, will receive virtual return mail treatment.)

(2) Business communications from the individuals in England and elsewhere with whom I'm exchanging books and magazines. (These too will get very prompt service from now on--probably two weeks or less.)

(3) Letters of such nature that they are possibilities for Fantasy Forum. (These will be delayed not more than two months.)

(4) Other letters. (If humanly possible, I'll answer these as well; but if they go six months without a reply, I'm going to have to ignore them.)

(5) Subscriptions and renewals, except in extraordinary instances, will be answered only by copies of The Acolyte.

I realise that this classification is arbitrary. I realise further that it is apt to antagonise many of my correspondents. I'm truly sorry for any hard feelings this plan may generate, and suggest that any who are miffed by all this might submit an alternate, workable plan. I'd be more than eager to consider it. --FTL

---ooOoo---

Future Issues. Nebulous as usual. Russell is well along on an elaborate article dealing with MRJames, which he hopes to have ready for the next issue. Wyatt is doing one on the fantasies of Eden Phillpots. Laney is working on an S. Fowler Wright opus which is unlikely to be completed for another six to nine months. Definitely on hand is an extremely interesting Lovecraft article by Stuart Boland --authentic, fascinating, original. But what are you writing for us?

---ooOoo---

By Way of Retraction. We deeply regret the necessity of devoting further space to the rather futile antagonism existing between co-editor Laney and A. Langley Searles. Searles has complained that Laney's brief account of it in the last Acolyte is incomplete, inaccurate, and gives an improper impression to readers who may not be fully cognizent with the full facts in the matter. Searles, in fact, has demanded an amplification and/or retraction on penalty of his bringing suit against us for libel. As stated in the previous edi-

(turn to page 13)

8. Edward Lucas White

-oOo-

A comparatively neglected American writer of the weird and fantastic is Edward Lucas White. His collected fantasies, Lukundoo and Other Stories (Doran 1927), should be an integral part of any well-rounded fantasy collection, if for the title story alone. Though known to most readers only for the famous "Lukundoo", White reveals in this collection a talent bordering on genius for portraying the outre and macabre

The title story tells of Ralph Stone, an English explorer in Africa who has incurred the enmity of a native witch doctor. A curse is put on him which causes horrible little living manikins to emerge from his body as horridly sensient appendages whose constant revilings torture him endlessly. Though he cuts them off with a razor, another appears in a short time. In the climactic closing scene, two other explorers have come across Stone and stand watching him as he lies on his back conversing with the loathesome little figure which has emerged from his body.

"'You speak all tongues?' he asked thickly.

"'Yea, verily, all that you speak,' putting out its microsdopic tongue, writhing its lips, and wagging its head from side to side We could see the thready ribs on it exiguous flanks heave as if the tiny thing breathed.

"'Has she forgiven me?' Stone asked in a muffled strangle.

"'Not while the moss hangs from the cypresses,' the head squeaked. 'Not while the stars shine on Lake Pontchartrain will she forgive'.

"And then Stone, all with one motion, wrenched himself over on his side. The next instant he was dead."

Thus ends a story that seems to capture the very evil spirit of darker Africa and the outraged, implacable goddess.

"Floki's Blade" resembles somewhat the heroic tales of the late Robert E. Howard. It tells of a magic sword which confers in its holder superhuman strength, and is able to distinguish between friend and foe.

In the strange story, "The Picture Puzzle", a young couple whose only child has been kidnapped turn to jig-saw puzzles as a means of distraction. One night a picture appears (visible only to the wife) of an old man, while on the reverse of the puzzle (visible only to the husband) appears an old house. Determined to keep Christmas as though their little girl were still with them, they go shopping one day. The wife sees the old man of the puzzle and, following him, they come to the house which had been mysteriously shown on the reverse. There they find their missing child. It is interesting to compare this story with W. H. Harvey's masterly treatment of the double coincidence theme in "August Heat".

"The Snout" tells of a gang of thieves who enter the closely guarded house of a mysterious recluse. They find to their amazement many indications of refinement and culture highlighted by an incredible collection of fantastic art. When finally found by them, the inhabitant of this amazing house proves to be the size of a child, perfectly formed, but with a head and face closely resembling an enigmatical Egyptian statue of the twelfth dynasty--neither Anubis nor Seth, but some nameless cynocephalus god.

"Alfandega 49a" begins in a deceptive atmosphere of peace and happiness at a summer boarding house and gradually works up to a climax of stark terror. It centers around the carefree "Pake", whose winning ways with women incurr the hatred of a mysterious individual i

Rio de Janeiro who has a supernatural power of compelling his enemies to walk out of an open window to death forty feet below. Although the reader can foresee the ultimate tragedy long before it happens, this lack of mystery in no wise detracts from the mounting suspense of an excellent, if somewhat conventional, weird story.

In "The Message on the Slate" we find a story reminiscent of Poe's deathless loves. The hero's wife dies, and a good deal of Poe-esque mumbo-jumbo is connected with her interment; two coffins, identical in size and weight, being buried together. He marries again to a woman to whom he is completely indifferent, his love being centered on his dead wife. The new wife, determined to supplant her predecessor in his affections, consults a clairvoyant who obtains a message saying that the two coffins should be exhumed and opened. The husband is present, apparently his normal self, at the ceremony of disinterment. As the coffins are uncovered, his outline begins to get indefinite and hazy, and finally, as they are opened, he disappears utterly and his body is found breathing its last in one of them.

A ghoul story as remarkable in its way as Lovecraft's "The Outsider" is "Amina". A traveller in Persia becomes separated from his party on the desert and encounters a woman who offers to lead him to water. Following her, he enters an ancient tomb, from every corner of which appear a drove of children, all of about the same age and all of whom the woman claims as her own. The movements of woman and children are becoming menacing when the traveller's party puts in an appearance. One of the men shoots the woman without hesitation. The shocked traveller upbraids him for this murder.

"'You are hard to convince,' said the consul sternly. 'Do you call that a woman?'

"He stripped the clothing from the carcass.

"Waldo sickened all over. What he saw was not the front of a woman, but more like the underside of an old fox terrier with puppies, or of a white sow with her second litter; from collar-bone to groin ten lolloping udders, two rows, mauled, stringy, and flaccid.

"'What kind of a creature is it?' he asked faintly.

"'A ghoul, my boy,' the consul answered solemnly, almost in a whisper."

"The Pig-Skin Belt" tells the story of a man pursued by the hatred of an enemy that would follow him anywhere on the earth, the moon, Mars, the planet of some other sun, or the least conspicuous satellite of the furthest star. An enemy that could at will attack him under the guise of a man, woman, child, bird, or even insect. His triumph over his enemy makes a gripping story.

Very effective too is "The House of the Nightmare" in which a traveller in the country has an accident with his car, and comes across a deserted old house inhabited only by a young boy. Forced to spend the night there, he is assailed by a nightmare in which a monstrous sow is about to attack him. He leaves in the morning and upon reaching the nearest town finds that the boy was killed six months previously by a murderous old sow.

Perhaps the strangest story in the volume is "Sorcery Island" A man in an airplane over the ocean sees below him an island, and at the same time becomes victim of a hallucination which makes him think he is astride a gigantic gander flying in the sky. He loses consciousness, and on regaining it, finds himself on the island beside his burning plane. The island proves to be a little kingdom ruled with oriental despotism by a former school friend who had always been notorious for his wild eccentricities, chief among them a mania for birds. It soon becomes apparent that the place is indeed a very island of enchantment where bird life is treated as sacred. Although surrounded by ev-

ery conceivable luxury, all the inhabitants of the island are held in thrall by the necromancy of an aged witch employed by the eccentric. The hero finally escapes after threatening to kill a large gander used by the witch in her spells.

A notable feature of this book is the author's "Afterword", in which White reveals the remarkable fact that all but one of the stories in this volume are the records of dreams which he has had. Indeed, in "The House of the Nightmare" White awoke in the midst of the nightmare, then went back to sleep and finished the dream!

In another volume of White's stories, The Song of the Siren, only the title story (which Lovecraft describes as having a very persuasive strangeness) can be classed as weird.

One fault that mars two or three of these stories is badly stilted and awkward dialogue. This is particularly noticeable in "The Message on the Slate" and "The Snout" (in which all the gangsters talk like university men). In other stories, the dialogue is thoroughly satisfactory.

Nevertheless, the name of Edward Lucas White deserves a prominent place in any study of American weird literature. He shows in his work many qualities it seems impossible to ignore. Not the least of these is the ability (to quote Lovecraft) of imparting an oblique sort of glamour which adds its own distinctive convincingness to his stories. Without having been influenced by any author in particular, White has developed a forceful and individual style that is particularly his own.

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The Whisperer

The awful whispers came from out of nowhere,
In broad daylight to catch me unawares.
They seemed so strange, so very dim,
As if they floated up from ancient lairs.

At first I could not comprehend its songs;
The rhythms were uncouth and much too old
To be a part of mundane life and plan---
Nor could I tell precisely what they told.

Sometimes on windless nights my shutters creaked
As though some Thing were fumbling with the latch---
And when the whispers echoed in my ears,
I bolted out of bed and struck a match.

Always the same---no living thing was near,
And though I searched the bedroom high and low,
I could not find the nameless whisperer
Or check that taunting, almost voiceless flow.

Back it comes, with accents now familiar,
Because I know at last from whence it springs.
I am a changeling, and my mate has called
From aery heights where Lloigor wails and sings.

---Duane W. Rimel

THE DREAMS OF ALBERT MORELAND

Fritz Leiber, Jr

I think of the autumn of 1939, not as the beginning of the Second World War, but as the period in which Albert Moreland dreamed the dream. The two events--the war and the dream--are not, however, divorced in my mind. Indeed, I sometimes fear that there is a definite connection between them, but it is not a connection which any sane person ought to consider seriously, and in any case it is not a clear one.

Albert Moreland was, and perhaps still is, a professional chessplayer. That fact has an important bearing on the dream, or dreams. He made most of his scant income at a games arcade in lower Manhattan, taking on all comers---the enthusiast who got a kick out of trying to beat an expert, the lonely man who turned to chess as to a drug, or the down-and-outer tempted into purchasing a half hour of intellectual dignity for a quarter. After I got to know him, I often wandered into the arcade and watched him playing as many as three or four games simultaneously, oblivious to the clicking and mechanical whirring of the pinball games and the intermittant whip-cracks from the shooting gallery. He got fifteen cents for every win; the house took the extra dime. When he lost, neither got anything.

Eventually I found out that he was a much better player than he needed to be to whitewash arcade competition. He had won casual games from internationally famous masters. A couple of Manhattan clubs had wanted to groom him for the big tournaments, but lack of ambition kept him drifiting along in obscurity. I got the impression that he actually thought chess too trivial a business to warrant serious consideration, although he was perfectly willing to dribble his life away at the arcade, waiting for something really important to come along, if it ever did. Once in a while, he eked out his income by playing on a club team, getting as much as five dollars.

I met him at the old brownstone house, where we happened to have rooms on the same floor. And it was there that he first told me about the dream.

We had just finished a game of chess, and I was idly watching the battle-scarred pieces slide off the board and pile up in a fold of the blanket on his cot. Outside a fretful wind eddied the dry grit; coming home earlier in the evening I had had to keep my eyes three-quarters closed. There was the surge of traffic noises, and from somewhere the buzz of a defective neon sign. I had just lost, but I was glad that Moreland never let me win, as he occasionally did to encourage the players at the arcade. Indeed, I thought myself fortunate in being able to play with Moreland at all, not knowing then that I was probably the best friend he had.

I was saying something obvious about the game.

"You think it a complicated game?" he inquired, peering at me with quizzical intentness, his brown eyes dark like round windows pushed up under heavy eaves. "Well perhaps it is. But I play a game a thousand times more complex every night in my dreams. And the queer thing is that the game goes on night after night. The same game. I never really sleep. Only dream, about the game."

Then he told me, speaking with the mixture of facetious jest and uncomfortable seriousness that was to characterise many of our subsequent conversations.

The images of his dream, as he described them, were impressively simple, without any of the usual merging and incongruity. A board so vast he sometimes had to walk out on to it to move his pieces. A great many more squares than in chess and arranged in patches of different colors, the power of the pieces varying according to the color of the square on which they stood. Above and to each side of the board only blackness, but a blackness that suggested starless infinity, as if, as he put it, the scene were laid on the very top of the universe.

