

the FANSCIENT



No. 6 Winter, 1949 15c
PORTLAND SCIENCE-FANTASY SOCIETY

With this issue, we end our first year in the present format. Most of you have indicated that you like it. Certainly it's made possible more wordage along with well-reproduced art-work than we could otherwise have brought you. Unless a lot of you demand a change we'll continue it.

However, there's some changes coming up. It boils down to lack of time. The News Bulletin is being dropped. We're still taking associate memberships in the PFS at \$1 a year (or more) but you can regard anything beyond the subscription price of The FANSCIENT as a donation to help with our work.

Experience has shown we can get 6 or 8 pages of ads, IF we send out about 20 cards and letters a month before deadline. However, often (like this time) we don't have time. So, hereafter we'll take the ads at the same rate but won't go after them. We're also dropping the policy of sending out sample copies to make up the difference between the subscription list and the 300 guarantee.

That brings us around to the fact that we're going to have to increase the rates. Effective with the date of the next issue, March 1, the price will be 25¢ a copy, 6 issues for \$1. All subs received before then will be entered at the present rate, new or renewal. Unless you're a paid-up subscriber or a regular publisher, better get some dough in.

Our thanks to Gordon Kull and George Cowie of the late VORTEX for "Two Feet From Brass" in this issue and also for Neil Jones' article two issues back.

You'll want to get some of the FANTASY POSTCARDS advertised on the back. Royalties go to The FANSCIENT. They're going fast. Hurry.

So many of you have offered opinions as to whether or not Jaephus was a lobby, that it is with pleasure that we are able to report that the question is solved. None other than THE final authority on lobbies, Mr. Nelson S. Bond states as follows in a letter to the editor:

I hasten to inform you, however, that the creature of your experience was not a lobby. This fact becomes self evident in so many ways that I can make the affirmation without fear of contradiction. You recognize, of course, that your "Jaephus" was never once known to pwidget, now was it ever his custom to rik triks—and by these actions alone, if by none other, can a lobby constantly and surely be recognized. Further I would point out that Jaephus' overall character was malevolent, selfish, Medonistic—whereas Mr. Wergenthwirker's companions, Henry and Japheth, were (if occasionally mischievous) always the warm and friendly benefactors of mankind.

It is my considered opinion that the otherworldly creature of your sad experience was a bolglorb. Of these demons, quite frankly, I know very little, save that a chapter of them was formed by Hector Braggleson when, in Gehenna, he instituted the infamous B.A.D.—Benevolent Association of Demons—which so affronted Lord Lucifer; at any rate, in that story of mine which relates of this incident I find one casual mention of bolglorbs, and I have some dim recollection that on the one occasion I was given the opportunity to leaf the pages of the Necronomicon, the description I read therein of the bolglorbian ilk was remarkably like that quoted in your story. However, I am rusty at antique tongues, and my translation could have been in error. . ."

Now if any of you have any further information about bolglorbs....

Don Ray

the FANSCIENT

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WINTER, 1949

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WANTED: copies of No 2.		75¢ ¼ page. \$1 more if we lay out.	
		Write for layout sizes.	

THE SEVEN AGES of FAN

By Robert Bloch

Illustrated by

RALPH RAYBURN PHILLIPS



One of the occupational hazards of fantasy writing (along with ulcers, fights with the loan companies and schizophrenia) is a constant exposure to fandom.

For years I have kept silent on the subject (far be it from me to bite the hand that feeds me, however poorly) but there comes a time when truth cries out for utterance. Only last night, the time came to me. I was sitting at the fire, nodding away as is my wont when listening to my wife, when a strange veiled figure entered the room.

"Utterance!" it yelled. "Utterance!"

"Who, pray, I enquired politely, 'The hell are you?'"

"I am Truth," replied the veiled figure. "And I am crying out for Utterance, who couldn't make it tonight and besides which he has a sore throat."

"That is very interesting," I mused, ripping the veil aside and discovering the figure of my small daughter, aged 5. "And now if you will kindly scram outta here I will get down to my business, which is to write an article about the Seven Ages of Fan."

It was, and is, my purpose to discuss the strange metamorphosis which seems to take place in the character, personality, aims and attitudes of the Average Fan as I have observed him thru the years, darkly.

This survey has absolutely nothing in common with Shakespeare's "Seven Ages of Man" except, perhaps, that Shakespeare and myself are both writers.

End of digressions. To work, to wit:

THE SEVEN AGES OF FAN



is the Quiescent, or reader-interest age. During this brief period our embryonic fan buys several fantasy magazines, weird or s-f, and proceeds to actually read them from cover to cover. I know that some of the more blasé and sophisticated fans are going to dispute this fact, but I can vouch for it—I have actually seen it happen with my own eyes. In the first stage, I maintain, fans really read the magazines.

THE SECOND AGE OF FAN

follows, alas, all too quickly upon the heels of the initial period. This is the Chiropastic stage, characterized by writer's Cramp, during which the neophyte fan begins to write letters to the pro magazines commenting on the stories and urging that the editors throw out everything except Kuttner yarns.

THE THIRD AGE OF FAN

finds the now enthralled victim sending personal letters to the editors to his favorite authors (out side of Kuttner, most fans seem to

like Lewis Padgett, Keith Hammond, Lawrence O'Donnell, Will Garth, Hudson Hastings, Paul Edmonds and such people). These letters consist of requests for autographs, favorable comments on published writings and a solicitation that the author read the fan's writings and revise them or collaborate with him on stories.

THE FOURTH AGE OF FAN

represents a crucial phase in his development. It is characterized by a chance exposure to a fan magazine, followed quickly by high fever, delirium and spots before the eyes—the latter caused by the faulty mimeographing of the magazine. Usually, without pause or rallying, the patient goes directly into:



which consists of publishing his own fan-magazine and ruthlessly spreading it over the entire fan world. By this time, of course, what with writing to editors and reading fan-mags and writing to authors and writing fan-mags, the fan has absolutely no time left to read any more pro magazines. And

he wouldn't care for the stuff if he did read it. For he is now a full-fledged fan in mid-career and by this time he is entering the sixth stage which is almost inevitably fatal.

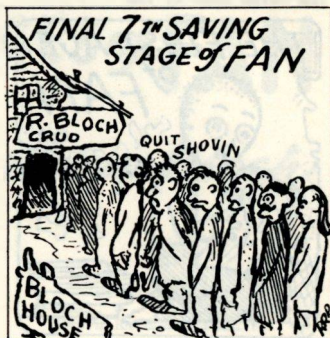
THE SIXTH AGE OF FAN

is characterized by "joining-fever," sometimes known as sympathetic herd-delusion or mass-hysteria. In this state, the fan rushes out and meets other sufferers. He often organizes and not infrequently goes so far as to convene. Sometimes he even draws up and charts. Fans visit him. He visits fans. Before he knows it he has entered into personal or literary contact with dozens of others, and has at least eight bitter feuds going at the same time.

