

THE FANTASY FAN

November, 1934

Dedicated to

CLARK ASHTON SMITH

THE FANTASY FAN

THE FANS' OWN MAGAZINE

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A SAD, SAD STORY

Once upon a time, a year ago last summer, to be more specific, I had money to burn, but rather than burn it, I decided to launch an attack upon the fantasy-loving public in the form of a fan magazine. You've guessed it—the result was none other than **THE FANTASY FAN**. I placed enough capital in the venture to start it off. Needless to say, I was disappointed with the results, as far as circulation goes—it's always that way. Inexperience with the publishing game allows for pretty pictures of people just dying to send in their dollars to your new magazine, but the cold facts certainly throw ice-water on air-castles. Experience shows that a publisher must fight for every subscription. It is filled with disappointments and hard knocks. After all, magazines are luxuries, particularly fiction magazines, and even more particularly fan magazines—and people can't afford luxuries during times when they can just about secure money enough to live on. Fantastic

fiction magazines have never been huge successes with the general public, whose average intelligence is that of a moron. The lovers of fantasy have a higher type of intellect, and are therefore very few in number. I doubt that there are 150,000 people in this country of 125,000,000 who can really appreciate the science and weird fiction that is published in contemporary magazines. They are what you call 'class' publications. And not one reader in five hundred of these fantasy magazines is the least bit interested in the "fan" angle—but those of them that are are loyal to the last. Each of them is worth fifty ordinary readers. They are the only ones that are interested in the fan magazines, so you can see why the aforementioned fan magazines will never boast of circulations comparing with *Liberty* or the *Saturday Evening Post* or pay \$500 for a cover illustration. Therefore, the only way to keep fan magazines is to secure every available *active* fan, those rare specimens, and keep them together in one big family. Of course, a few more spring

up every here and there (when otherwise normal people discover that there *is* such a thing as fantasy fiction and fan magazines).

What I started out to say was that I had money to burn when I organized THE FANTASY FAN and didn't mind it running in the red for a year. And so it has. And so it continues. I kept putting money in, and putting money in, never taking a cent out—never regretting the loss (nor do I today, nor consider it loss). I have enjoyed sacrificing hundreds of dollars (and that's not sarcasm) and devoting much of my time to gathering and assorting material for each issue.

But—and here's the reason for all this quibbling—domestic circumstances now prevent from taking any more money from my own pocket to donate to the cause, and the only way that THE FANTASY FAN can continue publication is to pay for itself. Of course, the circulation has gone up way past the mark where it half pays for the issue, certain months—due to advertising in Wonder Stories Science Fiction Swap Column under cover and the mention that Farnsworth Wright gave THE FANTASY FAN is the in the *Eerie* in the September 1934 issue of *Weird Tales*, not to speak of the co-operation of the readers we already had—but that is not enough. Now, my printer is a very nice fellow and prints THE FANTASY FAN for a very low price that cannot be duplicated anywhere, and it really does not cost so much to run TFF, when compared to the more professional magazines. I can guarantee you one thing, though: if every reader we now

CLARK ASHTON SMITH

An Autobiographette

I am inclined to think that my life is a pretty good exemplification of the theories propounded by Lester Anderson in his interesting and provocative article on Superstition. Anyhow, I was born on Friday the 13th, under Capricornus and Saturn, and have been flirting with most of the other orthodox jinxes ever since. I do not whistle in the dark, I have never gone in for Dream Books or psychoanalysis, and I make a habit of walking under ladders when it is more convenient to do this than circumambulate the obstruction. As to black cats—well, I have owned one for many years—a most sinister-looking creature, with all the aspects of an old-time wizard's familiar. Perhaps all this may help to explain the kumiss in the cocoanut, and may account for my ability to peruse the most horrendous stuff without batting an eyelash. Also (since there are modern superstitions as well as ancient ones) it may throw a light on my complete lack of faith in the Five year plan, EPIC, and all other cockeyed Utopian schemes. Moreover, it may help to explain my open mind in regard to all outre and inexplicable phenomena, and the fact that I can take the theories of Einstein, as well as of modern science in general, with a salutary pinch of saline seasoning.

have would subscribe (if he has not already done so) and secure at least one new subscriber, we could continue
(continued on next page)

OUR READERS SAY

In order to save space for more articles, starting with this issue, letters will be abbreviated.