When he was awake he couldn't quite remember all the rules of the game, although he recalled a great many isolate points; such as the appearance and powers of certain pieces, the situations in which two or more might be moved at the same time, and the interesting fact that--quite unlike chess--his pieces and those of his adversary did not duplicate each other. Yet he was convinced that he not only understood the game perfectly while dreaming, but also was able to play it in the highly strategic manner that characterizes the master chess player. It was, he said, as though his subconscious mind had many more dimensions of thought than his waking-mind, and were able to grasp intuitively complex series of moves that would ordinarily have to be reasoned out painfully, step by step.

"A feeling of increased mental power is a very ordinary dream-delusion, isn't it?" he added, peering at me sharply. "And so I suppose you might say it's a very ordinary dream."

I didn't know quite how to take that last remark, with its trace of sarcasm and ambiguity, so I prodded him with a question, for I wanted him to go on.

"What do the pieces look like?" I asked.

It turned out that they were similar to those of chess in that they were considerably stylized and yet suggested the original forms---architectural, animal, ornamental---which had served as their inspiration. But there the similarity ended. The inspiring forms, so far as he could guess at them, were grotesque in the extreme. There were terraced towers subtly distorted out of the perpendicular, strangely asymetric polygons that nevertheless made him think of temples and tombs, vegetable-animal shapes which defied classification and whose formalized limbs and external organs suggested a variety of unknown functions. The more powerful pieces seemed to be modelled after life forms, for they carried stylized weapons and other implements, and wore things similar to crowns and tiaras---a little like the king, queen, and bishop in chess---while the carving indicated voluminous robes and hoods. But they were in no other sense anthropomorphic. Moreland sought in vain for earthly analogies, mentioning Hindu idols, prehistoric reptiles, futurist sculpture, squids bearing daggers in their tentacles, and huge ants and mantises and other insects with fantastically adapted end organs.

"I think you would have to search the whole universe--every planet and every dead sun---before you could find the original models," he said, frowning. "Remember, there is nothing cloudy or vague about the pieces themselves in my dream. They are as tangible as this rook." He picked up the piece, clenched his fist around it for a moment, and then held it out toward me on his open palm. "It is only in what they suggest that the vagueness lies."

It was strange, but his words seemed to open some dream-eye in my own mind, so that I could almost see the things he described. I asked him if he experienced fear during his dream.

He replied that the pieces one and all filled him with repugnance---those based on higher life forms usually to a greater degree than the architectural ones. He hated to have to touch or handle them. There was one piece in particular which had an intensely morbid fascination for his dream-self. He identified it as "the archer" because the stylized weapon it bore gave the impression of being able to hurt at a distance; but like the rest it was quite inhuman. He described it as representing a kind of intermediate, warped life form which had achieved more than human intellectual power without losing--but rather gaining--in brute cruelty and malignity. It was one of the opposing pieces for which there was no duplicate among his own. The mingled fear and loathing it inspired in him sometimes became so great that they interfered with his strategic grasp of the whole dream-game, and he was afraid his feeling toward it would sometime rise to such a pitch that he would be forced to capture it just to get it off the board, even though such a capture might compromise his whole position.

"God knows how my mind ever cooked up such a hideous entity," he finished, with a quick grin. "Five hundred years ago I'd have said the Devil put it there."

"Speaking of the Devil," I asked, immediately feeling my flippancy was silly, "whom do you play against in your dream?"

Again he frowned. "I don't know. The opposing pieces move by themselves. I will have made a move, and then, after waiting for what seems like an eon, all on edge as in chess, everything still as death, one of the opposing pieces will begin to shake a little and then to wobble back and forth. Gradually the movement increases in extent until the piece gets off balance and begins to rock and careen across the board, like a water tumbler on a pitching ship, until it reaches the proper squar Then, slowly as it began, the movement subsides. I don't know, but it always makes me think of some huge, invisible, senile creature---crafty, selfish, cruel. You've watched that trembly old man at the arcade? The one who always drags the pieces across the board without lifting them, his hand constantly shaking? It's a little like that."

I nodded that I got the idea. For that matter, his description made it very vivid. For the first time I began to think of how unpleasant such a dream might be.

"And it goes on night after night?" I asked.

"Night after night!" he affirmed with sudden fierceness. "And always the same game. It has been more than a month now, and my forces are just beginning to grapple with the enemy. It's draining off my mental energy. I wish it would stop. I'm

getting so I hate to go to sleep." He paused and turned away. "It seems queer," he said after a moment in a softer voice, smiling apologetically, "It seems queer to get so worked up over a dream. But if you've had bad ones, you know how they can cloud your thoughts all day. And I haven't really managed to get over to you the sort of feeling that grips me while I'm dreaming, and while my brain is working at the game, and plotting move-sequence after move-sequence and weighing a thousand complex possibilities. There's repugnance, yes, and fear. I've told you that. But the dominant feeling is one of responsibility. I must not lose the game. More than my own personal welfare depends upon it. There are some terrible stakes involved, though I am never quite sure what they are.

"When you were a little child, did you ever worry tremendously about something, with that complete lack of proportion characteristic of childhood? Did you ever feel that everything, literally everything, depended upon your performing some trivial action, some unimportant duty, in just exactly the right way? Well, while I dream, I have the feeling that I am playing for some stake as big as the fate of mankind. One wrong move may plunge the universe into unending night. Sometimes, in my dream, I feel sure of it."

His voice trailed off and he stared at the chessmen. I made some remarks and started to tell about an air-raid nightmare I'd just had, but it didn't seem very important. And I gave him some vague advice about changing his sleeping habits, which didn't seem very important either, although he accepted it with good grace. As I started back to my room he said, "Amusing to think, isn't it, that I'll be playing the game again as soon as my head hits the pillow?" He grinned, and added lightly, "Perhaps it will be over sooner than we expect. Lately I've had the feeling that my adversary is about to unleash a surprise attack, although he pretends to be on the defensive." He grinned again, and shut the door.

As I waited for sleep, staring at the wavy churning darkness that is more in the eyes than outside them, I began to wonder whether Morland did not stand in greater need of psychiatric treatment than most chessplayers. Certainly a person without family, friends or proper occupation is more liable to mental abberations. Still, he seemed sane enough. Perhaps the dream was compensation for his failure to use anything like the full potentialities of his highly talented mind, even at chessplaying. Certainly it was a satisfyingly grandiose vision, with its unearthly background and its implications of stupendous mental skill.

There floated into my mind the lines from the Rubaiyat about the cosmic chessplayer who, "Hither and thither moves, and checks, and slays, And one by one back in the Closet lays."

Then I thought of the emotional atmosphere of his dream, and the feelings of terror and boundless responsibility, of tremendous duties and cataclysmic consequences---feelings I recognised from my own dreams---and I compared them with the mad, dismal state of the world (for it was October 1939, and the sense of utter catastrophe had not yet been dulled), and I thought of the million drifitng Morelands suddenly shocked into a realisation of the desperate plight of things and of priceless chances lost forever in the past and of their own ill-defined but certain complicity in the disaster. I began to see Moreland's dream as the symbol of a last-ditch, too-late struggle against the implacable forces of fate and chance. And my night thoughts began to revolve around the fancy that some cosmic beings, neither gods nor men, had created human life long ago as a just or experiment or artistic form, and now decided to base the fate of their creation on the result of a game of skill played against one of their creatures.

Suddenly I realized that I was wide awake and that the darkness was no longer restfull. I snapped on the light and impulsively decided to see if Moreland were still up.

The hall was as shadowy and funereal as that of most boarding houses late at night, and I tried to minimize the inevitable dry creakings. I waited for a few moments in front of Moreland's door, but I heard nothing, so instead of knocking, I presumed upon our slight familiarity and quietly edged open the door, in order not to disturb him if he were abed.

It was then I heard his voice, and so certain was my impression that the sound came from a considerable distance that I immediately walked back to the stair-well and called, "Moreland, are you down there?"

Only then did I realise what he said. Perhaps it was the peculiarity of the words that caused them first to register on my mind as merely a series of sounds.

The words were, "My spider-thing seizes your armor-bearer. I threaten."

It instantly occured to me that the words were similar in general form to any one of a number of conventional expressions in chess, such as, "My rook captures your bishop. I give check." But there were no such things as "spider-things" or "armor-bearers" in chess or any other game I knew of.

I automatically walked back toward his room, though I still doubted he was there. The voice had sounded much too far away--definitely outside of the building or at least in a remote section of it.

But he was lying in the cot, his upturned face revealed by the light of a distant electric advertisement, which blinked on and off at regular intervals. The traffic sounds, which had been almost inaudible in the hall, made the half-darkness restless and irritably alive. The defective neon sign still buzzed and droned insectlike as it had earlier in the evening.

I tiptoed over and looked down at him. His face, more pale than it should have been because of some quality of the intermittant light, was set in an expression of painfully intense concentration---forehead vertically furrowed, muscles around the eyes contracted, lips pursed to a line. I wondered if I ought to awaken him. I was acutely aware of the impersonally murmuring city all around us---block on block of shuttling, routined, aloof existence---and the contrast made his sleeping face seem all the more sensitive and vividly individual and unguarded, like some soft though purposefully tense organism which has lost its protective shell.

As I waited uncertainly, the tight lips opened a little, though without losing any of their tautness. He spoke, and for the second time the impression of distance was so compelling that I involuntarily looked over my shoulder, and out the dustily glowing window. Then I began to tremble.

"My coiled-thing advances to the thirteenth square of the green ruler's domain," was what he said, but I can only suggest the quality of the voice. Some inconceivable sort of distance had drained it of all richness and throatiness and overtones, so that it was hollow and flat and faint and disturbingly mournful, as voices sometimes sound in open country, or from up on a high roof, or when there is a bad telephone connection. I felt I was the victim of some gruesome deception, and yet I knew that ventriloquism is a matter of motionless lips and clever suggestion rather than any really convincing change in the quality of the voice itself. Without volition there rose in my mind visions of infinite space, unending darkness. I felt as if I were being wrenched up and away from the world, so that Manhattan lay below me like a black asymetric spearhead outlined by leaden waters, and then still further outward at increasing speed until earth and sun and stars and galazies were all lost and I was beyond the universe. To such a degree did the quality of Moreland's voice affect me.

I do not know how long I stood there waiting for him to speak again, with the noises of Manhattan flowing around yet not quite touching me, and the electric sign which showed Moreland's face blinking on and off unalterably like the ticking of a clock. I could only think about the game that was being played, and wonder whether Moreland's adversary had yet made an answering move, and whether things were going for or against Moreland. There was no telling from his face; its intensity of concentration did not change. During those months or minutes I stood there, I believed implicitly in the reality of the game. As if I myself were somehow dreaming, I could not question the rationality of my belief or break the spell which bound me.

When finally his lips parted a little and I experienced again that impression of impossible, eerie ventriloquism---the words this time being "My horned-creature vaults over the twisted tower, challenging the archer"---my fear broke loose from whatever controlled it and I stumbled toward the door.

Then came what was, in an oblique way, the strangest part of the whole episode. In the time it took me to walk the length of the corridor back to my room, most of my fear and most of the feeling of complete alienage and other worldliness which had dominated me while I was watching Moreland's face, receded so swiftly that I even forgot, for the time being, how great they had been. Perhaps it was because the unwholesome realm of Moreland's dream was so grotesquely dissimilar to anything in the real world. Whatever the cause, by the time I opened the door to my room I was thinking, "Such nightmares can't be wholesome. Perhaps he should see a psychiatrist. Yet it's only a dream," and so on. I felt tired and stupid. Very soon I was asleep.

But some wraith of the original emotions must have lingered, for I awoke the next morning with the fear that something might have happened to Moreland. Dressing hurriedly, I knocked at his door, but found the room empty, the bedclothes still rumpled. I enquired of the landlady, and she said he had gone out at eight-fifteen as

usual. The bald statement did not quite satisfy my anxiety. But since my job-hunting that day happened to lie in the direction of the arcade, I had an excuse to wander in. Moreland was stolidly pushing pieces around with an abstracted, tousle-haired fellow of Slavic features, and casually conducting two rapid-fire checker games on the side. Reassured, I went on my way without bothering him.

