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\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE FANTASY FAN, JANUARY 1934 \*\*\*

## THE FANTASY FAN

### THE FANS' OWN MAGAZINE

**Editor:** Charles D. Hornig

(Managing Editor: Wonder Stories)

Published 10 cents a copy  
Monthly \$1.00 per year

137 West Grand Street, Elizabeth, New Jersey

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Volume 1	January, 1934	Number 5
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IT'S UP TO YOU!

The time has come when we must ask you a very important question. Do you want *The Fantasy Fan* to remain a monthly, or would you rather have a bi-monthly or a quarterly instead? Now, don't answer this question by sending in a written reply. The only way you can answer it is by mailing to us a dollar for a year's subscription. Since the inception of *The Fantasy Fan* it has been running at a great loss. The cost of having the magazine printed is not small and the subscriptions do not pay for one quarter of the total cost. This fact may astound you, but it is the truth. *The Fantasy Fan* is young and not many of the fans know of its existence, chiefly because of the lack of a good advertising medium for the most part, and the refusal of *Weird Tales*, the only really good medium for advertising such a fan magazine, to accept our ad for the second time. Perhaps you do not find our magazine worth a dollar a year, and that weird fiction would get along just as well without a fan magazine. In this case, you need pay no attention to this editorial. But there are those of us who really like our magazine and would not like to see it go bi-monthly or quarterly and yet have not subscribed. Of course, those of our readers who have, have all done their part and are under no obligation. The editor has created a considerable sinking fund for the cost of publication, and although the sinking fund is practically exhausted, we are not sunk! As long as he has an income, the editor is willing to sacrifice a portion of it to keep *The Fantasy Fan* alive—but he alone cannot keep it a monthly. You cannot lose by the deal. You will get full value for your money. Our magazine will not fail, but if it did, every subscriber on our list would get back his money for those numbers he would not receive. So if the success of our magazine means anything to you, subscribe at once—each dollar sent in will insure a shorter period between issues. If you have already subscribed, try to get some of your friends interested. Give subscriptions for your fantasy fan friends. If your subscription runs out in a month or two, renew it now, ahead of time. Please send only dollar bills or money orders—no checks or stamps. *Are you faithful to fantasy fiction?*—then let's see action. I'm doing my part—are you doing yours? The

February number will be the regular monthly issue, and probably March, but future numbers will be bi-monthly unless you who have not sent in your subscriptions do so at once! If you could foresee the many rare treats we have in store for you, you would not hesitate a moment.

Here's hoping we have many faithful readers.

—The Editor

## INFORMATION

Through the courtesy of Ralph Milne Farley, Donald A. Wollheim, David Stolaroff, Ted Lutwin, and several other of our readers, we are able to present this additional list of stories written by Edgar Rice Burroughs as an addenda to the list presented last month:

The Outlaw of Torm  
The War Chief  
The Mad King  
The Girl From Hollywood  
The Tarzan Twins  
The Girl From Farris's  
The Mucker  
The Man Without a Soul  
The Pirates of Venus  
Lost on Venus  
Tarzan and the Lion Man  
Tarzan and the City of Gold  
The Apache Devil  
The Bandit of Hell's Bend  
The Moon Men  
The Red Hawk  
HRH the Rider  
Efficiency Expert

All of the above stories are not fantasy fiction.



Come over to 'The Boiling Point' and join in the argument.

## SCIENCE FICTION IN ENGLISH MAGAZINES

by Bob Tucker

(Series Four)

This month, the column is devoted entirely to a small English publication known as "Boy's Magazine." The particular issue in discussion is one of late November, 1933.

One of the two fantasy stories in this issue is "The Menace of the Monsters." The monsters, which are prehistoric nightmares of the past, invade England and proceed to raise everything they come upon, including a train, a couple of autos, etc. The story carried three pen and ink sketches which were very well executed. One portrayed a huge stegosaurus uprooting a train of cars, tossing it into the air, and spilling people out of it right and left.

Another illustration showed a tyrannosaurus in a death battle with a giant sabre-tooth tiger ... 'tis something to gaze upon, take my word for it!

The other science fiction story in the issue is named "The Ocean Crater" and resembles *Astounding's* "Telegraph Plateau" somewhat, in the fact that a deep crater opens in the ocean and ships drop down into it. This story has two illustrations, one showing a ship falling into the "ocean-pit" and the other portraying the destruction of an airplane carrier via "electric-arrow" rays from an overhead enemy plane.

Another story in the issue, "Chin Ling's Ghost" was supposed to be a supernatural tale.

(We hope to be able to present another article in this series in an early issue.)

