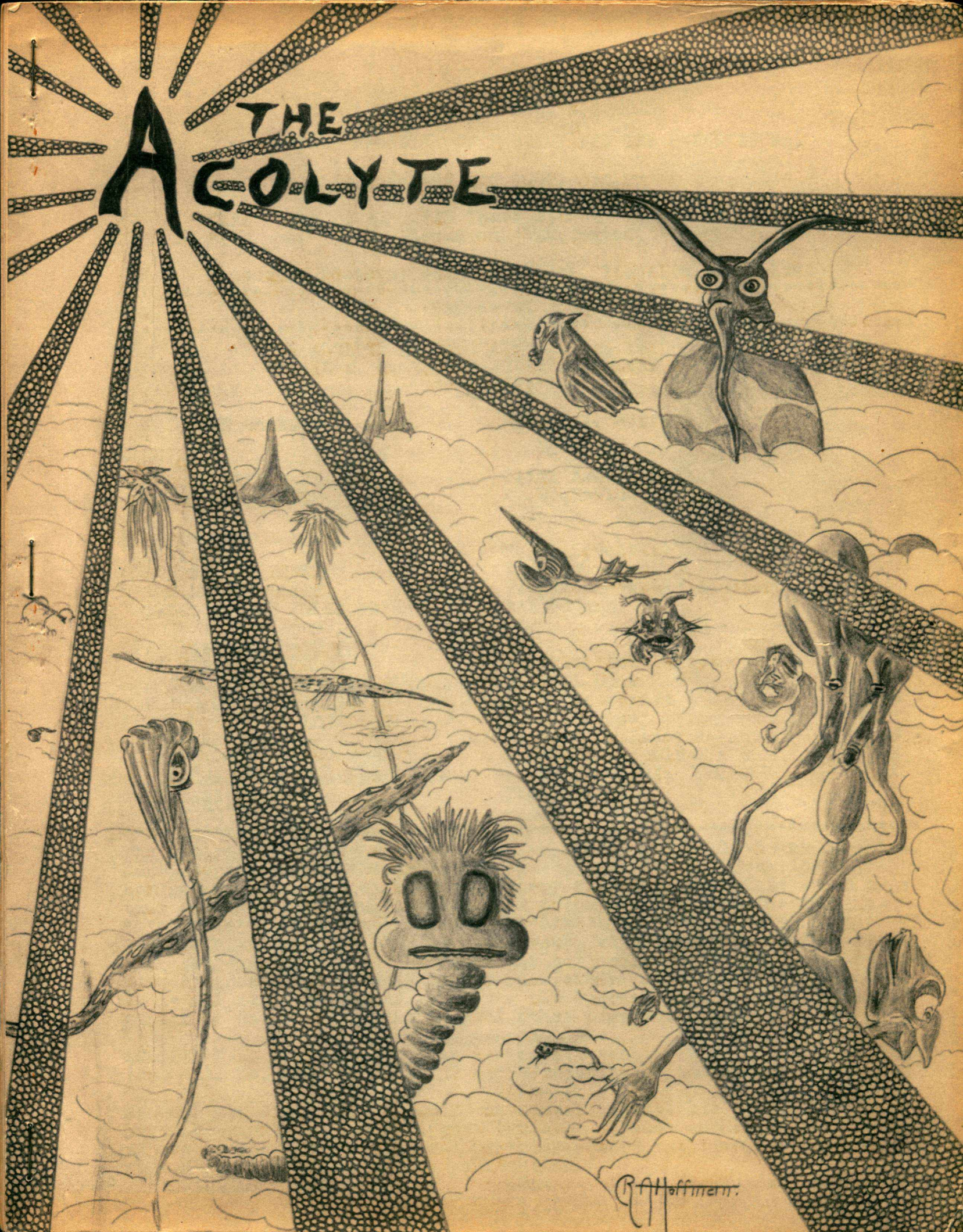


THE A EOLYTE



R. Hoffmann.

THE ACOLYTE

AN AMATEUR MAGAZINE OF FANTASY AND THE SUPERNATURAL

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THE ACOLYTE IS DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF THE
LATE H. P. LOVECRAFT BY A SINCERE ACOLYTE

Cover:

INTO THE UNKNOWN

Robert A. Hoffman

Fiction:

PROSE PASTELS
RETURN BY SUNSET

Clark Ashton Smith
R. H. Barlow

3
7

Verse:

CONTINUITY
ACROSS THE RIVER
THE DRAGON GLASS
TALES OF THE ELDER DAYS

H. P. Lovecraft
Duane W. Rimel
Virginia "Nanek" Anderson
Val Bryant

6
14
19
24

Articles and Features:

WITHIN THE CIRCLE
A CHECK-LIST OF BRAM STOKER
NOTES ON INTERPLANETARY FICTION
PSEUDONYMS OF LOVECRAFT
BOOK REVIEWS
LITTLE-KNOWN FANTASIES
LOVECRAFT AS AN ILLUSTRATOR
FANTASY FORUM
BACK COVER

Franklin Lee Baldwin
W. Paul Cook
H. P. Lovecraft
R. H. Barlow
Francis T. Laney
Harold Wakefield
H. P. Lovecraft
The Readers
Rocco E. Wright

3
6
15
18
19 & 26
20
21
27
32

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OUR MATERIAL RAN AWAY WITH US this issue, with the result that your editor got squeezed out. Apologies for not including the HPL bibliography are in order---but it will appear this summer as a separate pamphlet. It is all ready to stencil, but the old bugbear of space rose up and struck it down, along with several other promised items.

-oOo-

ACOLYTE WILL CONTINUE, as long as one FTL remains a civilian. How long that will be, only Yog-Sothoth and Hershey know, and they ain't talkin'!

-oOo-

YOUR EDITOR CAN'T HELP BRAGGING on himself, since his Cthulhu Mythology article caught the eye of August Derleth. A much augmented version will appear in the coming Lovecraft Omnibus---the first time, we believe, that a fan has achieved book publication.

-oOo-

(continued on page 26)

WITHIN THE CIRCLE

by Franklin Lee Baldwin

-oOo-

(Editor's note: Due to our shortage of space this issue, Lee's regular column will also have to serve as our editorial page.)

-oOo-

A sad thing indeed is the manner in which so many fanzine editors introduce their first issue to the gang. Many adopt so apologetic an attitude in their maiden editorial that even when the mag is quite good, the reader is on the alert for something at which to turn up his nose. There is a definite difference between likeable modesty and mere self-abasement, so don't beg anyone's pardon--if you think the mag needs apologising for, don't send it out. On the other hand, if you sincerely believe that the message contained will be of interest to fans in general, distribute it even if it is written on scratch paper. Don't ever be backward in endorsing your own work--if you don't appear to believe in what you've created, how can you expect anyone else to like it?

-oOo-

Richard Sale comes through with a dandy yarn about that well-known thing called resurrection. In spite of its somewhat torrid moments and cosmopolitan setting, it has some good scenes where those who thrive on the morbid side of things can have their innings. There's one in particular...but get it and read for yourself. Title is Lazarus #7. Another Handi-book publication that will really smite you with its beautiful yet dreadful sense of stealthily creeping horror is Cornell Woolrich's neatly constructed Black Alibi. This is one author who knows the art of combining the right words to make you feel you are actually on the spot. A must.

-oOo-

The book An Old Captivity by Nevil Shute has been out since 1940 and should still be procurable. It starts in a very matter-of-fact fashion relating the story of a commercial aviator who gets a job flying the proverbial professor and beautiful daughter on an archaeological expedition to Greenland. Up to the point of arrival it's a yarn of pioneering in the aviation field--after that, fantasy is so smoothly incorporated that the reader is just aware of its existence. The dream sequences and parts following are simply, yet effectively, told and comprise some of the best fantastic writing that has been produced.

-oOo-

I'd like to quote part of a letter I recently received: "I intend to go into fantasy fiction when the time permits, but I don't want to ap~~o~~ anyone, not even HPL. He's been done to death in that respect already; practically every amateur has at one time or another given his ponderous style a going over. He himself was the only master of it. He looked up to Poe, perhaps using him as a model; some say he even excelled Poe, but I think no one ever will. Edgar Allan had the knack of combining beauty and horror in such a way that the superlative qualities of each were brought into juxtaposition. Merritt comes closest of anyone I know today. He can create a thing of sheer beauty, then give it a touch of horror to set it off. And vice-versa, a thing of dark evil can have a touch of unearthly and angelic loveliness that makes one sad and sick at heart--yet somewhere in the background will still lurk a shadow of intangible dread and madness unparalleled. If ever I need a model for anything I write it will surely be Merritt..." I myself am all for beauty in fantastic literature--we've been terrorized and sickened enough. The end of the war will bring on a new era in weird literature, an era of weird BEAUTY. Wait and see.

F.L.B.

PROSE PASTELS

by Clark Ashton Smith

-oOo-

(Prose Pastels are reprinted from The Fantasy Fan through the courtesy of Clark Ashton Smith and Charles D. Hornig. They were originally published in 1934.)

-oOo-

1. CHINOISERIE

Ling Yang, the poet, sits all day in his willow-hidden hut by the river side, and dreams of the Lady Moy. Spring and the swallows have returned from the timeless isles of amaranth, further than the flight of sails in the unknown south; the silver buds of the willow are breaking into gold; and delicate jade-green reeds have begun to push their way among the brown and yellow rushes of yesteryear. But Ling Yang is heedless of the brightening azure, the light that lengthens; and he has no eye for the northward flight of the waterfowl, and the passing of the last clouds that melt and vanish in the flames of an amber sunset. For him, there is no season save that moon of waning summer in which he first met the Lady Moy. But a sorrow deeper than the sorrow of autumn abides in his heart: for the heart of Moy is colder to him than high mountain snows above a tropic valley; and all the songs he has made for her, the songs of the flute and the songs of the lute, have found no favor in her hearing.

Leagues away, in her pavilion of scarlet lacquer and ebony, the Lady Moy reclines on a couch piled with sapphire-coloured silks. All day, through the gathering gold of the willow-foliage, she watches the placid lake, on whose surface the pale-green lily pads have begun to widen. Beside her, in a turquoise-studded binding, there lie the verses of the poet Ling Yung, who lived six centuries ago, and who sang in all his songs the praise of the Lady Loy, who disdained him. Moy has no need to peruse them any longer, for they live in her memory even as upon the written page. And, sighing, she dreams ever of the great poet Ling Yung, and of the melancholy romance that inspired his songs, and wonders enviously at the odd disdain that was shown toward him by the Lady Loy.

