FANTASY COMMENTATOR

...covering the field of imaginative literature...

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editor and publisher

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THIS-'N'-THAT

Again we return to the task of listing all fantasy fiction that has appeared in 1948 since our last issue:

Ashton, Francis: Alas, That Great City (Dakers, 9/6). A lush and adventurous Atlantis novel; Haggard-like.

Burrough, E.R.: Llana of Gathol (Burroughs, $2). John Carter of Mars.

Campbell, J. W., Jr.: Who Goes There? (Shasta, $3). An excellent and highly recommended collection of s-f.

Carr, Robert S.: The Room Beyond (Appleton-Century-Crofts, $3). A curious fantasy about a modern saint.

Chamberlain Elinor: Snare for Witches (Dodd-Mead, $2½). A 1663 New England community obsessed with a witchcraft craze. Borderline but well written.

Coblentz, Stanton A.: The Sunken World (Fantasy Publishing Co., $3). A good adventure novel diluted by weak satire.

Dahl, Roald: Sometime Never (Scribners, $2¾). Satirical account of gremlins taking over the planet after atom wars have caused humanity to vacate it.

Desain, G. V.: Flight out of Fancy (Lane, 6/-). Dull satire on modern life.

Dunsany, Lord: The Fourth Book of Jorkens (Arkham, $3). 33 tall tales and a preface by the author. Excellent.

Farjeon, J.J.: Death of a World (Collins, 8/6). The future---and a desolate underground world at war.

Fisher, Vardis: The Divine Passion (Vanguard, $3½). Fifth in a series about prehistoric man.

Gosse, Jeanne: The Stone of Lauzières (Falcon, 8/6). A reworking of an old devil legend. So-so.

Groom, Pelham: The Purple Twilight (Laurie, 9/6). Interplanetary.

Hall, Austin: People of the Comet (Griffin, $2). A brief and dull s-f novel reprinted from 1923 Weird. Skip it.

Hill, Robert H.: The Spider in the Rose (Devereux, 8/6). Fictional treatment of the Walpole plot against Elizabeth with minor witchcraft adumbrations.

Hubbard, L. Ron: Final Blackout (Hadley, $3). Unusually good, if grim, account of the last European war.

---: Slaves of Sleep (Shasta, $3). The world of the jinns, described with considerably more blood than art.

Huxley, Aldous: Ape and Essence (Harpers, $2½). Satirical tale of the world in the 22nd century. Pretty bitter, pretty good.

Idle, Doreen: Yew Trees from the Window (Hodder & Stoughton, 9/6). Tedious account of the supernatural effect on inbitants of an adjacent cottage brought about by a group of trees. Phooey.

Junger, Ernst: On the Marble Cliffs (New Directions, $2½). Allegory of a non-existent land trans. from the German.

Kaup, Mrs. Elizabeth (Deving): Repeat with Laughter (Appleton, $2¾). A woman says she isn't getting any older---and really isn't!

Kingsmill, Hugh: The Dawn's Delay (Eyre & Spottiswoode, 10/6). Three long short stories (two of which are fantasy) and a novel, "The Return of William Shakespeare." Worth the money.

Lister, Stephen: Hail Bohemia! (Davies, 8/6). Fantastic satire about an island where Christian enlightenment reigns.

Liston, Edward: The Bowl of Night (Coward-McCann, $2¾). Lost race used as a disguise for a half-serious utopia.

Machen, Arthur: Tales of Horror and the Supernatural (Knopf, $3.95). 14 excellent stories introduced by P.vanD.Stern.

Pargeter, Edith: By Firelight (Heinemann, 10/6). British edition of the novel By What Strange Fire.

Phillpotts, Eden: Fall of the House of Heron (Hutchinson, 9/6). Another atomic energy thriller.

Rohmer, Sax: Shadow of Fu Manchu (Doubleday, $2). About what you'd expect.

Rolt, L.T.C.: Sleep No More (Constable, 8/6). 12 weird tales, well-written if not spine-chilling.

Russell, Eric Frank: Sinister Barrier (Fantasy Press, $3). Extended version of the 1939 Unknown novel. The theme (human beings are property) is good; the treatment, a bit too hard-boiled. Very entertaining, though. Better get it.

Sansome, Wm.: Something Terrible, Something Lovely (Hogarth, 8/6). Horror tales.

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THE "POLARIS" TRILOGY

by
Richard Witter

Born in the frozen wilderness of the Antarctic, the boy Polaris reached manhood seeing no other human being than the father who reared him. And after his father died the young man set out to find the civilized world he had been told of. In his adventurings northward he encountered Rose Emir, an American heiress, lost in the snows. Then the ice floe where the two made camp broke, whirling them once more southward on an enormous berg. Inland they found the mythical kingdom of Sardanes, a volcanic valley set like an emerald in the white fastness of the Antarctic, blooming with tropical verdure and peopled by a fragment of the ancient Greeks---the Hellenes, of whose victories the bard Homer sang long centuries ago. Polaris and Rose were the first visitors from the outer world of men to set foot in Sardanes in nigh upon three thousand years. There a king would have wedded Rose, but Polaris fought their way out of the valley with his dogs and guns, bringing the girl to Scoland's ship whence she originally had strayed. And Scoland, the daring explorer who had reached the South Pole in an airship, was forced to watch the girl he loved won from him by the man from the wilderness.

Such is the plot of that fantasy classic "Polaris---of the Snows." The story was originally published in 1915 in The All-Story-Cavalier magazine, and was brought to present-day readers by Famous Fantastic Mysteries in 1942. Neither of the two sequels which followed it have as yet been reprinted, however, although the first ("Minos of Sardanes") was once scheduled for appearance before Famous Fantastic Mystery's policy change intervened. Since few collectors own these original printings, and since the resurrection of Fantastic Novels magazine makes republication of the trilogy once more a possibility, an article describing Charles B. Stilson's remaining two "Polaris" novels seems distinctly in order.

In "Minos of Sardanes" Polaris learns from an old scientist, one Zenas Wright, that the volcanic fires sustaining life in Sardanes are doomed to early extinction. The two form an expedition to return to the Antarctic, and set out on the specially prepared cruiser Minnetonka captained by James Scoland, who is still inwardly bitter against Polaris for his success with Rose. While they are en route Minos, the hundredth king of Sardanes, is having serious trouble of his own. Analos, the nation's high priest, has aroused the people against the hierarchy, promising dire results from the onrushing cold as one volcano after another expires, if the unreligious king is not overthrown. But even as the priests and people attack, Minos steadfastly maintains that the doom Sardanes faces is but the work of nature, not God.

> When Nature issues a decree, the execution thereof is pitiless. She recks naught of dynasties or nations. When she would have a clean page on which to write, she erases, if needsbe, and with inexorable completeness, the fairest characters she may have inscribed previously. The smallest and the greatest, the tiny grass blade, the towering forest giant, the lowly anthill, the lofty mountain, the blind worm in the dust, proud man, the "lord of creation"---be any or all of these in her path, Nature breaks them, and, with her ally, Time, makes smooth the page for her next writing.
>
> Only those who are wise and instructed may pore

over such an erasure and, from a faint trace here, a blur there, partly read and partly guess at that which once was writ.

Years uncounted, Sardanes had flourished in the wastes of the Southland. Then the great All-Mother, always unhurried, drew a steadfast white finger across the valley.

Only a fortnight elapsed from the day on which the Gateway to the Future sent forth its first flare of fire, that followed centuries in which it had been dark---only a brief fortnight, and the Gateway alone of all the volcanic ring still sent fire and smoke heavenwards. All the sister hills lay silent and lifeless, their furious spirits spent and gone elsewhere, their seamed summits crowned with the white of Antarctic snows.

First to yield was the holy river Ukranis. Ice bound its sources until it became a mere streamlet, soon paralyzed by the cold into a glittering thread. A gray rime crept over the green velvet of the grass, and a white pall covered it softly. The blue roses withered and fell. The grain in the fields ceased to grow and lay lifeless. Bushes and shrubs died. The giant trees shed their faded foliage, their roots strangled in the chill of death, their palsied branches brittle and breaking down under a weight of snow. The bright birds of many hues that had flashed back and forth through the forest glades and lanes fluttered to the ground with mournful cries and died. The hum of insect life was stilled. On the hillsides, the little brown rabbits shivered in their burrows, nestled together and slept forever.

With all of these, there passed a hundred things, animate and inanimate, that had their living like in no other spot on earth.

This, Stilson's description of the death of the valley, is one of the most effective he ever wrote. As the fires of the Gateway volcano itself dwindle, the entire population of Sardanes---save Minos and his love, Memene---march stalwartly into this gateway of the future, Analos the last to descend into the flames.

Minos and Memene, trapped in the valley, try to keep themselves alive as long as possible with food and fire. But Minos one day wounds himself almost fatally with his axe while gathering wood; Memene tries to nurse him to health, but is helpless in the snowy cold. Polaris and his company choose this propitious moment to arrive on the scene and save the two.

Scoland, however, plays the traitor, marking false graves and returning to America with the tale of disaster having befallen Polaris and his companions. When Polaris and the rest of the party discover this treachery they push for the coast, and eventually locate the advance ship Felix grounded and abandoned. But aboard the auxiliary launch is found fully fueled and in seaworthy condition. The party set out in it for civilization, hoping to reach Australia.

Meanwhile Scoland has reached America and told his false story. He endeavors to win the distraught Rose once more, but when he forces his attentions on her Marcus, the gigantic leader of Polaris's dog pack, mauls him severely on seeing Rose's fear of the man. Insane with rage and pain and frustration, Scoland reveals his duplicity. The Minnetonka is headed southward again, and by a stroke of sheer luck it encounters en route the launch carrying Polaris and his party. They head for America once more as the second part of this trilogy ends.

This circumstance should please the type of person who derives great pleasure in discovering some very minor error in a story and writing the editor a major thesis about it: According to Stilson, Memene wears a bangle of rubies. But in the magazine cover illustration, the artist saw fit to put green jewels in their place. (Criticasters are reminded that it is a bit late to protest!)

Close examination of the cover illustrations for all three novels finds them rather drab and also (therefore?) artistic, as compared to present-day fare. That for "Polaris---of the Snows" is a simple portrayal of a struggle between a bear and Polaris, done in white and dull ochre, by P. Monahan. The Modest Stein cover for "Minos of Sardanes" shows Polaris's saving Minos and Memene from the attack of another bear; it is a somber study in browns, grays and a dull green. A bright red flag gives color and life to the cover for the third novel in Stilson's trilogy. Here, Willard Fairchild shows Polaris's dramatic entry into battle. One would scarcely recognize any of these paintings for fantasy nowadays in our era of bug-eyed monsters.

"Polaris and the Goddess Glorian," the concluding tale, gives the reader a feeling of anticlimax, of something being tacked on to an already completed unit. Moreover, it is slow in starting. Despite the latter fault interest is soon built up, and the reader is presented with a different type of action than that previously encountered.

On the way back to America, the Minnetonka picks up a lone human being in the Antarctic Ocean. He is encased in golden armor, and wears a mask that enables him to breathe as well below water as above. He proves to be Oleric the Red of Maeronica, whose chief city, Adlaz, was founded by the Atlanteans before Atlantis sank beneath the waves. Shortly after this incident the Minnetonka is crippled by a strange golden ray radiating from a submarine---called a fademe--- and survivors from the sinking vessel are taken aboard and brought to Adlaz.

Straightaway upon arrival Polaris infuriates the city's priesthood by slaying a sacred bull, and is condemned to death. With the aid of a spy from the nearby kingdom of Ruthar, with which Adlaz is at war, Polaris and Zenas Wright escape. In Ruthar they drill the army preparatory to attacking Adlaz, and Zenas instructs the people in the art of manufacturing explosives. By a combination of skill and treachery on the part of an Adlazian woman, the Rutharian army is victorious. Rose is rescued from the fate of a sacrificial victim, and according to an ancient prophecy Polaris assumes the throne governing all of Maeronica. He is married to Rose by the Goddess Glorian, and the two begin their reign.

The plot here is of course a common one: many authors before and since have used similar plots. Stilson's avoids several clichés that have become notorious in lost race stories, and this, along with a well above-average handling of the plot, produces a happy result. "Polaris and the Goddess Glorian" is especially similar to F. V. W. Mason's "Phalanxes of Atlans" and Merritt's "Snake Mother." There are many parallels with the latter---Suarra and Rose, Graydon and Polaris, the Snake Mother and the Goddess Glorian in the realm of character, and numerous coincidences of plot.

Obviously Stilson is a great dog-lover, as in each part of the trilogy these animals are given a key role in the plot. Who can forget Marcus, leader of the first pack, or Pallas, the faithful friend during the battle of the Gateway? In the concluding novel we have Rombar, a gigantic canine who is at Polaris's side throughout the entire story.

One wonders why, since many of Stilson's more mundane novels appeared in book form, these three never were put in hard covers. Certainly they possess adequate literary quality, and are rich in reader-appeal. In these days of small fantasy publishing houses we may perhaps hope that some director's searching eye will light upon the "Polaris" trilogy, and recognize its potential value.

TIPS ON TALES

by
Thyril L. Ladd

Harold E. Scarborough's Immortals (1924): When Dr. Brusilov met Isaac Skovar, and confirmed beyond doubt the fact that the old man had truly lived to the age of 1966 years, he was naturally astounded. With this subject as a start, he set about to create a serum which would insure mankind from ever aging. Old Isaac himself has no idea why he has escaped death, though he recalls when a certain Man passed him one day in ancient Jerusalem, he refused that Man, who was bearing a cross to his crucifixion, rest at his shop; Isaac was then 73. And as the Man passed by he murmured a few words, which Isaac did not clearly hear.... Dr. Brusilov meets success in his experiments, producing men aged forty whose physical bodies have been retained at the eighteen-year level. Thenceforward the reader becomes absorbed in the struggle between Brusilov, who wishes to reveal the discovery to the world, and the millionaire who partly financed the research---who has much different ideas. The book is no masterpiece, but is nevertheless a very interesting piece of writing, following its theme to a more or less expected denouement. Fantasy readers should not confuse it, by the way, with Ralph M. Farley's novel of exactly the same title which was serialized in Argosy some years back: the two stories are utterly different in both plot and treatment.