That evening we had a long talk about dreams in general, and I found him surprisingly well read on the subject, and scientifically cautious in his attitudes. Rather to my chagrin, it was I who introduced such dubious topics as clairvoyance, mental telepathy, and the possibility of strange telescopings and other distortions of time and space during dream states. Some foolish reticence about admitting I had pushed my way into his room the preceding night kept me from telling him what I had heard and seen, but he freely told me he had had another installment of the usual dream. He seemed to take a more philosophic view now that he had shared his experiences with someone. Together we speculated as to the possible daytime sources of his dream. It was after twelve when we said goodnight.

I went away with the curious feeling of having been let down---vaguely unsatisfied. I think the fear I had experienced the previous night and then almost forgotten must have been gnawing at me obscurely.

And the following evening, that fear found an avenue of return. Thinking Moreland must be tired of talking about dreams, I coaxed him into a game of chess. But in the middle of the game, he put back a piece he was about to move, and said, "You know, that damned dream of mine is getting very bothersome."

It turned out that his dream adversary had finally loosed the long-threatened attack, and that the dream itself had turned into a kind of nightmare. "It's very much like what happens to you in a game of chess," he explained. "You go along confident that you have a strong position and that the game is taking the right direction. Every move your opponent makes is one you have foreseen. You get to feeling almost omniscient. Suddenly he makes a totally unexpected attacking move. For a moment you think it must be a stupid blunder on his part. Then you look a little more closely and realise that you have totally overlooked something and that his attack is a sound one. Then you begin to sweat.

"Of course, I've always experienced fear and anxiety and a sense of overpowering responsibility during the dream. But my pieces were like a wall, protecting me. Now I can see only the cracks in that wall. At any one of a hundred weak points it might conceivably be broken through. Now, whenever one of the opposing pieces begins to wobble and shake, I wonder whether, when its move is completed, there will flash into my mind the unalterable and unavoidable combinations of subsequent moves leading to my defeat. Last night I thought I saw such a move, and the terror was so great that everything swirled and I seemed to drop through millions of miles of emptiness in an instant. Yet just in the instant of waking I realized I had miscalculated, and that my position, though perilous, was still secure. It was so vivid that I almost carried with me into my waking thoughts the reason why, but then some of the steps in the train of dream-reasoning dropped out, as if my waking mind were not big enough to hold them all."

He also told me that his fixation on "the archer" was becoming increasingly troublesome. It filled him with a special kind of terror, different in quality but perhaps higher in pitch than that engendered in him by the dream as a whole: a crazy, morbid terror, characterized by intense repugnance, nerve-twisting exasperation, and reckless suicidal impulses.

"I can't get rid of the feeling," he said, "that the beastly thing will in some unfair and underhanded manner be the means of my defeat."

He looked very tired to me, although his face was of the compact, tough-skinned sort that does not readily show fatigue, and I felt concerned for his physical and nervous welfare. I suggested that he consult a doctor (I did not like to say psychiatrist) and pointed out that sleeping tablets might be of some help.

"But in a deeper sleep the dream might be even more vivid and real," he answered grimacing sardonically. "No, I'd rather play out the game under the present conditions."

I was glad to find that he still viewed the dream as an interesting and temporary psychological phenomenon (what else he could have viewed it as, I did not stop to analyze). Even while admitting to me the exceptional intensity of his emotions, he maintained something of a jesting air. Once he compared his dream to a paranoid's delusions of persecution, and asked whether I didn't think it was good enough to get him admitted into an asylum.

"Then I could forget the arcade and earning a living, and devote all my time to dream-chess," he said, laughing sharply as soon as he saw I was beginning to wonder whether he hadn't meant the remark half seriously.

But some part of my mind was not convinced by his protestations, and when later I tossed in the dark, my imagination perversely kept picturing the universe as a great arena in which each creature is doomed to engage in a losing game of skill against demoniac mentalities which, however long they may play cat and mouse, are always assured of final mastery--or almost assured, so that it would be a miracle if they were beaten. I found myself comparing them to certain chess players who, if they cannot beat an opponent by superior skill, will capitalize on unpleasant personal mannerisms in order to exasperate him and break down the lucidity of his thinking.

This mood colored my nebulous dreams and persisted into the next day. As I walked the streets I felt myself inundated by an omnipresent anxiety, and I sensed taut, nervous mystery in each passing face. For once I seemed able to look behind the mask which every person wears and which is so characteristically pronounced in a congested city, and see what lay behind---the egotistical sensitivity, the smouldering irritation, the thwarted longing, the defeat....and, above all, the anxiety, too ill-defined and lacking in definite object to be called fear, but nonetheless infecting every thought and action, and making trivial things terrible. And it seemed to me that social, economic, and physiological factors, even Death and the War, were insufficient to explain such anxiety, and that it was in reality an upwelling from something dubious and horrible in the very constitution of the universe.

That evening I found myself at the arcade. Here too I sensed a difference in things, for Moreland's abstraction was not the calculating boredom with which I was familiar, and his tiredness was shockingly apparent. One of his three opponents called his attention to a move, after shifting around restlessly, and Moreland jerked his head as if he had been dozing. He immediately made an answering move, and quickly lost his queen and the game by a trap that was very obvious even to me. A little later he lost another game by an equally elementary oversight. The boss of the arcade, a big beefy man, ambled over and stood behind Moreland, his heavy-jowled face impassive, seeming to study the position of the pieces in the last game. Moreland lost that too.

"Who won?" asked the boss.

Moreland indicated his opponent. The boss grunted noncommittally and walked off.

No one else sat down to play. It was near closing time. I was not sure whether Moreland had noticed me, but after a while he stood up and nodded at me, and got his hat and coat. We walked the long stretch back to the rooming house. He hardly spoke a word, and my sensation of morbid insight into the world around persisted and kept me silent. He walked as usual with long, slightly stiff-kneed strides, hands in his pockets, hat pulled low, frowning at the pavement a dozen feet ahead.

When we reached the room he sat down without taking off his coat, and said, "Of course it was the dream that made me lose those games. When I woke this morning it was terribly vivid, and I almost remembered the exact position and all the rules. I started to make a diagram...."

He indicated a piece of wrapping paper on the table. Hasty criss-cross lines, incomplete, represented what seemed to be the corner of an indefinitely larger pattern. There were about five hundred squares. On various squares were marks and names standing for pieces, and there were dotted lines or arrows radiating out from the pieces to show their power of movement.

"I got that far. Then I began to forget," he said tiredly, staring at the floor. But I'm still very close to it. Like a mathematical puzzle you've not quite solved. Parts of the board kept flashing into my mind all day, so that I felt with a little more effort I would be able to grasp the whole thing. Yet I can't."

His voice changed. "I'm going to lose, you know. It's that piece I call 'the archer'. Last night I couldn't concentrate on the board; it was always drawing my eyes. The worst thing is that it's the spearhead of my adversary's attack. I ache to capture it. But I must not, for it's a kind of catspaw too, the bait of the strategic trap my adversary is laying. If I capture it, I will expose myself to defeat. So I must watch it coming closer and closer---it has an ugly, double-angled sort of hopping move---knowing that my only chance is to sit tight until my adversary overreaches himself and I can counterattack. But I won't be able to. Soon, perhaps tonight, my nerve will crack, and I will capture it."

I was studying the diagram with great interest, and only half heard the rest---a description of the actual appearance of "the archer". I heard him say something

about "a five-lobed head...the head almost hidden by a hood...appendages, each with four joints, appearing from under the robe...an eight-pronged weapon with wheels and levers about it, and little bag-shaped receptacles, as though for poison...posture suggesting it is lifting the weapon to aim it...all intricately carved in some lustrous red stone, speckled with violet...an expression of bestial, supernatural malevolence..."

Just then all my attention focussed suddenly on the diagram, and I felt a tightening shiver of excitement, for I recognized two familiar names which I had never heard Moreland mention while awake: "Spider-thing" and "green ruler".

Without pausing to think, I told him of how I had listened to his sleep-talking three nights before, and about the peculiar phrases he had spoken which tallied so well with the entries on the diagram. I poured out my account with melodramatic haste. My discovery of the entries on the diagram, nothing exceptionally amazing in itself, probably made such a great impression on me because I had hitherto strangely forgotten or repressed the intense fear I had experienced when I watched Moreland sleeping.

Before I was finished, however, I noticed the growing anxiety of his expression, and abruptly realized that what I was saying might not have the best effect on him. So I minimized my recollection of the unwholesome quality of his voice---the overpowering impression of distance---and the fear it had engendered in me.

Even so, it was obvious that he had received a severe shock. For a little while he seemed to be on the verge of a serious nervous derangement, walking up and down with fierce, jerky movements, throwing out crazy statements, coming back again and again to the diabolical convincingness of the dream---which my revelation seemed to have intensified for him---and finally breaking down into vague appeals for help.

Those appeals had an immediate effect on me, making me forget any wild thoughts of my own, and putting everything on a personal level. All my instincts were now to aid Moreland, and I once again saw the whole matter as something for a psychiatrist to handle. Our roles had changed. I was no longer the half-awed listener, but the steady friend to whom he turned for advice. That, more than anything, gave me a feeling of confidence and made my previous speculations seem childish and unhealthy. I felt contemptuous of myself for having encouraged his delusive trains of speculation, and I did as much as I could to make up for it.

After a while my repeated reassurances seemed to take effect. He grew calm and our talk became reasonable once more, though every now and then he would appeal to me about some particular point that worried him. I discovered for the first time the extent to which he had taken the dream seriously. During his lonely broodings, he told me, he had sometimes become convinced that his mind left his body while he slept, and travelled immeasurable distances to some transcosmic realm where the game was played. He had the illusion, he said, of getting perilously close to the innermost secrets of the universe and finding they were rotten and evil and sardonic. At times he had been terribly afraid that the pathway between his mind and the realm of the game would "open up" to such a degree that he would be "sucked up bodily from the world", as he put it. His belief that the loss of the game would doom the world itself had been much stronger than he had ever admitted to me previously. He had traced a frightening relationship between the progress of the game and of the War, and had begun to believe that the ultimate issue of the War---though not necessarily the victory of either side---hung on the outcome of the game.

At times it had gotten so bad, he revealed, that his only relief had been in the thought that, no matter what happened, he could never convince others of the reality of his dream. They would always be able to view it as a manifestation of insanity or overwrought imagination. No matter how vivid it became to him he would never have concrete, objective proof.

"It's this way," he said. "You saw me sleeping, didn't you? Right here on this cot. You heard me talk in my sleep, didn't you? About the game. Well, that absolutely proves to you that it's all just a dream, doesn't it? You couldn't rightly believe anything else, could you?"

I do not know why those last ambiguous questions of his should have had such a reassuring effect on me of all people, who had only three nights ago trembled at the indescribable quality of his voice as he talked from his dream. But they did. They seemed like the final seal on an agreement between us that the dream was only a dream and meant nothing. I began to feel rather bouyant and self-satisfied, like a doctor who has just pulled his patient through a dangerous crisis. I talked to Moreland in what I now realize was almost a pompously sympathetic way, without noticing how dis-

pirited were his obedient nods of agreement. He said little after those last questions

I even persuaded him to go out to a nearby lunchroom for a midnight snack, as if ---God help me!---I were celebrating my victory over the dream. As we sat at the not too dirty counter, smoking our cigarettes and sipping burningly hot coffee, I noticed that he had begun to smile again, which added to my satisfaction. I was blind to the ultimate dejection and submissive hopelessness that lay behind those smiles.

As I left him at the door of his room, he suddenly caught hold of my hand and said, "I want to tell you how grateful I am for the way you've worked to pull me out of this mess." I made a deprecating gesture. "No, wait," he continued. "It does mean a lot. Well, anyway, thanks."

I went away with a contented, almost virtuous feeling. I had no apprehensions whatever. I only mused, in a heavily philosophic way, over the strange forms fear and anxiety can assume in our pitiably tangled civilization.

As soon as I was dressed next morning, I rapped briskly at his door and impulsively pushed in without waiting for an answer. For once, sunlight was pouring through the dusty window.

Then I saw it, and everything else receded.

It was lying in the crumpled bedclothes, half hidden by a fold of blanket, a thing perhaps ten inches high, as solid as any statuette, and as undeniably real. But from the first glance I knew that its form bore no relation to any earthly creature. This fact would have been as apparent to someone who knew nothing of art as to an expert. I also knew that the red, violet-flecked substance from which it had been carved or cast had no classification among earthly gems or minerals. Every detail was there. The five-lobed head, almost hidden by a hood. The appendages, each with four joints, appearing from under the robe. The eight-pronged weapon with wheels and levers about it, and the little bag-shaped receptacles, as though for poison. Posture suggesting it was lifting the weapon to aim it. An expression of bestial, supernatural malevolence.