"You and your associates have done a highly commendable job under rather trying conditions and you may well be proud of your work."

— H. Koenig, New York, N.Y.

"THE FANTASY FAN is showing itself, all white cover and everything. I find it more interesting to see a publication grown than to find a brand-new mag on the market that perhaps may not last six months."

— Gertrude Hemken, Chicago, Ill.

"I wish to congratulate you for the start of a second year for THE FANTASY FAN and I hope it will continue for many, many more years."

— Julius Hopkins, Washington, D.C.

"Your issue of articles, the First Anniversary Number, is one of your most interesting yet, I think—a fine selection of features for both weird and science fan."

— Forrest J. Ackerman,
San Francisco, Calif.

"The Anniversary issue, with the many new items and the glossy cover, certainly marks a big step forward, and any lengthening of Lovecraft's treatise is always welcome."

— Duane W. Rimel, Asotin, Wash.

"THE FANTASY FAN has been improving steadily, and the first (and only) fault, that of too much science

fiction material, has been eliminated."

— Emil Petaja, Milltown, Mont.

"I was delighted with the First Anniversary Issue. It surely was neatly done and had a dandy line-up. However, I missed the usual bit of fiction."

— F. Lee Baldwin, Asotin, Wash.

"I enjoyed all the articles in the last THE FANTASY FAN, as well as the fantasies by Barlow and Morse. The slick cover has a pleasing effect, indeed, though I liked the coloured ones too."

— Clark Asthon Smith
Auburn, Calif.

A Sad, Sad Story

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monthly publication indefinitely.

So, if you really like our little publication, will you do your best to help bring in the subscriptions? The next issue will be published in anywhere from three weeks to two months, depending entirely upon cash receipts. And here is an amazing fact—every dollar sent in actually brings the next issue *days* nearer publication. What do you say? Wouldn't you hate to see THE FANTASY FAN break off publication, and right in the middle of Lovecraft's article, too? I know I would. It's become one of the family with me and if anything should happen to it, I believe I'd put a crepe on the door.

Your Sincere Friend,

THE EDITOR

WITHIN THE CIRCLE

by F. Lee Baldwin

"The Red Brain" by Donald Wandrei is one of a long cosmic series most of which is unpublished.

H. P. Lovecraft wrote 35 "Fungi from Yuggoth" in 1929 and 1930. *The Fantasy Fan* is going to print some of those which WT didn't take.

Farnsworth Wright has been a visitor in Seattle, Washington.

During the month of August, Clark Ashton Smith fought a terrible wood and grass fire on his ranch. He wrote fiction—of a more realistic cast than some of his present work—as early as 1910 and 1911; some of it appearing in the defunct *Black Cat*. He dropped prose entirely until 1925 when he wrote "The Abominations of Yondo" (rejected by WT and published in the *Overland Monthly*) and "Sadastor" (also rejected by WT but later accepted by them and published).

Weird Tales has on hand "The Hand of Wrath" by E. Hoffmann Price. He and Otis Adelbert Kline have collaborated in a Mexican weird novelette. It features Bart Leslie—Two Gun Bart—one of Kline's heroes. You will recall that he was featured in "The Demon of Tlaxpam" in WT a few years ago. Price has also collaborated with Frank Belknap Long, Jr., on a weird novelette which is on a "visit" to *Astounding Stories*. He is about to write a serial

and a novelette; interplanetary, and Far East, respectively.

Forrest Ackerman can produce, at his pleasure, hour long programs, of weird and fantastic voices and sequences. He has recently added to his set of sound-discs from "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde", the complete set of records from the weird-scientific film drama, "Frankenstein". He also possesses the thrilling story of Im-Ho-Tep—the Egyptian, dead 26 centuries, returned to life—featuring the weird voice of Boris Karloff; "Murders in the Rue Morgue" and the grotesque "Old Dark House".

Two youthful Merritt fans burglarized the basement of a certain Carnegie Library and made off with old *Science and Inventions* containing "The Metal Emperor".

Robert E. Howard's occupation is fiction-writing, though he helps his father (a physician) attend to a small farm on the outskirts of Cross Plains, Texas. He is 27 years old and has led a somewhat roving and adventurous life. He is an amateur athlete and boxer; is very fond of fighting and believes barbarism to be preferable to civilization. He is a profound historic student, and an authority on the folklore and tradition of the Southwest.

