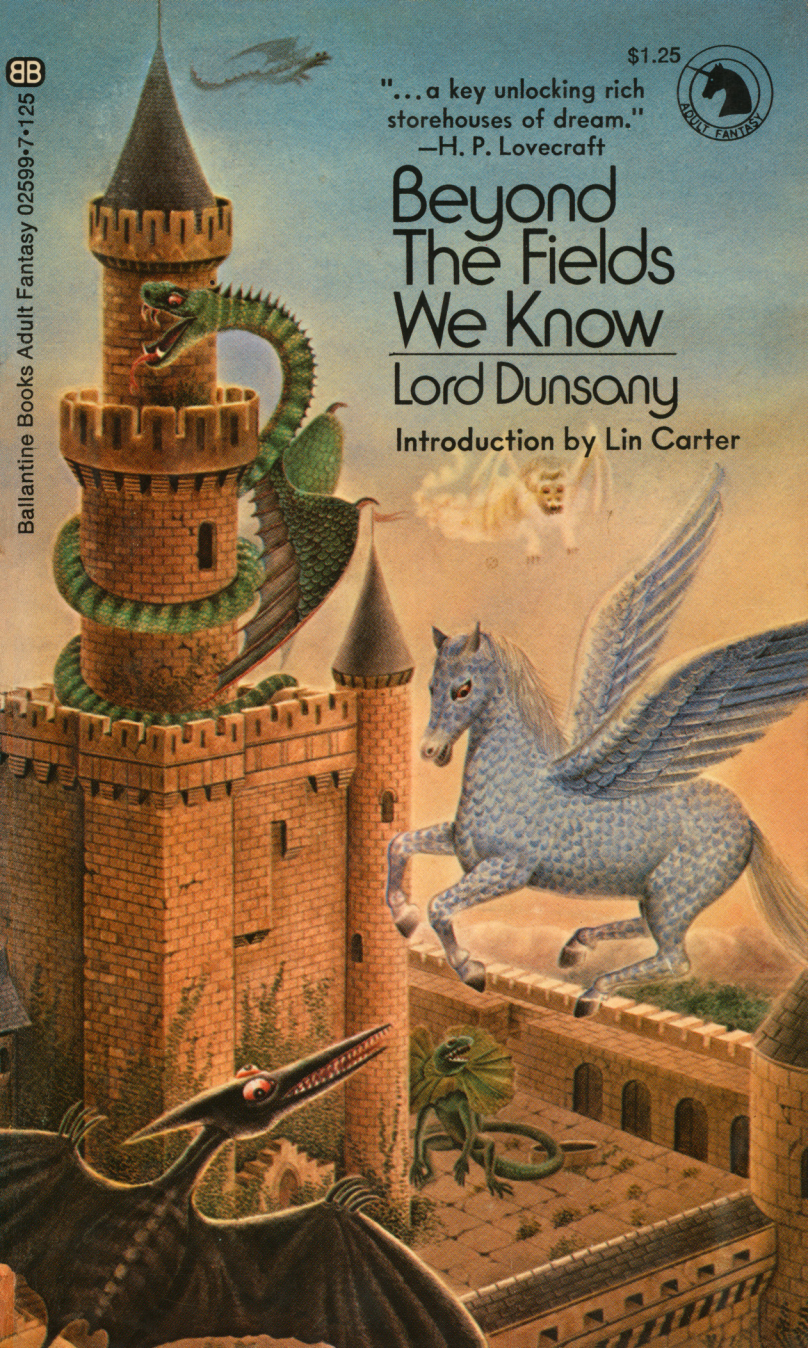
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ADULT FANTASY
"...a key unlocking rich storehouses of dream."
—H. P. Lovecraft
Beyond The Fields We Know
Lord Dunsany
Introduction by Lin Carter

Among the great writers of fantasy, Lord Dunsany was one of the first: not merely innovative, he was a stylist whose prose has been echoed but never imitated. As Baird Searles has remarked, "His constant repetition of 'the fields we know,' for instance, is not just a clever phrase. Through it and its ramifications, there is a constant pointing up of the difference between the mundane and the twilit depths of Elfland, where time stands still."

And L. Sprague de Camp says: "Dunsany's stories are a priceless possession for any lover of fantasy. Like first-rate poetry, they are endlessly rereadable. Those who have not read them have something to look forward to, and an assortment of Dunsany is the foundation stone of any fantasy collection."

The publishers are pleased to announce that this collection includes the entire contents of THE GODS OF PEGANA, unavailable since its original publication in 1905, and never before published in its entirety in America.

Other books by LORD DUNSANY in the Ballantine Adult Fantasy Series:

THE KING OF ELFLAND'S DAUGHTER
AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD
DON RODRIGUEZ: CHRONICLES OF SHADOW VALLEY

BEYOND THE FIELDS WE KNOW

Lord Dunsany

Edited,
With An Introduction And Notes, By

Lin Carter

BALLANTINE BOOKS • NEW YORK
An Intext Publisher

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"How Slid Made War Against the Gods" (orig. "The Coming of the Sea"), "The Vengeance of Men," "When the Gods Slept," "For the Honour of the Gods," "The Wisdom of Ord" (orig. "The South Wind"), "Night and Morning," "The Secret of the Gods," "The Relenting of Sarnidac," "The Jest of the Gods," and "The Dreams of a Prophet" first appeared in TIME AND THE GODS (London: William Heinemann, 1906; Boston: John W. Luce & Company).

"King Argimenes and the Unknown Warrior" first appeared in FIVE PLAYS (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1918). Copyright 1914 by Little, Brown and Company. All dramatic rights reserved by the author.

"The Kith of the Elf-Folk" and "The Sword of Welleran" first appeared in THE SWORD OF WELLERAN (London: George Allen & Sons, 1908; Boston: John W. Luce & Company, n.d.).

"The Madness of Andulsprutz" and "The Sword and the Idol" first appeared in A DREAMER'S TALES (London: George Allen & Sons, 1910; Boston: John W. Luce & Company, n.d.).

"Miss Cubbidge and the Dragon of Romance," "Chu-Bu and Sheemish," and "How Nuth Would Have Practised His Art on the Gnoles" first appeared in THE BOOK OF WONDER (London: William Heinemann, 1912; Boston: John W. Luce & Company, 1912).

"In the Sahara," "Songs From an Evil Wood," "The Riders," "The Watchers," "The Happy Isles," "The Enchanted People," "A Word in Season," and "The Quest" first appeared in FIFTY POEMS (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1929).

"A Story of Land and Sea" first appeared in TALES OF WONDER (London: Elkin Mathews, 1916; published in the United States as THE LAST BOOK OF WONDER, Boston: John W. Luce & Company, 1916; copyright 1916 by John W. Luce & Company). THE GODS OF PEGANA was first published in 1905 by Elkin Mathews in London, and reprinted in 1911 in London by the Pegana Press.

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SBN 345-02599-7-125

This edition published by arrangement with the Estate of Lord Dunsany.

First Printing: May, 1972

Cover art by Gervasio Gallardo

Printed in the United States ofAmerica

BALLANTINE BOOKS, INC.
101 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10003

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About BEYOND THE FIELDS WE KNOW
and Lord Dunsany:

Return to the World's Edge

William Morris, the renowned Victorian poet, translator, printer and artisan, was the first comparatively recent writer (born, 1834) to compose fantasy novels set against imagined worldscapes. The first of his pioneering romances, *The Wood Beyond the World*, was published May 11, 1895. With the publication of that landmark novel, Morris became the first great writer in a glorious tradition that is still going strong today, some seventy-seven years later.

The second great fantasy writer in the imaginary world tradition was a youth of seventeen when *The Wood Beyond the World* was first published. He was born the Hon. Edward John Moreton Drax Plunkett, and his father was an Anglo-Irish peer, the seventeenth Lord Dunsany. To be precise (for those who like to know such details), he was born at 15 Park Place Square, which is near Regent's Park in London, and the year was 1878. In time, he succeeded to the family title, becoming the eighteenth Baron Dunsany upon the death of his father.

Lord Dunsany wrote superlative novels of adult fantasy, but his most important work was in the field of the short story; indeed, his importance in the history of fantasy literature lies, in part, in the fact that he was

the first writer to adapt William Morris's invention, the imaginary world romance, to the short story form. While Dunsany's novels are splendid works of singing and poetic magic—you may know *The King of Elfland's Daughter*, which Ballantine revived in 1969, and *Don Rodriguez: Chronicles of Shadow Valley*, which we revived in 1971—while such novels as these are splendid stuff, it is in the short story that Dunsany demonstrated his great imaginative genius to the fullest.

I do not think "genius" too strong a word to use in discussing the Dunsanian *oeuvre*. No one in this world ever excelled Dunsany in the short fantasy, nor is anyone likely to go beyond him in the telling of lyric, exquisite fantasies. Surely he belongs with Tolkien and Cabell among the supreme masters of the genre. He is at very least their equal; in my personal opinion, their superior. Nearly every fantasy writer who has come after him has learned from his art, and many have been powerfully influenced by him. Readers of our Adult Fantasy Series familiar with *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* and *The Doom that Came to Sarnath* know that the great American master of the macabre, H. P. Lovecraft, idolized Dunsany, and admittedly emulated his style in his early "dreamlands" fiction. Dunsanian influence has been admitted by L. Sprague de Camp and Fritz Leiber, and it is clearly visible in the prose of Clark Ashton Smith and Jack Vance. My own cycle of Simrana tales are unabashedly Dunsanian in style and substance.

The best examples of Lord Dunsany's genius for fantasy are to be found among his first eight short story collections. These books are:

The Gods of Pegana (1905) London: Elkin Mathews.

Time and the Gods (1906) Boston: John W. Luce & Company.

The Sword of Welleran (1908) London: George Allen & Sons.

A Dreamer's Tales (1910) Boston: John W. Luce & Company.

The Book of Wonder (1912) London: William Heinemann.

Fifty-One Tales (1915) London: Elkin Mathews.

Tales of Wonder (1916) London: Elkin Mathews.*

Tales of Three Hemispheres (1919) Boston: John W. Luce & Company.

Within these eight slim books lies much of the finest fantasy ever written. But this is the judgment of hindsight; reviewers of the time treated them with contempt and derision—so much so that, as Lord Dunsany remarks in his autobiography, *Patches of Sunlight*, "Disappointed at the reception of my short stories, I turned to writing novels."

We who love Dunsany regret that decision deeply; but while we are sad that he wrote no further collections of tales about "little kingdoms at the Edge of the World," we can be glad we have at least those eight volumes.

I collected thirty of his very finest short fantasies into a book called *At the Edge of the World* which was published by Ballantine in March 1970. Naturally, I drew upon the eight books listed above. But I had far from

* Published in this country under the title of *The Last Book of Wonder.*

exhausted Dunsany's supply of brilliant stories, as the present collection attests.

Rather than simply repeat the format of that first collection, I have varied the fare in this one to include, besides stories, one of Lord Dunsany's fantasy plays—the best of them all, in my opinion—and a pocketful of poems as well.

This is the fourth of Lord Dunsany's books to appear under the Sign of the Unicorn's Head. Its contents should be almost entirely new to most of my readers; so far as I am aware, only one of the stories has ever appeared in an American paperback before, and that is "Chu-Bu and Shemish." I hope you enjoy this book as much as you enjoyed *At the Edge of the World*.

—Lin Carter
Editorial Consultant
The Ballantine Adult Fantasy Series

Hollis, Long Island, New York

Beyond the Fields We Know

Go from here eastwards and pass the fields we know, till you see the lands that pertain clearly to faery; and cross their boundary, which is made of twilight, and come to that palace that is only told of in song.

—*The King of Elfland's Daughter*

PREFACE

There be islands in the Central Sea, whose waters are bounded by no shore and where no ships come—this is the faith of their people.

THE GODS OF PEGANA

Editor's Note

When I said I drew from those eight great collections of Dunsany's short fantasies to assemble the book I called *At the Edge of the World*, I was guilty of a slight inaccuracy. Actually, I drew from the last seven books only, and did not touch the first of them at all. It is *The Gods of Pegana.* I previously neglected this first collection because the tales in *The Gods of Pegana* are all interconnected and do not look their best when taken out of context. Indeed, they are almost too slight to be considered real stories at all; perhaps they could more correctly be termed prose poems. At any rate, I used nothing from *The Gods of Pegana* in *At the Edge of the World.*

The Gods of Pegana was the first book Lord Dunsany ever wrote. As he recounted the genesis of the book, during the winter of 1903, when he was a young soldier and sportsman of just twenty-five, he took a house in Seend and divided his time about equally between grouse shooting, fox hunting, and speech-making on the theme of tariff reform, as he was then (briefly) in politics. Up to this point in his life, although he was interested in books and poetry, he had been aware of no vocation in that direction. But before

long, Fate provided him with a stimulus. As he describes the event in his autobiography:

> It was more a stimulant than an influence, seeing a play at His Majesty's Theatre called *The Darling of the Gods*. My imagination had an eastward trend, and here was the East right before my eyes, a place where my imagination wandering in the void could rest before going on again. I had never found anyone doing anything at all like the kind of work that I felt I should like to do; and here all of a sudden was someone doing the sort of thing that I thought I could do easily. It was as though I had gazed at a country that I believed forbidden to travellers, and suddenly I saw someone trespassing there. So there could be an audience for that kind of thing after all!

The play itself was a gorgeous drama set in a dim and fabulous Japan that never quite was. But it struck fire within the young Dunsany and obsessed his imagination with intoxicating visions. Although Dunsany does not discuss it in his autobiography, he first sat down and sketched out a map of his wonderlands, which he showed to a casual friend, the poet George Russell, who used the pseudonym A E, and who was then, as Dunsany phrased it, "in servitude to an agricultural paper." Dunsany knew him only slightly, but showed him the map of the magic kingdoms he desired to explore. Before long he began to write down short pieces about these kingdoms, or, rather, about the gods whom these kingdoms worshipped. As Dunsany explained:

> And so I began to write, guided then, as ever since, by two lights that do not seem very often to shine to-

gether: poetry and humour. And when my bits of writing were all gathered into a book, it began with the words: "There are in Pegana, Mung and Sish and Kib, and the maker of all small gods who is MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI." By the early summer the book was ready for printing, and I took it to a publisher who promised to publish it for me, though that promise was never kept . . .

Dunsany did not explain why that first publisher, who remains nameless, reneged on his promise. He decided to have another firm print the book at his own expense; but first he desired suitable illustrations. He had drawn up some sketches for it himself, but, as he put it, "I had the sense to realize that far better illustrations might be found."

Two artists alone suggested themselves to him as possessing the kind of visual imagination capable of realizing his dreams on paper: Gustave Doré and Sidney H. Sime. Doré was dead; Sime, happily, was very much alive, and, what's more, was willing.

This remarkable man consented to do me eight illustrations, and I have never seen a black-and-white artist with a more stupendous imagination. I think he is greater than Beardsley, and I do not know anyone else now living who can bring such scenes of wonder down upon paper with lamp-black and Indian ink. Of course the gods and their heavens that he drew for me were totally different from anything that I had imagined, but I knew that it would be impossible to catch Sime's Pegasus and drive it exactly along some track that I had travelled myself, and that if it were possible, it could only be done by clipping its wings.

While Sime prepared his eight illustrations for *The Gods of Pegana,* Dunsany became engaged (on July 15th, 1904, at the Duchess of Northumberland's garden party) to Lady Beatrice Villiers; they were wed in the parish church of Middleton Stoney, and Lord Northland was the best man. Northland was a fellow soldier; he had met Dunsany while both officers had served in the Coldstream Guards.

The book now completed, Dunsany took it to Elkin Mathews in Vigo Street in London to be printed, and, as I have mentioned earlier, he paid for the printing himself. He wryly recalled in his autobiography, "I paid for the publication of my first book . . . but never since then have I spent a penny on anything I have written, believing that such things should make their own way in the world."

Elkin Mathews published *The Gods of Pegana* in the autumn of 1905. A second edition was published in London in 1911 by the Pegana press, a suspicious name that suggests (to me, at least) that Dunsany again footed the bill for a private printing. *The Gods of Pegana* has never been published anywhere in the world during the sixty-two years from that day to this. It never had an edition published in the United States. It is probably not really the rarest of Dunsany's books (of which there are at least sixty-seven that I personally know of, and doubtless several more I have yet to encounter), for the honor of being the rarest of his works doubtless belongs to an obscure volume entitled *Selections from the Writings of Lord Dunsany,* published in Churchtown by the Cuala Press in 1912, with a preface by William Butler Yeats. But surely *The Gods of Pe-*

gana is the one book most assiduously sought after by Dunsany enthusiasts. So we have brought back to print in this volume the complete text of Dunsany's first book, *The Gods of Pegana.*

—L. C.

In the mists before the Beginning, Fate and Chance cast lots to decide whose the Game should be; and he that won strode through the mists to MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI and said: "Now make gods for Me, for I have won the cast and the Game is to be Mine." Who it was that won the cast, and whether it was Fate or whether Chance that went through the mists before the Beginning to MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI—none knoweth.

Before there stood gods upon Olympus, or ever Allah was Allah, had wrought and rested MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI.

There are in Pegana—Mung and Sish and Kib, and the maker of all small gods, who is MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI. Moreover, we have a faith in Roon and Slid.

And it has been said of old that all things that have been were wrought by the small gods, excepting only MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI, who made the gods, and hath thereafter rested.

And none may pray to MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI but only to the gods whom he hath made.

But at the Last will MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI forget to rest, and will make again new gods and other worlds, and will destroy the gods whom he hath made.

And the gods and the worlds shall depart, and there shall be only MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI.

Of Skarl the Drummer

When MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI had made the gods and Skarl, Skarl made a drum, and began to beat upon it that he might drum for ever. Then because he was weary after the making of the gods, and because of the drumming of Skarl, did MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI grow drowsy and fall asleep.

And there fell a hush upon the gods when they saw that MANA rested, and there was a silence on Pegāna save for the drumming of Skarl. Skarl sitteth upon the mist before the feet of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI, above the gods of Pegana, and there he beateth his drum. Some say that the Worlds and the Suns are but the echoes of the drumming of Skarl, and others say that they be dreams that arise in the mind of MANA because of the drumming of Skarl, as one may dream whose rest is troubled by sound of song, but none knoweth, for who hath heard the voice of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI, or who hath seen his drummer.

Whether the season be winter or whether it be summer, whether it be morning among the worlds or whether it be night, Skarl still beateth his drum, for the purposes of the gods are not yet fulfilled. Sometimes the arm of Skarl grows weary; but still he beateth his drum, that the gods may do the work of the gods, and

the worlds go on, for if he cease for an instant then MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI will start awake, and there will be worlds nor gods no more.

But, when at last the arm of Skarl shall cease to beat his drum, silence shall startle Pegana like thunder in a cave, and MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI shall cease to rest.

Then shall Skarl put his drum upon his back and walk forth into the void beyond the worlds, because it is THE END, and the work of Skarl is over.

There may arise some other god whom Skarl may serve, or it may be that he shall perish; but to Skarl it shall matter not, for he shall have done the work of Skarl.

Of the Making of the Worlds

When MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI had made the gods there were only the gods, and they sat in the middle of Time, for there was as much Time before them as behind them, which having no end had neither a beginning.

And Pegana was without heat or light or sound, save for the drumming of Skarl; moreover Pegana was The Middle of All, for there was below Pegana what there was above it, and there lay before it that which lay beyond.

Then said the gods, making the signs of the gods and speaking with Their hands lest the silence of Pegana should blush; then said the gods to one another, speaking with Their hands: "Let Us make worlds to amuse Ourselves while MANA rests. Let Us make worlds and Life and Death, and colours in the sky; only let Us not break the silence upon Pegana."

Then raising Their hands, each god according to his sign, They made the worlds and the suns, and put a light in the houses of the sky.

Then said the gods: "Let Us make one to seek, to seek and never to find out concerning the wherefore of the making of the gods."

And They made by the lifting of Their hands, each

god according to his sign, the Bright One with the flaring tail to seek from the end of the Worlds to the end of them again, to return again after a hundred years.

Man, when thou seest the comet, know that another seeketh besides thee nor ever findeth out.

Then said the gods, still speaking with their hands: "Let there be now a Watcher to regard."

And They made the Moon, with his face wrinkled with many mountains and worn with a thousand valleys, to regard with pale eyes the games of the small gods, and to watch throughout the resting time of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI; to watch, to regard all things, and be silent.

Then said the gods: "Let us make one to rest. One not to move among the moving. One not to seek like the comet, nor to go round like the worlds; to rest while MANA rests."

And They made the Star of the Abiding and set it in the North.

Man, when thou seest the Star of the Abiding to the North, know that one resteth as doth MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI, and know that somewhere among the Worlds is rest.

Lastly the gods said: "We have made worlds and suns, and one to seek and another to regard, let us now make one to wonder."

And they made Earth to wonder, each god by the uplifting of his hand according to his sign.

And Earth Was.

Of the Game of the Gods

A million years passed over the first game of the gods. And MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI still rested, still in the middle of Time, and the gods still played with Worlds. The Moon regarded, and the Bright One sought, and returned again to his seeking.

Then Kib grew weary of the first game of the gods, and raised his hand in Pegana, making the sign of Kib, and Earth became covered with beasts for Kib to play with.

And Kib played with beasts.

But the other gods said to one another, speaking with their hands: "What is it that Kib has done?"

And They said to Kib: "What are these things that move upon The Earth yet move not in circles like the Worlds, that regard like the Moon and yet they do not shine?"

And Kib said: "This is Life."

But the gods said one to another: "If Kib has thus made beasts he will in time make Men, and will endanger the secret of the gods."

And Mung was jealous of the work of Kib, and sent down Death among the beasts, but could not stamp them out.

A million years passed over the second game of the gods, and still it was the Middle of Time.

