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Forry-Word: This is a Deadline Day Publication, created at white heat in a brown study, and with the mental hazard of having not a drop of correction fluid handy. Glom emulates The New Yorker, this issue, in deserting its usual (gone to) pot-pourri of witticisms, criticisms and narcissisms for (à la the "Hiroshima" article) a single feature,

REMINISCENCE

by
Thyril L. Ladd

AS I GLANCE along the titles on my bookshelves, almost involuntarily I visualize the scene and circumstances under which each was acquired. As with every collector, the books have been discovered in a variety of places. In something of a hit-or-miss fashion, I intend to reminisce somewhat along this line.

I am uncertain at precisely what age I first read fantasy, but I must have been about 10 or 11 years old when I discovered Haggard's "Cleopatra" in my father's library. I enjoyed it--blithely sliding over any passages incomprehensible to my age--and immediately thereafter read HRH's incomparable "She". If this was the beginning of my reading in fantasy, it is well over 30 years ago.

The librarian at our home town Public Library, knowing what I most liked, saved for me, sometimes, titles just published. Thru her good offices, in 1916 I first read Twain's "The Mysterious Stranger" (in a magazine; I think Harper's)--and, in 1917, she gave me first chance at Mitchell's "Drowsy", and Burton E. Stevenson's "A King in Babylon". In later years I hunted out these titles, getting "Drowsy" by mail. /Put that pun-cil down, Ack, put that pun-cil down./ But the Stevenson title eluded me for years, until, in 1944, while walking down 4th Ave., in NYC, I found it, at last, outside a store on a 10c table /pretty cheap for a table; one would cost at least a buck out here in California/.

NEW YORK CITY has always been a gold mine of fantasy, to me, and I try to make a book-hunting trip there at least once yearly. Generally speaking, I have found the best things not on those streets especially devoted to bookshops, but rather in more out-of-the-way nooks and corners of the huge city. When in New York I suppose about 50% of my time is, necessarily, spent in cellars or attics, accumulating dust and dirt on my person, but, almost invariably, accumulating books, also.

Chapt. 2
"Best Cellars"

I have memories of many spots--Stammer's cellar, for instance. Stammer was a picturesque figure, in his book-jammed store on 4th Ave. He has passed away now, and was, indeed, an aged man when I first knew him. He would sit in a chair toward the rear of his store, keeping a

keen eye on all activity--barking precise and autocratic commands to his clerks. His knowledge of books was amazing--legendary. I recall as I started, one rainy day, for the cellar (where he kept all fiction) he called me back and bade me leave my umbrella with him. It seems that once some ingenious customer had attempted to carry off some books, secreted inside his umbrella!

Stammer's cellar yielded me some prized titles. In its murky depths I dug out from the dust-shrouded shelves such gems as Hyne's "The Lost Continent", in the 1900 First Edition; Astor's "Journey In Many Worlds"; an elegant copy of Marsh's "The Beetle"; several Haggards; Lloyd's "Etidorhpa", with its so-weird illustrations. GAEngland's "The Air Trust" was there; Stoker's "Jewel of the 7 Stars"; Benson's "Visible & Invisible"--and others. And, with the exception of "Etidorhpa", never did I have to pay more than a dollar for any book found in Stammer's cellar.

I recall one curious fact which intrigued me--that there were two old-book dealers in New York, one named Stammer, the other Stutter. Well, Mr Stammer is gone now--but, as far as I know, Mr Stutter is still actively in business. Both Stammer and Stutter had been conducting their businesses for over 40 years.

Chapt. 3 "Always Darkest Before---"

One afternoon I wandered into a 5th Ave. bookstore which didn't look too promising. Asking for fiction, I was bade to climb certain twisting iron stairs, and, up above, came upon a conglomeration /ed's plug/ of titles. In short time I had picked out mint copies of Sheriff's "The Hopkins Manuscript" and Stapledon's "Odd John" (at 50c each)--and SFWright's "Dawn". Then, on the very bottom of a very tall, lurching pile, I spied a thick book in a red binding. Of course its backstrip was turned to the wall so that I couldn't read the title. I felt certain I knew what this book was, so I tugged and pulled, and finally got it out. I was right in my guess! It was an excellent copy of England's "Darkness & Dawn". I took it downstairs, to find the owner had gone out. A girl-clerk looked at "D&D", and then decided 75c would be about the right price for it!

Down on Ann St., just off Nassau, there used to be a big remainder store--gone now. All books were new, and in dust wrappers, and at bargain prices. This was in the early 1930s. Priced from 49 to 89c, this store gave up to me a variety of Haggard titles, and every book till then issued by John Taine, except "Green Fire", which I picked up years later in Brooklyn.

Speaking of Brooklyn, it often gave me the best things found on any book hunt. There, too, used to be a remainder store. One afternoon Mrs Ladd and I were driving along Bdwy, Bklyn. In passing I noticed a small stand with a few books on it, in front of a stationery shop. One book was yellow. I said to Mrs Ladd, "That could be a copy of Merritt's 'The Face in the Abyss'." Two blocks further along I turned my car around and went back, parked, and trotted to this bookstand (which bore a sign, 25c ea.) My hunch had been correct: The yellow volume was a very nice copy of "The Face in the Abyss".