August W. Derleth is 24—U. of Wis. graduate and lives in Souk City, Wis. He is gaining fame in magazines of select quality with serious reminiscent regional fiction and poetry. He writes mystery books besides fantasy.

ON FANTASY

by Clark Ashton Smith

We have been told that literature dealing with the imaginative and fantastic is out of favour among the Intellectuals, whoever they are. Only the Real, whatever that is or may be, is admissible for treatment; and writers must confine themselves to themes well within the range of staticians, lightning calculators, Freud and Kraft-Ebbing, the Hearst and McFadden publications, NRA, and mail-order catalogues. Chimeras are no longer the mode, the infinite has been abolished; mystery is obsolete, and sphinx and medusa are toys for children. The weird and the unearthly are outlawed, and all mundane impossibilities (which, it may be, are the commonplaces of the Pleiads) have been banished to some limbo of literalistic derision. One may write of horses and hippopotomi but not of hippogriffs; of biographers, but not of ghouls; of slum-harlots or the hetairae of Nob Hill but not of succubi. In short, all pipe-dreams, all fantasies not authorized by Freudianism, by sociology, and the five senses, are due for the critical horse-laugh, when, through ignorance, effrontery, or preference, they find a place in the subject-matter of some author unlucky enough to have been born into the age of Jeffers, Hemingway, and Joyce.

Let us examine these amazing dicta, fathered, as they must be, by people whose literal-mindedness can be surpassed only by that of their "four-footed betters." Surely it is axiomatic that in thought or art we deal not with

things themselves, but with concepts of things. One may write, like Villon, of Muckle Meg and the Fair Helm-Maker; or, like Sterling, evoke Lilith and the blue-eyed vampire: in either case, only figments of the poet's mind are presented. It is for the creator, not the critic, to choose that image or symbol which suits him best. People who cannot endure anything with a tinge of trope or fantasy, should confine their reading to the census-returns. There, if anywhere, they will find themselves on safe ground.

To touch on other considerations: Why this thirst for literalism, for nothing but direct anthropological data, which would proscribe the infinitudes of imagination, would bar all that can lift us, even in thought, above the interests of the individual or the species? Does it not imply a sort of cosmic provincialism, an overweening racial egomania?

Indeed, if all things fantastic or impossible are to be barred as literary subject-matter, where is one to draw the line? Many thinkers who lived before Freud, and some who live contemporaneously with him, have maintained that the world itself is a fantasy; or, in De Casseres' phrase, a "superstition of the senses." Gaultier has pointed out that we live only by illusion, by a process of seeing ourselves and all things as they are not. The animals alone, being without imagination, have no escape from reality. From parietic to psychoanalyst, from poet to rag-picker, we are all in flight from the real. Truth is what we desire it to be, and the facts of life are a masquerade

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SUPERNATURAL HORROR IN LITERATURE

by H. P. Lovecraft

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Part Fourteen

The collaborators Erckmann-Chatrain enriched French literature with many spectral fancies like "The Man Wolf," in which a transmitted curse works toward its end in a traditional Gothic-castle setting. Their power of creating a shuddering midnight atmosphere was tremendous despite a tendency toward natural explanations and scientific wonders; and few short tales contain greater horror than "The Invisible Eye," where a malignant old hag weaves nocturnal hypnotic spells which induce the successive occupants of a certain inn chamber to hang themselves on a crossbeam. "The Owl's Ear" and "The Waters of Death" are full of engulfing darkness and mystery, the latter embodying the familiar overgrown-spider theme so frequently employed by weird fictionists. Villiers de l'Isle Adam likewise followed the macabre school; his "Torture by Hope," the tale of a stake-condemned prisoner permitted to escape in order to feel the pangs of recapture, being held by some to constitute the most harrowing short story in literature. This type, however, is less a part of the weird tradition than a class peculiar to itself—the so-called *conte creul*, in which the wrenching of the emotions is accomplished through dramatic tantalizations, frustrations, and gruesome physical horrors. Almost wholly devoted to this form is

the living writer Maurice Level, whose very brief episodes have lent themselves so readily to theatrical adaptation in the "thrillers" of the Grand Guignol. As a matter of fact, the French genius is more naturally suited to this dark realism than to the suggestion of the unseen; since the latter process requires, for its best and most sympathetic development on a large scale, the inherent mysticism of the Northern mind.

