

Pegasus

from:

*BBJm*

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Columbus, Ohio

We dedicate this issue  
to those two long-suffering gentlemen  
of the fantasy amateur press

Russell Chauvenet  
and  
Art Widner

# Pegasus

is a Monster Publication issued seldomly on the Borrowed Times Press. This edition is being done, all in one color, for the SAPA.

Summer 1943

Vol 2 No 1

## THE WELL OF DUORN

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Indeed "a tale of implications", to quote its author, some of which don't appear at first reading.

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# The Well of Duorm

It came to pass one night that I slept; and sleeping, dreamed.

And it seemed to me that I stood near the broad summit of a low hill, whereof the gradual slopes spread away with singular symmetry and melted into the dusk and shadows of a moonlit night. And on the summit above me a tall tower stood black against the faint-glowing sky, rising toward the moon which floated bright and cold above it. About the tower as I walked around it that I might discover where led the steps, I saw that the stone of it, ancient and rotten, glistened moistly and was thickly blotched with monstrous masses of dank moss like a growth of mold on the dead carcass of a beast; and I felt a chillness seeping out of the stone and pouring over me. I stepped hastily past the base of the tower, for I liked it not; and walking some distance beyond it I turned and looked toward the top. And I saw that somewhat below the top steps ended; yet could I discern no opening or door. Long I stood gazing at the cryptic tower and steps, but could not guess their purpose; wherefore, conceiving that haply the steps led to some closed door which I could not see in the deceptive moonlight at such a distance, I walked to the base of the tower and began to climb the winding narrow way. And the exceeding dampness of the tower and clumps of thick and clammy moss displeased me, and the chill which clung about the crumbling stone made me ill at ease.

Coming at length to a narrow ledge which clung to the tower at the end of the steps, I looked for an entrance. And I beheld the outline of a doorway, but no more than the outline; for the opening, choked with blocks of stone, was made one with the wall of the tower.

As I stood on the precarious ledge outside the obliterated doorway pondering the meaning of this thing, I heard a sound inside the tower. I listened fearfully, for I had not thought to find movement where change and life seemed long departed; and I heard a gurgling and lapping as of water, growing anon fainter as if receding like the sea-tide. And I thought that there was that within which sought egress; and I feared because the stone of the tower was so crumbling and decayed. Evil in the waning light of the declining moon did the tower seem to me, and horrible the dampness and growth of moss. And I hastened in dread down the slippery steps.

When I came to the bottom I could hear no more the lapping as of water and it came to me that the presence was gone from the tower. Almost gone, likewise, was the light of the moon sinking in the west; and in the gloom I went in haste from the ancient and haunted tower down the smooth regular slope of the hill whereon it stood. And as I entered the shadow and darkness at the base of the hill, so passed I into the oblivion of sleep.

In the morning I wakened marvelling at my dream of the ancient tower

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and full of wonder concerning the significance thereof, conjecturing from what remote region of time and place it was come to me. And as I pondered it seemed to me that I knew the history of the tower; but where or when I had learned it I could not tell. Then I knew that in sleep my spirit had wandered in the Great Abyss which is beyond space and time, and from which the spirit returneth bringing strange knowledge but no memory of its wandering in that unimaginable realm. And I looked upon the knowledge which was come to me out of the Abyss, learning of the land called Cromaril and that which befell the people thereof.

\* \* \* \* \*

Long had the people of Cromaril known drought, and the drying of their streams beneath the unveiled burning sun, and the withering and blackening of their fields in the blight of the heat, and the choking dust that blew throughout the land in the parching wind from the eastward-lying desert. Of all the rivers and streams which had watered the land there remained, aside from the mighty Amarthais which formed the western boundary of Cromaril down to the sea, Only the River Moul which flowed from the wild and remote regions to the north but did not enter the sea. For the river Moul was not like other rivers, but ended in the Pool of the Moon, where its waters sank into the earth and were seen no more. Moreover the swiftness of its current changed strangely between moonrise and moonrise, being at certain hours exceeding great and at other hours, when the moon hung overhead, too slight to be perceived: hence did the people of the land call the river Moul, which signifieth Moon-River. And in every cycle of the moon, on the night when the Moon-Spirit came down from the Pearl of the Night hanging round and bright and cold overhead to bathe in the Pool of the Moon, brimming and still, when the priests and people performed the Rite of the Renewing of the Waters. And they invoked the favor of the pale Moon-Spirit floating in the Pool; and dipping therein earthen jars they bore the water thence and poured it on their fields that the earth, blessed thus by the Moon-Spirit, might be fruitful.

But the drought came breathing hot from the desert, and the fields died, and the Rites availed naught. And the King spake with the wise men and priests and said: "Behold, the waters are gone from the land; the rains come not and the rivers vanish; the wells are filled with dust and the people perish. And it is come to pass that the River of the Moon groweth smaller day by day, and the waters thereof pass unrenewed into the ground and are lost. Surely the Moon-Spirit hath forsaken us, his people. Now must we have water; else in these days our doom is come. What hope lives within you who know the mysteries of the elements and the ways of the gods?"

But the sages could give no answer and the priests were dumb.

Then was the King sorrowful; and he made lament for his people, saying, "The waters, the waters are gone, O my people; how shall ye drink? The life is gone from the fields, the life is gone; the earth is clad no more, and the bones thereof lie bare: the bones of the earth lie bare

and dry. The ground thirsteth for water; my people thirst: they pant, their mouths are open, they drink dust. The rain cometh not, and the dust filleth the sky; dust is in the air, and death: and ye my people are dying."