----oOoOo----

2. THE MIRROR IN THE HALL OF EBONY

From the nethermost profound of slumber, from a gulf beyond the sun and stars that illumine the Lethean shoals and the vague lands of somnolent visions, I floated on a black unrippling tide to the dark threshold of a dream. And in this dream I stood at the end of a long hall that was ceiled and floored and walled with sable ebony, and was lit with a light that fell not from the sun or moon nor from any lamp. The hall was without doors or windows, and at the further extreme an oval mirror was framed in the wall. And standing there, I remembered nothing of all that had been; and the other dreams of sleep, and the dream of birth and of everything thereafter, were alike forgotten. And forgotten too was the name I had found among men, and the other names whereby the daughters of dream had known me; and memory was no older than my coming to that hall. But I wondered not, nor was I troubled thereby, and naught was strange to me: for the tide that had borne me to this threshold was the tide of Lethe.

Anon, though I knew not why, my feet were drawn adown the hall, and I approached the oval mirror. And in the mirror I beheld the hag-

gard face that was mine, and the red mark on the cheek where the one I loved had struck me in her anger, and the mark on the throat where her lips had kissed me in amorous devotion. And, seeing this, I remembered all that had been; and the other dreams of sleep, and the dream of birth and of everything thereafter, alike returned to me. And thus I recalled the name I had assumed beneath the terrene sun, and the names I had borne beneath the suns of sleep and of reverie. And I marvelled much, and was enormously troubled, and all things were most strange to me, and all things were as of yore.

----ooOoo----

3. THE MUSE OF HYPERBOREA

Too far away is her wan and mortal face, and too remote are the snows of her lethal breast, for mine eyes to behold them ever. But at times her whisper comes to me, like a chill unearthly wind that is faint from traversing the gulfs between the worlds, and has flown over ultimate horizons of ice-bound deserts. And she speaks to me in a tongue I have never heard but have always known; and she tells of deathly things and of things beautiful beyond the ecstatic desires of love. Her speech is not of good or evil, nor of anything that is desired or conceived or believed by the termites of earth; and the air she breathes, and the lands wherein she roams, would blast like the utter cold of sidereal space; and her eyes would blind the vision of men like suns; and her kiss, if one should ever attain it, would wither and slay like the kiss of lightning.

But, hearing her far, infrequent whisper, I behold a vision of vast auroras, on continents that are wider than the world, and seas too great for the enterprise of human keels. And at times I stammer forth the strange tidings that she brings: though none will welcome them, and none will believe or listen. And in some dawn of the desperate years, I shall go forth and follow where she calls, to seek the high and beautiful doom of her snow-pale distances, to perish amid her indeseccrate horizons.

----ooOoo----

4. THE LOTUS AND THE MOON

I stood with my beloved by the lotus pool, when the moon was round as the great ivory breast of a Titaness, and the flowers were full-blown and pale upon the water.

And I said to my beloved: "I would that thou shouldst love me well tonight; for never again shall there be a night like this, with the meeting of thee and me by this pool with flowers blown but not over-blown."

But she demurred, and was perverse, and loved me not as I would that she should love me.

And after several nights we stood again by the lotus pool, when the moon was hollow as an aging breast, and the petals of the flowers had fallen apart on the water.

And now my beloved was fain to love me well, and all was well between us. But in my heart I mourned for that other night, when the moon was round as the great ivory breast of a Titaness, and the flowers were full blown and pale upon the water.

----ooOoo----

5. THE PASSING OF APHRODITE

In all the lands of Illarion, from mountain-valleys rimmed with unmelting snow, to the great cliffs of sard whose reflex darkens a sleepy, tepid sea, were lit as of old the green and amethyst fires of summer. Spices were on the wind that mountaineers had met in the high glaciers; and the eldest wood of cypress, frowning on a sky-clear bay,

was illumined by scarlet orchids....But the heart of the poet Phaniol was an urn of black jade overfraught by love with sodden ashes. And because he wished to forget for a time the mockery of myrtles, Phaniol walked alone in the waste bordering upon Illarion; in a place that great fires had blackened long ago, and which knew not the pine or the violet, the cypress and the myrtle. There, as the day grew old, he came to an unsailed ocean, whose waters were dark and still under the falling sun, and bore not the memorial voices of other seas. And Phaniol paused, and lingered upon the ashen shore; and dreamt awhile of that sea whose name is Oblivion.

Then, from beneath the westering sun, whose bleak light was prone on his forehead, a barge appeared and swiftly drew to the land: albeit there was no wind, and the oars hung idly on the foamless wave. And Phaniol saw that the barge was wrought of ebony fretted with curious anaglyphs, and carved with luxurious forms of gods and beasts, of satyrs and goddesses and women, and the figurehead was a black Eros with full unsmiling mouth and implacable sapphire eyes averted, as if intent upon things not lightly to be named or revealed. Upon the deck of the barge were two women, one pale as the northern moon, and the other swart as equatorial midnight. But both were clad imperially, and bore the mien of goddesses or of those who dwell near to the goddesses. Without word or gesture, they regarded Phaniol; and, marvelling, he inquired, "What seek ye?"

Then, with one voice that was like the voice of hesperian airs among palms at evening twilight in the Fortunate Isles, they answered, saying:

"We wait the goddess Aphrodite, who departs in weariness and sorrow from Illarion, and from all the lands of this world of petty loves and pettier mortalities. Thou, because thou art a poet, and hast known the great sovereignty of love, shall behold her departure. But they, the men of the court, the market-place and the temple, shall receive no message nor sign of her going-forth, and will scarcely dream that she is gone....Now, O Phaniol, the time, the goddess and the going-forth are at hand."

Even as they ceased, One came across the desert; and her coming was a light on the far hills; and where she trod the lengthening shadows shrunk, and the grey waste put on the purple asphodels and the deep verdure it had worn when those queens were young, that are now a darkening legend and a dust of mummia. Even to the shore she came and stood before Phaniol, while the sunset greatened, filling sky and sea with a flush as of new-blown blossoms, or the inmost rose of that coiling shell which was consecrate to her in old time. Without robe or cirole or garland, crowned and clad only with the sunset, fair with the dreams of man but fairer yet than all dreams: thus she waited, smiling tranquilly, who is life or death, despair or rapture, vision or flesh, to gods and poets and galaxies unknowable. But, filled with a wonder that was also love, or much more than love, the poet could find no greeting.

"Farewell, O Phaniol," she said, and her voice was the sighing of remote waters, the murmur of waters moon-withdrawn, forsaking not without sorrow a proud island tall with palms. "Thou hast known me and worshipped all thy days till now, but the hour of my departure is come: I go, and when I am gone, thou shalt worship still and shalt not know me. For the destinies are thus, and not forever to any man, to any world or to any god, is it given to possess me wholly. Autumn and spring will return when I am past, the one with yellow leaves, the other with yellow violets; birds will haunt the renewing myrtles; and many little loves will be thine. Not again to thee or to any man will return the perfect vision and the perfect flesh of the goddess."

Ending thus, she stepped from that ashen strand to the dark prow

CONTINUITY

by H. P. Lovecraft

-oOo-

There is in certain ancient things a trace
Of some dim essence---more than form or weight;
A tenuous aether, indeterminate,
Yet linked with all the laws of time and space.
A faint, veiled sign of continuities
That outward eyes can never quite descry;
Of locked dimensions harbouring years gone by,
And out of reach except for hidden keys.

It moves me most when slanting sunbeams glow
On old farm buildings set against a hill,
And paint with life the shapes which linger still
From centuries less a dream than this we know.
In that strange light I feel I am not far
From the first mass whose sides the ages are.

----oOoOo----

(Continuity originally appeared in Causerie for February 1936,
and is reprinted here through the courtesy of E. A. Edkins.)

THE PASSING OF APHRODITE. (cont.)

of the barge; and even as it had come, without wafture of wind or movement of oar, the barge put out on a sea covered with the fallen, fading petals of sunset. Quickly it vanished from view, while the desert lost those ancient asphodels and the deep verdure it had worn again for a little. Darkness, having conquered Illarion, came slow and furtive on the path of Aphrodite; shadows mustered innumerable to the grey hills; and the heart of the poet Phaniol was an urn of black jade overfraught by love with sodden ashes.

CHECK~LIST OF BRAM STOKER

by W. Paul Cook

-oOo-

UNDER THE SUNSET---Illustrated---Sampson Low, 1882

A GLIMPSE OF AMERICA---Sampson Low, 1886

THE SNAKE'S PASS---Sampson Low, 1891 (Fantasy)

THE FATE OF FENELLA---in collaboration---Sampson Low, 1892

THE SHOULDER OF SHASTRA---Constable, 1895

THE WATER'S MOU'---Constable, Some Library No. 2---1895

DRACULA---Constable, 1897 (Fantasy)

MISS BETTY---Later Day Stories #1, 1898

THE MYSTERY OF THE SEA---Heinemann, 1902

THE JEWEL OF THE SEVEN STARS---Heinemann, 1903 (Fantasy)

THE MAN---Heinemann, 1905

PERSONAL REMINISCENCES OF HENRY IRVING, 2 vols.---Heinemann, 1906

SNOWBOUND: A RECORD OF A THEATRICAL TOURING PARTY---

Collier's Shelley Library, 1908

LADY ATHLYNE---Heinemann, 1908

THE LADY OF THE SHROUD---Heinemann, 1909 (Fantasy)

FAMOUS IMPOSTERS---10 Illustrations---Sedgwick, 1910

THE LAIR OF THE WHITE WORM---Illus. in color---Wm. Rider, 1911 (Fantasy)

DRACULA'S GUEST, AND OTHER WEIRD STORIES---Routledge, 1914 (Fantasy)

RETURN BY SUNSET

(From a painting by Clark Ashton Smith)

by R. H. Barlow

-oOo-

Flooding up from abysses under abysses, streaming scarlet like gore from an enormous wound, the sun groped down into darkness. Its rays seceded from the great conical ruin on the valley-rim. Then for a little, vast flocks of birds sought haven amid the dirt-covered rubble. Clamorous with fear of the night, they piled and fluttered into shafts and crevices like swarming bees--and were gone. Not a feather then showed among the occasionally-carven stones which looked out across the valley. Night was there, still yet vibrant, like a pool which hides fish, like an age-darkened mirror which no longer shows faces.

There was no road to the littered cliff and had not been for a measureless time; for time enough to forget a civilization. Once a temple had stood there, but no more acolytes came to the broken shrine, no one remembered to pay homage to the gods. Of the walls remaining, not one was waist-high: much of the rock facing of the cone--whose centre was clay--had slid into ruin and been covered by vines: none of the square brick columns nearby supported a roof. A stone basin, large enough to lie in, and rimmed with half-obliterated carvings of some procession, alone remained intact, one edge buried--a sacrificial bowl, grown over with flowering gourds. The god had grown weary and departed. Whatever screams had once lulled him were now not even echoed on the wind; whatever blood and entrails had once gleamed before his eyes were now long superseded by the leaves and the rain and the snow. The ruin was old as the cliff it stood on, and like the cliff would last always. It could undergo no further change. A future as long as its past, disturbed by no slipping stone, lay before it--and already it was older than death. It would lie lonely in the rain for centuries; it would listen to the lamentations of the night-wind, who mourns that man should ever have been tricked into existence; it would stare by summer at the sun and dress itself by winter in the ice. Yet it would suffer no change by these. Unto the ultimate blackness, when all the small golden suns burnt out forever, the idols would lie and think stone thoughts, the tumbled walls would strive to remember what hands had built them a long while since.