## THE BOILING POINT

After five months, the Smith-Ackerman debate is still waxing hot. We open this month's column with another rebuttal from Ackerman:

"Since the pros and cons on my Boiling Point article have changed around to discussions of character, I wish to state that I do not like H. P. Lovecraft's attitude. I was interested in his closing sentence in the second issue, and also in Mr. Derleth's. They were both interesting to analyze. But I resent Mr. Lovecraft's further uncalled for remarks. If I am not qualified to judge any weird tales, he is not qualified to call names. It seems to me of late that his palsy-walsy Clark Ashton Smith has been turning out an over-abundant amount of literature—but goodness! I don't think the man egotistic and attempting to draw attention to himself! The man likes to write, and so do I. Yet Mr. Lovecraft says of me 'peculiarly ridiculous', because I make absurd comments to focus people's eyes on me; and write voluminously for the same reason, I take it. But I don't keep a scrap-book. That's not vary consistent with the nature described, is it? And ask Mr. Hornig what my answer was when he proposed a 'Forrest J. Ackerman' issue of *The Fantasy Fan*. What a puffing up I should have gotten had I been *that* sort of person: You tell 'em Charles—what I said: 'No!' Not that I see what difference it makes who writes articles and how many of them there are in one issue, as long as they're good—which I hope mine are. But people *will* talk. And so I am not obliging with an autobiography of myself for the 'Famous Fantasy Fans' feature either.

"Furthermore, Mr. Lovecraft, you seem to have forgotten something. I keep my letters from famous writers. You say I once wrote you a very childish attack on your work. But your answer to that letter was: 'I was very pleased to get your bright and candid letter this morning.' That is a different story.

"I write these paragraphs in my behalf, because, being more of a weird fans' magazine, I can't expect many voices on my side from *The Fantasy Fan* readers. If you will see the third paragraph in the letter of C. Ferry and B. Rogers in the December *Wonder Stories*, however, you will find that the gentlemen are three times over as vehement and acidic as I. You might call them unknowing supporters.

"To Robert Nelson, who says I must be daft or an imbecile or a notoriety-seeking clown and knave (and does it in one breath), I can only answer that I thought it was a foregone conclusion that fantasy fans were 'daft' anyway, and that examination of the ratings of the members of my alma mater graduating class might prove differently about the second statement, and that I think I have cleared of the third already.

"Richard E. Morse's letter has impressed me as the one that really 'says something.' His thought had not occurred to me before, and it is worthwhile considering. *Weird Tales* allows science fiction; why not *Wonder Stories* weird tales? As the science fiction fan I am always eager to see stf in *Weird Tales* and any other magazine. I see that the process can easily be reversed. So Mr. Morse 'has' me. The argument is settled.

"Numerous Eyrie letters knock stf in *Weird*: I only did the same, but from the other side of the fence."

H. P. Lovecraft also retaliates:

"Glad you are giving the vociferous Master Ackerman a hearing—it's always well to let both sides of a debate have an equal chance. But I fear that Effjay the Terrible and his allies don't make out a very strong case. The tirade to which exception was taken was not merely an assertion that Smith's 'Dweller in Martian Depths' is unsuited for a science fiction magazine. It was a wholly gratuitous and intemperate attack on the story itself, written with a slap-dash extravagance and obviously sadistic gusto which plainly showed either a complete lack of analytical understanding and imaginative sensitiveness, or (as it was probable) a mere boyish desire to show off and attract notice. However, Ackerman is young, as proved by his tendency to regard ordinary civilized language as alien and incomprehensible. Now that he's had a good barrage from the general public, it would be just as well to leave him in peace. Five years from now he'll go beyond any of us in laughing at his explosions of today."

William H. Dellenback also has something to say:

"I am not a Weird Man; indeed, I have read *very* few weird stories that I have considered really good. Therefore, this is not so much a defense of Smith (who, I believe, is absolutely wrong in trying to link weird fiction with science fiction), as a rebuttal to Ackerman. However, first let me say that I think you are making a mistake, Editor, in publishing, and readers, in writing, letters which make too personal remarks. Aside from the fact that they are not true, the Boiling Point is for arguing about principles and not for calling antagonists names.

"But on with the dance—Forrest says that 'Dweller in Martian Depths' and 'The Light From Beyond' should not have been published in *Wonder Stories*. He also calls 'The Time Stream' doubtful material for a stf publication.

"Point 1—In regard to Forrest's dislike of Smith's excessive vocabulary, I will say this is purely a matter of personal opinion. And I respect his opinion (which is more than do Messrs. Lovecraft, Barlow, and Nelson) even though I don't agree with him. As a change from the average run of stf stories, I enjoy Smith's wonderful language; I believe I have read very few stories as beautifully told as 'The Light From Beyond'. And though I don't like his weird stories, nevertheless, his manner of telling seems to me admirably fitted to weird fiction.

"Point 2—I agree heartily with Mr. Crawford; science fiction would indeed be dull, if it consisted of nothing but the ideas Mr. Barlow lists. Fantasy is an integral part of stf; and while

the three above mentioned stories were, for a large part, fantasy, they also contained the elements of strict stf.

"Point 3—Finally, if no other explaining will suffice, I can only offer this last fact: Such stories provide variety, and there are many who will like them. So, if you don't, Forrest, just forget about it. Stf can not be composed of all interplanetary yarns, or all medical, or all of any other type."