And the King made an end. And he lifted up his eyes and beheld the seer Evos standing apart like one minded to speak, but full of doubt. And the King commanded him, if aught he knew of hope, to speak his thought.

And Evos spake: "O King, there may be a greater evil than dying of hunger or thirst. By a certain divination I have found a place of water, but meseemeth that there is an evil and a peril there, and that doth lurk which may bring fear and a nameless fate. Let the people arise and go unto the banks of the river Amarthais and haply many will live until the rains come once more."

But the King replied: "Thou knowest, O Evos, that many are gone thither, and that many have been slain by the great serpents of the river. Only at the ford of Lursi, where the river is shallow, may the people get water. How many, dost thou think, may dwell at the ford? Reveal therefore where other water may be found and tell what peril doth threaten."

Then slowly Evos answered: "Let it be so. This, then, must be done: men must go unto the tower which is on the Hill of Duorm, and enter therein, and dig in the bottom; and water will be found beneath. But concerning the peril mine arts tell me naught save that it is strange and awful. And I fear lest it come forth from the tower and go abroad in the land; wherefore consider well, O King, whether water should be sought in the Hill of Duorm."

When the King and those about him heard the saying of Evos they were troubled; for in the land and city of Cromaril the Hill of Duorm bore an ill name, albeit none knew why this should be. Yet oft at night, in the time when it was the custom of the people to listen to the ancient legends, hearing how the Moon-Spirit first descended to earth to bathe in the river Moul, and how the river flowed thereafter not into the sea but stopped where the Spirit had bathed, then the tellers of tales whispered of a forgotten legend. And they spake of the Hill of Duorm rising in singular symmetry where the river had once flowed, south of the city of Cromaril, which lay between the Hill and the Pool of the Moon. And they spake of the ancient tower, reared by a forgotten people; and how some evil once had dwelt in it, so that even in these days all men shunned it, but none remembered why.

Of these rumors of a forgotten legend the King bethought him, and pondered long in doubt and misgiving; howbeit at length, beholding the plight of his people, he commanded sundry of his men to go unto the tower and there do the bidding of Evos. And he sent also Kadu the One-Eyed, captain of his bodyguard, he who had lost his eye in defence of his master: him he sent together with the soldiers; and he bade them be watchful against danger.

P O R T A L

In the season when the moon had commenced to wane these went to the Hill of Duorm, walking on dusty roads beneath the searing sun. And coming to the Hill, rising like the back of some monstrous tortoise from the plain, they approached the tower standing alone and remote from all other things, and mounted the spirally ascending steps which circled it. Hot upon them breathed the desert wind, so that they scarce could draw breath; and they climbed faintly, and came at last to the top: and they beheld there an arched portal in the side of the tower.

As they entered the portal a coolness enwrapped them like the cold breath of a specter; and they shivered as with an ague, marvelling at this thing. At first, being dazzled by the glare and brightness of the sun, they could see naught in the gloom within; but anon they beheld in the center of the tower the black mouth of a well as broad as the height of four men; and around it, between the rim thereof and the wall of the tower, there went a narrow way whereon they stood. And none could see the bottom of the well by reason of the darkness; and Evos commanded certain of them to fetch torches and large baskets which might hold men, and ropes.

When these were brought Evos bade the men descend into the well in the baskets: and they would not, for they were afraid. And Evos said: "How now; are ye men, and soldiers also? Or are ye children that go in fear of darkness? What imaginings have made you afraid?"

And they said unto him: "This place is evil, and all men fear it. The wise men speak ill of it, and the legends of the people. Moreover it is not good that coldness should abide here alone when all other places are hot. We will not go down."

And Evos said: "I am old, and my strength is gone from me: yet I, even I, will descend into the well. Make ready a basket, and ye shall see, O faint in spirit, whether the sayings of the tellers of tales will harm me. And thou, Kadu, dost thou tremble at a tale heard in the night?"

And Kadu replied: "I fear no thing. I will go with thee."

And the twain took torches; and the men let them down in baskets fashioned of woven reeds.

Now as Kadu and Evos descended they felt the coolness wax more and more; and lifting on high their torches they saw that the sides of the well glistened in the light like the slimy bodies of the great serpents of the river Amarthais seen in the moonlight; and anon they beheld clumps of pale moss growing in this place and that. And coming at length to the bottom of the well they stepped out of the baskets and the bottom was covered with moss, and they walked on it as a soft and clammy rug. And in the place dwelt an exceeding chill.

And Evos bade Kadu scrape away the moss with his sword that they might see what lay beneath. And Kadu scraped and found rock beneath; and anon, when he had scraped a space where five men might stand, they

perceived that the bottom of the well had the likeness of a floor made of massive blocks of stone, hewn and fitted securely and with care. And there were graven into the stone divers signs, like unto some manner of writing; and the twain essayed to uncover the stones that they might understand the purport of the writing. And there was also carven the image of some thing, much worn with age and past the divingin of any man to say what manner of thing it might be save that the shape of it bore the semblance of a living creature.

And Evos studied the doubtful signs and the image for a space; and he said: "This writing is beyond all my lore, and I cannot tell the meaning of it, save that it is haply an incantation against some evil. And it may be that this image is a symbol of the evil, but I know not; neither can I understand its nature. But this I know: there is an evil in this place, and it is not good to call it forth. Let us turn and go back to the city, and seek water elsewhere."

And Kadu replied: "Here shall we find water. The King hath commanded it."

And Evos said: "I have no more to say."