And Kib grew weary of the second game, and raised his hand in The Middle of All, making the sign of Kib, and made Men: out of beasts he made them, and Earth was covered with Men.

Then the gods feared greatly for the Secret of the gods, and set a veil between Man and his ignorance that he might not understand. And Mung was busy among Men.

But when the other gods saw Kib playing his new game They came and played it too. And this They will play until MANA arise to rebuke them, saying: *"What do ye playing with Worlds and Suns and Men and Life and Death?"* And They shall be ashamed of their playing in the hour of the laughter of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI.

It was Kib who first broke the Silence of Pegana, by speaking with his mouth like a man.

And all the other gods were angry with Kib that he had spoken with his mouth.

And there was no longer silence in Pegana or the Worlds.

The Chaunt of the Gods

There came the voice of the gods singing the chaunt of the gods, singing: "We are the gods; We are the little games of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI that he hath played and hath forgotten.

"MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI hath made us, and We made the Worlds and the Suns.

"And We play with the Worlds and the Suns and Life and Death until MANA arise to rebuke us, saying: *'What do ye playing with Worlds and Suns?'*

"It is a very serious thing that there be Worlds and Suns, and yet most withering is the laughter of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI.

"And when he arises from resting at the Last, and laughs at us for playing with Worlds and Suns, we will hastily put them behind us, and there shall be Worlds no more."

The Sayings of Kib

(SENDER OF LIFE IN ALL THE WORLDS)

Kib said: "I am Kib. I am none other than Kib."

"Kib is Kib. Kib is he and no other. Believe!"

Kib said when Time was early, when Time was very early indeed—there was only MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI. MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI was before the beginning of the gods, and shall be after their going.

And Kib said: "After the going of the gods there will be no small worlds nor big."

Kib said: "It will be lonely for MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI. Because this is written, *believe!* For is it not written, or are you greater than Kib? Kib is Kib."

Concerning Sish

(THE DESTROYER OF HOURS)

Time is the hound of Sish.

At Sish's bidding do the hours run before him as he goeth upon his way.

Never hath Sish stepped backward nor ever hath he tarried; never hath he relented to the things that once he knew nor turned to them again.

Before Sish is Kib, and behind him goeth Mung.

Very pleasant are all things before the face of Sish, but behind him they are withered and old.

And Sish goeth ceaselessly upon his way.

Once the gods walked upon the Earth as men walk and spake with their mouths like Men. That was in Wornath-Mavai. They walk not now.

And Wornath-Mavai was a garden fairer than all the gardens upon Earth.

Kib was propitious, and Mung raised not his hand against it, neither did Sish assail it with his hours.

Wornath-Mavai lieth in a valley and looketh towards the south, and on the slopes of it Sish rested among the flowers when Sish was young.

Thence Sish went forth into the world to destroy its cities, and to provoke his hours to assail all things, and to batter against them with the rust and with the dust.

And Time, which is the hound of Sish, devoured all

things; and Sish sent up the ivy and fostered weeds, and dust fell from the hand of Sish and covered stately things. Only the valley where Sish rested when he and Time were young did Sish not provoke his hours to assail.

There he restrained his old hound Time, and at its borders Mung withheld his footsteps.

Wornath-Mavai still lieth looking towards the south, a garden among gardens; and still the flowers grow about its slopes as they grew when the gods were young; and even the butterflies live in Wornath-Mavai still. For the minds of the gods relent towards their earliest memories, who relent not otherwise at all.

Wornath-Mavai still lieth looking towards the south; but if thou shouldst ever find it thou art then more fortunate than the gods, because they walk not in Wornath-Mavai now.

Once did the prophet think that he discerned it in the distance beyond mountains, a garden exceeding fair with flowers; but Sish arose, and pointed with his hand, and set his hound to pursue him, who hath followed ever since.

Time is the hound of the gods; but it hath been said of old that he will one day turn upon his masters, and seek to slay the gods, excepting only MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI, whose dreams are the gods themselves—dreamed long ago.

The Sayings of Slid

(WHOSE SOUL IS IN THE SEA)

Slid said: "Let no man pray to MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI, for who shall trouble MANA with mortal woes or irk him with the sorrows of all the houses of Earth?

"Nor let any sacrifice to MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI, for what glory shall he find in sacrifice or altars who hath made the gods themselves?

"Pray to the small gods, who are the gods of Doing; but MANA is the god of Having Done—the god of Having Done and of the Resting.

"Pray to the small gods and hope that they may hear thee. Yet what mercy should the small gods have, who themselves made Death and Pain; or shall they restrain their old hound Time for thee?

"Slid is but a small god. Yet Slid is Slid—it is written and hath been said.

"Pray thou, therefore, to Slid, and forget not Slid, and it may be that Slid will not forget to send thee Death when most thou needest it."

And the People of the Earth said: "There is a melody upon the Earth as though ten thousand streams all sang together for their homes that they had forsaken in the hills."

And Slid said: "I am the Lord of gliding waters and

of foaming waters and of still. I am the Lord of all the waters in the world and all that long streams garner in the hills; but the soul of Slid is in the Sea. Thither goes all that glides upon the Earth, and the end of all the rivers is the Sea."

And Slid said: "The hand of Slid hath toyed with cataracts, adown the valleys have trod the feet of Slid, and out of the lakes of the plains regard the eyes of Slid; but the soul of Slid is in the Sea."

Much homage hath Slid among the cities of men and pleasant are the woodland paths and the paths of the plains, and pleasant the high valleys where he danceth in the hills; but Slid would be fettered neither by banks nor boundaries—so the soul of Slid is in the Sea.

For there may Slid repose beneath the sun and smile at the gods above him with all the smiles of Slid, and be a happier god than Those who sway the Worlds, whose work is Life and Death.

There may he sit and smile, or creep among the ships, or moan and sigh round islands in his great content—the miser lord of wealth in gems and pearls beyond the telling of all fables.

Or there may he, when Slid would fain exult, throw up his great arms, or toss with many a fathom of wandering hair the mighty head of Slid, and cry aloud tumultuous dirges of shipwreck, and feel through all his being the crashing might of Slid, and sway the sea. Then doth the Sea, like venturous legions on the eve of war that exult to acclaim their chief, gather its force together from under all the winds and roar and follow and sing and crash together to vanquish all things—and all at the bidding of Slid, whose soul is in the sea.

"There is ease in the soul of Slid and there be calms upon the sea; also, there be storms upon the sea and troubles in the soul of Slid, for the gods have many moods. And Slid is in many places, for he sitteth in high Pegana. Also along the valleys walketh Slid, wherever water moveth or lieth still; but the voice and the cry of Slid are from the Sea. And to whoever that cry hath ever come he must needs follow and follow, leaving all stable things; only to be always with Slid in all the moods of Slid, to find no rest until he reach the sea. With the cry of Slid before them and the hills of their home behind have gone a hundred thousand to the sea, over whose bones doth Slid lament with the voice of a god lamenting for his people. Even the streams from the inner lands have heard Slid's far-off cry, and all together have forsaken lawns and trees to follow where Slid is gathering up his own, to rejoice where Slid rejoices, singing the chaunt of Slid, even as will at the Last gather all the Lives of the People about the feet of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI."

The Deeds of Mung

(LORD OF ALL DEATHS BETWEEN PEGANA AND THE RIM)

Once, as Mung went his way athwart the Earth and up and down its cities and across its plains, Mung came upon a man who was afraid when Mung said: "I am Mung!"

And Mung said: "Were the forty million years before thy coming intolerable to thee?"

And Mung said: "Not less tolerable to thee shall be the forty million years to come!"

Then Mung made against him the sign of Mung, and the Life of the Man was fettered no longer with hands and feet.

At the end of the flight of the arrow there is Mung, and in the houses and the cities of Men. Mung walketh in all places at all times. But mostly he loves to walk in the dark and still, along the river mists when the wind hath sank, a little before night meeteth with the morning upon the highway between Pegana and the Worlds.

Sometimes Mung entereth the poor man's cottage; Mung also boweth very low before The King. Then do the Lives of the poor man and of The King go forth among the Worlds.

And Mung said: "Many turnings hath the road that

Kib hath given every man to tread upon the Earth. Behind one of these turnings sitteth Mung."

One day as a man trod upon the road that Kib had given him to tread he came suddenly upon Mung. And when Mung said: "I am Mung!" the man cried out: "Alas, that I took this road, for had I gone by any other way then had I not met with Mung."

And Mung said: "Had it been possible for thee to go by any other way then had the Scheme of Things been otherwise and the gods had been other gods. When MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI forgets to rest and makes again new gods it may be that They will send thee again into the Worlds; and then thou mayest choose some other way, and so not meet with Mung."

Then Mung made the sign of Mung. And the Life of that man went forth with yesterday's regrets and all old sorrows and forgotten things—whither Mung knoweth.

And Mung went onward with his work to sunder Life from flesh, and Mung came upon a man who became stricken with sorrow when he saw the shadow of Mung. But Mung said: "When at the sign of Mung thy Life shall float away there will also disappear thy sorrow at forsaking it." But the man cried out: "O Mung! tarry for a little, and make not the sign of Mung against me *now*, for I have a family upon the Earth with whom sorrow will remain, though mine should disappear because of the sign of Mung."

And Mung said: "With the gods it is always Now. And before Sish hath banished many of the years the sorrows of thy family for thee shall go the way of thine." And the man beheld Mung making the sign of Mung before his eyes, which beheld things no more.

The Chaunt of the Priests

This is the chaunt of the Priests.
The chaunt of the Priests of Mung.
This is the chaunt of the Priests.
All day long to Mung cry out the Priests of Mung, and, yet Mung hearkeneth not. What then, shall avail the prayers of All the People?
Rather bring gifts to the Priests, gifts to the Priests of Mung.
So shall they cry louder unto Mung than ever was their wont.
And it may be that Mung shall hear.
Not any longer than shall fall the Shadow of Mung athwart the hopes of the People.
Not any longer then shall the Tread of Mung darken the dreams of the People.
Not any longer shall the lives of the people be loosened because of Mung.
Bring ye gifts to the Priests, gifts to the Priests of Mung.
This is the chaunt of the Priests.
The chaunt of the Priests of Mung.
This is the chaunt of the Priests.

The Sayings of Limpang-Tung

(THE GOD OF MIRTH AND OF MELODIOUS MINSTRELS)

And Limpang-Tung said: "The ways of the gods are strange. The flower groweth up and the flower fadeth away. This may be very clever of the gods. Man groweth from his infancy, and in a while he dieth. This may be very clever too.

"But the gods play with a strange scheme.

"I will send jests into the world and a little mirth. And while Death seems to thee as far away as the purple rim of hills, or sorrow as far off as rain in the blue days of summer, then pray to Limpang-Tung. But when thou growest old, or ere thou diest pray not to Limpang-Tung, for thou becomest part of a scheme that he doth not understand.

"Go out into the starry night, and Limpang-Tung will dance with thee who danced since the gods were young, the god of mirth and of melodious minstrels. Or offer up a jest to Limpang-Tung; *only* pray not in thy sorrow to Limpang-Tung, for he saith of sorrow: 'It may be very clever of the gods,' but he doth not understand."

And Limpang-Tung said: "I am lesser than the gods;

pray, therefore, to the small gods and not to Limpang-Tung.

"Natheless between Pegana and the Earth flutter ten thousand thousand prayers that beat their wings against the face of Death, and never for one of them hath the hand of the Striker been stayed, nor yet have tarried the feet of the Relentless One.

"Utter thy prayer! It may accomplish where failed ten thousand thousand.

"Limpang-Tung is lesser than the gods, and doth not understand."

And Limpang-Tung said: "Lest men grow weary down on the great Worlds through gazing always at a changeless sky I will paint my pictures in the sky. And I will paint them twice in every day for so long as days shall be. Once as the day ariseth out of the homes of dawn will I paint upon the Blue, that men may see and rejoice; and ere day falleth under into the night will I paint upon the Blue again, lest men be sad."

"It is a little," said Limpang-Tung, "it is a little even for a god to give some pleasure to men upon the Worlds." And Limpang-Tung hath sworn that the pictures that he paints shall never be the same for so long as the days shall be, and this he hath sworn by the oath of the gods of Pegana that the gods may never break, laying his hand upon the shoulder of each of the gods and swearing by the light behind Their eyes.

Limpang-Tung hath lured a melody out of the stream and stolen its anthem from the forest; for him the wind hath cried in lonely places and ocean sung its dirges.

There is music for Limpang-Tung in the sounds of the moving of grass and in the voices of the people that lament or in the cry of them that rejoice.

In an inner mountain land where none hath come he hath carved his organ pipes out of the mountains, and there when the winds, his servants, come in from all the world he maketh the melody of Limpang-Tung. But the song, arising at night, goeth forth like a river, winding through all the world, and here and there amid the peoples of earth one heareth, and straightway all that hath voice to sing crieth aloud in music to his soul.

Or sometimes walking through the dusk with steps unheard by men, in a form unseen by the people, Limpang-Tung goeth abroad, and, standing behind the minstrels in cities of song, waveth his hands above them to and fro, and the minstrels bend to their work, and the voice of the music ariseth; and mirth and melody abound in that city of song, and no one seeth Limpang-Tung as he standeth behind the minstrels.

But through the mists towards morning, in the dark when the minstrels sleep and mirth and melody have sunk to rest, Limpang-Tung goeth back again to his mountain land.

Of Yoharneth-Lahai

(THE GOD OF LITTLE DREAMS AND FANCIES)

Yoharneth-Lahai is the god of little dreams and fancies.

All night he sendeth little dreams out of Pegana to please the people of Earth.

He sendeth little dreams to the poor man and to The King.

He is so busy to send his dreams to all before the night be ended that oft he forgetteth which be the poor man and which be The King.

To whom Yoharneth-Lahai cometh not with little dreams and sleep he must endure all night the laughter of the gods, with highest mockery, in Pegana.

All night long Yoharneth-Lahai giveth peace to cities until the dawn hour and the departing of Yoharneth-Lahai, when it is time for the gods to play with men again.

Whether the dreams and the fancies of Yoharneth-Lahai be false and the Things that are done in the Day be real, or the Things that are done in the Day be false and the dreams and the fancies of Yoharneth-Lahai be true, none knoweth saving only MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI, *who hath not spoken.*

Of Roon, the God of Going

AND THE THOUSAND HOME GODS

Roon said: "There be gods of moving and gods of standing still, but I am the god of Going."

It is because of Roon that the worlds are never still, for the moons and the worlds and the comet are stirred by the spirit of Roon, which saith: "Go! Go! Go!"

Roon met the Worlds all in the morning of Things, before there was light upon Pegana, and Roon danced before them in the Void, since when they are never still. Roon sendeth all streams to the Sea, and all the rivers down to the soul of Slid.

Roon maketh the sign of Roon before the waters, and lo! they have left the hills; and Roon hath spoken in the ear of the North Wind that he may be still no more.

The footfall of Roon hath been heard at evening outside the houses of men, and thenceforth comfort and abiding know them no more. Before them stretcheth travel over all the lands, long miles, and never resting between their homes and their graves—and all at the bidding of Roon.

The Mountains have set no limit against Roon nor all the seas a boundary.

Whither Roon hath desired there must Roon's people go, and the worlds and their streams and the winds.

I heard the whisper of Roon at evening, saying: "There are islands of spices to the South," and the voice of Roon saying: "Go."

And Roon said: "There are a thousand home gods, the little gods that sit before the hearth and mind the fire—there is *one* Roon."

Roon saith in a whisper, in a whisper when none heareth, when the sun is low: "What doeth MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI?" Roon is no god that thou mayest worship by thy hearth, nor will he be benignant to thy home.

Offer to Roon thy toiling and thy speed, whose incense is the smoke of the camp fire to the South, whose song is the sound of going, whose temples stand beyond the farthest hills in his lands behind the East.

Yarinareth, Yarinareth, Yarinareth, which signifieth Beyond—these words be carved in letters of gold upon the arch of the great portal of the Temple of Roon that men have builded looking towards the East upon the Sea, where Roon is carved as a giant trumpeter, with his trumpet pointing towards the East beyond the Seas.

Whoso heareth his voice, the voice of Roon at evening, he at once forsaketh the home gods that sit beside the hearth. These be the gods of the hearth: Pitsu, who stroketh the cat; Hobith, who calms the dog; and Habaniah, the lord of glowing embers; and little Zumbiboo, the lord of dust; and old Gribaun, who sits in the heart of the fire to turn the wood to ash—all these be home gods, and live not in Pegana and be lesser than Roon.

There is also Kilooloogung, the lord of arising smoke, who taketh the smoke from the hearth and sendeth it to the sky, who is pleased if it reacheth Pegana, so that the gods of Pegana, speaking to the gods, say:

"There is Kilooloogung doing the work on earth of Kilooloogung."

All these are gods so small that they be lesser than men, but pleasant gods to have beside the hearth; and often men have prayed to Kilooloogung, saying: "Thou whose smoke ascendeth to Pegana send up with it our prayers, that the gods may hear." And Kilooloogung, who is pleased that men should pray, stretches himself up all grey and lean, with his arms above his head, and sendeth his servant the smoke to seek Pegana, that the gods of Pegana may know that the people pray.

And Jabim is the Lord of broken things, who sitteth behind the house to lament the things that are cast away. And there he sitteth lamenting the broken things until the worlds be ended, or until someone cometh to mend the broken things. Or sometimes he sitteth by the river's edge to lament the forgotten things that drift upon it.

A kindly god is Jabim, whose heart is sore if anything be lost.

There is also Triboogie, the Lord of Dusk, whose children are the shadows, who sitteth in a corner far off from Habaniah and speaketh to none. But after Habaniah hath gone to sleep and old Gribaun hath blinked a hundred times, until he forgetteth which be wood or ash, then doth Triboogie send his children to run about the room and dance upon the walls, but never disturb the silence.

But when there is light again upon the worlds, and dawn comes dancing down the highway from Pegana, then does Triboogie retire into his corner, with his children all around him, as though they had never danced about the room. And the slaves of Habaniah and old Gribaun come and awake them from their sleep upon

the hearth, and Pitsu strokes the cat, and Hobith calms the dog, and Kilooloogung stretches aloft his arms towards Pegana, and Triboogie is very still, and his children asleep.

And when it is dark, all in the hour of Triboogie, Hish creepeth from the forest, the Lord of Silence, whose children are the bats, that have broken the command of their father, but in a voice that is ever so low. Hish husheth the mouse and all the whispers in the night; he maketh all noises still. Only the cricket rebelleth. But Hish hath set against him such a spell that after he hath cried a thousand times his voice may be heard no more but becometh part of the silence.

And when he hath slain all sounds Hish boweth low to the ground; then cometh into the house, with never a sound of feet, the god Yoharneth-Lahai.

But away in the forest whence Hish hath come Wohoon, the Lord of Noises in the Night, awaketh in his lair and creepeth round the forest to see whether it be true that Hish hath gone.

Then in some glade Wohoon lifts up his voice and cries aloud, that all the night may hear, that it is he, Wohoon, who is abroad in all the forest. And the wolf and the fox and the owl, and the great beasts and the small, lift up their voices to acclaim Wohoon. And there arise the sounds of voices and the stirring of leaves.

The Revolt of the Home Gods

There be three broad rivers of the plain, born before memory or fable, whose mothers are three grey peaks and whose father was the storm. There names be Eimes, Zanes, and Segastrion.

And Eimes is the joy of lowing herds; and Zanes hath bowed his neck to the yoke of man, and carries the timber from the forest far up below the mountain; and Segastrion sings old songs to shepherd boys, singing of his childhood in a lone ravine and of how he once sprang down the mountain sides and far away into the plain to see the world, and of how one day at last he will find the sea. These be the rivers of the plain, wherein the plain rejoices. But old men tell, whose fathers heard it from the ancients, how once the lords of the three rivers of the plain rebelled against the law of the Worlds, and passed beyond their boundaries, and joined together and whelmed cities and slew men, saying: "We now play the game of the gods and slay men for our pleasure, and we be greater than the gods of Pegana."

And all the plain was flooded to the hills.

And Eimes, Zanes, and Segastrion sat upon the mountains, and spread their hands over their rivers that rebelled by their command.

But the prayer of men going upward found Pegana, and cried in the ear of the gods: "There be three home gods who slay us for their pleasure, and say that they be mightier than Pegana's gods, and play Their game with men."

Then were all the gods of Pegana very wroth; but They could not whelm the lords of the three rivers, because being home gods, though small, they were immortal.

And still the home gods spread their hands across their rivers, with their fingers wide apart, and the waters rose and rose, and the voice of their torrent grew louder, crying: "Are we not Eimes, Zanes, and Segastrion?"

Then Mung went down into a waste of Afrik, and came upon the drought Umbool as he sat in the desert upon iron rocks, clawing with miserly grasp at the bones of men and breathing hot.

And Mung stood before him as his dry sides heaved, and ever as they sank his hot breath blasted dead sticks and bones.

Then Mung said: "Friend of Mung! go, thou and grin before the faces of Eimes, Zanes, and Segastrion till they see whether it be wise to rebel against the gods of Pegana."

And Umbool answered: "I am the beast of Mung."

And Umbool came and crouched upon a hill upon the other side of the waters and grinned across them at the rebellious home gods.

And whenever Eimes, Zanes, and Segastrion stretched out their hands over their rivers they saw before their faces the grinning of Umbool; and because the grinning was like death in a hot and hideous land

therefore they turned away and spread their hands no more over their rivers, and the waters sank and sank.

But when Umbool had grinned for thirty days the waters fell back into the river beds and the lords of the rivers slunk away back again to their homes: still Umbool sat and grinned.

Then Eimes sought to hide himself in a great pool beneath a rock, and Zanes crept into the middle of a wood, and Segastrion lay and panted on the sand—still Umbool sat and grinned.

