

Dedicated To Edgar Allan Poe

THE FANTASY FAN

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NOTICE

Due to increased printing costs, we find it no longer possible to continue our covers.

OUR READERS SAY

We hope that this issue will give you a better appreciation of that father of the weird tale, Edgar Allan Poe. H. P. Lovecraft's article brings out many points in the ability of this immortal which have never been mentioned in his biographies.

"The issues have been consistently pleasing. The September had the edge over the October number on account of variety."

— Lester Anderson
Hayward, Calif.

"I wish you to know that the idea of dedicating each issue is a very fine one. I hope you can keep on giving

us such fine material that has never before seen print."

— F. Lee Baldwin
Asotin, Wash.

"Oh—hurray and other such expletives! It just tickled me pink to find some more of H. P. Lovecraft's works 'Fungi from Yuggoth,' 'Tis many a long year I've been waiting to find more of them."

— Gertrude Hemken
Chicago, Ill.

"I am extremely glad to see the new TFF, which manages to hold much of interest despite the space I use up. As I said before, I surely appreciate the courtesy of the dedication. I shall be anxious to see the coming Smith and Poe numbers."

— H. P. Lovecraft
Providence, R. I.

"Congratulations on the new and greatly improved appearance of TFF. The new cover adds its dignity."

— Richard Ely Morse
Washington, D. C.

WEIRD WHISPERINGS

by Schwartz and Weisinger

Horror Stories, a companion weird magazine to *Terror Tales*, will appear in the middle of December ... The Winford Publications' weird magazine forecast in this column some months ago made its bow in November under the title, *Mystery Novels Magazine*, *Weird! Strange!! Unusual!!!* To judge from the first issue there will appear a complete book-length novel in each number, to be accompanied by three or four weird-mystery yarns ... Edmond Hamilton deserts science fiction in the February *Weird Tales* for a crime story, called "Murder in the Grave" ... Clark Ashton Smith does a lot of drawing for his own amusement, mostly heads of supernatural creatures. One very good one shows an old man with an elephant's trunk for a nose, ending in the head of a snake.

A strange and unusual twist to stories about radio will be given in a new story by the author of "Vampires of the Moon," A. W. Bernal, titled "The Man who was Two Men" ... *Tales of Magic and Mystery*, a short lived weird magazine, published a few yarns by Frank Owen, and an exceptionally good H. P. Lovecraft story, "Cool Air" ... An ingenious tale of the distant future, dealing with mechanical companions and synthetic love, written by Frank Belknap Long, Jr., and entitled "The Body Masters," will be one of the highlights of the February WT.

For the past few years the Philip Allan & Co., Ltd., of London, has been publishing a collection of weird tale books under the title, *The Creeps Series*, a *Collection of Uneasy Tales*. Included in the series so far are: "Powers of Darkness," "Panics," "Monsters," "Nightmares," "Mysterries of Asia," (by Achmed Abdullah), "Quakes," "Horrors," "Terrors," "Devil's Drums," "Veils of Fear," "The Strange Papers of Dr. Blayre," and now in preparation, "Tales of the Grotesque." The books contain about 12 stories, each of a distinctly weird nature by such authors as Tod Robbins, Elliott O'Donnell, H. R. Wakefield, Douglas Newton, and others. Every year, too, appears a "Not at Night" series, edited by Christine Campbell Thomson, containing a collection of the best weird stories published during the year, the majority being from *Weird Tales*.

Paul Ernst's three part novel, "Rulers of the Future," relating what the world will be like millions of years from now, and carrying the heroes of the story thru the whole universe with the speed of light, will be published starting with the January *Weird Tales* ... "The Red Room," by H. G. Wells, is the most often plagiarized weird story, according to Farnsworth Wright, and "The Damned Thing," by Bierce is another plot often seized upon ... In the February *Weird* will appear the first of Seabury Quinn's new series dealing with Thomas Eldridge Carter, investigator for the Grand Central Life Assurance Company, called "The Web of Living Death."