We hereby give notice that the Smith–Ackerman debate will be concluded in the February issue. It has just about run its course. If you have anything to say, you'd better say it now. It's your last chance. In next month's column, Clark Ashton Smith presents a rebuttal to the vociferous letter of D. Alexander's in our December issue. Mr. Smith is glad to know that Ackerman is being given an even break. We hope that this friendly argument has been well-taken by all concerned and will cause no hard feelings.

## The Ghoul

by Clark Ashton Smith

During the reign of the Caliph Vathek, a young man of good repute and family, named Nouredin Hassan, was haled before the Cadi Ahmed ben Becar at Bussorah. Now Nouredin was a comely youth, of open and gentle mien; and great was the astonishment of the Cadi and of all others present when they heard the charges that were preferred against him. He was accused of having slain seven people, one by one, on seven successive nights, and of having left the corpses in a cemetery near Bussorah, where they were found lying with their bodies and members devoured in a fearsome manner, as if by jackals. Of the people he was said to have slain three were women, two were travelling merchants, one was a mendicant, and one a grave-digger.

Ahmed ben Becar was filled with the learning and wisdom of honorable years, and withal was possessed of much perspicacity. But he was deeply perplexed by the strangeness and atrocity of these crimes and by the mild demeanor and well-bred aspect of Nouredin Hassan, which he could in no wise reconcile with them. He heard in silence the testimony of witnesses who had seen Nouredin bearing on his shoulders the body of a woman at yester-eve in the cemetery; and others who on several occasions had observed him coming from the neighborhood at unseemly hours when only thieves and murderers would be abroad. Then, having considered all these, he questioned the youth closely.

"Nouredin Hassan," he said, "thou hast been charged with crimes of exceeding foulness, which thy bearing and thy lineaments belie. Is there haply an explanation of these things by which thou canst wholly clear thyself, or in some measure mitigate the heinousness of thy deeds, if so it be that thou art guilty? I adjure thee to tell me the truth in this matter."

Now Nouredin Hassan arose before the Cadi; and the heaviness of extreme shame and sorrow was visible on his countenance.

"Alas, O Cadi," he replied, "for the charges that have been brought against me are indeed true. It was I and none other, who slew these people; nor can I offer any extenuation of my act."

The Cadi was sorely grieved and astonished when he heard this answer.

"I must perforce believe thee," he said sternly. "But thou hast confessed a thing which will make thy name hence forward an abomination in the ears and mouths of men. I command thee to tell me why these crimes were committed, and what offense these persons had given thee, or what injury they had done to thee; or if perchance thou slewest them for gain, like a common robber."

"There was neither offense given nor injury wrought by any of them against me," replied Nouredin. "And I did not kill them for their money or belongings or apparel, since I had no need of such things, and, aside from that, have always been an honest man."

"Then," cried Ahmed ben Becar, greatly puzzled, "what was thy reason if it was none of these?"

Now the face of Nouredin Hassan grew heavier still with sorrow; and he bowed his head in a shamefaced manner that bespoke the utterness of profound remorse. And standing thus before the Cadi, he told this story:

The reversals of fortune, O Cadi, are swift and grievous, and beyond the foreknowing or advertence of men. Alas! for less than a fortnight agone I was the happiest and most guiltless of mortals, with no thought of wrongdoing toward anyone. I was wedded to Amina, the daughter of the jewel-merchant Aboul Cogia; and I loved her deeply and was much beloved by her in turn; and moreover we were at this time anticipating the birth of our first child. I had inherited from my father a rich estate and many slaves; the cares of life were light upon my shoulders; and I had, it would seem, every reason to count myself among those whom Allah has blest with an earthly foretaste of Heaven.

Judge, then, the excessive nature of my grief when Amina died in the same hour when she was

to have been delivered. From that time, in the dire extremity of my lamentation, I was as one bereft of light and knowledge; I was deaf to all those who sought to condole with me, and blind to their friendly offices.

After the burial of Amina my sorrow became a veritable madness, and I wandered by night to her grave in the cemetery near Bussorah and flung myself prostrate before the newly lettered tombstone, on the earth that been digged that very day. My senses deserted me, and I knew not how long I remained on the damp clay beneath the cypresses, while the horn of a decrescent moon arose in the heavens.

Then, in my stupor of abandonment, I heard a terrible voice that bade me rise from the ground on which I was lying. And lifting my head a little, I saw a hideous demon of gigantic frame and stature, with eyes of scarlet fire beneath brows that were coarse as tangled rootlets, and fangs that overhung a cavernous mouth, and earth-black longer and sharper than those of the hyena. And the demon said to me:

"I am a ghoul, and it is my office to devour the bodies of the dead. I have now come to claim the corpse that was interred today beneath the soil on which thou art lying in a fashion so unmannerly. Begone, for I have fasted since yester-night, and I am much anhungered."