And Eimes grew lean, and was forgotten, so that the men of the plain would say: "Here once was Eimes"; and Zanes scarce had strength to lead his river to the sea; and as Segastrion lay and panted a man stepped over his stream, and Segastrion said: "It is the foot of a man that has passed across my neck, and I have sought to be greater than the gods of Pegana."

Then said the gods of Pegana: "It is enough. We are the gods of Pegana, and none are equal."

Then Mung sent Umbool back to his waste in Afrik to breathe again upon the rocks, and parch the desert, and to sear the memory of Afrik into the brains of all who ever bring their bones away.

And Eimes, Zanes, and Segastrion sang again, and walked once more in their accustomed haunts, and played the game of Life and Death with fishes and frogs, but never essayed to play it any more with men, as do the gods of Pegana.

Of Dorozhand

(WHOSE EYES REGARD THE END)

Sitting above the lives of the people, and looking, doth Dorozhand see that which is to be.

The god of Destiny is Dorozhand. Upon whom have looked the eyes of Dorozhand he goeth forward to an end that naught may stay; he becometh the arrow from the bow of Dorozhand hurled forward at a mark he may not see—to the goal of Dorozhand. Beyond the thinking of men, beyond the sight of all the other gods regard the eyes of Dorozhand.

He hath chosen his slaves. And them doth the destiny god drive onward where he will, who, knowing not whither nor even knowing why, feel only his scourge behind them or hear his cry before.

There is something that Dorozhand would fain achieve, and, therefore, hath he set the people striving, with none to cease or rest in all the worlds. But the gods of Pegana speaking to the gods, say: "What is it that Dorozhand would fain achieve?"

It hath been written and said that not only the destinies of men are the care of Dorozhand but that even the gods of Pegana be not unconcerned by his will.

All the gods of Pegana have felt a fear, for they have

seen a look in the eyes of Dorozhand that regardeth beyond the gods.

The reason and purpose of the Worlds is that there should be Life upon the Worlds, and Life is the instrument of Dorozhand wherewith he would achieve his end.

Therefore the Worlds go on, and the rivers run to the sea, and Life ariseth and flieth even in all the Worlds, and the gods of Pegana do the work of the gods—and all for Dorozhand. But when the end of Dorozhand hath been achieved there will be need no longer of Life upon the Worlds, nor any more a game for the small gods to play. Then will Kib tiptoe gently across Pegana to the resting-place in Highest Pegana of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI, and touching reverently his hand, the hand that wrought the gods, say: "MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI, thou hast rested long."

And MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI shall say: *"Not so; for I have rested for but fifty aeons of the gods, each of them scarce more than ten million mortal years of the Worlds that ye have made."*

And then shall the gods be afraid when they find that MANA knoweth that they have made Worlds while he rested. And they shall answer: "Nay; but the Worlds came all of themselves."

Then MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI, as one who would have done with an irksome matter, will lightly wave his hand—the hand that wrought the gods—and there shall be gods no more.

When there shall be three moons towards the north above the Star of the Abiding, three moons that neither wax nor wane but regard towards the North.

Or when the comet ceaseth from his seeking and stands still, not any longer moving among the Worlds but tarrying as one who rests after the end of search, then shall arise from resting, because it is THE END, the Greater One, who rested of old time, even MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI.

Then shall the Times that were be Times no more; and it may be that the old, dead days shall return from beyond the Rim, and we who have wept for them shall see those days again, as one who, returning from long travel to his home, comes suddenly on dear, remembered things.

For none shall know of MANA who hath rested for so long, whether he be a harsh or a merciful god. It may be that he shall have mercy, and that these things shall be.

The Eye in the Waste

There lie seven deserts beyond Bodrahán, which is the city of the caravans' end. None goeth beyond. In the first desert lie the tracks of mighty travellers outward from Bodrahán, and some returning. And in the second lie only outward tracks, and none return.

The third is a desert untrodden by the feet of men.

The fourth is the desert of sand, and the fifth is the desert of dust, and the sixth is the desert of stones, and the seventh is the Desert of Deserts.

In the midst of the last of the deserts that lie beyond Bodrahán, in the centre of the Desert of Deserts, standeth the image that hath been hewn of old out of the living hill whose name is Ranorada—the eye in the waste.

About the base of Ranorada is carved in mystic letters that are vaster than the beds of streams these words:

To the god who knows.

Now, beyond the second desert are no tracks, and there is no water in all the seven deserts that lie beyond Bodrahán. Therefore came no man thither to hew that statue from the living hills, and Ranorada was wrought by the hands of gods. Men tell in Bodrahán, where the caravans end and all the drivers of the camels rest, how once the gods hewed Ranorada from the living hill,

hammering all night long beyond the deserts. Moreover, they say that Ranorada is carved in the likeness of the god Hoodrazai, who hath found the secret of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI, and knoweth the wherefore of the making of the gods.

They say that Hoodrazai stands all alone in Pegana and speaks to none because he knows what is hidden from the gods.

Therefore the gods have made his image in a lonely land as one who thinks and is silent—the eye in the waste.

They say that Hoodrazai had heard the murmurs of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI as he muttered to himself, and gleaned the meaning, and knew; and that he was the god of mirth and of abundant joy, but became from the moment of his knowing a mirthless god, even as his image, which regards the deserts beyond the track of man.

But the camel drivers, as they sit and listen to the tales of the old men in the market-place of Bodrahán, at evening, while the camels rest, say: "If Hoodrazai is so very wise and yet is sad, let us drink wine, and banish wisdom to the wastes that lie beyond Bodrahán." Therefore is there feasting and laughter all night long in the city where the caravans end.

All this the camel drivers tell when the caravans come in from Bodrahán; but who shall credit tales that camel drivers have heard from aged men in so remote a city?

Of the Thing That Is Neither God nor Beast

Seeing that wisdom is not in cities nor happiness in wisdom, and because Yadin the prophet was doomed by the gods ere he was born to go in search of wisdom, he followed the caravans to Bodrahán. There in the evening, where the camels rest, when the wind of the day ebbs out into the desert sighing amid the palms its last farewells and leaving the caravans still, he sent his prayer with the wind to drift into the desert calling to Hoodrazai.

And down the wind his prayer went calling: "Why do the gods endure, and play their game with men. Why doth not Skarl forsake his drumming, and MANA cease to rest?" and the echo of seven deserts answered: "Who knows? Who knows?"

But out in the waste, beyond the seven deserts where Ranorada looms enormous in the dusk, at evening his prayer was heard; and from the rim of the waste whither had gone his prayer, came three flamingoes flying, and their voices said: "Going South, Going South" at every stroke of their wings.

But as they passed by the prophet they seemed so cool and free and the desert so blinding and hot that

he stretched up his arms towards them. Then it seemed happy to fly and pleasant to follow behind great white wings, and he was with the three flamingoes up in the cool above the desert, and their voices cried before him: "Going South, Going South," and the desert below him mumbled: "Who knows? Who knows?"

Sometimes the earth stretched up towards them with peaks of mountains, sometimes it fell away in steep ravines, blue rivers sang to them as they passed above them, or very faintly came the song of breezes in lone orchards, and far away the sea sang mighty dirges of old forsaken isles. But it seemed that in all the world there was nothing only to be going South.

It seemed that somewhere the South was calling to her own, and that they were going South.

But when the prophet saw that they had passed above the edge of Earth, and that far away to the North of them lay the Moon, he perceived that he was following no mortal birds but some strange messengers of Hoodrazai whose nest had lain in one of Pegana's vales below the mountains whereon sit the gods.

Still they went South, passing by all the Worlds and leaving them to the North, till only Araxes, Zadres, and Hyraglion lay still to the South of them, where great Ingazi seemed only a point of light, and Yo and Mindo could be seen no more.

Still they went South till they passed below the South and came to the Rim of the Worlds.

There there is neither South nor East nor West, but only North and Beyond: there is only North of it where lie the Worlds, and Beyond it where lies the Silence, and the Rim is a mass of rocks that were never used by the gods when They made the Worlds, and on it sat

Trogool. Trogool is the Thing that is neither god nor beast, who neither howls nor breathes, only IT turns over the leaves of a great book, black and white, black and white for ever until THE END.

And all that is to be is written in the book as also all that was.

When IT turneth a black page it is night, and when IT turneth a white page it is day.

Because it is written that there are gods—there are the gods.

Also there is writing about thee and me until the page where our names no more are written.

Then as the prophet watched IT, Trogool turned a page—a black one, and night was over, and day shone on the Worlds.

Trogool is the Thing that men in many countries have called by many names, IT is the Thing that sits behind the gods, whose book is the Scheme of Things.

But when Yadin saw that old remembered days were hidden away with the part that IT had turned, and knew that upon one whose name is writ no more the last page had turned for ever a thousand pages back. Then did he utter his prayer in the fact of Trogool who only turns the pages and never answers prayer. He prayed in the face of Trogool: "Only turn back thy pages to the name of one which is writ no more, and far away upon a place named Earth shall rise the prayers of a little people that acclaim the name of Trogool, for there is indeed far off a place called Earth where men shall pray to Trogool."

Then spake Trogool who turns the pages and never answers prayer, and his voice was like the murmurs of the waste at night when echoes have been lost: "Though

the whirlwind of the South should tug with his claws at a page that hath been turned yet shall he not be able to ever turn it back."

Then because of words in the book that said that it should be so, Yadin found himself lying in the desert where one gave him water, and afterwards carried him on a camel into Bodrahán.

There some said that he had but dreamed when thirst had seized him while he wandered among the rocks in the desert. But certain aged men of Bodrahán say that indeed there sitteth somewhere a Thing that is called Trogool, that is neither god nor beast, that turneth the leaves of a book, black and white, black and white, until he come to the words: MAI DOON IZAHN, which means The End For Ever, and book and gods and worlds shall be no more.

Yonath the Prophet

Yonath was the first among prophets who uttered unto men.

These are the words of Yonath, the first among all prophets:

There be gods upon Pegana.

Upon a night I slept. And in my sleep Pegana came very near. And Pegana was full of gods.

I saw the gods beside me as one might see wonted things.

Only I saw not MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI.

And in that hour, in the hour of my sleep—I knew.

And the end and the beginning of my knowing, and all of my knowing that there was, was this—that Man Knoweth Not.

Seek thou to find at night the utter edge of the darkness, or seek to find the birthplace of the rainbow where he leapeth upward from the hills, only seek not concerning the wherefore of the making of the gods.

The gods have set a brightness upon the farther side of the Things to Come that they may appear more felititous to men than the Things that Are.

To the gods the Things to Come are but as the Things that Are, and nothing altereth in Pegana.

The gods, although not merciful, are not ferocious

gods. They are the destroyers of the Days that Were, but they set a glory about the Days to Be.

Man must endure the Days that Are, but the gods have left him his ignorance as a solace.

Seek not to know. Thy seeking will weary thee, and thou wilt return much worn, to rest at last about the place from whence thou settest out upon thy seeking.

Seek not to know. Even I, Yonath, the oldest prophet, burdened with the wisdom of great years, and worn with seeking, know only that man knoweth not.

Once I set out seeking to know all things. Now I know one thing only, and soon the Years will carry me away.

The path of my seeking, that leadeth to seeking again, must be trodden by very many more, when Yonath is no longer even Yonath.

Set not thy foot upon that path.

Seek not to know.

These be the Words of Yonath.

Yug the Prophet

When the Years had carried away Yonath, and Yonath was dead, there was no longer a prophet among men.

And still men sought to know.

Therefore they said unto Yug: "Be thou our prophet, and know all things, and tell us concerning the wherefore of It All."

And Yug said: "I know all things." And men were pleased.

And Yug said of the Beginning that it was in Yug's own garden, and of the End that it was in the sight of Yug.

And men forgot Yonath.

One day Yug saw Mung behind the hills making the sign of Mung. And Yug was Yug no more.

Alhireth-Hotep the Prophet

When Yug was Yug no more men said unto Alhireth-Hotep: "Be thou our prophet, and be as wise as Yug."

And Alhireth-Hotep said: "I am as wise as Yug." And men were very glad.

And Alhireth-Hotep said of Life and Death: "These be the affairs of Alhireth-Hotep." And men brought gifts to him.

One day Alhireth-Hotep wrote in a book: "Alhireth-Hotep knoweth All Things, for he hath spoken with Mung."

And Mung stepped from behind him, making the sign of Mung, saying: "Knowest thou All Things, then, Alhireth-Hotep?" And Alhireth-Hotep became among the Things that Were.

Kabok the Prophet

When Alhireth-Hotep was among the Things that Were, and still men sought to know, they said unto Kabok: "Be thou as wise as was Alhireth-Hotep."

And Kabok grew wise in his own sight and in the sight of men.

And Kabok said: "Mung maketh his sign against men or withholdeth it by the advice of Kabok."

And he said unto one: "Thou hast sinned against Kabok, therefore will Mung make the sign of Mung against thee." And to another: "Thou has brought Kabok gifts, therefore shall Mung forbear to make against thee the sign of Mung."

One night as Kabok fattened upon the gifts that men had brought him he heard the tread of Mung treading in the garden of Kabok about his house at night.

And because the night was very still it seemed most evil to Kabok that Mung should be treading in his garden, without the advice of Kabok, about his house at night.

And Kabok, who knew All Things, grew afraid, for the treading was very loud and the night still, and he knew not what lay behind the back of Mung, which none had ever seen.

But when the morning grew to brightness, and there was light upon the Worlds, and Mung trod no longer in the garden, Kabok forgot his fears, and said: "Perhaps it was but a herd of cattle that stampeded in the garden of Kabok."

And Kabok went about his business, which was that of knowing All Things, and telling All Things unto men, and making light of Mung.

But that night Mung trod again in the garden of Kabok, about his house at night, and stood before the window of the house like a shadow standing erect, so that Kabok knew indeed that it was Mung.

And a great fear fell upon the throat of Kabok, so that his speech was hoarse; and he cried out: "Thou art Mung!"

And Mung slightly inclined his head, and went on to tread in the garden of Kabok, about his house at night.

And Kabok lay and listened with horror at his heart.

But when the second morning grew to brightness, and there was light upon the Worlds, Mung went from treading in the garden of Kabok; and for a little while Kabok hoped, but looked with great dread for the coming of the third night.

And when the third night was come, and the bat had gone to his home, and the wind had sank, the night was very still.

And Kabok lay and listened, to whom the wings of the night flew very slow.

But, ere night met the morning upon the highway between Pegana and the Worlds, there came the tread of Mung in the garden of Kabok towards Kabok's door.

And Kabok fled out of his house as flees a hunted beast and flung himself before Mung.

And Mung made the sign of Mung, pointing towards The End.

And the fears of Kabok had rest from troubling Kabok any more, for they and he were among accomplished things.

Of the Calamity That Befel Yun-Ilara by the Sea, and of the Building of the Tower of the Ending of Days

When Kabok and his fears had rest the people sought a prophet who should have no fear of Mung, whose hand was against the prophets.

And at last they found Yun-Ilara, who tended sheep and had no fear of Mung, and the people brought him to the town that he might be their prophet.

And Yun-Ilara builded a tower towards the sea that looked upon the setting of the Sun. And he called it the Tower of the Ending of Days.

And about the ending of the day would Yun-Ilara go up to his tower's top and look towards the setting of the Sun to cry his curses against Mung, crying: "O Mung! whose hand is against the Sun, whom men abhor but worship because they fear thee, here stands and speaks a man who fears thee not. Assassin lord of murder and dark things, abhorrent, merciless, make thou the sign of Mung against me when thou wilt, but until silence settles upon my lips, because of the sign of Mung, I will curse Mung to his face." And the people in the street below would gaze up with wonder

towards Yun-Ilara, who had no fear of Mung, and brought him gifts; only in their homes after the falling of the night would they pray again with reverence to Mung. But Mung said: "Shall a man curse a god?" And Mung went forth amid the cities to glean the lives of the People.

And still Mung came not nigh to Yun-Ilara as he cried his curses against Mung from his tower towards the sea.

And Sish throughout the Worlds hurled Time away, and slew the Hours that had served him well, and called up more out of the timeless waste that lieth beyond the Worlds, and drave them forth to assail all things. And Sish cast a whiteness over the hairs of Yun-Ilara, and ivy about his tower, and weariness over his limbs, for Mung passed by him still.

And when Sish became a god less durable to Yun-Ilara than ever Mung hath been he ceased at last to cry from his tower's top his curses against Mung whenever the sun went down, till there came the day when weariness of the gift of Kib fell heavily upon Yun-Ilara.

Then from the Tower of the Ending of Days did Yun-Ilara cry out thus to Mung, crying: "O Mung! O loveliest of the gods! O Mung, most dearly to be desired! thy gift of Death is the heritage of Man, with ease and rest and silence and returning to the Earth. Kib giveth but toil and trouble; and Sish, he sendeth regrets with each of his hours wherewith he assails the World. Yoharneth-Lahai cometh nigh no more. I can no longer be glad with Limpang-Tung. When the other gods forsake him a man hath only Mung."

But Mung said: "Shall a man curse a god?"

And every day and all night long did Yun-Ilara cry aloud: "Ah, now for the hour of the mourning of many, and the pleasant garlands of flowers and the tears, and the moist, dark earth. Ah, for repose down underneath the grass, where the firm feet of the trees grip hold upon the world, where never shall come the wind that now blows through my bones, and the rain shall come warm and trickling, not driven by storm, where is the easeful falling asunder of bone from bone in the dark." Thus prayed Yun-Ilara, who had cursed in his folly and youth, while never heeded Mung.

Still from a heap of bones that are Yun-Ilara still, lying about the ruined base of the tower that once he builded, goes up a shrill voice with the wind crying out for the mercy of Mung, if any such there be.

Of How the Gods Whelmed Sidith

There was dole in the valley of Sidith.

For three years there had been pestilence, and in the last of the three a famine; moreover, there was imminence of war.

Throughout all Sidith men died night and day, and night and day within the Temple of All the gods save One (for none may pray to MANA-YOOD SUSHAI) did the priests of the gods pray hard.

For they said: "For a long while a man may hear the droning of little insects and yet not be aware that he hath heard them, so may the gods not hear our prayers at first until they have been very oft repeated. But when your praying has troubled the silence long it may be that some god as he strolls in Pegana's glades may come on one of our lost prayers, that flutters like a butterfly tossed in storm when all its wings are broken; then if the gods be merciful they may ease our fears in Sidith, or else they may crush us, being petulant gods, and so we shall see trouble in Sidith no longer, with its pestilence and dearth and fears of war."

But in the fourth year of the pestilence and in the second year of the famine, and while still there was imminence of war, came all the people of Sidith to the door of the Temple of All the gods save One, where

none may enter but the priests—but only leave gifts and go.

And there the people cried out: "O High Prophet of All the gods save One, Priest of Kib, Priest of Sish, and Priest of Mung, Teller of the mysteries of Dorozhand, Receiver of the gifts of the People, and Lord of Prayer, what doest thou within the Temple of All the gods save One?"

And Arb-Rin-Hadith, who was the High Prophet, answered: "I pray for all the People."

But the people answered: "O High Prophet of All the gods save One, Priest of Kib, Priest of Sish, and Priest of Mung, Teller of the mysteries of Dorozhand, Receiver of the gifts of the People, and Lord of Prayer, for four long years hast thou prayed with the priests of all thine order, while we brought ye gifts and died. Now, therefore, since They have not heard thee in four grim years, thou must go and carry to Their faces the prayer of the people of Sidith when They go to drive the thunder to his pasture upon the mountain Aghrin-aun, or else there shall no longer be gifts upon thy temple door, whenever falls the dew, that thou and thine order may fatten.

"Then thou shalt say before Their faces: 'O All the gods save One, Lords of the Worlds, whose child is the eclipse, take back thy pestilence from Sidith, for ye have played the game of the gods too long with the people of Sidith, who would fain have done with the gods.' "

Then in great fear answered the High Prophet, saying: "What if the gods be angry and whelm Sidith?" And the people answered: "Then are we sooner done with pestilence and famine and the imminence of war."

That night the thunder howled upon Aghrinaun, which stood a peak above all others in the land of Sidith. And the people took Arb-Rin-Hadith from his Temple and drave him to Aghrinaun, for they said: "There walk to-night upon the mountain All the gods save One."

And Arb-Rin-Hadith went trembling to the gods.

Next morning, white and frightened from Aghrinaun, came Arb-Rin-Hadith back into the valley, and there spake to the people, saying: "The faces of the gods are iron and their mouths set hard. There is no hope from the gods."

Then said the people: "Thou shalt go to MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI, to whom no man may pray: seek him upon Aghrinaun where it lifts clear into the stillness before morning, and on its summit, where all things seem to rest surely there rests also MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI. Go to him, and say: 'Thou hast made evil gods, and They smite Sidith.' Perchance he hath forgotten all his gods, or hath not heard of Sidith. Thou hast escaped the thunder of the gods, surely thou shalt also escape the stillness of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI."

Upon a morning when the sky and lakes were clear and the world still, and Aghrinaun was stiller than the world, Arb-Rin-Hadith crept in fear towards the slopes of Aghrinaun because the people were urgent.

All that day men saw him climbing. At night he rested near the top. But ere the morning of the day that followed, such as rose early saw him in the silence, a speck against the blue, stretch up his arms upon the summit to MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI. Then instantly they saw him not, nor was he ever seen of men again

who had dared to trouble the stillness of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI.

Such as now speak of Sidith tell of a fierce and potent tribe that smote away a people in a valley enfeebled by pestilence, where stood a temple to "All the gods save One" in which was no high priest.

Of How Imbaun Became High Prophet in Aradec of all the Gods Save One

Imbaun was to be made High Prophet in Aradec, of All the Gods save One.