Once this stage is reached, there is no turning back. The rest is inevitable. There remains only—



Tottering on the brink of the abyss, the fan presents a truly pitiable picture: a haggard caricature of what was once a healthy, happy 12-year-old boy. He cannot read the pro magazines any more,



because he and his fellow fans know that they stink. He cannot write to the editors any more, because they are his bitter enemies. He is all washed up with the pro authors who refused to collaborate with him on his epics. He no longer finds time to read even the fan-mags; of course, he gets very few of these because his feuds have cut him off the mailing lists. As for his own fan-mag, he doesn't bother to put it out—there is no one left to mail it to after he rules out all of those who disagree with him. And he has alienated his personal contacts due to long, bitter arguments over Shaver, the World of Kull-A or Chu-Chu.

No, there is no way to retrace his steps. He can only take the plunge, over the edge of the precipice. He has reached the SEVENTH STAGE.

Hating fantasy fiction, fantasy readers, fantasy editors, fantasy authors and fantasy fans, there is nothing left for him to do but become a fantasy publisher.

Which he does!

What more is there to say? The

THE SEVEN AGES OF FAN

moral is all too obvious. If there are those among you who are in any of the preliminary phases, do not delude yourself.

Repent now, before it is too late. Turn back, I beseech you! Become an agent, become a pro author, become anything, however low and vile—but do it now, while there is yet time and hope.

But.....if, in spite of all my pleas, warnings and entreaties.... you succumb and reach that fatal, final SEVENTH STAGE.....

Then get in touch with me. I've got a lot of crud lying around, suitable for publication in book form. The line forms at your left.

THE END

In '49 it's the

CINVENTION

Send your buck to Donald E. Ford, 129 Maple Ave., Sharonville, Ohio.

Ah! my Beloved, fill the Cup that clears

Today of past Regrets and future Fears—

To-morrow?—Why, To-morrow I may be

Myself with Yesterday's Sev'n Thousand Years.



Another illustration by Donald B. Day for The RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

The EXPLORER

By Miles Eaton



THE COUNCIL seated itself around its circular table, smoothed its fifty beards, and folded its hundred hands on its chests.

Old Toru rose. He was the oldest and most venerable among them. "Gentlemen," he said, "We must do something about the followers of Laman because of this heresy. We can easily dispose of them. We can banish them or we can imprison them. There are any number of practical things we might do to them. But the difficulty is to do the right thing. We must face the terrible idea that they might be right."

Horror showed in the forty nine faces, but the heads nodded sagely while forty nine voices hummed approval.

"We must do the right thing," continued the speaker. "We all know that minority groups arising among the people are always partially right, at least they offer improvements over the old order. So it seems we must prove them wrong; we must prove that the edge of the world—out beyond the mountains—drops off into nothing as taught—" His voice broke. He bowed his head. "—as taught by our venerable fathers, and, it is said, a revelation of the gods themselves."

Forty nine graybeards expressed sorrow, their voices humming with anxiety.

"Now," said old Toru, "We must devise a plan to settle the matter forever. We must settle it so that no heresies of the like will ever arise again. And the answer must be true, so we ourselves may have peace in our minds. Do the followers of Laman await without?"

"They do," spoke clerk Boru, fondling his white beard.

"Send them in," said Toru.

The Council was silent for a mo-

ment. Old Toru rose. "Sire," he said, "Perhaps if we were to call upon Shusha, our deity, to give us the proof we need, thus will the Lamanians return to the way of their fathers and thus will we know the truth."

The forty nine were aghast. Call upon Shusha? Unthinkable.

"Brother Doubtful," said old Toru sternly, "Shusha gave us the wisdom long ago. The wisdom is perfect and eternal. Who are we to question it now."

Forty nine heads made the customary movement.

"But," said Toru persistently, "We question the wisdom now when we recognize any claim of the Lamanians. It is said that heretics must die. Now we admit that they might have a segment of ground for their belief—"

"Yes, we know," mused Toru, "But the revelations were recorded by human hands and are therefore subject to error. Perhaps we should ask for a new interpretation."

Horu sprang to his feet. He yet had strange ideas. His beard was still streaked with black.

"Sire," he said, "It appears to me that the simplest method would be to send a man out to see the edge of the world. Then we will know the truth of the matter and will know how to deal with them."

"Impossible!" cried forty nine voices.

"This is blasphemy," said old Toru sternly. "In all written history no man has crossed the mountains and looked over the edge of the world."

Horu's eyes gleamed. "Let the explorer be one of the Lamanians and let the sin be on his own head."

"But he may return with the information that there is land beyond the mountains, or worse—the world is not square at the edge."

"If it be true," said Horu calmly, "Then we shall know it."

Illustrated by D. BRUCE BERRY.

The forty nine looked at their fingers in horror.

"And if he does not return," continued Horu, "The order will naturally dissolve."

The forty nine looked up hopefully.

"This must be honest," said old Toru solemnly. "We will be fair with them. A man shall be allowed to cross the mountains and look over the edge of the world. I have spoken."

Forty nine voices grumbled, but the heads nodded in unison.

Ten men came into the room. They were young, strong, clean cut and handsome. And flames burned deep in their eyes. Laman, the leader, stepped forward.

"This heresy," said Toru stiffly, "State it for us."

Laman smiled before he began to talk. As he chose his words a light came and grew in his face. His enthusiasm mounted as he told what he believed. It was catching, his zeal, and the council nodded with him.

"Venerable gentlemen," he began, "The tales of our fathers are old, and only little understood." The Council gasped. Laman lifted his head proudly. "It is said that in this circle of the world are the three kingdoms of Choshthuhhana, Parahn of the Gilded Towers and Perth. It is said that there are no more. Around these are the mountains, tall and crowned with snow. From these come huge rivers tumbling down into our placid Lake Shush, from which arises on festive occasions, the deity Shusha, may His name be revered and may He have mercy upon me if I speak falsely."

"But we have observed, Sires, that the snows on the tops of the mountains melt and run down the other sides. Our own Lake Shush neither gains in volume nor is diminished, and the water in it is fresh, yet it has no outlet---".

"As for Lake Shush," broke in Toru coldly, "You know it drains thru the center of the earth to fall into space below."

"So I have been told," said Laman, "But if the water falls, what holds the world up? Why does it not fall too?"

"And what answer do you make to that in your heresy?" sneered Toru. Laman smiled.

"We have no answer, sires, but we would like one. It is merely something to consider. Also, venerable Sires, we have observed that in the planting time, the birds are among us, but in the harvest time they fly into the land of cold and are gone until spring. Where do they go—where do they stay? On the edge of the world?"

"Answers to those are not good for youthful heads. Yet I will inform you that the birds fly down under the world, where dwells Shusha at the bottom of the lake. It is so recorded by the ancients and cannot be wrong. There, of course, it is always warm and bright, and there you will go some day if you will only forget this terrible blasphemy."

"Very well, Sire, I hope to enjoy eternity with the rest of you. But first I want to prove that beyond the mountains is another land like ours, filled with rivers and lakes—and, perhaps—people."

"People!" The faces of the council turned red, then purple.

Old Toru swallowed several times before he spoke. "My boy, we have been discussing that which is the only reason we have been tolerant with you. If you want to know the truth, we will permit you to go and seek it and ask the pardon of Shusha for our temerity. Go now, you may choose who you will to make the journey, just one of you, and bring bring back accurate word of the edge of the world."