Now, at the sight of this demon, and the sound of his dreadful voice, and the still more dreadful meaning of his words, I was like to have swooned with terror on the cold clay. But I recovered myself in a manner, and besought him, saying:

"Spare this grave, I implore thee; for she who lies buried therein it dearer to me than any living mortal; and I would not that her fair body should be the provender of an unclean demon such as thou."

At this the ghoul was angered, and I thought that he would have done me some bodily violence. But again I besought him, swearing by Allah and Mohammed with many solemn oaths that I would grant him anything procurable and would do for him any favor that lay in the power of man if he would leave undespoiled the new-made grave of Amina. And the ghoul was somewhat mollified, and he said:

"If thou wilt indeed perform for me a certain service, I shall do as thou askest." And I replied:

"There is no service, whatsoever its nature, that I will not do for thee in this connection, and I pray thee to name thy desire."

Then the ghoul said: "It is this, that thou shalt bring to me each night, for eight successive nights, the body of one whom thou hast slain with thine own hand. Do this, and I shall neither devour nor dig the body that lies interred hereunder."

Now was I seized by utter horror and despair, since I had bound myself in all honor to grant the ghoul his hideous requirement. And I begged him to change the terms of the stipulation, saying to him:

"Is it needful to thee, O eater of corpses, that the bodies should be those of people whom I myself have slain?"

And the ghoul said: "Yea, for all others would be the natural provender of myself or of my kin in any event. I adjure thee by the promise thou hast given to meet me here tomorrow night, when darkness has wholly fallen or as soon thereafter as thou art able, bringing the first of the eight bodies."

So saying, he strode off among the cypresses, and began to dig in another newly made grave at a little distance from that of Amina.

I left the graveyard in even direr anguish than when I had come thinking, of that which I must do in fulfilment of my sworn promise, to preserve the body of Amina from the demon. I know not how I survived the ensuing day, torn as I was between sorrow for the dead and my horror of the coming night with its repugnant duty.

When darkness had descended, I went forth by stealth to a lonely road near the cemetery; and waiting there amid the low-grown branches of the trees, I slew the first passer with a sword and carried his body to the spot appointed by the ghoul. And each night thereafter, for six more nights, I returned to the same vicinity and repeated this deed, slaying always the very first who came, whether man or woman, or merchant or beggar or grave-digger. And the ghoul awaited me on each occasion, and would begin to devour his provender in my presence, with small thanks and scant ceremony. Seven persons did I slay in all, till only one was wanting to complete the agreed number; and the person whom I slew yester-night was a woman, even as the witnesses have testified. All this I did with utmost repugnance and regret, and sustained only by the remembrance of my plighted word and the fate which would befall the corpse of Amina if I should break the bond.

This, O Cadi, is all my story. Alas! for these lamentable crimes have availed me not, and I have failed in wholly keeping my bargain with the demon, who will doubtless this night consume the body of Amina in lieu of the one corpse that is still lacking. I resign myself to thy judgement, O Ahmed ben Becar, and I beseech thee for no other mercy than that of death, wherewith to terminate my double grief and my twofold remorse.

When Nouredin Hassan had ended his narrative, the amazement of all who had heard him was verily multiplied, since no man could remember hearing a stranger tale. And the Cadi pondered for a long time and then gave judgment, saying:

"I must needs marvel at thy story, but the crimes thou hast committed are none the less heinous, and Iblis himself would stand aghast before them. However, some allowance must be made for the fact that thou hadst given thy word to the ghoul and wast bound as it were in honor to fulfill his demand, no matter how horrible its nature. And allowance must likewise be made for thy connubial grief which caused thee to forfend thy wife's body from the demon. Yet I cannot adjudge thee guiltless, though I know not the punishment which is merited in a case so utterly without parallel. Therefore, I set thee free, with this injunction, that thou shalt make atonement for thy crimes in the fashion that seemeth best to thee, and shalt render justice to thyself and to others in such degree as thou art able."

"I thank thee for this mercy," replied Nouredin Hassan; and he then withdrew from the court amid the wonderment of all who were present. There was much debate when he had gone, and many were prone to question the wisdom of the Cadi's decision. Some there were who maintained that Nouredin should have been sentenced to death without delay for his abominable actions though others argued for the sanctity of his oath to the ghoul, and would have exculpated him altogether or in part. And tales were told and instances were cited regarding the habits of ghouls and the strange plight of men who had surprised such demons in their nocturnal delvings. And again the discussion returned to Nouredin, and the judgment of the Cadi was once more upheld or assailed with divers arguments. But amid all this, Ahmed Ben Becar was silent, saying only:

"Wait, for this man will render justice to himself and to all other concerned, as far as the rendering thereof is possible."

So indeed it happened, for on the morning of the next day another body was found in the cemetery near Bussorah lying half-devoured on the grave of Nouredin Hassan's wife, Amina. And the body was that of Nouredin, self-slain, who in this manner had not only fulfilled the injunction of the Cadi but had also kept his bargain with the ghoul by providing the required number of corpses.

## WE'LL BET YOU DIDN'T KNOW

by Mortimer Weisinger

That Penn State Froth, the official comic magazine for Penn University, recently burlesqued Amazing Stories.