SUPERNATURAL HORROR
IN LITEATURE

by H. P. Lovecraft

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Part Fifteen

VII. Edgar Allan Poe

In the eighteen-thirties occurred a literary dawn directly affecting not only the history of the weird tale, but that of short fiction as a whole; and indirectly moulding the trends and fortunes of a great European aesthetic school. It is our good fortune as Americans to be able to claim that dawn as our own, for it came in the person of our illustrious and unfortunate fellow-countryman Edgar Allan Poe. Poe's fame has been subject to curious undulations, and it is now a fashion amongst the "advanced intelligentsia" to minimise his importance both as an artist and as an influence; but it would be hard for any mature and reflective critic to deny the tremendous value of his work and the pervasive potency of his mind as an opener of artistic vistas. True, his type of outlook may have been anticipated; but it was he who first realized its possibilities and gave it supreme form and systematic expression. True also, that subsequent writers may have produced greater single tales than his; but again we must comprehend that it was only he who taught them by example and precept the art which they, having the way cleared for them and given an explicit guide, were perhaps able to carry to greater lengths. Whatever his limitations, Poe did that which no one else ever did or could

have done; and to him we owe the modern-story in its final and perfected state

Before Poe the bulk of weird writers had worked largely in the dark; without an understanding of the psychological basis of the horror appeal, and hampered by more or less of conformity to certain empty literary conventions such as the happy ending, virtue rewarded, and in general a hollow moral didacticism, acceptance of popular standards and values, and striving of the author to obtrude his own emotions into the story and take sides with the partisans of the majority's artificial ideals. Poe, on the other hand, perceived the essential impersonality of the real artist; and knew that the function of creative fiction is merely to express and interpret events and sensations as they are, regardless of how they tend or what they prove—good or evil, attractive or repulsive, stimulating or depressing, with the author always acting as a vivid and detached chronicler rather than as a teacher, sympathiser, or vendor of opinion. He saw clearly that all phases of life and thought are equally eligible as subject matter for the artist, and being inclined by temperament to strangeness and gloom, decided to be the interpreter of those powerful feelings and frequent happenings which attend pain rather than pleasure, decay rather than growth, terror rather than tranquility, and which are fundamentally either adverse or indifferent to the tastes and traditional outward sentiments of mankind, and to the health, sanity, and normal expansive welfare of the species.

Poe's spectres thus acquired a convincing malignity possessed by none of their predecessors, and established a new standard of realism in the annals of literary horror. The impersonal and artistic intent, moreover, was aided by a scientific attitude not often found before; whereby Poe studied the human mind rather than the usages of Gothic fiction, and worked with an analytical knowledge of terror's true sources which doubled the force of his narratives and emancipated him from all the absurdities inherent in merely conventional shudder-coining. This example having been set, later authors were naturally forced to conform to it in order to compete at all; so that in this way a definite change began to affect the main stream of macabre writing. Poe, too, set a fashion in consummate craftsmanship; and although today some of his own work seems slightly melodramatic and unsophisticated, we can constantly trace his influence in such things as the maintenance of a single mood and achievement of a single impression in a tale, and the rigorous paring down of incidents to such as have a direct bearing on the plot and will figure prominently in the climax. Truly may it be said that Poe invented the short story in its present form. His elevation of disease, perversity, and decay to the level of artistically expressible themes was likewise infinitely far-reaching in effect; for avidly seized, sponsored, and intensified by his eminent French admirer Charles Pierre Baudelaire, it became the nucleus of the principal aesthetic movements in France, thus making Poe in a sense the father of

the Decadents and the Symbolists.

Poet and critic by nature and supreme attainment, logician and philosopher by taste and mannerism, Poe was by no means immune from defects and affectations. His pretence to profound and obscure scholarship, his blundering ventures in stilted and laboured pseudo-humour, and his often vitriolic outbursts of critical prejudices must all be recognized and forgiven. Beyond and above them, dwarfing them to insignificance, was a master's vision of the terror that stalks about and within us, and the worm that writhes and slavers in the hideously close abyss. Penetrating to every festering horror in the gaily painted mockery called existence, that vision had power to project itself in marvelous crystallisations and transmutations; till there bloomed in the sterile America of the thirties and forties such a moon-flourished garden of gorgeous poison fungi as not even the nether slope of Saturn had known in the days of the unutterable blasphemies. Verses and tales alike sustain the burden of cosmic panic. The raven whose noisome beak pierces the heart, the ghouls that toll iron bells in pestilential steeples, the vault of Ulalume in the black October night, the shocking spires and cones under the sea, the "wild, weird clime that lieth, sublime, out of Space—out of Time"—all these things and more leer at us amidst maniacal rattlings in the seething nightmare of the poetry. And in the prose there yawn open for us the very jaws of the pit—in conceivable abnormalities slyly hinted into a horrible half-knowledge by words whose innocence we scarcely doubt till the

cracked tension of the speaker's hollow voice bids us fear their nameless implications; demoniac patterns and presences slumbering noxiously till waked for one phobic instant into a shrieking revelation that cackles itself to sudden madness or explodes in memorable and cataclysmic echoes. A Witches' Sabbath of horror flinging off decorous robes is flashed before us—a sight the more monstrous because of the scientific skill with which every particular is marshalled and brought into an easy apparent relation to the known gruesomeness of material life.