Laman's eyes glistened with a strong new light so it seemed Shu-

sha had found abode in his face. "It is what we have prayed for," he said, "And I have been already chosen. I leave at once and tho the information I bring back may not be just what either of us might wish, you may be sure it will be the truth."

The ten filed out, leaving a perturbed council. In the morning, Laman was gone.

**** * * * * *

Two snows covered the mountain peaks with iridescent light, then melted and swelled the rivers before pouring into the silence of Lake Shush. Two harvests filled the granaries of the land and twice had the birds flown to warm themselves with Shusha, far under the lake.

And in the autumn when the birds once more flew northward, Laman came out of the mountains and stood before them.

Fifty beards a little longer and whiter sat around the circular table.

He came directly to them, backed by his nine Lamanians. And old Toru raised his eyebrows and asked, "Well, my boy, how was the edge of the earth?"

Laman cleared his throat. He would enjoy this moment. Magic spells would he weave about the Council, for it was a strange tale he brought.

"I went," said Laman, "Up the cleft behind the village of Perthana. I will spare you the details of my climb except that it grew rapidly more difficult. I picked my way from rock to rock and lived on roasted pika—which I killed with my sling—for three weeks. Presently I stood among the scattered patches of snow with the main masses towering beside me. I selected a narrow defile and so gained a narrow ridge where I could look down on either side."

"Before me lay a wide valley strewn with boulders and stunted trees, but beyond was yet another range of mountains, higher than these we see around us here. Cautiously I descended into the valley and drank my first river water since leaving home. Along the stream a heavy growth of forest contrasted with the mountains thru which I had come. The land teemed with game and I had no difficulty living comfortably on the victims of my sling-arm. Roots and nuts augmented my diet and as the land seemed so peaceful and gentle, I set off down the river fearing nothing."

"But before I had gone very far, I encountered a road." Laman paused to enjoy the consternation of the Council.

"Yes, a road. But it was an old road, an ancient road, with its granite paving uprooted by huge trees and covered with vines and moss. Having no better way, I followed it for it was comparatively easy to travel. From time to time, other little roadways branched from it and once I passed a pile of scattered bricks and squared stones, which once might have been a small cluster of buildings. I investigated them but I could find nothing of interest, so I continued on the road. I followed it for three months."

"Three months!" echoed the Council.

Laman smiled at them. "For three months I lived off the game of the land and followed the road, but in the fourth month, I found something of great interest."

The Council leaned forward. "Yes, I was walking along the road, enjoying the pleasant surroundings, listening to the few birds in the dying leaves, and studying the huge mossy boles overhead. I topped a small rise and saw it in the distance—a city--"

"A city!" gasped everyone.

"—but such a city as I never saw before. Its buildings rose up into the clouds in long, graceful spires. Gold shone in the autumn evening. Parahn of the gilded towers is dull beside it. Lacy bridges spanned graceful arches, and in the center of the city, one steeple towered above the others, pointing a solitary, and I thought lonely, finger into the sky. I was eager to get to it, yet I was cautious too, for I suspected there might be—well—might be—people there."

"Ah," said the Council. "I found out eventually. But when I first saw it, it was far away and I had miles to walk despite my eagerness. I passed many interesting objects, which grew more plentiful now. Among them was a mammoth tower of rose quartz, shining pink in the sun, its empty windows staring blankly. The landscape seemed forlornly beautiful, still and solemn in that autumn sun."

"And you saw no people?" asked Toru.

"Not yet," said Laman. "Our fathers had good reason for forbidding us this land and I found out why, though I do not know how to explain it. Anyhow, the next day I passed what appeared to be ancient farmsteads though they are now overgrown with forest and thicket. But the old ditches were there, half-filled with alluvial soil, and I also found small tunnels as big in diameter as my arm, with all bends at right angles. They were red and, I think, might once have been sheathed inside with metal, but for what purpose I can't imagine."

"In two more days, I came to the city and walked the rubble-strewn streets. All was inexpressibly lonesome, the tumbled buildings with, here and there, a remnant of smooth, untarnished wall—the masses of fallen stones—a long-dead

and rotting city."

"And there were no people?" asked Toru.

"Yes, there were people," said Laman slowly. "Many people. All dead—frozen. Petrified."

"Petrified!" echoed the Council. "Yes, whatever cataclysm overtook them was sudden, for they were engaged in coming and going and in homely activities. But I was cautious. I didn't know when I entered that they were dead. I decided that only when I met no living person."

"What were they like, these people?" asked Toru.

"Like us. They were a little taller than we, on the average, with a preponderance of golden hair against our brown. They wore filmy petrified garments, flowing, but with wide, plated belts that I suspect were devices used for weapons and pockets and that sort of thing. I also suspect that they are the ancestors of our fathers."

The council was silent. Dumb. "I dwell in the city a whole year. I considered this the end of my journey, having come so far. I drew maps which are in my pack, I studied—"

"Then you didn't go to the end of the earth after all," sneered Toru.

Laman looked at them queerly. "I'm coming to that," he said. "But meanwhile I made a spacious building my headquarters and explored from it, taking copies of the inscriptions, making drawings of the architecture. I found one massive building, badly tumbled, but filled with thin, flexible strips which were covered with writing in their mechanical script. I suspect it was their library. At least here is one of the strips for you to examine."

Laman took from his pack a coil of thin blue material on a metal spool. Thinner than vellum and about one finger wide. He passed

it to the council who silently examined it. They could make nothing of the writing on it so when their curiosity had subsided Laman continued.

"As I said, the city was about the end of my journey. I spent a year there, yet hardly touched its many secrets. I marveled at the artificial lakes, the ruined towers filled with cells like the honeycombs of a bee. Many of the bridges still stood, spanning tremendous gulfs at dizzying heights. Buildings had transparent stuff over the windows which looked like ice but was neither cold nor wet. Gardens with strange trees not native to the place bore beautiful fruits which I tried and enjoyed. The trees, of course, had all run wild and multiplied many times but they had no counterpart in the forests. I have some seeds in my pack. I even found an artificial waterfall where the water fell up a ways, then fell down again with a musical gurgle. There were carved gods too, some looking like people, some like animals and some strangely conglomerate. I saw—"

"But the end of the world," broke in Toru, "what of that?"

Again Laman looked at them strangely before he spoke. But his voice remained unmoved as he continued.

"Well, I wanted to winter there in the city where it was so pleasantly sheltered and to return home

the following spring. So one fine winter day, when my exploring and sketching had grown a little tiring, I decided to push on away from the city and see what lay beyond me. I don't know what I expected to find—almost anything except your idea of it."

"Tell us," broke in Toru breathlessly, "What was it?"

"I walked down the road which was wider now, a broad thoroughfare as wide as the tallest trees. For two days I walked and then I saw it. I could scarcely credit my own vision."

The Council didn't breathe. "I guess I sort of expected to find more mountains or more valleys containing more cities—but—"

"What was it?" cried Toru. "The edge of the earth!"

"I went out to it and looked over—straight down I looked—I remember how smooth the side was."