When Dal saw it, the girl Leyenda was with him. They had crossed many valleys and delved into many forests escaping from her brothers; and weariness walked with them now. Up the long hill at evening they had seen the ruin, of a type familiar throughout the land, and hoping it might afford refuge, had climbed to it. When they saw that no chamber was complete, they sat on a low grey rock carved with half a face. How could they go on? Behind them was a route they dared not retrace; in front, the cliff fell straight away to obscure bottom-lands shielded with mist. They seemed to be on the crest of an onrushing wave.

How gently ruin had come to this place! Little yellow wild-flowers were sprinkled across its pavement; dirt and rubble lay where once rich-garmented priests alone could set foot. Yet war for once was not to blame---no battle but the wind had taken this high place, no victor but the frost had trod it.

Leyenda turned her face to her lover. "Must we go back?"

He lifted up a handful of her yellow hair and held it to his lips. "Tomorrow--tomorrow," he said.

She seemed satisfied with this. "I am glad that we can stay. Surely they will not come here."

He did not answer, but looked at her, and she bit her lip, saying:

"I know, but that was twelve days ago."

"It was twelve days, and we have seen nothing since the water-hole; but who tracked down the creature with hands and fangs?" he asked. And she knew it was her elder brother who had done so.

They had a night at least. If there were no buildings, neither were there likely to be snakes or other dangers on this sterile height. The warm swamp country was left behind them, but Dal had a heavy cloak woven of green fibers: they could sleep wrapped in this. They chose a spot at the base of the ruin, a sunken place where some underground chamber had fallen in. Rest was more precious than escape.

The pale night darkened, and save for the fluttering once of a shadow dissatisfied with its perch, nothing disturbed them. The ground grew chilly toward morning, and Dal awoke and fell to pondering on their future course, and then a little later something called in a high voice and was answered from the valley, and day drew near. He stood and saw the low eroded mountains, green and purple, many miles off, with such woodland and meadow country running to the cliff's base as he had suspected at night. It seemed a fair place--but was there any way to descend? He kicked off a stone, and thought he failed to hear it, but as he sought another, the noise of the first floated up vague and remote. Leyenda rose, untangling her hair, and said she was hungry.

With a stick he soon frightened three fat birds out of their nest on the cone, and lost sight of Leyenda as he pursued them. One, regarding him with little fear, led him a few yards and then disappeared suddenly in the hole it had been making for; but he killed the other two, tangling them in a snarl of blossoming briar. Their blood splattered and their floundering wings shook down a rain of petals. Then as he lifted out the sleek, nerveless bodies, necks adangle and gore on their patterned wings; Leyenda gave a little cry.

His heart was knifed with intuition, and he dropped the birds, but gripped the club he had killed them with. Leyenda was beyond the cone, which was flanked on the right by the cliff-edge and on the left by tumbled stone blocks, so he was compelled to scramble up over it to meet the danger from above. But when he could see her, she was alone, crouching on the ground, and exclaiming softly over something the size of a pear. Dal's shadow fell across her, and she started. For a moment he saw the image of his fear reflected in her eyes and suddenly pale lips. Then she laughed.

"How terrible you look up there with that big stick in your hand. Are you planning to have me for breakfast?" Then, solicitously-- "Oh, you're all bloody. Are you hurt?"

He shook his head, but at that moment, in his eagerness to descend, stepped on a loose stone and sprawled toward her. His left ankle gave way, and was kindled to instant fiery pain. He slid a few feet, groaning despite himself. She sprang to him and stroked the injured part with frightened fingers, but seeing this pained him, left off. And then, not sure how much he was injured, and fearing to learn, Dal said it was a small thing and that he would rest a while before getting up. He told her of the birds lying where he had left them, and she in turn displayed her find. It was caked with dirt, but gleaming still--- a bracelet, almost a shakel, of hammered metal. Copper or gold, but gnawed with verdigris, she had found it half-under a stone lintel while she was looking for blackberries.

"Isn't it lovely? I shall wear it," Leyenda said, putting it in his hand. "But I shall have to wash it first. And--" regarding him severely, "I'll have to wash you too unless you make yourself presentable. There is a sort of well--a shallow place with a stone rim--over there." She pointed to a clump of bushes greener than any of the others.

It was when he tried to rise that he realised his ankle was badly twisted, possibly even broken. She took the news with heavy face.

They must stay here? Manifestly. Several days, probably. And any one of those days a figure, or three figures, kilted in scarlet and bearing axes that had bitten the vertebrae of many a beast might come silently up the long hill... None the less, they must stay. Perhaps they would be thought lost in the swamp, back where she had abandoned the small wooden god which alone of her possessions Leyenda had cherished and carried as long as she might. If they found the god, they would not believe she could have left it and gone, trusting only in her lover. Dal considered this matter and that; and finally Leyenda left him to pluck the birds, whose numerous nests on the ground and among the ruins assured them of plentiful food during their halt. And he, the man, with a little assistance, got atop the cone, from whose vantage point anyone lying on his stomach could see two miles down the hill. He thought of the lame man who guarded their village at night from the anamolous claws of the forest-dwellers.

It was good up there in the sun, which beat indifferently on man and brick and bush. The village they had fled, carrying only an idol and their love, was thickly beset by cypresses, from which little bleached serpents occasionally slid onto a man's shoulders. Here nothing was above him. Under the special tolerance of the sun, all jewels were mirrored in the landscape--emerald and amber in the grass, turquoise in the sky, and all the others in the thick-sown phlox, mounting and bannering the ruin. He lay and watched, and planned their descent into the strange country, and wondered what masks the priests of that land might wear.

During the afternoon Leyenda prepared a trap, whose cunning loops of twisted fibre made Dal feel numb-fingered, and proud of such a clever woman, he expressed his pride; and so they were content until evening caught them. Then as on the previous day, the sun fled and the birds returned all in such a confusion of light and sound that it made them wonder. The sky was brighter than blood on a spear.

On the day following, after she had assisted Dal to his post, Leyenda spent an hour washing her bracelet in the mossy basin. After it had soaked for a while, the encrustations could be gouged from the design. Washing and polishing alternately with dried grass, she eventually was able to make out the picture. It had been hammered in with a small pointed instrument, and showed a figure lying in chains before an altar. She must have found a part of the ceremonial ornaments used by the keepers of the temple; and though all the old gods were discredited, Leyenda was uneasy. She knew her own god, the dog-faced image lying in the swamp two weeks' journey behind, would not like this uncovering of his predecessor. All the ruins, spiritual and temporal, of the old days were held suspect by the tribes, which sometimes wandered through them, but she wanted to keep her bracelet. Without conscious volition, Leyenda wedged her arm into it so tightly that she found it would not come off. She had not intended to do so--but there it was. Dal, fortunately for her peace of mind, thought all evil magic would have long since gone out of the bracelet.

Time passed, and Dal's ankle did not improve. For the first three days his eyes went back again and again to the region which they had left, and all its empty miles were a reassurance that their pursuers had faltered. He soon became so certain of this that he forgot to look eastward but turned instead to the west, where lay that fertile valley unreachably far beneath them, into which they hoped to descend. Increasingly at evening, as the sun grew big and spattered the cliff and the world below with various crimsons, he thought of what might lie in the future. Sometimes Leyenda was with him, but she did not care for the evening sky which so stirred his imagination. In a few short days it became to him as fire is to a chill old man: aided by the woman he would lie atop the mound with ruined wonders beneath him and stare

through the golden layers as they became transmuted from light to gold and gold to blood, and in the darkening heart of the descending orb it seemed to Leyenda that he read things, for he would make no move to leave his perch till darkness was full upon them. Then he would sit up and stretch and limp down and he would be her lover with only a glow of the sunset in his dark eyes.

This was the first of the things which Leyenda found disturbing. It was more than her vanity which protested at his finding so great an interest outside herself. She wondered what the sunset told him of the ruin; of the gods who had gone away. The place had been a temple, and things had happened there; even the broken basin covered with gourds had once been slaughter's abode. She pulled at her bracelet.

The moon came, and the bright nights. It shone upon the cliff as it might upon a high tower--they were more conscious of the altitude than by day. As it grew big Leyenda became restless and sometimes left Dal sleeping---he was feverish in the evenings, and slept heavily---while she went out in the air. One night while she was walking with strange thoughts and plucking at her bracelet, which still could not be loosed, she had a fright. Looking down the long slope toward her eastern home, she thought she saw a moving shape in the moon-steeped grasses half a mile distant. Her marrow chilled. She tried to change her terror to disbelief, to tell herself it was a mist, but then she saw it was looking at her. Soreams paralysed her throat, and she uttered no sound at all, but just stood there. In another moment it moved or flickered out of sight, and she ran gasping to Dal. Her brothers! Her brothers! How long before they would climb the slope?

Dal was asleep, lying with face averted on his cloak. The sight of him silenced her at the moment of calling out. What use to waken him? She would go back and watch until no doubt was left. This resolution surprised her--none the less she followed it out. She went some distance, and seated herself behind a bush with flickering leaves. From there every foot of the slope was visible--and naught seemed amiss. What had she seen? One of the night-flying birds? In a little she had convinced herself it was so. The giddy moonrays poured as upon a distant arena, which, no matter what it harboured, could not affect her. She laughed, and was pleased that she had let her lover sleep. By dawn the unstirring sea of mist had ebbed, and there was a faint cold which made her creep back to Dal's side. He looked at her through a dream and said nothing.

When the moon was absent, another thing occurred. She lay in the shelter they had contrived, only a few inches of slate to shut out the stars thickening over the unattainable land. The tide of her thoughts wandered, and a dream took shape, of the sort which forms in a mind that has slipped its leash. She appeared somehow to see the stars beyond the roof--white crowding fragments of unstable light. Their numbers and intensity were uncommon, but more than that, like boiling particles they pushed and opposed and seethed and scattered in visible motion. Not in their habitual pace moved these dancers in ether, but with new speeds and in new relationships. They seemed to describe vast patterns that ought to have taken whole lifetimes to execute.

And they lit the ruins, and seemed to congregate above the tumbled conical altar, more brilliantly than all the moons of the year could do, and since they moved, their light came constantly from new angles; where darkness had been now was a star, two stars, or twenty, shunting from prodigious facets their own and their brothers' flames. And in the moments she stared at them, the altar seemed to change. Cracks became fewer, the moss retreated, the runnels of the rain were filled, the patient erosion of the wind undone, and the work of the snowflake defeated. Unexplained joys swelled in her as she perceived

this, and with each crazy figure devised by the drunken stars a year seemed shed, a tedious year from the courtyard and the altar, and strangely, yet expectedly, from her likewise. She ran with joy to the altar and stood upon it, poising on the carved stone, expecting, desiring, demanding...and then the stars retreated into mist, and about her the idols, tumbled grotesquely among the stones of their ruined house, stared with oblique or inverted eyes at the sky which had roofed their former grandeur.