And at Kadu's command they were drawn up again. And Kadu said to his soldiers: "Go now, certain of you, and fetch hither men from the quarries, the cutters of stone; and bid them bring tools." And as he commanded, so was it done: and they let down the cutters of stone into the well, and they commenced to hew the rock.

For three days the cutters of stone hewed the bottom of the well and Kadu kept watch with his soldiers, and Evos waited at the mouth of the well, for a boding of ill lay heavy within him. And on the afternoon of the fourth day the watchers heard the laborers cry aloud in terror, and a grating noise as of rocks grinding together, and again a single cry, but multiplied an hundredfold, echoing and re-echoing like the voice of one crying out in some vast cavern. And they heard the manifold echoes of splashing and then only silence.

And approaching in fear the rim of the well they looked down, but saw not the light of torches, but only blackness. And the ropes whereto the baskets were fastened were taut, as if the baskets hung free; and they laid hold of the ropes and drew up the baskets empty.

And those gathered in the tower spake together in awe concerning that which lay beneath, conceiving that they stood above some abyse, and questioning what might abide therein. And even came, and darkness and no man durst remain in the tower. And they stood on the hill without the tower, keeping watch; and the constellations arose in the east and passed slowly across the sky, and the gibbous moon rose red, and paled with the passing of time.

And anon they that kept watch heard a sound within the tower; and they listened, fearing what it might portend. And it seemed to them that they heard a gurgling and lapping as of water, growing louder, then



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softer, and anon ceasing. And they waited; but there was naught. And the moon, declining from overhead, began to pale with the light of day; and the light came and grew, and the sun rose.

And Kadu and Evos mounted the steps and entered into the tower. And they looked into the well; and lo, water filled it to within the height of a man from the rim. And they called to the men, telling them of this; and the men hastened into the tower to behold the wonder. Long they looked; marvelling how this was come to pass; and after a time it seemed to them that the water sank in the well. And it was so; and as the morning passed, the water sank with a gurgling and lapping, and was gone from the well.

And Kadu, full of wonder, asked what manner of well this might be, and what source the water thereof might have.

And Evos said: "It is in my mind that on the morrow the well will once again be filled with water. And art thou amazed, seeing that the flowing of the river Moul doth wax and wane, and the Pool of the Moon doth rise and fall in such wise albeit not so mightily?"

Now when he had spoken thus he fell silent, like one to whom a thought had come.

And the twain bore the news of this thing to the King; and Kadu told it to the King and answered his questions. But Evos spake not and was distraught. And he left the presence of the King and went to his chamber, and there remained in thought; for his spirit was disquieted and full of disturbing reflections.

Great was the rejoicing of the people when they heard of the finding of water. And on the morrow they went forth to the Hill of Duorn bearing vessels of earth, and of stone, and of precious porcelain, and baskets of woven reeds daubed with clay. And when they entered the tower, lo, the well was full of water. And certain of them, filling the largest vessels at the well, let these down by ropes to the people below that they might fill their vessels: and the people drank and were glad.

Now those who came first to the tower in the morning told of a curious wetness down the steps, and of water on the narrow rim of the well, saying that the well had overflowed in the night. But certain soldiers who had watched by the tower all night said that in the hours before the dawn one had come from the city to drink at the well and perchance to fill his vessel; for although the soldier keeping watch at the time while the other slept had not seen this one enter the tower, he had seen him come out, and descending the steps unheeding of the soldier's call, return toward the city.

And Kadu chid the soldier for that he had not halted this one, saying that it was not good that any man should enter the ill-regarded tower at night, whether in thirst or for some other end. And he resolved to keep watch also in the night.

And he did; and anon and anon as the time passed he made circuit of the tower, watching against any that might come. And it came to pass that as he walked thus by the side of the tower a drop of water fell upon his head. And looking up he beheld dimly by the light of the high-hanging moon the form of one who stood on the narrow ledge without the doorway. And marvelling how this one had come there he lifted up his voice and called unto this form demanding the name and purpose thereof. Wherefore Kadu, drawing his sword, began to count the tower.

And the soldiers, wakened by his shout, stood beneath watching, for they remembered what was told concerning the tower and were afraid. And anon the one that stood by the doorway turned, and entering the tower vanished from their sight. And Kadu came to the doorway, and raised his sword and went in.

Long the soldiers waited, but heard no sound. And the moon rose higher, and the ghostly light of dawn came; but none came forth from the tower. And the sun rose, and day was come; but the tower stood silent. And the soldiers spake with one another, saying, "Lo, the people come from the city. What will they say of us, seeing us standing here without knowledge of our captain? Come now, it were well to go up into the tower and see what is come to pass."

And slowly they went into the tower; and no one was there. And there was a wetness about the rim of the well, but naught to tell them of the presence of Kadu.

Now the people came bearing their vessels. And when they heard what was befallen they were troubled, and stood in doubt whether to enter the tower. But the desert wind blew on them and the sun smote them, and they felt thirst. And they argued among themselves; and one arose and said: "Behold, it is day, and no thing now remaineth in the tower; what then can harm us? Lo, the heat of the day waxeth and the sun is like a flame: an we have not water we perish. Come then, let us fill our vessels."

And the people hearkened unto this one, and did his counsel; and naught befell them.

Now when the King heard how Kadu was gone from the sight of man, his spirit was heavy within him and he mourned; for he had loved Kadu, who had served him faithfully and had saved his life in battle. And in his sorrow he bethought him of those four men who had perished in hewing the bottom of the well; and he summoned unto him those who were best beloved of them who had perished.