"And what did you see from there?" asked Toru.

"Nothing."

"Nothing?"

"Just the sky straight down for more than a mile."

"Just sky," breathed the fifty.

"Oh yes, I saw too a tiny tongue of orange flame from under the world, where is the abode of Shusha. And as I watched I saw a flock of birds fly toward that place where it is always warm and bright."





LAST REQUEST

Where life has gone...though centuries before...
Upon some drifting world that has, forever more,
Been spurned by cultures older than our sun;
There let me lie and count the passing stars
One by one....

—Joseph B. Baker.

From Out of the Ages

by Thyril L. Ladd

There are a number of books developing the same theme: that of an ancient Egyptian being awakened to our present day. It is a fascinating theme, attractive to us probably because of our interest in the reactions of those who last knew life so long ago, to our modern time inventions, customs and religions.

It is my intention to discuss only six titles using this development—tho there are many others, also—such, for example, as Guy Boothby's novel, "Pharos the Egyptian". But the six titles I have selected seem to be especially fascinating stories of this type.

Perhaps one of the very best of them is William Henry Warner's "The Bridge of Time" (1919). With his beloved stolen by raiders and carried into the desert—with the ancient Egyptian Royal City threatened by an onslaught of invaders, a young Egyptian Prince is sent into the future thru a mystic drug given him by the High Priest. His hidden tomb is well supplied with jars of jewels, and he is bidden to learn of some powerful weapon of future time, that he may bring knowledge of it back with him, and, thru its use, save Egypt. A drug to cause his return has been provided.

The Prince awakens in the year 1914, and is, of course, bewildered at what he sees. He cannot understand the ruined temples and pyramids; the utter oblivion into which the great Egypt he has known has passed. His adventures in the

new time are fascinating—his amazement at such things as a steamship and railroad trains; his visit to New York City and his first ride on a subway.

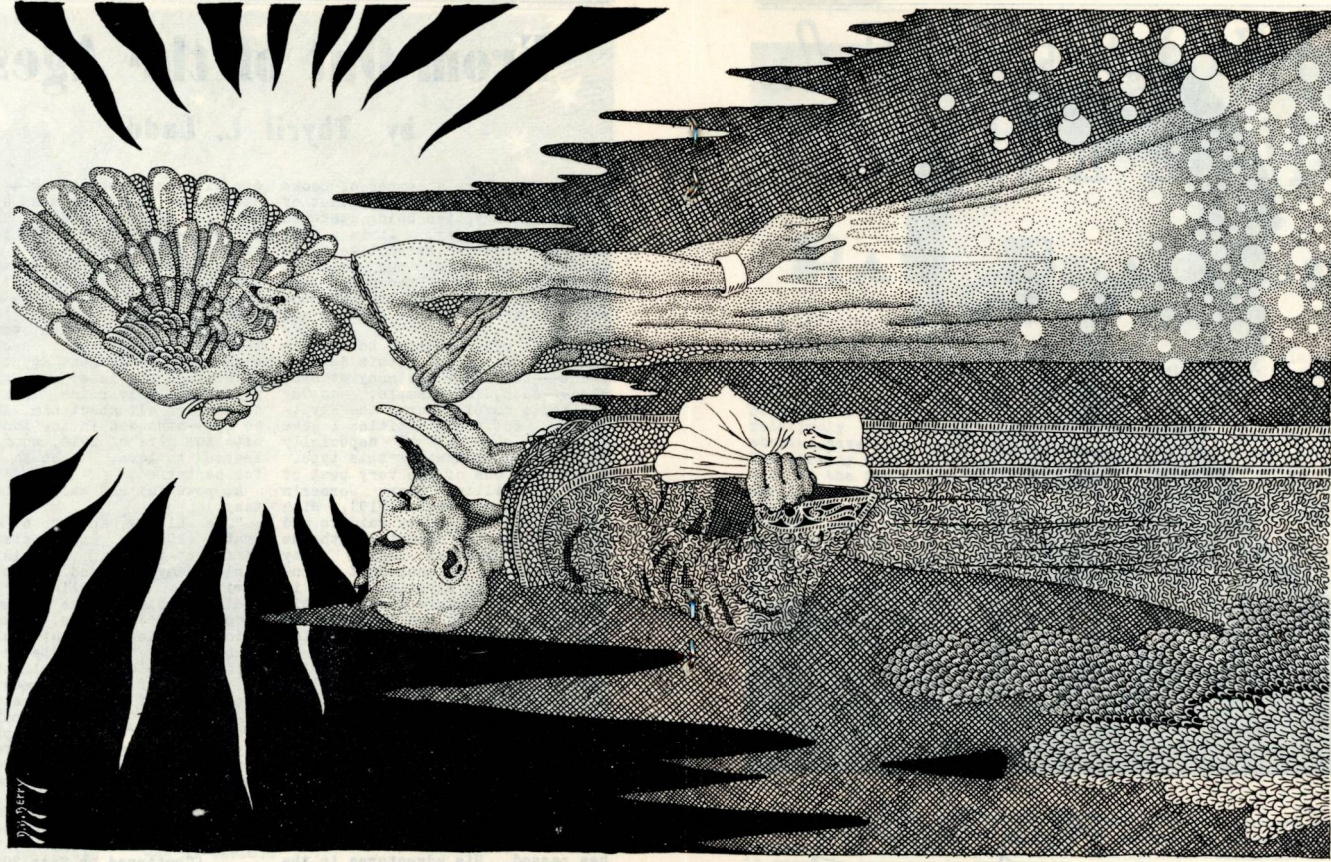
He meets a girl identical in face and form with his lost beloved of long ago, and they fall in love. But he recalls his duty, repairs to the hidden tomb and takes the drug which sends him back again to Ancient Egypt. But he arrives too late: Egypt has fallen and only ruins, death and defeat are all about him. And here he is—stranded in the long past, with the girl of 1914, whom he has learned to love, not to be born for centuries.

A powerful and well-written fantasy.

"The Living Mummy" by Ambrose Pratt, (1910), is of a somewhat different theme. In this tale a man's mummy is found in a tomb and revived. An unwilling servant in the new world, the living mummy becomes a dangerous, malignant thing, seeking the death which has been denied. The tale becomes a thrilling melodrama, almost lurid in character as it sweeps to a conclusion of highest tension.

A beautiful Egyptian maiden is brought to life again in present-day surroundings. She falls in love with him who has revived her, but their romance is menaced by the very priest who placed her in suspended animation, and who promised her eternal doom because she spurned his affection. This book

(Continued on Page 29)



SATAN'S MISTRESS

D. Bruce Berry



Ray Bradbury

AUTHOR, AUTHOR

RAY BRADBURY

When lovers of fantasy get together, the talk turns first to the "old masters". However, it is never long until the name of Ray Bradbury is mentioned. In the relatively few years that his stories have been appearing, he has already established himself as one of the great writers of fantasy in our time.