Leyenda awoke a long time later. She did not tell Dal of her experience, but occupied herself picking berries all morning and afternoon till the closer bushes were stripped. She was nearly out of his sight along the cliff's edge before she had enough. The coloured sky gleamed like porcelain, the world of the previous night seemed unthinkably far, yet she was not easy. There was her bracelet for one thing; it seemed tighter than usual. She wondered why it would not come off. Repeated hammering with stones had done nothing aside from bruising her arm. It gripped her like an inexorable hand--the hand, she vaguely felt, of the past of this place of whose history nothing was known. She wondered who had lost the baubel--shackel-- in that unrecorded yesterday. She wondered who had built this and the other ruins scattered over her land, mounted by the vine, invaded by the forest; and at the coming and receding over the centuries' shore of the tide of their inhabitants.

As she came back, Dal called down to her.

"I think we'd better have a fire at night."

Thinking she had misunderstood him, she tossed the long hair from her ear.

"We need a fire, I think. There are animals here."

A fire! Something to draw destruction on them! What if her brothers were still searching? She was very near now: he sat up and pointed to the north side of the cone. Where the bricks had slid away, something had dug a burrow in the clay side. The beast which made it must have been large and had large claws.

"Look at it," said Dal, "and find out what it was after. Perhaps roots we can eat ourselves."

She put her berries down and examined the planed side of the pyramid. There something the color of ripe corn glittered from its clay matrix. For the second time the ruin had cast up treasure. A gold knife, long as her arm from wrist to elbow and scrolled over with words in a language which had no other monument, lay exposed. Conscious of the weight on her arm, she would not touch it.

They discussed the find uneasily, and decided she must put a great rock over it, and planned for a fire. When night came, they had a yellow blaze in the entrance to their makeshift hut. Fuel had been gathered and stored inside, and they were to keep alternate watch. Only the unknown land, and the unknown watchers therein, could see the flame... no one in the east, whence pursuit might yet come. And now they were confident Dal could walk in two days more.

The beast, if it came, was baffled by the stone, but something worse happened. From too much hobbling about, or from lack of sleep when guarding Leyenda, Dal complained of a fever, and before the second flame was kindled, was aflame himself. It had come so rapidly that the girl crouching beside him, touching his lips and cheeks, could not understand that he was ill. She sought to arouse him, and then when he turned away, sat up vigilant and perplexed while his sighs grew heavier. The indifferent flame popped and flickered and nearly escaped for lack of tending while she sat there. A sound aroused her finally, a pebble sliding, and she listened for the beast and watched the man and thrust twigs into the fire until dawn.

By noon of the following day she was going often to the well and

and soaking a strip from her cloak's edge in the tepid water to wipe his face. At intervals she brought him eggs, or the sweet gourds growing by the sacrificial bowl; but he paid no attention to them, or else strewed and crushed them with gesticulating arm. He shouted or muttered of animals which he had taken, appearing sometimes to think himself tracking a goat over frightful crags. Leyenda had his bow, Dal complained, and would not give it to him, so he could not kill the goat when there was a chance to do so. It stood and looked at him. Many times he said this, and finally she did bring the bow to him, but he only cast it aside with convulsive fingers; and she was puzzled and afraid. Then she thought of something more practical. Because he talked of a goat, some animal--or animal-shapen god--must be plaguing him. She would propitiate it, snare it with offerings, and then defeat it with a charm, and he would look at her calmly again.

Immediately she decided this--the shadows were spreading long on the ground--she built an altar; a tiny heap of reddish stones behind the hut, with red petals laid upon them; and then with a broken stick she obtained another ingredient--her own blood. The blood and the petals she stirred together, singing a chant whose words no one understood any more, and she crawled around this affair three times, calling herself goat. Then it was ready, and with a wintry heart she waited for something to come and feed.

She did not see the day wane.

Three hours she crouched.

Then, with her words of damnation unuttered, Leyenda rose and went back to the sick man. Inside, she stationed herself by the fire, and fed it, and fed her thoughts. With the image of forests passed, of paths traversed along muddy shores, of ravines unsteady with rock, of dogs and men avoided, of valleys and plains and slopes and hills and finally this last grim precipice beyond which there was no going, she remembered their flight. With what eagerness she had freed Dal, the death-destined prisoner of her brothers. How they had run in the first moments! And to what goal? She sensed somehow, but in an inarticulate way, that these ruined sunsets like blood running across the decks of wicked defeated ships as they nosed down to doom, were not isolated and meaningless phenomena, but that they had all along presaged the now apparent tragedy. A tragedy so high and exquisite that mournfulness was not even to be thought of. Their fate was linked to the ruins; their coming and abiding had been destined. With them the old day had awakened. She had seen it in dream. She knew herself to be of it. How the centuries had flowed back beneath those intermeshing stars! As ignorant of man as was the earthquake or the typhoon had they revealed themselves to be--forming patterns unmeasurable by miles and years--patterns whose ultimate nature the race would not survive to comprehend. The audacious eye viewed them, but it was as if a housefly wrought in a warm dung-heap should nestle in a roof built for snows and winters. Though she sat by the fire and the sick man, she peered backward into paste so dark that only a hint of something stirred in them; and forward in wonder and doubt at the end, when all villages should be as were the citadels of the old race; when nowhere on field or mountaintop would move aught, but the pacing sun as its light revealed, caressed and forgot man's works in the course of declining day. Leyenda had not thought of this before. She would not ever have thought it in the village.

Calm as the light that flickered yellow in a little bowl in her father's house Leyenda grew. She wondered if her god had followed her. Diminished and spent was her woe. She had gone beyond protesting--she had reached an incomprehensible peace--caught, almost, some secret which fluttered in the dark beyond all fears. Beyond the night which lay all about earth, a fundamental source abode and dreamt in the desolations. Thence streamed the patterns which an hour ago had seemed agonising be-

cause she saw them dimly. Thence streamed all good and hateful things, and the power which shaped them knew them not apart, but somehow this was consoling. Her robbed goods were returned to her; her tears washed away. It was autumn in her heart, a golden-haired autumn which had forgotten the flower which was to perish, and nurtured the life-crowded root. What did she expect so joyously?---She turned with a face but lately contorted, and gazed ambiguously at Dal. She touched his incredible flesh with hands no longer restless for aught save the dust a thousand years deep on the ruin which was each day lighted curiously by an expiring sun.

Dal startled her with a request, made with closed eyes, for water. There was none. She had forgotten to bring any in. On the previous night it would have been twenty steps of terror to the well, but she roused herself, selected a bundle of dried stalks, twisted it tightly, and touched it to the fire. By its blaze she went out into the darkness.....

Awakening slowly, Dal seemed to recall a quest through unending corridors; through forests of black-trunked pines in whose upper gloom the birds flitted anonymously; through boulder-peopled ravines. His journey amid these things had been more strenuous even than that with Leyenda, and Leyenda did not share it. She had left him midway--though how or why he could not remember. Leyenda! He knew of course that it had been a dream occasioned by his fever, but still he grieved weakly. Then he turned and stared at the burnt sticks where the fire had been, and where she had sat feeding it. The spot was cold, and she was gone indeed.

In a small voice he called her, with expectant eyes on the sun-flooded door. A line of grasses, a few crazily embedded stone blocks, and the sky's blue were all that he could see, prone as he was. He waited. Was she gathering eggs? The dream of his lone journey remained disquietingly present. If she did not come, he would look for her. The half-remembered fever had kept him from using the ankle; it was swollen but only negligibly painful. He could make his way about with a stick--perhaps he could even climb the cone, from whose top such a wide range was visible. So, the wait becoming unendurable, and his cries availing naught, he stood up and found his strength was gone. Such weakness was incredible to him--his very hand, clutching the door-edge, was flaccid and powerless. Now he was thoroughly frightened, but he managed to stagger out calling her name. What devilish thing had happened in the intervals of his delirium? Had she gone out and fallen from the cliff? Had the thing which scratched at the cone-side....but he smothered the thought. Hunger told him of days that had elapsed unseen...sunless dawns and unstarred evenings.

Outdoors, he sensed a change in his surroundings, as if someone had assiduously tidied the ruin, set one block upon another, pulled away the creepers. His eye fell upon a brick pillar, and judged it to be higher than before, but this information can hardly be said to have reached his brain. Then, calling up a strength he did not have, propelling himself clumsily with a stick under his arm-pit, Dal searched.

He searched like the wind searching the night, the wind whose remembered cry was similar to his own; the wind which touched regretfully the grass of unsown fields, that fretted the wave of lake and sea; but not like the rain-weighted wind was his weeping.

Then by the gourd-vine he came upon a clue, and his heart was marble. It was the ruinous, thousand-year old basin which had once served to hold the victims of the god. It had been righted, cleansed of moss, mended. And on its shallow curve reposed Leyenda's bracelet. Her hateful shackle of a bracelet. A while since it had clasped her soft arm. It would do so no more--nor would Dal. For the baubel was smeared with blood. He seized it, and drawing back his weak arm, threw

it goldenly into space. Instantly he regretted that he had done so. A dark circle remained on the stone--blood clotted into the porous surface. He watched a while, then shaking with bewilderment--though in his heart he knew--lifted his eyes to the gold and gore of the sunset. There massive clouds, acres in extent, hid the sun but left an empty space. Across this window of the heavens undulated the expiring sun-rays. A nimbus shone there--a sign was blossoming out. Something was congregating out of the welter--being borne in on lapping waves from the farthestmost spatial and temporal sea, growing stronger with each wave. With bloodshot hectic eyes and grinning teeth he sought to make it out. But it did not resolve itself.

So he stood there as the birds, clamouring to the nest never built for them, came in from wherever they had been; from the huts of men in green-shadowed forests; from the broken highways, from the changing streams and changing mountains; and from the land, broad and unattainable, beneath him.

(August 1938 - June 1939. Mexico City and San Francisco.)

ACROSS THE RIVER

by Duane W. Rimel

-oOo-

What lies across the open river
Where the shoreline dimly gleams
Beyond the mist that softly lingers
Like a veil of ghostly dreams?

Where is that spire which gently rises
Far above the treetops sere?
Whence comes that distant, fevered tolling
That disturbs my troubled ear?

At dusk I see faint lights a-twinkle
In the willows by the Snake;
There are no houses, yet the gleaming
Has a source beyond mistake.

Where are the silent craft that slither
Near the dark and gloomy shore,
Their names obscured by fog and distance---
Haunting me forevermore?

Where is that edifice so lofty
Bathed in twilight's afterglow,
Its gables rearing dimly skyward,
Hiding secrets none should know?

There is no answer; I have been there,
Searched the cobbled streets in vain;
But when I come across the river
All these fancies live again.