Poe's tales, of course, fall into several classes; some of which contain a purer essence of spiritual horror than others. The tales of logic and ratiocination, forerunners of the modern detective story, are not to be included at all in weird literature; whilst certain others, probably influenced considerably by Hoffman, possess an extravagance which rellegates them to the borderline of the grotesque. Still a third group deal with abnormal psychology and monomania in such a way as to express terror but not weirdness. A substantial residuum, however, represent the literature of supernatural horror in the acutest form; and give their author a permanent and unassailable place as deity and fountain-head of all modern diabolic fiction. Who can forget the terrible swollen ship poised on the billow-chasm's edge in "Ms. Found in a Bottle"—the dark intimations of her unhallowed age and monstrous growth, her sinister crew of unseeing greybeards, and her frightful southward rush under full sail thru the ice of the Antarctic night, sucked

onward by some resistless devil-current toward a vortex of eldritch enlightenment which must end in destruction?

Then there is the unutterable "M. Valdemar," kept together by hypnotism for seven months after his death, and uttering frantic sounds but a moment before the breaking of the spell leaves him "a nearly liquid mass of loathsome, of detestable putrescence." In the "Narrative of A. Gordon Pym" the voyagers reach first a strange south polar land of murderous savages where nothing is white and where vast rocky ravings have the form of titanic Egyptian letters spelling terrible primal arcana of earth; and thereafter a still more mysterious realm where everything is white, and where shrouded giants and snowy-plumed birds guard a cryptic cataract of mist which empties from immeasurable celestial heights into a torrid milky sea. "Metzengerstein" horrifies with its malign hints of a monstrous metempsychosis—the mad nobleman who burns the stable of his hereditary foe; the colossal unknown horse that issues from the blazing building after the owner has perished therein; the vanishing bit of ancient tapestry where was shown the giant horse of the victim's ancestor in the Crusade's; the madman's wild and constant riding on the great horse, and his fear and hatred of the steed; the meaningless prophecies that brood obscurely over the warring houses; and finally, the burning of the madman's palace and the death therein of the owner, borne helpless into the flames and up the vast staircase astride the beast he has ridden so strangely. Afterward the rising smoke of the ruins

takes the form of a gigantic horse. "The Man of the Crowd," telling of one who roams day and night to mingle with streams of people as if afraid to be alone, has quieter effects, but implies nothing less of cosmic fear. Poe's mind was never far from terror and decay, and we see in every tale, poem, and philosophical dialogue, a tense eagerness to fathom unplumbed wells of night, to pierce the veil of death, and to reign in fancy as lord of the frightful mysteries of time and space.

Certain of Poe's tales possess an almost absolute perfection of artistic form which makes them veritable beacon-lights in the province of the short story. Poe could, when he wished, give to his prose a richly poetic cast; employing that archaic and Orientalised style with jeweled phrase, quasi-Biblical repetition, and recurrent burthen so successfully used by later writers like Oscar Wilde and Lord Dunsany; and in the cases where he has done this we have an effect of lyrical phantasy almost narcotic in essence—an opium pageant of dream in the language of dream, with every unnatural colour and grotesque image bodied forth in a symphony of corresponding sound. "The Masque of the Red Death," "Silence, a Fable," and "Shadow, a Parable," are assuredly poems in every sense of the word save the meterical one and owe as much of their power to aural cadence as to visual imagery. But it is in two of the less openly poetic tales, "Ligeia," and "The Fall of the House of Usher,"—especially the latter—that one finds those very summits of artistry whereby

Poe takes his place at the head of fictional miniaturists. Simple and straight-forward in plot, both of these tales owe their supreme magic to the cunning development which appears in the selection and collocation of every least incident. "Ligeia" tells of a first wife of lofty and mysterious origin, who after death returns through a preternatural force of will to take possession of the body of a second wife; imposing even her physical appearance on the temporary reanimated corpse of her victim at the last moment. Despite a suspicion of prolixity and topheaviness, the narrative reaches its terrific climax with relentless power. "Usher," whose superiority in detail and proportion is very marked, hints shudderingly of obscure life in inorganic things, and displays an abnormally linked trinity of entities at the end of a long and isolated family history—a brother, his twin sister, and their incredibly ancient house all sharing a single soul and meeting one common dissolution at the same moment.