His rare genius for telling an unusual tale and telling it well is shown in the wide range of publications which have carried his stories. Ray Bradbury has appeared in *HARPER'S*, *THE NEW YORKER*, *CHARM*, *LA DEMOISELLE*, *THE AMERICAN MERCURY*, *Cornell University EPOCH*, *TOUCHSTONE*, *THE CALIFORNIAN* and *SCRIPT*. He has also done stories for *DIKE MYSTERY*, *FLYNN'S DETECTIVE*, *NEW DETECTIVE* and *DETECTIVE TALES* as well as all the science-fiction and fantasy magazines.

Bradbury's play, "The Meadow", was selected for the BEST ONE ACT PLAYS OF 1947-1948, published by

Dodd Mead. Other plays have been broadcast over NBC and CBS by Ida Lupino, Richard Widmark and June Havoc, on *SUSPENSE* and *MOLLE MYSTERY*.

His stories appeared in the 1946 and 1948 editions of the BEST AMERICAN SHORT STORIES as well as the 1947 and 1948 editions of the O. HENRY MEMORIAL AWARDS PRIZE STORIES. (Third Prize winner, 1948).

At present, Ray Bradbury is in the final weeks of preparing his second book of short stories, "The Illustrated Man", a cross-section of his work, utilizing his output in fantasy, weird and science-fiction as well as his work in the more prosaic, realistic fields.

Many of the factors contributing to his meteoric rise to the top in his chosen field become clear in view of some of the things Bradbury tells, so without further ado we'll turn the stage over to him.

My grandfather and his father before him were publishers of magazines, books and newspapers. So it seems to have run in the family a little, this business of starva-

tion thru writing and publishing. My mother is of Swedish stock and was born in Stockholm. My father's family came to America around 1630. I was born in 1920, on Aug-

ust 22nd. in the town of Waukegan, Illinois, on a Sunday afternoon while my brother and father were attending a baseball game on the other side of town. I can recall a minor operation that was performed upon me on the second day after my birth. I have vivid recollections of numberless days in my first and second years; though this is considered to be doubtful by the medical profession. This fact of being aware and remembering at an early age probably resulted in my story, "The Small Assassin", which relates the tale of a child, a few weeks old, which tries to kill its mother and father. Needless to say, my parents still survive, happy, though somewhat appalled by the creature they raised.

My first creation with paper and red crayon was a drawing of a skeleton. The little girl next door refused to be frightened by it, so I knocked her down. I tried to scare mother and dad with it, but no luck there either. I'm afraid I wasn't very successful at frightening anyone in those days. Perhaps it was the quality of my tools and the method in which I used them. I like to believe I do somewhat better in WEIRD TALES, now.

I was neither a brilliant nor a moronic student, though I did better in English than in any other study. When I was eight years old a large, plump boxcar of a girl, aged eighteen, whose main occupation was flinging her legs over the side of a chair and staring at a copy of a strange magazine, moved into my Grandmother's upstairs room (yes, the same room where The Man Upstairs moved later). She gave me one of the magazines to read. It was a copy of AMAZING or WONDER, I do not recall which, and I have never forgotten the thrill of seeing the Paul Illustrations and reading the incredible stor-

ies.

My mind was open to such things, of course, because of the fact that I had been nurtured at the gentle breast of the OZ books. Tarzan, too, had not been neglected, and I spent many evenings at my Uncle Bion's house borrowing his complete collection of Burroughs.

By the time I was 12 I had moved to Arizona, where I met a boy by the name of Bob Tucker (not the Bob Tucker) and he had a vast collection of WONDERS and AMAZINGS which he lent to me. I began to draw pictures of rocket ships, make my own comic strips. In Art class I continually created men from lars and scaly creatures from old castles, much to the consternation of my teachers. Each Sunday I ran to the newsstand and bought the Sunday Tarzan strip and cut it in a neatly out and pasted it in a large scrap book. Those were the days when Harold Foster was drawing it, and I do not feel ashamed at all to admit that I am probably one of the few individuals in the world who has a complete file of Tarzan from its inception by Foster sometime in the early thirties, until he stopped drawing it, as I recall, in 1936. I haven't my file handy, but all of it is packed away in a large trunk, and often when the feeling gets too much for me, I open the trunk and wander through all the old adventures once again, with Tarzan. I still consider the artwork to be among the best in the history of cartoon illustration.

I could not possibly go on without mentioning Buck Rogers. I was a "saving" bug. I have a complete file of Buck Rogers from the year 1929, Number 1, through the year 1937, when Mr. Dick Calkins, to my utter dismay, began to decay. I stopped collecting. I have hated Mr. Calkins ever since for getting so infinitely sloppy in his art-

work. I thank him however for all of the joy he gave my formative years with his excellent cartooning and his lively imagination. Whatever happened to that man?

While in Arizona I wandered by a radio station, KGAR, and the next day at school I announced to my school chums that I was going to be broadcasting on the station some time in the next week. What a liar I was! I knew nobody there, but I had suddenly decided to act on the station's programs. After I had lied to my chums, there was only one way out. I simply had to get that radio job. I went to the station every night from seven until ten, getting in the way, speaking to everyone, smiling, answering the phone, bothering and bothering.

The next Saturday night I appeared on a program reading the comic section to the kiddies. I was twelve, but spoke in various German dialects for the Katzenjammer Kids, for Tailspin Tommy, and for Bringing Up Father. This continued for twenty weeks. In the meantime I became sound man and general bit-player on other programs. It was in the blood. I offered to write a program for them, but they refused, saying they realized how busy I was with school work. I said I wouldn't mind. But they were firm, thinking only of me and my overworked brain, undoubtedly.

I wrote several sequels to the Burroughs Martian series on a toy dial typewriter, when I was thirteen. It was the depression, and we had little money to buy books. The simplest solution seemed to be to write them myself. They were illustrated and very good, if I can believe several notes in an old diary of mine.

We moved next door to a family in Los Angeles in 1934. This family had a typewriter. They were foolish enough to let me discover

this. I immediately appeared and began to dictate stories to their seventeen year old daughter, who typed them for me, since I had not yet learned to make a typewriter work.

I saved my lunch money and by the latter part of 1937 I bought a typewriter for ten dollars and really started sending stories to HARPER and the ATLANTIC. From then on I wrote several plays and a review for our High School graduating class. When I graduated, I continued submitting and getting rejections, year after year from WEIRD TALES, ASTOUNDING and all of the other magazines. This continued from 1936 until 1941. I thought HARPER and the NEW YORKER must be crazy passing up my work, by God, they couldn't do this to me! But they continued to do it with depressing regularity.

My first sale was to SUPER SCIENCE and this story was "Pendulum" written with Henry Hasse and published in the November, 1941 issue of the magazine. Henry and I wrote six stories together, only three of which ever saw publication. Whatever happened to the other three, I haven't the faintest idea.

I sold about three stories the first year, 1941, and six stories in 1942 and about 12 stories in 1943, and about 24 stories in 1944. It seemed to double each year, as did my income, thank God. I sold newspapers on a street corner to give myself eight hours a day at my typewriter during the years from 1938 through 1942.