That Charles Willard Diffin composes his stuff on a dictaphone.

That the A. in A. Hyatt Verrill's name stands for Alpheus.

That Jack Williamson is the only writer who ever copped a cover for each part of a serial.

That it's ironic that the letters in Verne's name, rearranged, spell 'never.'

That P. S. Miller is a descendant of Alexander Hamilton.

That Wonder Stories is the only s-f mag on file in the New York Public Library.

That the reason the first eleven issues of Amazing Stories were printed on heavy paper was because the publishers wanted to give the fans "a big package for their money."

That, with the exception of his first story, Hamilton has never had a story refused by Weird Tales. And even the first was accepted after rewriting.

That William Briggs MacHarg and Edwin Balmer (the creators of Luther Trant) are brothers-in-law.

That Wonder Stories paid over seven cents a word for Charles Tanner's story "The Color of Space."

That Forrest J. Ackerman used to correspond regularly with 115 fans.

That Jack Williamson is a cowboy.

That Charles Cloukey was fifteen years old when he sold his first story.

That the mystery novel, "The 13th Murder," refers to Amazing Stories and Weird Tales as "detective and mystery fiction"—and they ring Saturn!

That the story, "Warriors of Space," featured in the first issue of Science Wonder Stories, was a sequel to "The World in the Balance," in an old Argosy.

That Hugo Gernsback conducted a contest in Science & Invention to obtain a name for his

projected magazine—named *Amazing Stories* after the winner was announced.

That P. Schuyler Miller had a B.S. and an M.S. degree before he was 21.

## MY SCIENCE FICTION COLLECTION

by Forrest J. Ackerman

### Part Five

More for my own satisfaction than anything else, is the second part of this last division of my collection; "stills." These are scenes from a score of fantasy pictures ranging in size from 5" × 11" × 14", and in subjects from prehistoric monsters of 10,000,000 years ago to exploring interplanetary parties of the future. There are many scenes from "Metropolis" of the vast, shining electricity, of the inside furnishings of the buildings, of the costumes of the people of that time; and there are pictures of the machinery to run the city, the underground world, the robotrix, the televisors. From "King Kong" I have 9 stills: a brontosaurus, an allosaur about to eat a man, Kong on exhibition in New York, in the jungle with the girl, smashing in a building, atop the Empire State, etc.

Secured from 'Frankenstein' are pictures of the monster, and his making in the laboratory. "Just Imagine" offers scenes of heaven-scraped New York in 1980, of the rocket for Mars, of the nifty little earthplanes. I have seven interesting pictures from "The Most Dangerous Game." Laboratories and the death ray of "The Mask of Fu-Manchu" are included. From Wells' "Island of Lost Souls" there are photos of the evolved animals of a hundred thousand years hence; apemen, the panther-woman, wolf-creatures, etc. "High Treason" offers numerous stills: television, the European city, war in 1940, a dance hall of seven years ahead, the English Channel sub-sea express, a broadcasted trial, and more. "The Mummy" is shown returning to life, prehistoric monsters from "The Mystery of Life" are present. Machinery, experiments, scientists—all from the stf-detective tale, "Doctor X." I also have several stills from "By Rocket to the Moon," such as those showing the model rocket and its trip—also pictures of Mars, Saturn, the end of the world, and an ethership from "Our Heavenly Bodies" a scene from "The Lost World," "The Stellar Express," and many others.

[In part six, next month, Mr. Ackerman concludes his interesting article.]

## HOW TO COLLECT FANTASY FICTION

by Julius Schwartz

### Part Five—Conclusion

Fantasy booklets have appeared at lesser intervals. *Amazing Stories* put out Landell Bartlet's "Vanguard of Venus" in 1928. Gernsback has put out 18 science fiction booklets, of which only the last six are now in print. He likewise issued a reprint of Garret Smith's "Between Worlds". Mimeographed booklets were put out by Carl Swanson (Edmond Hamilton's "The Metal Giants", a reprint) and by the Fantasy Fiction Publications ("Guests of the Earth" by Hugh Langley). The Arra Printers have put out A. Merritt's "Thru the Dragon Glass," "The Cavemen of Venus," "The Price of Peace," and Dr. Keller's "Wolf Hollow Bubbles."

This article wouldn't be complete without mention of the hard-covered fantasies. It's a hopeless task to try and muster even a tenth of all the fantasy books. The best way to go about it, however, is to "haunt" the second-hand book stores and scrutinize any book whose title sounds promising or inviting.

There's one tantalizing feature connected with the collection of fantastic fiction: your collection will Never be complete! But this misfortune has one commendable merit. The collector's interest in Fantasy fiction will never wane.

The End

## SUPERNATURAL HORROR IN LITERATURE

### Part Four

by H. P. Lovecraft

(copyright 1927, by W. Paul Cook)

### II The Dawn of the Horror Tale

As may naturally be expected of a form so closely connected with primal emotion, the horror tale is as old as human thought and speech themselves.