---ooOoo---

(Note: Across The River is the second in the series of Duane Rimel's poems dealing with the Snake River.)

NOTES ON INTERPLANETARY FICTION

by H. P. Lovecraft

-oOo-

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-oOo-

Despite the current flood of stories dealing with other worlds and universes, and with intrepid flights to and from them through cosmic space, it is probably no exaggeration to say that not more than a half-dozen of these things, including the novels of H. G. Wells, have even the slightest shadow of a claim to artistic seriousness or literary rank. Insincerity, conventionality, triteness, artificiality, false emotion, and puerile extravagance reign triumphant throughout this overcrowded genre, so that none but its rarest products can possibly claim a truly adult status. And the spectacle of such persistent hollowness has led many to ask whether, indeed, any fabric of real literature can ever grow out of the given subject matter.

The present commentator does not believe that the idea of space-travel and other worlds is inherently unsuited to literary use. It is, rather, his opinion that the omnipresent cheapening and misuse of that idea is the result of a widespread misconception; a misconception which extends to other departments of weird and science fiction as well. This fallacy is the notion that any account of impossible, improbable, or inconceivable phenomena can be successfully presented as a commonplace narrative of objective acts and conventional emotions in the ordinary tone and manner of popular romance. Such a presentation will often "get by" with immature readers, but it will never approach even remotely the field of aesthetic merit.

Inconceivable events and conditions form a class apart from all other story elements, and can not be made convincing by any mere process of casual narration. They have the handicap of incredibility to overcome; and this can be accomplished only through a careful realism in every other phase of the story, plus a gradual atmospheric or emotional building-up of the utmost subtlety. The emphasis, too, must be kept right---hovering always over the wonder of the central abnormality itself. It must be remembered that any violation of what we know as natural law is in itself a far more tremendous thing than any other event or feeling which could possibly affect a human being. Therefore in a story dealing with such a thing we can not expect to create any sense of life or illusion of reality if we treat the wonder casually and have the characters moving about under ordinary motivations. The characters, though they must be natural, should be subordinated to the central marvel around which they are grouped. The true "hero" of a marvel tale is not any human being, but simply a set of phenomena.

Over and above everything else should tower the stark, outrageous monstrousness of the one chosen departure from nature. The characters should react to it as real people would react to such a thing if it were suddenly to confront them in daily life; displaying the almost soul-shattering amazement which anyone would naturally display instead of the mild, tame, quickly-passed-over emotions prescribed by cheap popular convention. Even when the wonder is once to which the characters are assumed to be used, the sense of awe, marvel and strangeness which the reader would feel in the presence of such a thing must somehow be suggested by the author. When an account of a marvellous trip is presented without the colouring of appropriate emotion, we never feel the least degree of vividness in it. We do not get the spine-

tickling illusion that such a thing might possibly have happened, but merely feel that someone has uttered some extravagant words. In general, we should forget all about the popular hack conventions of cheap writing and try to make our story a perfect slice of actual life except where the one chosen marvel is concerned. We should work as if we were staging a hoax and trying to get our extravagant lie accepted as literal truth.

Atmosphere, not action, is the thing to cultivate in the wonder story. We cannot put stress on the bare events, since the unnatural extravagance of these events makes them sound hollow and absurd when thrown into too high relief. Such events, even when theoretically possible or conceivable in the future, have no counterpart or basis in existing life and human experience, hence can never form the groundwork of an adult tale. All that a marvel story can ever be, in a serious way, is a vivid picture of a certain type of human mood. The moment it tries to be anything else it becomes cheap, puerile, and unconvincing. Therefore a fantastic author should see that his prime emphasis goes into subtle suggestion---the imperceptible hints and touches of selective and associative detail which express shadings of moods build up a vague illusion of the strange reality of the unreal---instead of into bald catalogues of incredible happenings which can have no substance or meaning apart from a sustaining cloud of colour and mood-symbolism. A serious adult story must be true to something in life. Since marvel tales cannot be true to the events of life, they must shift their emphasis toward something to which they can be true; namely, certain wistful or restless moods of the human spirit, wherein it seeks to weave gossamer ladders of escape from the galling tyranny of time, space and natural laws.

And how are these general principles of adult wonder fiction to be applied to the interplanetary tale in particular? That they can be applied, we have no reason to doubt; the important factors being here, as elsewhere, an adequate sense of wonder, adequate emotions in the characters, realism in the setting and supplementary incidents, care in the choice of significant detail, and a studious avoidance of the hackneyed artificial characters and stupid conventional events and situations which at once destroy a story's vitality by proclaiming it a product of weary mass mechanics. It is an ironic truth that no artistic story of this kind: honestly, sincerely, and unconventionally written, would be likely to have any chance of acceptance among professional editors of the common pulp school. This, however, will not influence the really determined artist bent on creating something of mature worth. Better to write honestly for a non-remunerative magazine than to concoct worthless tinsel and be paid for it. Some day, perhaps, the conventions of cheap editors will be less flagrantly absurd in their anti-artistic rigidity.

The events of an interplanetary story---aside from such tales as involve sheer poetic fantasy---are best laid in the present, or represented as having occurred secretly or prehistorically in the past. The future is a ticklish period to deal with; since it is virtually impossible to escape grotesqueness and absurdity in depicting its mode of life, while there is always an immense emotional loss in representing characters as familiar with the marvels depicted. The characters of a story are essentially projections of ourselves; and unless they can share our own ignorance and wonder concerning what occurs, there is an inevitable handicap. This is not to say that tales of the future can not be artistic, but merely that it is harder to make them so.

A good interplanetary story must have realistic human characters; not the stock scientists, villainous assistants, invincible heroes, and lovely scientist's-daughter heroines of the usual trash of this sort. Indeed, there is no reason why there should be any "villain", "hero",

or "heroine" at all. These artificial character-types belong wholly to artificial plot-forms, and have no place in serious fiction of any kind. The function of the story is to express a certain human mood of wonder and liberation, and any tawdry dragging-in of dime-novel theatricalism is both out of place and injurious. No stock romance is wanted. We must select only such characters (not necessarily stalwart or dashing or youthful or beautiful or picturesque characters) as would naturally be involved in the events to be depicted, and they must behave exactly as real persons would behave if confronted with the given marvels. The tone of the whole thing must be realism, not romance.

The crucial and delicate matter of getting the characters off the earth must be very carefully managed. Indeed, it probably forms the greatest single problem of the story. The departure must be plausibly accounted for and impressively described. If the period is not prehistoric, it is better to have the means of departure a secret invention. The characters must react to this invention with a proper sense of utter, almost paralyzing wonder, avoiding the cheap fictional tendency of having such things half-taken for granted. To avoid errors in complex problems of physics, it is well not to attempt too much detail in describing the invention.

Scarcely less delicate is the problem of describing the voyage through space and the landing on another world. Here we must lay primary stress on the stupendous emotions--the unconquerable sense of astonishment--felt by the voyagers as they realize they are actually off their native earth, in cosmic gulfs or on an alien world. Needless to say, a strict following of scientific fact in representing the mechanical, astronomical, and other aspects of the trip is absolutely essential. Not all readers are ignorant of the sciences, and a flagrant contravention of truth ruins a tale for anyone able to detect it.

Equal scientific care must be given to our representation of events on the alien planet. Everything must be in strict accord with the known or assumed nature of the ~~case~~ in question--surface gravity, axial inclination, length of day and year, aspect of sky, etc.--and the atmosphere must be built up with significant details conducing to verisimilitude and realism. Heavy stock devices connected with the reception of the voyagers by the planet's inhabitants ought to be ruled rigidly out. Thus we should have no over-facile language learning; no telepathic communication; no worship of the travellers as deities; no participation in the affairs of pseudo-human kingdoms, or in conventional wars between factions of inhabitants; no weddings with beautiful anthropomorphic princesses; no stereotyped Armageddons with ray-guns and space-ships; no court intrigues and jealous magicians; no peril from hairy ape-men of the polar caps; and so on, and so on. Social and political satire are always undesirable since such intellectual and ulterior objects detract from the story's power as a crystallisation of a mood. What must always be present in superlative degree is a deep, pervasive sense of strangeness--the utter, incomprehensible strangeness of a world holding nothing in common with ours.

It is not necessary that the alien planet be inhabited--or inhabited at the period of the voyage--at all. If it is, the denizens must be definitely non-human in aspect, mentality, emotions, and nomenclature, unless they are assumed to be descendants of a prehistoric colonising expedition from our earth. The human-like aspect, psychology, and proper names commonly attributed to other-planetary beings by the bulk of cheap authors is at once hilarious and pathetic. Another absurd habit of conventional hacks is having the major denizens of other planets always more advanced scientifically and mechanically than ourselves; always indulging in spectacular rites against a background of cubistic temples and palaces, and always menaced by some monstrous and dramatic peril. This kind of pap should be replaced by an adult realism, with

the races of other-planetarians represented, according to the artistic demands of each separate case, as in every stage of development--sometimes high, sometimes low, and sometimes in picturesquely middling. Royal and religious pageantry should not be conventionally overemphasized; indeed, it is not at all likely that more than a fraction of the exotic races would have lit upon the especial folk-customs of royalty and religion. It must be remembered that non-human beings would be wholly apart from human motives and perspectives.

But the real nucleus of the story ought to be something far removed from the specific aspect and customs of any hypothetical outside race--ought, indeed, to be nothing less than the simple sensation of wonder at being off the earth. Interest had better be sustained by accounts of bizarre and un-terrestrial natural conditions, rather than through any artificially dramatic actions of the characters, either human or exotic. Adventures may well be introduced, but they should be properly subordinated to realism--made inevitable outgrowths of the conditions instead of synthetic thrills concocted for their own sake.

The climax and ending must be managed very carefully to avoid extravagance or artificiality. It is preferable, in the interest of convincingness, to represent the fact of the voyage as remaining hidden from the public--or to have the voyage a prehistoric affair, forgotten by mankind and with its discovery remaining a secret. The idea of any general revelation implying a widespread change in human thought, history, or orientation tends to contradict surrounding events and clash with actual future probabilities to radically to give the reader a sense of naturalness. It is far more potent not to make the truth of the story dependent on any condition visibly contradicting what we know--for the reader may pleasantly toy with the notion that perhaps these marvels may have happened after all!

Meanwhile the deluge of inept interplanetary tosh continues. Whether a qualitative upturn will ever occur on anything like a large scale, this commentator cannot venture to prophesy; but at any rate, he has had his say regarding what he deems the main aspects of the problem. There are without doubt great possibilities in the serious exploitation of the astronomical tale; as a few semi-classics like The War of the Worlds, The Last and First Men, Station X, The Red Brain, and Clark Ashton Smith's best work prove. But the pioneers must be prepared to labour without financial return, professional recognition, or the encouragement of a reading majority whose taste has been seriously harmed by the rubbish it has devoured. Fortunately sincere artistic creation is its own incentive and reward, so that despite all obstacles we need not despair of the future of a fresh literary form whose present lack of development leaves all the more room for brilliant and fruitful experimentation.