There are many people who helped me in those years. Leigh Brackett showed me something about action. Henry Kuttner taught me to stop writing purple passages. Henry Hasse taught me to hook my stories to the bone. Ross Rocklynne helped me with ideas. Robert Heinlein and his wife Leslyn read and criticized and helped me place my

first stories to SCRIPT magazine. Edmond Hamilton and Jack Williamson came in for their share of script-reading also, and stood up to it like men. I owe a very great deal to all of them for their patience and their help. And I will always remember the aid I received from Julius Schwartz, my agent during the long, lean years.

In the past five years I have not read any of the sf or fantasy magazines. My reading matter is usually HARPER'S MAGAZINE, the anthologies of the best stories of each year, and a number of experimental reviews. I believe a writer can grow in his own field by reading what has been done in other fields. I believe his outlook will be fresher if he turns his mind at the end of each day away from his own form of fiction into channels at the exact opposite of the scale. I like Steinbeck, Hemingway, Eudora Welty, Katherine Anne Porter, Balzac, Ambrose Bierce and Elizabeth Parsons. I work every day from seven thirty in the morning until five thirty in the evening, writing, reading, and writing again. When I do not feel like writing, I rewrite some story which I cannot hurt by working on when I'm not up to par. When I can do neither, I take a walk along the ocean.

I get my ideas from reading fiction, poetry, the newspapers, and listening to friends talk. The habit of not reading the sf or weird magazines is not a form of

snobism, I assure you, but only a way to insure myself that I don't unwittingly plagiarize some other persons' ideas. For this same reason I have never read Macbeth, Blackwood or Coppard, or, for that matter, Chambers. I feel sorry for myself, missing them, but it is the surest way to make certain that one is at least faintly original. If Hemingway or Steinbeck creep into my work, that's something else again, God help me.

I joined the L. A. S. F. L. in 1937 and was a member until 1941. There I met and enjoyed the good friendship of Forrest Ackerman, Russ Hodgkins and Fred Shroyer. Through them I published my own magazine, FUTURIA FANTASIA, which ran through four issues, with covers by Bok, and articles by Kuttner, Rocklynne, Hasse and Emil Petja.

I am married, and have been for one year, to a graduate of UCLA, Marguerite McClure, who knows more about literature than I will ever know.

My plans include putting out several more volumes of short stories in the next few years, and a novel. I hope to do a three act play later. Like every other writer, I am afraid I will drop dead before my really good work is done. My nightly prayer is, "Not tonight, oh Lord. Wait until after the next book." So far, the Lord has waited. I hope he continues to be reasonable.

—Ray Bradbury

SCIENCE-FICTION and FANTASY STORIES by RAY BRADBURY.

Title	Magazine	Date
And the Moon Be Still As Bright	Thrilling Wonder Stories	June 1948
Asleep in Armageddon	Planet Stories	Win. 1948
Bang! You're Dead	Weird Tales	Sep. 1944
Big Black and White Game	American Mercury	Aug. 1945
Big Black and White Game	BEST AMERICAN SHORT STORIES	1946
Black Ferris	Weird Tales	May 1948
Candle, The	Weird Tales	Nov. 1942

RAY BRADBURY Bibliography

Chrysalis	Amazing Stories	July 1946
Creatures that Time Forgot, The	Planet Stories	Fall 1946
Crowd, The	Weird Tales	May 1943
Dead Man, The	Weird Tales	July 1945
Defense Mech	Planet Stories	Spr. 1942
Dia de Muerte, El	Touchstone	Fall 1947
Doodad	astounding Science Fict	Sep. 1943
Ducker, The	Weird Tales	Nov. 1943
Earth Men, The	Thrilling Wonder Stories	Aug. 1945
Electrocution, The	Californian	Aug. 1946
End of Summer	Script	Sep. 1948
Fever Dream	Weird Tales	Sep. 1948
Final Victim	Amazing Stories	Feb. 1946
(with Henry Hasse)		
Gabriel's Horn	Captain Future	Spr. 1943
(with Henry Hasse)		
Handler, The	Weird Tales	Jan. 1947
Homecoming	Mademoiselle	Oct. 1946
Homecoming	Avon Fantasy Reader No. 3	1947
Homecoming	O. HENRY LEONARD AWARDS PRIZE STORIES OF 1947	
I, Rocket	Amazing Stories	May 1944
I See You Never	New Yorker	Nov. 8 1947
I See You Never	BEST AMERICAN SHORT STORIES OF	1948
Interim	Weird Tales	July 1947
Interim	Epoch	Autumn 1947
Invisible Boy	Mademoiselle	Nov. 1945
Irritated People, The	Thrilling Wonder Stories	Dec. 1947
Jar, The	Weird Tales	Nov. 1944
Joke, The	Weird Tales	May 1944
Jonah of the Dove Run	Planet Stories	Spr. 1948
King of the Gray Spaces	Famous Fantastic Myster	Dec. 1943
Lazarus Come Forth	Planet Stories	Win. 1944
Let's Play "Poison"	Weird Tales	Nov. 1946
Long Years, The	Maclean's (Canada)	Sep. 15, 1948
Lorelei of the Red Mist	Planet Stories	Sum. 1946
(with Leigh Brackett)		
Man Upstairs, The	Harpers	Mar. 1947
Man Upstairs, The	Avon Fantasy Reader No. 4	1947
Mars Is Heaven	Planet Stories	Fall 1948
Meadow, The (play)	BEST ONE ACT PLAYS OF 1947-1948	
Million Year Picnic, The	Planet Stories	Sum. 1946
Monster Laker, The	Planet Stories	Spr. 1944
Morgue Ship	Planet Stories	Sum. 1944
Night, The	Weird Tales	July 1946
October Game, The	Weird Tales	Mar. 1948
One Timeless Spring	Colliers	Apr. 13, 1948
Pendulum	Super Science Stories	Nov. 1941
(with Henry Hasse)		
Pillar of Fire	Planet Stories	Sum. 1948
Piper, The	Thrilling Wonder Stories	Feb. 1943
Poems, The	Weird Tales	Jan. 1945
Powerhouse	Charm	Mar. 1948

Powerhouse (Third Prize Winner) O. HENRY MEMORIAL AWARDS PRIZE

STORIES OF 1948.	
Promotion to Satellite	Thrilling Wonder Stories Fall 1943
Reunion	Weird Tales Mar. 1944
Rocket Skin	Thrilling Wonder Stories Spr. 1946
Rocket Summer	Planet Stories Spr. 1947
Seythe, The	Weird Tales July 1943
Sea Shell, The	Weird Tales Jan. 1944
Shape of Things, The	Thrilling Wonder Stories Feb. 1948
Skeleton	Weird Tales Sep. 1945
Smiling People, The	Weird Tales May 1946
Square Pegs, The	Thrilling Wonder Stories Oct. 1948
Subterfuge	Astonishing Stories Apr. 1943
There Was an Old Woman	Weird Tales July 1944
Tombstone, The	Weird Tales Mar. 1945
The Tomorrow and Tomorrow	Amazing Stories May 1947
Traveler, The	Weird Tales Mar. 1946
The Undersea Guardians	Amazing Stories Dec. 1944
Visitor, The	Startling Stories Nov. 1948
Watchers, The	Weird Tales May 1945
Wind, The	Weird Tales Mar. 1943
Women, The	Famous Fantastic Myst Oct. 1948
Zero Hour	Planet Stories Fall 1947