Lady Eleanor Smith's Lovers' Meeting (1940): I think that Lady Smith has done a superlative job here. She tells a story of two lovers, who, barred from marrying by social mores of today, use an ancient magic rite to send themselves back in time. They find themselves in England's Regency days, when Lord Byron was the rage, and when social customs were even more rigid. He, an earl's son before the shift in time, finds himself a humble tutor; she, formerly the daughter of a vagabond, has become a titled daughter of a lordly house, scheduled to wed a man she does not love, regardless of her wishes. Primarily a love story, this novel nevertheless remains on a classical plane, and does not stoop to excesses of sticky sentiment. It is a good novel as well as a good fantasy novel, and makes highly entertaining reading.

James Paul Kelly's Prince Izon (1910): In an inaccessible side canyon of the Colorado stand two cities which were founded long ages ago when the Aztecs, fleeing the Spanish conquistadores, migrated northward. In one the ancient religion (complete with human sacrifices) is still maintained; in the other city, where Catholic missionaries once penetrated, Christianity holds sway. (An interesting twist of plot is shown when the reader learns that the cities are well aware of the civilized world without, but prefer to remain isolated from it.) Into these cities is brought an exploring party and also two kidnapped Mexican girls. There are no maidens to be rescued from horrible dooms at the last split second, nor any gallant white heroes in this lost race novel---but there are kidnappings, exciting intrigues, ancient magical rites, excitement and adventures galore, well larded with fantastic trappings. The format of the book itself is gorgeous: it is beautifully bound, and boasts many full-page plates in color. Collectors will find Prince Izon as pleasant to look at as interesting to read.

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BACK NUMBERS: An unusually heavy demand has exhausted supplies completely; all recent issues are now out of print. However, #9 (Winter 1945-46) has just been reprinted, and is available in small supply. Copies are being distributed with this number to patrons who ordered in advance.

AN ANALYTICAL APPROACH TO THE SUPERNATURAL-HORROR TALE

by
George T. Wetzel

Aside from the appellations of "ghost" or "witchcraft" stories, or the ambiguity of "horror" tale, there exists today no generally accepted manner of naming and separating different types of spectral literature. A galaxy of terms are indeed in usage, but of these many overlap one another's meanings while others merely indicate variants of some elemental concept. This leaves an observer with the erroneous impression of the complexity and the plot-profusion of the genre. The complexity is only apparent---it results merely from lack of order. As for the array of plots, there are in reality but three definite kinds of the supernatural-horror tale (with perhaps two exceptions or tentative additions); the dominating element is based on the psychic phenomena of ghosts and demons, and at times the manticist, while the exceptions mentioned above are the tale of mental abnormality and that of "pure" fantasy---both relatively modern in use.

A workable (if broad) definition of the supernatural-horror tale could be: any narrative which portrays the extroadinary, those imaginative creations that lie out of the plane of the world's cold realism.

The genesis of the supernatural-horror tale is unquestionably the mythologies of the world's races. In the oldest nature myths there is a symbolism of two conflicting, inimical forces that are later personified as anthropomorphic gods or supernal beings. Underlying all such myths, too, is the conflict of good versus evil. Perhaps dim stirrings of ethical and moral ideas in man caused him to interpret the conflict of nature in such terms. Whatever the reason, it gave impulse to the fabrication of fantastic tales now designated as myths.

A conclusion---perhaps Lovecraftean in outline---at which comparative mythology hints is that all myths can be traced back to certain fundamental parent themes. This idea of basic derivatives is best exemplified in the process of theme evolution, an evolution which philologists and mythologists have inferred from examinations of collected legends and folklore. It involves transition from nature myth through anthropomorphic god myth to racial folklore or legend. The nature myth explains symbolically the operation of natural forces---for example, the periodic appearance and disappearance of the sun. Its later expansion to include spring and winter as the life and death cycle of nature led it to take on a more mystical garb, until it evolved into a god myth. (One version of the latter is the tale of Orpheus's sojourn in Hades, the symbolism in which is clearly apparent.) The final outline of this theme comes to us in the various folktales of returning dead. Another evolution would be night personified as an ogre that swallows the sun; appearing later in the battle of Quetzalcoatl against evil beings as a god myth; and eventually becoming the legend of a night-demon such as a vampire.

It is racial folklore that the modern supernatural-horror tale most closely resembles; and it is also from this source that the themes themselves come. Of the various types to be outlined below the supernatural-horror story may fall cleanly into one; but again it may have elements of any of the others as well. To achieve unity of impression, however, it will nearly always stress one single dominating central idea---and this naturally aids the bibliographer in typing it according to one of the four headings. These are as follows:

I. The ghost story is probably the most easily defined of all, being simply the return of the dead, either pseudo-physically or in the form of some sort of psychic residue. Its beginning, as previously inferred, goes back to the resurrection theme of nature.

II. The tale involving manticism or magic is a bit more complex because of internal subdivision. A certain end is sought by someone who employs preternatural means, either ritualistic magic or invocational magic. Ritualistic magic is performed by the manticist and depends upon the principles of similarity and contact; invocational magic depends on the controlling of a demon who is compelled to accomplish the conjuror's design. An overlapping division of this category could be made according to objective magic (such as clairvoyance and prescience) which occurs without conscious design and manipulation, and subjective magic, the nature and use of which is clearly apprehended by the user.

III. Demonism is a type that affords the most latitude of variation, and both racial folklore and fiction are full of it. At one point the demoniac and the mantic categories overlap. When the demon is degraded---i.e., summoned to do the will of the manticist---the story naturally falls into classification II above; but when the demon is exalted---i.e., worshipped in some pagan ceremonial---the story belongs in class III. Human monsters, such as werewolves, vampires and changelings, likewise belong here, since they are forms that evolved from demoniac types.

IV. The fourth type, mental abnormality, has been exploited only in comparatively recent years. The principal subdivisions appear to be phobias and manias.

V. In the pure fantasy tale the supernatural-horror angle is not paramount; rather mysticism and/or metaphysics abound.

The prose styles used in the depiction of the supernatural-horror tale are of three kinds: the arabesque, the gothic and the realistic. The arabesque subdivides into the lyrical and the grotesque; both, however, have a strong poetic cast. The classic arabesque would be a style strongly tinted with phantasmagoric horror that suggests both the Oriental and the Saracenic. The gothic style is best described as an association of ideas that imply anything medievalistic. The realistic style is relatively modern in that it disregards the classical means of depicting the spectral, and instead depends on the commonplace, prosaic props of the everyday world.

All classifications mentioned in this brief essay are not held to be pedantically fixed or descriptively exhaustive. Additional study is needed to make both more definite; also, cross-variations in both basic types and styles are forever producing hybridizations difficult to pin down. But the theme and style of even such an errant tale will usually be dominated by one of the headings listed above.

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BEYOND THE SHADOW

by
Genevieve K. Stephens

Beyond the shadow on the wall
Stands Nemesis, ebon-cloaked and tall;
Here sit the weird sisters---three
Who weave the loom of destiny.
Ugly demons from seven hells
Pull the ropes of funeral bells.
The dreamer starts in sudden dread---
Behold! It is himself among the sheeted dead.

IN A GLASS—DARKLY

by
Matthew H. Onderdonk

Like a fine, scarlet thread through the dunnish fabric of English literature runs the tradition of the tale of terror. Many talented authors have devoted more than a minimum of their writing time to work in this genre, and not a few have made it their sole, lasting contribution. Take any great name and examine minutely his or her works, and somewhere will be found more than a hint of whisperings from beyond the rim of the known universe. This seeming anomaly in a race noted for at least a surface practicality and phlegmatic temper may be explained as a measure of their urbane sophistication. The weird or supernatural story doubtless had its beginnings in the folk lore of fear as early man cringed before an external world of harsh and inexplicable buffetings and an inner world of dreams and visions equally beyond his explanation. The modern approach must be intellectual, however, because in spite of the enormous and glaring gaps in our knowledge we do know quite a bit about the physical universe surrounding us and the psychical labyrinth within. A bit more, at least, than did our ancestors.

So it is that men and women of English letters---both British and American---are perhaps ideally equipped for literary ventures into this realm. By the very fact of the surface matter-of-factness and security of their intellectual grasp of things they do not fear to move on into the domain of the as-yet unknown. They are eager to break down the age-old barriers which still hide the deeper truths; they seek to make rational what the past considered wholly irrational; they hope to show as being merely supernormal what graybeards of old gibbered of as supernatural. To this quest they bring the clarity of thought and open-mindedness of outlook, the subtle yet controlled imagination, the tenacity of purpose and the vivacity of spirit which are among the most distinguished attributes of the breed. Science may make one world of us some day, but from the realistic outlook of today we may safely state that for the perfect approach to the weird tale the Latins are too narrowly tough-minded, the Celts in general too artless, the Teutons too ponderous and mystical, the Slavs too gloomy, and most of the peoples of the East too poetic and fatalistic.

We in America have made our own significant and lasting contributions to this same body of writing but our absolute place, thus far, has been distinctly subsidiary. Naturally, the comparative youth of our nation provides us with some excuse, but the inescapable fact remains that never has the weird tradition been a wide and potent influence over a whole era of our literary effort as it was, for example, during the age of Gothic romance in England. Another curious fact emerges: while we owe an immeasurable debt to our author friends in Britain as far as background and basic legend are concerned, some of our most eminent writers in the weird genre have reached their maturity without conspicuous evidence of direct and vital British influence being an integral factor in their work.

Poe seems swayed far more by the mad, chaotic and decadent dreams of Hoffmann and the German Romantic movement than by the comparatively unsubtle machinations of Walpole, Radcliffe or "Monk" Lewis. Ambrose Bierce seems so wholly native to America in spirit and outlook and style as to constitute almost a separate and distinct school in himself. Hawthorne and Wilkins-Freeman are unequivocally and completely children of our harsh, bleak and often fanatical New England tradition. Might not a reason for this seeming dilemma be found in an unconscious psychological revolt in the minds of our sensitive writers from the

basic roots of the mother country during our nation's earlier years? After all, we fled from those shores to attain freedom from that which we abhorred: the memories of George III and also of the tragic years 1812-1815 did not subside easily in our minds for a few generations. It is only in the last few decades that our fate and future has become so inextricably merged with that of Britain.

Is it significant that we were forced to await the works of a latter-day genius like Howard Lovecraft (who was incidentally a notorious and fanatical Anglophile) before we could note in our weird literature a definite and thorough reliance upon British tradition? It is rather striking, too, that in Lovecraft we see both of the great, main schools of the English weird genre blended into a single amalgam for probably the first time on our shores.

Classifications are sometimes as odious as comparisons, yet this writer has personally found it most convenient to look upon the spectral tale as falling roughly into two great, main categories or schools in British writing. Of course, there are subtle mutants and offshoots very difficult to label, but for practical purposes it would appear that they fall principally into either the "forthright" or the "mystical" camps.

The product of the first group is by definition unequivocal and direct; it is most closely identified with the unadulterated story of haunting and ghostly apparitions. Its locale is usually mundane, and its human characters are generally ordinary men and women. There is never any doubt about the existence and attributes of the spectre and its malevolent manifestations. Events are most important: atmosphere is relegated to the dim background or neglected entirely. The authors frequently insist that their tale is but a narrative of true happenings and that they do not seek to color it by artistic devices. Hence, while striving for verisimilitude and conviction it must be confessed that distressingly often the story lacks impact and psychological depth: for modern tastes it is "tame"---all too frequently it has a slightly musty and archaic flavor. We think of this first group as having its most prominent roots in the work of Sheridan Le Fanu, and reaching its greatest heights in the memorable Montague Rhodes James's shivery pieces. Among its latter-day exponents we note R. H. Malden, H. R. Wakefield and, to a certain extent, William Fryer Harvey and E. F. Benson.

The "mystical" school achieves its most striking effects by indirection and implication; its ghosts are most frequently noticed by the reaction they induce in the haunted one's mind or spirit. Very often they are merely a force or psychic influence---a ghost in the conventional sense may never be revealed or even hinted at. Its settings are exotic and overwhelming, its characters complex and fantastic. It strives to create an impression of terror in the reader's mind and this is most successfully brought about by deft bits of suggestive eerieness and dark, indirect hints. Often the crux of the tale's meaning lies in what the author leaves unsaid. It has a potent appeal to the modern mind by the very fact of its psychological delvings and its ability to set the reader's nerves jangling to the tune of the shrouded and inexplicable forces of the universe both within and outside of our familiar world. It may be thought of as having its greatest manifestation in the works of Arthur Machen, Lord Dunsany, Algernon Blackwood and Walter de la Mare. More contemporary disciples may be noted in the writings of Oliver Onions, John Metcalfe and L. P. Hartley....

The above random thoughts have come to mind as a result of a recent rereading of two English ghost story collections, both published last year by the Edward Arnold Company of London: Not Exactly Ghosts by Sir Andrew Caldecott, and Unholy Relics by M. P. Dare. These volumes follow, in general, the tenets of the forthright tradition, but in them the essence is so weakened, the brilliance so dimmed, that we seem (in the fine phrase of Le Fanu) to be viewing the great, weird, literary standards of the past as if "in a glass, darkly." However, since

it is worse than futile to dwell upon past glories in ignorance of present-day realities, we must perforce deal with the material at hand---however inferior by comparison.

Sir Andrew Caldecott's lifetime of public service in the East has naturally influenced the setting of many of his tales, but their overall mood still remains predominately British. Nowhere does the mysticism or poetry of the Orient introduce itself in his style and philosophy. Yet he carries into his writing none of the official heaviness which his former governorships of Ceylon or Hong Kong might lead us to anticipate. A clear English style devoid of attempts at artistic coloring or subtle impressions faces us. A certain air of half-humorous irony pervades a few of the tales. He aims at a realistic delineation of events; hence he at times swings perilously close to dullness in the very profuseness of detail. Lacking any great element of suspense or emotionally gripping climax, many of the efforts simply plod along to their inevitable conclusions and peter out.