Chapt. 4
"Lucky Ladd"

BACK IN THE 20s, on book hunts, I used to visit Ladd's Book Store in Brooklyn. He had a huge stock. He and I never did satisfactorily decide whether or not we were related. After his death, his store vanished, but one of his woman-clerks opened a very small store out on Flatbush Ave. She was still in business there in '44 & '45, for I visited her each year, talked books with her, petted her, and examined her loops, left a few words out there--should read petted her huge tomcat and examined her stock⁷ most of which one has to look at perched on a very high ladder, for the ceilings are extremely high, the place small and narrow. I found her shelves (double rows!) packed with fantasy titles, most of which she sold me for 50 and 75c, tho she stubbornly insisted on a dollar for an "as new" copy (1st Edit., '96!) of Robt. W. Chamber's "The Maker of Moons", in perfect dust wrapper!

Another little Bklyn shop, still in existence, yielded me Bradshaw's "The Goddess of Atvatabar" (1892) for a dollar; Taine's "Green Fire" (1928) for \$1.50; Chester's "The Jingo" (1912) for 15c; Haggard's "The Lady of Blossholme" (1908) for \$2; "Dr Fogg"; Eliz. Birckmeier's "Poseidon's Paradise" for a buck; and a half a dozen others.

One finds them everywhere.....In a shop facing a park in San Jose Cal, in Aug. 1925, I bought a tattered copy of Haggard's "Nada the Lily". It was a bad copy--covers gone--and as I read it, sitting on the observation platform of a Southern Pacific train, on my way to LA, I'd tear off each page as I read it, and toss it away! (This procedure lightened its bulk.) I fear this performance slightly amazed the other passengers!

From mid-1934 to Feb. '38 I owned and conducted a bookstore in Albany, NY. Naturally, in buying old books I kept my eye peeled for fantasy. One day a lady bought /read brought⁷ in 8 books, for which she wanted a quarter apiece. She got her price! One of them was a superb first edition, 1926, of Merritt's "The Ship of Ishtar", and another "The World's Desire" by Haggard & Land.

My store was near the railroad station, and a stout gentleman, stopping over between trains, learned that I liked fantasy. "I'll make a you a present of a book I've been reading," he said. /A premature "a" in the foregoing speech, inadvertently added by me in copying, turns the unidentified altruist into an Italian.⁷ "I'll mail it to you." He did. The book was Eddison's "The Worm Ouroboros".

While in the store, my wholesaler released, at 54c a copy. These were mint in. d/w. /You mean jam, Thyril.⁷ Haggard's "Belshazzar" and Merritt's "Dwellers in the Mirage". For a long time I featured these two titles on sale for 75c apiece, along with a few copies of Ray Cummings' "The Man Who Mastered Time" and "Tarrano the Conqueror".

Chapt. 5
"Author! Author!"

A TALL SLIM young man who often visited my bookstore became a very fine friend. His name was P. Schuyler Miller, an avid collector and a fantasy author himself, with material often appearing in the old (large sized) Amazing Stories and other magazines. Thru his interest I added many fine titles to my collection. One day he loaned me a copy of Erle Cox's "Out of the Silence" (1928). I began to read it, and literally sat up all nite to finish it. I wanted this badly, and Schuyler appeared--within a week--with a copy he had located in New York for a dollar. Then, one day Schuyler popped into my store and announced he had bought for me a book just printed. "You owe me \$2.50 for this!" he said. "\$2.50!" I grumbled, handing him the money but without too much enthusiasm. He handed me, then, a black-leather bound book (it looked like a Bible!) titled "Dawn of Flame"--a memorial volume of tales by Weinbaum, then not-long deceased. Moskowitz writes me that only 250 copies of this book were ever actually distributed. Schuyler had performed for me a valuable service.

Now this way, now that; from here, from there; thus my books have been gathered together. So it is, of course, with all fantasy collectors, and each who reads this could tell his story of book-hunting and discoveries.

Personally, I follow one rule: If I see books in a place, stop and look! You never know!

End

An Ad

Here, boys & girls, are some bargains (well, anyway, books) overlooked by looker Ladd. Any or all may be had by sending money, postal notes, stamps, checks and/or money orders to me, Forrest Ackerman, at Box 6151 Metro Stn, Los Angeles 55, Cal.

WORLDS BEGINNING, by the author of Thunder Rock; recommended to you by Dale Hart, EE Evans, Russ Hodgkins and myself. Jam.....\$1.25
 MILLENIUM I, by Dwiggin (illustrated). Future drama. Near new.\$1.00
 SYNTHETIC MEN OF MARS, SWORDS OF MARS, CARSON OF VENUS, TARZAN THE MAGNIFICENT and 16 others by Burroughs, all jam.....ea.\$1.00
 THE PEOPLE OF THE COMET, first Austin Hall in hard covers.....\$2.00
 THE SIXTH HEAVEN, novel by "Travelling Grave" Hartley....jam.....\$1.50
 TITUS GROAN, the Gothic classic by Mervyn Peake, jam.....\$1.25
 BACK TO THE FUTURE (2047), new English novel, jam.....\$2.50
 FINAL BLACKOUT, autograff by L. Ron Hubbard.....\$3.00
 THE BLACK WHEEL, A. Merritt & Hannes Bok.....\$4.00
 OUT OF THE UNKNOWN, van Vogt & Hull fantasyarns.....\$2.50
 THE WORLD OF NULL-A, van Vogt (revised from aSF).....\$2.50
 THE ELEPHANT AND THE KANGAROO, "Ill-Made" White's latest.....\$1.00
 MISTRESS MASHAM'S REPOSE, White's next-to-latest (jam).....\$1.00
 HOLY TERRORS, by the late Arthur Machen (jam).....\$0.50
 THE IMMORTALS, Ralph Milne Farley, mint.....\$0.50
 SLAVES OF IJAX, John Russell Fearn, mint.....\$0.50

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