And when they were before him he said unto them: "Lo, your grief is mine and your sorrow my sorrow; for ye have lost those who dwell in your hearts, and I have lost Kadu whom I loved; and they are devoured by the tower of the Hill of Duora. Verily it is a place of calamity and ill-fortune; yet is it a source of blessing, for the people have water. It may be that the gods require sacrifice for this that we have given unto us; and these have died, but the people live. And

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therefore their names shall be graven in stone, that the memory of them may dwell among men in the days to come."

And the King said moreover: "It is fitting that ye should have a token of these that are gone: ask of me therefore whatsoever ye would, and if I am able I will grant it you."

Now there were come before the King four persons; and one was the brother of one who had perished, and one was the son of another, and one was the father of the third, and one was the mother of the fourth. And they lifted up their voices saying, "Gracious art thou, O King, and kind to us thy people in the midst of sorrow."

And Akim, a cutter of stone, spake and said: "O King, this who is gone was my brother who worked with me in thy quarries. All our days we labored together save on the evil day when he perished in the tower. And now I beseech thee to stop the door of the tower which hath swallowed him, for I fear that which cometh thenceforth. For lo, I left the quarries at dusk yesterday, having toiled long in striving by labor to assuage my sorrow. And I stopped in the house of a friend by the way, the hour being late, and supped there; and afterward went in darkness to my home. And it seemed to me that there was one who followed after me in the path; and oft I stopped and looked behind me, but could see no one. And once I turned my steps and went back some space, seeking who it might be that followed; but I found no one. And as I went back it seemed to me that the path was no longer dry and full of dust, but wet and cold unto my feet; and I was afraid, and turned and got me to my house. And in the morning when I went that way unto the quarries, behold, the path as far as my threshold was changed, and the dust thereof had the seeming of being caked, as if it had been wetted. And there was another path like unto it which went in the way of the Hill of Duorm, and the wetness was yet upon it. Therefore, O King, this is my plea: that thou cause to be sealed the door of the tower that no thing may come out more.

When the other three heard the saying of Akim they were amazed and full of fear, saying, "O King, he speaks wisdom; for we too know evil of the tower, and it is come to us all."

And the young man Sebur said: "Behold, this who is gone was my father; and now I am come into his place, and feed my mother and brethren. Now it came to pass last night that I wakened from sleep, being ill at ease; and I was cold, and the air was chill. And it seemed to me that one stood without the door of the house, whence flowed the chill; and I was afraid. And I took a torch, and lit it, and opened the door. And there was that which fled as if in fear of the light; and methought I saw two glowing sparks, like to the glow of fireflies, or the eyes of a cat in the night: this I saw, but no more. And when I turned to enter the doorway I saw that the stone of the threshold gleamed in the light of the torch and was wet. And it is in my mind that this that came to my house is like to that which hath followed after Akim."

Then spake Ibalo, who was father to one who was gone: "I too wakened

in the night, being disquieted in spirit; and there was a shill in the air. And it seemed to me that one stood on the roof above my head, near to the door on the roof. And I was afraid, for I thought that that which stood there was not one which should wait outside the dwellings of men in the night. And in the morning I climbed through the door of the roof; and there was a wetness by the door, and on the steps outside the house which lead to the roof there was wetness.

Then spake the mother, Lahni, being sore troubled: "O King, the tower hath swallowed my son, and now my husband is gone. For one came in the night and stood by the window; and I awoke, and my husband with me, saying that the wind blew cold in the window. And we perceived the form of one that stood without; and my husband called, asking who stood there: but none answered. And he seized a staff, and bade me be of good heart, and went forth; and he hath not returned. And in the morning there was a wetness beneath the window, and a trail leading thence as of a thing that had been dragged. Wherefore, O King, close the door of the tower lest evil come to all."

And the King was troubled; and he sent them away with gifts, and summoned Evos and told him what was come to pass.

And Evos ceased from his meditation and said: "Woe to the people of Gromaril, and to thee, O King: for the evil which I feared is come upon us. Now unless thou cause to be sealed the door of the tower there is naught to save thee and us from nameless fate, for I have no knowledge to turn aside that which doth threaten, and can but surmise what it may be."

But the King replied: "So long as the drought remaineth the well shall be open unto the people, that they may drink and live."

And Evos said: "Then guard thyself, O King, and go not out of the palace in the night. And do thou cause men to stand all about the palace at night bearing torches; and adjure them to watch diligently, nor suffer their torches to be put out."

And the counsel of Evos was done; and all the night men stood in a ring about the palace, and it was circled with fire.

And the morning came, but the sun was hid, for clouds covered the sky. And the afternoon came, and the light grew dim, and there was the sound of thunder afar. And the wind blew cold, and the thunder came loud, and the clouds were split by fire. And rain fell slow and scanty, and anon came thicker and heavier. And night came: and the rain fell like the falls of Shaou doom on the river Amarthais, and the storm spirits fought and roared with voices of thunder, and the fire leaped and danced in the air, and the breath of the storm shook the earth.

And the torches of them who guarded the palace were put out, and none could light them. And the King's bodyguard came and stood without his chamber with drawn swords, that none might pass.

## P a r a g r a p h

Now when the King beheld the fury of the storm and the rain pouring down he rejoiced; and he stood by a window and watched, saying, "Rain is come once more to Cromaril, and the land will live again, and the people will thirst no more. Now thanks be to the gods, who thus gave us life."

And it came to pass as the guard watched without the chamber of the King that one came in haste, holding in his hand an extinguished torch, and crying out, "The King, The King is attacked. To the King; defend him, defend him."

And the captain of the guard raised his sword, saying, "How now, what babbling is this? Stand back: none approach the chamber of the King."