A very flourishing, though till recently quite hidden branch of weird literature, is that of the Jews, kept alive and nourished in obscurity by the sombre heritage of early Eastern magic, apocalyptic literature, and cabbalism. The Semitic mind, like the Celtic and Teutonic, seems to possess marked mystical inclinations; and the wealth of underground horror-lore surviving in ghettos and synagogues must be much more considerable than is generally imagined. Cabbalism itself, so prominent during the Middle Ages, is a system of philosophy explaining the universe as emanations of the Deity, and involving the existence of strange spiritual realms and beings apart from the visible world, of which dark glimpses may be obtained through certain secret incantations. Its ritual is bound up with mystical interpretations of the Old Testament, and attributes an esoteric significance to each letter of the Hebrew alphabet—a circumstance which has imparted to Hebrew letters a sort of spectral glamour and potency in the popular literature of magic. Jewish folklore has preserved much of the terror and mystery of the past, and when more thoroughly stud-

ied is likely to exert considerable influence on weird fiction. The best examples of its literary use so far are the tale of "The Golem" by Gustav Meyrink, and the drama "The Dybbuk" by the Jewish writer using the pseudonym "Ansky". The former, widely popularised through the cinema a few years ago, treats of a legendary artificial giant made and animated by a medieval rabbin of Prague according to a cryptic formula. The latter, translated and produced in American in 1925 describes with singular power the possession of a living body by the evil soul of a dead man. Both golems and dybbuks are fixed types, and serve as frequent ingredients of later Jewish tradition.

(The next issue of THE FANTASY FAN will be dedicated to Edgar Allan Poe, in which will be published an instalment of Mr. Lovecraft's article about four times as long as this one, all dealing with this father of the fantastic. Don't miss part fifteen.)

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THE DEMONIAN FACE

by Clark Ashton Smith

About 1918 I was in ill health and, during a short visit to San Francisco, was sitting one day in the Bohemian Club, to which I had been given a guest's card of admission. Happening to look up, I saw a frightful demonian face with twisted rootlike eyebrows and oblique fiery-slitted eyes, which seemed to emerge momentarily from air about nine feet above me and lean toward my seat. The thing disappeared as it approached me, but left an ineffaceable impression of malignity, horror, and loathsomeness. If an hallucination, it was certainly seen amid appropriate surroundings; if an actual entity, it was no doubt the kind that would be likely to haunt a club in one of our modern Gomorrachs.

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WEIRD WHISPERINGS

by Schwartz and Weisinger

Pen Names

Ronal Kayser, who has been writing for *Weird Tales* under the pen-name of Dale Clark, has now dropped his pseudonym and will hereafter use his own name... Greye La Spina had five stories in the first issue of that old fantasy magazine, *The Thrill Book*... Four of these tales appeared under various pseudonyms, but the cover design story was published under her own name... G. G. Pendarves, famous weird author, is the pen-name of an Englishwoman... Her real name is Miss G. Gordon Trenery; she is now selling stories to some of the English magazines under the name of Gordon Trenery... And remember Hugh Davidson, author of "The Vampire Master," "Snake Man," and other WT thrillers? Well, Davidson is the pseudonym for none other than Edmond Hamilton!

Weird News

Winford Publications' new weird magazine, out in about two months, will sell for fifteen cents a copy, and is tentatively titled *Mystery Novels Monthly*. It will feature a book-length mystery novel each issue, but all the shorter stories will be of a strictly weird nature. J. Silberkeit is the editor... Miss C. L. Moore has returned to 'Northwest' Smith as a character in a new story titled "Juhi," which will probably appear in the February WT... Nat Schuchman, besides writing

science fiction and weird-mystery yarns for *Astounding*, *Dime Mystery*, and *Terror Tales*, likewise writes quite regularly for *Super Detective*... E. Hoffmann Price sells consistently to the new mag, *Spicy Detective Stories*... *Tales of the Uncanny*, a new English magazine, features weird yarns by such well known authors as Algernon Blackwood, H. G. Wells, John Buchan, Hugh Walpole, Michael Arlen, H. R. Wakefield, and Somerset Maugham.