The best (and certainly the most Jamesian) story is "A Room in a Rectory." This has all the familiar elements of antiquarianism and psychic residue of diabolistic worship from the dim past. It has to do with a young rector who rashly insists upon reopening a room which his unfortunate predecessor had ordered sealed. At first, the room seems to provide a most cozy study and the rector is delighted---smirking loftily at the superstition of the former inhabitant. Gradually, however, the parishioners become aware of an odd element in his sermons---a preoccupation with the darker aspects of theology, an unhealthy emphasis upon demons and the diabolical. The rector has the inspiration to include lines of poetry in his dissertations which have come to him during dreams by the fire in his study. The congregation notes with growing uneasiness that these lines seem to parody in a shocking manner the pious sentiments of the hymns he later directs them to sing. In his comfortable study the rector has dreams (or are they really dreams?) of obscene worship, bloody sacrifice and the Black Mass. As the central hierophant he recognizes a familiar face and eventually connects it with the likeness of the Prince of Evil as portrayed in one of the church's stained glass windows which dramatically represents St. Michael vanquishing the proud figure of Lucifer. Investigation shows that this same face is none other than that of one of the very early church rectors who used his own image for that of Satan when the window was created. This same personage died under rather mysterious circumstances over two centuries in the past. By now, the villagers are loath to attend services because of the terrifying behavior of their man of God: he no longer preaches in the pulpit, but with his back against the wall as though fearing some dark menace. The only real flaw in the tale is its comparatively mild denouement. James, I feel sure, would have made it more grisly and satisfying.

Other good stories in Not Exactly Ghosts are: "Sonata in D Minor" which tells with considerable power of a rare recording made by two mad musicians that drives any hapless listener to homicide; "Whiffs of the Sea," in which an odd seascape clears up an old mystery of a smuggler who was immured in a floating buoy by his cronies (here a menacing atmosphere is well maintained); and "Light in the Darkness," an absorbing but gruesome account of what befell an impious white man determined to show the natives that their pagan shrine was a fraud---and how the priests of the shrine have the last laugh. Perhaps the freshest idea in the collection is in "In Due Course," wherein a retiring planter who had an unfortunate experience with a praying mantis in the dim East uses his obsession to murderously obtain an inheritance back home, but is unexpectedly brought to book by an application of his own idea. This is a case of the biter bit with a vengeance and has a grotesque and startling climax.

The remaining seven tales range from fair to indifferent or even puerile in quality. "Branch Line to Benceston" tells in a rather poorly-developed se-

quence of events of an obscure antiquarian who kept an unspeakable rendezvous in a non-existent town. "Decastroland" has the familiar theme of murder through mutilation of a portrait, but is not overly convincing. "Christmas Reunion" tells about an unexpected and sinister Santa Claus who attends a Yuletide celebration with results which may be easily imagined. "The Pump in Thorp's Spinney" has an authentic shudder or two but is ruined by a weak plot structure. "Autoepitathy" fails to live up to its intriguing title and is, quite frankly, rather dull. "A Victim of Medusa" seems distinctly pointless, and "Fits of the Blues" is a pedestrian affair which could well have been eliminated. From the above it can be seen that the range of Sir Andrew's imaginative powers is not too sweeping, and that in addition he is hampered by an inability to bring his ideas to fruition in a majority of cases.

In Unholy Relics we have far more unity of mood and considerably more uniformity in quality, yet nowhere do any of the stories reach a really challenging emotional level. The author maintains (apparently in all seriousness) that his tales are based on actually experienced events, but his intentions are seldom realized as far as achievement of verisimilitude is concerned. There is a happy continuity to the collection in that all the stories concern the adventures of two bachelor antiquarians living in a sort of Holmes and Watson relationship. They are preoccupied with such esoteric literary efforts as a history of the Saxon kingdoms and an account of the Albigensian Wars. In quest of material for these books they experience the series of adventures recounted in Unholy Relics. The mood of these tales is decidedly Jamesian, and, considering the wide antiquarian knowledge and occult lore held by M. P. Dare, it is a cause for regret that in the majority of them he has seen fit to underplay the dramatic potentialities of his material. We should have been enthralled and thrilled by these stories because their ideas are good and the possibilities of the themes very promising. However, the lack of atmosphere, a mediocre style and indifferent development provide for the reader naught but placid interest except in a few exceptional instances.

The title tale is excellent. It relates what befell an antiquarian who was inadvertently locked for the night in a musty crypt of the ancient cathedral at Toulouse. Its supernatural horror reaches impressive heights: in his ignoble effort to steal the bones of English saint who by a twist of history was interred there, he looses dark and ancient forces which nearly bring about his dissolution. This story is well worth remembering when a new anthology is ever considered in the future. Good, also, is "A Nun's Tragedy," in which the two investigators are trapped in a ruined abbey of evil repute and come to grips with arcane evil beyond description. "The Demoniac Goat" relates of a cleric supposedly dead who still walks the hills of Derbyshire in the semblance of human form, and carries out the horrid rituals of pagan sacrifice; this tale ranks but a little below the above-mentioned two.

A great variety of gambits are encountered in the remaining tales. "The Nymph Still Lives" is an engaging fantasy, not without humor, in which the narrator sleeps by an old Roman wall and dreams of a beautiful and enticing dryad; on awakening, he finds a garland of wild flowers circling his brow! "Borgia Pomade" contains gruesome adumbrations of medieval sadism in the matter of a ghostly cosmetic jar discovered in a walled-up chamber, and tells the fate of those who used the beautiful container for unguents. "Fatal Oak" describes the decidedly uncongenial furniture made from the wood of an accursed gibbet and the unhappy persons in whose home the furniture resided. "The Beam" deals more or less competently with the poltergeist legend and, according to the accepted formulae, the dire and painful effects it has had upon the life of a young girl.

"The Haunted Drawers" is a secret compartment story of small consequence with rather distressing attempts at humor. Second Sight is the theme of "A For-

gotten Italian" in which a forgotten book is unearthed with the aid of automatic writing. A haunted suit of armor whose helmet flies off and travels around the halls of an old castle is the concern of "The Haunted Helmet." Of conventional pattern is "An Officer's Coat," wherein the spirit of a long-dead soldier returns to claim his scarlet tunic of Napoleonic days. None of these stories can be considered more than average in quality.

In "Abbott's Magic" the Black Mass is handled with considerable detail and not a little competence, but there are no surprises for the sophisticated reader and the strings of supernatural horror are plucked but lightly. "Bring Out Your Dead" of course deals with ghostly adumbrations from the past---namely, the Great Plague, when chalked doors were signs of abomination and the overflowing carts rumbled down the dark and filthy streets of grimly striken London. In this tale a young scholar by too deep preoccupation with the past actually contracts the dread malady with fatal results.

From the above it will be evident that M. P. Dare has missed few of the stock plots and situations of the supernatural tale. While contributing very little that is new or exciting in the genre, he has provided us with two or three entries of better-than-average stature and several others that are diverting enough on first reading, at least. All in all, though, the tales promise far more than they actually deliver, and it is with a sense of frustration and disappointment that we close the volume.

The writer must confess that it was with a good deal of relief and secure satisfaction that he was able to turn from his typewriter and survey on his shelves the great works of the past which, he feels sure, have little to fear so far from present-day competition. He will continue to read the modern product, but without too much anticipation. If this be retreat to an ivory tower, he can only retort by an obvious paraphrase of the famed words attributed to Patrick Henry.

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PHILLPOTTS, Eden

Lycanthrope: the Mystery of Sir William Wolf

London: Thornton Butterworth, 1937. 253pp. 19½ cm. 7/6.
London: Thornton Butterworth, 1938. 253pp. 19½ cm. 2/6.
New York: Macmillan, 1938. 280pp. 20½ cm. $2.
Toronto: Thomas Nelson, 1938. 253pp. 19½ cm. 90¢.

Review: In every field some books are better and some are worse than the worst and best. Not many, however, are like Lycanthrope, which must take its place as one of the best and worst novels in fantastic literature. Briefly stated, this paradox is brought about by having the best plot written in the clumsiest style, and the best complications ruined by the worst ending.

Sir William Wolf, last of his line, comes at the age of twenty-six into his inheritance: Stoombury, a typical old English estate. It is an eerie place, surrounded by gloomy oak woods and possessing a library full of musty books. William, a lover of the occult and the unusual, takes upon himself the task of sorting and cataloging his immense library---and, like those who consult the Necronomicon, he runs straightway into trouble.

There are few people in isolated Stoombury. The new owner's only associates are Marfoy, his oldest and best friend; Telford Wolf, a cousin; his fiancée, Alma Boyd; Alma's father, a minister; and Bob Meadows, William's valet.

In the course of his task William finds an old book in which is written a weird prophecy called "Twilight of the Wolf"; this contains ominous portents of what will come to pass when "a red wolf shall rule." William is red-headed---the

only red-haired man ever to attain the family title. He is more than a little upset by these promised dooms; the prophecy preys on him, and when one night, on ascending the staircase, he finds his hand suddenly wet with blood---on analysis it proves to be human blood---he is very much frightened. For the old verse had read: "His own hands red with human gore." Next there is the smell of a wolf, hanging about the lake; and then wolf-howls are heard from the oak woods, where no wolves have been seen for over a hundred years.

William's mind seems affected by this haunting. Marfoy, Telford and Alma attempt to convince him that some human agency is responsible; that a deliberate attempt is being made to unhinge his reason. Marfoy in particular refuses to consider any other alternative. But William will not listen. He is convinced that no real wolf, but a werewolf, is responsible; that it has been sent by God to punish him for some unknown crime of his ancestors. Any attempts to destroy this werewolf would be a sin and a sacrilege. William is firmly convinced also that on New Year's Eve he, too, will become a wolf by a lycanthropic change; that "red wolf" will meet "grey wolf" and the curse be ended forever---paid for by his own death. And so he stubbornly refuses to take any protective steps whatsoever, and patiently submits to what he believes to be certain fate.

All this naturally affects others as well as William. Marfoy and Telford are very concerned for their friend. Alma is almost broken-hearted. Meadows resigns, and his place is taken by a capable young man with an interest in the occult, James Callender.

As the fatal night approaches, Marfoy, Boyd and Telford agree on a plan to drug William so that he will sleep undisturbed---for if New Year's Eve passes without incident William agrees to forget about the prophecy and search for explanations elsewhere. William dines alone in his room, takes the opiate as they have planned, and soon after Callender reports him sleeping soundly.

At the stroke of midnight a lean, lupine form steals along the hall to the door of the baronet's room, and here Phillpotts reaches his dramatic climax. For when it leaps at the sleeper with a horrible cry, a red wolf rises from the bed---and the two lock into a death-grapple!

...Toll the knell of a story that might have been. The author retraces his steps and proceeds to tell the whole story over again, this time from the viewpoint of Callender, who is actually no valet at all, but a detective brought secretly into the house on the initiative of Boyd. Callender quickly discovers that the "prophecy" is a forgery---the pages carrying it are bound into the book crookedly---but instead of relieving William's mind, the two try to set a trap for the culprit responsible.

The author's explanation sounds weak and unconvincing. Marfoy and Telford, it seems, are the conspirators. Telford wanted the Wolf title and money; Marfoy, the reward he would get for his aid in the plot. Telford (conveniently an artist) did the forging and prepared a wolf costume, while Marfoy was responsible for most of the other spurious effects.

On the fatal night Telford donned his wolf costume, hoping to frighten Sir William to death, or at worst drive him insane. But the baronet had actually been drugged at Alma Boyd's house, and put to bed there. Bob Meadows, working with Callender and Boyd, attired himself for the surprise and took William's place. Telford, confronted by what looked like a red wolf, feared that William actually had become a werewolf, and fainted from sheer fright. Marfoy, trapped, commits suicide by blowing his brains out.

Many supposedly fantastic tales have logical endings, and at this I shall never protest. But Phillpotts has spoken of "Telford's very real affection for his cousin," and "Marfoy, whose only friend, really, was young Wolf"---and that, I stubbornly maintain, is unfair indeed. It is not even a surprise story,

for long before the alleged surprise arrives we are told who the culprits are---by the author himself! In fact, the reader's interest drops to zero after the mid-book climax, and the six chapters which follow are all anticlimactic. It almost seems as if Phillpotts got his characters into a mess from which they could not be extricated logically---and resorted to the easiest possible solution.

Therefore, bemoan the werewolf that wasn't! Never peep between the covers of that infamous fantastic mystery, Lycanthrope: for you too will be as fascinated by the first half, and as disappointed, frustrated and maddened by the second half as was I.

---Marion Zimmer.

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FANTASY IN THE "POPULAR" MAGAZINE

compiled by
William H. Evans

(Compiler's note: This magazine, begun in November, 1903 by Street & Smith, was designed primarily for boys, and featured the usual Dick Merriwell type of stories at first. Within a few issues, though, it had changed into a general adventure fiction periodical for adults, much like Argosy. It was the usual pulp size; while the first few issues were rather thin, it soon increased in thickness, and later, with an increase in price, became quite a thick book.... I am indebted to Darrell C. Richardson for use of his personal list of fantasy in Popular, against which the one below was checked before being published. ---W.H.E.)

Feb. 1904 (vol. 1, #4)

"At Jupiter's Call" by R. H. Farnham (5pp): A device to neutralize Earth's gravitational pull on a meteor from Jupiter, and so have the meteor pulled back to that planet. An interesting story, well advanced past its time.

Mar. 1904 (1,5)

"After the Paper Went to Bed" by M. J. Reynolds (4pp): An overworked, well-alcoholed city editor thinks he is seeing pink elephants, but a more mundane explanation is found. Average.

Dec. 1904 (3,2)

"The Sea Serpent Syndicate" by Everard Jack Appleton (7pp): A sea serpent is found---and lost again. Fair.

Jan. 1905 (3,3)

"Ayesha: the Further History of She-Who-Must-Be-Obeyed" by H. Rider Haggard (8-part serial)(36, 26, 20, 15, 17, 16, 14, 12pp): This sequel to She is deservedly one of the great classics of fantasy-adventure, and fully as interesting as its predecessor. Every fantasy lover should be thoroughly familiar with it. The importance that Popular's editor placed on this story is shown by the fact that the first three installments were illustrated in color on the magazine's cover; this was the first story to be so illustrated, and remained the only one for the next seven or eight years. In addition, various information by and about Haggard and a long summary of She accompanied each installment. These numbers are well worth looking for.

Feb. 1905 (3,4)

"The Rampant Lizard" by Hugh Henstreet (4pp): If you would like to read this story but lack the February, 1905 Popular, take down your September, 1927 Weird Tales and turn to "The Adventure of the Pipe" by Richard Marsh. I've not compared the two word for word, but I do know that both have identical themes, developments, incidents and even similar phrasing. (The Marsh sto-

ry, incidentally, was the first published; it originally appeared about the turn of the century.) Anyway, the story is about a pipe with a snake carved on the bowl and stem. The snake moves when the pipe is smoked---but there's a rational explanation, of course.