And the torchbearer cried again, "Defend him, defend him."

And the captain of the guard said, "Stand back. Declare thyself now: what dost thou here?"

And the torchbearer said, "Behold, I stood without the palace trying to light my torch. And there came a flash of sky-fire; and I beheld in a window of the palace two forms that seemed to struggle. And I cried out and ran toward the palace, and as I ran, one went past me; and I turned; and as the sky-fire flickered I saw dimly the form of one who dragged a thing; and I saw a glow like to the eyes of a cat, save that there was but one."

And when the captain of the guard heard, he hastened to the King's chambers. And there was no one; but there was a wetness on the floor.

And in the land of Cromaril the King was known no more, and his son reigned over the land. And he caused the door of the tower to be sealed with stone and mortar, and the people went no more to the Hill of Duorn.

And the rivers flowed again, and the wells were full, and the earth bore fruit once more. And in the season of the full moon, when the Pool of the Moon, brimming and still, received the Moon-Spirit, the people gathered to do the Rite of the Renewing of the Waters in gratitude to the Moon-Spirit for that rain had come again to the land.

But Evos went not unto the pool, saying that it was not good that the people should go there and invoke the Moon-Spirit. And he remained in his chamber meditating, for a thought troubled him again.

And the priests and people performed the Rite; and the High Priest bade the people bow down for the invocation. And they bowed their faces to the ground and hid their eyes, for no man must behold the communion of the Moon-Spirit with the High Priest. And the High Priest spake the invocation, and anon his voice was stilled for the response. And his voice remained still; and the people waited and still he spake not.

And the people lifted their eyes; and lo, the High Priest was not; but on the face of the pool were ripples and the water was troubled.

Now when Evos heard, he went to the King and spake the thing that was in his mind. And the King summoned the wise men together. And they spake together of the evil that was come to the land from the Hill of Duorm, and of that which came in the night bringing a wetness and a chill, and of the glow like the eyes of cats, and of the single glow seen by the torchbearer, and of the well in the tower and the waxing and waning thereof, and of the waxing and waning of the Pool of the Moon, and of the position of the city in the valley between the Hill of Duorm and the Pool, and of the vanishing of the men in the tower, and of the vanishing of the High Priest. Of these and many other things spake the wise men and the King, and they pondered long the significance thereof.

And it came to pass that the King sent forth a decree that all the people of the city of Gromaril should go forth from thence and return no more, and that no more should the Moon-Spirit be worshipped in the land. And the King and all the people went out from thence; and there came no man into the valley and the city of Gromaril between the Pool of the Moon and the Hill of Duorm from that time forward.

And thus it is that in the land of Gromaril there came to be a legend like to the ancient forgotten legend whispered of by the tellers of tales, concerning the Pool of the Moon, and the Hill of Duorm, and the valley between: how that the place was accursed. And the legend told how the people ceased to worship the Moon-Spirit, deeming the Spirit evil, and fearing it, and fearing the river Moul, and whispering in awe concerning the curious waxing and waning of the currents thereof.

And thenceforth it was known in the land that the region round about the city was evil; so that men shunned it, but knew not why. For the priests and sages kept secret the things that they knew or surmised.

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Now it came to pass that I dreamed.

And it seemed to me that I stood on the crumbling stone roof of an ancient building like a palace, which was in the midst of ruins of stone; of fallen walls and broken pillars and uneven pavements cracked by trees and covered with patches of moss and fern. All about lay the ruins, and I perceived that I stood in a city of some forgotten age. Pale in the moonlight were the tottering walls and columns, and dim the shadows among them. And I saw a shape which moved among the shadows, and afar off another, and then more. Blurred and dim they were in the wan light; but it seemed to me that as they moved they left trails. And as I looked I saw that the trails glistened wetly in the moonlight like the tracks of snails.

the end

NIGHT RAIN

The night rain in the nodding garden  
Makes rose leaves dance where no wind blows;  
Behind green coats the young buds harden,  
Behind black clouds a young moon glows.

The rain's light touch on still, dark water  
Stirs rings of ripples. Each lily sways  
Alone -- no night moths come to court her;  
On lily pads the slight rain plays.

The dial marks no moonlit hours,  
The clouds' thick masses dim the skies;  
Within the garden's cold, wet bowers  
No single bird or insect flies.

Still, with a beat that does not cease,  
The rain gives dancing leaves no peace.

-- Louis Russell Chauvenet

"WHITE IN THE MOON . . . ."

The passing ships of night are dark,  
And weary lies the way before the wanderer,  
Who, tired and desirous of sleep, would stop-  
But he cannot linger,  
May not ponder the days  
Which pass before his gaze,  
Heavyladen with the dust of memories.

-- Bob Jones

# "ULTIMO" book review

-- "Ultimo", text by Ruth Vassos, projections by John Vassos, E. P. Dutton & Company, New York, 1930, 43 pp.

Future historians take note; seers, unshroud your crystals. Here is a prophecy, sounded in an authoritative tone, which will give you much to ponder and consider, whether you agree or dispute; and between whiles you may read it out of curiosity. It is promised that you will not lay down the book because of disinterest.

Countless millenia hence, a shivering human race hugs the earth's equator and builds huge insulation bubbles under which to exist. The sun, a dully staring orb of tarnished red, drifts sluggishly across the heavens which once it spanned in twelve hours, and its vitiated rays but scarcely illuminate the snows which it used to melt in a twinkling. And, winter by stark winter, the snows have heaped up until it is always winter.