Beyond doubting, it was the thing Moreland had dreamed of. The thing which had horrified and fascinated him, as it now did me; which had rasped unendurably on his nerves, as it now began to rasp on mine. The thing which had been the spearhead and catspaw of his adversary's attack, and whose capture---and it now seemed evident that it had been captured---meant the probable loss of the game itself. The thing which had somehow been sucked back along an ever-opening path across unimaginable distances from a realm of madness ruling the universe.

Beyond doubting it was "the archer".

Hardly knowing what moved me, save fear, or what my purpose was, I fled from the room. Then I realized that I must find Moreland. No one had seen him leaving the house. All day I searched for him. The arcade. Chess clubs. Libraries.

Never, and it is almost two years now, have I seen him or heard any word of him.

It was evening when I went back and forced myself to re-enter his room. The figure was no longer there. No one professed to know anything about it when I questioned them, but some of the denials were too angry, and I know that "the archer", being obviously a thing of value and having no overly great terrors for those who do not know its history, has most probably found its way into the hands of some wealthy and eccentric collector. Other things have vanished by a similar route in the past.

But I am certain that it was not made on earth.

And although there are reasons to fear the contrary, I feel that somewhere---in some cheap boarding house or lodging place, or in some madhouse---Albert Moreland, if the game is not already lost and the forfeiture begun, is still playing that unbelievable game for stakes it is bad to contemplate.

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EDITORIALLY SPEAKING. (cont. from page 8)

torial, Laney's family obligations preclude his participation in the always expensive folderol of court procedings. To put it bluntly, Laney does not feel it worthwhile to jeopardize the possible future of his two infant daughters by taking any chances whatever on making big donations to lawyers and their works. If this be cowardice, make the most of it.

Upon careful dissection and analysis of The Dog In The Manger, we have discovered five points which, we believe, may require

(turn to page 37)

THE FANTASTIC ELEMENT IN THE SHORT STORIES OF IVAN TURGENEV

by Carol Wyatt

-oOo-

In 1875 Turgenev wrote "...to everything supernatural I am indifferent." Yet in the course of his writings this great master of the realistic novel produced no less than eight short stories dealing directly with the supernatural, many prose poems in the genre, and a group of short stories in which a mysterious fatalism plays an unnaturally large part.

It was as if the realm of the supernatural had tried to claim Turgenev for its own. Indeed, ghosts appeared to him, one of whom was a woman in a brown cloak, who sometimes said a few words in French, "but never anything worth remembering. He dismissed the specters as hallucinations". ((quote from: A. Yarmolinsky, Turgenev, The Century Co., NY, 1926, p.252)) On another occasion, at a dinner-party, the faces of the guests seemed to turn into skulls as he watched them. He put this incident into a prose poem, but it is neither very original nor distinguished. His visions may perhaps have sprung from his childhood, an unusually disquieting one; or have been the result of the influence of his mother, a forceful woman of great cruelty to her serfs. In France, too, Turgenev might have come under the influence of any of several writers preoccupied with fantasy or horror; particularly the admirers of Edgar Allan Poe, such as Theophile Gautier who gives us in "Spirite" a tale, rather typical of the time, about a young girl who returns as a spirit to the man she had loved. In addition to all these associations, Turgenev had been from earliest childhood familiar with the imaginative Russian folk tales. Combined with his literary genius, these elements might have made him not only the great realistic novelist he was, but also one of our greatest writers of fantastic fiction. Let us see what was actually the case.

Turgenev was, in all his power, essentially a gentle, tender person, even occasionally weak and vacillating. It is popularly supposed that just these modest and indecisive men may do the writing of the world's tales of horror. Turgenev was just the opposite--physically he was huge, impressive, a giant, yet in his writing delicate, precise and accurate. He shows us the Russian gentry--the superfluous man; the simple, faithful young girl of great moral energy; the tyrants who rule the households; the serene peasants; and the students, with their elaborately evolved ideologies. These are all drawn from Russian life; he depicted what he had seen with a supreme fidelity to truth. But while we see the clear photograph, as it were; we hear at the same time, as the tolling of a great bell, the annunciation of Turgenev's philosophy--a fatalistic pessimism. Its tolling may fade now and then, but it never stops. His characters are destined for certain ends which they cannot in any way overcome. And it is this concept of a mysterious, powerful, impartial fate that lends a supernatural twist to so many of his short stories. Accident and coincidence, as the agents of the irrevocable destiny, are important elements in such tales as "The Watch", "The Correspondence", and "Torrents of Spring"; and his portrayal of the mysterious, dream-like woman, and the mysterious man who acts as a deus-ex-machina--appearing in "Torrents of Spring", "First Love", and others, all of which are, strictly speaking, realistic tales. As to his concept of the cosmos as containing a power indifferent to the needs and uses of mankind, as we have observed, it is usually exemplified in his stories of supernatural events by some not unusual

person versus an overpoweringly strong fate. In this, in a sense, he looks forward to the "scientific materialism" of H. P. Lovecraft.

Like Henry James and, later, Lovecraft, Turgenev believed that in a satisfying horror tale the "spectral phenomena should be malevolent". The content of all Turgenev's stories of the supernatural is the human being persecuted by fate, and it is usual to find in these strange situations mediocre, common-sense people, Gogolian types, though more humane, more spiritualized, but people without philosophical powers. Weak, petty, miserable people, unworthy of great passions, meet suddenly a mysterious adventure.

Such a one is Aratov, the hero of "Clara Militch". He is an excessively introverted young man, living alone silently with his aunt, occasionally studying photography. Clara Militch, a young actress, falls violently in love with Aratov who, through timidity and indecision, ignores her. In despair, she commits suicide, and he repents bitterly, commencing to love her memory. His aunt has assured him that for the first forty days after death the soul simply hovers about the place where death had occurred. Then, one night, he hears his name whispered; he hears moans and "light arpeggios up and down the keys of the piano". The next day he tries to forget Clara, rather disliking her for the theatricality of her suicide. He has the next night a fantastic dream, in which he thinks repeatedly, "Evil is coming." Later that night, Clara actually appears to him, and here for the first time we have reason to believe that the supernatural occurance is anything but subjective. After receiving a second nocturnal visit from Clara, Aratov expires in bliss. "When they lifted him up and laid him on his bed, in his clenched right hand they found a small tress of a woman's dark hair." For all that, it is the only reference here that indicates that the whole thing is not merely a result of the excited state of mind of the nervous young man. But, remarkable as the occurance has been, the last sentence reminds us that these were ordinary people in ordinary surroundings, that although the reluctant young man has been drawn into the circle of the blessed, his origins are humble and matter-of-fact: "And once more on the face of the dying man shone out the rapturous smile, which gave the poor old woman such cruel pain."

((A comparison of Gautier's Spirite and Turgenev's Clara Militch reveals a surprising number of parallels: in each case the theme is the triumph of love over death, the return from the grave of a pure young girl to the man who had not returned her love during her lifetime; in each case her death had been, directly or indirectly, the result of her despair over this unrequited love. Both pairs of lovers include one worldly member, though emotionally unattached, and one comparative recluse. The return of both girls is signalled by barely audible sighs, whispered phrases, a misty apparition, and music on the piano. While the young man is in suspense as to whether this may not be entirely in his imagination, he at first cannot sleep, then he sleeps soundly and dreams a fantastic and prophetic dream. At last, with the welcomed death of the hero, the lovers are united in spiritual bliss and look forward to an eternity together.

((Whether Turgenev is indebted to Gautier's work (published seventeen years earlier, in 1876), or both to a common source, or whether the idea was simply in the air, is a matter of conjecture. I can find only one letter from Turgenev to Gautier (in Tourgueneff and his French Circle, ed. E. Halperine-Kaminsky, T.Fisher Unwin, London, 1897). It deals almost entirely with a painting, but its tone is such that we may believe they held no further correspondence, although they are known to have met and talked. Whether Turgenev had read the work in question we can only guess.))

In "Phantoms", the tale of the nocturnal flights in space

and time of a young man with a vampire, it is worthy of note that the young man does not realize for a long time that he is paying for his explorations with his own life's blood. We suspect it when Turgenev mentions her kiss, "...a strange sensation, like the faintest prick of a soft and delicate sting", but the hero has no Faustian choice to make. And apparently the great adventure which is permitted to him has not touched him very deeply. Although he "shudders in anguish at the mere thought of annihilation", he has, a few lines before, confided that he would have liked to ask the opinion of others about these curious occurences, but he would have been taken for a madman (he is, we see, still able to think of public opinion), and "I gave up all reflection upon it at last; to tell the truth I had no time for it. For one thing, the emancipation had come along, with the redistribution of property, etc., and for another, my own health failed." He describes the state of his health, explains that he has too little blood--but just as the reader turns his thoughts back to the gruesome cause for this lack, he brings us back to earth with a jolt: "The arbitrator swears that without me there's no coming to an understanding with the peasants. Well, what's one to do?"

A contrast in the styles of "Phantoms" and "A Dream" is clearly seen in corresponding passages describing the appearance of a feared and powerful man. "Phantoms" has much of the symphonic prose later to be used to such great effect by H. P. Lovecraft. There we find "...a muffled shout thundered through the multitude and a pale stern head, in a wreath of laurel, with downcast eyelids, the head of the emperor, began slowly to rise out of the ruin..." The repetition and elaboration of the word "head" intensifies the effect of its appearance. ((The following line too is reminiscent of the "indescribable horror" of Lovecraft. It reads, "There is no word in the tongue of man to express the horror which clutched at my heart." So is the protagonist's frequent loss of consciousness. But Turgenev has never given anything like the detailed, heaping-up of information typical of Lovecraft.)) In "A Dream", the plot of which is dependent upon the appearances and disappearances of a mysterious man, long since believed dead, whom the narrator believes to be his own father, we find the use of understatement in the sensational occurences: (1) "The man was the father I had been looking for, the father I had beheld in my dream!"; (2) "The man was that fearful apparition of the night with the evil eyes..."; (3) "The corpse was the baron, my father!" "The Dream" makes further use of accident and coincidence--the supernatural appearance and deeds of men who cannot, by the laws of nature, appear.

In "The Song of Triumphant Love", a tale about the effects of some Hindu sorcery in winning the love of a young girl and bringing a man back to life, there is a different set of paraphernalia--instead of the moonlight, disembodied spirits, and visions of past ages--in the vein of "Giselle" or Gautier's "Spirite"--we are given Turgenev's most exact description of a magic rite: "Near the chair on the floor, which was strewed with dried herbs, stood some flat bowls of dark liquid, which exhaled a powerful, almost suffocating odour, the odour of musk. Around each bowl was coiled a small snake of brazen hue, with golden eyes that flashed from time to time", and so on.

These are, however, not only stories of happenings which cannot be explained by natural laws. "Clara Militch" does not only return from the grave; she demonstrates that the power of love can overcome the power of death. "A Strange Story" does not only describe the calling up from the dead of the narrator's old tutor; but gives us a picture of that phenomenon of the Russian spirit, the will to be trampled upon, humiliated completely. "The Dog" does not only depict the visitations of a mysterious dog and a series of curious coincidences,

but also illustrates Turgenev's idea of a power irrevocably controlling man's destiny.

Turgenev, unlike Machen, does not refrain from mentioning certain parts of a ritual as forbidden, secrets too horrible to be revealed, and the like; indeed, there is nothing that could be bowdlerized. For example, in "The Song of Triumphant Love" a dead man returns to life; but while this is sensational, it is not really shocking, nor are the rites that bring it about. This is perhaps the clue to Turgenev's supernatural stories: they are, despite the scorn they have received from some critics, good, typical, occasionally powerful pieces of Victorian horror,--at least as good as others of their school; but, even discounting the handicaps of time and custom, Turgenev never gives us the unimaginable experience. He never speaks of a nameless horror or a secret rite because he had no such horrors or rites in his mind. George Moore said that Turgenev had the "illuminative rather than the creative imagination".

How shall we complain of an illuminative imagination like that of Ivan Turgenev? No aesthetic criteria can demand more. But the greatest achievement in the realm of horror, fantasy, and the supernatural asks not only illumination but creation.