"Billy Martin, Volcanoist" by Everard Jack Appleton (5pp): "Volcano dust," when planted, starts small volcanoes! Just a hoax again.

Apr. 1905 (3,6)

"From the Deep Sea" by Henry C. Rowland (2-part serial)(7,6pp): Prof. Oppenheim explodes a mine deep in the ocean and brings up part of the sea bottom, including a giant squid. The story is really a sea mystery, with its fantasy incidental in the final paragraphs.

May 1905 (4,1)

"Mr. 'Iggins' Invisible Cloth" by Everard Jack Appleton (6pp): A pretty poor tale about a cloak of invisibility used to "fix" a horse race.

"The Ape and the Diamond" by Richard Marsh (5-part serial)(20,17,23,25,16pp): A cursed jewel brings its owners bad luck; it cannot be sold, but must be given away. An unusual story, quite interesting.

Oct. 1905 (4,6)

"A Hypnotic Digression" by Everard Jack Appleton (6pp): Hypnotism. A sequel to Appleton's other stories, and as bad.

Feb. 1906 (5,4)

"A Prisoner of the Mind" by James K. Egerton (33pp): The first in a series of tales featuring one Tommy Williams, a hypnotist who uses his powers to solve crimes, etc. Here he makes a criminal reënact a murder. Well handled.

"The Sound Machine" by Everard Jack Appleton (6pp): Another hoax---this time about a device alleged to change noise into power. Skip it.

"The Other Man" by Martin G. Flavin (11pp): Hallucinations of a man while on a wrecked ship. Very unusual.

Apr. 1906 (5,6)

"A Mesmeric Mystery" by James K. Egerton (36pp): Tommy Williams locates buried treasure by hypnotizing a descendent of a pirate. Trouble arrives when the hypnotized man, imagining he is the pirate, gets loose. Not too bad.

Oct. 1906 (6,6)

"The Adventure of the Bahama Cay" by James K. Egerton (35pp): A direct sequel to the tale just above, and quite good. This is the last genuine fantasy in the series, which continued in the continental detective vein in Popular for another three years with about twenty more titles.

Jan. 1907 (7,3)

"The Strange Cases of a Medical Free-lance: 1. The Case of the Atavistic Patient" by Wm. B. M. Ferguson (8pp): Dr. Tiberius Tinkle, a most unusual M. D., has a patient who is persuaded that he has inherited a cannibalistic trait. Dr. Tinkle finds out he is being drugged---and why. So-so.

Feb. 1907 (7,4)

"2. The Case of the Musical Jackal" (8pp): This time Dr. Tinkle works with hypnotism and a card sharper.

Mar. 1907 (7,5)

"3. The Case of the Vegetable Rabies" (7pp): Attempted murder disguised as hydrophobia. So-so.

Apr. 1907 (7,6)

"5. The Case of the Hell-House" (8pp): An improperly-run asylum is discovered and corrected. These get worse.

May 1907 (8,1)

"6. The Case of the Anemic Patient" (9pp): Drugs lead to strange things, including murder. The last of the series, thank goodness.

"A Problem in Motion" by Everard Jack Appleton (6pp): A perpetual motion de-

vice, driven by love vibrations---but it runs backwards! Above average.

Aug. 1907 (8,4)

"The White Horse of Drowning Ford" by B. M. Bower (8pp): A supernatural western, about an alleged ghost horse, with a mundane explanation. Poor.

Dec. 1907 (9,2)

"Last Luck Lake" by S. Carleton: A werewolf tale turns out to be a hoax.

Apr. 1908 (9,6)

"The Other Bed" by E. F. Benson (6pp): About a haunted room. Very good.

Jul. 1908 (10, 3)

"Hearts and Diamonds" by Francis Whillock (2-part serial)(20,19pp): A lost race of Mayas in Central America is discovered by some explorers, who have the usual adventures with native princesses and priests. Average.

"The Kinship of Ages" by James Barr (7pp): A cave story and its modern sequel.

Oct. 1908 (10,6)

"The Microbe of Fear" by Chas. Steinfort Pearson (14pp): A strange medicinal treatment by a band of Indians causes a man to become unafraid. He investigates, and eventually finds both a drug that causes fear and also the secret of the Indians' remedy, only to lose them in a fire. Better than average.

Mar. 1909 (11,5)

"The Land of the Lost" by Roy Norton (6-part serial)(19,22,19,18,16,20pp): Mysterious warnings of a cataclysm, which destroys much of the American West Coast and causes a new land to arise, start things off. The new land has a mountain valley inhabited by superscientific Incas. Very good.

(with the October 1909 issue Popular magazine began to appear semi-monthly.)

Jan. 1, 1910 (14,6)

"Told in the Storm" by Rex Ellingwood Beach, pseud. (6pp): An unusual tall story of the gold rush days and a man who wouldn't stay dead.

Feb. 1, 1910 (15,2)

"The Mate of His Soul" by Morgan Robertson (10pp): A man at sea is obsessed with the vision of a demon.

Mar. 1, 1910 (15,4)

"In the Wake of the Weather Cloth" by Mayn Clew Garnett (4pp): A farcical tall tale of a submarine that dove through the earth and came up in China.

June 1, 1910 (16,4)

"The Lake of Pearl" by James Francis Dwyer (6pp): About a Borneo lake that is liquid mother-of-pearl. A well-written, unusual little yarn.

Oct. 15, 1910 (18,1)

"The City of Dread" by Stewart Edward White (3-part serial)(22,18,18pp): A mad scientist terrorizes New York with a device that removes power, sound and light. An interesting story.

July 1, 1911 (20,6)

"The Ninth Battleship" by Robert Dean (13pp): A phantom vessel appears in the midst of the U.S. battle fleet during a tense crisis with Japan. Good despite the fact that no explanation is ever offered.

Oct. 1, 1911 (21,6)

"Telepathy" by Geo. Patullo (5pp): As the title indicates.

Dec. 1, 1911 (22,4)

"The Darragh Clurichawn" by Francis Lynde (13pp): An engineer is apparently haunted by a clurichawn---an Irish dwarf whose presence presages death---and almost has a wreck. There's a mundane explanation, but the story still is interesting.

May 1, 1912 (24,2)

"The Green-Goods King" by Arthur B. Reeve (50pp): The first of the Craig Kennedy stories. Counterfeit money and murder mixed with magnetic sound re-

cording (36 years ago!) and similar s-f devices. Good.

July 1, 1912 (24,6)
"The Treasure Vault" by Arthur B. Reeve (50pp): Craig Kennedy solves the mystery of how an impregnable bank vault was entered. Good.

Oct. 15, 1912 (26,1)
"The Monster of Middleditch" by Wilbur Daniel Steele (8pp): A small village is terrified by a monster variously described by the inhabitants. Only one person actually sees anything---and it turns out to be germs in his eye! Somehow this was a little too much for me.

Nov. 1, 1912 (26,2) airship.
"The Flying Eye" by Jacques Futrelle (8pp): Readable tale of an invisible

Jan. 1, 1913 (26,6)
"The Mind Master" by Burton E. Stevenson (4-part serial)(22,29,28,26pp): Murder in New York, with a Hindu mystic in the thick of it. Borderline.

Feb. 15, 1913 (27,3)
"Inca Gold" by Ledward Rawlinson (6pp): An adventurer claims to have discovered the lost treasure of the Incas, and produces gold relics as "proof." Better

Feb. 1, 1913 (27,2) skip it.
"The Peace Advocate" by Edwin Balmer (7pp): A grim, realistic story of a fight between two battleships; the time is "tomorrow." A gripping account of a battle that hasn't happened---yet.

Mar. 15, 1913 (27,5)
"Against Odds" by Edwin Balmer (9pp): Another future war story; this time a lone American battleship is trapped off South America by two enemy vessels. A realistic, not too pleasant picture of war.

Apr. 1, 1915 (27,6)
"The Death Thought" by Arthur B. Reeve (2-part serial)(20,32pp): Craig Kennedy solves a mystery involving, it seems, telepathy---as well as some unusual scientific instruments. Average.

May 1, 1913 (28,2)
"The Third Arm" by Edwin Balmer (10pp): A sequel to the first two tales, this one introduces the airship to the battleship---to the latter's disadvantage.

May 15, 1913 (28,3)
"The Fight in the Air" by Edwin Balmer (10pp): The airship gets a return bout.
"The Destroyer" by Burton E. Stevenson (5-part serial)(26,23,28,25,31pp): Intrigues and European spies after a device to set off ammunition from afar.

June 1, 1913 (28,4)
"The Battle below the Water" by Edwin Balmer (8pp): Submarines appear for the first time in a major fleet engagement. The final slug-fest is to follow.

July 1, 1913 (28,6) "The Fight of the Fire Control" by Edwin Balmer:
The battle between the massed American and enemy fleets is decided by superior fire control provided by the use of airplane spotting. Much the same type of story as Leinster's "Politics" (Amazing Stories, June, 1932). Good.

Aug. 15, 1913 (29,3)
"The Retroactive Existence of Mr. Juggins" by Stephen Leacock (3pp): A parable about a man's life that runs backwards. Unusual but uninspired.

Sep. 1, 1913 (29,4)
"The Biggest Story that Ever Happened" by Henry W. Hyde (6pp): A device that explodes ammunition at a distance is perfected, and prevents war with Japan.

Sep. 15, 1913 (29,5) Reasonably good.
"The Girl of the 100 Steps" by J. Kenilworth Egerton (3-part serial)(35,33,31 pp): Tommy Williams returns with a murder in Paris and New York. Borderline.

Dec. 1, 1913 (30,4)
"The Avenger" by Burton E. Stevenson (62pp): An unusual detective story with

fantasy overtones. There is very neat method of scaring a person to death, too.

Jan. 1, 1914 (30,6)

"The Broom of the Desert" by Sax Rohmer (12pp): Adventure and mystery within the shadows of the pyramids. Very good atmosphere and an apparent resurrection.

"The Scientific Gunman" by Arthur B. Reeve (2-part serial)(29,30pp): Craig Kennedy against a gunman whose us anesthetic bullets, etc. Full of fancy gadgets, but interesting, even nowadays.

Feb. 1, 1914 (31,2)

"The Saber-Tooth" by George Sterling (8pp): The first of the "Babes in the Wood" series about a cave boy and girl. Their adventures are more interesting and better told than Burroughs, and more believable, too. All are good.

Feb. 15, 1914 (31,3)

"The Pool of Pitch" (6pp): The second of the series.

March 1, 1914 (31,4)

"Naa-Shus the Man Ape" by Geo. Sterling (7pp): Third of the series.

March 15, 1914 (31,5)

"The Trapping of Rhoom" by Geo. Sterling (7pp): Fourth of the series.

Apr. 1, 1914 (31,6)

"The Wrath of Lions" by George Sterling (7pp): The fifth.

Apr. 15, 1914 (32,1)

"The Involuntary Exile" by Geo. Sterling (7pp): The last story in the excellent "Babes in the Wood" series.

May 1, 1914 (32,2)

"The Terrorists" by Arthur B. Reeve (2-part serial)(38,27pp): A device to detonate explosives by wireless is included in this detective tale. Dated.

Sep. 15, 1914 (33,5)

"Out of the Miocene" by John Chas. Beecham (2-part serial)(20,26pp): A modern man is sent back into the prehistoric via hypnotism. While good, this does not compare with Sterling's "Babes in the Wood" series noted above.

Oct. 7, 1914 (34,2)

"Albrecht von Geierberg's Mind" by Wolcott Le Clear Beard (27pp): Certainly World War I must have made writers conscious of need for a device to explode ammunition at a distance, for this is another tale embodying it. So-so.

Nov. 23, 1914 (34,5)

"The Projectile" by Edwin Balmer (10pp): An account of the Battle of Jutland from an airplane overhead. Good, but minor fantasy content.

Jan. 7, 1915 (35,2)

"The Man Who Made Gold" by Jos. Ernest (12pp): He made gold---and also transmutated microbes. One of the new germs killed him, and after his death the new species of germ died out and the gold reverted to lead. Readable.

Jan. 23, 1915 (35,3)

"The Stone Age" by A. M. Chisholm (23pp): A recently-excavated stone axe affects one member of an archeological partly strangely; he dreams of prehistoric times, walks in his sleep, etc. When several crimes---including murder---are committed thereabouts, he gets into trouble. Turns out to have been someone else, though. Average.

Feb. 23, 1915 (35,5)

"The Millennium Engine" by Leavitt Ashley Knight (10pp): A 1934 inventor devises a new engine that is made of specially tempered copper and uses nitroglycerine for fuel. (Apparently Knight was unfamiliar with the properties of this chemical, or he wouldn't have employed it!) This puts the railroads out of business, which results in a national crisis and general panic. Finally a new social system arises.

April 7, 1915 (36,2)

"Across a Million Years" by Geo. C. Shedd: A paleontologist remembers a previous cave life. (Reprinted later in 100,1.)

Apr. 23, 1915 (36,3)

"The Inert Atom" by Francis Lynde: Atomic power released again. So-so.

"Haroun Pasha" by Sax Rohmer, pseud (A.S.Ward): A better-than-average Rohmer

June 23, 1915 (37,1) tale of Oriental mysticism.

"Beyond the Threshold" by Joseph Ernest (9pp): A man projects his mind into the fourth dimension and sees the future; meanwhile, the effect is to throw his body processes into a faster metabolic rate. So-so.

Dec. 20, 1915 (39,1)

"The Dragon of the Cunchas" by John Chas. Bucham (23pp): A sea monster in a South Seas island lagoon terrifies the natives. It is finally killed by the crew of a trading ship. The only remaining trace of the monster is a scale similar to that of an extinct dinosaur. Average.

Feb. 7, 1916 (39,4)

"The Devil's Checkmate" by Curt Hansen (6pp): The devil appears before a man and informs him that when he---the man---makes the sign of the cross he will die. When he inadvertantly does so on a chessboard the prediction materializes. Rather good.

"Mystery and the Melbourne Cup" by Clarence L. Cullen (14pp): A hoax about a mechanical horse that gets out of control after being entered in a race. Not particularly good.