The Edmond Hamilton Lowdown

Here's the story behind the discovery and making of Edmond Hamilton as related by Farnsworth Wright:

"Hamilton's first story, entitled 'Beyond the Unseen Wall' was rejected by me ten years ago, but I liked its possibilities so well that I sent Hamilton a three-page typewritten letter with the rejection, telling him how I thought the story might be fixed up; because it sagged in the middle and was rather unconvincingly set forth. I did not know Hamilton from Adam's off ox, but a year later he sent the story back again, rewritten and so much changed that I hardly recognized it. I accepted it immediately, and I suggested 'The Desert God' as an acceptable title. Hamilton wrote back suggesting a new one, 'The Monster-God of Mamurth,' which is the title under which we printed it in *Weird Tales*. Hamilton has not had a rejected from us since then. Up to the present, he has had 43 stories printed in *Weird Tales*, and several more are in our hands and will appear soon."

The Primal City

by Clark Ashton Smith

In these after-days, when all things are touched with insoluble doubt and dereliction, I am not sure of the purpose that had taken us into that little visited land. I recall, however, that we had found explicit mention, in a volume of which we possessed the one existing copy, of certain vast prehuman ruins lying amid the bare plateaus and stark pinnacles of the region. How we had acquired the volume I do not know; but Sebastian Polder and I had given our youth and much of our manhood to the quest of hidden knowledge; add this book was a compendium of all things that men have forgotten or ignored in their desire to repudiate the inexplicable.

We, being enamored of mystery, and seeking ever for the clues that material science has disregarded, pondered much upon those pages written in an antique alphabet. The location of the ruins was clearly stated, though in terms of an obsolete geography; and I remember our excitement when we had marked the position on a terrestrial globe. From the very first we were eager to behold the alien city, and certain of our ability to find it. Perhaps we wished to verify a strange and fearful theory which we had formed regarding the nature of the earth's primal inhabitants; perhaps we sought to recover the buried records of a lost science...or perhaps there was some other and darker objective...

I recall nothing of the first stages of our journey, which must have been long and

ardous. But I recall distinctly that we travelled for many days amid the bleak, treeless uplands that rose rapidly like a teirred embankment toward the range of high pyramidal summits guarding our destination. Our guide was a native of the country, sodden and taciturn, with intelligence little above that of the llamas which carried our supplies. He had never visited the ruins, but we had been assured that he knew the way, which was a secret remembered by few of his fellow countrymen. Rare and scant was the local legendry concerning the place and its builders; and, after many queries, we could add nothing to the knowledge gained from the immemorial volume. The city, it seemed, was nameless; and the region about it was untrodden by man.

Desire and curiosity raged within us like a calenture; and we gave no heed to the hazards and travails of exploration. Over us stood the eternal azure of vacant heavens, matching in their desolation the empty landscape. The route steepened; and above us now was a wilderness of cragged and chasmed rock, where nothing dwelt but the sinister wide-winged condors.

Often we lost sight of certain eminent peaks that had served us for landmarks. But it seemed that our guide knew the way, as if led by an instinct more subtle than memory or intelligence; and at no time did he hesitate. At intervals we came to the broken fragments of a paved road that had formerly traversed the whole of

this difficult region: broad, cyclopean flags of gneiss, channeled as if by the storms of cycles older than human history. And in some of the deeper chasms we saw the eroded piers of great bridges that had spanned them in other time. These ruins reassured us; for in the primordial volume there was mention of a highway and of mighty bridges, leading to the fabulous city.

Polder and I were exultant; and yet I think that we both shivered with a curious terror when we tried to read certain inscriptions that were still deeply engraved on the worn stones. No living man, tho erudite in all the tongues of Earth, could have deciphered those characters; and perhaps it was their very alienage that frightened us. We had sought diligently during laborious years for all that transcends the dead level of mortality through age or remoteness or strangeness; we had longed ardently for the esoteric and bizarre; but such longing was not incompatible with fear and repulsion. Better than those who had walked always in the common paths, we knew the perils that might attend our exorbitant and solitary reserches.