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Affinity

You, too, are tainted with the Vampire strain
The same blood surges through us both, like wine.
No wonder that our thoughts and moods combine
And merge beyond the common, earthly plane.
Forbidden arts, weird rites, and devil lore,
Such things are legends now, but they have been
Reality beyond mere human ken,
And they shall flourish in this world once more.

No longer must I walk the earth alone.
Together we shall prowl in ebon nights
And share our secret joys and dark delights
While venturing into the vast unknown.
Flesh of my flesh, blood of my blood, thou art
My shadow, twin, and living counterpart.

---Tigrina

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If a rubber-stamped date, "APR 15", appears in the space to the right of this paragraph, it indicates that your subscription and/or exchange agreement has expired. No further notice will be sent, nor will any further copies of The Acolyte unless you renew your subscription, or reactivate your exchange agreement.

MELANGE: IN WHICH E. HOFFMAN PRICE DISCUSSES WRITING AND SELLING AS APPLIED TO FANTASY....

----oooOoo----

(Note: The following material comprises the body of a letter inspired by that of Robert Bloch in last issue's Fantasy Forum, and intended for that column this time. Due to its length, we thought it advisable to set it up as a separate article. FTL/SDR)

-oOo-

Robert Bloch's message is informative and stimulating. My comment is in no wise intended as a refutation; rather, let us consider it as an amplification, via example, of a subject Bloch has treated ably as far as he has gone.

The law of supply and demand--that and nothing else--regulates the rates paid for fiction, whether weird, or adventure, or western, or detective--all of which I have for the past 13 years written in commercial quantities. But the circulation of a magazine limits the sum which an editor can bid in competition with other editors. Every so often a non-weird editor tells me that he'd like one of my yarns, but he can't compete with so and so's rates. He hasn't the circulation which permits a big enough budget.

Is the man kidding me? Well, maybe. But I have reason to believe he is sincere. Since his competitors are paying me three times as much per word as he can offer, and are staying in business, and selling a sufficient number of copies to show a profit, they can hardly be crazy for publishing my stuff. And the chap who says he can't pay such rates would only be fooling himself if he were falsifying! Because his phoney hard luck story to me would be depriving him of the caliber of fiction which is putting his competitors ahead of him.

Once, after some years absence from the weird field, I dug up a few notes I'd coddled for five years, and worked up the yarn in strictly amateur spirit, the "labor of love" touch--frankly, a sentimental gesture in remembrance of the old days when I did nothing but fantasy. I sent it to my agent. He sent it to a minor slick, and not to a fantasy magazine. The editor said, "I don't like this weird junk --my customers as a rule won't put up with it--but this is such a damn good yarn I am buying it in spite of the weird element."

I do not say it was a great story or even a good one. But it got a premium price, not because of the fantasy element, but in spite of the fantasy it contained.

I dug up another long mulled over set of notes. Once more, in truly amateur spirit, I decided I'd do a 1¢ a word job. My agent sent it to a fantasy mag which has never been acknowledged by any fan as being worthy of fan attention; if its existence had ever been noted, it had been shrugged off with loathing and disgust. (Fans are peculiarly self-blinded little bigots, in so many cases! They are so sure of an opinion that they will take no risk of experiments which'd spoil it!) Anyway, the editor of that nauseating tripe-dispenser whooped with glee and paid 3¢ a word.

I did a third one. A weird yarn, mind you. Agent said it was "distinctive" and tried it on a slik, but missed by a hair. Then ultra-realistic and mundane Adventure got a look. The editor shouted, "Only a madman would have bounced this yarn!", and paid a fancy figure for it.

The "labor of love", it seems, will pay dividends if the ms is handled by a salesman who knows his business. But for an agent who knows a story when he sees one, I would undoubtedly have settled for 1¢ a word on these three stories.

It is idle to tell me, "Well, these probably weren't really fantasy yarns." I've sold over a hundred weird yarns since 1924, and should reasonably know by now what is and what ain't weird! And, after all, the customers who paid for the yarns are fair judges.

The reaction of the editor who said, "My customers don't go for this fantasy junk, but I'll buy this yarn anyway," gives a hint: to wit, that in his large circulation (which permits him to pay gilt-edged rates), there are comparatively few fantasy lovers. So, a mag specializing in fantasy would have a much shorter circulation list than one catering to, let's say, readers of detective fiction.

Therefore, to a great degree, the low rates paid in the fantasy field are the inevitable result of the comparatively small amount of dough laid on the line by the total of fantasy lovers.

No one ever did get his rates raised purely because he was a great artist or a sincere craftsman. You may be a great artist, but until you get two or three editors bidding against each other, and paying a bonus for first look, you're going to get 1¢ a word and no more.

Finally, with the limited budgets in the fantasy field, the most rabid bidding can't go higher than the figure Bloch gives; you cannot squeeze blood out of a turnip. But if your fantasy yarn is somewhat keyed to reality, and is not too utterly other-worldly and remote and extreme, it'll appeal to the reader who as a rule considers fantasy as childish hog-wash---and the editors catering to that class of reader will put in their bids, provided that you really have a story with personality and individuality sufficient to overcome the majority's indifference to fantasy. But you have to put some real human interest--I do not mean gummy romance--into a fantasy yarn which is to compel the interest of folks who shrug fantasy off as puerile vaporing.

When Bloch speaks of editors who have pet slants on fantasy, I can only say that in view of his wide current experience, he speaks with authority. On the other hand, and without detracting from Bloch's general thesis, I do wish to add this: that if a story has honest to God punch, power, strength of theme, tri-dimensional characterizations which make the actors actual live creatures and not rubber-stamp types, the most formula ridden editor will break down. Witness the extreme example I offer in the case histories of two out of three of my weird offerings. The editor of a magazine entitled Adventure, whose keynote is mundane realism, made a much greater concession in accepting "Graven Image" than the most formula ridden fantasy editor in the world could possibly have made in accepting that same yarn.

Granted, such an editor as Bloch visualizes might have bounced "Graven Image". It's not impossible. But I do not consider these "pet slant" mugs as worthy of serious consideration. A man whose editorial life is a rigid formula soon is editorially dead---and Lo, the editors I have seen vanish since 1924! And pardon this personal and perhaps smug-seeming quip: I add that I still ride up and down the earth, gaily raping tabus in every field--to hell with what so and so thinks is his slant; I'm writing the yarn. Finally, my business---fantasy, detective, weird, and adventure---didn't really begin to pay dividends until I ignored slants, supposed-slants, pet patterns of this guy and that gal, and just sat down to write a story--as damned good and honest story as I was able to write. And then tell my agent, "Never mind crabbing about tabus; your job is to sell this stuff; shut up and get to work; I am busily diddling another tabu, and even more outrageously." The good man is now happy about it all, for he finds that the off-trail, nuts-to-pet-slant yarns are easier to sell, and pay fancier prices than stuff done to what one thinks is some chap's pet slant

I remember when someone or other was dizzy on "thought variants"....well, I did him a yarn that hadn't a trace of his pet pattern.

He up and bought it. If he hadn't, someone else would have.

Bloch says that probably not oftener than once in ten times does--or can--a commercial writer turn out a really superlative yarn. He is dead right, except that I'd be inclined to make it rather once in twenty or once in twenty-five.

One reason so much fantasy is tripe is just this: a great many beginners do fantasy because they feel that since they're treating of the unreal, they can make their own rules, whereas in other fields, they have to make at least a stab at knowing what they're talking about. Then, too, they've not yet learned how to write well about anything; they muddle around in rubber-stamped phrases, rubber-stamped set-ups, conventional reactions. They'd be just as lousy if they'd turn to do westerns. In fact, the western field is as cliche ridden as the fantasy field ever could be!

These beginners--a few of them--finally learn how to write, how to present genuine, tri-dimensional characters rather than derivative "types" mouthing derivative phrases and emoting in the borrowed, stock-type emotions. The minute the author advances, he drifts into the fields where there are larger budgets; though before he does so, he may well have dished out a few first class stories. There are a few exceptions: those whose sole love is fantasy. They could, if they so elected, be headliners in the higher paying mundane magazines, but they stay in fantasy, true amateurs and true artists. They'd be just like that in mundane fiction, but they have made a choice, and they like it.

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Lyramudis L. VORKONEZH

Screaming Kalmovrons plummeted to the blanched ground of the moon-steeped planet Lyramudis. Slippery beaks tore bits of decayed flesh from the rotting carcass of a cancerous Thath. As they pulled at the shreds of skin, their scaly, clawed wings stirred up puffs of fine dust that vanished like the many souls who had once inhabited this -- the forbidden of all the universe.

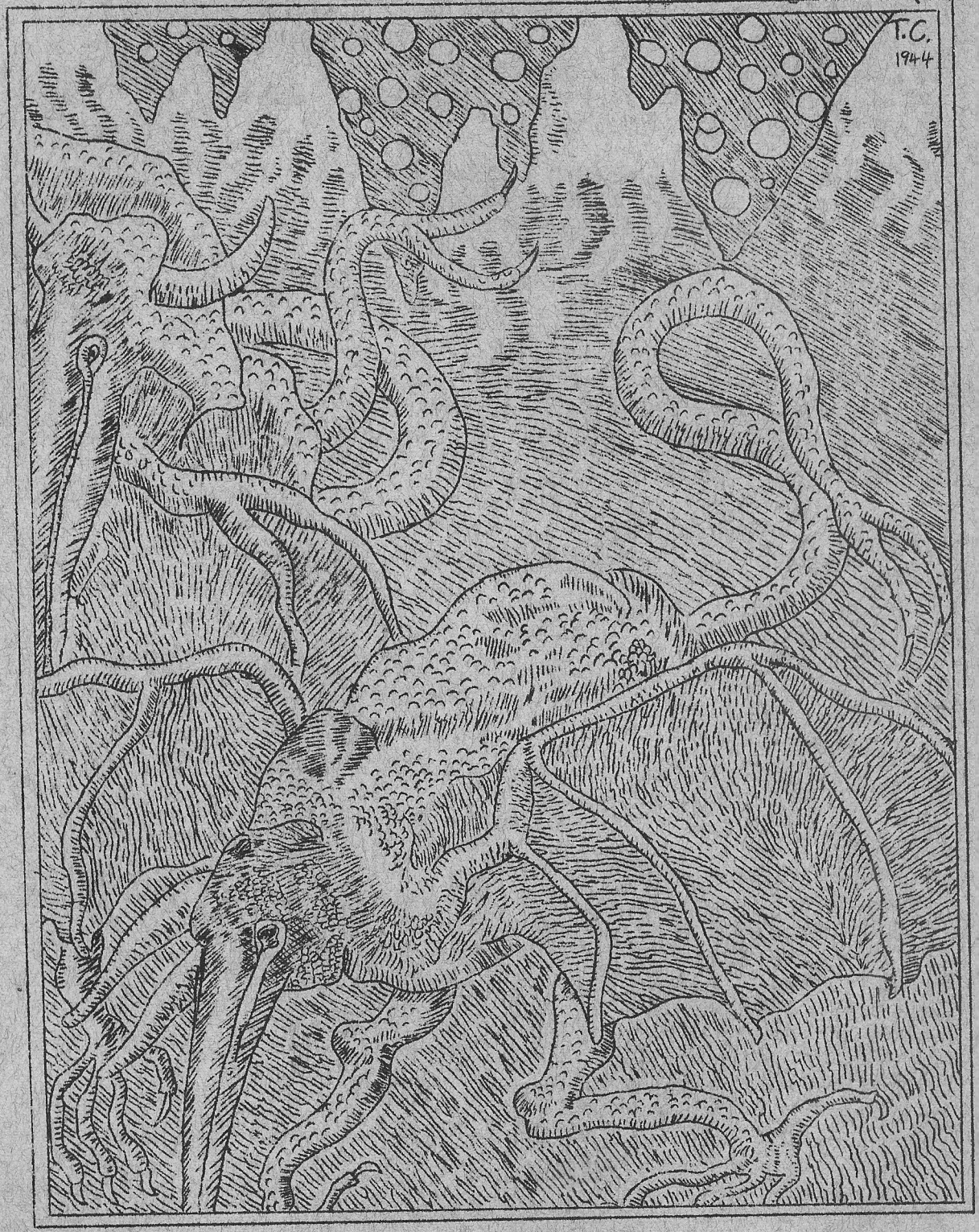
Through the settling dust and the protruding ribs, one could look over the hills of Lyramudis, the beautiful hills once inviting and cool, with green foliage waving brilliant blooms in the gentle winds. Now all was barren. Hills lay like the body of a dead woman: mounds pulling and writhing, the ravaged breasts now dry and creased with time and the broken hands of torture. On cliffs (the raped sides of once-graceful mountains) clung the ruin of the singing Rulta tree, not even sighing with the dead air that surrounded it, for there was life no more in the good and beautiful of Lyramudis.