March 20, 1916 (40,1)

"The Phantom Cougar" by Bertrand W. Sinclair (22pp): Another hoax. This time it's about a huge cougar that mysteriously disappears after materializing a few feet away from a hunter. A movie projector is the solution.

May 7, 1916 (40,4)

"The Familiar" by J. Kennelworth Egerton (2-part serial)(36,34pp): A borderline fantasy about intrigue and spies.

July 7, 1916 (41,2)

"When Sullivan Was Mpret" by J. K. Egerton (2-part serial) (29,33pp): More

Sep. 20, 1916 (42,1) spies.

"The Tower of Terror" by Francis Metcalfe (J.K.Egerton)(2-part serial)(38, 40

Oct. 20, 1916 (42,3) pp): Ditto.

"The Third Phase" by Francis Metcalfe (2-part serial)(34,30pp): Same again.

Feb. 7, 1917 (43,2)

"The Forgotten Land" by Henry Herbert Knibbs (8pp): The United States is invaded and conquered by the Japanese. One man is left alone in the West. He travels north, meets another white girl, and they return to a hidden valley where they live happily for years. Meanwhile the Japs die of a plague and the Indians recover the country. Finally the last whites die of old age. The story is very effectively told, and the writing on a high plane.

May 7, 1917 (44,4)

"The Annhilator" by Walter M. Darbung (11pp): An invasion of the West Coast by the Japanese in 1923 is defeated by an electric gun that causes tremendous explosions at a distance. Run of the mine stuff.

June 7, 1917 (44,6)

"De Profundis" by H. de Vere Stacpoole (8pp): A fabulous sea monster is almost caught. An unusual idea, well developed.

Oct. 20, 1917 (46,3)

"His Eminence, the Devil" by Francis Lynde (68pp): High finance, aided by a device to control electricity from a distance. Mostly mystery and intrigue.

Nov. 7, 1917 (46,4)

"Over There" by Henry C. Rowland (2-part serial)(17,12pp): A trip to Mars---which is inhabited by people who are reincarnations of Earth people. Love

enters the picture, and finally the hero is forced to return to Earth, with his sweetheart remaining behind and awaiting his reincarnation. Interesting, but a bit too mystical.

Nov. 20, 1917 (46,5)

"On the Long Leash" by Holman Day (89pp): Hypnotism is used to commit a "perfect" crime. This is mostly incidental to the detective work, however.

Dec. 7, 1917 (46,6)

"From the World's Yesterday" by Henry C. Douglas (9pp): An unimpressive tale about a hidden valley in Canada where a mammoth still lives.

Jan. 20, 1918 (47,3)

"The White Eye" by H. de Vere Stacpoole (11pp): A plague of blindness seizes the world, sparing only the young children. Since machines cannot conveniently be used any longer, civilization gradually returns to a simple, primitive existence, with science and technology ultimately being outlawed permanently. Is this a plea for the "simple life" by an enemy of science? If so, it fails to convince.

Feb. 20, 1918 (47,5)

"The Arbiters" by Henry C. Rowland (4-part serial)(29,28,27,26pp): Spies and intrigue, with everyone after a formula for exploding ammunition at a distance. It is better than most other stories in this vein, and has more actual s-f too.

March 7, 1918 (47,6)

"Castle Innes" by H. de Vere Stacpoole (5pp): A ruined castle is haunted by its former rascally owners. The usual lost traveller visits it and escapes.

March 20, 1918 (48,1)

"The Psychomancers" by Holman Day (92pp): A poor hoax about the dead coming back.

April 20, 1918 (48,3)

"The Merlin-Ames Torpedo" by L. H. Robbins (65pp): A wonderful new invention provides excuse for more of the usual adventurous intrigues and spying.

"The Campbells Are Coming" by Wm. A. Shryer (23pp): Atomic power and spies. The secret involves a new way of procuring radium and its use as a source of heat.

Aug. 7, 1919 (53,4)

"The Green Rust" by Edgar Wallace (4-part serial)(27,29,20,22pp): A post-World War I German plot to destroy the world's wheat crop by a plague is uncovered and foiled in a typical Wallace thriller. Appeared in book form in 1920.

Sep. 7, 1919 (53,6)

"Breath of the Devil" by Howard Fielding (2-part serial)(23,24pp): This time a super gas is the object of spies and intrigue.

Sep. 20, 1919 (54,1)

"The Glyphs" by Roy Norton (56pp): A story about searching for and locating a hidden Maya city---which, surprisingly, has no native princesses! Good.

Oct. 20, 1919 (54,3)

"Adventures on the Borderland" by W. A. Anderson (6pp): A man has a nightmare of being dead---and dies in the manner he dreamed. Above average.

Nov. 7, 1919 (54,4)

"The Secret City" by Roy Norton (3-part serial)(27,32,29pp): A sequel to "The Glyphs." This time the expected intrigues enter. Not as good as the first story.

Jan. 20, 1920 (55,3)

"Wildfire" by L. H. Robbins (54pp): In 1940 Labor, being virtually all-powerful in the United States, is about to take over the government openly. Then a very destructive atomic ray enters the picture; government and capitalists get control of it. The coup (which turns out to have been Russian-inspired) is nipped in the bud, and seven years later atomic power is harnessed for making the world a better place to live in. Cops-and-robberish, but not bad.

Feb. 7, 1920 (55,4)

"The Seeds of Enchantment" by Gilbert Frankau (5-part serial) (33,27,26,27,31 pp): A lost colony in Indo-China. Good, but mostly adventure.

"Barney of the World Police: 1. "Cape to Cairo" by Arthur Tuckerman (7pp): Air police in 1930. Much like the old Air Wonder stuff, with a dash of Ray Cummings' "Crimes of the Year 2000" stories.
Feb. 20, 1920 (55,5)
"2. The Radio Call from Kupang" (7pp): Second in the series.
March 7, 1920 (55,6)
"3. The Bronze Key of Paradise"(12pp): Finishing the series.
Nov. 7, 1920 (58,2)
"The Black Grippe" by Edgar Wallace (7pp): A plague makes everyone in London ---and the rest of the world---blind for five days. The British carry on.
Dec. 7, 1920 (58,4) Unusual.
"The Malmarte 'Works'" by H. P. Downes (12pp): A poor hoax about a device to produce heat indefinitely---from nothing.
April 20, 1921 (60,1)
"The Wonderful Day" by Bertram Atkey (18pp): A device to read people's minds does not disclose the usual sordid thoughts. Well done.
June 7, 1921 (60,4)
"As Shades They Met Again" by Lew Fitz Morris (5pp): The ghosts of two race-track fans meet on Charon's ferry and decide to set up race-tracks in Hades.
July 20, 1921 (61,1) Poor pseudo-humor.
"The Radium Veil" by John Collier (14pp): Invisibility, used for crime, does
"The Thunder-Maker" by L. H. Robbins (2-part serial) not pay. Medium.
(14,18pp): Bringing the upper atmosphere to sea level for cooling purposes also brings trouble. Again mostly commercial intrigue. So-so.
Oct. 7, 1921 (61,6)
"The Day of Uniting" by Edgar Wallace (61pp): A comet is due to hit the Earth and keeping it secret provides a good deal of Wallace thrills. Everything turns out to have been due to an error in calculations. Good.
Jan. 20, 1922 (63,1)
"The Body of Blynn Anderson" by Hubbard Hutchinson (8pp): Metempsychosis by
Aug. 7, 1922 (65,2) mental force. So-so.
"Brains" by Alan Sullivan (8pp): Personalities are changed when part of the brain is replaced with that of another. Standard stuff.
Sep. 7, 1922 (65,4)
"The Splendor of Asia" by L. Adams Beck (44pp): An Egyptian colony in the Himalayas, degenerate beast-men and the usual beautiful princesses. Interesting reading, and especially noteworthy for a reference to the Abominable Snowmen, also used by H. P. Lovecraft.
May 20, 1923 (68,3)
"The Haunted Ticker" by Percival Wilde (15pp): A stock market ticker continues to give quotations for speculation after the death of its owner. Good.
Nov. 7, 1923 (70,2)
"The Amethyst Scarab" by L. Adams Beck (91pp): Reincarnation of an Atlantean queen buried in an Egyptian tomb, a scarab ring with hypnotic powers, and invasion and revolt in India are the varied ingredients that make an interesting novel of mystery and intrigue.
Dec. 7, 1923 (70,4)
"The Red-Coated Horseman" by Raymond J. Brown (14pp): A hackneyed tale of a murdered man's ghost returning for revenge.
Jan. 1, 1925 (75,1)
"The Eyes of Sebastian" by Alan Sullivan (8pp): A typical werewolf story.
April 20, 1925 (76,1)
"The House in the Reeds" by Signe Toksvig (8pp): A ghost saves a man's life by calling a doctor. Of average quality.

May 7, 1926 (80,2)
"The Goblin of Gabriel's Hole" by William West Winter (71pp): A secret search for treasure and werewolves (which turn out to be a hoax) laid in Idaho.
"The Goddess from the Shades" by John Buchan (4-part serial)(38,34,34,28pp): A case of temporal prevision. Every year on the first Monday in April a man experiences the same dream of a strange room. Finally he happens to travel to a Greek island, where isolated provincials still celebrate ancient pagan rites at Easter. There he meets the usual beautiful girl, who is of course slated to be sacrificed at the next festival, and by various means manages to save her. A good, entertaining novel, published in book form later that same year as The Dancing Floor.

Aug. 20, 1926 (81,3)
"The Abominable Test" by Fred MacIsaac (9pp): Resurrection of the dead in an army hospital. Very good atmosphere.

Nov. 7, 1926 (82,2)
"Empress of the Sands" by Robert H. Rhode (71pp): A hidden city in the Sahara ruled by a beautiful princess, some American adventurers, intrigue and fighting, with the Foreign Legion arriving at the last moment. So-so.

April 7, 1927 (83,6)
"The Greek Statue" by Fred MacIsaac (14pp): A travelling American business man finds a statue that resembles him in an Italian museum. He falls asleep and dreams and dreamsof a previous incarnation as the statue's original.

June 7, 1927 (84,4)
"The Tomb of the Elephants" by H. de Vere Stacpoole (9pp): The tomb of the elephants is found in Central Africa. Borderline, but good atmosphere.

(With the September 24, 1927 issue---vol. 85, #5---Popular became a weekly.)

Oct. 8, 1927 (86,1)
"Bride of the Tiger" by William West Winter (47pp): Aztec remnants in Mexico, an American adventuress, a beautiful girl worshipped as a goddess and a jaguar lead to wild adventures. So-so.

Nov. 26, '27 (87,2)
"What Walks Beside Me" by Emmet F. Harte (14pp): A beautiful, wistful little story about a boy who saw men's characters as the animals accompanying them.

Dec. 17, 1927 (87,5)
"The Last Atlantide" by Fred MacIsaac (6-part serial)(28,25,21,28,25,19pp): A manuscript found in a pre-Mayan ruin tells the story of Atlantis and its final destruction. Full of court intrigue, beautiful women and fighting.

Jan. 21, 1928 (88,4)
"Port o' Missing Planes" by William F. McMorrow (7pp): A group of fliers are marooned in a fertile oasis in the Antarctic peopled by white savages.

March 24, 1928 (90,1)
"Og, the Dawn Man" by Edison Marshall (4-part serial)(23,27,23,19pp): A flier crashes in the Yukon, loses his memory, and lives as a caveman. Borderline.

April 28, 1928 (90,6)
"The Sky Buccaneers" by William F. McMorrow (38pp): Air pirates in the future.

July 7, 1928 (92,4)(with this number Popular became a semimonthly once more.)
"The Vanishing Point" by Francis Lynde (47pp): A ray makes things invisible.

2nd Nov., 1929 (97,5)
"The Bottomless Gulf" by John E. Gurdon (8pp): The ghost of an airman comes back to hear about his death. Quite well done.

1st Feb., 1930 (98,4)
"The Earthquakers" by Francis Lynde (54pp): Atomic power---misused. The story concerns mainly racketeers attempting to get hold of the secret. So-so.

2nd April, 1930 (99,3)
"The Devil's Checkmate" by Curt Hansen (6pp): reprint from Feb. 7, 1916, q.v.
1st June, 1930 (99,6)
"The Phantom Cougar" by Bertrand W. Sinclair (22pp): reprint from 3-20-16.
2nd June, 1930 (100,1)
"Across a Million Years" by Geo. C. Shedd (11pp): reprint from April 7, 1915.
2nd Aug., 1930 (100,5)
"Morgo the Mighty" by Sean O'Larkin (4-part serial)(44,26,30,20pp):
Adventures in Hamalayan caves with bat-men, giant ants, intelligent reptiles, super chickens and beautiful girls. Three fantastic covers by Brown, too.

---oOo--- (concl. on p. 292)

Merritt, Abraham and Bok, Hannes

The Black Wheel

New York: New Collectors' Group, 1948. 115pp. 27.5 cm. $3.

Further information: The book is misdated "1947" on the title-page. This edition is limited to 1000 numbered copies; Hannes Bok has drawn six full-page illustrations and a pictorial title-page for it.

Review: The Black Wheel is the second unfinished Merritt novel to be completed by Hannes Bok. This task should have been easier than the first, for he inherited not only a reasonably detailed outline of the entire plot but the first seven chapters---some 25,000 words, or about thirty per cent of the work---completely written. (Merritt reputedly never put his plots on paper; he was supposed merely to keep them in his mind's eye while composing. You may consider the fact that he did not in this case to be either the exception that proves the rule or clear proof that tradition is all wet, depending on how you tend to view such matters.)

Several versions of these initial chapters existed, and I am told that Bok pieced together portions of each to make as long an opening as possible. The result may be a mélange, but it is a smoothly homogeneous one, its literary sutures nowhere evident. Merritt's writing here is definitely his mature work. This fact becomes obvious after one has read only a few hundred words, and a chance reference on page 19 dates it even more exactly: some time after mid-1934. The plot, too, is late Merritt, depending as it does more upon psychological interplay of personalities than fantastic situations and overcolored descriptions.