The soaring structures of the proud cities have been buried, and the last ocean craft was inextricably frozen amid the bergs, generations and generations ago. Daring men, protected by insulation and heaters against the claws of the cold, used to venture out upon the naked wastes of ice; but it is always the same out there, and now men crouch in their bubbles, waiting for the accumulators to run down.

But the engineers of that time have not lost their daring. Into the earth they sink mighty shafts; and far below, in the warmth of the terrestrial core, the caverns are made in which the race flourishes again.

The result is an Utopia beyond dreams, an underground paradise where man expands and applies his heritage of reason with purpose to eradicate his own flaws. He becomes a thoroughly social being, and the paths of his being run smoothly.

The tale is told by a young man of that golden-age period. Life is in the main good, but terrifyingly monotonous, and he must escape. The drama of his life and escape is not the concern of the book; but it does cast a flicker of color across the pages of the text.

For the lovers of imaginative work, however, it is not the text at all but the illustrations, that will capture interest. Let it be said here that John Vassos is a psychologist of repute, and his "projections", besides being pictures as such, are media for the conveying of entirely subjective nuances of meaning. Besides the accustomed contents of a picture -- that is, such things as form, tonal values, masses -- these contain much also of that subtle, elusive quality called atmosphere. In many of them the atmosphere is little short of unearthly, with the misty diaphanous texture of a Debussy Impression.



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Perhaps the best example is the frontispiece of the volume, in which shapes float in space, trailing swirl upon swirl of translucent draperies in a progression almost mystical in import. Vassos employs such formless swirls many times throughout the book (there is an illustration to about every two pages of text), masterfully and with effect.

The work is all in tones of gray from black to white; and -- here is a matter to note well -- there is almost never any gradation of tone in a given area. Shading is obtained by a succession of contours or laminae, forming bands of greater and greater density as the shading progresses from light to dark. Yet each strip has the same weight throughout its area. The result is highly individual and -- better still -- highly effective.

The projections are not all composed of filmy impressionisms. Even the lightest of his touches is clean and sharp in outline; there is no fuzziness here. And many of the projections have a strength and impact that is startling. Vassos is quite proficient at the modern game of heaping blocks and angles and masses of indeterminate shape and making a picture of it. He is more successful than some -- but be prepared for impressionism with no apologies.

But to abandon an over-analytical viewpoint, a word or two is in order about certain of the pictures, individually. His conception of a city of the future is inspiring; the towers strike upward to the heavens, and the flying spans leap from building to building with a lightness that testifies an imagination far from earthbound. Another illustration, a scene under the sea, suggests ponderous shapes undulating through a well-nigh congealed fluid, between great white crystals that thrust up from the sea floor like the bones of a ruined temple. And the ice in his illustrations is gold.

This is art that is living and new; the artist has refused to observe the bounds of conventional subjects and has applied his craft and daemon to a rare subject. ULTIMO is commended to your attention as a book of a sort that is not often encountered. It may be difficult to obtain; but it is worth much effort to that end.

## finis

### Variations on a Theme by Gustav Holst

The planets roll their endless course.

O, ellipse eternal, it is of thee

And of thy cosmic, primal force,

That man will draw his final fee.

-- BJ

TO MARIE

To hear the sound of twilit skies  
    When you are mile on mile afar,  
Brings to my eye-dimmed waiting eyes  
    Some fantasy of night's first star.

The flitting of that homeward dove  
    Recalls that we were youthful, young  
Who loved to fight and fought for love;  
    Yet ours is now a long lost tongue.

Wild pulses voiced ecstatic joy  
    As our delight rose to extreme,  
You, a girl -- I, no more than boy;  
    Can this be but an eve's strange dream?

But now the night has cloaked this sphere,  
    To leave us once more far apart;  
You may seem far, but you're so near  
    With thoughts that press just heart  
    to heart.

-- Joe Fortier

# The FAR, ENCHANTED PLACES

"When I behold the skylark move in perfect grace toward its love the sun, and, growing drunk with joy, forget the use of wings, so that it topples from the height of heaven, I envy the bird's fate. I, too, would taste that ruinous mad moment of communion, there in heaven, and my heart dissolves in longing."

-- James Branch Cabell,  
The Cream of the Jest

Life being, on the whole, a monotonous and often rather nasty business it is something less than strange that the escapist conception of paradise is one common to all the races of man since time began.

These paradises might be divided into two general groups.

One, the paradise created by the refinement of human nature, and two, those composed of an environment in which the exigencies of modern commerce have no part.

The subdivisions of these two groups are many, and have played a prominent part in the beliefs and literature of earth's people. The very first chapter of the Christian bible is concerned with man's first perfect place -- the Garden of Eden.

And the theme of such an idyllic land has been carried out extensively in fantasy fiction, too; the theme of a culture, an environment lost to the outside world, until a traveller or travellers stumble upon it by chance.

Merritt, of course, is the most prominent exponent of this idea. His "Moon Pool", "Dwellers In The Mirage", "Three Lines of Old French", "Face In The Abyss" -- indeed, there are probably not more than three fantasy stories by A. Merritt which do not deal with lost lands. Nor does the repetition of this particular theme grow tiresome; the theme is too fascinating a one, and the writer too excellent for that.