From Ardra, Rhoodra, and the lands beyond came all High Prophets of the Earth to the Temple in Aradec of All the gods save One.

And then they told Imbaun how The Secret of Things was upon the summit of the dome of the Hall of Night, but faintly writ, and in an unknown tongue.

Midway in the night, between the setting and the rising sun, they led Imbaun into the Hall of Night, and said to him, chaunting altogether: "Imbaun, Imbaun, Imbaun, look up to the roof, where is writ The Secret of Things, but faintly, and in an unknown tongue."

And Imbaun looked up, but darkness was so deep within the Hall of Night that Imbaun saw not even the High Prophets who came from Ardra, Rhoodra, and the lands beyond, nor saw he aught in the Hall of Night at all.

Then called the High Prophets: "What seest thou, Imbaun?"

And Imbaun said: "I see naught."

Then called the High Prophets: "What knowest thou Imbaun?"

And Imbaun said: "I know naught."

Then spake the Hight Prophet of Eld of All the gods save One, who is first on Earth of prophets: "O Imbaun! we have all looked upwards in the Hall of Night towards the secret of Things, and ever it was dark, and the Secret faint and in an unknown tongue. And now thou knowest what all High Prophets know."

And Imbaun answered: "I know."

So Imbaun became High Prophet in Aradec of All the Gods save One, and prayed for all the people, who knew not that there was darkness in the Hall of Night or that the secret was writ faint and in an unknown tongue.

These are the words of Imbaun that he wrote in a book that all the people might know:

"In the twentieth night of the nine hundredth moon, as night came up the valley, I performed the mystic rites of each of the gods in the temple as is my wont, lest any of the gods should grow angry in the night and whelm us while we slept.

"And as I uttered the last of certain secret words I fell asleep in the temple, for I was weary, with my head against the altar of Dorozhand. Then in the stillness, as I slept, there entered Dorozhand by the temple door in the guise of a man, and touched me on the shoulder, and I awoke.

"But when I saw that his eyes shone blue and lit the whole of the temple I knew that he was a god though he came in mortal guise. And Dorozhand said: 'Prophet of Dorozhand, behold that the people may know.' And

he showed me the paths of Sish stretching far down into the future time.

"Then he bade me arise and follow whither he pointed, speaking no words but commanding with his eyes.

"Therefore upon the twentieth night of the nine hundredth moon I walked with Dorozhand adown the paths of Sish into the future time.

"And ever beside the way did men slay men. And the sum of their slaying was greater than the slaying of the pestilence or any of the evils of the gods.

"And cities arose and shed their houses in dust, and ever the desert returned again to its own, and covered over and hid the last of all that had troubled its repose.

"And still men slew men.

"And I came at last to a time when men set their yoke no longer upon beasts but made them beasts of iron.

"And after that did men slay men with mists.

"Then, because the slaying exceeded their desire, there came peace upon the world that was brought by the hand of the slayer, and men slew men no more.

"And cities multiplied, and overthrew the desert and conquered its repose.

"And suddenly I beheld that THE END was near, for there was a stirring above Pegana as of One who grows weary of resting, and I saw the hound Time crouch to spring, with his eyes upon the throats of the gods, shifting from throat to throat, and the drumming of Skarl grew faint.

"And if a god may fear, it seemed that there was fear upon the face of Dorozhand, and he seized me by the hand and led me back along the paths of Time that I might not see THE END.

"Then I saw cities rise out of the dust again and fall back into the desert whence they had arisen; and again I slept in the Temple of All the gods save One, with my head against the altar of Dorozhand.

"Then again the Temple was alight, but not with light from the eyes of Dorozhand; only dawn came all blue out of the East and shone through the arches of the Temple. Then I awoke and performed the morning rites and mysteries of All the gods save One, lest any of the gods be angry in the day and take away the Sun.

"And I knew that because I who had been so near to it had not beheld THE END that a man should never behold it or know the doom of the gods. This They have hidden."

Of How Imbaun Met Zodrak

The prophet of the gods lay resting by the river to watch the stream run by.

And as he lay he pondered on the Scheme of Things and the works of all the gods. And it seemed to the prophet of the gods as he watched the stream run by that the Scheme was a right scheme and the gods benignant gods; yet there was sorrow in the Worlds. It seemed that Kib was bountiful, that Mung calmed all who suffer, that Sish dealt not too harshly with the hours, and that all the gods were good; yet there was sorrow in the Worlds.

Then said the prophet of the gods as he watched the stream run by: "There is some other god of whom naught is writ." And suddenly the prophet was aware of an old man who bemoaned beside the river, crying: "Alas! alas!"

His face was marked by the sign and seal of exceeding many years, and there was yet vigour in his frame. These be the words of the prophet that he wrote in his book: "I said: 'Who art thou that bemoans beside the river?' And he answered: 'I am the fool.' I said: 'Upon thy brow are the marks of wisdom such as is stored in books.' He said: 'I am Zodrak. Thousands of years ago I tended sheep upon a hill that sloped towards the sea.

The gods have many moods. Thousands of years ago They were in mirthful mood. They said: "Let Us call up a man before US that We may laugh in Pegana."

" 'They took me from my sheep upon the hill that slopes towards the sea. They carried me above the thunder. They stood me, that was only a shepherd, before Them on Pegana, and the gods laughed. They laughed not as men laugh, but with solemn eyes.

" 'And Their eyes that looked on me saw not me alone but also saw the Beginning and THE END and all the Worlds besides. Then said the gods, speaking as speak the gods: "Go, back to thy sheep."

" 'But I, who am the fool, had heard it said on earth that whoso seeth the gods upon Pegana becometh as the gods, if so he demand to Their faces, who may not slay him who hath looked them in the eyes.

" 'And I, the fool, said: "I have looked in the eyes of the gods, and I demand what a man may demand of the gods when he hath seen Them in Pegana." And the gods inclined Their heads and Hoodrazai said: "It is the law of the gods."

" 'And I, who was only a shepherd, how could I know?

" 'I said: "I will make men rich." And the gods said: "What is rich?"

" 'And I said: "I will send them love." And the gods said: "What is love?" And I sent gold into the Worlds, and, alas! I sent with it poverty and strife. And I sent love into the Worlds, and with it grief.

" 'And now I have mixed gold and love most woefully together, and I can never remedy what I have done, for the deeds of the gods are done, and nothing may undo them.

" 'Then I said: "I will give men wisdom that they may be glad." And those who got my wisdom found that they knew nothing, and from having been happy became glad no more.

" 'And I, who would make men happy, have made them sad, and I have spoiled the beautiful scheme of the gods.

" 'And now my hand is for ever on the handle of Their plough. I was only a shepherd, and how should I have known?

" 'Now I come to thee as thou restest by the river to ask of thee thy forgiveness, for I would fain have the forgiveness of a man.'

"And I answered: 'O Lord of seven skies, whose children are the storms, shall a man forgive a god?'

"He answered: 'Men have sinned not against the gods as the gods have sinned against men since I came into Their councils.'

"And I, the prophet, answered: 'O Lord of seven skies, whose plaything is the thunder, thou art amongst the gods, what need hast thou for words from any man?'

"He said: 'Indeed I am amongst the gods, who speak to me as they speak to other gods, yet is there always a smile about Their mouths, and a look in Their eyes that saith: "Thou wert a man."

"I said: 'O Lord of seven skies, about whose feet the Worlds are as drifted sand, because thou biddest me, I, a man, forgive thee.'

"And he answered: 'I was but a shepherd, and I could not know.' Then he was gone."

Pegana

The prophet of the gods cried out to the gods: "O! All the gods save One" (for none may pray to MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI), "where shall the life of a man abide when Mung hath made against his body the sign of Mung?—for the people with whom ye play have sought to know."

But the gods answered, speaking through the mist:

"Though thou shouldst tell thy secrets to the beasts, even that the beasts should understand, yet will not the gods divulge the secret of the gods to thee, that gods and beasts and men shall be all the same, all knowing the same things."

That night Yoharneth-Lahai same to Aradec, and said unto Imbaun: "Wherefore wouldst thou know the secret of the gods that not the gods may tell thee?

"When the wind blows not, where, then, is the wind?

"Or when thou art not living, where art thou?

"What should the wind care for the hours of calm or thou for death?

"Thy life is long, Eternity is short.

"So short that, shouldst thou die and Eternity should pass, and after the passing of Eternity thou shouldst

live again, thou wouldst say: 'I closed mine eyes but for an instant.'

"There is an Eternity behind thee as well as one before. Hast thou bewailed the aeons that passed without thee, who art so much afraid of the aeons that shall pass?"

Then said the prophet: "How shall I tell the people that the gods have not spoken and their prophet doth not know? For then should I be prophet no longer, and another would take the people's gifts instead of me."

Then said Imbaun to the people: "The gods have spoken, saying: 'O Imbaun, Our prophet, it is as the people believe whose wisdom hath discovered the secret of the gods, and the people when they die shall come to Pegana, and there live with the gods, and there have pleasure without toil. And Pegana is a place all white with the peaks of mountains, on each of them a god, and the people shall lie upon the slopes of the mountains each under the god that he hath worshipped most when his lot was in the Worlds. And there shall music beyond thy dreaming come drifting through the scent of all the orchards in the Worlds, with somewhere someone singing an old song that shall be as a half-remembered thing. And there shall be gardens that have always sunlight, and streams that are lost in no sea beneath skies for ever blue. And there shall be no rain nor no regrets. Only the roses that in highest Pegana have achieved their prime shall shed their petals in showers at thy feet, and only far away on the forgotten earth shall voices drift up to thee that cheered thee in thy childhood about the gardens of thy youth. And if thou sighest for any memory of earth because thou hearest unforgotten voices, then will the gods send

messengers on wings to soothe thee in Pegana, saying to them: "There one sigheth who hath remembered Earth." And they shall make Pegana more seductive for thee still, and they shall take thee by the hand and whisper in thine ear till the old voices are forgot.

" 'And besides the flowers of Pegana there shall have climbed by then until it hath reached to Pegana the rose that clambered about the house where thou wast born. Thither shall also come the wandering echoes of all such music as charmed thee long ago.

" 'Moreover, as thou sittest on the orchard lawns that clothe Pegana's mountains, and as thou hearkenest to melody that sways the souls of the gods, there shall stretch away far down beneath thee the great unhappy Earth, till gazing from rapture upon sorrows thou shalt be glad that thou wert dead.

" 'And from the three great mountains that stand aloof and over all the others—Grimbol, Zeebol, and Trehagobol—shall blow the wind of the morning and the wind of the evening and the wind of all the day, borne upon the wings of all the butterflies that have died upon the Worlds, to cool the gods and Pegana.

" 'Far through Pegana a silvery fountain, lured upward by the gods from the Central Sea, shall fling its waters aloft, and over the highest of Pegana's peaks, above Trehagobol, shall burst into gleaming mists, to cover Highest Pegana, and make a curtain about the resting-place of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI.

" 'Alone, still and remote below the base of one of the inner mountains, lieth a great blue pool.

" 'Whoever looketh down into its waters may behold all his life that was upon the Worlds and all the deeds that he hath done.

" 'None walk by the pool and none regard its depths, for all in Pegana have suffered and all have sinned some sin, and it lieth in the pool.

" 'And there is no darkness in Pegana, for when night hath conquered the sun and stilled the Worlds and turned the white peaks of Pegana into grey then shine the blue eyes of the gods like sunlight on the sea, where each god sits upon his mountain.

" 'And at the Last, upon some afternoon, perhaps in summer, shall the gods say, speaking to the gods: "What is the likeness of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI and what THE END?"

" 'And then shall MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI draw back with his hand the mists that cover his resting, saying: *"This is the Face of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI and this THE END."* ' "

Then said the people to the prophet: "Shall not black hills draw round in some forsaken land, to make a vale-wide cauldron wherein the molten rock shall seethe and roar, and where the crags of mountains shall be hurled upward to the surface and bubble and go down again, that there our enemies may boil for ever?"

And the prophet answered: "It is writ large about the bases of Pegana's mountains, upon which sit the gods: 'Thine Enemies Are Forgiven.' "

The Sayings of Imbaun

The Prophet of the gods said: "Yonder beside the road there sitteth a false prophet; and to all who seek to know the hidden days he saith: 'Upon the morrow the King shall speak to thee as his chariot goeth by.' "

Moreover, all the people bring him gifts, and the false prophet hath more to listen to his words than hath the Prophet of the gods.

Then said Imbaun: "What knoweth the Prophet of the gods? I know only that I and men know naught concerning the gods or aught concerning men. Shall I, who am their prophet, tell the people this?

"For wherefore have the people chosen prophets but that they should speak the hopes of the people, and tell the people that their hopes be true?"

The false prophet saith: "Upon the morrow the king shall speak to thee."

Shall not I say: "Upon The Morrow the gods shall speak with thee as thou restest upon Pegana?"

So shall the people be happy, and know that their hopes be true who have believed the words that they have chosen a prophet to say.

But what shall know the Prophet of the gods, to whom none may come to say: "Thy hopes are true," for whom none may make strange signs before his eyes to

quench his fear of death, for whom alone the chaunt of his priests availeth naught?

The Prophet of the gods hath sold his happiness for wisdom, and hath given his hopes for the people.

Said also Imbaun: "When thou art angry at night observe how calm be the stars; and shall small ones rail when there is such a calm among the great ones? Or when thou art angry by day regard the distant hills, and see the calm that doth adorn their faces. Shalt thou be angry while they stand so serene?

"Be not angry with men, for they are driven as thou art by Dorozhand. Do bullocks goad one another on whom the same yoke rests?

"And be not angry with Dorozhand, for then thou beatest thy bare fingers against iron cliffs.

"All that is is so because it was to be. Rail not, therefore, against what is, for it was all to be."

And Imbaun said: "The Sun ariseth and maketh a glory about all the things that he seeth, and drop by drop he turneth the common dew to every kind of gem. And he maketh a splendour in the hills.

"And also man is born. And there rests a glory about the gardens of his youth. Both travel afar to do what Dorozhand would have them do.

"Soon now the sun will set, and very softly come twinkling in the stillness all the stars.

"Also man dieth. And quietly about his grave will all the mourners weep.

"Will not his life arise again somewhere in all the worlds? Shall he not again behold the gardens of his youth? Or does he set to end?"

Of How Imbaun Spake of Death to the King

There trod such pestilence in Aradec that, the King as he looked abroad out of his palace saw men die. And when the King saw Death he feared that one day even the King should die. Therefore he commanded guards to bring before him the wisest prophet that should be found in Aradec.

Then heralds came to the temple of All the gods save One, and cried aloud, having first commanded silence, crying: "Rhazahan, King over Aradec, Prince by right of Ildun and Ildaun, and Prince by conquest of Pathia, Ezek, and Azhan, Lord of the Hills, to the High Prophet of All the gods save One sends salutations."

Then they bore him before the King.

The King said unto the prophet: "O Prophet of All the gods save One, shall I indeed die?"

And the prophet answered: "O King! thy people may not rejoice for ever, and some day the King will die."

And the King answered: "This may be so, but certainly *thou* shalt die. It may be that one day I shall die, but till then the lives of the people are in my hands."

Then guards led the prophet away.

And there arose prophets in Aradec who spake not of death to Kings.

Of Ood

Men say that if thou comest to Sundari, beyond all the plains, and shalt climb to his summit before thou art seized by the avalanche which sitteth always on his slopes, that then there lie before thee many peaks. And if thou shalt climb these and cross their valleys (of which there be seven and also seven peaks) thou shalt come at last to the land of forgotten hills, where amid many valleys and white snow there standeth the "Great Temple of One god Only."

Therein is a dreaming prophet who doeth naught, and a drowsy priesthood about him.

These be the priests of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI. Within the temple it is forbidden to work, also it is forbidden to pray. Night differeth not from day within its doors. They rest as MANA rests. And the name of their prophet is Ood.

Ood is a greater prophet than any of all the prophets of Earth, and it hath been said by some that were Ood and his priests to pray chaunting all together and calling upon MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI that MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI would then awake, for surely he would hear the prayers of his own prophet—then would there be Worlds no more.

There is also another way to the land of forgotten

hills, which is a smooth road and a straight, that lies through the heart of the mountains. But for certain hidden reasons it were better for thee to go by the peaks and snow, even though thou shouldst perish by the way, that thou shouldst seek to come to the home of Ood by the smooth, straight road.

The River

There arises a river in Pegana that is neither a river of water nor yet a river of fire, and it flows through the skies and the Worlds to the Rim of the Worlds,—a river of silence. Through all the Worlds are sounds, the noises of moving, and the echoes of voices and song; but upon the River is no sound ever heard, for there all echoes die.

The River arises out of the drumming of Skarl, and flows for ever between banks of thunder, until it comes to the waste beyond the Worlds, behind the farthest star, down to the Sea of Silence.

I lay in the desert beyond all cities and sounds, and above me flowed the River of Silence through the sky; and on the desert's edge night fought against the Sun, and suddenly conquered.

Then on the River I saw the dream-built ship of the god Yoharneth-Lahai, whose great prow lifted grey into the air above the River of Silence.

Her timbers were olden dreams dreamed long ago, and poets' fancies made her tall, straight masts, and her rigging was wrought out of the people's hopes.

Upon her deck were rowers with dream-made oars, and the rowers were the people of men's fancies, and

princes of old story and people who had died, and people who had never been.

These swung forward and swung back to row Yoharneth-Lahai through the worlds with never a sound of rowing. For ever on every wind float up to Pegana the hopes and the fancies of the people which have no home in the Worlds, and there Yoharneth-Lahai weaves them into dreams, to take them to the people again.

And every night in his dream-built ship Yoharneth-Lahai setteth forth, with all his dreams on board, to take again their old hopes back to the people and all forgotten fancies.

But ere the day comes back to her own again, and all the conquering armies of the dawn hurl their red lances in the face of the night, Yoharneth-Lahai leaves the sleeping Worlds, and rows back up the River of Silence, that flows from Pegana into the Sea of Silence that lies beyond the Worlds.

And the name of the River is Imrana the River of Silence. All they that be weary of the sound of cities and very tired of clamour creep down in the night-time to Yoharneth-Lahai's ship, and going aboard it, among the dreams and the fancies of old time, lie down upon the deck, and pass from sleeping to the River, while Mung, behind them, makes the sign of Mung because they would have it so. And, lying there upon the deck among their own remembered fancies, and songs that were never sung, and they drift up Imrana ere the dawn, where the sound of the cities comes not, nor the voice of the thunder is heard, nor the midnight howl of Pain as he gnaws at the bodies of men, and far away and

forgotten bleat the small sorrows that trouble all the Worlds.

But where the River flows through Pegana's gates, between the great twin constellations Yum and Gothum, where Yum stands sentinel upon the left and Gothum upon the right, there sits Sirami, the lord of All Forgetting. And, when the ship draws near, Sirami looketh with his sapphire eyes into the faces and beyond them of those that were weary of cities, and as he gazes, as one that looketh before him remembering naught, he gently waves his hands. And amid the waving of Sirami's hands there fall from all that behold him all their memories, save certain things that may not be forgotten even beyond the Worlds.

It hath been said that when Skarl ceases to drum, and MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI awakes, and the gods of Pegana know that it is THE END, that then the gods will enter galleons of gold, and with dream-born rowers glide down Imrana (who knows whither or why?) till they come where the River enters the Silent Sea, and shall there be gods of nothing, where nothing is, and never a sound shall come. And far away upon the River's banks shall bay their old hound Time, that shall seek to rend his masters; while MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI shall think some other plan concerning gods and worlds.

The Bird of Doom and the End

For at the last shall the thunder, fleeing to escape from the doom of the gods, roar horribly among the Worlds; and Time, the hound of the gods, shall bay hungrily at his masters because he is lean with age.

And from the innermost of Pegana's vales shall the bird of doom, Mosahn, whose voice is like the trumpet, soar upward with boisterous beatings of his wings above Pegana's mountains and the gods, and there with his trumpet voice acclaim THE END.

Then in the tumult and amid the fury of Their hound the gods shall make for the last time in Pegana the sign of all the gods, and go with dignity and quiet down to Their galleons of gold, and sail away down the River of Silence, not ever to return.

Then shall the River overflow its banks, and a tide come setting in from the Silent Sea, till all the Worlds and the Skies are drowned in silence; while MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI in the Middle of All sits deep in thought. And the hound Time, when all the Worlds and cities are swept away whereon he used to raven, having no more to devour, shall suddenly die.

But there are some that hold—and this is the heresy of the Saigoths—that when the gods go down at the last into their galleons of gold Mung shall turn alone,

and, setting his back against Trehagobol and wielding the Sword of Severing which is called Death, shall fight out his last fight with the hound Time, his empty scabbard Sleep clattering loose beside him.

There under Trehagobol they shall fight alone when all the gods are gone.

And the Saigoths say that for two days and nights the hound shall leer and snarl before the face of Mung—days and nights that shall be lit by neither sun nor moons, for these shall go dipping down the sky with all the worlds as the galleons glide away, because the gods that made them are gods no more.

And then shall the hound, springing, tear out the throat of Mung, who, making for the last time the sign of Mung, shall bring down Death crashing through the shoulders of the hound, and in the blood of Time that Sword shall rust away.

Then shall MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI be all alone, with neither Death nor Time, and never the hours singing in his ears, nor the swish of the passing lives.

But far away from Pegana shall go the galleons of gold that bear the gods away, upon whose faces shall be utter calm, because They are the gods knowing that it is THE END.

TALES FROM PEGANA

Editor's Note

The two major influences upon his prose style which Dunsany openly acknowledged were those of Herodotus and the King James Bible. I am not sufficiently adept in the study of the first and greatest of the Greek historians to detect any stylistic derivations from that source, but the influence of the King James's prose is visible in Biblical rhythms and phrasings Dunsany employed. Indeed, the resemblance goes beyond that, for *The Gods of Pegana* is not so much a volume of short stories as it is a work of invented mythology . . . the "old testament" of the Gods who were worshipped in the lands about Pegana.