There is enough fantasy in it for all that. Disabled and blown off her course by a Caribbean hurricane, the Susan Ann, with as queer a lot of people aboard as you could assemble, limps into the shelter of a tiny islet just off the Bahama Bank. There, half buried in the lagoon sand, lies the hulk of an old wreck. On the weatherbeaten deck is the ship's wheel, queerly intact, its convex black rim strangely carved with the outlines of eighteen human hands; and the door to the cabin is kept shut by a frame of spikes projecting chevaux-de-frise-like a full foot out of the wood. At this point Merritt's contribution abruptly ends, and the troubles of those on the Susan Ann begin.

So, incidentally, do those of the reader. Because from there on The Black Wheel gets progressively more verbose and dull. True, there are occasional spots where his interest again flickers briefly alight---such as the discovery of the jewels and the weird corpses in the spiked cabin, and the scenes where the latters' personalities insinuate themselves into the dreams of the party---but the effectiveness of these scenes seems more a result of plot than narration.

In general, Bok's work varies from fair to almost right---and "almost right," as everyone knows, is an annoyingly unsatisfactory characteristic for any writing to have. But let me be more specific. In revieving The Fox Woman I spoke

of the similarity between Merritt's early style and Bok's imitation of it, saying that more often than not the two could not be told apart. I spoke also of the two authors' faults being much the same---feverish narration, florid description and exaggerated, overused figures of speech. These parallels made for unity in The Fox Woman. In The Black Wheel, on the other hand, Bok's early Merritt style is glaringly out of place. It grates on the mind's eye, it constantly gets in the way of the story. Merritt never abandoned the unusual in his riper productions, but he used it sparingly, depending primarily on sound characterization and authentic, down-to-earth values for effect. Bok refuses (or is unable) to adopt this restraint; he seems interested only in piling extravagance upon extravagance, in jazzing up his prose to the utmost limit. As a result the reader becomes quickly satiated.

The plot of The Black Wheel demands strong emphasis on psychology. We have, instead, emphasis on aimless conversation. Most of the characters chatter unceasingly; in fact, they are the biggest windbags I have ever encountered. In spite of the ornate style, the book at times reads like a novel of manners. (By the way, can anyone imagine Merritt writing a novel of manners?) Therefore it is no surprise to find that these characters lack full-rounded depth; they are little more than pale, two-dimensional shadows. The sole importance of one of them, for example, is to recite extemporaneously at one sitting (pp. 79-82) over three thousand words on the technical significance of the wheel as a religious ornament. (Employed dropwise, peppermint extract is an excellent flavoring; but don't ever try drinking a full glass of the stuff!) Some of the medical parlance is a bit off, too---like the incident (p. 45) where an M.D. swabs with ether (instead of alcohol) before making a hypodermic injection. And finally, proving the book has everything except what it should have, Bok even treats us to a sermon on racial tolerance (pp. 48-51). (At the risk of being labelled a bigot I shall assert that a fantastic adventure story is no place for preaching.)

What would A. Merritt himself have made of the material? More, I do not doubt, than did his collaborator; yet I hardly believe that the product would offer much competition to, say, Burn Witch Burn! or Dwellers in the Mirage. Admittedly the opening chapters in any novel must be devoted largely to groundwork, but even so, I found those in The Black Wheel slower-paced and more diffuse than they needed to be. Whether careful later acceleration could atone for them is problematical. One wonders, too, why Merritt never finished the story. The plot as he outlined it, with its multiple combinations of the possession and dual personality themes, is no easy one to fill out convincingly. Did he sense this inherent difficulty? Or was it the old story of too little leisure time? Probably a little of both, in my opinion, with emphasis on the former.

I am sorry that I can find little to praise even in the physical make-up of the book. The type has the same microscopic dimensions as that used in The Fox Woman, and an optometrist who advertised in either volume could probably make enough money to retire. The type-size probably accounts for the great number of grammatical and typographical errors that have been overlooked, but I think the proofreaders deserve more sympathy than censure considering the eye-wrenching difficulty of their task. The illustration on page 15 is quite good, but all of the others are much below Bok's usual acceptable standard. Finally, the gold lettering on the cover has been shoddily applied, and flakes off if you merely stare at it too long.

Let us face the facts, unpleasant as they are: Hannes Bok's part of this collaboration is an utter flop, and in toto The Black Wheel is a keen disappointment.

---A. Langley Searles.

THE IMMORTAL STORM

A HISTORY OF SCIENCE-FICTION FANDOM

by
Sam Moskowitz

(part 13)

The August 21, 1938 issue of Fantasy News followed its Claire P. Beck scoop with another, equally newsworthy. Black headlines announced to fandom the merging of the SFAA, Helios, Tesseract, Fantasy Review and the Moskowitz Manuscript Bureau into a single unit: New Fandom. Moskowitz's strategy was obvious: by maximum publicity he hoped to give the new organization such momentum that no reneging on the part of Van Houten or objection on that of Beck could effectively block submergence of the SFAA and its members therein. At the same time Fantasy News announced Van Houten's name as a co-founder.

Close upon the heels of this, the next week's issue circulated a four-paged, hektographed supplement published by Moskowitz, Current Fantasy. This reprinted Van Houten's letter giving to Moskowitz all rights to the SFAA. In it Moskowitz also outlined New Fandom's aims, among which were:

1) New Fandom is to attempt to establish a new base for fandom, missing since the death of Fantasy Magazine.
2) Our immediate aim is to sponsor the World's Fair Science Fiction Convention in 1939.
3) We are to publish the official organ of the club, which shall be for the present 20 large-size, mimeographed pages, fine material, with a special silk-screen cover.

Moskowitz then wrote to Van Houten directly, chiding him diplomatically for falling for a "Michelist scheme" that, he averred, was designed to destroy the SFAA. By the end of August Van Houten had not only abandoned any other plans for the SFAA he might have nurtured, but was actively doing his promised share of stencilling for New Fandom.

By the alchemical process of the above mergings, New Fandom gained as automatic members all active and inactive participants in the SFAA and subscribers to Tesseract, Helios and Fantasy Review as well. The total came to approximately 125---a staggering total for an organization in those days. Ironically, too, it included Wollheim and Wilson (unbeknownst to themselves), arch-enemies of New Fandom's founders.

All that now remained was to issue the first number of New Fandom with as much speed as possible. To help finance it the founders levied a full year's dues upon themselves, dunned members of their families (!) and high-pressured all fan acquaintances in the greater New York area. Material originally intended for Tessaract and Helios was reworked for New Fandom presentation. As managing-secretary, Moskowitz planned its every detail, and overrode any dissents of his associates as dictatorially and blithely as he had earlier when the organization itself had been planned.

Fortunately Moskowitz was a person who practised extreme economy, and his relationship with New Fandom showed this facet of his personality plainly. The cheapest wax stencils were used for mimeographing, and for these (as well as all other purchases) Moskowitz insisted on itemized bills before withdrawals from the club treasury could be made---and made his associates foot the difference on an overpaid bill from their own pockets, besides. The result was a magazine produced for a figure far lower than its size and thickness indicated.

New Fandom contained no fiction, but only articles and columns---a radical innovation in the field at that time. Its neatly silk-screened cover was reminiscent of the old International Observer's. The magazine ran to twenty mimeographed pages. About two hundred copies of the initial number were mailed to members and to likely prospects. By 1938 standards the results were sensational. Renewals of membership poured in; over two dozen recruits joined, including old-time fans not then active in the field, professional authors, and a surprising percentage of names previously unheard of. Though some (like Ackerman) were not particularly enamoured of the new club, most comments on it and the publication carried unqualified praise. Fans active and casual, old and new, all found some responsive chord struck within them.

Nothing succeeds like success, and the very appearance of New Fandom was one of success. Moreover, the forthright assertion that the organization would sponsor a banner world convention and was militantly working for that purpose with a nation-wide enrollment removed all air of sectionalism that New Fandom might have otherwise had to cope with. When such names as John W. Campbell, Jr., Eando Binder, L. Sprague de Camp, Willy Ley, Frank R. Paul, J. Harvey Haggard, John D. Clark, Thomas S. Gardner, H. C. Koenig, Roy A. Squires, Harry Warner, Dale Hart, and Peter Duncan were associated with the magazine, fans had to sit up and take notice.

But for all this the organization might never have been successful had it not been for the continual publicity it received in Taurasi's Fantasy News. The latter was fast supplanting Wilson's Science Fiction News Letter as the leading news weekly in the field. Its policies, format, size and scoops rocketed it quickly to prestige over a fading competitor. And, since Fantasy News had become a sounding board for New Fandom, success for one meant success for the other. It became axiomatic, for a time, that if Taurasi gained a dozen new subscribers in one month, New Fandom would get the same dozen the next. And later we shall see that even as both publications rose and prospered together, so would they fall together.

XXXIII
New Fandom's Rise to Power

Leo Margolies' letter of September 14, 1938, which had formally dissolved the Greater New York SFL chapter, had left New York City, proposed site of the first world science-fiction convention, without an official working organization to assume local responsibility for the affair. It was evident that the first group that could organize itself into a strong club would have a clear-cut superiority in pressing claim for the coveted post of convention sponsors. And it was equally evident that the Michelists and the New Fandomites would be the two competing rivals.

New Fandom founders lost little time in making preparations. Under the stimulating aegis of Sykora, Taurasi called a meeting of fans at his home on October 2, 1938. Ten persons attended. This group agreed to organize a SFL chapter in Queens. Application for a charter was made to Thrilling Wonder Stories, and this was received within a week. Within the same space of time New Fandom had appointed the Queens SFL chapter the official sponsoring committee of the New York convention.

The Michelists, however, had lost even less time. On September 18 they formed the Futurian Science Literary Society of New York (later humorously referred to by them as "a popular front blind for the CPASF"), a title that usage abbreviated into simply "Futurians." The latter designation became so popular, by the way, that it eventually supplanted the term "Michelists" entirely. Among those present at this formative meeting were many names well known in science-

fiction circles: Frederick Pohl, John Michel, Donald Wollheim, Walter Kubilus, Jack Gillespie, Isaac Asimov, Cyril Kornbluth, Jack Rubinson, Herman Leventman, and Robert W. Lowndes, who had recently migrated to New York City from New England, and who (as we have seen) had come into the Futurian orbit.

The Science Fiction News Letter soon became the general propaganda organ of the Futurians, much as Fantasy News was for New Fandom. In an effort to offer stiffer competition to Fantasy News, the News Letter added Pohl to its staff as reporter, and with the September 1, 1938 issue assumed a mimeographed format. However, the fantastic speed (in fan circles, at least) with which New Fandom had been created and was printed and distributed---and then, most paralyzing blow of all, accepted---proved a major setback. Even that might not have proved insurmountable had it not been for another development, equally swift and disconcerting.

John W. Campbell, Jr., editor of Astounding Stories, had been sent a complimentary copy of New Fandom, and his reaction was enthusiastic indeed. In a letter he complimented the magazine highly, and went on to say:

> As I understand it, one of the main efforts of New Fandom will be directed toward the success of the World Science Fiction Convention. At the recent Newark Convention, I expressed my desire to help both fandom magazines and the World Convention idea as much as possible. If you'll send me a letter describing---in not more than 250 words---the New Fandom magazine, giving data, aims, and how to get in touch, I'll try to run it promptly in "Brass Tacks."

Campbell went on to urge the New Fandom heads to visit his office and talk over the situation. This invitation was accepted, and the resulting interview led to his support of the organization. The October 2, 1938 Fantasy News spread this news throughout fandom; and when everyone learned that Street & Smith would give the convention publicity and donate contributions for its auction, and that Mr. Campbell himself would be present, the organization's prestige accelerated anew. All that there remained for New Fandom to do was gain a vote of confidence at the Philadelphia Conference. This, if obtained---and the prospects were decidedly favorable---would squelch permanently any Futurian hopes for sponsorship.

The gospel of New Fandom, meanwhile, was being effectively disseminated in yet another way. Taurasi's Fantasy News, a Cosmic Publication, was not the only journal appearing under that banner. Cosmic Tales was revived as a Cosmic Publication under the aegis of Louis and Gertrude Kuslan, two serious-minded fans living in Connecticut. The first issue, dated September, 1938, proved very popular throughout fandom. Kuslan, receiving support both from Taurasi and the Moskowitz Manuscript Bureau (which now operated as a New Fandom unit) was naturally generous in "plugging" the organization. Similar plugs appeared in The Planeteer, now being issued by Taurasi after it had been dropped by Blish. And New Fandom's biggest boost came when Olon F. Wiggins, noted as a strong-minded individual not easily swayed to any loose cause, joined Cosmic and dropped his Galactic Publications masthead. The only remaining publishing house of importance was Philadelphia's Comet group, and all of the fans there---with the exception of Milton A. Rothman---were inveterate anti-Michelists and anti-Wollheimists, and so would scarcely be against New Fandom. The remaining independant fan journals either were neutral to the question or were in such moribund condition as to make them of no importance. The sole exception, Scienti-Snaps, though technically neutral did not hesitate to donate free publicity to New Fandom.

The Futurians realized that time was running out and that they still lacked a promising rallying-point. Professionals and fans alike were falling in-

to line behind their rivals. Theoretically, the Philadelphia Conference should give them an opportunity to meet them on even terms---but in actuality, since the conference was being sponsored by the antagonistic Comet group, the Futurians could not count on even this. Furthermore, with a sizeable delegation from the Queens SFL and such other visiting enemies as Jack Speer present, they were sure to lack numbers as well as voice. The Futurians knew these facts, and realized that a complete debacle could be avoided only by drastic methods.

Their plan of action was unprecedented. Headlines in the News Letter for September 3, 1938 (and here we must digress to keep in mind that the relationship between the date on the journal and the date subscribers received it was frequently tenuous, for at this time the News Letter began a series of delayed appearances) predicted a "Convention War" in October, and the text which followed read:

> ...in New York City John B. Michel and Mr. Wollheim, powers in the field, have decided to toss a lethal monkey wrench into the machinery by announcing a Fifth Eastern Science Fiction Convention to be held in their city on the same date as the Philadelphia affair. They reason that more fans will attend the New York gathering than its rival....

Consternation was the order of the day in Philadelphia when this news circulated there. New York fans would constitute the bulk of conference attendees, and a local affair there would prove stiff competetion indeed. There was also the ever-present danger that a larger New York group could vote an endorsement of a Futurian-sponsored world convention. Frantic correspondence between Moskowitz and the Philadelphia fans followed, and despair dominated it at first. Out of this gloomy crucible, however, a plan took form.