What had angered the demon gods to seek such revenge on this moon-steeped planet? What crime so great that a land's heart should be torn asunder and laid gasping for life's blood? We cannot ask the Kalmovrons, whose tiny minds can think only of the gangrenous food offered them. Nor can we ask the now dead Thath.

Should we ask the lonely hills of their plight, of their death, of their sin? Their only answer would be silence, the silence of those in Doom's clutches.

Scream, o happy Kalmovrons! Gorge your greedy bellies, and be happy while you may, for the curse on this blighted planet is not lightly allayed. Not yet are the demon gods sated.

A Drawing



THOMAS G. L. COCKROFT

In Recognition of Death

I.

It is a wonderful train ride
With the farms sliding by in the cold dusk
And animals grazing in the yellow sun
And little wooden-floored stations,
The boards brushed with frost or odorous with rain,
And strange turbulent cities by night
With steel bridges over rivers reflecting lights
And vast mysterious depots.

But the conductor is always coming up behind me.
I can hear the click of his punch.
And I wonder if he will pass me by,
Or if he will take up my ticket
And I will have to get off and enter the landscape,
Become stationary forever.

So I gaze more greedily
And talk to the person opposite
And rummage in my baggage,
And insincerely yawn,
And furiously think.

II.

Death is my real friend,
Always doing things for my own good
Whether I like them or not.
He prods me toward the future,
He goads me to accomplishment,
He keeps reminding me of my unfulfilled potentialities,
Promises, hopes, intentions, and resolves.
He makes no promises.
He never threatens.
Yet he is eloquent.
If I lived ten thousand years,
His voice would only be more urgent.

III.

Death, a stern counsellor, is always at my elbow, whispering,
"The time is, was, and shall be," in his clipped accent.
"You died ten years ago, tomorrow, now."
Often I have refused to see him, calling others to mask him from me.
Sloth and placidity are fat councilmen.
Their gross bodies easily cover his lean one.
But were I to put granite walls between us,
His words would be as true.
Forget mortal counsellors.
Death is the only true ally.
He deals in verities.
He recognizes accomplishment.
He knows there are things he cannot kill,
Or, killing, must remember and so make immortal.

IV.

The killers creep toward me through the dark, red-smeared,
with hate in their hearts.
But death is dignified and does not hate me.
The killers are ignorant and cruel.
But death knows all and regards me fairly.
The killers are not his agents --
It may happen that they will die at the hand of their intended victim.
Death will not kill me, but something that has life or movement --
A stone, a force, a micro-organism, the macro-organism.
Life will mangle me, and then death will befriend me.

---Fritz Leiber, Jr.

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LITTLE-KNOWN SCIENTIFICTIONISTS

FRANCIS T. LANEY

(Note: This column is designed as a companion to Wakefield's extremely popular feature, and will cover some of the less familiar writers of science fiction. Unlike Little-Known Fantaisistes, this series will be written by various individuals. If you have the information on any "little-known scientifictionist", we will be very grateful if you will write it up and submit it to us for inclusion in this column under your by-line. FTL/SDR)

1. CHAUNCEY THOMAS

-oOo-

Like many other one-book scientifictionists, Chauncey Thomas was not a professional author. He was a nineteenth century manufacturer of coaches and carriages in Boston, Massachusetts, who had risen to this station in life in quite the Alger tradition, having originally been a mechanic and machinist. Thomas found the strain of business life a bit too much for him without some sort of escape mechanism. Having exhausted reading, he decided that a more participative hobby might serve the purpose of distracting his mind from his troubles, and struck upon the expedient of studying "the material and mechanical possibilities of the future". To quote from the preface of his book: "The plan worked admirably. An ideal world was thus opened, into which the imagination could enter at any time and wander serenely amid the glittering sights of a wonderland ever new, and with ever shifting scenes."

This recreation occupied a great deal of Chauncey Thomas' spare time from 1872 to 1878. Originally writing for his own kicks, he found his notes gradually taking the form of a connected manuscript, and in 1880 submitted the narrative to Houghton Mifflin. It met with the usual reception of amateur efforts, and was filed away by Thomas and forgotten. In the meantime, Houghton Mifflin published Edward Bellamy's well-known Looking Backward in 1889, and somewhat to their surprise found themselves in possession of a terrific best-seller, one which was still selling thousands of copies yearly nearly half a century later. George Houghton recollected the Thomas opus, and decided that it might perhaps be revamped into such form as to cash in on the popularity of Looking Backward.

As a consequence, 1891 saw a rather stubby, 302 page volume added to Houghton Mifflin's list: The Crystal Button, or Adventures of Paul Prognosis in the Forty-Ninth Century. Long out of print, the book can be found only in second-hand places, and is rather uncommon.

It is, however, definitely worth searching out and adding to one's collection.

Despite some almost unbelievable ineptnesses of plot and arrangement, The Crystal Button not only holds reader interest well, but is an impressive piece of prophetic fantasy. The puerile manner in which Paul Prognosis is transferred to and from the 49th Century, and the somewhat dry and turgid narrative style can both well be ignored in view of the truly fascinating picture of industrial and technological progress Chauncey Thomas spreads before his readers.

Thomas was a thoroughly competent inventor and machinist, amd fortunately confined the bulk of his prognostications along lines with which he was thoroughly familiar. Thus The Crystal Button gains hugely in realism. The scores of gadgets of the new civilization are described with such minuteness that it is plain that they could be constructed from Thomas' descriptions. Whether or not all of them would work is open to conjecture--notably the great plant for conversion of solar power--but it seems to this reviewer that most of them would work as described.

As a work of prognosis, The Crystal Button is extremely interesting. Many of the advances Thomas depicts have already come into general use, some have been negated by developements unforeseeable to him, and others are yet to be adopted. The chief failures in prophecy center around Thomas' understandable inability to predict the internal combustion motor and its huge effect on civilization, and his obvious lack of knowledge along chemical lines. Thomas has everything powered by electricity (largely garnered from the sun) or by compressed air, and he fails almost entirely to foresee the effect of synthetics (although interestingly enough he senses plastics to a certain extent by his lavish use of glass in construction and industry--usually in applications now handled by plastics). His familiarity with electricity seems to have been less practical than theoretical, for in dozens of instances he rigs out highly complicated and ingenious systems of weights and trips and levers to perform some semi-automatic function which would now be handled by an electric switch. In any event, any sf fan with the least bent along mechanical lines will find The Crystal Button highly fascinating.

While the best part of the book deals with mechanical advances, there are several chapters devoted to utopian treatments of government, labor relations, sociology, education, and similar topics. These sections rather parallel Looking Backward, and are of much less interest than the mechanical chapters, since Thomas was no more than a layman in these subjects, and was thus unable to impart to them the strong aura of authenticity which makes most of the book so excellent.

The plot is of slight moment. Paul Prognosis, who seems to be a semi-autobiographical character, suffers a severe blow on the head in an accident taking place in his native Boston of 1872, and in a thoroughly idiotic manner (which this reviewer must admit he still does not follow!) is transported to Tone, the metropolis of 4872 which occupies Boston's ancient site. He broods around home (Boston) for around a decade, while his spirit roams happily through Tone; though in some cock-eyed manner his physical body seems to be present in both places simultaneously! His eventual return to the 19th Century takes place when the world of Tone is threatened by a huge comet. It is particularly annoying to find that, although Tone is obviously intended to be actual, many of the characters he meets there are subconsciously inspired by members of his family, the doctor who attends him, and others in the 19th Century. Topping this mad inconsistency we find him eventually leading simultaneously a dual physical life in both worlds! Thomas should have decided whether or not to make Tone a drea

Witches' Sabbath

From all the dank, miasmal countryside
Come loathesome creatures at the eventide,
To hold dread council in a secret glen
Whose blackened grass was never trod by men.

The twisted oaks, like tortured senile things,
Bow down and quiver at the sound of wings
That stir the fetid air, while slug and snail
Creep out, and amadillos clad in mail.

Soft, furry bats and crawling, shapeless beasts
Wait eagerly, like guests at ghoulish feasts;
And last of all, the witches come in troops
To mingle with the warlocks in small groups.

When darkness falls, an ancient witch begins
A wailing chant to unseen violins,
While pallid stars peer down from their great heights
in stark revulsion at the impious rites.

---Robert Avrett

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LITTLE-KNOWN SCIENTIFICTIONISTS (concluded):
sequence and then stuck consistently by his decision.

But these are minor criticisms. Though they mar the overall effect, they cannot spoil the brilliantly conceived prophecies of mechanical advances for which The Crystal Button is recommended, nor deprive Chauncey Thomas of a secure niche in scientifiction's hall of fame.

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The Fisher

The pool was stagnant, and its slimy top
Hinted at brooding tenants underneath.
I laughed my fancy off, and with a "plop"
The line went down to mysteries beneath.
And then I saw it give a sudden twitch,
As though a lurking monster down below
Had crept from out its subterranean niche,
To touch the cord in case it was a foe.

I heaved the line up, and a heavy weight
Kept it quite taut -- my arms and legs grew weak;
And God! -- I saw the horror's face, and hate
Glared in its eyes above a pointed beak.
Spellbound, I read the ghastly monster's thought;
He was the fisher --- I, the thing he'd caught!

---Arthur F. Hillman

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WANTED URGENTLY:
The following books by S. Fowler Wright: Megiddo's Ridge, The Screaming Lake, Four Days War, The Hidden Tribe, and The Secret of the Screen Will pay cash, give good exchange, or as a last resort would appreciate an opportunity to borrow them for a time. F. T. Laney, 1005 West 35th Place, Los Angeles 7, Calif.

BANQUETS FOR BOOKWORMS

Arkham House Output. By now, most Acolyte readers have probably procured the latest from Sauk City--H. P. Lovecraft, Marginalia. Those who have not are urged to do so at once; this volume is about as fascinating a melange as this reviewer has yet had the pleasure of seeing. Marginalia is not so much a book as a glorified fan magazine in book format. There are four full-length short stories--one ghost written and three revisions--reprinted from Weird Tales and the old Wonder: the balance of the book is comprised of a selection of HPL's better essays, a few story fragments and juvenilia, and a splendid array of essays and poems in appreciation of HPL. These last comprise an unforgettable composite view of Lovecraft as a man. Topping the volume is a fine series of 16 full-page half-tone plates showing a large variety of previously unpublished photograph of Lovecraft and his friends and several reproductions of HPL's holograph and pen-and-ink sketches. The illustrations alone are worth far more than the price of the book. ($3.00 from Arkham House, Sauk City, Wisconsin)

---ooOoo---

Bart House Output. The second Lovecraft pocket-book was published early this year, and is a big 25¢ worth. Bart House Mystery No. 13, it is titled The Dunwich Horror, and contains in addition The Shadow Out of Time and The Thing on the Doorstep. This and the previous HPL pocket-book, The Weird Shadow Over Innsmouth, are both available either at your newsstand or from Bartholomew House Inc., Dept PB-6, 205 East 42nd Street, New York City 17. If ordering from the publisher, add 5¢ per volume for postage and packing charges.

---ooOoo---

Avon Output. The newest in Avon's Merritt series is the famous Face in the Abyss, which in this edition also includes the sequel, The Snake Mother. It is Murder Mystery Monthly No. 29. The editors of The Acolyte wish to point out that all of the previous Avon Merritts are still available from the publishers, and our readers are warned not to pay premium prices for them. It has been brought to our attention that a certain so-called "fan-dealer" has been charging 50¢ and $1.00 per copy for certain of these volumes. Apart from the current book, the list now comprises: Seven Footprints to Satan, Burn Witch Burn, Creep Shadow Creep, The Moon Pool, and The Dwellers in the Mirage. These may be had at 25¢ per copy from Avon Book Company, 119 West 57th Street, New York City 19.