Often we had debated, with variously fantastic conjectures, the enigma of the mountain builded city. But, toward our journey's end, when the vestiges of that pristine people multiplied around us, we fell into long periods of silence, sharing the taciturnity of our stolid guide. Thoughts came to us that were overly strange for utterance; the chill of elder aeons entered our hearts from the ruins—and did not depart.

We toiled on between the desolate rocks and the sterile heavens, breathing an air that became thin and painful to the lungs, as if with some admixture of cosmic ether. At high noon we reached an open pass,

and saw before and above us, at the end of a long and quickly opened perspective, the city that had been described as an unnamed ruin in a volume antedating all other known books.

The place was built on an inner peak of the range, surrounded by snowless summits little sterner and loftier than itself. On one side the peak fell in a thousand-foot precipice from the overhanging ramparts; on another, it was terraced with wild cliffs; but, the third side, facing toward us, was a steep acclivity with broken-down scarps and chimneys that would offer small difficulty to expert mountaineers. The rock of the whole mountain was strangely ruinous and black; but the city walls, tho gapped and worn to a like dilapidation, were conspicuous at a distance of leagues.

Polder and I beheld the bourn of our world-wide search with thoughts and emotions which we did not voice. The Indian made no comment, pointing impassively toward the far summit with its crown of ruins. We hurried on, wishing to complete our journey by daylight; and plunging into an abysmal valley, we began at mid-afternoon the ascent of the slope toward the city.

We were impressed anew by the abnormal and manifold cleavages of the granite. It was like climbing amid the overthrown and fire-blasted blocks of a Titan citadel. Everywhere the slope was rent into huge, obliquely angled masses, often partly vitrified, which made the ascent a more arduous problem than we had expected. Plainly, at some former time, the stone had been subjected to the action of heat; and yet there were no volcanic craters amid the nearby mountains. Puzzlingly, I recalled a passage in the old volume, hinting ambiguously at the dark

fate that had long ago destroyed the city's inhabitants. But from this passage I could still draw no definite conclusion: for the ideation was too fantastic to be understood as anything more than a dubious figure of speech.

We had left our three llamas at the slope's bottom, merely taking with us provisions for a night. Thus unhampered, we made fair progress in spite of the ever-varying obstacles offered by the shattered scarps. After a while we came to the hewn steps of a stairway mounting to the summit; but the steps had been wrought for the feet of colossi, and, in many places, they were part of the heaved and tilted ruin; so they did not greatly facilitate our climbing.

The sun was still high above the western pass behind us; and for this reason, as we went on, I was much surprised by a sudden deepening of the char-bike blackness on the rocks. Turning, I saw that several greyish vapory masses, which might have been either cloud or smoke, were drifting idly about the summits that overlooked the pass; and one of these masses rearing like a limbless figure, upright and colossal, had interposed itself between us and the sun.

Sebastian and the guide had also noted this phenomenon. Clouds were almost unheard-of amid those mountains in summer; and the presence of smoke would have been equally hard to explain. Moreover, the grey masses were wholly detached from each other and showed a peculiar opacity and sharpness of outline. At second glance they did not really resemble any cloud forms we had ever seen; for about them there was a baffling suggestion of weight and solidity. Moving sluggishly into the heavens above the pass, they preserved

their original contours and their separate-ness. They seemed to swell and tower, coming toward us on the blue air from which, as yet, no lightest stirring of wind had reached us. Floating thus, they maintained the rectitude of massive columns or of giants marching on a broad plain.

I think we all felt an alarm that was none the less urgent for its vagueness. Somehow, from that instant, it seemed that we were penned up by unknown powers and were cut off from all possibility of retreat. We had ventured into a place of hidden peril—and the peril was upon us. In the movement of the strange clouds there was something alert, deliberate—and implacable. Polder spoke with a sort of horror in his voice, uttering the thought which had already occurred to me.

"They are the sentinels who guard this region—and they have espied us!"

We heard a harsh cry from the Indian. Following his gaze, we saw that several of the unnatural cloud-shapes had appeared on the summit toward which we were climbing, above the megalithic ruins. Some arose half hidden by the walls, as if from behind a breastwork; others stood, as it were, on the topmost towers and battlements, bulking in portentous menace, like the cumuli of a thunder-storm.