These bizarre conceptions, so awkward in unskillful hands, become under Poe's spell living and convincing terrors to haunt our nights; and all because the author understood so perfectly the very mechanics and physiology of fear and strangeness—the essential details to emphasise, the precise incongruities and conceits to select as preliminaries or concomitants to horror, the exact incidents and allusions to throw out innocently in advance as symbols or prefigurings of each major step toward the hideous denouement to come, the nice adjustments of cum-

ulative force and the unerring accuracy in linkage of parts which make for faultless unity throughout and thunderous effectiveness at the climactic moment, the delicate nuances of scenic and landscape value to select in establishing and sustaining the desired mood and vitalising the desired illusion—principles of this kind, and dozens of obscurer ones too elusive to be described or even fully comprehended by any ordinary commentator. Melodrama and unsophistication there may be—we are told of one fastidious Frenchman who could not bear to read Poe except in Baudelaire's urbane and Gallically modulated translation—but all traces of such things are wholly overshadowed by a potent and inborn sense of the spectral, the morbid, and the horrible which gushed forth from every cell of the artist's creative mentality and stamped his macabre work with the ineffaceable mark of supreme genius. Poe's weird tales are *alive* in a manner that few others can ever hope to be.

Like most fantasistes, Poe excels in incidents and broad narrative effects rather than in character drawing. His typical protagonist is generally a dark, handsome, proud, melancholy, intellectual, highly sensitive, capricious, introspective, isolated, and sometimes slightly mad gentleman of ancient family and opulent circumstances; usually deeply learned in strange lore, and darkly ambitious of penetrating to forbidden secrets of the universe. Aside from a high-sounding name, this character obviously derives little from the early Gothic novel; for he is

THE FAVORITE WEIRD
STORIES OF
CLARK ASHTON SMITH

(Courtesy of H. Koenig)

"The Yellow Sign" by Chambers
 "The House of Sounds" by Shiel
 "The Willows" by Blackwood
 "A View from a Hill" by James
 "The Death of Halpin Frayser" by
 "The House of Usher" Poe | Bierce
 "The Masque of Red Death" Poe
 "The White Powder" by Machen
 "The Call of Cthulu" by Lovecraft
 "The Colour out of Space" "

clearly neither the wooden hero nor the diabolical villain of Radcliffian or Ludovician romance. Indirectly, however, he does possess a sort of genealogical connexion; since his gloomy, ambition and anti-social qualities savour strongly of the typical Byronic hero, who in turn is definitely an offspring of the Gothic Manfreds, Montonis, and Ambrosios. More particular qualities appear to be derived from the psychology of Poe himself, who certainly possessed much of the depression, sensitiveness, mad aspiration, loneliness, and extravagant freakishness which he attributes to his haughty and solitary victims of Fate.

(Part Sixteen next month deals with the eighth section of this article, "The Weird Tradition in America," dealing mostly with Nathaniel Hawthorne and his comparison with Poe. Don't miss it.)

WILLIAM HOPE HODGSON

by H. Koenig

A few years ago Faber and Faber published an anthology of ghost stories chosen by Colin de la Mare under the title "They Walk Again." Most of the stories included in this splendid anthology were by well-known writers such as Blackwood, Dunsany, and Bierce and many of the stories were familiar ones—"The Monkey's Paw," "Green Tea" and "The Ghost Ship." However, one new story was included in the book; one comparatively new face appeared among all the old familiar ones. The story was "The Voice in the Night" a horrifying and yet pathetic tale of human beings turned into a fungoid growth; the author is William Hope Hodgson.

Except perhaps for a few of the older readers of weird stories, the name of Hodgson will mean nothing, and yet twenty-five years ago Hodgson wrote a number of books which compare very favorably with any of our modern weird stories, books which rank high in the fantasy field and which deserve more popularity and publicity than they ever received. Five of his books should be read by all weird story lovers: "The Boats of the Glen Carrig" 1907, "The House on the Borderland" 1908, "The Night Land" 1912, and "Carnacki, The Ghost Finder" 1913.

The first three books form (in Hodgson's words) "what perhaps may be termed a trilogy; for though very different in scope, each of the three

books deals with certain conceptions that have an elemental kinship." A few chapter headings will give some idea of the treat in store for fantasy fans fortunate enough to locate these books—"The Thing that Made Search," "The Island in the Weed," "The Noise in the Valley," "The Weed Men," "The Thing in the Pit," "The Swing Things," etc.