DETECTIVE STORIES by RAY BRADBURY

Careful Man Dies, A	New Detective	Nov. 1946
Dead Men Rise Up Never	Dime Mystery	July 1945
Four Way Funeral	Detective Tales	Dec. 1944
Half Pint Homicide	Detective Tales	Nov. 1944
Hell's Half Hour	New Detective	Mar. 1945
I'm Not So Dumb	Detective Tales	Feb. 1945
It Burns Me Up	Dime Mystery	Nov. 1944
Killer Come Back To Me	Detective Tales	July 1944
Long Night, The	New Detective	July 1944
Long Way Home	Dime Mystery	Nov. 1945
Small Assassin, The	Dime Mystery	Nov. 1946
Trunk Lady, The	Detective Tales	Sep. 1944
Wake for the dead	Dime Mystery	Sep. 1947
Yesterday I Lived	Flynn's Detective Fiction	Aug. 1944

SCIENCE-FICTION STORY under the name of BRETT STERLING

Referent	Thrilling Wonder Stories	Oct. 1948
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DETECTIVE STORY under the name of D. R. BANAT

Corpse Carnival	Dime Mystery	July 1945
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HELP!

AUTHOR, AUTHOR in the next issue features Will F. Jenkins (Murray Leinster). If you know of any fantasy stories by him, elsewhere than the fantasy & sf mags, please let us know. Give title, name of mag and date of issue. Thanx.

CAMPBELL Better Than Himself!

Book Review by Philip Gray

WHO GOES THERE? by John W. Campbell, Jr. Shasta Publishers. 1948. \$3.00

The slug-slug stories Campbell wrote under his own name had the theme of movement from beginning to end: the action intensified to such an extreme there was room for little else. Their very pace grew more monotonous with each passing sentence, until the wearied reader could well hope for a respite—even if it were nothing more than a monologue on unhuman philosophy a la Stapledon. Yet, with the pseudonym of Don A. Stuart, Campbell was the originator of the "mood" stories. "Twilight", the first-written of over a dozen in the same manner, was, to quote Campbell in his introduction, "....submitted to and immediately bounced by every science-fiction and fantasy magazine in the business when it was first written." After ASTOUNDING passed from Clayton to Street & Smith, Tremaine, the new editor, accepted it. Different in approach and atmosphere from anything else ASTOUNDING had previously used, "Twilight" was favorably acclaimed by the readers. The success, which was somewhat of a surprise, not only gave evidence of the growing-up of science-fiction readers but paved the way for further stories employing the same characteristics.

With the publicity the title novelette, "Who Goes There", has received from other sources, it should not require much mentioning here. Briefly, it is one of the best stories of man versus the unearthly—with the emphasis on a brooding danger—I have seen. A suspense tale written in a manner to rival any modern detective fictionist.

By the same token of a well handled atmosphere, "Twilight" will be as popular 14 years hence as it was that length of time ago. Like all sf-themed stories which live beyond their time, "Twilight" has a minimum of popular science, and again the emphasis is on the creating of a suitable mood. It is the narrative of a man who travels thru time and stops at the point where man wavers on the brink of extinction. In "Night", the sequel, Campbell paints, thru the eyes of a man who has gone yet farther, a terrible picture of a universe that has sped to the outskirts of a dying galaxy—the thoughts of the last person to witness the forgotten glories of man, where only the machines they had forgotten how to use, bear mute testimony of what earth once was. It takes a good writer to convey how a dead universe must look to one who sees it in its death throes and realizes his kind has faded from the stage of life unknown ages before. The most significant aspect of these two stories is the mood of utter despair and a recurring, haunting sadness. With Andrei's "The Red Brain" and Benet's "By the Waters of Babylon" they must be remembered for their integral treatment of a theme.

Short in comparison, yet still good, are the other four shorts that go to make up this 230 page collection. The weakest of them is "Dead Knowledge"; this because the climax could not equal the long build-up.

There are few books I would rather have in my collection, and these are all books, which, like "Who Goes There?", I enjoyed reading, and will want to read again sometime when the memory of the first impression grows dim—for Campbell is not only as good as the best, but better than himself.

AND SO, Dave Erholm, tramp adventurer of many years' standing, found himself sitting in the barren cell of the Pembroke jail, awaiting transportation to the state penitentiary. But Dave was not one to give in easily to despair. He had been played for a sucker and his subsequent reaction took the form of a slow burning anger. And with Dave, to be angry meant to think and plan, and then to act. All day long he had stood looking at the ancient tombstones thru the narrow barred window of the cell, and he had thought and planned. Tonight he would act.

Thru some vagary of fate Dave had been nabbed from a boxcar when his freight stopped at Pembroke to take on water. Dragged protesting to the police station, he was booked for first degree murder and railroaded to a conviction in record time.

After the jailor had left bearing the tray containing the remnants of his evening meal, Dave lightly kicked the rock wall below the cell's window. A few flakes of ancient plaster fell to the floor.

The jail was older than the city, having first existed as a trapper's shack and later as a mission house for an itinerate preacher who had aided many a pioneer on his western journey and also buried a considerable number of them in an adjacent burial ground. Still later, governing officials, examining the foot-thick stone wall of the old structure deemed it appropriate for use as a jail.

The cell in which Dave was quartered was mainly underground. Its single window at ground level looked across the sidewalk which ran along the side of the building to where the old burial ground still held its place as a part of the culture of Pembroke. There, the grass grew lush and rank. Dave

JAIL-BREAK

by
R. Flavie Carson

Illustrated by DONALD B. DAY

kicked again at the wall and noted with satisfaction the little shower of rock and plaster which fell to the floor.

The earth was soft and spongy, interlaced with countless millions of fiber-like moss roots which presented a matted and apparently impenetrable barrier to freedom. But such a seemingly adverse condition of the soil soon proved of definite advantage, for the damp humus could be moved and pressed internally without the necessity of removing it backward thru the tunnel. Dave thrust forward with clenched fists and knotted forearms, tearing the root fibers apart and molding the earth into a hard, smooth compactness on all sides, just as a nail driven into a soft pine plank forces the surrounding wood fibers to make way for its entrance. It was exhausting work and he made but slow pro-



gress. The seconds ticked by and inch by inch the tunnel grew until it was twice the length of Dave's body. Breathing became increasingly difficult altho the porous soil supplied sufficient oxygen for the needs of a resting body.

The third night after loosening the first stones of the wall, Dave labored frantically. Dawn, he knew, would bring two armed attendants and a train ride to the state prison. He estimated that the tunnel need be lengthened another two feet, and then he might break thru to the surface and freedom. In the narrow, cramped confines of the tunnel he sweated copiously. His clothing became a sodden mass of fabric, torn and clogged with earth. Several of his finger nails were split and clogged with freshly dried blood. The strain was terrific; his heart seemed to swell to enormous size, pressing against his ribs, and only the thought of the cool air and wide open spaces of night kept him at his work.