Dunsany's fellow countryman, Padraic Colum, was to my knowledge the first to observe the true novelty of the concept behind *The Gods of Pegana.* "His mind," Colum wrote of Dunsany in 1917, "began like an ancient literature with mythology. He told us first about the gods of the lands where his priests and kings and shepherds were to abide."

The innovation was a striking one, but for some peculiar reason no other fantasy writer has followed Dunsany in it. However, it was this particular aspect of Dunsany's artistry that seized upon the imagination of H. P. Lovecraft when he discovered his first Dunsany

collection in 1919. This invented pantheon of *dieu nouveau* struck him, as it strikes most of us, as a superbly original conception. It was from *The Gods of Pegana* that Lovecraft conceived of his Cthulhu Mythos pantheon, and Dunsany's peculiar style of coined names, redolent of both Hebrew and Greek sounds, reappears in Lovecraft (a theme elaborated on in the terminal note to our present book). This suggests the immediacy and the impact of the elder writer upon the younger.

Dunsany had now invented both the paradise of his imaginary kingdoms at the Edge of the World and the divinities that reigned thereover, together with myths and even something of their liturgy. In his next book, *Time and the Gods*, he turned to creating the hero-tales and kingly legends of these remote and fabulous lands. It was written during the winter of 1904 and the following summer, while Dunsany and his bride were living in Wiltshire, where they had rented a house called Rood Ashton. Dunsany recalled that Rood Ashton had fine woods about it that were perfect for shooting parties. Of this period, he wrote:

> There occasionally came to me some vivid and strange scene, and an idea for a story, which I dictated to my wife, and found that, whether it was that her pen moved much faster than mine or that the glare of the white paper used to shine between me and my visions, I was able to unfold a tale with an ease that I had not known when I tried to pursue my fancies with my own pen.

Time and the Gods was not completed during that stay in Wiltshire; the young couple spent Christmas

with Lady Dunsany's parents at Middleton and, in February, 1905, traveled to Castle Dunsany, the 13th Century Norman stronghold in County Meath, Ireland, that was the hereditary family seat. The following summer they took a house in London, and it was there that Lord Dunsany completed his second book.

> This book [Dunsany later recorded], like *The Sword of Welleran* which followed it, was named, as most books of short stories are, on what I think is a wrong principle, that is to say from one tale in the book: I merely followed the usual custom, but I think now that a book should have a name of its own.

Here follow ten stories from *Time and the Gods*, of which the first few tales show the ways in which Dunsany built upon the background and settings he had already established for his Pegana mythos.

—L.C.

How Slid Made War Against the Gods

Once there was no sea, and the gods went walking over the green plains of earth.

Upon an evening of the forgotten years the gods were seated on the hills, and all the little rivers of the world lay coiled at Their feet asleep, when Slid, the new god, striding through the stars, came suddenly upon earth lying in a corner of space. And behind Slid there marched a million waves, all following Slid and tramping up the twilight; and Slid touched earth in one of her great green valleys that divide the south, and here he encamped for the night with all his waves about him. But to the gods as They sat upon Their hilltops a new cry came crying over the green spaces that lay below the hills, and the gods said:

"This is neither the cry of life nor yet the whisper of death. What is this new cry that the gods have never commanded, yet which comes to the ears of the gods?"

And the gods together shouting made a cry of the south, calling the south wind to Them. And again the gods shouted all together making the cry of the north, calling the north wind to Them; and thus They gathered to Them all Their winds and sent these four down

into the low plains to find what thing it was that called with the new cry, and to drive it away from the gods.

Then all the winds harnessed up their clouds and drave forth till they came to the great green valley that divides the south in twain, and there found Slid with all his waves about him. Then for a great space Slid and the four winds struggled with one another till the strength of the winds was gone, and they limped back to the gods, their masters, and said:

"We have met this new thing that has come upon the earth and have striven against its armies, but could not drive them very forth; and the new thing is beautiful but angry, and is creeping towards the gods."

But Slid advanced and led his armies up the valley, and inch by inch and mile by mile he conquered the lands of the gods. Then from Their hills the gods sent down a great array of cliffs of hard, red rocks, and bade them march against Slid. And the cliffs marched down till they came and stood before Slid and leaned their heads forward and frowned and stood staunch to guard the lands of the gods against the might of the sea, shutting Slid off from the world. Then Slid sent some of his smaller waves to search out what stood against him, and the cliffs shattered them. But Slid went back and gathered together a hoard of his greatest waves and hurled them against the cliffs, and the cliffs shattered them. And again Slid called up out of his deep a mighty array of waves and sent them roaring against the guardians of the gods, and the red rocks frowned and smote them. And once again Slid gathered his greater waves and hurled them against the cliffs; and when the waves were scattered like those before them the feet of the cliffs were no longer standing firm, and their faces were

scarred and battered. Then into every cleft that stood in the rocks Slid sent his hugest wave and others followed behind it, and Slid himself seized hold of huge rocks with his claws and tore them down and stamped them under his feet. And when the tumult was over the sea had won, and over the broken remnants of those red cliffs the armies of Slid marched on and up the long green valley.

Then the gods heard Slid exulting far away and singing songs of triumph over Their battered cliffs, and ever the tramp of his armies sounded nearer and nearer in the listening ears of the gods.

Then the gods called to Their downlands to save Their world from Slid, and the downlands gathered themselves together and marched away, a great white line of gleaming cliffs, and halted before Slid. Then Slid advanced no more and lulled his legions, and while his waves were low he softly crooned a song such as once long ago had troubled the stars and brought down tears out of the twilight.

Sternly the white cliffs stood on guard to save the world of the gods, but the song that once had troubled the stars went moaning on, awaking pent desires, till full at the feet of the gods the melody fell. Then the blue rivers that lay curled asleep opened and shook their gleaming eyes, uncurled themselves and shook their rushes, and, making a stir among the hills, crept down to find the sea. And passing across the world they came at last to where the white cliffs stood, and, coming behind them, split them here and there and went through their broken ranks to Slid at last. And the gods were angry with Their traitorous streams.

Then Slid ceased from singing the song that lures

the world, and gathered up his legions, and the rivers lifted up their heads with the waves, and all went marching on to assail the cliffs of the gods. And wherever the rivers had broken the ranks of the cliffs, Slid's armies went surging in and broke them up into islands and shattered the islands away. And the gods on Their hill-tops heard once more the voice of Slid exulting over Their cliffs.

Already more than half the world lay subject to Slid, and still his armies advanced; and the people of Slid, the fishes and the long eels, went in and out of arbours that once were dear to the gods. Then the gods feared for Their dominion, and to the innermost sacred recesses of the mountains, to the very heart of the hills, the gods trooped off together and there found Tintaggon, a mountain of black marble, staring far over the earth, and spoke thus to him with the voices of the gods:

"O eldest born of our mountains, when first we devised the earth we made thee, and thereafter fashioned fields and hollows, valleys and other hills, to lie about thy feet. And now, Tintaggon, thine ancient lords, the gods, are facing a new thing which overthrows the old. Go therefore, thou, Tintaggon, and stand up against Slid, that the gods be still the gods and the earth still green."

And hearing the voices of his sires, the elder gods, Tintaggon strode down through the evening, leaving a wake of twilight broad behind him as he strode: and going across the green earth came down to Ambrady at the valley's edge, and there met the foremost of Slid's fierce armies conquering the world.

And against him Slid hurled the force of a whole

bay, which lashed itself high over Tintaggon's knees and streamed around his flanks and then fell and was lost. Tintaggon still stood firm for the honour and dominion of his lords, the elder gods. Then Slid went to Tintaggon and said: "Let us now make a truce. Stand thou back from Ambrady and let me pass through thy ranks that mine armies may now pass up the valley which opens on the world, that the green earth that dreams around the feet of older gods shall know the new god Slid. Then shall mine armies strive with thee no more, and thou and I shall be the equal lords of the whole earth when all the world is singing the chaunt of Slid, and thy head alone shall be lifted above mine armies when rival hills are dead. And I will deck thee with all the robes of the sea, and all the plunder that I have taken in rare cities shall be piled before thy feet. Tintaggon, I have conquered all the stars, my song swells through all the space besides, I come victorious from Mahn and Khanagat on the furthest edge of the worlds, and thou and I are to be equal lords when the old gods are gone and the green earth knoweth Slid. Behold me gleaming azure and fair with a thousand smiles, and swayed by a thousand moods." And Tintaggon answered: "I am staunch and black and have one mood, and this—to defend my masters and their green earth."

Then Slid went backward growling and summoned together the waves of a whole sea and sent them singing full in Tintaggon's face. Then from Tintaggon's marble front the sea fell backwards crying on to a broken shore, and ripple by ripple straggled back to Slid saying: "Tintaggon stands."

Far out beyond the battered shore that lay at Tin-

taggon's feet Slid rested long and sent the nautilus to drift up and down before Tintaggon's eyes, and he and his armies sat singing idle songs of dreamy islands far away to the south, and of the still stars whence they had stolen forth, of twilight evenings and of long ago. Still Tintaggon stood with his feet planted fair upon the valley's edge defending the gods and Their green earth against the sea.

And all the while that Slid sang his songs and played with the nautilus that sailed up and down he gathered his oceans together. One morning as Slid sang of old outrageous wars and of most enchanting peace and of dreamy islands and the south wind and the sun, he suddenly launched five oceans out of the deep all to attack Tintaggon. And the five oceans sprang upon Tintaggon and passed above his head. One by one the grip of the oceans loosened, one by one they fell back into the deep and still Tintaggon stood, and on that morning the might of all five oceans lay dead at Tintaggon's feet.

That which Slid had conquered he still held, and there is now no longer a great green valley in the south, but all that Tintaggon had guarded against Slid he gave back to the gods. Very calm the sea lies now about Tintaggon's feet, where he stands all black amid crumbled cliffs of white, with red rocks piled about his feet. And often the sea retreats far out along the shore, and often wave by wave comes marching in with the sound of the tramping of armies, that all may still remember the great fight that surged about Tintaggon once, when he guarded the gods and the green earth against Slid.

Sometimes in their dreams the war-scarred warriors of Slid still lift their heads and cry their battle cry;

then do dark clouds gather about Tintaggon's swarthy brow and he stands out menacing, seen afar by the ships, where once he conquered Slid. And the gods know well that while Tintaggon stands They and Their world are safe; and whether Slid shall one day smite Tintaggon is hidden among the secrets of the sea.

The Vengeance of Men

Ere the Beginning the gods divided earth into waste and pasture. Pleasant pastures They made to be green over the face of earth, orchards They made in valleys and heather upon hills, but Harza They doomed, predestined and foreordained to be a waste for ever.

When the world prayed at evening to the gods and the gods answered prayers They forgot the prayers of all the Tribes of Arim. Therefore the men of Arim were assailed with wars and driven from land to land and yet would not be crushed. And the men of Arim made them gods for themselves, appointing men as gods until the gods of Pegana should remember them again. And their leaders, Yoth and Haneth, played the part of gods and led their people on though every tribe assailed them. At last they came to Harza, where no tribes were, and at last had rest from war, and Yoth and Haneth said: "The work is done, and surely now Pegana's gods will remember." And they built a city in Harza and tilled the soil, and the green came over the waste as the wind comes over the sea, and there were fruit and cattle in Harza and the sounds of a million sheep. There they rested from their flight from all the tribes, and builded fables out of their sorrows till all men smiled in Harza and children laughed.

Then said the gods, "Earth is no place for laughter." Thereat They strode to Pegana's outer gate, to where the Pestilence lay curled asleep, and waking him up They pointed toward Harza, and the Pestilence leapt forward howling across the sky.

That night he came to the fields near Harza, and stalking through the grass sat down and glared at the lights, and licked his paws and glared at the lights again.

But the next night, unseen, through laughing crowds, the Pestilence crept into the city, and stealing into the houses one by one, peered into the people's eyes, looking even through their eyelids, so that when morning came men stared before them crying out that they saw the Pestilence whom others saw not, and thereafter died, because the green eyes of the Pestilence had looked into their souls. Chill and damp was he, yet there came heat from his eyes that parched the souls of men. Then came the physicians and men learned in magic, and made the sign of the physicians and the sign of the men of magic and cast blue water upon herbs and chanted spells; but still the Pestilence crept from house to house and still he looked into the souls of men. And the lives of the people streamed away from Harza, and whither they went is set in many books. But the Pestilence fed on the light that shines in the eyes of men, which never appeased his hunger; chiller and damper he grew, and the heat from his eyes increased when night by night he galloped through the city, going by stealth no more.

Then did men pray in Harza to the gods, saying:

"High gods! Show clemency to Harza."

And the god listened to their prayers, but as They

listened They pointed with their fingers and cheered the Pestilence on. And the Pestilence grew bolder at his masters' voices and thrust his face close up before the eyes of men.

He could be seen by none saving by those he smote. At first he slept by day, lying in misty hollows, but as his hunger increased he sprang up even in sunlight and clung to the chests of men and looked down through their eyes into their souls that shrivelled, until almost he could be dimly seen even by those he smote not.

Adro, the physician, sat in his chamber with one light burning, making a mixing in a bowl that should drive the Pestilence away, when through his door there blew a draught that set the light a-flickering.

Then because the draught was cold the physician shivered and went and closed the door, but as he turned again he saw the Pestilence lapping at his mixing, who sprang and set one paw upon Adro's shoulder and another upon his cloak, while with two he clung to his waist, and looked him in the eyes.

Two men were walking in the street; one said to the other: "Upon the morrow I will sup with thee."

And the Pestilence grinned a grin that none beheld, baring his dripping teeth, and crept away to see whether upon the morrow those men should sup together.

A traveller coming in said: "This is Harza. Here will I rest."

But his life went further than Harza upon that day's journey.

All feared the Pestilence, and those that he smote beheld him, but none saw the great shapes of the gods by starlight as They urged Their Pestilence on.

Then all men fled from Harza, and the Pestilence

chased dogs and rats and sprang upward at the bats as they sailed above him, who died and lay in the streets. But soon he turned and pursued the men of Harza where they fled, and sat by rivers where they came to drink, away below the city. Then back to Harza went the people of Harza pursued by the Pestilence still, and gathered in the Temple of All the gods save One, and said to the High Prophet: "What may now be done?" who answered:

"All the gods have mocked at prayer. This sin must now be punished by the vengeance of men."

And the people stood in awe.

The High Prophet went up to the Tower beneath the sky whereupon beat the eyes of all the gods by starlight. There in the sight of the gods he spake in the ear of the gods, saying: "High gods! Ye have made mock of men. Know therefore that it is writ in ancient lore and found by prophecy that there is an END that waiteth for the gods, who shall go down from Pegana in galleons of gold all down the Silent River and into the Silent Sea, and there Their galleons shall go up in mist and They shall be gods no more. And men shall gain harbour from the mocking of the gods at last in the warm moist earth, but to the gods shall no ceasing ever come from being the Things that were the gods. When Time and worlds and death are gone away nought shall then remain but worn regrets and Things that once were gods.

"In the sight of the gods.

"In the ear of the gods."

Then the gods shouted all together and pointed with Their hands at the Prophet's throat, and the Pestilence High sprang.

Long since the High Prophet is dead and his words are forgotten by men, but the gods know not yet whether it be true that THE END is waiting for the gods, and him who might have told Them They have slain. And the Gods of Pegana are fearing the fear that hath fallen upon the gods because of the vengeance of men, for They know not when THE END shall be, or whether it shall come.

When the Gods Slept

All the gods were sitting in Pegana, and Their slave Time, lay idle at Pegana's gate with nothing to destroy, when They thought of worlds, worlds large and round and gleaming, and little sliver moons. Then (who knoweth when?), as the gods raised Their hands making the sign of the gods, the thoughts of the gods became worlds and silver moons. And the worlds swam by Pegana's gate to take their places in the sky, to ride at anchor for ever, each where the gods had bidden. And because they were round and big and gleamed all over the sky, the gods laughed and shouted and all clapped Their hands. Then upon earth the gods played out the game of the gods, the game of life and death, and on the other worlds They did a secret thing, playing a game that is hidden.

At last They mocked no more at life and laughed at death no more, and cried aloud in Pegana: "Will no new thing be? Must those four march for ever round the world till our eyes are wearied with the treading of the feet of the Seasons that will not cease, while Night and Day and Life and Death drearily rise and fall?"

And as a child stares at the bare walls of a narrow hut, so the gods looked all listlessly upon the worlds, saying:

"Will no new thing be?"

And in Their weariness the gods said: "Ah! to be young again. Ah! to be fresh once more from the brain of Mana Yood Sushai."

And They turned away Their eyes in weariness from all the gleaming worlds and laid them down upon Pegana's floor, for They said:

"It may be that the worlds shall pass and we would fain forget them."

Then the gods slept. Then did the comet break loose from his moorings and the eclipse roamed about the sky, and down on the earth did Death's three children —Famine, Pestilence, and Drought—come out to feed. The eyes of the Famine were green, and the eyes of the Drought were red, but the Pestilence was blind and smote about all round him with his claws and among the cities.

But as the gods slept, there came from beyond the Rim, out of the dark, and unknown, three Yozis, spirits of ill, that sailed up the river of Silence in galleons with silver sails. Far away they had seen Yum and Gothum, the stars that stand sentinel over Pegana's gate, blinking and falling asleep, and as they neared Pegana they found a hush wherein the gods slept heavily. Ya, Ha, and Snyrg were these three Yozis, the lords of evil, madness, and of spite. When they crept from their galleons and stole over Pegana's silent threshold it boded ill for the gods. There in Pegana lay the gods asleep, and in a corner lay the Power of the gods alone upon the floor, a thing wrought of black rock and four words graven upon it, whereof I might not give thee any clue, if even I should find it—four words of which none knoweth. Some say they tell of the opening of a flower

toward dawn, and others say they concern earthquakes among hills, and others that they tell of the death of fishes, and others that the words be these: Power, Knowledge, Forgetting, and another word that not the gods themselves may ever guess. These words the Yozis read, and sped away in dread lest the gods should wake, and going aboard their galleons, bade the rowers haste. Thus the Yozis became gods, having the power of gods, and they sailed away to the earth, and came to a mountainous island in the sea. There they sat down upon the rocks, sitting as the gods sit, with their right hands uplifted, and having the power of gods, only none came to worship. Thither came no ships nigh them, nor ever at evening came the prayers of men, nor smell of incense, nor screams from the sacrifice. Then said the Yozis:

"Of what avail is it that we be gods if no one worship us nor give us sacrifice?"

And Ya, Ha, and Snyrg set sail in their silver galleons, and went looming down the sea to come to the shores of men. And first they came to an island where were fisher folk; and the folk of the island, running down to the shore, cried out to them:

"Who be ye?"

And the Yozis answered:

"We be three gods, and we would have your worship."

But the fisher folk answered:

"Here we worship Rahm, the Thunder, and have no worship nor sacrifice for other gods."

Then the Yozis snarled with anger and sailed away, and sailed till they came to another shore, sandy and low and forsaken. And at last they found an old man upon the shore, and they cried out to him:

"Old man upon the shore! We be three gods that it were well to worship, gods of great power and apt in the granting of prayer."

The old man answered:

"We worship Pegana's gods, who have a fondness for our incense and the sound of our sacrifice when it squeals upon the altar."

Then answered Snyrg:

"Asleep are Pegana's gods, nor will They wake for the humming of thy prayers which lie in the dust upon Pegana's floor, and over Them Sniracte, the spider of the worlds, hath woven a web of mist. And the squealing of the sacrifice maketh no music in ears that are closed in sleep."

The old man answered, standing upon the shore:

"Though all the gods of old shall answer our prayers no longer, yet still to the gods of old shall all men pray here in Syrinais."

But the Yozis turned their ships about and angrily sailed away, all cursing Syrinais and Syrinais's gods, but most especially the old man that stood upon the shore.

Still the three Yozis lusted for the worship of men, and came, on the third night of their sailing, to a city's lights; and nearing the shore they found it a city of song wherein all folks rejoiced. Then sat each Yozi on his galleon's prow, and leered with his eyes upon the city, so that the music stopped and the dancing ceased, and all looked out to sea at the strange shapes of the Yozis beneath their silver sails. Then Snyrg demanded their worship, promising increase of joys, and swearing by the light of his eyes that he would send little flames

to leap over the grass, to pursue the enemies of that city and to chase them about the world.

But the people answered that in that city men worshipped Agrodaun, the mountain standing alone, and might not worship other gods even though they came in galleons with silver sails, sailing from over the sea. But Snyrg answered:

"Certainly Agrodaun is only a mountain, and in no manner a god."

But the priests of Agrodaun sang answer from the shore:

"If the sacrifice of men make not Agrodaun a god, nor blood still young on his rocks, nor the little fluttering prayers of ten thousand hearts, nor two thousand years of worship and all the hopes of the people and the whole of the strength of our race, then are there no gods and ye be common sailors, sailing from over the sea."

Then said the Yozis:

"Hath Agrodaun answered prayer?" And the people heard the words that the Yozis said.

Then went the priests of Agrodaun away from the shore and up the steep streets of the city, the people following, and over the moor beyond it to the foot of Agrodaun, and then said:

"Agrodaun, if thou art not our god, go back and herd with yonder common hills, and put a cap of snow upon thy head and crouch far off as they do beneath the sky; but if we have given thee divinity in two thousand years, if our hopes are all about thee like a cloak, then stand and look upon thy worshippers from over our city for ever." And the smoke that ascended from his feet stood still and there fell a hush over great Agro-

daun; and the priests went back to the sea and said to the three Yozis:

"New gods shall have our worship when Agrodaun grows weary of being our god, or when in some night-time he shall stride away, leaving us nought to gaze at that is higher than our city."