"The Night Land" is one of the longest fantastic romances ever written, running close to six hundred pages. It is a story of the world in the future when the sun has died and the "Last Millions" are living in a large redoubt, a huge pyramid of gray metal nearly eight miles high and five miles around the base. Beyond the pyramid were mighty races of terrible creatures, half-beast and half-man, night hounds monstrous slugs, and other horrible monsters. As a protection against all these evils a great electric circle was put about the pyramid and lit from the Earth Current. It bounded the pyramid for a mile on each side and none of the monsters were able to cross it due to a subtle vibration which affected their brains.

"Carnacki, The Ghost Finder" is a series of six short ghost stories in which Carnacki investigates ghostly phenomena in various homes. One or two of the tales are somewhat weakened by a natural explanation of the ghosts, but each of the stories is well worth reading.

Hodgson's tales may well have served as source books for many of the stories now being read in our present day pulp magazines. The whole

(continued on page 64)

The Sorcery of Aphlar

by Duane W. Rimel

The council of twelve seated on the jeweled celestial dais ordered that Aphlar be cast from the gates of Bel-haz-en. He sat too much alone, they decreed, and brooded when toil should have been his lot. And in his obscure and hidden delvings he read all too frequently those papyri of Elder æons which reposed in the Guothic shrine and were to be consulted only for rare and special purposes.

The twilight city of Bel-haz-en had climbed backward in its knowledge. No longer did philosophers sit upon street corners speaking wise words to the populace, for stupid ignorance ruled within the crumbling and immemorially ancient walls. Where once the wisdom of the stars abounded, only feebleness and desolation now lay upon the place; spreading like a momstrous blight and sucking foul nurture from the stupid dwellers. And out of the waters of the Oll that meandered from the mountains of Azlakka to pass by the aged city, there rose often great clouds of pestilence that racked the people sorely, leaving them pale and near to dying. All this their loss of wisdom brought. And now the council had sent their last and greatest wise man from them.

Aphlar wandered to the mountains far above the city and built a cavern for protection from the summer heat and winter chill. There he read his scrolls in silence and his mighty wis-

dom to the wind about the crags and to the swallows on the wing. All day he sat and watched below or drew queer drawings on small bits of stone and chanted to them, for he knew that some day men would seek the cave and slay him. The cunning of the twelve did not mislead him. Had not the last exiled wiseman's screams rent the night two moon-rounds before when people thought him safely gone?

Had not his own eyes seen the priest's sword-slashed form floating by in the poison waters? He knew no lion had killed old Azik, let the council say what they might. Does a lion slash with a sword and leave his prey uneaten?

Through many seasons Aphlar sat upon the mountain, gazing at the muddy Oll as it wound into the misty distance to the land where none ever ventured. He spoke his words of wisdom to the snails that worked in the ground by his feet. They seemed to understand, and waved their slimy feelers before they sank beneath the sand again. On moonlight nights he climbed the hill above his cave and made strange offerings to the moon-God Alo; and when the night-birds heard the sound they drew close and listened to the whispering. And when queer winged things flapped across the darkened sky and loomed up dimly against the moon Aphlar was content. Those

which he had addressed had heeded his beckoning. His thoughts were always far away, and his prayers were offered to the pale fancies of dusk.

Then one day past noontide Aphlar rose from his earthen chair and strode down the rock mountain-side. His eyes, heeding not the rotten, stone-walled city, held steadfastly to the river. When he drew near its muddy brink he paused and looked up the bosom of the stream. A small object floated near the rushes, and this Aphlar rescued with tender and curious care. Then, wrapping the thing in the folds of his robe, he climbed up again to his cave in the hills. All day he sat and gazed upon the object; rummaging now and then in his musty chronicles, and muttering awful syllables as he drew faint figures on a piece of parchment.

That night the gibbous moon rose high, but Aphlar did not climb above his dwelling. Queer night birds flew past the cavern's mouth, chirped eerily, and fled away into the shadows.

Many days passed before the council sent their messengers of murder; but at last the time was thought ripe, and seven dark-browed men stole away to the hills. Yet when that grim seven ventured within the cave they saw not the wise man Aphlar. Instead, small blades of grass were sprouting in his natural chair of earth. All about lay papyri dim and musty, with faint figures drawn upon them. The seven shuddered and left forthwith when they beheld these things, but as the last man tremblingly withdrew he

saw a round and unknown thing lying on the ground. He picked it up, and his fellows drew close in curiosity; but they saw upon it only alien symbols which they could not read, yet which made shrink and quaver without knowing why. Then he who had found it cast it quickly over the steep precipice beside him, but no sound came from the slope below whereon it should have fallen. And the thrower trembled, fearing many things that are not known but only whispered about. Then, when he told how the sphere he had held was without the weight a thing of stone should have; how it was like to have floated on air as the thistledown floats; he and the six with him slunk as one from the spot and swore it was a place accursed.