---ooOoo---

Dorothy Scarborough. This author's well-known The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction is not a current publication, but a small remainder was recently discovered at the publishers' warehouse. The book was published in 1917, and is a virtual necessity for the serious collector and student of fantasy. It is badly marred by Miss Scarborough's failure to differentiate between book and short story titles and by her omission of an adequate bibliography. The result is that when she speaks of some story one is never certain whether it is a book-title, a short story in some available collection, or an ephemeral production in some forgotten magazine. Even with this fault, the volume remains a splendid piece of critical work.

In connection with the remark on black market prices in the mention of Avon Books, we should like to point out that a very recent list of this same "fan-dealer" quotes The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction at the outrageous price of $10.00. Considering that the book may be had from the publishers at a quarter of that price, victims

of this robbery could scarcely be blamed for consulting with the OPA.

Acolyte readers intending to order the volume are urged to do so at once, since only about 40 copies are reputed to be left, and the book will not be reprinted. ($2.50 from G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2 West 45th Street, New York City 19)

---ooOoo---

Argus News. Ben Abrahamson's output is still characterised by delays, but it is certain that the items of fantasy interest will be well worth waiting for. J. O. Bailey's Pilgrims Through Space and Time is to be a history and bibliography of scientifiction, to contain over 400 pages and sell for $5.00. This reviewer's enthusiasm is less ardent than it might have been had the volume appeared anywhere near the time it was originally scheduled. (It has been delayed for more than a year.) It's still worth waiting for. Other contemplated Argus books include reprints of Charles Finney's Circus of Dr. Lao with illustrations by Artzybasheff, and of H. P. Lovecraft's Supernatural Horror In Literature. Also contemplated is a detailed study of Lovecraft by August Derleth. (The Argus Book Shop, 3 West 46th St., New York 19.)

---ooOoo---

Non-fantasy In Disguise. A recent Handi-Book (15¢) entitled The Last Secret by Dana Chambers appears at first glance to be of a scientifictional nature. It deals with the discovery of atomic power but since the secret is lost, unapplied, in the death of its discoverer, and since the bulk of the book is typical secret service adventure stuff of dubious quality it can scarcely be recommended as fantasy.

---ooOoo---

William Hope Hodgeson. While review of current commercial magazines is somewhat outside the usual scope of this column, the re-publication of anything by Hodgeson is an event worthy of notice. In the June 1945 issue of Famous Fantastic Mysteries appears the fabulously rare and famous The Boats of the 'Glen Carrig', one of the best seafaring fantasies which this reviewer has ever had the pleasure of reading. It deals with...but why spoil your pleasure with a preview? By all means, buy this one and read it; it is the fantasy event of the month. Coupled with it is Even A Worm by J. S. Bradford, a sardonic little opus with an ending that will knock most readers right through the backs of their chairs. Both are reprints of British books, and both are excellently illustrated by Lawrence. (All-Fiction Field Inc., Circulation Dept., 205 E. 42nd, NYC, 25¢--or at your newsdealer.)

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EDITORIALLY SPEAKING. (cont. from page 13)
more or less amplification and/or retraction to come within applicable libel laws.

(1) "Extortionistic and prohibitive" is probably too strong a term to apply to a price of 5¢ per sheet for the Searles bibliography, even though comparable mimeography can be furnished elsewhere in the field for 1¢ a sheet. A nickle is not going to make or break anyone. We apologise for any implication of banditry which may have been conveyed in Laney's editorial. This editorial plainly stated that the publisher was not Searles himself; he states in his letter to us: "I have no power or authority to tell its publisher how much he shall charge for it." (Incidentally, Laney made a stupid mistake in arithmetic in mentioning 5¢ per sheet; the price is actually 12 sheets for $1.00) And Searles had further stated in a letter to us that his bibliography cannot be published in one piece at present, as it is not yet sufficiently integrated for this.

(2) Inasmuch as Searles is well-known to associate with all manner of highly regarded individuals both in the fantasy field and elsewhere, it should be clear that the statement anent the "prohibitive price in self-respect" required to associate with him can be looked on only as an outburst of temper, and is hereby withdrawn with apologies both to Searles himself and to the various individuals who associate with him.

(3) The letter from Searles dealing with our overtures towards collaboration on his bibliography was described in the editorial as being "arrogant and supercilious". This it was not. It was simply a request for further information. What Laney interpreted as arrogance and superciliousness was contained on a separate mimeographed sheet enclosed in the same envelope, an advance copy of page 31 of the second issue of Searles' FAPA magazine. This will be taken up in detail later in this statement. Searles is quite right, however, when he maintains that the letter itself could not justly be termed "arrogant and supercilious".

(4) The editorial states that Searles' threat to sue would preclude the further use of bibliographical material in The Acolyte, Laney was laboring under a misapprension. Searles states in his letter to us: "And I am certainly in no way concerned with the amount of bibliographical material Acolyte publishes; that is up to its editors and contributors, not to me. Copyrighting a bibliography does not, so far as I know, prevent you from publishing supplementary material such as the check-lists of Cook which I have seen in your pages in the past. If the future scope of Acolyte is limited, it is limited by the material you find in your hands to print, not by any action of mine."

(5) Despite contentions of semanticists, name-calling is libel insofar as it may damage the callee's reputation. The appellation "dog in the manger" is hereby withdrawn with apologies.

That seems to cover the actual points of possible libel in the editorial. Searles submitted a statement which he wished published in these pages. It seems needless to take up the space with it, since the various points are all being covered at this time. Two of these points, however, probably require some mention, even though they were not included in the Acolyte editorial.

Searles points out that Laney did not answer his letter dealing with the possible collaboration on the biblio, and that Laney attacked him in his Fantasy Amateur Press Association magazine, Fan-Dango. These facts are true. The editorial was incomplete, however, in that it did not mention that the chief point of difference between Laney and Searles arose over Searles' statement in his FAPA publication to the effect that he would submit to the Postmaster General any FAPA magazine in future mailings which seemed to him illegally pornographic, and therefore unmailable according to P.O. regulations. Searles agrees that a previous official FAPA decision had set up machinery to cope with submissions of this nature, but states that he felt it had been disregarded and that prompt action, rather than words, was therefore demanded.

Laney, in addition to being completely opposed to any censorship other than that imposed by the good taste of individual FAPA members, felt that Searles' proposed action could be construed in no way other than as that of a would-be informer. The page of his magazine which carried this threat was included in the same envelope as the letter which was wrongly referred to as arrogant and supercilious. Laney admits freely that his extreme anger at this statement caused him to ignore the letter from Searles, caused the attack on Searles in Fan-Dango, and caused him to announce that he would boycott Searles altogether. Laney wished to point out that the chief bone of contention, this ruckus in FAPA, was left out of the original statement, and, thus toned down

the editorial in #9 Acolyte was not a complete statement of fact.

Laney wishes to state the obvious fact that co-editor Russell had nothing to do with the Searles editorial (which was signed merely "FTL" rather than the customary "FTL/SDR") and in fact did not see it until it was published. Russell, as a matter of fact, has from the first been completely neutral in the feud.

Apologies are due to the readers of The Acolyte for having taken up space with petty personalities. Anger is certainly a poor basis for selecting magazine material, and will not be used again in The Acolyte. Approximately three pages have been taken up in this and the last issue with the Searles question. This issue has four extra pages of customary Acolyte material to make up for the wasted space. The next will return to the customary 30 pages.

FTL/SDR

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FANTASY FORUM

BEING LETTERS
FROM OUR READERS

---ooOoo---

T. O. MABBOTT of New York City comments on issue before last:

"The Battle That Ended the Century" is highly amusing. I notice the "denial" you print by Lovecraft is no denial at all, but a series of elaborate equivocations that sound like one. It reminds one of Dr. Johnson telling people that he did not write a certain preface for a friend, who later explained he went to the trouble of dictating it to her so both could swear she wrote it. Unless it can be shown that Lovecraft categorically said he had nothing to do with the composition, or did not know the author, I think he must remain strongly suspect. But I think an unequivocal denial should be accepted.

The reference to Cohen's Garage is not nonsense but a transparent allusion to a restaurant still operating on 52nd St., New York, called Kelly's Stable. It is in a building once really a stable, and hence in a way a relic of the past of a city Lovecraft did not like. Cohens and Kellys are traditionally paired in comic productions, usually quarrelling and making up. Hence they are parallel as stable and garage, to use the chiastic order.

Ivar K. Rodent is obviously extremely bitter. Ivar was a Danish marauder known as "cruelest" and rodent of course means rat. I suspect no name is meant, but someone who had absconded or committed plagiarism may have been understood at the time. Ivar is in the Britannica. But of course it may be a pun and not thought out, and only seem bitter by chance. Perhaps he is better left unidentified unless deceased...

...NODENS. I have a guess only about him as Lord of the Abyss. Lovecraft would think of the patron of London as friendly--- even if bad elsewhere the tutelary deity is always good at home. The name Nodens looks a lot like nodans, knotting. HPL might have indulged in a popular etymology and thought of the divinity tying things (a marriage beneath the earth) in the sense of founding or establishing in the depths, a kind of alma Venus, despite his masculine sex. I am sure this is not good philology, but it certainly was my thought until I looked up the declension of nodo, and perhaps HPL did not look it up, or did, and decided to ignore the inconvenience of slight incorrectness, as the old time etymologists often did.

---ooOoo---

THYRIL L. LADD touches on a writer seldom mentioned in Acolyte:

...Now Mr. Derleth has written me in no uncertain contempt of my inclusion in

my collection of the novels of Edgar Rice Burroughs. Quoth Mr. Derleth --"I am personally not too fond of the high-adventure, weird-romance theme..."--stop a minute; Ladd emphatically IS! resume quote:--"Burroughs, for instance, is not represented in my library; his Mars etc. settings do not fool me for an instant; Burroughs is an adventure story writer in the pulp field, and nothing more." End Mr. D's quote. Now Edgar doesn't fool Thyril either; I quite comprehend just what sort of a writer Edgar is; his books, with slightly different strage settings, are of much the same pattern always; meet awful monster; kill awful monster; meet lovely girl; man too dumb (ALWAYS!) to realise until page 256 that girl loves him; saves said girl from awful doom; sacrifices....on and on. Derleth's accusation carries much of justification. I have a college education myself and can read--DO read--a great deal of the so-called better class of thing--but dammit! There comes a time every so often when I want to re-read one of ERB's crazy tales! So ERB is very much in evidence in my collection. And I must confess I await each of his new novels with anticipation--all ready to be taken along on the same (re-set) series of stuff. ((I hope this is not too much out of context, but it is very seldom that one finds a "literate fantaisiste" who has enough guts to admit he likes some of the less favored material. I myself must confess for a wholly indefensible liking for an occasional Ray Cummings! FTL))

---ooOoo---

Our wandering art director, t/4 Bob Hoffman, writes from France: I saw a funeral procession in progress at a neighboring French village recently, and it looked like a scene out of Frankenstein or some similar dismally-set film. Rain and chill were everywhere as I rode past the quaint town, which is laid in a valley beneath the main road. And then, in the semi-distance, I saw this funeral column slowly descending a hill. The procession was coming down the road from left to right, and the head of the column, having followed a turn in the narrow road, was already moving back on itself, proceeding straight toward the left. There was the antiquated black hearse, elaborately canopied with musty velvet, led by an ebon horse sploshing deliberately through the mud. Immediately following was a double column of black-clad mourners, with a double column of large black umbrellas slowly and jerkily bobbing up and down to the accompaniment of the unrhythmic tread of those who had come to mourn for one whose casket was now inexorably being drawn through the rain to the dampness of the tomb.

---ooOoo---

James Sandoe, University of Colorado librarian, gives us some tips which should have been in Banquets for Bookworms: I came the other day on a brief study of early nineteenth century "bluebooks" or "chapbooks", best-known perhaps as shilling shockers. It's the fifth in the series of Harvard honors theses in English and was written by one William W. Watt. Title: Shilling Shockers of the Gothic School: a study of chapbook Gothic romances. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1932 (54 p.) It's a beginner's essay but well and amusingly done and not a little illuminating.

Have you noticed The Mystery Companion (1943) or The Second Mystery Companion (1944), both edited by A. L. Furman and both published by Gold Label bbooks? In each are reprinted tales from a number of pulps, including Weird Tales. The principle concern is with crime and detection but the infiltration of fantasy, would, I thought, interest you.