Cosmic terror appears as an ingredient of the earliest folklore of all races, and is crystalized in the most archaic ballads, chronicles, and sacred writings. It was, indeed, a prominent feature of the elaborate ceremonial magic, with its rituals for the evocation of demons and spectres which flourished from prehistoric times, and which reached its highest development in Egypt and the Semetic nations. Fragments like the Book of Enoch and the Claviculae of Solomon well illustrate the power of the weird over the ancient Eastern mind, and upon such things were based enduring systems and traditions, whose echoes extend obscurely even to the present time. Touches of this transcendental fear are seen in classic literature and there is evidence of its still greater emphasis in a ballad literature which paralleled the classic stream, but vanished for lack of a written medium. The Middle Ages, steeped in fanciful darkness, gave it an enormous impulse toward expression; and East and West alike were busy preserving and amplifying the dark heritage, both of random folklore and of academically formulated magic and cabalism, which had descended to them. Witch, werewolf, vampire, and ghoul brooded ominously on the lips of bard and grandam, and needed but little encouragement to take the final step across the boundary that divides the chanted tale or song from the formal literary composition. In the Orient, the weird tale tended to assume a gorgeous colouring and sprightliness which almost transmuted it into sheer phantasy. In the West, where the mystical Teuton had come down from his black Boreal forests and the Celt remembered strange sacrifices in Druidic groves, it assumed a terrible intensity and convincing seriousness of atmosphere which doubled the force of its half-told, half-hinted horrors.

Much of the power of Western horror-lore was undoubtedly due to the hidden but often suspected presence of a hideous cult of nocturnal worshipers whose strange customs—descended from pre-Aryan and pre-agricultural times when a squat race of Mongoloids roved over Europe with their flocks and herds—were rooted in the most revolting fertility-rites of immemorial antiquity. This secret religion, stealthily handed down amongst peasants for thousands of years despite the outward reign of the Druidic, Graeco-Roman, and Christian faiths in the regions involved, was marked by wild "Witches' Sabbaths" in lonely woods and atop distant hills on Walpurgis Night and Hallowe'en, the traditional breeding-seasons of the goats and sheep and cattle; and became the source of vast riches of sorcery legend, besides provoking extensive witchcraft prosecutions of which the Salem affair forms the chief American example. Akin to it in essence, and perhaps connected with it in fact, was the frightful secret system of inverted theology or Satan-worship which produced such horrors as the famous "Black Mass"; whilst operating toward the same end we may note the activities of those whose aims were somewhat more scientific or philosophical—the astrologers, cabbalists, and alchemists of the Albertus Magnus or Raymond Lully type, with whom such rude ages invariably abound. The prevalence and depth of the medieval horror-spirit in Europe, intensified by the dark despair which waves of pestilence brought, may be fairly gauged by the grotesque carvings slyly introduced into much of the finest later Gothic ecclesiastical work of the time; the demoniac gargoyles of Notre Dame and Mont St. Michel being among the most famous specimens. And throughout the period, it must be remembered, there existed amongst educated and uneducated alike, a most unquestioning faith in every form of the supernatural; from the gentlest of Christian doctrines to the most monstrous morbidities of witchcraft and black magic. It was from no empty background that the Renaissance magicians and alchemists—Nostradamus, Trithemius, Dr. John Dee, Robert Fludd, and the like—were born.

In this fertile soil were nourished types and characters of somber myth and legend which persist in weird literature to this day, more or less disguised or altered by modern technique. Many of them were taken from the earliest oral sources, and form part of mankind's permanent heritage. The shade which appears and demands the burial of its bones, the demon lover who comes to bear away his still living bride, the death-fiend or psychopomp riding the night-wind, the man-wolf, the sealed chamber, the deathless sorcerer—all those may be found in that curious body of mediaeval lore which the late Mr. Baring-Gould so effectively assembled in book form. Wherever the mystic Northern blood was strongest, the atmosphere of the popular tales became most intense; for in the Latin races there is a touch of basic rationality which denies to even their strangest superstitions many of the overtones of glamour so characteristic of our own forest-born and ice-fostered whisperings.

(continued next month)

### The Sacred Bird

Annals of the Jinns—4

by R. H. Barlow

There appeared one day in the market-place of Ulathia a most peculiar fowl which fell exhausted from the skies. Its plumage was of brilliant hue, and despite its confusion, a wise and knowing look was seen within the orange eyes. After resting a moment, it fluttered about the square, entering the various shops in a proprietary manner and finally settled in that of a sweetmeat dealer. Soon all the tradesfolk hurried across the cobble-stones to see this gaudy visitor and to feed it many tid-bits. Not in the least bothered by its admiring audience, it permitted its head to be scratched and petted as it ate.

In time, the news spread through the thatched houses to the ears of the Imperial Council, all



of which laid down their pens and came in a body to view it. It was discovered by them greedily eating a preserved orange-rind, a meal varied by occasional pecks at a nut. Having already devoured odds and ends of all sorts, it was no longer hungry, and even as they panted in, it fell asleep. When the crowd drew aside to admit the rotund Council, it complained loudly.