But after they had gone a snail crawled slowly from a sandy crevice and slid intently over to where the blades of grass were growing. And when it reached the spot, two slimy feelers stretched forth and bent oddly downward, as if eager to watch forever the winding river.

◆ The End

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PROSE PASTELS

by Clark Ashton Smith

5. *The Passing of Aphrodite*

In all the lands of Illarion, from mountain-valleys rimmed with unmelting snow, to the great cliffs of sard whose reflex darkens a sleepy, tepid sea, were lit as of old the green and amethyst fires of summer. Spices were on the wind that mountaineers had met in the high glaciers; and the eldest wood of cypress, frowning on a sky-clear bay, was illumined by scarlet orchids... But the heart of the poet Phaniol was an urn of black jade overfraught by love with sodden ashes. And because he wished to forget for a time the mockery of myrtles, Phaniol walked alone in the waste bordering upon Illarion; in a place that great fires had blackened long ago, and which knew not the pine or the violet, the cypress or the myrtle. There, as the day grew old, he came to an unsailed ocean, whose waters were dark and still under the falling sun, and bore not the memorial voices of other seas. And Phaniol paused, and lingered upon the ashen shore; and dreamt awhile of that sea whose name is Oblivion.

Then, from beneath the westering sun, whose bleak light was prone on his forehead, a barge appeared and swiftly drew to the land: albeit there was no wind, and the oars hung idly on the foamless wave. And Phaniol saw that the barge was wrought of ebony fretted with curious anaglyphs, and carved with luxurious forms of

gods and beasts, of satyrs and goddesses and women; and the figurehead was a black Eros with full unsmiling mouth and implacable sapphire eyes averted, as if intent upon things not lightly to be named or revealed. Upon the deck of the barge were two women, one pale as the northern moon, and the swart as equatorial midnight. But both were clad imperially, and bore the mien of goddesses or of those who dwell near to the goddesses, without word or gesture, they regarded Phaniol; and, marvelling, he inquired, "What seek ye?"

Then, with one voice that was like the voice of hesperian airs among palms at evening twilight in the Fortunate Isles, they answered, saying:

"We wait the goddess Aphrodite, who departs in weariners and sorrow from Illarion, and from all the lands of this world of petty loves and pettier mortalities. Thou, because thou art a poet, and hast known the great sovereignty of love, shall behold her departure. But they, the men of the court, the market-place and the temple, shall receive no message nor sign of her going-forth, and will scarcely dream that she is gone... Now, O Phaniol, the time, the goddess and the going-forth are at hand."

Even as they ceased, One came across the desert; and her coming was a light on the far hills; and where she trod the lengthening shadows shrunk, and the grey waste put on the purple asphodels and the deep verdure it had worn when those queens were young, that now are a darkening legend and a dust of mummia. Even to the shore she came and stood before Phaniol,

while the sunset greatedened, filling sky and sea with a flush as of new-blown blossoms, or the inmost rose of that coiling shell which was consecrate to her in old time. Without robe or circlet or garland, crowned and clad only with the sunset, fair with the dreams of man but fairer yet than all dreams: thus she waited, smiling tranquilly, who is life or death, despair or rapture, vision or flesh, to gods and poets and galaxies unknowable. But, filled with a wonder that was also love, or much more than love, the poet could find no greeting.

"Farewell, O Phaniol," she said, and her voice was the sighing of remote waters, the murmur of waters moon-withdrawn, forsaking not without sorrow a proud island tall with palms. "Thou hast known me and worshipped all thy days till now, but the hour of my departure is come: I go, and when I am gone, thou shalt worship still and shalt not know me. For the destinies are thus, and not forever to any man, to any world or to any god, is it given to possess me wholly. Autumn and spring will return when I am past, the one with yellow leaves, the other with yellow violets; birds will haunt the renewing myrtles; and many little loves will be thine. Not again to thee or to any man will return the perfect vision and the perfect flesh of the goddess."

Ending thus, she stepped from that ashen strand to the dark prow of the barge; and even as it had come, without wafture of wind or movement of oar, the barge put out on a sea covered with the fallen, fading petals of sunset. Quickly it vanished from view,

AN INTERVIEW WITH E. HOFFMAN PRICE

by Fred Anger

& Louis C. Smith

Author, linguist, world-traveller, automobile mechanic and cook—that, fantasy fans, is a fairly representative picture of E. Hoffman Price! The Syrian quarters of Chicago and New York and the Old French Quarter of New Orleans are no strange places to this prolific author of weird stories and detective yarns; he is equally at home in the Philipines and in certain little-known sections of France. He is—but wait!—let's go about this in an orderly manner.