Then, with terrifying swiftness, many more of the cloud-presences towered simultaneously from the four quarters, emerging from behind the gaunt peaks or assuming sudden visibility in mid-air. With equal and effortless speed, as if convoked by an unheard command, they gathered in converging lines upon the eyre-like ruins. We the climbers, and the whole slope about us and the valley below, were plunged in a twilight weird and awesome as that of central eclipse.

The air was still windless, but it weighed upon us as if burdened with the wings of a thousand cacodemons. I remember that I was overwhelmingly conscious of our exposed position, for we had paused on a wide landing of the mountain-hewn steps. We could easily have concealed ourselves amid the huge fragments on the surrounding slope; but, for the nonce, we were incapable of the simplest movement.

In a close-ranged army, the Clouds mustered above and around us. They rose into the very zenith, swelling to insuperable vastness, and darkening like Tartarean gods. The sun had disappeared, leaving no faintest beam to prove that it still hung unfallen and undestroyed in the heavens.

I felt that I was crushed into the very stone by the eyeless regard of that awful assemblage, judging and condemning. We had trespassed upon a region conquered long ago by strange elemental entities; we had approached their very citadel—and now we must meet the doom our rashness had invited. Such thoughts, like a black lightning, flared in my brain.

Now, for the first time, I became aware of sound—if the word can be applied to a sensation so anomalous. It was as if the oppression that weighed upon me had grown audible; as if palpable thunders poured over and past me. I felt, I heard them in every nerve, and they roared through my brain like torrents from the opened flood-gates of some tremendous weir in a world of genii.

Downward upon us, with limbless atlantean stridings, there swept the cloudy cohorts. Their swiftness was that of supernatural things. The air was riven as if by the tumult of a thousand tempests, was rife with an unmeasured elemental malignity. I recall but partially the events that

ensued; but the impression of insufferable darkness, of demonic clamor and trampling, and the pressure of thunderous burdensome onset, remains forever indelible. Also, there were voices that called out with the stridor of clarions in a war of gods, uttering ominous syllables that the ear of man could never seize.

Before those vengeful Shapes; we could not stand for a moment. We hurled ourselves with a mad precipitation down the shadowed steps of the giant stairs. Polder and the guide were a little ahead of me, to the left hand, and I saw them in that baleful twilight on the verge of a deep chasm, which, in our ascent, had compelled us to much circumambulation. I saw them leap together—and yet I swear that they did not fall into the chasm: for one of the Shapes was upon them whirling and stooping, even as they sprang. There was a blasphemous, unthinkable fusion as of forms heheld in delirium: for an instant the two men were like vapors that swelled and swirled, towering high as the thing that had caught them; and the thing itself was a misty Janus, with two heads and bodies melting, no longer human, into its unearthly column.

After that, I remember nothing more, except the sense of vertiginous falling. By some miracle I must have reached the edge of the chasm and flung myself into its depths without being overtaken as the others had been. How I escaped the pursuit of those cloudy Guardians is forever more an enigma. Perhaps, for some inscrutable reason of their own, they permitted me to go.

When I returned to awareness, stars were peering down upon me like chill inquisitorial eyes between black and jagged lips.

of rock. The air had turned sharp with the coldness of nightfall in a mountain land. My body ached with a hundred bruises and my right forearm was limp and useless when I tried to raised myself. A dark mist of horror stifled my thoughts. Struggling to my feet with pain-racked effort, I called aloud, though I knew that none would answer me. Then, striking match after match, I searched the chasm and found myself, as I had expected, alone. Nowhere was there any trace of my companions: they had vanished utterly—as clouds vanish.

Somehow, by night, with a broken arm, I must have climbed from the steep fissure, I must have made my way down the frightful mountainside and out of that namelessly haunted and guarded land. I remember that the sky was clear, that the stars were undimmed by any semblance of cloud; and that somewhere in the valley I found one of our llamas, still laden with its stock of provisions...

Plainly I was not pursued by the Guardians. Perhaps they were concerned only with the warding of that mysterious primal city from human intrusion. Never shall I learn the secret of those ruinous walls and crumbling keeps, nor the fate of my companions. But still, through my nightly dreams and diurnal visions, the dark Shapes move with the tumult and thunder of a thousand storms; and my soul is crushed into the earth with the burden of their imminence; and They pass over me with the speed and vastness of vengeful gods; and I hear Their voices calling like clarions in the sky, with ominous, world-shaking syllables that the ear can never seize.