This plan might appear ridiculous but for the fact that we have previously seen (chapter XXVIII) an application of the psychology underlying it. Fans in those days were avid collectors of their own amateur journals; even feuds seldom reached the stage where opponents would cancel one another's magazine subscriptions. The worst tragedy that could befall an active fan was to miss getting a copy of some fan journal. Remembering this, and banking on the fact that Fantasy News had a larger and more effective circulation than did The Science Fiction News Letter, announcement of the plan was run in the former. Headlines there announced "Special Booklets to be Issued for the Philadelphia Science Fiction Conference!" And the accompanying details emphasized that these would be obtainable nowhere else. If you couldn't get there---well, that was your hard luck. Better attend!

Abruptly, just a week before the conference was to take place, the News Letter revealed that the Futurians were calling off their counter-convention and would be in Philadelphia in full force---provided "Lowndes is permitted to make a 30-minute speech on the aims of the group."

Though it would probably be exaggerating to credit the plan for distributing booklets for full responsibility here, its influence should not be underestimated. The Futurian decision was undoubtedly influenced by rumours that began circulating at the time to the effect that Mort Weisinger, editor of Thrilling Wonder Stories magazine, would attend the Philadelphia meeting accompanied by several professional fantasy authors. This would mean that Standard Publications was following the lead of Street and Smith in throwing its weight behind New Fandom, and that the Futurian cause was indeed lost.

The Futurians never admitted this, of course, though their actions did. They claimed that their announced convention was a joke instigated by David Kyle and simultaneously attacked New Fandom for having "sold out to the pros." These statements, together with the fact that no denial was issued until the last mom-

ent by either Michel or Wollheim, lend credence to the belief that if a competing affair had not been planned, then at least harm to the Philadelphia Conference through distracting notices had been.

Near-perfect fall weather greeted attendees on Sunday, October 16th at the City of Brotherly Love. A little over two dozen fans were present, and almost without exception they were individuals of note in the field. The New Fandom delegation of Sykora, Taurasi, Gardner, Thompson and Moskowitz made up the earlier arrivals. The better-known members of the PSFS were also present---John Baltadonis, Robert Madle, Jack Agnew, Milton Rothman, Jack Johnson, Helen Cloukey, Milton Asquith, Lee Blatt, Thomas Whiteside and Oswald Train. William Perlman had arrived from Baltimore, and Jack Speer from Washington. Authors John D. Clark, Otto Binder, David Vern (pen name: David V. Reed) had come, the latter in company with Mort Weisinger of Thrilling Wonder Stories. No Futurians appeared.

Four conference booklets were distributed: Moskowitz's second number of the hektographed Different, Taurasi's mimeographed, four-paged leaflet Space, a special issue of the PSFS News and Speer's Chronoton. The PSFS News had been published (with the aid of Moskowitz) just before the call to order. Chronoton was a fan curiosity, an hourly magazine, hektographed in Washington one day between 10 A.M. and 3 P.M. (A second set was alleged to have been prepared during the conference, with hourly news there included, but your historian has not seen this.)

The first business to come before the conference was that of New Fandom. Rothman opened it by announcing that the organization's preëminence seemed unchallenged, and introduced Sykora as one of the heads of the committee. Sykora pointed out that at this early date few concrete promises could be made, but if fans and professionals alike extended their help New Fandom would present a gathering to be proud of. Moskowitz next spoke at considerable length about the general set-up of New Fandom. At the moment, he admitted, it was dictatorial---and this came about necessarily in the early stages of any organization because no one save the creators cared to do any of the ground work. He felt that this dictatorial essence was to a large extent mitigated, however, comparing New Fandom to the professional science-fiction magazines: these were run by single individuals for profit, yet they were democratic in the sense that their success depended on how well they followed the wishes of the majority. New Fandom was also bound by that law. Moskowitz intimated that once the organization had successfully staged the world convention steps would be taken to adopt a constitution and hold elections. He humorously mentioned the accusation of New Fandom having "sold out" to the professionals, and stated his belief that science-fiction could not advance unless all concerned parties worked together; that coöperation was an imperative necessity since neither the fans nor the professionals were independant of one another. One of the aims of the organization, indeed, was to bring the two groups into the close coöperation that had existed during the era of Fantasy Magazine.

Discussion by the conferees followed. Finally Jack Speer suggested, and then himself framed, a motion recognizing New Fandom as the official sponsor of the 1939 convention and stating that the Philadelphia Conference went on record as supporting it. This motion was passed without dissent, though not unanimously, and New Fandom heads breathed a sigh of relief.

The next item on the program was a round-table discussion on the purpose of science-fiction. In the process of his contribution to this, Weisinger revealed that his company would very shortly issue a new science-fiction magazine called Startling Stories, and the first issue, in addition to carrying a new novel by Stanley G. Weinbaum, "The Black Flame," would initiate a unique department of interest to fans, "Review of the Fan Magazines." Complete addresses as well

as prices would be included with these reviews. This amounted to an official announcement that the barrier between the fans and the publishers was broken, and was vitally important in what it portended. For the first time in many years an efficient method was being set up by a mass-circulation magazine to funnel new faces into fandom, and the field was bound to be changed by this influx. Weisinger went on to state that the purpose of science-fiction---as far as professionals were concerned---was to make money, an assertion that did not shock the assembly. (Fandom was indeed growing up!) Neither did John Clark's speech, which concluded that it was an escape from reality for readers. Thomas Gardner backed up in part Sykora's long-standing opinion that science-fiction could inspire one to pursue a career in science; he went on to state that he also believed the development of rocket-power or practical atomic energy would arouse intense public interest in science-fiction---a prediction that has recently proved highly accurate. Both Robert Thompson and Milton Rothman felt that stories in the field offered inspiration to scientific workers, and William Perlman cited an example he had personally observed that lent credence to this view.

At this point in the proceedings a 700-word telegram arrived. It was from John W. Campbell, Jr., who was unable to attend, and gave his ideas on the topic of the round-table discussion. His strongest point was that science-fiction was able to point a road or issue a warning more effectively than any other type of fiction, but he stressed that its message would not be read if it were not presented in an entertaining and human fashion. It is generally believed that Will Sykora had been given this speech by Campbell in New York, and that just before leaving the city had telegraphed it ahead, in order to create an effect at the conference favorable to New Fandom; it turned out, of course, that an added boost such as this was unnecessary. In any event, the attendees telegraphed a reply to Campbell in the name of chairman Rothman, in which they expressed the hope of seeing him at the 1939 convention.

The dinner that followed the more formal part of the meeting was a joyous occasion of grand good fellowship, and bantering tomfoolery was the order of the day. The climax came when the toast was offered: "Gentlemen, down with Wollheim!"---and most drank to it. The ceaseless feuds had taken their toll, had built up a tremendous opposition, had virtually shattered the once-commanding position held by Donald A. Wollheim. They had brought, too, a general feeling that feuds themselves were to be avoided. On Sykora's advice the New Fandom leaders capitalized upon this, letting it be known that henceforth none of them would engage in feuding, regardless of what heights of vituperation their opponents rose to. This stand proved popular with fandom as a whole, though there were a few die-hard dissenters---such as Speer and a few Philadelphians---who felt that the initial anti-Wollheim and -Futurian advantage should be pressed until the opposition had been reduced to helplessness for all time. Some of these, indeed, continued their open campaign. Most fan journals, however, were quick to adopt the no-controversy policy. The result was that almost all means of propaganda, other than that self-published, became closed to the Futurians.

New Fandom's string of quick victories nevertheless resulted in several unusual and totally unexpected actions by the Futurians, as we shall eventually see.

(to be continued)

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(This-'n'-That---continued from page 260)

Shaver, Richard S.: I Remember Lemuria and The Return of Sathanas (Venture, $3). Two anti-scientific fantasies.

Silve, Claude: Eastward in Eden (Gollancz, 7/6). Delightful tale of a little boy kidnapped to a never-never land.

(concluded on page 293)

TALBOT MUNDY: ORIENTAL MYSTIC

by
Darrell C. Richardson

Talbot Chetwynd Mundy was born in London in 1879, and attended Rugby. He left school at sixteen, went to Germany, and there drove a wagon in a travelling circus. At eighteen he was in India sending dispatches to a London newspaper about tribal fighting. He wandered on foot and horseback up the western side of India as far as Kashmir and Ladoph, and then along the lower Himalayas as far as Sikkim and Assam. He himself summarizes his further travels thus: "Shot a number of tigers while roaming in India. Wounded in the Boer War---broke in Cape Town. To sea before the mast, in the Antarctic. Tramped Australia from Sydney to Brisbane. Before the mast again from Hobart, Tasmania, to Delagoa Bay with a cargo of blue-gum piles. Turned up in Cape Town again. Started a long walk to Cairo, which lasted seven years, including lay-offs and a side trip from Uganda across the Ruenzori Mountains and the Congo Free State. Served as a British Government official during a part of this time. During these years did a lot of big game hunting, including lion and elephant. Nearly died three times of black water fever and once from a wound from a poisoned spear. Turned up in London again finally and found that most of my relatives and friends were dead."

He came to the United States in 1911 and started a writing career with his first appearance in Adventure magazine with an article called "Pig-Sticking in India." He headed it with this verse, which represented his own outlook on life:

> Youth's daring spirit, manhood's fire
> Firm hand and eagle eye,
> Must he acquire who would aspire
> To see the gray boar die.

Mundy's years in the British Government service in India and East Africa provided an authentic background for many of his novels and short stories. He was a born story teller, and had a touch of that faculty for making the stay at home fancy he was glimpsing dark and alluring fantasies in the lands where Kipling reigned almost supreme.

Talbot Mundy died in his home at Bradenton Beach, Florida, on August 5, 1941, at the age of sixty-one.

He loved America. "The delightful and frequent hospitality of English friends and an impulse that takes me back to England sometimes twice a year in no way tempts me to regret my American citizenship," he said. "The more I see of other lands, and the more I enjoy them, the better I like the U.S.A.---which I regard as the silliest, kindest, shrewdest, most tolerant and intolerant, most ignorant and best informed, most corrupt and incorruptible, meanest and most generous, least comprehensible, and much the most amusing, comfortable and contenting country in the world."

In the foreword to his book The Valiant View (a collection of ten stories) Mundy says: "From past and present I draw but one conclusion, one hope for the future. But perhaps it is more than hope. It may be knowledge. I believe "The Valiant View" is a glimpse, or momentary consciousness of immortality, which makes us all perhaps a little lower than the angels (whoever they are), but infinitely and forever higher than this valiant clay on which we hang the decorations, or which we smear with shame, conceit, hypocrisy and doubt. I believe in the Ancient Wisdom, and the Ancient Law that he shall keep his Vision and increase it, who can see death as only a change, and disaster as only a chance to discover, each within himself, his own resources."

Mundy was a great raconteur, one who had many stories to tell and who told them well. The occult held a large share of his attention for many years. He wrote much of the Near East and the Orient---that part of the world where lie the roots of our civilization. Many of his tales go far back into antiquity. His works are noted for the authenticity of their backgrounds and for the Ancient Wisdom which permeates them, even though they are always fast-moving and colored by Eastern glamour. No author has a more loyal following of almost worshipful readers. Almost all of Mundy's works are out of print and hard to obtain.

The major portion of his writings appeared in Adventure, the most literary of the "pulp" magazines. For the three decades preceding his death almost every issue contained something under his own name or that of his pseudonym, Walter Galt. He also contributed to The Blue Book, Argosy, All-Story, Golden Book, The Golden Fleece and The American Weekly.

Undoubtedly most of his writings would be enjoyed by the lover of fantasy and off-trail literature; there is a vein of the fantastic and at least a hint of the occult or the supernatural in practically all of his work. However, I wish to mention here briefly only those titles that are forthright fantasy. The Devil's Guard (1926) is considered an important book in the field of occult Orientalia. It is a thrilling tale of the roof of the world, Tibet. Moreover, it is one of Talbot Mundy's finest works. The reader follows Jimgrim, Ramsden, Narayoh Singh and Challunder Ghose through incredible adventure, and from the lips of that wisest of all sages, Tsiang Samdup, gathers pearls of priceless wisdom. This book appeared in Britain under the title Ramsden.

Black Light (1930) is a tale of the supernatural and of psychic elements possessing vividness that lends them an almost physical basis. It is a strange and passionate love story as well. The heroine is taken by her Indian nurse to be reared by priests in a temple near Nepaul, where Buddhist and Hindu teachings blend into a calm philosophy that forms the matrix for tremendous concepts. Involved in the conflict are a maharajah seeking the girl for his harem, a yogi, and the hero, whose manhood has been suppressed by matriarchal dominance. The supernatural and fantastic happenings excite the imagination with uncanny power.

Probably Mundy's very best novel is Full Moon (1935). Originally it appeared in The American Weekly, and was especially liked by A. Merritt. (In England it was published under the title There Was a Door.) Here the author suggests a new theory---one that no scientist has yet refuted. Over one hundred thousand people in the civilized world today vanish each year without trace. Mundy asks in this book: "Do they all die?" This is a dramatic and intriguing tale of the fourth dimension.

Jimgrim (1931) was serialized in Adventure as "King of the World." Dorje, a modern Tamerlane or Genghis Khan, was a mystic who came into possession of the scientific secrets of lost Atlantis, which provide him with such weapons as the world has never seen since that continent sank beneath the waves. Another source of Dorje's secrets was the legendary buried cities of the Gobi. It is left for Jimgrim to tilt a lone lance against him in the name of selfless decency and common sense. Jimgrim, because of his study of the occult teachings in Shambola, is the only man in the world equipped to meet this mystic on even terms. One of the most fantastic of all Mundy novels, this ends with the death of Jimgrim, but Dorje is compelled to flee the planet for the moon in his great space ship---and the world is saved from his dominion.

The Thunder Dragon Gate (1936) and Old Ugly Face (1940), Mundy's last two books, deal with fantastic adventure in Tibet. In the first the American Tom Grayne befriends Tho-pa-ga, hereditary keeper of the Thunder Dragon Gate, and the mouthpiece of the rulers of Tibet. Their thrilling experiences are continued in the second book, which introduces the Tibetan lama. Mundy had once planned a trip

by trailer through India and Tibet. The end of that trailer trip was doubtless intended to find Talbot Mundy and the Grand Lama conversing about the secrets of immortality. These two books to some degree carry the fruits of the author's lifetime search for the ancient wisdom of the world. He has succeeded in these volumes in translating some of this wisdom into a modern idiom.