Contrary to popular belief, E. Hoffman Price did *not* have his first story published in *Weird Tales*; his first was sold to "*Droll Stories*," and brought him the magnificent sum of twenty-four dollars (he chuckles over it now). His first story in *Weird Tales* was "*The Rajah's Gift*" which appeared in January 1925; and from this time on, until his job as manager of an acetylene plant petered out, Price wrote exclusively for *Weird Tales* and *Oriental Stories*. Since the spring of

.....
while the desert lost those ancient asphodels and the deep verdure it had worn again for a little. Darkness, having conquered Illarion, came slow and furtive on the path of Aphrodite; shadows mustered innumerable to the grey hills; and the heart of the poet Phaniol was an urn of black jade overfraught by love with sodden ashes.

1932 he has devoted all his time to fictioneering.

"The Sultan's Jest" his third story in the "Unique Magazine" was later reprinted in "The Sovereign Magazine" published in London.

"The Lord of the Fourth Axis," in *Weird Tales* last year was revised three times before Farnsworth Wright accepted it. The strange, unique design for the rug which played so prominent part in this latter tale was suggested by a Turkestan prayer rug of unusual shape now hanging in the Chicago home of Editor Wright.

The locale of the Pierre D'artois stories is authentic: there is the city of Bayonne, France, and there Price lived for some time, visiting the underground chambers, soaking in the atmosphere of the place. Also in France, he visited the city of Lourdes where he obtained from several old legends, material for "Tarbis of the Lake."

To "Strange Detective Stories" Price sold one of the Pierre D'artois stories, which he considers the wildest story he has ever written.

Material for "The Prophet's Grandchildren" (*W. T.* October 1925) was picked up in the Philipines.

Having sold every story in which a peacock was mentioned, Price quite naturally considers this beautiful bird the best of good luck emblems. But enough for the writings of E. Hoffmann Price! For the man himself:

His favorite smoke is the *nargileh* or water pipe; though on occasions

he does relish a cigar or a cigarette rolled from Bull Durham tobacco.

He speaks German, mangles French and Spanish, and gargles a smattering of Arabic.

While in Oklahoma this spring, he salvaged sheet metal from an abandoned smokestack—welded the pieces together to make an automatic feed acetylene generator for a friend who owned a repair shop.

He lived several years in "Le Vieux Carre" — that's creole for "Old French Quarter"—of New Orleans, which accounts for his frequent use of Crescent City atmosphere. He has been in the Philippines, Japan, Hawaii, Mexico has covered France from end to end, and is at home in most parts of the States.

Favorite dishes: Chili con Carne, East Indian Curry, and on state occasions, a capon stuffed with pistachios and basted with sherry until, when completely roasted, the fowl is coated with a high glaze of deep walnut color: the result being called "Varnished Vulture" by the crew of fictioneers who make *Weird Tales* Editorial Rooms their headquarters. And a close second to the foregoing is turtle stew, prepared according to an old creole recipe.

And, there, in a fragmentary, woefully incomplete way, you have E. Hoffmann Price: swell spinner of tall yarns, linguist, mechanic, cook par excellence—and in general a hell of a good fellow.

Selah!

The Laughter of a Ghoul

by Robert Bloch

Have you ever heard the laughter of a ghoul? Shrill and high, it rises and ululates with the cadence of a song from the Pit. Hearing it brings the soul closer to strange terrors and gives the listener vague glimpses into half-opened door-ways thru which no man should peer too closely. Once I heard that mocking laughter in the silence of the night, and since that evil-fated day the night has held neither silence nor surcease from the haunting memory of that mirth or madness. Ever it lurks and lingers in the shadows of my brain, till only thru expression of my torment can I hope to maintain my sanity in a world made hideous by the Nemesis of inescapable memory.

In all the Rood-mass realms of Nightmare, there is nothing equalling in foulness that grim and fearful monster known to legend as the Ghoul. Accursed is he, and accursed the land burdened by his presence. In such a land I dwelt, lord of an ancient, remote line.

Slithering secrets dwelt within the archaic avenues of the vast and sombre forest near my manor in the hills—secrets black and hideous, haunting and unspeakable, such as demonian presences mumble nightly in the aeon-dead abysses beyond the light of stars. Here in this forlorn realm of trickling tarns and baleful solitude my newly-wedded and beloved bride chanced one day to wander, as in rustic holi-

day. All unbeknowing, I spent the day in town, returning only as eventide drew near. But she, my beloved, did not return, even with the coming of darkness.

