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## THE PHANTAGRAPH

the oldest fantasy fanzine

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### EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS HEAVES A SIGH

--An excerpt from his novel "Beyond  
Thirty", published Feb. 1916. Supposedly  
written in 2137 A.D.--

What boy has not sighed for the good old days of wars, revolutions, and riots? How I used to pore over the chronicles of those old days, those dear old days, when workmen went armed to their labors, when they fell upon one another with gun and bomb and dagger, and the streets ran red with blood! Ah, but those were the times when life was worth the living; when a man who went out by night knew not at which dark corner a "Footpad" might leap upon and slay him; when wild beasts roamed the forests and the jungles, and there were savage men, and countries yet unexplored.

Now, in all the Western Hemisphere dwell's no man who may not find a schoolhouse within walking distance, or at least within flying distance. The wildest beast that roams our waste places lairs in the frozen north or the frozen south within a government reserve, where the curious may view him and feed him bread crusts from the hand with perfect impunity...

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THEY WATCH

By Emil Petaja

When the stealthy, relentless curtain  
of night  
Has blurred all the patterns of color  
and light,  
Although nothing is seen, and nothing  
is said--  
They watch in the darkness, beside  
my bed;

And sometimes the sudden heat-lightning  
etches  
The chains and the drapes in luminous  
sketches,  
And sometimes a lost bird's desolate  
cry  
Pierces the black, tangled reaches of  
sky. . .

For years they have watched, and brooded,  
like this;  
But tonight I can tell there is something  
amiss. . .  
For they quiver the darkling air about  
me.  
Almost I hear them cackling with  
glee. . .

In the dawn I'll discover these dream-  
fraught shapes,  
For an urgent, sibilant whispering  
escapes:

"Shall you not join them? Outward be led?  
Do you not know yet..... you too are dead?"

ONE FOR THE BLACK BAG

Your editor, during his working days, is the editor of the famous detective pulp "Ten Detective Aces". In the earliest days of this magazine, it was called "The Dragnet" and featured many young writers since then famous in other fields. One was August Derloeth. We were poring over the office files of Dragnet and ran across the following letter, titled as above, in the letter department of the April 1929 issue (Vol. II No. 3, page 372):

My dear sir:

Having lately come across a copy of the DRAGNET for the first time, and noting your desire for opinions from readers, I am compelled to express my pleasure at the excellent quality of the publication.

In the February issue, to my mind, two stories stand out as of especially dis-tractive merit. One of these--"The Black Bag"--handles the elements of suspense and surprise with a skill and assurance not often met with in popular magazine fiction; and somehow achieves a naturalness which causes the rather free use of coincidence to pass unnoticed.

The other--and perhaps the better technically--is "The Adventure of the Black Narcissus" by August W. Derloeth. The extremely fine craftsmanship of this tale creates a sense of constantly impending revelation and never-flagging interest; whilst the denouement comes with such a mingled inevitability and shock of surprise that we feel not only dramatically satisfied, but moved with a conviction of reality which no mere theatrical

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claptrap could supply. There is an element of unusual proportion and sanely consistent verisimilitude which does not clash at all with the rapid and brilliant movement and the expert knitting of plot-developments. I sincerely hope that Mr. Derloeth is a permanent member of your writing staff, for his "Solar Pons" seems eminently qualified to take rank with the standard detectives of fiction.

With best wishes for your group of publications, I am,

Yours very truly,  
H.P. LOVECRAFT,  
10 Barnes Street  
Providence, R.I.

Naturally the discovery of this letter was quite a surprise. But on second thought it is obvious that Lovecraft did all in his power to help out the young and talented writer of the Solar Pons stories. That Derloeth has now helped out Lovecraft on the man is but honorable gratitude.

Derloeth sold The Dagnet some five or six stories, all but one Solar Pons tales. We have not tracked them all down, for the office files are not complete, but what we have seen of them speaks highly. A Solar Pons story, written in this period, will be found among the stories included in Ellery Queen's recent anthology "The Misadventures of Sherlock Holmes" (which is worth reading for a light evening or two). And recently Derloeth informed me that he is planning on an anthology of Solar Pons--a pleasant thought.

Incidentally the story "The Black Bag" was by Mignon Eberhart, now rated a leading detective writer--so HPI's selection was not without merit on that score either.

...Donald A. Wellheim