And the Yozis sailed away and cursed towards Agrodaun, but could not hurt him, for he was but a mountain.

And the Yozis sailed along the coast till they came to a river running to the sea, and they sailed up the river till they came to a people at work, who furrowed the soil and sowed, and strove against the forest. Then the Yozis called to the people as they worked in the fields:

"Give us your worship and ye shall have many joys."

But the people answered:

"We may not worship you."

Then answered Snyrg:

"Ye also, have ye a god?"

And the people answered:

"We worship the years to come, and we set the world in order for their coming, as one layeth raiment on the road before the advent of a King. And when those years shall come, they shall accept the worship of a race they knew not, and their people shall make their sacrifice to the years that follow them, who, in their turn, shall minister to the END."

Then answered Snyrg:

"Gods that shall recompense you not. Rather give us your prayers and have our pleasures, the pleasures that we shall give you, and when your gods shall come, let them be wroth—they cannot punish you."

But the people continued to sacrifice their labour to their gods, the years to come, making the world a place for gods to dwell in, and the Yozis cursed those gods and sailed away. And Ya, the Lord of malice, swore that when those years should come, they should see whether it were well for them to have snatched away the worship from three Yozis.

And still the Yozis sailed, for they said:

"It were better to be birds and have no air to fly in, than to be gods having neither prayers nor worship."

But where sky met with ocean, the Yozis saw land again, and thither sailed; and there the Yozis saw men in strange old garments performing ancient rites in a land of many temples. And the Yozis called to the men as they performed their ancient rites and said:

"We be three gods well versed in the needs of men, to worship whom were to obtain instant joy."

But the men said:

"We have already gods."

And Snyrg replied:

"Ye, too?"

The men answered:

"For we worship the things that have been and all the years that were. Divinely have they helped us, therefore we give them worship that is their due."

And the Yozis answered the people:

"We be gods of the present and return good things for worship."

But the people answered, saying from the shore:

"Our gods have given us already the good things, and we return Them the worship that is Their due."

And the Yozis set their faces to landward, and cursed

all things that had been and all the years that were, and sailed in their galleons away.

A rocky shore in an inhuman land stood up against the sea. Thither the Yozis came and found no man, but out of the dark from inland towards evening came a herd of great baboons and chattered greatly when they saw the ships.

Then spake Snyrg to them:

"Have ye, too, a god?"

And the baboons spat.

Then said the Yozis:

"We be seductive gods, having a particular remembrance for little prayers."

But the baboons leered fiercely at the Yozis and would have none of them for gods.

One said that prayers hindered the eating of nuts. But Snyrg leaned forward and whispered, and the baboons went down upon their knees and clasped their hands as men clasp, and chattered prayer and said to one another that these were the gods of old, and gave the Yozis their worship—for Snyrg had whispered in their ears that, if they would worship the Yozis, he would make them men. And the baboons arose from worshipping, smoother about the face and a little shorter in the arms, and went away and hid their bodies in clothing and afterwards galloped away from the rocky shore and went and herded with men. And men could not discern what they were, for their bodies were bodies of men, though their souls were still the souls of beasts and their worship went to the Yozis, spirits of ill.

And the lords of malice, hatred and madness sailed back to their island in the sea and sat upon the shore as

gods sit, with right hand uplifted; and at evening foul prayers from the baboons gathered about them and infested the rocks.

But in Pegana the gods awoke with a start.

For the Honour of the Gods

Of the great wars of the Three Islands are many histories writ and of how the heroes of the olden time one by one were slain, but nought is told of the days before the olden time, or ever the people of the isles went forth to war, when each in his own land tended cattle or sheep, and listless peace obscured those isles in the days before the olden time. For then the people of the Islands played like children about the feet of Chance and had no gods and went not forth to war. But sailors, cast by strange winds upon those shores which they named the Prosperous Isles, and finding a happy people which had no gods, told how they should be happier still and know the gods and fight for the honour of the gods and leave their names writ large in histories and at the last die proclaiming the names of the gods. And the people of the Islands met and said:

"The beasts we know, but lo! these sailors tell of things beyond that know us as we know the beasts and use us for their pleasure as we use the beasts, but yet are apt to answer idle prayer flung up at evening near the hearth, when a man returneth from the ploughing of the fields. Shall we now seek these gods?" And some said:

"We are lords of the Islands Three and have none to

trouble us, and while we live we find prosperity, and when we die our bones have ease in the quiet. Let us not therefore seek those who may loom greater than we do in the Islands Three or haply harry our bones when we be dead."

But others said:

"The prayers that a man mutters, when the drought hath come and all the cattle die, go up unheeded to the heedless clouds, and if somewhere there be those that garner prayer let us send men to seek them and to say: "There be men in the Isles called Three, or sometimes named by sailors the Prosperous Isles (and they be in the Central Sea), who ofttimes pray, and it hath been told us that ye love the worship of men, and for it answer prayer, and we be travellers from the Islands Three.' "

And the people of the Islands were greatly allured by the thought of strange things neither men nor beasts who at evening answered prayer.

Therefore they sent men down in ships with sails to sail across the sea, and in safety over the sea to a far shore Chance brought the ships. Then over hill and valley three men set forth seeking to find the gods, and their comrades beached the ships and waited on the shore. And they that sought the gods followed for thirty nights the lightnings in the sky over five mountains, and as they came to the summit of the last, they saw a valley beneath them, and lo! the gods. For there the gods sat, each on a marble hill, each sitting with an elbow on his knee, and his chin upon his hand, and all the gods were smiling about Their lips. And below them there were armies of little men, and about the feet of the gods they fought against each other and slew one another for

the honour of the gods, and for the glory of the name of the gods. And round them in the valley their cities that they had builded with the toil of their hands, they burned for the honour of the gods, where they died for the honour of the gods, and the gods looked down and smiled. And up from the valley fluttered the prayers of men and here and there the gods did answer a prayer, but oftentimes They mocked them, and all the while the gods were smiling, and all the while men died.

And they that had sought the gods from the Islands Three, having seen what they had seen, lay down on the mountain summit lest the gods should see them. Then they crept backward a little space, still lying down, and whispered together and then stooped low and ran, and travelled across the mountains in twenty days and came again to their comrades by the shore. But their comrades asked them if their quest had failed and the three men only answered:

"We have seen the gods."

And setting sail the ships hove back across the Central Sea and came again to the Islands Three, where rest the feet of Chance, and said to the people:

"We have seen the gods."

But to the rulers of the Islands they told how the gods drove men in herds; and went back and tended their flocks again all in the Prosperous Isles, and were kinder to their cattle after they had seen how that the gods used men.

But the gods walking large about Their valley, and peering over the great mountain's rim, saw one morning the tracks of the three men. Then the gods bent their faces low over the tracks and leaning forward ran, and

came before the evening of the day to the shore where the men had set sail in ships, and saw the tracks of the ships upon the sand, and waded far out into the sea, and yet saw nought. Still it had been well for the Islands Three had not certain men that had heard the travellers' tale sought also to see the gods themselves. These in the night-time slipped away from the Isles in ships, and ere the gods had retreated to the hills, They saw where ocean meets with sky the full white sails of those that sought the gods upon an evil day. Then for a while the people of those gods had rest while the gods lurked behind the mountain, waiting for the travellers from the Prosperous Isles. But the travellers came to shore and beached their ships, and sent six of their number to the mountain whereof they had been told. But they after many days returned, having not seen the gods but only the smoke that went upward from burned cities, and vultures that stood in the sky instead of answered prayer. And they all ran down their ships again into the sea, and set sail again and came to the Prosperous Isles. But in the distance crouching behind the ships the gods came wading through the sea that They might have the worship of the isles. And to every isle of the three the gods showed themselves in different garb and guise, and to all they said:

"Leave your flocks. Go forth and fight for the honour of the gods."

And from one of the isles all the folk came forth in ships to battle for gods that strode through the isle like kings. And from another they came to fight for gods that walked like humble men upon the earth in beggar's rags; and the people of the other isle fought for the honour of gods that were clothed in hair like beasts:

and had many gleaming eyes and claws upon their foreheads. But of how these people fought till the isles grew desolate but very glorious, and all for the fame of the gods, are many histories writ.

The Wisdom of Ord

Two players sat down to play a game together to while eternity away, and they chose the gods as pieces wherewith to play their game, and for their board of playing they chose the sky from rim to rim, whereon lay a little dust; and every speck of dust was a world upon the board of playing. And the players were robed and their faces veiled, and the robes and the veils were alike, and their names were Fate and Chance. And as they played their game and moved the gods hither and thither about the board, the dust arose, and shone in the light from the players' eyes that gleamed behind the veils. Then said the gods: "See how We stir the dust."

* * * * * * *

It chanced, or was ordained (who knoweth which?) that Ord, a prophet, one night saw the gods as They strode knee deep among the stars. But as he gave Them worship, he saw the hand of a player, enormous over Their heads, stretched out to make his move. Then Ord, the prophet, knew. Had he been silent it might have still been well with Ord, but Ord went about the world crying out to all men, "There is a power over the gods."

This the gods heard. Then said They, "Ord hath seen."

Terrible is the vengeance of the gods, and fierce were Their eyes when They looked on the head of Ord and snatched out of his mind all knowledge of Themselves. And that man's soul went wandering afield to find for itself gods, for ever finding them not. Then out of Ord's Dream of Life the gods plucked the moon and the stars, and in the night-time he only saw black sky and saw the lights no more. Next the gods took from him, for Their vengeance resteth not, the birds and butterflies, flowers and leaves and insects and all small things, and the prophet looked on the world that was strangely altered, yet knew not of the anger of the gods. Then the gods sent away his familiar hills, to be seen no more by him, and all the pleasant woodlands on their summits and the further fields; and in a narrower world Ord walked round and round, now seeing little, and his soul still wandered searching for some gods and finding none. Lastly, the gods took away the fields and stream and left to the prophet only his house and the larger things that were in it. Day by day They crept about him drawing films of mist between him and familiar things, till at last he beheld nought at all and was quite blind and unaware of the anger of the gods. Then Ord's world became only a world of sound, and only by hearing he kept his hold upon Things. All the profit that he had out of his days was here some song from the hills or there the voice of the birds, and sound of the stream, or the drip of the falling rain. But the anger of the gods ceases not with the closing of flowers, nor is it assuaged by all the winter's snows, nor doth it rest in the full glare of summer, and They snatched away from

Ord one night his world of sound and he awoke deaf. But as a man may smite away the hive of the bee, and the bee with all his fellows builds again, knowing not what hath smitten his hive or that it shall smite again, so Ord built for himself a world out of old memories and set it in the past. There he builded himself cities out of former joys, and therein built palaces of mighty things achieved, and with his memory as a key he opened golden locks and had still a world to live in, though the gods had taken from him the world of sound and all the world of sight. But the gods tire not from pursuing, and They seized his world of former things and took his memory away and covered up the paths that led into the past, and left him blind and deaf and forgetful among men, and caused all men to know that this was he who once had said that the gods were little things.

And lastly the gods took his soul, and out of it They fashioned the South Wind to roam the seas for ever and not have rest; and well the South Wind knows that he hath once understood somewhere and long ago, and so he moans to the islands and cries along southern shores, "I have known," and "I have known."

But all things sleep when the South Wind speaks to them and none heed his cry that he hath known, but are rather content to sleep. But still the South Wind, knowing that there is something that he hath forgot, goes on crying, "I have known," seeking to urge men to arise and to discover it. But none heed the sorrows of the South Wind even when he driveth his tears out of the South, so that though the South Wind cries on and on and never findeth rest none heed that there is aught that may be known, and the Secret of the gods is safe.

But the business of the South Wind is with the North, and it is said that the time will one day come when he shall overcome the bergs and sink the seas of ice and come where the Secret of the gods is graven upon the pole. And the game of Fate and Chance shall suddenly cease and He that loses shall cease to be or ever to have been, and from the board of playing Fate or Chance (who knoweth which shall win?) shall sweep the gods away.

TIME AND THE GODS

Editor's Note

It wasn't long before Dunsany found, as other authors have also found, that working against preconceived background lore can at times become an embarrassing stricture which can be uncomfortably confining. As you go along, new ideas for stories occur to you, but they are stories that violate the various historical, geographical or mythological systems you have already established. The only solution to the problem is to promptly junk your mythos and go ahead and write whatever kinds of stories you want to. This is precisely what Dunsany did.

His autobiography notes, concerning the writing of the stories in *Time and the Gods*:

> The early part of that book was of a world ruled over by the Gods of Pegana, but as the book progressed I became heterodox to my own heterodoxy and wrote tales of people that worshipped other gods.

The last five stories from *Time and the Gods*, which follow, show Dunsany abandoning his earlier Pegana settings and striking out to explore new realms at the World's Edge.

—L.C.

Night and Morning

Once in an arbour of the gods above the fields of twilight Night wandering alone came suddenly on Morning. Then Night drew from his face his cloak of dark grey mists and said: "See, I am Night," and they two sitting in that arbour of the gods, Night told wondrous stories of old mysterious happenings in the dark. And Morning sat and wondered, gazing into the face of Night and at his wreath of stars. And Morning told how the ruins of Snamarthis smoked in the plain, but Night told how Snamarthis held riot in the dark with revelry and drinking and tales told by kings, till all the hosts of Meenath crept against it and the lights went out and there arose the din of arms or ever Morning came. And Night told how Sindana the beggar had dreamed that he was a King, and Morning told how she had seen Sindana find suddenly an army in the plain, and how he had gone to it still thinking he was King and the army had believed him, and Sindana now ruled over Marthis and Targadrides, Dynath, Zahn, and Tumeida. And most Night loved to tell of Assarnees, whose ruins are scant memories on the desert's edge, but Morning told of the twin cities of Nardis and Timaut that lorded over the plain. And Night told terribly of what Mynandes found when he walked through

his own city in the dark. And ever at the elbow of regal Night whispers arose saying: "Tell Morning *this*."

And ever Night told and ever Morning wondered. And Night spake on, and told what the dead had done when they came in the darkness on the King that had led them into battle once. And Night knew who slew Darnex and how it was done. Moreover, he told why the seven Kings tortured Sydatheris and what Sydatheris said just at the last, and how the Kings went forth and took their lives.

And Night told whose blood had stained the marble steps that lead to the temple in Ozahn, and why the skull within it wears a golden crown, and whose soul is in the wolf that howls in the dark against the city. And Night knew whither the tigers go out of the Irasian desert and the place where they meet together, and who speaks to them and what she says and why. And he told why human teeth had bitten the iron hinge in the great gate that swings in the walls of Mondas, and who came up out of the marsh alone in the dark-time and demanded audience of the King, and told the King a lie, and how the King, believing it, went down into the vaults of his palace and found only toads and snakes, who slew the King. And he told of ventures in palace towers in the quiet, and knew the spell whereby a man might send the light of the moon right into the soul of his foe. And Night spoke of the forest and the stirring of shadows and soft feet pattering and peering eyes, and of the fear that sits behind the trees taking to itself the shape of something crouched to spring.

But far under that arbour of the gods down on the earth the mountain peak Mondana looked Morning in

the eyes and forsook his allegiance to Night, and one by one the lesser hills about Mondana's knees greeted the Morning. And all the while in the plains the shapes of cities came looming out of the dusk. And Kongros stood forth with all her pinnacles, and the winged figure of Poesy carved upon the eastern portal of her gate, and the squat figure of Avarice carved facing it upon the west; and the bat began to tire of going up and down her streets, and already the owl was home. And the dark lions went up out of the plain back to their caves again. Not as yet shone any dew upon the spider's snare nor came the sound of any insects stirring or bird of the day, and full allegiance all the valleys owned still to their Lord the Night. Yet earth was preparing for another ruler, and kingdom by kingdom she stole away from Night, and there marched through the dreams of men a million heralds that cried with the voice of the cock: "Lo! Morning comes behind us." But in that arbour of the gods above the fields of twilight the star wreath was paling about the head of Night, and ever more wonderful on Morning's brow appeared the mark of power. And at the moment when the camp fires pale and the smoke goes grey to the sky, and camels sniff the dawn, suddenly Morning forgot Night. And out of that arbour of the gods, and away to the haunts of the dark, Night with his swart cloak slunk away; and Morning placed her hand upon the mists and drew them upward and revealed the earth, and drove the shadows before her, and they followed Night. And suddenly the mystery quitted haunting shapes, and an old glamour was gone, and far and wide over the fields of earth a new splendour arose.

The Secret of the Gods

Zyni Moë, the small snake, saw the cool river gleaming before him afar off and set out over the burning sand to reach it.

Uldoon, the prophet, came out of the desert and followed up the bank of the river towards his old home. Thirty years since Uldoon had left the city, where he was born, to live his life in a silent place where he might search for the secret of the gods. The name of his home was the City by the River, and in that city many prophets taught concerning many gods, and men made many secrets for themselves, but all the while none knew the Secret of the gods. Nor might any seek to find it, for if any sought men said of him:

"This man sins, for he giveth no worship to the gods that speak to our prophets by starlight when none heareth."

And Uldoon perceived that the mind of a man is as a garden, and that his thoughts are as the flowers, and the prophets of a man's city are as many gardeners who weed and trim, and who have made in the garden paths both smooth and straight, and only along these paths is a man's soul permitted to go lest the gardeners say, "This soul transgresseth." And from the paths the

gardeners weed out every flower that grows, and in the garden they cut off all flowers that grow tall, saying:

"It is customary," and "it is written," and "this hath ever been," or "that hath not been before."

Therefore Uldoon saw that not in that city might he discover the Secret of the gods. And Uldoon said to the people:

"When the worlds began, the Secret of the gods lay written clear over the whole earth, but the feet of many prophets have trampled it out. Your prophets are all true men, but I go into the desert to find a truth which is truer than your prophets." Therefore Uldoon went into the desert and in storm and still he sought for many years. When the thunder roared over the mountains that limited the desert he sought the Secret in the thunder, but the gods spake not by the thunder. When the voices of the beasts disturbed the stillness under the stars he sought the Secret there, but the gods spake not by the beasts. Uldoon grew old and all the voices of the desert had spoken to Uldoon, but not the gods, when one night he heard Them whispering beyond the hills. And the gods whispered one to another, and turning Their faces earthward They all wept. And Uldoon though he saw not the gods yet saw Their shadows turn as They went back to a great hollow in the hills; and there, all standing in the valley's mouth, They said:

"Oh, Morning Zai, oh, oldest of the gods, the faith of thee is gone, and yesterday for the last time thy name was spoken upon earth." And turning earthward they all wept again. And the gods tore white clouds out of the sky and draped them about the body of Morning Zai and bore him forth from his valley behind the hills, and muffled the mountain peaks with snow, and beat

upon their summits with drum sticks carved of ebony, playing the dirge of the gods. And the echoes rolled about the passes and the winds howled, because the faith of the olden days was gone, and with it had sped the soul of Morning Zai. So through the mountain passes the gods came at night bearing Their dead father. And Uldoon followed. And the gods came to a great sepulchre of onyx that stood upon four fluted pillars of white marble, each carved out of four mountains, and therein the gods laid Morning Zai because the old faith was fallen. And there at the tomb of Their father the gods spake and Uldoon heard the Secret of the gods, and it became to him a simple thing such as a man might well guess—yet hath not. Then the soul of the desert arose and cast over the tomb its wreath of forgetfulness devised of drifting sand, and the gods strode home across the mountains to Their hollow land. But Uldoon left the desert and travelled many days, and so came to the river where it passes beyond the city to seek the sea, and following its bank came near to his old home. And the people of the City by the River, seeing him far off, cried out:

"Hast thou found the Secret of the gods?"

And he answered:

"I have found it, and the Secret of the gods is this"—:

Zyni Moë, the small snake, seeing the figure and the shadow of a man between him and the cool river, raised his head and struck once. And the gods were pleased with Zyni Moë, and have called him the protector of the Secret of the gods.

The Relenting of Sarnidac

The lame boy Sarnidac tended sheep on a hill to the southward of the city. Sarnidac was a dwarf and greatly derided in the city. For the women said:

"It is very funny that Sarnidac is a dwarf," and they would point their fingers at him saying:—"This is Sarnidac, he is a dwarf; also he is very lame."

Once the doors of all the temples in the world swung open to the morning, and Sarnidac with his sheep upon the hill saw strange figures going down the white road, always southwards. All the morning he saw the dust rising above the strange figures and always they went southwards right as far as the rim of Nydoon hills where the white road could be seen no more. And the figures stooped and seemed to be larger than men, but all men seemed very large to Sarnidac, and he could not see clearly through the dust. And Sarnidac shouted to them, as he hailed all people that passed down the long white road, and none of the figures looked to left or right and none of them turned to answer Sarnidac. But then few people ever answered him because he was lame, and a small dwarf.

Still the figures went striding swiftly, stooping forward through the dust, till at last Sarnidac came running down his hill to watch them closer. As he came to

the white road the last of the figures passed him, and Sarnidac ran limping behind him down the road.

For Sarnidac was weary of the city wherein all derided him, and when he saw these figures all hurrying away he thought that they went perhaps to some other city beyond the hills over which the sun shone brighter, or where there was more food, for he was poor, even perhaps where people had not the custom of laughing at Sarnidac. So this procession of figures that stooped and seemed larger than men went southward down the road and a lame dwarf hobbled behind them.

Khamazan, now called the City of the Last of Temples, lies southward of the Nydoon hills. This is the story of Pompeides, now chief prophet of the only temple in the world, and greatest of all the prophets that have been:

"On the slopes of Nydoon I was seated once above Khamazan. There I saw figures in the morning striding through much dust along the road that leads across the world. Striding up the hill they came towards me, not with the gait of men, and soon the first one came to the crest of the hill where the road dips to find the plains again, where lies Khamazan. And now I swear by all the gods that are gone that this thing happened as I shall say it, and was surely so. When those that came striding up the hill came to its summit they took not the road that goes down into the plains nor trod the dust any longer, but went straight on and upwards, striding as they strode before, as though the hill had not ended nor the road dipped. And they strode as though they trod no yielding substance, yet they stepped upwards through the air.