The End

LOST EXCERPTS

by Robert Nelson

1. In Living Darkness

In dreams ago I walked aimlessly and long in far and distant realms.

I have seen wretched and depressed women feed with their milk the famished spirits that swelter and moulder amid the rank noisomeness of charnel hells. By blue and rotting trees I have seen colossal and cankered white worms fawning to their young and devouring themselves.

I have seen evil and demented dwarfs fling flaring torches into the faces of maids who were playing sad violins and dying with nameless sins and melody. And I have stood on red rocks overlooking a black and ever-surgng sea wherein dread things stabbed and slew and shrieked in exaltation to the molten dripping skies.



On Fantasy

(continued from page 38)

in which we imagine that we have identified the maskers. The highest intellects have always delighted in poetic fantasy and philosophic paradox, knowing well that the universe itself is multiform fantasy and paradox, and that everything perceived or conceived as actuality is merely one phase of that which has or may have innumerable aspects. In this phantom whirl of the infinite, among these veils of Maya that are sevenfold behind sevenfold, nothing is too absurd, too lovely, or dreadful to be impossible.

MEDUSA

by Clark Ashton Smith

(Written at the age of 18)

As drear and barren as the glooms of Death,
It lies, a windless land of livid dawns,
Nude to a desolate firmament, with hills
That seem the fleshless earth's outjutting ribs,
And plains whose face is crossed and rivelled deep
With gullies twisting like a serpent's track,
The leprous touch of Death is on its stones,
Where, for his token visible, the Head
Is throned upon a heap of monstrous rocks,
Rough-mounded like some shattered pyramid
In a thwartly cloven hill-ravine, that seems
The unhealing scar of huge of Tellurian wars.
Her lethal beauty crowned with twining snakes
That animate her hair, the Gorgon reigns:
Her eyes are clouds wherein Death's lightnings lurk,
Yet, even as men that seek the glance of Life,
The gazers come, where, coiled and serpent-swift,
Those levins wait. As round an altar-base
Her victims lie, distorted, blackened forms
Of posture horror smitten into stone—
Time caught in meshes of eternity—
Drawn back from dust and ruin of the years,
And given to all the future of the world.
The land is claimed of Death: the daylight comes
Half-strangled in the changing webs of cloud
That unseen spiders of bewildered winds
Weave and unweave across the lurid sun
In upper air. Below, no zephyr comes
To break with life the circling spell of doom.
Long vapour-serpents twist about the moon,
And in the windy murkness of the sky,

The guttering stars are wild as candle-flames
That near the socket.

Thus the land shall be,
And Death shall wait, throned in Medusa's eyes,
Till, in the irremeable webs of night,
The sun is snared, and the corroded moon
A dust upon the gulfs, and all the stars
Rotted and fallen like rivets from the sky,
Letting the darkness down upon all things.



MALANOTH

(To Clark Ashton Smith)

by R. O. P.

Where is the ancient hidden sphere
Where Malanoth is king?
What silhouetted towers rear
And on the heavens cling?

Above the wall that shows no gate
The mighty columns loom;
Mysterious wonder incarnate
Where slumbers ancient doom.

Beyond the myriad whirling moons
That circle through the skies—
A place described in evil runes,
The awesome kingdom lies.

And Malanoth, its striped face
Obscure and pondering
Thinks always in that silent place
Of some old, secret thing.

A DEATH SIGNAL

(A True Experience)

by Kenneth B. Pritchard

My grandfather was on his death bed. A door to his room was closed. Other doors in the house were shut, and at least one was locked or bolted.

Some of his family were down stairs. They knew that the end was near; but just when he would pass, they could not tell.

What happened next must have put terror into the hearts of the inhabitants.

All of a sudden, all the doors in the house opened, whether they were bolted or otherwise! And then, even as they had opened, so they closed! And my grandfather was dead.

It seemed as though his death was a signal for someone or something to open and close the doors. What was its meaning? Did something come to take his soul?

It is easy to see how Shakespeare's Hamlet spoke strange truths; and that men of science and learning have much to uncover, with the light of of the torch of intelligence leading the way into dark corners and shedding an illuminating gleam into the unknown.



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