PSEUDONYMS OF H. P. LOVECRAFT

by R. E. Barlow

-oOo-

Lovecraft gave me this partial list of his pseudonyms about 1934. Most of these were used exclusively in the amateur journals of the UAPA and NAPA, and many were used only once. This list may enable the industrious to track down items in the Fossil Library of Amateur Journalism, Benjamin Franklin Memorial, Philadelphia--where his own collection reposes. (I sent it there after his death, in fulfilment of his instructions.)

H. Littlewit, Edward Softly, H. Paget-Lowe, Lawrence Appleton, John J. Jones, Archibald xxx (surname forgotten by HPL), Lewis Theobald Jr., Ward Phillips (from HOWARD PHILLIPS lovecraft).



nanek

THE DRAGON GLASS

by Virginia "Nanek" Anderson

-oOo-

No magic mirror of Japan can hold upon its gilded span,
Enchantment as this mirror can.
'Round its edge the dragon lies, and in his heavy-lidded eyes
Suspicion never, never dies.
This is no ordinary glass, upon whose surface pictures pass
Reflected in its crystal mass.
This mirror is a limpid door, that leads beyond to one world more
And to that new world's ancient lore.

(Dedicated to A. Merritt.)

BOOK REVIEW

THEY. by "Lilith Lorraine" (Mary M. Wright). Avalon Presse, Route 8, Box 83-F, San Antonio, Texas. Price, 35¢.
THIS BROCHURE is Lilith Lorraine's latest publication, and consists of a very ambitious 52 stanza poem of "prophecy". To my mind, They failed to live up to its advance billing as "a daring venture in verse which will knock the lid off"---this reviewer is inured to radical predictions---but nevertheless this fine piece of work struck me as a most successful attempt to say in poetry what the more future-minded stf authors have been saying in prose. Though not strictly fantasy, and marred by an occasional stanza not up to Lilith's best work, They should appeal to all poetically inclined fans.

(FTL)

LITTLE-KNOWN FANTASISTES

by Harold Wakefield

-oOo-

II. OLIVER ONIONS

Called by one critic "the greatest enigma among modern English writers of fiction", Oliver Onions is most noted for his collection of weird tales published under the title Widdershine, though he has written several non-fantastic novels and a number of other short fantasies. Among the latter may be mentioned,

In Accordance with the Evidence, and Grey Youth.

Born in Bradford, Yorkshire, England, in 1873, Onions was trained as an artist; falling into authorship accidentally, he has been writing since 1900. His wife is the formerly very popular novelist, Berta Ruok.

The stories in Widdershine fall into the type that may be classified as "tales of the borderland of the mind". Easily the most famous is that classic of horror, The Beckoning Fair One. This story depicts with extraordinary power the slow and inexorable fastening on the body and soul of Oleron (the principal character) of the spirit of an evil but beautiful woman. Told with masterly skill, the tale unfolds from the early and idyllic life of Oleron in the new house he has taken, the first intimations of a presence in the house, its jealousy of Oleron's friend Elsie Bengough culminating in her murder, and finally the total abandonment of Oleron to his perilous succubus. The ending of the story in an atmosphere of gloom, decay, and madness as Oleron is arrested and taken away to be charged with a murder of which he is morally innocent is hardly excelled in all horror literature.

In Phantas, a dying, delirious sailor on a sinking galleon is vouchsafed strange glimpses into future ages. Benlian tells with almost naive simplicity of the projection of the sculptor Benlian's soul into the god he has modelled, and contains much of subtle horror which may be lost on the casual reader.

The Cigarette Case employs the rather hackneyed plot of the friends who visit a strange house at night and are entertained by two gracious women; only to find on visiting the spot in daylight that the house has lain for years in deserted ruins. It is the poorest of Onions' weird stories, and is not to be compared with his better work.

Somewhat in the style of Arthur Machen is Io, in which pagan forces invade a young girl and the spirit of the Bacchante finally bursts through modern conventions, driving away in terror her commonplace young sweetheart. Hic Jacet, though containing some supernatural elements, deals chiefly with problems of the artistic conscience. The Accident tells how the future was for an instant revealed to a successful painter while waiting for a disreputable old acquaintance.

Perhaps the strangest story in the collection is Rocum, which tells of a man near to the ultimate mysteries of nature. Pursued by echoes and something far worse, his attempt to hunt it down high over London hurls him to a spectacular death.

The weird stories of Oliver Onions are very modern in that he dispenses almost entirely with such hackneyed standbys as vampires, werewolves, ghosts, and the like. His tales have those little nuances which are the mark of a master; and can be very horrible, especially when dealing with the borderland of insanity---the madresses which are insanity in the courts of law, but which leave the reader wondering. In such stories as The Beckoning Fair One, Benlian, and Rocum; he treats of regions few writers would care, or dare, to approach. All in all, Onions deserves far greater renown than he has thus far received.

LOVECRAFT AS AN ILLUSTRATOR



Cthulhu

June 8 1934

H.P. Lovecraft

(The following excerpts, and the accompanying textual illustrations are taken from a letter written by H. P. Lovecraft in 1934, and are wholly new to print. We apologise for the gross ineptness of the stencilling, but it must be remembered that Lovecraft's drawing style does not lend itself well to mimeograph reproduction. We regret the omission of The Blasted Heath, but this sketch was included in the body of the letter, and the writing on the back precluded successful tracing. Lovecraft himself would have been the first to dismiss his sketchings as being serious art, but we feel that his followers will be deeply interested in his pictorial conception of two of his most striking entities. This material appears in these pages through the courtesy of Franklin Lee Baldwin, the original recipient of the letter.)

(turn to page 23)



Picturman's Medall
July 27, 1934.

H.P. Lovecraft

LOVECRAFT AS AN ILLUSTRATOR.

...I feel tremendously and undeservedly flattered by your kindly mention of the crude and casual sketch in my letter to Rimel. I've always wished I could draw, but have no natural aptitude for it--so that despite infinite pains my best efforts in that direction are rather ludicrous and pathetic. Odd too, for my grandmother, great-aunt, and late elder aunt were all accomplished artists--while my father's sketch book attests his very passable skill with the pencil. It makes me green with envy when I see certain naturally gifted persons effortlessly translate a visual impression to paper. When I try the same thing, the result is an awkward mess of forced pen-scratches. Whether I could ever learn how to draw decently with patient special instruction, I really don't know. My poor results in school discouraged me--although perhaps some of the completeness of the failure was due to the fact that I was confined to certain simple objects and problems, and not allowed to have my own way and choose my own methods. It is my weakness that I can't conform to rules and restrictions very well. I have to learn and do things in my own way--as dictated by my especial interests and aptitudes--or not at all. That was probably what turned me against music in childhood--I was confined to the simple drudgery and repeated exercises of orthodox instruction. In drawing it was the same way. All that ever really interested me were landscape and architectural effects--rural vistas, pictures of houses, and street scenes--but school instruction was very slow in getting to these. Instead I was chained to vases and cubes and spheres and flowers and all that, and filled full of rules for making lines and handling light and shade. Well, that was all very valuable--but what I needed were rules of perspective for landscapes and panoramas. The smaller objects did not interest me, and I had no incentive to help me master my natural crudeness of pen and pencil manipulation. The few landscapes I was allowed to do were assigned without basic perspective rules--why, I don't know. So I gave up serious drawing as a bad job. In the ensuing years I have often crudely scratched diagrams of things as primitive illustrations, but have realized that pictorial art is not for me.

As for a view of the "blasted heath"--that's rather a hard proposition, since my idea was simply a region where all the vegetation had disintegrated to a greyish powder! However, I suppose a view of the edge of it would (if I could really draw it) convey some idea of what I had in mind. Stunted trees, dead prostrate trunks, and all that--and a suggestion of the abandoned road and perhaps a farmhouse ruin. But I doubt if I could formulate any pictorial conception that a fastidious editor would care to print. The problems of wide perspective are too complex for an ignorant layman to do more than fumble around with--and then again, I am dolefully weak on the sort of pen-strokes needed to represent light and shade and various surfaces properly. But here goes--as an experiment:

(The sketch, far better than Lovecraft's derogatory remarks would lead one to expect, was drawn in the body of the letter, and as mentioned before was absolutely untraceable. FTL)

Not so hot...not so hot! It takes more than I've got to put across the picture of desolation inherent in the original idea of the blasted heath! And this reminds me that I feel tremendously flattered by your suggestion that I attempt a frontispiece for The Colour Out Of Space! Ah, me--would that I could! I have always envied authors who can illustrate their own tales--putting into visibility exactly what they have in mind instead of depending on the routine work (often careless, uncomprehending, and unsympathetic) of magazine illustrators--but have scarcely hoped to be able to produce anything suitable myself. ...I'm under no illusions as to the inaptitude of my unschooled pictorial blunderings.

H. P. LOVECRAFT.

TALES OF THE ELDER DAYS

by Vil Bryant

I. THE QUEST OF KARITH-ZAN

Beyond the carven walls of Plinth - beyond the river A1;
In the fabled lands of Homem, where mountains meet the sky;
Where the purple snows of Jagar seep down the slopes of Zel -
Dwells an ancient, evil wizard - so Pharnik tribesmen tell.
In accents hushed and softened - yea, full thousand fars away,
The populace of Yem-Dar-Ish but speak of him by day.
To speak of him in darkened hours is risking fearful things;
His name can bring Shub-Niggurath, or Zhar, on night-black wings.

But Karith-Zan, the goldsmith's son, knew neither fear nor dread,
And in his mind there dwelt one thought; the maid Lal-Var, to wed.
A fair and comely maid was she, the daughter of Kal-Ish -
And Karith-Zan did wet his lips, and wish a natural wish.
But Karith-Zan, a manly youth, and handsomer than most -
Found not the favor of Lal-Var, for Lal-Var loved a ghost.
She loved a soldier, battle-slain, among the tribes of Edd -
And buried not, his spirit stayed to haunt the maiden's bed.
And Karith-Zan did fume and fret, about his rival dead,
And thought and thought 'til fearful scheme took shape within his head.

The goldsmith's son mused thus and so, and knew he could not hope
To find the bones of Anthai-Kath within his lifetime's scope.
The sorcerer of Yem-Dar-Ish, a wise and able man,
Had told him to forget the maid, and not to plot and plan
To win her grace; for if he did, the price would be too dear
For him to pay. (And saying so, had looked quite pale and queer.)
But Karith-Zan did ask the price to have his cherished boon.
And Dilgo-Deg, the sorcerer, composed a magic rune,
And thus protected, wrote the Name, and gave it to the youth,
And told him to seek out that one, and said his word was sooth.

And so the youth prepared himself to make that journey far -
With shield and sword and camel strong---for guide, a brilliant star.
From Yem-Dar-Ish he then went forth, and travelled toward the west,
Through Sarnath and Kadatheron, and rarely stopped to rest.
He crossed the Bnazic desert, where Edds and Pharniks dwell,
And came at last to Homem, and the purple peak of Zel.