"Gwarn arf 'n chase y'self!" commanded the half-awake bird. "Gwarn arf," it repeated, fluttering its wings and adjusting for a nice nap. It then uttered a rasping incoherency and dozed off placidly. The people drew back whispering excitedly. "A demon!" averred one. This brought a chorus of dissent among the others. "An angel.... Just a trick.... Who ever heard of a bird talking?... A magician in disguise.... What has happened?... Still thy tongue, neighbor...."

... The head of the Council, a gray-beard notoriously superstitious, cleared his throat and a silence fell over all present. "My friends," he gurgled happily, "My *dear* friends and fellow citizens! This is an occasion of undoubted significance in the annals of our fair city, equalled only by that of, as you doubtless will realize, early in the reign of—rather; to continue; In other words, my dear friends," he began over, unable to sustain the sentence any longer, "To make it clear to all concerned, this is, I believe, and no one, I hope, would contradict me, I have occasion to think —" Here his voice lowered to a whisper and ended in a triumphant shout, "A *Messenger* sent to guide us!" He leered cheerfully at the mob. "Therefore, let us convey it in state to the City Hall to rule us as it sees fit!"

Which was forthwith done amid much celebration, and the chattering of the escaped parrot from that day guided the fortunes of the city of Ulathia, interpreted by the Ruler and his Council as they desired.



Another tale in this series will appear next month.

#### OUR READERS SAY

S. M. White, one of our New Zealand readers is not altogether satisfied with science fiction in general:

"*The Fantasy Fan* is of great interest to me. I hope that it keeps on going. I have two objections to scientifiction—1. There is too much 'blood and thunder.' 2. Not enough originality in plots. Thus too much spoils the flavor. But there are several themes on which few of your authors have touched. 1. A story with lots of science. 2. A story concerning that which comes after death (if anything). 3. A really humorous story. 4. None of the authors except H. G. Wells has tried to solve the problem of labor vs. capital. Stories often end up: "Workers of the world, you are free!" Free to what? Technocracy? NRA? Vanderbiltism? These four ought to keep writers busy."

The hardest job of an editor is trying to please everyone. As this is an impossibility, all they can do is to please as many as they can. When a majority voice a suggestion, he must take it into serious consideration. We find that the underused plots you have mentioned have been used quite often, except that which is not for science fiction, but has been overdone in weird stories.

"I keep forgetting that each month I am going to receive a copy of *The Fantasy Fan* so that, when it does come, it is such a pleasant surprise. As a regular feature, I enjoy Bob Tucker's report on the English stf magazines best of all. 'How to Write a Stf Story' was *so* funny."—Forrest J. Ackerman

"The November TFF is decidedly improving and I look forward to future issues with much interest. I wonder how many collectors there are that can discriminate between the trash that seems popular and the best in Fantasy?"—R. H. Barlow

"The November issue of TFF was magnificent! What got the cake was 'How to Write a Stf Story' by Hoy Ping Pong. By the way, Editor, who is this Hoy Ping Pong? Anyway, regardless of who he is, he seems to be humorously inclined, so let's have more from him. No periodical is exactly good without a touch of humor."—Ted H. Lutwin

There's no use in concealing the identity Hoy Ping Pong. It is none other than Bob Tucker, author of the English science fiction series, and more Hoy Ping Pong articles to come.

"I liked the November issue very much and hope you'll publish more of Smith's poetry."—Robert E. Howard

"I was certainly disappointed to hear that the *Necronomicon*, *Book of Eibon*, and the *Nameless Cults* had no existence except in the fertile imaginations of Lovecraft, Smith, and Howard. That's not illusion of reality. Anyone could quote books and authors that never existed. To me, it is plain fabrication. According to Joseph McCabe, the monks of the middle ages were adepts at it. I must say, however, that it was quite a help in giving an illusion of reality to Lovecraft's stories, and Smith's. It won't be now, though, because the cat is out of the bag. But what about 'Yog Sothoth' and 'Sattaquo' and 'Thule.' Surely, there must be a legend of some sort to account for them, or does their ancientness go no farther than 1924? Were they born about the same time as *Weird Tales*? I notice that the Illusion of reality has much more force at night than in the daytime."—

Carl J. Smith

It is only an A-1 author that can make you believe that a thing exists when it really doesn't. Perhaps the cat is out of the bag, at you say, but we don't believe that it detracts from Smith's, Lovecraft's, or Howard's stories one bit. However, weird fans will probably not be satisfied until the aforesaid "fabricators" write up the books *in toto* that they have created in their minds. Smith is now working on a chapter of "The Book of Eibon."

"I was pleased to receive your clever little 'Fantasy Fan' and consider it highly entertaining and useful and well worth the dollar I enclose for a year's subscription. From time to time I noticed in the reader's columns the uprise of little pamphlets, but never gave them serious thought. This one you have sent me startled me into appreciating that the fantasy fans are an energetic lot.