"This the gods did, for They were not born men who strode that day so strangely away from earth.

"But I, when I saw this thing, when already three had passed me, leaving earth, cried out before the fourth:

" 'Gods of my childhood, guardians of little homes, whither are ye going, leaving the round earth to swim alone and forgotten in so great a waste of sky?'

"And one answered:

" 'Heresy apace shoots her fierce glare over the world and men's faith grows dim and the gods go. Men shall make iron gods and gods of steel when the wind and the ivy meet within the shrines of the temples of the gods of old.'

"And I left that place as a man leaves fire by night, and going plainwards down the white road that the gods spurned cried out to all that I passed to follow me, and so crying came to the city's gates. And there I shouted to all near the gates:

" 'From yonder hilltop the gods are leaving earth.'

"Then I gathered many, and we all hastened to the hill to pray the gods to tarry, and there we cried out to the last of the departing gods:

" 'Gods of old prophecy and of men's hopes, leave not the earth, and all our worship shall hum about Your ears as never it hath before, and oft the sacrifice shall squeal upon Your altars.'

"And I said—

" 'Gods of still evenings and quiet nights, go not from earth and leave not Your carven shrines, and all men shall worship You still. For between us and yonder still blue spaces oft roam the thunder and the storms. There in his hiding lurks the dark eclipse, and there

are stored all snows and hails and lightnings that shall vex the earth for a million years. Gods of our hopes, how shall men's prayers crying from empty shrines pass through such terrible spaces; how shall they ever fare above the thunder and many storms to whatever place the gods may go in that blue waste beyond?'

"But the gods bent straight forward, and trampled through the sky and looked not to the right nor left nor downwards, nor ever heeded my prayer.

"And one cried out hoping yet to stay the gods, though nearly all were gone, saying:—

" 'O gods, rob not the earth of the dim hush that hangs round all Your temples, bereave not all the world of old romance, take not the glamour from the moonlight nor tear the wonder out of the white mists in every land; for, O ye gods of the childhood of the world, when You have left the earth you shall have taken the mystery from the sea and all its glory from antiquity, and You shall have wrenched out hope from the dim future. There shall be no strange cities at night time half understood, nor songs in the twilight, and the whole of the wonder shall have died with last year's flowers in little gardens or hill-slopes leaning south; for with the gods must go the enchantment of the plains and all the magic of dark woods, and something shall be lacking from the quiet of early dawn. For it would scarce befit the gods to leave the earth and not take with Them that which They had given it. Out beyond the still blue spaces Ye will need the holiness of the sunset for Yourselves and little sacred memories and the thrill that is in stories told by firesides long ago. One strain of music, one song, one line of poetry and one kiss, and a memory of one pool with rushes, and each one the

best, shall the gods take to whom the best belongs, when the gods go.

" 'Sing a lamentation, people of Khamazan, sing a lamentation for all the children of earth at the feet of the departing gods. Sing a lamentation for the children of earth who must now carry their prayer to empty shrines and around empty shrines must rest at last.'

"Then when our prayers were ended and our tears shed, we beheld the last and smallest of the gods halted upon the hill-top. Twice he called to Them with a cry somewhat like the cry wherewith our shepherds hail their brethren, and long gazed after Them, and then deigned to look no longer and to tarry upon earth and turn his eyes on men. Then a great shout went up when we saw that our hopes were saved and that there was still on earth a haven for our prayers. Smaller than men now seemed the figures that had loomed so big, as one behind the other far over our heads They still strode upwards. But the small god that had pitied the world came with us down the hill, still deigning to tread the road, though strangely, not as men tread, and into Khamazan. There we housed him in the palace of the King, for that was before the building of the temple of gold, and the King made sacrifice before him with his own hands, and he that had pitied the world did eat the flesh of the sacrifice."

And the Book of the Knowledge of the gods in Khamazan tells how the small god that pitied the world told his prophets that his name was Sarnidac and that he herded sheep, and that therefore he is called the shepherd god, and sheep are sacrificed upon his altars thrice a day, and the North, East, West, and the South are the four hurdles of Sarnidac and the white clouds

are his sheep. And the Book of the Knowledge of the gods tells further how the day on which Pompeides found the gods shall be kept for ever as a fast until the evening and called the Fast of the Departing, but in the evening shall a feast be held which is named the Feast of the Relenting, for on that evening Sarnidac pitied the whole world and tarried.

And the people of Khamazan all prayed to Sarnidac, and dreamed their dreams and hoped their hopes because their temple was not empty. Whether the gods that are departed be greater than Sarnidac none know in Khamazan, but some believe that in Their azure windows They have set lights that lost prayers swarming upwards may come to them like moths and at last find haven and light far up above the evening and the stillness where sit the gods.

But Sarnidac wondered at the strange figures, at the people of Khamazan, and at the palace of the King and the customs of the prophets, but wondered not more greatly at aught in Khamazan than he had wondered at the city which he had left. For Sarnidac, who had not known why men were unkind to him, thought that he had found at last the land for which the gods had let him hope, where men should have the custom of being kind to Sarnidac.

The Jest of the Gods

Once the Older gods had need of laughter. Therefore They made the soul of a king, and set in it ambitions greater than kings should have, and lust for territories beyond the lust of other kings, and in this soul They set strength beyond the strength of others and fierce desire for power and a strong pride. Then the gods pointed earthward and sent that soul into the fields of men to live in the body of a slave. And the slave grew, and the pride and lust for power began to arise in his heart, and he wore shackles on his arms. Then in the Fields of Twilight the gods prepared to laugh.

But the slave went down to the shore of the great sea and cast his body away and the shackles that were upon it, and strode back to the Fields of Twilight and stood up before the gods and looked Them in Their faces. This thing the gods, when They had prepared to laugh, had not foreseen. Lust for power burned strong in that King's soul, and there was all the strength and pride in it that the gods had placed therein, and he was too strong for the Older gods. He whose body had borne the lashes of men could brook no longer the dominion of the gods, and standing before Them he bade the gods to go. Up to Their lips leapt all the anger of the Older gods, being for the first time commanded,

but the King's soul faced Them still, and Their anger died away and They averted Their eyes. Then Their thrones became empty, and the Fields of Twilight bare as the gods slunk far away. But the soul chose new companions.

The Dreams of a Prophet

I

When the gods drave me forth to toil and assailed me with thirst and beat me down with hunger, then I prayed to the gods. When the gods smote the cities wherein I dwelt, and when Their anger scorched me and Their eyes burned, then did I praise the gods and offer sacrifice. But when I came again to my green land and found that all was gone, and the old mysterious haunts wherein I played as a child were gone, and when the gods tore up the dust and even the spider's web from the last remembered nook, then did I curse the gods, speaking it to Their faces, saying:—

"Gods of my prayers! Gods of my sacrifice! because Ye have forgotten the sacred places of my childhood, and they have therefore ceased to be, yet may I not forget. Because Ye have done this thing, Ye shall see cold altars and shall lack both my fear and praise. I shall not wince at Your lightnings, nor be awed when Ye go by."

Then looking seawards I stood and cursed the gods, and at this moment there came to me one in the garb of a poet, who said:—

"Curse not the gods."

And I said to him:

"Wherefore should I not curse Those that have

stolen my sacred places in the night, and trodden down the gardens of my childhood?"

And he said "Come, and I will show thee." And I followed him to where two camels stood with their faces towards the desert. And we set out and I travelled with him for a great space, he speaking never a word, and so we came at last to a waste valley hid in the desert's midst. And herein, like fallen moons, I saw vast ribs that stood up white out of the sand, higher than the hills of the desert. And here and there lay the enormous shapes of skulls like the white marble domes of palaces built for tyrannous kings a long while since by armies of driven slaves. Also there lay in the desert other bones, the bones of vast legs and arms, against which the desert, like a besieging sea, ever advanced and already had half drowned. And as I gazed in wonder at these colossal things the poet said to me:

"The gods are dead."

And I gazed long in silence, and I said:

"These fingers, that are now so dead and so very white and still, tore once the flowers in gardens of my youth."

But my companion said to me:

"I have brought thee here to ask of thee thy forgiveness of the gods, for I, being a poet, knew the gods, and would fain drive off the curses that hover above Their bones and bring Them men's forgiveness as an offering at the last, that the weeds and the ivy may cover Their bones from the sun."

And I said:

"They made Remorse with his fur grey like a rainy evening in the autumn, with many rending claws, and Pain with his hot hands and lingering feet, and Fear

like a rat with two cold teeth carved each out of the ice of either pole, and Anger with the swift flight of the dragonfly in summer having burning eyes. I will not forgive these gods."

But the poet said:

"Canst thou be angry with these beautiful white bones?" And I looked long at those curved and beautiful bones that were no longer able to hurt the smallest creature in all the worlds that they had made. And I thought long of the evil that they had done, and also of the good. But when I thought of Their great hands coming red and wet from battles to make a primrose for a child to pick, then I forgave the gods.

And a gentle rain came falling out of heaven and stilled the restless sand, and a soft green moss grew suddenly and covered the bones till they looked like strange green hills, and I heard a cry and awoke and found that I had dreamed, and looking out of my house into the street I found that a flash of lightning had killed a child. Then I knew that the gods still lived.

II

I lay asleep in the poppy fields of the gods in the valley of Alderon, where the gods come by night to meet together in council when the moon is low. And I dreamed that this was the Secret.

Fate and Chance had played their game and ended, and all was over, all the hopes and tears, regrets, desires and sorrows, things that men wept for and unremembered things, and kingdoms and little gardens and the sea, and the worlds and the moons and the suns; and

what remained was nothing, having neither colour nor sound.

Then said Fate to Chance: "Let us play our old game again." And they played it again together, using the gods as pieces, as they had played it oft before. So that those things which have been shall all be again, and under the same bank in the same land a sudden glare of sunlight on the same spring day shall bring the same daffodil to bloom once more and the same child shall pick it, and not regretted shall be the billion years that fell between. And the same old faces shall be seen again, yet not bereaved of their familiar haunts. And you and I shall in a garden meet again upon an afternoon in summer when the sun stands midway between his zenith and the sea, where we met of before. For Fate and Chance play but one game together with every move the same and they play it oft to while eternity away.

King Argimenes and the Unknown Warrior

Editor's Note

Time and the Gods was published in London by William Heinemann in 1906, and the American edition was published that same year by John W. Luce and Company of Boston. Lord Dunsany followed that collection with another, *The Sword of Welleran,* but before long he became interested in another art form, the writing of plays.

The Dunsanys were guests at Lord Bath's house, Longleat, for the shooting, where Lady Dunsany developed a cough from the raw autumn evenings. They decided it was best to spend the winter in Egypt so that she might recover in its hot, dry climate. They reached Egypt by November, and took a steamer up the Nile to Aswan, and the steamer was named the *Nitocris,* after the vengeful Egyptian queen whose story is told in Herodotus. Reminded of this marvelous story, Lord Dunsany eventually used it as the basis of his first play, *The Queen's Enemies.*

He wrote very many plays thereafter, and some of them achieved remarkable success and were performed in London, Dublin, Moscow, and New York. My favorite, and the most fantastic of them, in the exact sense that his stories are fantastic, is *King Argimenes and the Unknown Warrior* which follows. It is the

best example I can think of to demonstrate Dunsany's achievements in the theater. The play was written in 1911 and was first performed by the Irish Players. It has had many admirers, among them the late Fletcher Pratt, who set his brilliant fantasy novel, *The Well of the Unicorn,* in the world of King Argimenes.

—L.C.

PERSONS

KING ARGIMENES
ZARB, *a slave born of slaves*
AN OLD SLAVE
A YOUNG SLAVE
SLAVES
} *Slaves of King Darniak*

KING DARNIAK
THE KING'S OVERSEER
A PROPHET
THE IDOL-GUARD
THE SERVANT OF THE KING'S DOG

QUEEN ATHARLIA
QUEEN OXARA
QUEEN CAHAFRA
QUEEN THRAGOLIND
} *Queens of King Darniak*

GUARDS AND ATTENDANTS

Time: A long time ago.

The First Act

The dinner-hour on the slave-fields of King Darniak. King Argimenes is sitting upon the ground, bowed, ragged and dirty, gnawing a bone. He has uncouth hair and a dishevelled beard. A battered spade lies near him. Two or three slaves sit at back of stage eating raw cabbage-leaves. The tear-song, the chant of the low-born, rises at intervals, monotonous and mournful, coming from distant slave-fields.

KING ARGIMENES: This is a good bone; there is juice in this bone.

ZARB: I wish I were you, Argimenes.

KING ARGIMENES: I am not to be envied any longer. I have eaten up my bone.

ZARB: I wish I were you, because you have been a king. Because men have prostrated themselves before your feet. Because you have ridden a horse and worn a crown and have been called Majesty.

KING ARGIMENES: When I remember that I have been a king it is very terrible.

ZARB: But you are lucky to have such things in your memory as you have. I have nothing in my memory— Once I went for a year without being flogged, and I remember my cleverness in contriving it— I have nothing else to remember.

KING ARGIMENES: It is very terrible to have been a king.

ZARB: But we have nothing who have no good memories in the past. It is not easy for us to hope for the future here.

KING ARGIMENES: Have you any god?

ZARB: We may not have a god because he might make us brave and we might kill our guards. He might make a miracle and give us swords.

KING ARGIMENES: Ah, you have no hope, then.

ZARB: I have a little hope. Hush, and I will tell you a secret— The King's great dog is ill and like to die. They will throw him to us. We shall have beautiful bones then.

KING ARGIMENES: Ah! Bones.

ZARB: Yes. That is what *I* hope for. And have *you* no other hope? Do you not hope that your nation will arise some day and rescue you and cast off the king and hang him up by his thumbs from the palace gateway?

KING ARGIMENES: No. I have no other hope, for my god was cast down in the temple and broken into three pieces on the day that they surprised us and took me sleeping. But will they throw him to us? Will so honorable a brute as the King's dog be thrown to us?

ZARB: When he is dead his honors are taken away. Even the King when he is dead is given to the worms. Then why should not his dog be thrown to us?

KING ARGIMENES: We are not worms!

ZARB: You do not understand, Argimenes. The worms are little and free, while we are big and enslaved. I did not say we were worms, but we are *like* worms,

and if they have the King when he is dead, why then—

KING ARGIMENE: Tell me more of the King's dog. Are there big bones on him?

ZARB: Ay, he is a big dog—a high, big, black one.

KING ARGIMENES: You know him then?

ZARB: Oh yes, I know him. I know him well. I was beaten once because of him, twenty-five strokes from the treble whips, two men beating me.

KING ARGIMENES: How did they beat you because of the King's dog?

ZARB: They beat me because I spoke to him without making obeisance. He was coming dancing along over the slave-fields and I spoke to him. He was a friendly great dog, and I spoke to him and patted his head, and did not make obeisance.

KING ARGIMENES: And they saw you do it?

ZARB: Yes, the slave-guard saw me. They came and seized me at once and bound my arms. The great dog wanted me to speak to him again, but I was hurried away.

KING ARGIMENES: You should have made obeisance.

ZARB: The great dog seemed so friendly that I forgot he was the King's great dog.

KING ARGIMENES: But tell me more. Was he hurt or is it a sickness?

ZARB: They say that it is a sickness.

KING ARGIMENES: Ah, then he will grow thin if he does not die soon. If it had been a hurt!—but we should not complain. I complain more often than you do because I had not learned to submit while I was yet young.

ZARB: If your beautiful memories do not please you, you should hope more. I wish I had your memories. I should not trouble to hope then. It is very hard to hope.

KING ARGIMENES: There will be nothing more to hope for when we have eaten the King's dog.

ZARB: Why, you might find gold in the earth while you were digging. Then you might bribe the commander of the guard to lend you his sword; we would all follow you if you had a sword. Then we might take the King and bind him and lay him on the ground and fasten his tongue outside his mouth with thorns and put honey on it and sprinkle honey near. Then the gray ants would come from one of their big mounds. My father found gold once when he was digging.

KING ARGIMENES [*pointedly*]: Did your father free himself?

ZARB: No. Because the King's Overseer found him looking at the gold and killed him. But he would have freed himself if he could have bribed the guard.

[*A Prophet walks across the stage attended by two guards.*]

SLAVES: He is going to the King. He is going to the King.

ZARB: He is going to the King.

KING ARGIMENES: Going to prophesy good things to the King. It is easy to prophesy good things to a king, and be rewarded when the good things come. What else should come to a king? A prophet! A prophet!

[*A deep bell tolls slowly. King Argimenes and Zarb pick up their spades at once, and the old slaves at the back of the stage go down on their knees immediately and grub in the soil with their hands. The white beard of the oldest trails in the dirt as he works. King Argimenes digs.*]

KING ARGIMENES: What is the name of that song that we always sing? I like the song.

ZARB: It has no name. It is our song. There is no other song.

KING ARGIMENES: Once there were other songs. Has this no name?

ZARB: I think the soldiers have a name for it.

KING ARGIMENES: What do the soldiers call it?

ZARB: The soldiers call it the tear-song, the chant of the low-born.

KING ARGIMENES: It is a good song. I could sing no other now.

[*Zarb moves away digging.*]

KING ARGIMENES [*to himself as his spade touches something in the earth*]: Metal! [*Feels with his spade again*] Gold perhaps!—It is of no use here.

[*Uncovers earth leisurely. Suddenly he drops on his knees and works excitedly in the earth with his hands. Then very slowly, still kneeling, he lifts, lying flat on his hands, a long greenish sword, his eyes intent on it. About the level of his uplifted forehead he holds it, still flat on both hands, and addresses it thus*]:

O holy and blessed thing!

[*Then he lowers it slowly till his hands rest on his knees, and looking all the while at the sword, loquitur*]

Three years ago to-morrow King Darniak spat at me, having taken my kingdom from me. Three times in that year I was flogged, with twelve stripes, with seventeen stripes, and with twenty stripes. A year and eleven months ago, come Moon-day, the King's Overseer struck me in the face, and nine times in that year he called me dog. For one month two weeks and a day I was yoked with a bullock and pulled a rounded stone all day over the paths, except while we were fed. I was flogged twice that year—with eighteen stripes and with ten stripes. This year the roof of the slave-sty has fallen in and King Darniak will not repair it. Five weeks ago one of his Queens laughed at me as she came across the slave-fields. I was flogged again this year and with thirteen stripes, and twelve times they have called me dog. And these things they have done to a king, and a king of the House of Ithara.

[*He listens attentively for a moment, then buries the sword again and pats the earth over it with his hand, then digs again*]

[*The old slaves do not see him: their faces are to the earth. Enter the King's Overseer carrying a whip. The slaves and King Argimenes kneel with their foreheads to the ground as he passes across the stage. Exit the King's Overseer.*]

KING ARGIMENES [*kneeling, hands outspread downward*]: O warrior spirit, wherever thou wanderest,

whoever be thy gods, whether they punish thee or whether they bless thee, O kingly spirit, that once laid here this sword, behold, I pray to thee, having no gods to pray to, for the god of my nation was broken in three by night. Mine arm is stiff with three years' slavery, and remembers not the sword. But guide thy sword till I have slain six men and armed the strongest slaves, and thou shalt have the sacrifice every year of a hundred goodly oxen. And I will build in Ithara a temple to thy memory wherein all that enter in shall remember thee; so shalt thou be honored and envied among the dead, for the dead are very jealous of remembrance. Ay, though thou wert a robber that took men's lives unrighteously, yet shall rare spices smoulder in thy temple and little maidens sing and new-plucked flowers deck the solemn aisles; and priests shall go about it ringing bells that thy soul shall find repose. Oh, but it has a good blade, this old green sword; thou wouldst not like to see it miss its mark (if the dead see at all, as wise men teach), thou wouldst not like to see it go thirsting into the air; so huge a sword should find its marrowy bone. [*Extending his right hand upward*] Come into my right arm, O ancient spirit, O unknown warrior's soul! And if thou hast the ear of any gods, speak there against Illuriel, god of King Darniak. [*He rises and goes on digging.*]

THE KING'S OVERSEER [*reëntering*]: So you have been praying.

KING ARGIMENES [*kneeling*]: No, master.

THE KING'S OVERSEER: The slave-guard saw you. [*Strikes him.*] It is not lawful for a slave to pray.

KING ARGIMENES: I did but pray to Illuriel to make me a good slave, to teach me to dig well and to pull the rounded stone and to make me not to die when the food is scarce, but to be a good slave to my master the great King.

THE KING'S OVERSEER: Who art thou to pray to Illuriel? Dogs may not pray to an immortal god. [*Exit.*]

[*Zarb comes back, digging.*]

KING ARGIMENES [*digging*]: Zarb!

ZARB [*also digging*]: Do not look at me when you speak. The guards are watching us. Look at your digging.

KING ARGIMENES: How do the guards know we are speaking because we look at one another?

ZARB: You are very witless. Of course they know.

KING ARGIMENES: Zarb!

ZARB: What is it?

KING ARGIMENES: How many guards are there in sight?

ZARB: There are six of them over there. They are watching us.

KING ARGIMENES: Are there other guards in sight of these six guards?

ZARB: No.

KING ARGIMENES: How do you know?

ZARB: Because whenever their officer leaves them they sit upon the ground and play with dice.

KING ARGIMENES: How does that show that there are not another six in sight of them?

ZARB: How witless you are, Argimenes! Of course it shows there are not, Because, if there were, another officer would see them, and their thumbs would be cut off.