He climbed up to the great bronze door, that stood twelve cubits high;
And knocked thereon, and knocked again, before there came reply.
The door swung wide, but naught was there, save darkness so profound
That Karith-Zan cried out in fear, yet uttered not a sound.
A voice then spake in timbre deep, and asked his mission there.
And Karith-Zan explained it, though he spake to empty air.
"Rash mortal, go!" the Voice intoned, "Before I blast your soul!
The Ancient One deals not with men. Go hence to seek thy goal!"

"There is no other sorcerer," retorted Karith-Zan,
"Who hath the power which I seek, and also hath a plan
For me to use, that I may find the bones of Anthai-Kath,
And bury deep the cursed things, then take my homeward path,
To wed Lal-Var when she is freed from her dead lover's spell.
"No price thou ask can be too great, O Ancient One of Zel!"

The deep voice spake: "No price too great? Thou art a fool indeed! Wouldst trade thy little soul, O man, that Lal-Var may be freed?" "My soul, my life, my body too - all these I will exchange," Spake Karith-Zan. The Voice then laughed, in accents deep and strange, And said: "O man, thou art an ass, to bargain thus with me; For if I wished to take thy soul, couldst take it now from thee! But wait---thy quest amuseth me, a most diverting joke! The maiden shall be thine, and love for thee I shall evoke. And now, begone!" The door swung closed, and Karith-Zan stepped back, Then downward made his way, still dazed--his mouth agape and slack. He scarce believed his ears awhile, until he came to Edd; Where just beyond, on desert sands, he saw the bones ahead. Then, coming close, he saw the shield, and knew he had not dreamt. And he rejoiced, and thought 'twas wise that he had dared attempt To bargain with the Fearful One, for now his quest was o'er. So digging deep, he hid the bones, and took his way once more; Returning thence to Yem-Dar-Ish, to claim the maid Lal-Var. But when he went to her abode, with honey in a jar, And gold, and gems, and frankincense, and many presents fair, Her tearful parents told him that she dwelt no longer there. The ghost of Anthai-Kath had come, to tell her of his fate - That now his bones were buried deep - in Eden he would wait. And so Lal-Var, in wretched grief, departed from her home, And to the vast still lake that lies near Sarnath she did roam. Upon the great, grey rock she climbed, and cast herself therefrom. And some there were who heard a sound, as of a great, low drum.

When Karith-Zan received this news, he bowed his head in grief; But when alone, he swore an oath, for 'twas his real belief The Ancient One had tricked him, and fulfilled his evil jest. But then the voice laughed in his ear, and bade him wait and rest Until the full moon rose that night, and he would have his wife. So Karith-Zan, upon his couch, played idly with a knife, And strove to calm his lustful thoughts, until the moon arose. At last it came, that silver light which warms not as it grows; And with it came a muffled knock upon his chamber door. He flung it wide, then held his breath, until he could no more - Then screamed it out, and screamed again, at what was standing there.

Out in the streets, the screams were heard, and late folk stopped to stare; Then hurried on as fast they might, because they did not dare To seek the cause, lest they behold a sight not good to see. But in the dawn, a guardsman came, and in the house went he, And soon returned, his face quite pale, and told what he had seen: The goldsmith's son lay cold and dead, his face a ghastly green - Green water lay in little pools among the scattered rugs, And on the dead man's face there crawled green-spotted water bugs. And in his hand, he clutched his knife, while on the floor there laid A woman's breast, of purple hue, clean-severed by the blade.

(advertisement)

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LESLIE. A. CROUTCH

BOOK REVIEW

The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath by H. P. Lovecraft. (Previously unpublished, this novel will be featured in the new Lovecraft omnibus, Beyond The Wall Of Sleep, to be published this coming September by Arkham House, Sauk City, Wisconsin. The editors of The Acolyte wish to thank August Derleth for the loan of the typescript.)

-oOo-

To appreciate The Dream-Quest Of Unknown Kadath requires several readings; at first, it leaves one somewhat unsatisfied. Kadath is a rather peculiar melange, and suffers somewhat from faulty technique. Though written in much the same general style as Lovecraft's pure fantasies, it extends to more than 40,000 words, and is not subdivided into chapters or sections. As a result, there are many dull spots and anticlimaxes, and taken as a whole the novel raises hob with common conceptions of unity.

Kadath as a novel is nothing; as a realistic depiction of a long dream it is magnificent--the very passages that mar it as a conventional story add convincingly to its dream-like quality. Any actual dream moves from one event to another with a complete illogic--digressions, fantasies, inanities pointlessly following one another, pathos cheek-by-jewel with low comedy, until we either awaken or drop into a deeper, more anesthetic slumber. Kadath's seemingly almost purposeless rambles present this dream-like effect admirably, and in addition the story contains some of the finest writing Lovecraft ever did. The earlier stages of Randolph Carter's "dream-quest" teem with passages breathtaking in their fantastic beauty; and the arduous climb of Mount Ngranek, the kidnapping of Carter by the night-gaunts, and the subsequent adventures in lightless N'kai carry a most convincing atmosphere of terror. Then the final trip across the Plateau of Leng, culminating in the meeting with Nyarlathotep, can easily stand comparison with nearly any of Lovecraft's other achievements.

It is a real pleasure to renew our acquaintance with Randolph Carter and Richard Upton Pickman, the latter degenerated into a ghoul much as was foreshadowed in Pickman's Model. Carter is of course his usual mystic self, forever trying to tear aside the veil of the unknown.

Kadath is a particularly important story from the standpoint of the "Cthulhu myth-pattern". Written in 1926-27, it represents the transitional stage in Lovecraft's compositions. His earlier stories, though gradually building up the idea of "outsideness", contained comparatively little mention or description of the malign entities fumbling at the gateway. The Call of Cthulhu, written late in 1926, marked the final abandonment of the dream world of the earlier fantasies, and struck out boldly into new concepts. Kadath, the last of the fantasies, manages to knit the fragments of mythos contained in the earlier stories into a homogeneous whole, and in addition furnishes the background for most of Lovecraft's later allusions to the Plateau of Leng and Kadath-In-The-Cold-Waste.

Lovecraft's successful experiment in dream-portrayal should have been published long ago. While it is not likely ever to win the popular acclaim accorded such tales as The Call of Cthulhu, The Outsider, The Music of Erich Zann, and others of H.P.L.'s acknowledged masterpieces, The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath is certain to be cherished by fantasy fans. Fandom is indebted to August Derleth for including this previously unobtainable story in the forthcoming omnibus.

(FTL)

EDITORIAL (cont. from page 1). WE PARTICULARLY WISH TO THANK Lee Baldwin for sponsoring the cover this issue. Thanks also to the various gentlemen who gave us reprint permission. FTL.

FANTASY FORUM

There has been considerable misapprehension of The Acolyte's rating system. We realize that it is not perfect, but it is the only system that enables us to take a letter of comment and convert it into figures. The best item in the issue scores 5; second and third best, 4 and 3 respectively; favorable mention, 2; unfavorable mention, -3. Only one item may receive a 5, but there may be any number of 4's, 3's, 2's, or -3's. It has also been suggested that -3 is a heavy penalty to pay for one person's dislike, but one must consider that if an item grates on someone to the extent that he will write a special letter to say so, -3 is a very generous allowance. Be all this as it may, the system will stand as before. The third issue worked out as follows: (cumulative totals):

Poetry and the Artistic Ideal.....84	Angkor Thom.....42
Music of the Stars.....61	Variety Is The Spice.....39
The Snake54	Superstitious?.....37
Mime of Sleep.....53	Keeper of the Gate.....34
Within the Circle.....51	Cracks--Wise and Otherwise...29
Little-Known Fantaisistes.....47	Editorial.....33
Claimed.....45	Canada Calling.....22
Cover.....42	Night.....13
	The Summons.....3

Ratings through the courtesy of: R. Wright, Child, Swisher, Lyon, Sinn, Miller, W. Evans, Ackermann, Widner, Shaw, Wakefield, Mason, Betts, Warner, Bronson, Lamb, Derleth, Hornig, Cunningham, Bovard, Jenkins, Holby, Sykora, Banister, van Vogt.

-oOo-

The three Acolytes are proud to present our letter section this time, and believe that you folks are going to have to do some massive correspondence to top it in our next issue.

-oOo-

I observe the present criticism and villification of so-called science-fiction, and wonder if anybody really knows what science-fiction is. Back in the days of the great experimenter, Hugo Gernsback, Amazing Stories was put on the market as a popular medium for presenting to the general public reprints of such famous stories as Wells' War of the Worlds and the Jules Verne epics. Now it is certain that these men had something to say when they wrote. Unfortunately, they did not, in their time, write enough to last a magazine forever. Therefore, an alarming shortage appeared imminent in this type of literature. At the same time, the magazine was doing wonderfully well, and couldn't be discarded simply because there were no more stories to reprint. Therefore a few well-known authors were hand-bred to the task of producing this type of fiction. It was not long before every possible plot had been written. Every world and dimension had been visited. Every type of fantastic machine had been invented and discarded for something better. Science-fiction probably reached its end when it succeeded in working itself to the ultimate end of time. At first, you doubtless remember, stories were laid a few years in the future. This future kept growing more and more distant. One writer described the world a hundred years from now, another leaped a thousand, and another took ten thousand or a million. And what did they discover? That only so far could they go, then history must repeat. Humanity could become only so civilized, then it had nothing more to strive for and needs must die out. And right then, science-fiction died out with it, after all possibilities had been explored. Who wants to read of the future a hundred years distant when his imagination is already sated with the million-year future? Now you see what has happened. Present writers are just digging over the terri-

tory well dug up by more capable writers in the past. There is no longer any use trying to appeal to the old-time reader of science-fiction. His appetite demands something new and there is nothing new to feed him. A new generation has arisen in the past fifteen years, to whom the old stuff is new. The old school did their best writing when the subject was new; anything they do now is not worthy their former efforts. So they don't bother. Cheaper writers--hacks, if you will--have taken their place. They grind out the ancient formulas and situations in a juvenile way for the newer, juvenile readers. And there, my friend, you have the sad case of science-fiction. For a dear, departed friend, it is fitting and proper to shed a few tears at the grave. But ever to hope for a resurrection is beyond the bounds of possibility.

I recall several years ago the most notable attempt to inspire the decadent science-fiction with some kind of life; in which the editor fondly proclaimed that he was going to replace "science" with "human interest". Human interest, to his paltry imagination, turned out to be scantily clad women with "globular" breasts and a yen for violent lascivia, being shagged over the quaintly featureless surfaces of alien planets by horny spacefarers who had been too long aspace.