"My eulogies and praises to the incomparable Clark Ashton Smith for his 'Kingdom of the Worm.' He has the magic of words that makes great writers. We like to honor the memory of Poe as the father of the short story and the fantastic type of fiction, but Smith surpasses him.

"Enclosed you will find a little story of mine that I tender you gratis—let us say as a Christmas present, for use in TFF. I wrote it on the spur of the moment one day, as the idea popped into my mind and refused to depart."—Eando Binder

We thank Mr. Binder, an author of note, for his excellent story. It will appear in an early issue of TFF. The theme used is a brand new one, and we believe will make a big hit with all lovers of weird fiction.

"The November issue was a gem all the way through, and I am certainly learning a lot of facts about fantastic fiction that are quite new to me. It answers numerous questions that I have had in mind for a long time. I think the comments by the readers constitute a most absorbing part of your magazine, especially when they are by contributors and old fans that know the 'ropes' well. Understand that I am a comparative beginner in the absorbing game of chasing fantastic literature. It is quite noticeable that the trend is turning even more toward the fantastic than the pure science fiction, which, it would seem, has been on the wane for some time. I am not a science fiction crank, however, and have several good tales in my collection. They are not interplanetary, though, but ones approaching closer to the fantastic.

"The poem by Clark Ashton Smith was enormous; yet, more than that. I do not think one could describe it. 'The Other Gods' by H. P. Lovecraft added just the right atmosphere to TFF. The mention of Ulthar in this story recalled a story by the same author named 'The Cats of Ulthar.'

"As Mr. Ackerman's collection continues to pile up, it seems that in spite of mania to judge literature, he certainly does a thing up right when he starts.

"The discovery that the now famous book 'Necronomicon' is entirely fictitious was a considerable shock. Too bad that such a volume is not available to all lovers of fiction pertaining to the black arts and kindred subjects. I had even thought seriously of sending to the State College Library in quest of a copy in English! I wondered at the time if it had yet been translated. Why not have Lovecraft write such a book? I am sure it would sell well. I enjoy reading the denouncement of Mr. Ackerman."—Duane W. Rime

As Dr. Keller says, it doesn't matter whether a reader praises Forrest or condemns him, so long as they say *something*. We, also, were on the verge of sending someplace for the *Necronomicon* in English.

"Lovecraft's 'The Other Gods' and 'Supernatural Horror in Literature' are a treat for which I am sure every reader is grateful. 'True Ghost Stories' is very well presented and Barlow's 'Annals of the Jinns' very capably upholds fantastic lore. Smith's 'The Kingdom of the Worm' recalled to my mind Donald Wandrei's 'The Worm King', a poem which I read in *Weird Tales* years ago. While different in essence of tone, these two carry the same eery quality. Although your various departments have not yet swung into full stride, great promise is indicated.

"I have a suggestion for Mr. Tucker. If his English connection will supply him with sufficient information, a column or so on Arthur Machen and Algernon Blackwood might introduce two very worthy writers of weird tales to your readers."—Chester D. Cuthbert

We have on hand for early publication, several articles on the works of the great writers of the past. Watch for them. To our readers: How did you like Mr. Cuthbert's story "The Sublime Vigil" in the February 1934 issue of *Wonder Stories*? Watch his progress! We predict that in less than one year he will be one of your favorite authors.

"Glad to see the December issue. All the stories art excellent and the departments are as interesting as usual."—H. P. Lovecraft

"I have received the November TFF and would say that it is the most satisfactory issue so far. 'The Other Gods' is indeed a masterpiece of prose poetry, filled with imaginative overtones. Barlow's second Annals of the Jinns is memorably touched, and the sense of atmosphere conveyed is remarkable in view of its brevity. Hoy Ping Pong's article on how to write scientifiction is most amusing.

"Re the origin of the word 'weird,' which you attributed to Edgar Allan Poe. I believe that Poe

was perhaps the first to employ this adjective in the modern sense of eerie or uncanny or bizarre; but you will find it used in older writers, such as Shakespeare, with a special application to witchcraft or sorcery. The three Fates of classic mythology were spoken of as 'the weird sisters,' and the root-meaning of the word has reference to fate or destiny. As a noun, it is still sometimes used in the latter sense; and it also means a prediction of prophecy. The word itself is of Anglo-Saxon origin, and is related to the old German *wurt* and Icelandic *urdhr*."—Clark Ashton Smith

In my filler concerning the origin of the word "weird," you will remember that I said that its meaning the bizarre originated with Edgar Allen Poe. I had in mind the other meanings as I wrote it. Undoubtedly, if Edgar Allan Poe had not used it, the word would not be popular today.

"I had intended to write since I received the first copy of TFF, but circumstances made it impossible. I wish to compliment you on the magazine. It is not perfect, of course—But it is different and that is a blessing indeed."—Louis C. Smith

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Transcriber's Note:

Minor typographical errors have been corrected without note.

Irregularities and inconsistencies in the text have been retained as printed.

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