A more literary example of this type of paradise is Hilton's "Lost Horizon". This book has the advantage of being unconcerned with Merritt's eternally reiterated "Two-forces-one-good-the-other-evil-fighting-against-each-other-in-lost-land-hero-helps-good-side-conquer-evil-and-gets-girl." The conflict in "Lost Horizon" is a much more valid, from the literary standpoint, mental struggle. However, this latter is rare indeed in pulp fiction, and even Haggard's admirable Allan of "She" is far too busy chucking gentlemen over his shoulder to give much thought to such abstractions. The nearest approach fantasy authors make to mental conflict, is in tales built around people whose spiritual essence goes banging around the country while the body sleeps. Here the hero generally finds his other world much more at-

tractive than present surroundings, but is unable to leave the sphere in which he maintains his material existence. Which naturally causes him to feel somewhat frustrated. An example of this is Hamilton's "Dreamer's Worlds" in the November, 1941, WEIRD.

A list of this lost land paradise type of story would not be complete without mention of G. A. Smith's "City of the Singing Flame"; an excellent attempt at epic-proportion atmosphere fantasy, which did not seem to me to add up quite properly. Dunsany's trilogy of The Land of Dream in "Tales of Three Hemispheres" belongs in this classification, too.

Another type of paradise closely related to this group, is that which has its existence on other planets. And the best example of it is the well-known Balmer-Wylie collaboration, "After Worlds Collide". Remember the silent, shining cities of the Other People? There is a thrill not easily forgotten in the thought of the things to be found in such a city: mechanical perfection, the culture, achievements, arts of a greater race dead over a billion years. It is this idea that probably led Lester del Rey to say, "My ambition is to write a story with the theme of "After Worlds Collide", and the atmosphere of "Final Black-out". There have been a multitude of such wonderful cities found in the magazines of the '31, '32, '33 Gernsback era, when space-flight was a wonder and not a commonplace. Few ever succeeded in capturing the atmosphere of this book.

Other-dimensional paradises are worthy of mention, too. C. L. Moore's "Bright Illusion" with its romantic and slightly absurd plot of love between two beings from different dimensions; and the only two decent stories ever written by Van Lorne, "Strange City" and its excellent sequel are best examples.

Future paradises. Ah, here indeed do we find paradises galore! For if a fantasy story of the future is not pessimistic, then it must be optimistic, and we find the world of the future rich in scientific miracles. Stories like Stuart's magnificent "Forgetfulness", one of the greatest -- if not the greatest -- pulp stories ever written; and tales like Weinbaum's "Black Flame" and "Dawn of Flame" are worthy of inclusion in this group. Two splendid stories, even if the slightly laughable heroines and the equally laughable antics of the hero for their benefit did prove that Stanley had a lot to learn about wimmin and guys and such stuff. A similar lack of knowledge where psychological motivation is concerned, was shown in Williamson's "Legion of Time", wherein the beautiful heroine tried with admirable persistence to kill men whenever she saw them -- those men opposed to her, that is -- gave them no encouragement whatever to love her, and still had 'em crawling after her when she had tortured them until they could no longer stand, all because she was booful -- this typical Williamson heroine, I say, is found only in fiction; or, if actually existing, are all old maids.

Speaking of "Legion of Time", it is a sample of several tales which are difficult to put into this classification since they are concerned

## Paradise

with the future, but are not strictly of the future. Another case in point is Robert Moore Williams' unforgettable "Flight of the Dawn Star", the quiet, masterly little story of two rocketeers who flew into a space warp, and emerged to find themselves on a planet that was paradise, and so unlike their own earth that it brought on a nostalgic longing for the eternally bitter struggle of their own planet; and how, in their search for it, they discovered that they had not only traveled in space but in time as well, and that this world they were on was but their own in the future. Then, too, Bob Williams' fantasy "City in the Far-Off Sky" (a favorite of mine), is probably the best example of a paradise that has its existence in the present as well as the future.

C. L. Moore seems to be dominating this, but permit me to mention one other story by her -- in my opinion her best -- "Greater Than Gods". This picture of two possibility futures contacting the scientist who must be the deciding factor between them, is a story to be ranked for its superb writing skill among the best. This vivid conception of two futures, one with a surplus of scientific zeal and no time for human happiness, the other idle, beautiful, but without achievement, sterile scientifically, points out in the most fascinating manner, all extremes are bad, and the middle course is best. Too, Stuart's grimly powerful and pathetic "Twilight" shows how this happens when the peak of scientific accomplishment has been reached; how every comfort, every dream of perfection conceivable by the human mind has been granted, and how in the granting mankind was made the more unhappy.

Which is the basic fault of all perfection -- being perfection, it is static. Happiness can come only through contrast, and he who has known only ultimate beauty and nothing else, can never appreciate that beauty. Great happiness comes only after great sorrow and is made more welcome thereby. No paradise could be liveable if it did not have imperfections. If without fault, it would succeed only in boring its dwellers to a welcome death in short order.

Paradises of an illusionary nature are a type which cannot be ignored. Manning and Pratt's "City of the Living Dead" tells the story of escapists who find paradise in a machine. Unpleasant indeed to speculate that today's motion pictures may evolve -- or degenerate -- to such a form! Weinbaum's "Pygmalion's Spectacles" with its transitory paradise is a device with which much fault may be found, on the grounds that it was fun while it lasted, but the waking up and knowing that the fun is gone is a fate not at all enjoyable. It reminds one of the remark of the man who fell out of the fifth story window -- "Going down was a grand sensation, but hitting the ground ---"

The seventh subdivision is that of the Utopia.

The very word Utopia has a connotation. It is not a complimentary connotation, indeed, rather the contrary. It carries with it a stigma of visionary impossibilities; of futile dreamers meditating insanely on millenia which can never be.

And it is a connotation that will remain forever justified until he

man nature itself undergoes a drastic metamorphosis.