Then it was that the frightened servants who met me at the gate babbled that which sent me racing off, torch in hand, into the depths of the dream-wood looming so loathesomely in the unholy luminance of the autumn moon. Shrieking and cursing I went on, gibbering threats to the skies; but more dreadful still was my silence when at last I reached the end of my quest. Do not ask me how or where I found her. She was not dead, but she would have been better so after what It had done. She never spoke after I found her, and I do not think that she knew me. I pray that she did not. I carried her back to the manor and delivered her to the care of the servants. Then, with a score of retainers I returned again to the forest to do that which must be done, and to eradicate certain discoveries whose very existence was an insult to sanity. There were bloated trees to cut down, and creepers to be torn from the depths of nameless graves. There were curious holes to be blocked with massive stones and certain tracks and monstrous footprints over which the good cure' must pronounce exorcism. There was another shrub-hidden cavern in the swamps containing grisly but unmistak-

able evidences of tenancy. One such place I entered alone and performed a deed with the long sword my grand-sire had wielded in the Orient. Then I collapsed, and was carried home upon a hastily-improvised litter of birchen branches, to toss for many weeks thereafter in the delirious agony of mocking, cacodemoniacal memory.

After that I spent many days poring unceasingly over disquieting bits of ancient legendry concerning the forest and its ghastly presences, whilst awaiting the birth of my wife's child—for she, in a condition of unsensibility precluding her removal from the manor, was about to become a mother. And so slowly passed the dreary months of waiting and expectancy, whilst over all hung the shadow of an impinging dread.

At last the day arrived when, as I brooded in my study, poring over the chronicle of a woodsman who had heard the pipes of Pan, the mid-wife came and gently touched me on the shoulder. In faltering accents she whispered that my wife was dead. I sat there dully for five endless minutes; then in a voice sepulchrally muted, I asked after my child. She led me silently into the room where dead mother and living infant lay.

Yes, the child was alive, still is alive, but I will say no more. May the Ultimate Powers of the consign it—and the Fate that produced it—to everlasting torment! For it was when I entered that room where the dead mother and the living infant lay that I heard for the first time **THE LAUGHTER OF A GHOUL!**

The End

LOST EXCERPTS

by Robert Nelson

II. The Feast of the Centaurs

The enormous chamber was aflame with a myriad lamps. There were long tables covered with seemingly endless varieties of meats, wines, cheeses, birds, and other viands and edibles. Drunken centaurs carried other intoxicated centaurs across the tables trampling everything that came their way, causing both wrath and mirth to others. Wine was spilled heavily all about; and centaurs fell and grappled with one another on the lubricious earth. Two there were who fought for the possession of a fried grasshopper; and three belabored each other's heads with weighty stools. Some threw great platters of food from the tables and demanded more wine. And the exhalation that arose from the food and creatures became heavier; and the rejoicing and the swearing and debating of tongues increased.

There were huge mirrors of multiplied convexity in the vast room and these seemed to enhance and sharpen the ebbing and flowing luminosity from the immense wax lights and bright vases. The mirrors caused much confusion among the inebriated and over-gorged creatures, for they crashed and careened with one another against the mirrors and cut themselves, and laughed and cursed at their own grotesque and misshapen likenesses.

SEABURY QUINN

A Brief Note

While it is not generally known to his readers, many of whom believe him to be a physician, Seabury Quinn, author of the Jules de Grandin stories which have been popular with the readers of *Weird Tales* for ten years, holds the degrees of Bachelor and Master of Laws, being graduated from the National University Law School, Washington, D. C., in 1910. From 1910 until his entry into the U. S. Army at the outbreak of the World War (Secod Lieutenant, Infantry attached Intelligence Service) he practised law in the National Capital, specializing in criminal and personal injury cases, in which he acted principally as medico-legal consultant to other attorneys.

William Hope Hodgson
(continued from page 56)

range of weird and fantastic plots appears to have been covered in the five books listed previously—pig-men, elementals, human trees, ghosts, sea of weeds, thought-transference, intelligent slugs, and in "The Night Land" the men are equipped with a hand weapon called a Diskos. This consists of a disk of gray metal which spins in the end of a metal rod, is charged from earth currents and capable of cutting people in two.

Unfortunately, there is practically no bibliographical data concerning Hodgson available. Even his old publishers are unable to supply any in-

formation except a meager list of some of his books and the regrettable fact that he was killed during the war.

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