He was digging upward now, and in his desperation he could not decide whether the work was easier or more difficult. He must break thru the surface soon. Suffocation was imminent. Horrible thoughts of being buried alive flitted thru his brain and sudden fear lent emphasized energy to his failing strength. Griggling his body forward upon his arms and elbows, he butted his head and shoulders viciously upwards. The top soil gave way grudgingly and Dave found his face above ground. He rested then, with eyes closed, his open mouth gulping in great draughts of life-giving air. Altho the graveyard was flooded by the light of a full moon, his face was scarcely discernable from the surrounding ground, so smudged and blackened had it become during his burrowing in the tunnel. Rested now, he opened his eyes. There before him rose a single slab of chiseled stone, a grave stone, no doubt, altho it was odd that he had not encountered the coffin or met with any of its decaying remnants. Squinting closely, Dave read the inscription, and his face filled with sudden horror and dismay as the meaning of the words became clear in his mind:

DAVID E. ERLHOLM
Born June 3, 1909
Died September 7, 1948

Today was the seventh!

The full moon paled toward the west and a faint pre-dawn breeze stole softly thru the sleeping town. In the cemetery the shadows huddled closer together and the earth seemed to breathe a sigh of repletion, much as a man who has just finished a Sunday dinner might do.

THE END

Two Feet From Brass

By Russ Whitman

He was standing on a vast, limitless plain that stretched out as far as he could see. How he got there he would never know. All he knew was that he was there.

For a while he merely stood, contemplating his surroundings, or rather his lack of surroundings. He remarked about their miserableness and deplored the utter lack of composition of the whole scene's creator.

He started to walk—walked for some distance before he turned and saw the pole. It was a telephone pole. It must have been standing there behind him all the time. It was really a relief to have even this for a bit of scenery, he thought.

The man looked up admiringly at the pole; a half-reverent expression crossed his face. He did not know why. Except perhaps that it seemed to be the only way to express his appreciation toward the pole.

He never paused to question his sanity. Everything seemed quite definite. There were no blurs, no mists, clouds or distortions. He merely sat down by the telephone pole and pondered why he was there. And after much deliberation, he decided that he should cry for help. He started to open his mouth—then decided that it would be no use. After all, he could see for miles around—There was nothing—nothing except the bleak, interminable plain—and the telephone pole.

Then he turned—something in his subconscious had sensed the presence of another object—had sensed it before, only before, it had failed to register on the conscious.

There it was, fastened in a very ordinary way to the side of the telephone pole—a telephone.

He rushed with a mad impetus to the newly endeared object—snatched up the phone and dialed "Operator". There was no sound—the line was obviously dead.

He sighed despairingly—again took his position—sitting in front of the pole gazing out into the endless space, and wondering what it could all mean.

"R-r-reeeeeee!"

He jumped to his feet—the phone had rung! With feverish effort he tremblingly grasped the phone in both hands, fumbling like a child with the simple mechanism.

"Hello! Hello!" he cried, "Hello!"

There was a momentary silence. Then a wooden-like voice said, "Telephone pole speaking."

is entitled "IRAS! A Mystery" (1896) and is by Theo. Douglas (Mrs. H. D. Everett). The aura of the supernatural is especially well done in this novel.

John Knittel's "Nile Gold" (1929) is a powerful and effective story, of similar plot. In this book it is a Queen who is brought to life, one who died in her youth. Again there is the evil opposing personality of an ancient Egyptian priest, reapparent in a modern body, and the persecution which the Queen endured thousands of years ago, continues in the present. She falls in love with the archeologist who has revived her, and the ending—as in so many of these books—is tragic.

Again, in "Daughter of Egypt", (London, 1937), by Compton Irving, a beautiful ancient Egyptian girl is restored to life. The revival is perhaps better done in this novel than in some of the others, and gives some very effective reading. The same theme—that of present day persecution by the priest who caused the suspended animation long ago—is repeated in this story. With variance of detail and incident, the three last-named novels follow the same plot.

Lastly, Bram Stoker's well-known story, "The Jewel of Seven Stars" (1904), must be given attention. It is, perhaps, the best constructed plot of any of this theme, except "The Bridge of Time". There is unique variance, in that the tomb of a sorceress-Queen of Egypt is sought and found. So detestable was this beautiful ruler to her people, that her tomb was made with no inscriptions appealing for mercy in the underworld. Nor did she die, but was put asleep by the magicians of ancient Egypt, when her crimes and evil spells became beyond endurance. Her body is found and brought to England, where

plans are made to follow the ancient formulae for her awakening. In a final chapter which is loaded with suspense and the feeling of impending doom, the revival attempt is made, and the novel concludes in a scene of terror and death—as the sorceress-Queen's body moves into life again. A later version has lessened this final tragic ending of Stoker's book, but the whole tone of the tale demands the ending of the original version.

There, then, are interesting examples of this fascinating theme. I have no doubt that there are others, even as well done, which could have been properly included in this article.

The theme is, perhaps, one of the most alluring in fantasy: the long-motionless body moving—quickening to life again—the cobwebs of centuries brushed aside—while eyes that last saw another age and time peer, bewildered, at a new and amazing world. THE END

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THE BLACK WHEEL by A. Merritt and
Hannes Bok. Illustrated by Bok.
New Collectors Group. 1947 \$3.00

These two black-bound volumes, with the titles on the covers in gold, present an attractive, if unusual appearance. 8 1/2 x 11 in size, the good-to-excellent Bok illustrations show to advantage the format has forced the text into two columns of rather small type.

In completing these stories begun by the acknowledged master, A. Merritt, Hannes Bok has tackled an extremely difficult project with credit to himself. In both, Bok has carried on from Merritt's beginnings, keeping in the mood and spirit in which they began. All the writing in these two volumes shows the work of conscientious craftsmen, tho of course the older Merritt's work has a finish that the younger Bok sometimes lacks.

Bok's task was the easier in THE FOX WOMAN as the Merritt portion was really an introduction to the main story which took place some 20 years later. What few characters appear in both parts were barely mentioned in the earlier, leaving Bok free to develop a whole set of new characters. And what characters he develops: a finer set of villains have seldom graced the pages of any novel. Were this same group of characters turned loose in a more conventional tale, I feel certain that it would be on the best-seller list, especially if the tale were as well-plotted as in this case.

THE BLUE PAGODA, Bok's continuation of THE FOX WOMAN, unfolds in absorbing action while revealing careful research in mythology and locale. The only serious flaws are a few overlong passages and the

inclusion of a couple of scenes of the type made famous by Thorne Smith. They are excellently done but have no place in this story.

In THE BLACK WHEEL, Bok has a more difficult job to do and does it even better. Here he takes over a story-line already developed and with a group of characters fully established. Aside from a little out-of-character dialogue from McTeague, he carries on smoothly to unfold an enthralling and well-plotted story. Particularly well-done is the interplay between a swiftly culminating series of fantastic happenings, and the frantic efforts of the narrator, Dr. Fennimore, to explain everything on rational grounds.

On the whole, the two books are a credit to all concerned: Merritt, Bok and the New Collectors Group, and are well deserving of a place in any collector's library as well as being entertaining reading.

—Donald B. Day

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And stuff

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