However, the advantage of authors living in the present is that they can imagine anything they wish to existing in the future. "Utopia Island", "Men Like Gods", "Brave New World", and the most appealing of them all, "Seeker of Tomorrow" -- all these feature places of perfection, but as Wells demonstrated in "Things to Come", the granting of ease, comfort and security through mechanical means cannot alone bring about a Utopia. No matter how much some individuals have, they can never be happy unless they possess their neighbor's portion, also. And it is the nature of a certain type of mind that it cannot rest content unless it controls, unless it possesses power. The fact that this type of person does exist tends to make Utopias pretty shaky propositions. Human beings desire perfection from the bottoms of their hearts, but when they obtain it they never have the vaguest idea of what to do with it. A most discouraging state of affairs.

This, then, this human instability is a factor which must inevitably make the dream of a paradise a dream only, never to be realized. For even if it could be achieved it could not suit all individuals. The designing of a heaven for all the people who have lived through the ages, is a job that must lead any omnipotent being to quit in disgust and get a job on the WPA. Think of combining the riotous barbarian Valhalla of the old Germans, and the sensuous houris-haunted heaven of the Mohammedans with the peaceful everlasting Sunday that is heaven to nice old ladies!

The contrast between the paradise conceptions of the sickly, fretful Linton and the bubblingly energetic Catherine in Brontë's "Wuthering Heights" is useful in this respect:

"One time, however, we were near quarreling. He said the pleasantest manner of spending a hot July day was lying from morning till evening on a bank of heath in the middle of the moors, with the bees humming dreamily about among the bloom, and the larks singing high up overhead, and the blue sky and bright sun shining steadily and cloudlessly. That was his most perfect idea of heaven's happiness: mine was rocking in a rustling green tree, with a west wind blowing, and bright white clouds flitting rapidly above; and not only larks, but throistles and blackbirds, and linnets, and cuckoos pouring out music on every side, and the moors seen at a distance, broken into cool dusky dells; but close by, great swells of long grass undulating in waves to the breeze; and woods and sounding water, and the whole world awake and wild with joy. He wanted to lie in an ecstasy of peace; I wanted all to sparkle and dance in a glorious jubilee. I said his heaven would be only half alive; and he said mine would be drunk; I said I should fall asleep in his; and he said he could not breathe in mine, and began to grow very snappish. At last we agreed to try both, as soon as the right weather came; and then we kissed each other and were friends."

Thus, a paradise for all the world's people, must be a paradise for

## P r e s e n t

both romanticist and materialist, the sensitive and the bawdy, the weak and the strong, the old and the young. The paradise of a Shroeyer would, for example, be --

It has just occurred to me what the paradise of a Shroeyer would be like. We had better not, he said loudly, go into that.

As for myself, my own conception of paradise would be the experiencing of that which occurred to the principal characters in F. George Fredrick's "Einstein Express". To be disembodied, free, a being of mentality -- to soar upward to the stars laughing madly in the sheer ecstasy of inconceivable velocity, to tread beyond infinity and know tomorrow and yesterday at once. To run, shrieking in joy, through the garden of the land of brighter suns, where the perfume of a million bizarre flowers is like a shining cloud and the flame of color is like the heart of a million suns; to have knowledge incarnate, and to step reverently through the colossal halls of the Elder Ones, hurtle down their cyclopean stairs, and, having seen them, to flee in a terror so unimaginable that it cannot be remembered. To whip suns around like playthings, to make a world and then a system for it and after that -- to give it life; to "hold infinity in the palm of my hand, and see eternity in a day . . ."

This must be my paradise. This is perfection without fault, without flaws, without worldliness of any sort. Endlessly, ceaselessly, eternally.

Or at least until some other astral being opens a celestial stand to peddle the ectoplasmic equivalent of the hot dog.

-- THE END --

## SONG OF DESTRUCTION

Across the shifting desert dunes  
The grey-green tanks go scurrying past;  
Tall geysers rise as thunder seems  
To crush the earth beneath its blast.

Like rats men crouch in filthy holes,  
Or sweat behind the blazing guns  
Amidst the bursting hell, and soon  
Across the sands the red blood runs.

High in the azure blue above,  
The birds of war attack their prey.  
They twist and dive and kill and then  
Plunge burning to the gory fray.

Thus it is when the war cry rings,  
When man takes up the club and mace,  
And fights his hardest to destroy  
his greatest foe -- the human race.

-- Eugene Roseboom

Our initial reluctance to the distribution of Pegasus through the F. A. P. A. was occasioned, primarily, by the complete lack of publications of this type within the organization. Others, such as Censored and Fantascer, which enjoyed circulation through the mailings were also distributed widely outside by subscription. Contributors outside the Association will be the only non-member recipients of Pegasus.

The mailings are composed chiefly of papers of friendly and distinctly personal chit-chat, generally centering around the successes and failures of the previous bundles and/ or articles of dispute or agreement between members. Naturally we believe that these papers should be the larger part of each mailing but we feel that a magazine of fairly general fan-reader interest, with stories, articles and poems not so close to the organization, also has its place. We hope you feel the same way.

Of course, it isn't our intention to offer any sort of competition to the larger subscription magazines of the Spaceways, Fanfare, Space Tales variety; we couldn't. Our resources wouldn't even permit the faint stirring of such a hope within our breast.

Now that general distribution has lapsed, the problem of material becomes a larger one, for we must now rely, in great measure, upon the members for the contents of each issue. And while articles and short stories are obtainable (even though with difficulty), it is next to impossible to get enough verse to round out an issue. Not great poetry -- just good verse, a measure of which is imperative to any even fair number.

We herewith cast ourself humbly upon your mercy and hope for the best.