I'm doing an anthology for Sheridan House (which is another

name for Gold Label, by the way) and in my tentative and to-be-reduced table of contents included this much fantasy: Boucher's Elsewhen and The Ghost of Me, Raymond Chandler's The Bronze Door; and Carter Dicksons Blind Man's Hood which, like his novel, The Burning Court, is perfectly sound detection plus supernatural. On a second list I had noted Heinlein's They and Padgett's Time Locker, the latter at Boucher's suggestion.

---ooOoo---

An overlooked postal from Mr. Sandoe:

If you don't know it already, look for The Fatal Kiss Mystery, by Rufus King, just reissued in a pocket edition by the Popular Library. It was published first in book form in 1928 but bears an earlier copyright date (1924) which suggests magazine publication. It's title is part of the burlesque of the whole and it is not a detective story at all but a piece of scientifictive fooling. I found it rather amusing and it warrants some attention as the least characteristic of Rufus King's labors.

---ooOoo---

F. Lee Baldwin, our long-absent contributing editor from Idaho, gives with the dope on a bit of semi-Fortean research he has been conducting:

Nearly two years ago I started gathering material for an article which, if completed, would have been either the most amazing thing ever put on paper or as unsavory and pointless as a Philharmonic rendition of Pinetop's Boogie-Woogie. It was to consider, dispassionately, the deaths and disappearences of various fantasy authors with a view to accumulating any evidence which might indicate that they had not so much "died" as "been removed" by unknown powers because they "knew too much". This is definitely border-line stuff; my objective thus was not so much to prove or disprove any definite point as to assemble all available evidence and let the reader draw any conclusion which he might care to.

As early as 1934 I considered the possibilities of such an article and as time went on, and events shaped as they did, I became convinced of its phenomenal aspect. Then, in the winter of 1942, I amassed what notes I had at hand and went to work attempting to complete them. I wrote countless letters, each with stamped return envelope, and with fingers crossed sent them out. I garnered a few favorable replies and from these I scouted further along the same channels. But in nearly all instances where I'd try a follow-up I'd get cut off short, or worse, get no further encouragement. After about a year and a half of this I gave up. But even so, I got some pretty startling suppositions, predictions, facts and just plain tall yarns. I could use them all because the article is not a fact opus entirely; if it were, I'd be a confirmed mystic second only to the Prophet. You see, in reality I don't believe in a single facet of the theory underlying this article. By its contents I'm not trying to prove a damn thing; am not trying to hit at possible intangibles. I have both feet planted on the ground as they should be. And Mister, if you could but glance at the notes I have you'd want it that way. I'm leveling!

When I first actually commenced this fishing, this crusty snooping, I did give it serious enough thought that I came up with the idea that there must, or should, be a common denominator. Then along came a letter from a person who was trying valiantly to help me along suggesting I procure a copy of Sinister Barrier and give it a going over. After plenty of sweat, I finally located a copy of #1 Unknown in which it appears and spent a very dull night plodding through it. Needless to say, I was rather amazed that the term "common denominator" was used here for the same purpose as I'd used it, all unbeknownst to me. Coincidence, I stoutly decree.

I have divided my rather imposing list into four categories:

1. Those who merely disappeared.
3. Those who actually took their own lives or appeared to have done so.
3. Those who died as the result of some organic disorder or growth.
4. Those who were prematurely whisked away by accident.

It is to be noted that all, with the possible exception of an extremely small percentage, were in the prime of life.

If the authority is correct, Blackwood and Shiel, whom I had thought long departed, still live. In a way, that is rather extraordinary; more, in a way, than the fact that Bierce and Hall merely disappeared into the desert, as my informants tell me.

At least, the idea was worth kicking around once. It may be so again, when I have the courage and brass-bound effrontery that it takes to invade the sanctum of homes where memories are best left undisturbed. After all, just what would be the ultimate gain?

Still, after reading through the letters and notes I have at hand, I'm tempted.

((Would the readers of The Acolyte be interested in seeing the results of Mr. Baldwin's researches to date published in these pages? FTL))

---ooOoo---

A later letter from Dr. Mabbott:

Speaking of Lovecraft, as I often am, I was interested in what Leiber Jr. had to say of the mythology; and believe I agree that his best work has only occasionally been picked as such by his admirers. I have myself some ideas on the Mythology, as at times embodying the "Truth as Lovecraft saw it". But I have always been very careful about it vecause I have always wondered what Lovecraft may have said plainly on the subject in letters or essays I may not have seen. However, I took one hint from the reminiscences of W. Paul Cook, who said that Lovecraft always asserted his "atheism" or "materialism" so strongly that Cook wondered if he had his doubts. I have met with nothing in Lovecraft that makes me suppose he was a very technical philosopher; and it is on record that no less a person than Shelley, after meeting Robert Southey, first learned he was not an atheist but a pantheist. (N.B. Only recently I got a bit of a surprise, for on telling a very learned minister I did not think even an omnipotent God could do ANYTHING, I learned the highly orthodox view was also that God could not make a square circle, and that what I thought my leading heresy was not so heretical after all; indeed apparently would not even get me in trouble with the pope!) Now what I think Lovecraft intellectually certainly rejected was what he supposed to be the idea of the supernatural. I wonder if he defined this correctly or not -- indeed I wonder how he would have come out had he looked into real theology; assuming he was as little concerned with it as possible. (I do not mean Lovecraft believed what I do--that is beside the point, for I have some mystical tendencies--but I do mean that in rejecting the supernatural as commonly understood to mean events contrary to nature, I am not sure Lovecraft opposed himself so much to religionists as he may have supposed he did.) I think his mythology was primarily only for purposes of fiction; and that Lovecraft certainly did not believe in it. But (as Poe observed) a man cannot write a lot without giving away what he really thinks. Such a work as The dream Quest of Unknown Kadath is obviously extremely personal and self revelatory. Here there is little talk of the elder gods, but constant mention of them. I think an antiquarian, such as Lovecraft, did think in the old days men had been more or less on the right track at times, and that the elder gods represent the fact, or maybe I should say the

hope that men might ultimately come to their senses, and that Pope might be right, that back of apparently blind nature there might be "harmony thou canst not see". I think Lovecraft's "mythological characters represent extraordinary powers within natural laws. He seems to have speculated whether, even within natural law, considering the ideas of Einstein and others, extraordinary though not supernatural powers might be possessed by individuals, human or of other kinds. At least for fiction he accepted the possibility of such beings.

As for Nyarlathotep, he is often apparently evil and both deceptive and cynical, but he is a fairly decent person in the Kadath book. My friend Jack Birss once went with Lovecraft to the Metropolitan Museum, and tells me Lovecraft knew a lot about Egyptology. The trouble is that Birss is no Egyptologist, and I cannot even guess what "a lot" means. Is it fair to say I think maybe Lovecraft knew what a person might easily pick up about Egypt--and assume he knew HOTEP means something? It means several things but "at peace" is the summary. The Nile at peace is my guess--that is, the universal fact of change is still productive of peace. Maybe Nyarla makes sense too and I may be off the track, but the little vocabulary in Budge's First Steps in Egyptian gives nothing suggestive, and I shall, until proof is offered, assume that is about as far as Lovecraft went in the matter---I suspect, however, he did know meanings of some common Egyptian words. I think, in the last analysis, Lovecraft regarded the world as at present in a mess (what thoughtful person will disagree with him?) and literature of escape for that reason of the highest possible value. But he also must have recognized there are some nice things about existence besides escape literature. I think he saw the universe as apparently purposeless, but including things (cats and men) that had some occasional apparent purpose. He personified terror and horror as powerful, but not all-powerful. Hence the Elder Gods.

---ooOoo---

This letter from E. Hoffman Price missed the last Acolyte by one day:

Dr. I. M. Howard ((father of Robert E. Howard)) died in Ranger, Texas, Sunday night, November 12, 1944. Dr. P. M. Kuykendall, West Texas Hospital, Ranger, Texas wired me. While I could have wired a floral tribute for the funeral, November 15, I sent Dr. K. a box of Cuban made cigars, saying that as between flowers in a cemetary and weeds on his desk, I preferred the latter. In that Dr. Howard's surviving kinfolk had ignored him during the closing years of his life, I should not, even had I their addresses, care to offer condolences; that instead I preferred that my final expressions of respect and esteem for the late Dr. Howard be tendered to Dr. Kuykendall, colleague, and perhaps friend as well, of the departed.

So I wrote a paragraph: "He faced bereavement and loneliness and old age without complaint; stoically, never voicing anything querulous or bitter or self pitying; so that it would have been belittling to have felt sorry for him. Darkness and death; he knew both were near, and he faced them alone, and with a steadfastness that we survivors could well accept as a pattern, in our own eventual time.

"I had been worrying lest his sight fail before the memorial edition of his son's collected stories went to press; included in the foreword was a personality sketch, condensed draft of which Dr. Howard read some months ago. And now I hear that darkness and death came together."

---ooOoo---

August Derleth outlines Arkham's coming publications:

...The 1945 list looks like this, and we will publish the titles in this general order, though we are not accepting advance orders for any title except

Something Near, already advertised, until after our 1945 catalog appears, probably in April. The following titles will be published one after the other until our 1945 paper quota is absorbed, and then we just stop until 1946.

Something Near, by August Derleth. (Clyne jacket) $3.00
Witch House, by Evangeline Walton. (Clyne jacket) $2.50
The Opener of the Way, by Robert Bloch. (Clyne jacket) $3.00
The Hounds of Tindalos, by Frank Belknap Long. (Bok jacket) $3.00
A possible new trio of tales by Algernon Blackwood. (Clyne jacket) $2.00
Green Tea and Other Ghost Stories, by J. Sheridan le Fanu (Clyne jacket) $3.00
The House on the Borderland and Other Novels, by William Hope Hodgeson. (Bok jacket) $5.00
Skull Face and Others, by Robert E. Howard. (Bok jacket) $5.00

We have just acquired rights to the four Hodgeson novels, and we are negotiating with Blackwood, with Dean R. H. Malden for his book of ghost stories, with Lady Cynthia Asquith (who edited The Ghost Book, Shudders, When Churchyards Yawn) for a collection of her own. We are negotiating with Van Vogt for Slan to be added to our Novels series, begun with Witch House. The following mss. have been completed and sent to the publishers for 1945 publication:

Who Knocks? 20 Masterpieces of the Spectral for the Connoisseur, edited by Derleth. (Wilkins-Freeman, Benson, Worrell, Quinn, Lovecraft, Grendon, Bradbury, Wakefield, Harvey, Sturgeon, Machen, Sinclair, Hampton, Schnirring, White, Asquith, Whitehead, Burks, Coppard, and Steele) - Farrar and Rinehart, Autumn, $2.60 or 3.10

H. P. L.: A Memoir, by August Derleth - Abrahamson, New York, limited edition, $2.50

Supernatural Horror in Literature, by HPL - Abrahamson, New York, limited edition, $2.50

In addition to all this, The Lurker at the Threshold has been completed by me as a Lovecraft-Derleth collaboration from notes and fragments left by HPL. About 70,000 words. It will appear as a novel at $2.50, no date, maybe 1946.

---ooOoo---

LAST MINUTE REMARKS:

The stack of letters for this department, upon examination, did not fill up quite as much space as had been anticipated, several having been more or less outdated by the time they finally came to the top of the pile.

During the last few stencils it occured to me that perhaps someone might make some sort of connection between the mention on p. 26 of the grafting "fan-dealer" and the omission of the customary advertisement by Weaver Wright. There is no connection whatever, Mr. "Wright" is not the individual referred to. The absence of the ad is due to the sad fact that your editor has the chicken pox (!!) and is isolated in a phoneless house; thus having been unable to make contact with Acolyte's erstwhile advertiser.

In this morning's (April 9) mail, arrived a letter from Bob Gibson, an artilleryman in a Canadian outfit in action on the Italian front. Gibson enclosed a four-page, hand-written ms. entitled "Fantasy In Italy", which is an exceptionally well-done essay listing and discussing native Italian scientifiction, and covering about 30 to 35 different titles. It will appear in the next issue. The homefront fans who are too lazy to write for their fellows in the comfort and convenience of their own homes should not feel too proud of themselves when Gibson is so interested in the field that he actually writes for it while under fire (though off duty of course). FTL