Tell me, why are so many writers ashamed of the fact that they cannot plot? This type of writer persists in believing editors are gargoyles of formula jealously guarding their precious pages from the plotless multitude. They read in these pages stinking plots that nauseate them and say, "If that is what the editor wants, he's crazy--I simply won't write it." Now the fact is, editors choose a stinking plot in preference to no plot at all. And where the difficulty comes in is that nobody can tell exactly what a plot is. A plot is like the string around a package. Merely wrapped around a number of times, it is bound soon to fall off. But once the two ends are tied, it can't fall off. And so help me, that is all a great many rejected stories need--the ends of the string tied together. You don't find a story like this in a magazine because it irks a reader to be given a rise, only for a let-down. When a story ends through the satisfaction of a purpose, the story has a plot, and the plot is weak only insofar as the purpose is weak. Too many of my own stories have weak purpose, and this has been diagnosed as weak plot.

Even though Mr. Campbell has consistently rejected everything I ever sent him, I cannot condemn his policy. In my opinion, it has been responsible for producing some of the best fantasy ever written. When I can write half as well as some of the top-notchers who write for Unknown, I'll feel I'm getting somewhere.

I feel that Harry Warner, therefore, is making some highly uncalled-for remarks. Also, he is infuriated because he, apparently, does not understand some of the finer points of writing as discussed by Jack Woodford. Now I know Jack Woodford quite well. I once even collaborated--or would you call it that?--on a book with him. (The book never sold, but that is neither here nor there.) Mr. Warner mistake's Jac's meaning entirely on the connection of sex impulse with human endeavor. Apparently he has not heard of sublimation. Any competent psychiatrist will expound the same material, only in words ponderous in their enormity. Much as Warner may regret the fact, sex is here to stay. Without it, none of us would be here, nor, I believe, would we want to be here. Pure intellect has no "feeling"--the appreciation of art and beauty, sad though it may be to contemplate, is entirely physical. You see, the gentle differentiation is that Jac did not say lecherousness or lasciviousness is connected with every human endeavor. He said sex. And the effect of sex is no more the same as the effect of lechery as the effect of appetite is the same as that of hoggishness. If people would stop mentally translating the word "sex" into a certain

four-letter Anglo-Saxon word every time they run across it in print, they wouldn't miss so much of what they're reading. And that, I think, disposes of Mr. Warner.

But getting back to plot, I think that all that is necessary is to exercise the imagination sufficiently to, as Woodford expresses it, hang new ornaments on the old Christmas tree. So help me, that is the truth in a nutshell. The hard part is finding ornaments that are really new....And finding someone else who also agrees they are new. No one will ever satisfactorily resolve the ancient enigma of why the material that is so scornfully turned down by one editor will be so eagerly snapped up by another.

Be that as it may, no matter what you or I should say about plot, somebody else would always disagree. So I hold that instead of worrying about plot, writers should worry about writing a damn good original story---and not even plot can compete with originality. And if you kick something out of the sum total of your own experience, instead of out of the sum total of your reading, it's bound to be original, n'est ce pas?

MANLY BANISTER.

-oOo-

I do not agree with you that the best fantasy does not see print, or is never written. I have noticed that many ideas offered as examples of your claim are frequently of a very flimsy or fragile (almost ethereal) nature. They lack both the quality of excitement demanded by such magazines as Unknown and, from their very nature, the quality of credibility required by the slicks. In a world where a magazine must sell in the tens of thousands every month to pay its way, the tastes of a half-dozen individuals here and there cannot possibly change the pattern. Personally, I think that it will be a long time before anyone writes, or even thinks about, better stories than those A. Merritt turned out during his best years.

A. E. VAN VOGT.

-oOo-

Particularly interested in the comments by Warner, Banister, and Lorraine. For some time, Sam Russell, Morrie Dollens, and myself have had our "dream-mag" in mind---a professional science-fiction-fantasy magazine free from editorial tedium, pulpy format and illustrations, and the other dissatisfactory qualities inherent in the pulps of today. This proposed publication would not be comparable to any of the mags of the past or those now in existence---it would be something entirely new. It would take pages and pages to describe all the ideas and suggestions which have been broached---suffice it to say that we are some day planning to realize the dream, fantastic though it might sound.

PHIL BRONSON

-oOo-

Your mag. received and contents noted with high approval. It's been a long time since I've read a fan publication written in English, and the novelty is refreshing. So is the thought that the cult of fantasy hasn't died out. As I hack my way through the years, I forget the halcyon days of 1934-5 when I achieved publication in the earlier fan books...when Lovecraft and Derleth introduced me via correspondence to the world of imagination and its imagin-natives. I will always be grateful to the fan field for the inspiration it has afforded, and I know that many of tomorrow's writers will emerge from mimeographed pages. Good old HPL and CAS and Augie have always realized this, and I'm glad to see their work represented and commented upon in The Acolyte.

Keeping fantasy alive in wartime is a precarious job...but a vital one. At times like these, the production of highly imaginative material is largely taken over by Congress. (NOTE TO FBI: I'm only kidding, boys!)

Anyway, best of luck to you...and keep up the good work. By the

way--for the sake of controversy, have you read the April Unknown Worlds containing Fritz Leiber's novel, CONJURE WIFE? I nominate it one of the finest fantasies ever written...any time, anywhere. It seems to open up an entirely new modern approach to mantic arts. Also pleasing to me was Henry Kuttner's recent opus (in Asf)...MIMSY WERE THE BOROGOVES. Two yarns far divorced from the hackneyed stuff so prevalent nowadays.

I direct your attention to these items because I feel fantasy needs the stimulation of fresh material. I think there is no need to feel that fine work stopped when Lovecraft died and Smith dropped out of WT. Some of these younger disciples (Kuttner and Leiber particularly) are turning out powerful material. It deserves recognition as such.

ROBERT BLOCH.

-oOo-

Harold Wakefield got the jump on me with his column Little Known Fantaisistes. For a long time I have planned a similar series of articles for my FAPA magazine, The Reader and Collector, but just couldn't find the time to assemble all the data. Le Fanu was a happy selection for opening the series; I only wish Wakefield had covered a little more ground. For instance, how many people think of Le Fanu when the books Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights are mentioned? Very few, I'll wager. And yet the Bronte gals were greatly influenced by Le Fanu's books, particularly The Purcell Papers, published in the Dublin University Magazine. How many people think of Le Fanu when reading Arthur Machen and Algernon Blackwood? Again, very few. And yet his Dr. Hesselius was the forerunner of Machen's Dr. Raymond and Blackwood's Dr. Silence.

H. C. KOENIG.

-oOo-

Now in active planning for the Arkham House fantasy library are the following titles: JUMBEE AND OTHER UNCANNY TALES, by Henry S. Whitehead (\$3.00); THE MOON POOL AND OTHERS, an omnibus by A. Merritt (\$5.00); THE BEST FROM WEIRD TALES, 20 to 30 tales representing the best from 1923 to 1943 (\$3.00). If reader support merits it, we will get out one of these books before the year's end (in addition to BEYOND THE WALL OF SLEEP), and the other two next year; but if not, we'll do only one in 1944, and no more this year. (If I may interrupt, please note the Arkham House advertisement on the next page, and act accordingly---any of you folks who feel that four issues of my smudged mimeography are worth 35¢ have no excuse for not having all these books in your collections. FTL.) According to my present estimate, after rereading almost all the Whitehead tales, JUMBEE AND OTHER UNCANNY TALES will contain the following stories: MRS. LORRIQUER, THE BLACK BEAST, CASSIUS, THE GREAT CIRCLE, SEVEN TURNS IN A HANGMAN'S NOOSE, THE CUNNING OF THE SERPENT, HILL DRUMS, SWEET GRASS, THE SHADOWS, BLACK TANCREDE, THE TREE-MAN, JUMBEE--an even dozen, and, I think, his very best stories. The only hitch in the program re Whitehead is this: we can't contact anyone for permission, we don't know his heirs, etc., and so far I've not succeeded in getting access to mss. of unpublished stories--I simply cannot contact anyone. (Another interruption: if any of you folks can give any information that will help out, please send it in at once. FTL)

AUGUST DERLETH

-oOo-

I enjoy Arthur Machen because he was a great master of English prose, as great as he was ill-treated, and my co-religionist. I rate his essays above his stories, without disparaging the latter. In his polemical writings he proved himself the greatest satirist since Swift, and more sincere than he. His burning indignation was directed not against the human race, but against its detractors and oppressors.

Machen has been fairly consistently misunderstood by his chief American admirers. Sensualists have considered him a sensualist (he was certainly no prude) not seeing that his sensualism, like that of

Rabelais, was profoundly metaphorical. His "occultism" is simply Celto-Catholic mysticism. For his opinion of occultism in the abstract you have only to read the riotous burlesque of Kabbalism in Things Far And Near. Whether he actually "believed" in witches and demons I don't know, but if he did he was agin 'em! His heart was with the ancient saints of Wales who saw Pan and conquered him. REV. ERNEST MASON

-oOo-

The sheer volume of Lovecraft's writings makes Derleth's omnibuses, fine though they are, utterly inadequate. For instance, Barlow estimated that all of the poetry by itself would fill a book the size of the first Arkham House volume, while Lovecraft during his lifetime wrote the utterly incredible total of about 100,000 letters---and you know how long his letters were! Barlow says that during most of his life Lovecraft averaged about eight letters a day, some running to 60 pages in length! PAUL FREEHAFFER

-oOo-

An interesting side-light to the statement in the editorial to the effect that stories have to be slanted to suit a veritable host of iron-clad rules is the fact that A. E. van Vogt, one of Campbell's best and biggest producers at the present time, says that he does not slant his stories! I don't know whether the remark in the editorial was meant to include Campbell's magazines or not, but it seemed to me at the time that it was.....I would like a further elucidation of what Harry Warner calls "plotless" stories. I wasn't aware such things existed. No matter how poor the construction, material or treatment of a story it still has a "plot" if however loosely coherent. Now what about it, Harry? JOHN HOLLIS MASON

-oOo-

Talk about your great philosophers, his letters would indicate that Lovecraft could be ranked with James, Spencer, Russell, or Dewey. I have never seen such an earnest outlay of pure thought as was exhibited in that letter of his you printed. His thoughts were so ranked and marshalled before he ever set pen to paper that they were all put down clearly and logically. His language was so clear, and yet so exquisite in structure, that it leaves no doubt in one's mind as to what he was trying to say. Truly a thought-provoking piece of writing. DAVID MILLER.

(advertisement)

BEYOND THE WALL OF SLEEP,

the second omnibus volume of H. P. Lovecraft's collected writings, will be published about September 10. This volume will contain the previously unpublished novel THE DREAM-QUEST OF UNKNOWN KADATH; all remaining Lovecraft stories omitted from THE OUTSIDER, AND OTHERS (including THE CASE OF CHARLES DEXTER WARD); an appreciation of Lovecraft written by his life-long friend, W. Paul Cook; THE CTHULHU MYTHOS: A GLOSSARY, compiled by Francis T. Laney; and selected essays and verses by Lovecraft (including the complete FUNGI FROM YUGGOTH).

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