Om (1924) is another weird Oriental tale which can be classified as fantasy, though it is not as significant as the titles previously mentioned. I must, however, mention in passing that great historical trilogy about Tros: Tros of Samothrace, Queen Cleopatra and The Purple Pirate. These too contain much of the wisdom of ancient Rome, Egypt and Britain, as well as the sayings of the Druid Taliesan.

Talbot Mundy might have ranked higher in the literary scene if he had written less and put a little more of the ability he really seems to have in some of his absorbing romances. And had he attempted to enter the field of fantasy in earnest he might well have become one of the greatest of them all. Still, he has produced some very entertaining fantasies which carry one along irresistibly, and he has also created several characters which remain in the memory as real persons, fit subjects for that hero worship which every normal male, of whatever age, accords to d'Artagnan and Athos.

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(Fantasy in the Popular Magazine---concluded from page 282)

1st Dec., 1930 (101,6)

"Men from Space" by Chas. Willard Diffin (21pp): A typical s-f story of invaders from space. Spaceship cover by Howard V. Brown.

(With the February, 1931 issue Popular magazine became a monthly)

June, 1931 (103,2)

"Vest-Pocket Treasure" by Sean O'Larkin (74pp): Adventure and intrigue with a Mayan uprising. Borderline, and so-so anyway.

(With the October, 1931 issue---vol. 103, #6---Popular combined with Street and Smith's Complete Stories to form Popular Complete Stories.)

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THUMBING THE MUNSEY FILES

by
William H. Evans

(Allstory is the magazine under discussion; the year, 1905. ---ed.)

July "The Valley of the Shadow" by Count Villiers de l'Isle Adam (translated by Mary K. Ford)(4pp): The ghost of a dead wife appears to a man. The atmosphere maintained is very good.

"The Shrunken Shoulder" by Sam P. Davis (4pp): A rather unconvincing account of an artist who, accused of plaigarism, claims he is a reincarnation of both the original artist and his model.

Aug. "The Harbor of Living Dead" by J. Aubrey Tyson (48pp): A strange island in the Atlantic is visited by all ships coming within its influence, but is forgotten by all who leave it. The inhabitants are eternally youthful. A seasick remedy inadvertently negates the influence on one visitor, however, who remembers the island and returns there to rescue a girl he had fallen in love with there. Very well told.

Oct. "The Gorilla" by Don Mark Lemon (7pp): A superb atmospheric horror story.

Nov. "The Occupant of Craymore" by Edgar Franklin (9pp): A supposedly haunted house, and a ghost that turns out to be a madman. Average.

1906

Feb. "The Buyer of Time" by W.B.Finney (3pp): A man sells a day of his time and finds himself living 24 hours behind.

Apr. "The Tide of Terror" by Claire Tucker (28pp): An interesting account of what happens when a tremendous tidal wave hits the English coast.

May "The Gift from Mars" by William Wallace Cook (3-part serial) (14,15,16pp): The philosopher's stone falls in a meteorite; it is used to change base metals to gold, and world finance is upset. The power is finally lost, and normalcy returns.

"The Vengeance of Honorat" by Stanislaus Meunier (translated by Mary K. Ford)(6pp): A man is frightened to death while hypnotized. Unusual and rather grim.

July "Bagley's Automatic Grasshopper" by Howard Dwight Smiley (4pp): A giant, automatic jumping machine gets loose and finally wrecks itself. Fair.

"The Barber's Cue" by Burke Jenkins (2pp): Can a hypnotized subject be made to commit murder against his will? This story describes one such test. So-so.

Aug. "?" by Don Mark Lemon (5pp): An artist paints a picture of an imaginary man. Later he is amazed to sight the man himself in the street. Returning to his studio, he finds that the picture has disappeared from the canvas. Several horrible murders are committed, and the description of the perpetrator fits that of the mysterious subject. When the latter suddenly reappears on the canvas, the artist attempts to burn it. Then the figure steps from the flames and kills the artist. Quite good.

Sep. "The Great Green Wave" by Grace Duffield Goodwin (3pp): A more conventional supernatural story about a corpse at sea that cannot be thrown overboard.

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This-'n'-That --- Concluded

Mullen, Stanley: Moon-Foam and Sorceries (Gorgon Press, 4936 Grove St., Denver, Col., $3). 13 stories and 13 poems, in a beautifully illustrated and bound limited edition.

Sinclair, Upton: A Giant's Strength (Laurie, 9/6). U.S. is atom-bombed.

Skinner, B. F.: Walden Two (Macmillan, $3). A psychological utopia.

Smith, E. E.: Skylark Three (Fantasy Press, $3). More space-opera.

Stern, David: Francis Goes to Washington (Farrar, Straus, $2½). More amusing adventures of the talking mule.

Taylor, Samuel W.: Heaven Knows Why (Wyn, $2½). Old Moroni Skinner, now in heaven, decides the last of his line now living on Earth needs prodding. So-so.

Wandrei, Donald: The Web of Easter Island (Arkham, $3). Supernatural novel, and a pretty miserable one, too. Skip it.

Williams, Chas.: All Hallows' Eve (Pellagrini & Cudahy, $2¾). Reprint of English supernatural novel first published in 1945. Fairly good.

Next time this column will list non-fiction items pertaining to the field. Before signing off, let us sound a note of sadness: Dead at the age of 68, one of the greatest authorities on supernatural literature and possibly the most capable and widely-read experts on witchcraft---Montague Summers. He was truly a titan in his chosen field. ---A.L.S.

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IN THE NEXT ISSUE of Fantasy Commentator: articles by Dr. David H. Keller, Redd Boggs, George Ebey, and---if it can be squeezed in!---Paul Spencer.

INDEXES

TITLES

CONTRIBUTORS

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The Cincinnati Fantasy Group in the News!

The Cincinnati Post

MONDAY, JANUARY 5, 1948.

WHEN THE U. S. dropped its atomic surprise on Hiroshima, a thousand learned amateurs whipped through the news reports and turned nary a hair.

They had heard it all before from a hundred scientific prophets whose writings are preserved in a hundred thousand stories born of fact, imagination, and human interest in the superhuman. Their handbooks are magazines which bear names like Amazing Stories, Astounding Stories, Weird Stories, Tales of the Supernatural.

Of all literary fans—excepting possibly those who insist Shakespeare was a man named Bacon—the readers of scientific, weird, and fantastic fiction are the most closely-knit and active. They are organized into the National Fantasy Fan Federation, of which Dale Tarr, of 1402 Scott street, Covington, is the national president.

THEY HOLD conventions, which bear titles similar to the names of the mythical planets to be found in scientific fiction; the Chicago meeting was called Chicon, the Pacificon was held in Los Angeles, the Denvention in Denver. Next year Toronto, Canada, will be the host to the Torcon.

The all-out fan is one who collects scientific fiction. There are about 2000 of them in the U. S. and 10 or 12 in Greater Cincinnati.

Charles Tanner, of 2007 Sutter avenue, a chemist, wrote some of the earliest scientific fiction and his friends think it some of the best. A private printing of his stories is being arranged.

One of the big men among the collectors is the Rev. Darrell Richardson, pastor of the First Baptist church in Ft. Mitchell. A doctor of theology and trained in the classics, he began collecting scientific fiction in 1943 and in four years has amassed one of the most complete libraries of that kind in the world. Even the Library of Congress turns to him for information. Of him, more later.

SCIENTIFIC FICTION is found in almost every kind of publication from the pulps to the super-slick privately printed books destined only for collectors.

Some of the magazines and books now command nice prices. A magazine, unknown, lasted 24 issues and could have been purchased on the newsstands for $6. A complete set today gets you $100. Many such items are "lost" in attics and cupboards.

Many are rare because only a few persons ever got the original issues. Some privately printed fan publications had circulations of 25 or 30.

There are three types of day-dream fiction. Scientific stories are those based on fact and many are written by scientists whose hobby is fiction. Weird stories deal with the supernatural. Fantastic stories, according to Dr. Richardson, are "grown up fairy tales."

IF ANYBODY is qualified to make a definition, the Ft. Mitchell pastor is. The walls of his home are lined with first editions. One room is a combined book-bindery and magazine warehouse. Collectors all over the English speaking world come to him for help. He has reminded authors of books or stories they had written and forgotten.

Barring an unexpected meeting with a ray-gunner from Xrypton or a hostile from Mars. I'll tell you something about him tomorrow.

This Group With The Well-Known Writer CHARLES R TANNER As Chairman Will Sponser The CINVENTION

ATTEND THE CINVENTION
7TH WORLD SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION

The Cincinnati Post TUESDAY, JANUARY 6, 1948.

THE REV. Darrell Richardson is a barrel-chested Ft. Mitchell pastor who can deliver a line from Homer or H. P. Lovecraft with equal facility.

He is an encyclopedia of information on scientific, weird, and fantastic stories wherein rocket ships are as commonplace as kiddy-cars and Jupiter is a whistle-stop on the morning run to Neptune.

A more unlikely repository for such learning is unlikely. Dr. Richardson lives in a white cottage on Silver lane with a wife, a small son (trained not to tear up books and magazines), a thousand or so books, 3500 magazines and an a abiding enthusiasm for his hobby.

The books are mostly works on theology, but they include a complete set of Edgar Rice Burroughs first editions in English and about 30 in foreign languages. His list of Burroughs' stories is the standard against which collectors check their progress.

THE FIRST all-scientific story magazine was published in 1926. The Ft. Mitchell pastor has every issue of the 35 or 40 such magazines published since then in the U. S., Canada, and England. His collection is worth about $7500.

This collection claims only about one-third of Dr. Richardson's total, the rest being magazines which occasionally published fantastic stories.

Although some collectors have worked a score of years with lesser results, Dr. Richardson completed his since 1943. To do it, he wrote 1500 Chambers of Commerce and asked that to distribute his list of wants to bookshops in their cities. He still is getting replies.

AS THE magazines began to pile up, he became, of necessity, an expert amateur bookbinder. He does his work in a second floor room whose walls are lined with apple boxes filled with books and magazines. Apple boxes are just the right size.

Since he has the scientific field pretty well under his thumb, Dr. Richardson is working on H. Rider Haggard and Frederick Faust.

Faust was an amazingly prolific writer whose works appeared under 23 names, the best known of which was Max Brand. He went to great lengths to protect his pseudonyms and once, under a pen name, dedicated a book to himself under his real name.

When one of the magazines for which he wrote cut its prices, Faust and five other writers resigned. It developed that Faust was all six.

IT TOOK a secretary two years to index the books and magazines which Dr. Richardson has collected.

His hobby is confined to a few minutes reading time before meals and to any time he can stay awake after 10 p. m. This is possible because he can read a page in about four quick looks and hopes eventually to do it in a single glance.

He is still surprised by his hobby. At first he was only a reader of scientific stories. Then he became interested in astronomy and finally he began collecting.

Next thing he knew, the place was full of books and magazines.

Register Now — by Sending $1.00 to Donald E. Ford, 129 Maple, Sharonville, Ohio.

BOOKS FOR SALE

Continuing the list (begun last issue) of items, usually duplicates, I am disposing of. All in good condition unless otherwise specified. I pay postage on all orders.

THE WITCH IN THE WOOD by T.H.White. 1st edn. Delightful fantasy. .65
I, James Blunt by H.V.Morton. Wraps. Tale of Future. Lon, '42. .25
THE RETURN OF WM. SHAKESPEARE by H.Kingsmill. 1st edn. N.Y., '29. .75
THE ELEPHANT AND THE KANGAROO by T.H.White. mint d/w. 1st edn. N.Y., 1947. I consider this utterly wonderful entertainment. .75
SEA CHANGE by B. Hunt. d/w. Best witchcraft novel of 1946. .60
MURDER OF THE U.S.A. by W. Jenkins (Leinster). 1st edn, d/w. .50
SARAH MANDRAKE by M. Wadleton. 1st edn, torn d/w. Possession. .50
THE BABYONS by C. Dane. 1st edn; NY, 1928. Edges worn. .35
JULES VERNE OMNIBUS. NY, 1931. 4 complete novels, 800pp. .50
BUT GENTLY DAY by Robert Nathan. 1st edn. Beautiful fantasy. .50
UNIVERSAL STATION by Beth Brown. 1st edn, NY, 1944. .50
THE THING AT THEIR HEELS by Harrington Hext. NY, 1923. Scarce. .60
BEFORE I GO HENCE by Frank Baker. mint, d/w. 1st edn (1946). .75
SOMETHING ABOUT EVE by J.B.Cabell. 1st edn. front cover stained. .60
JURGEON by Cabell. Considered his masterpiece. NY, 1923. .50
THE STALLION by Cabell. 1st edn, d/w. Scarce item. 1.00
THE HIGH PLACE by Cabell. NY, 1923. Third Printing. .50

Two extremely rare science-fiction novels by John Mastin: THROUGH THE SUN IN AN AIRSHIP (London, 1909) and THE IMMORTAL LIGHT (London, 1907). Former an interplanetary; the latter, about a lost civilization in the Antarctic. Practically never seen in collections, much less offered for sale. Perfect condition. Each $4. Or, both for $7.50.

THE WHITE DEER by James Thurber. 1st edn. Very amusing fantasy. .50
TRY ANOTHER WORLD by J.J.Meyer. mint, d/w. Interplanetary. .75
TALES OF WAR by Lord Dunsany. Boston, 1918. .75
NEW GODS LEAD, ten s-f shorts by S.Fowler Wright. 1st, very worn .75
QUEEN OF THE DAWN by H.R.Haggard. 1st Am. edn. Scarce .60
THE GREAT PRINCE SHAN by Oppenheim. Tale of future. 1922; d/w. .75
CRUCIBLE ISLAND by C.B.Pallen. Rare utopia. 1st; NY, 1919. 1.00
DAWN by S.F.Wright. 1st Am. edn. 1929. Sequel to DELUGE. .50
THE WAR GOD WALKS AGAIN by F.B.Austin. 1st edn, 1926. S-f. .50
13 Seconds that Rocked the World by J.J.Meyer. Creation of the Mentator, a scientific world brain. Unusual. mint, d/w .75
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