KING ARGIMENES: Ah! [*A pause*] Zarb! [*A pause*] Would the slaves follow me if I tried to kill the guards?

ZARB: No, Argimenes.

KING ARGIMENES: Why would they not follow me?

ZARB: Because you look like a slave. They will never follow a slave, because they are slaves themselves, and know how mean a creature is a slave. If you looked like a king they would follow you.

KING ARGIMENES: But I am a king. They know that I am a king.

ZARB: It is better to look like a king. It is looks that they would go by.

KING ARGIMENES: If I had a sword would they follow me? A beautiful huge sword of bronze.

ZARB: I wish I could think of things like that. It is because you were once a king that you can think of a sword of bronze. I tried to hope once that I should some day fight the guards, but I couldn't picture a sword, I couldn't imagine it; I could only picture whips.

KING ARGIMENES: Dig a little nearer, Zarb. [*They both edge closer.*] I have found a very old sword in the earth. It is not a sword such as common soldiers wear. A king must have worn it, and an angry king. It must have done fearful things; there are little dints in it. Perhaps there was a battle here long ago where all were slain, and perhaps that king died last and buried his sword, but the great birds swallowed him.

ZARB: You have been thinking too much of the King's dog, Argimenes, and that has made you hungry, and hunger has driven you mad.

KING ARGIMENES: I *have* found such a sword.

[*A pause.*]

ZARB: Why—then you will wear a purple cloak again, and sit on a great throne, and ride a prancing horse, and we shall call you Majesty.

KING ARGIMENES: I shall break a long fast first and drink much water, and sleep. But will the slaves follow me?

ZARB: You will *make* them follow you if you have a sword. Yet is Illuriel a very potent god. They say that none have prevailed against King Darniak's dynasty so long as Illuriel stood. Once an enemy cast Illuriel into the river and overthrew the dynasty, but a fisherman found him again and set him up, and the enemy was driven out and the dynasty returned.

KING ARGIMENES: If Illuriel could be cast down as my god was cast down perhaps King Darniak could be overcome as I was overcome in my sleep?

ZARB: If Illuriel were cast down all the people would utter a cry and flee away. It would be a fearful portent.

KING ARGIMENES: How many men are there in the armory at the palace?

ZARB: There are ten men in the palace armory when all the slave-guards are out.

[*They dig awhile in silence.*]

ZARB: The officer of the slave-guard has gone away— They are playing with dice now. [*He throws down his spade and stretches his arms.*] The man with the big beard has won again, he is very nimble with his thumbs— They are playing again, but it is getting dark, I cannot clearly see.

[*King Argimenes furtively uncovers the sword, he picks it up and grips it in his hand.*]

ZARB: Majesty!

[*King Argimenes crouches and steals away towards the slave-guard.*]

* * * * * * *

ZARBS [*to the other slaves*]: Argimenes has found a terrible sword and has gone to slay the slave-guard. It is not a common sword, it is some king's sword.

AN OLD SLAVE: Argimenes will be dreadfully flogged. We shall hear him cry all night. His cries will frighten us, and we shall not sleep.

ZARB: No, no! The guards flog poor slaves, but Argimenes had an angry look. The guards will be afraid when they see him look so angry and see his terrible sword. It was a huge sword, and he looked very angry. He will bring us the swords of the slave-guard. We must prostrate ourselves before him and kiss his feet or he will be angry with us too.

OLD SLAVE: Will Argimenes give me a sword?

ZARB: He will have swords for six of us if he slays the slave-guard. Yes, he will give you a sword.

SLAVE: A sword! No, no, I must not; the King would kill me if he found that I had a sword.

SECOND SLAVE [*slowly, as one who develops an idea*]: If the King found that I had a sword, why, then it would be an evil day for the King.

[*They all look off left.*]

ZARB: I think that they are playing at dice again.

FIRST SLAVE: I do not see Argimenes.

ZARB: No, because he was crouching as he walked. The slave-guard is on the sky-line.

SECOND SLAVE: What is that dark shadow behind the slave-guard?

ZARB: It is too still to be Argimenes.

SECOND SLAVE: Look! It moves.

ZARB: The evening is too dark, I cannot see.

[*They continue to gaze into the gathering darkness. They raise themselves on their knees and crane their necks. Nobody speaks. Then from their lips and from others farther off goes up a long, deep "Oh!" It is like the sound that goes up from the grandstand when a horse falls at a fence, or, in England, like the first exclamation of the crowd at a great cricket match when a man is caught in the slips.*]

CURTAIN

The Second Act

The Throne Hall of King Darniak. The King is seated on his throne in the centre at the back of the stage; a little to his left, but standing out from the wall, a dark-green seated idol is set up. His queens are seated about him on the ground, two on his right and two between him and the idol. All wear crowns. Beside the dark-green idol a soldier with a pike is kneeling upon one knee. The tear-song, the chant of the low-born, drifts faintly up from the slave-fields.

FIRST QUEEN: Do show us the new prophet, Majesty; it would be very interesting to see another prophet.

THE KING: Ah, yes.

[*He strikes upon a gong, and an Attendant enters, walks straight past the King and bows before the idol; he then walks back to the centre of the stage and bows before the king.*]

THE KING: Bring the new prophet hither.

[*Exit Attendant. Enter the King's Overseer holding a roll of paper. He passes the King, bows to the idol, returns to the front of the King, kneels and remains kneeling with bended head.*]

THE KING [*speaking in the meanwhile to the Second Queen on his immediate right*]: We are making a beautiful arbor for you, O Atharlia, at an end of the great garden. There shall be iris-flowers that you love and all things that grow by streams. And the stream there shall be small and winding like one of those in your country. I shall bring a stream a new way from the mountains. [*Turning to Queen Oxara on his extreme right*]: And for you, too, O Oxara, we shall make a pleasance. I shall have rocks brought from the quarries for you, and my idle slaves shall make a hill and plant it with mountain shrubs, and you can sit there in the winter thinking of the North. [*To the kneeling Overseer*]: Ah, what is here?

THE KING'S OVERSEER: The plans of your royal garden, Majesty. The slaves have dug it for five years and rolled the paths.

THE KING [*takes the plans*]: Was there not a garden in Babylon?

THE KING'S OVERSEER: They say there was a garden there of some sort, Majesty.

THE KING: I will have a greater garden. Let the world know and wonder. [*Looks at the plans.*]

THE KING'S OVERSEER: It shall know at once, Majesty.

THE KING [*pointing at the plan*]: I do not like that hill, it is too steep.

THE KING'S OVERSEER: No, Majesty.

THE KING: Remove it.

THE KING'S OVERSEER: Yes, Majesty.

THE KING: When will the garden be ready for the Queens to walk in?

THE KING'S OVERSEER: Work is slow, Majesty, at this season of the year because the green stuff is scarce

and the slaves grow idle. They even become insolent and ask for bones.

QUEEN CAHAFRA [*to the King's Overseer*]: Then *why* are they not flogged? [*To Queen Thragolind*]: It is so simple, they *only* have to flog them, but these people are so silly sometimes. I want to walk in the great garden, and then they tell me: "It is not ready, Majesty. It is not ready, Majesty," as though there were any reason why it should *not* be ready.

FOURTH QUEEN: Yes, they are a great trouble to us.

[*Meanwhile the King hands back the plans. Exit the King's Overseer. Reënter Attendant with the Prophet, who is dressed in a long dark brown cloak; his face is solemn; he has a long dark beard and long hair. Having bowed before the idol, he bows before the King and stands silent. The attendant, having bowed to both, stands by the doorway.*]

THE KING [*meanwhile to Queen Atharlia*]: Perhaps we shall lure the ducks when the marshes are frozen to come and swim in your stream; it will be like your own country. [*To the Prophet*]: Prophesy unto us.

THE PROPHET [*speaks at once in a loud voice*]: There was once a King that had slaves to hate him and to toil for him, and he had soldiers to guard him and to die for him. And the number of the slaves that he had to hate him and to toil for him was greater than the number of the soldiers that he had to guard him and to die for him. And the days of that King were few. And the number of thy slaves, O King, that thou hast to hate thee is greater than the number of thy soldiers.

QUEEN CAHAFRA [*to Queen Thragolind*]: —and I wore the crown with the sapphires and the big emerald in it, and the foreign prince said that I looked very sweet.

[*The King, who has been smiling at Atharlia, gives a gracious nod to the Prophet when he hears him stop speaking. When the Queens see the King nod graciously, they applaud the Prophet by idly clapping their hands.*]

THIRD QUEEN: Do ask him to make us another prophecy, Majesty! He is so interesting. He looks so clever.

THE KING: Prophesy unto us.

THE PROPHET: Thine armies camped upon thy mountainous borders descry no enemy in the plains afar. And within thy gates lurks he for whom thy sentinels seek upon lonely guarded frontiers. There is a fear upon me and a boding. Even yet there is time, even yet; but *little* time. And my mind is dark with trouble for thy kingdom.

QUEEN CAHAFRA [*to Queen Thragolind*]: I do not like the way he does his hair.

QUEEN THRAGOLIND: It would be all right if he would only have it cut.

THE KING [*to the Prophet, dismissing him with a nod of the head*]: Thank you, that has been very interesting.

QUEEN THRAGOLIND: How clever he is! I wonder how he thinks of things like that?

QUEEN CAHAFRA: Yes, but I hate a man who is conceited about it. Look how he wears his hair.

QUEEN THRAGOLIND: Yes, of course, it is perfectly dreadful.

QUEEN CAHAFRA: Why can't he wear his hair like other people, even if he does say clever things?

QUEEN THRAGOLIND: Yes, I hate a conceited man.[1]

[*Enter an Attendant. He bows before the idol, then kneels to the King.*]

THE ATTENDANT: The guests are all assembled in the Chamber of Banquets.

[*All rise. The Queens walk two abreast to the Chamber of Banquets.*]

QUEEN ATHARLIA [*to Queen Oxara*]: What was he talking about?

QUEEN OXARA: He was talking about the armies on the frontier.

QUEEN ATHARLIA: Ah! That reminds me of that young captain in the Purple Guard. They say that he loves Linoora.

QUEEN OXARA: Oh, Thearkos! Linoora probably said that.

[*When the Queens come to the doorway they halt on each side of it. Then they turn facing one another. Then the King leaves his throne and passes between them into the Chamber of Banquets, each couple courtseying low to him as he passes. The Queens follow, then the attendants. There rises the wine-song, the chant of the nobles, drowning the chant of the low-born. Only the Idol-Guard remains behind, still kneeling beside Illuriel.*]

THE IDOL-GUARD: I do not like those things the Prophet said— It would be terrible if they were true— It would be very terrible if they were false, for he

[1] It is not necessary for the prophet's hair to be at all unusual.

prophesies in the name of Illuriel—Ah! They are singing the wine-song, the chant of the nobles. The Queens are singing. How merry they are!—I should like to be a noble and sit and look at the Queens.

[*He joins in the song.*]

THE VOICE OF A SENTINEL: Guard, turn out.

[*The wine-song still continues.*]

THE VOICE OF ONE HAVING AUTHORITY: Turn out the guard there! Wake up, you accursed pigs!

[*Still the wine-song. A faint sound as of swords.*]

A VOICE CRYING: To the armory! To the armory! Reinforce! The Slaves have come to the armory. Ah! mercy.

[*For awhile there is silence.*]

KING ARGIMENES [*in the doorway*]: Go you to the slave-fields. Say that the palace-guard is dead and that we have taken the armory. Ten of you, hold the armory till our men come from the slave-fields. [*He comes into the hall with his slaves armed with swords.*] Throw down Illuriel.

THE IDOL-GUARD: You must take my life before you touch my god.

A SLAVE: We only want your pike.

[*All attack him; they seize his sword and bind his hands behind him. They all pull down Illuriel, the dark-green idol, who breaks into seven pieces.*]

KING ARGIMENES: Illuriel is fallen and broken asunder.

ZARB: [*with some awe*]: Immortal Illuriel is dead at last.

KING ARGIMENES: My god was broken into three pieces, but Illuriel is broken into seven. The fortunes of Darniak will prevail over mine no longer. [*A slave breaks off a golden arm from the throne.*] Come, we will arm all the slaves. [*Exeunt.*]

KING DARNIAK [*enters with Retinue*]: My throne is broken. Illuriel is turned against me.

AN ATTENDANT: Illuriel is fallen.

ALL [*with King Darniak*]:

Illuriel is fallen, is fallen. [*Some drop their spears.*]

KING DARNIAK [*to the Idol-Guard*]: What envious god or sacrilegious man has dared to do this thing?

THE IDOL-GUARD: Illuriel is fallen.

KING DARNIAK: Have men been here?

THE IDOL-GUARD: Is fallen.

KING DARNIAK: What way did they go?

THE IDOL-GUARD: Illuriel is fallen.

KING DARNIAK: They shall be tortured here before Illuriel, and their eyes shall be hung on a thread about his neck, so that Illuriel shall see it, and on their bones we will set him up again. Come!

[*Those that have dropped their spears pick them up, but trail them along behind them on the ground. All follow dejectedly.*]

VOICES OF LAMENTATION [*growing fainter and fainter off.*] Illuriel is fallen, Illuriel is fallen. Illuriel, Illuriel, Illuriel. Is fallen. Is fallen. [*The song of the low-born ceases suddenly. Then voices of the slaves in the slave-fields chanting very loudly.*]: Illuriel

is fallen, is fallen, is fallen. Illuriel is fallen and broken asunder. Illuriel is fallen, fallen, fallen.

[*Clamor of fighting is heard, the clash of swords, and voices, and now and then the name of Illuriel.*]

THE IDOL-GUARD [*kneeling over a fragment of Illuriel.*]: Illuriel is broken. They have overthrown Illuriel. They have done great harm to the courses of the stars. The moon will be turned to blackness or fall and forsake the nights. The sun will rise no more. They do not know how they have wrecked the world.

[*Reënter King Argimenes and his men.*]

KING ARGIMENES [*in the doorway.*]: Go you to the land of Ithara and tell them that I am free. And do you go to the army on the frontier. Offer them death, or the right arm of the throne to be melted and divided amongst them all. Let them choose.

[*The armed slaves go to the throne and stand on each side of it, loquitur*]: Majesty, ascend your throne.

[*King Argimenes, standing with his face toward the audience, lifts the sword slowly, lying on both his hands, a little above his head, then looking up at it, loquitur*]: Praise to the unknown warrior and to all gods that bless him.

[*He ascends the throne. Zarb prostrates himself at the foot of it and remains prostrated for the rest of the Act, muttering at intervals* "Majesty." *An armed slave enters dragging the King's Overseer. King Argimenes sternly watches him. He is dragged before the Throne. He still has the roll of parchment in his*

hand. For some moments King Argimenes does not speak. Then pointing at the parchment]: What have you there?

THE KING'S OVERSEER [*kneeling*]: It is a plan of the great garden, Majesty. It was to have been a wonder to the world. [*Unfolds it.*]

KING ARGIMENES [*grimly*]: Show me the place that I digged for three years. [*The King's Overseer shows it with trembling hands; the parchment shakes visibly*]: Let there be built there a temple to an Unknown Warrior. And let this sword be laid on its altar evermore, that the ghost of that Warrior wandering by night (if men do walk by night from across the grave) may see his sword again. And let slaves be allowed to pray there and those that are oppressed; nevertheless the noble and the mighty shall not fail to repair there too, that the Unknown Warrior shall not lack due reverence.

[*Enter, running, a Man of the household of King Darniak. He starts and stares aghast on seeing King Argimenes.*]

KING ARGIMENES: Who are you?

MAN: I am the servant of the King's dog.

KING ARGIMENES: Why do you come here?

MAN: The King's dog is dead.

KING ARGIMENES AND HIS MEN [*savagely and hungrily*]: *Bones!*

KING ARGIMENES [*remembering suddenly what has happened and where he is*]: Let him be buried with the late King.

ZARB [*in a voice of protest*]: Majesty!

CURTAIN

POEMS

Editor's Note

It might be said, and with considerable truth, that Lord Dunsany's career was a continuous striving to conquer, one by one, the major forms of literature.

Beginning with the short story and the drama, examples of which we have already seen, he then ventured into the essay with *Nowadays* (1918); the novel with *Don Rodriguez* (1922); and, starting in 1929, with his first collection of verse.

In all, Dunsany produced eight books of verse (or at least that many are known to me). They are: *Fifty Poems* (1929); *Mirage Water* (1938); *War Poems* (1941); *A Journey* (1943); *Wandering Songs* (1943); *The Year* (1946); *The Odes of Horace,* a translation (1947); and *To Awaken Pegasus* (1949).

Here following are eight poems from his first collection which seem to me particularly outstanding lyrics.

—L.C.

In The Sahara

Oh, you that stay in cities, saw you this pretty thing?
The moon was new on Sunday, all in a silver ring.
Now it is veiled and curious, no more a shining hoop,
And the wind is in the Desert, and the sand is in the soup.

The wind that Allah bridles is free to-night to roam,
Like camels in the evening, when the caravans are home.
The tent-ropes creak uneasily, the soup is full of grit,
And all the cooks of London-town have not the like of it.

I know years hence in cities, when Spring has scarce touched Spain,
I'll yearn for mighty spaces and fret to see again
As on some larger planet, the huge horizon's loop,
When the wind is in the Desert and the sand is in the soup.

Songs From An Evil Wood

I.

There is no wrath in the stars,
They do not rage in the sky;
I look from the evil wood
And find myself wondering why.

Why do they not scream out
And grapple star against star,
Seeking for blood in the wood,
As all things round me are?

They do not glare like the sky
Or flash like the deeps of the wood;
But they shine softly on
In their sacred solitude.

To their high happy haunts
Silence from us has flown,
She whom we loved of old
And know it now she is gone.

When will she come again
Though for one second only?
She whom we loved is gone
And the whole world is lonely.

II.

Somewhere lost in the haze
The sun goes down in the cold,
And birds in this evil wood
Chirrup home as of old;

Chirrup, stir and are still,
On the high twigs frozen and thin.
There is no more noise of them now,
And the long night sets in.

Of all the wonderful things
That I have seen in the wood,
I marvel most at the birds,
At their chirp and their quietude.

For a giant smites with his club
All day the tops of the hill,
Sometimes he rests at night,
Oftener he beats them still.

And a dwarf with a grim black mane
Raps with repeated rage
All night in the valley blow
On the wooden walls of his cage.

And the elder giants come
Sometimes, tramping from far,
Through the weird and flickering light
Made by an earthly star.

And the giant with his club,
And the dwarf with rage in his breath,
And the elder giants from far,
They are all the children of Death.

They are all abroad to-night
And are breaking the hills with their brood,
And the birds are all asleep,
Even in Plugstreet Wood.

The Riders

Who treads those level lands of gold,
The level fields of mist and air,
And rolling mountains manifold
And towers of twilight over there?

No mortal foot upon them strays,
No archer in the towers dwells,
But feet too airy for our ways
Go up and down their hills and dells.

The people out of old romance,
And people that have never been,
And those that on the border dance
Between old history and between

Resounding fable, as the king
Who held his court at Camelot.
There Guinevere is wandering
And there the knight Sir Lancelot.

And by yon precipice of white,
As steep as Roncesvalles, and more,
Within an inch of fancy's sight,
Roland the peerless rides to war.

And just the tip of Quixote's spear,
The greatest of them all by far,
Is surely visible from here!
But no: it is the Evening Star.

The Watchers

The world of old in its orbit moving
Chanced to pass (if there's chance at all)
Near to the path of two Spirits' roving,
Who stood and looked at the large green ball.

Morning flashed upon tusk and pinion,
Tooth and talon, of tribes at war.
"Who, we wonder, will win dominion?
Which will rule in the little star?"

Little scope there appeared for wonder:
The mammoth strode from the forest's dusk.
Who but he, with his hooves of thunder?
Who but he, with his lightning tusk?

Yet there seemed in his monstrous striding,
Heaving weight and enormous ears,
Something gross. So, before deciding,
"Come again in a million years."

Through the vault where the stars are sprinkled
Ages passed from the world away.
All of that time Orion twinkled:
Nothing changed in the Milky Way.

Again they stood where the world was rolling,
Again they watched, and saw, this time, Man,
Heard the roar of his engines coaling,
Scanned his cities to guess his plan,

Peered through clouds that his smoke turned sour,
Even spied on his hopes and fears.
"Yes," they said, "he has surely power.
But come again in a million years."

The Enchanted People

It came, it came again to the scented garden,
The call that they would not heed,
A clear wild note far up on the hills above them,
Blown on an elfin reed.

From the heath in the hidden dells of a moorland people
It came so crystal clear
That they could not help a moment's pause on their pathways,
They could not choose but hear.

The very blackbird, perched on the wall by cherries
Ripe at the end of June,
Made never a stir through all of his glossy body,
Learning that unknown tune.

Two rabbits paused midway between fear and wonder,
Not knowing whether to run
Or whether to find their way to the heathery upland,
Far up, facing the sun.

They needs must hear as they walked in their valley garden,

Surely they needs must heed
That it came from a folk as magical and as enchanted
As ever blew upon reed.

Surely they must arise in the heavy valley,
Sleepy with years of night,
And go to the old immortal things out of fable
That danced young on the height.

But the moss was black and old on the paths about them,
And the weeds were old and deep,
And they could not remember who were high on the uplands;
And they needed sleep.

And they thought that a day might come when someone would call them
With a song more loud and plain.
And the call rang past like birds going over a desert,
And it never came again.

The Happy Isles

A rumour to the Romans came,
Got partly from a poet's lips
And part from sunset clouds aflame,
Seen dimly from the furthest ships.

It told how, westward of our hopes
And further far than any dream,
With dawn for ever on their slopes,
The Happy Isles are all agleam.

I think that some seafarer hurled
Beyond the Gates of Hercules,
Lost by the boundaries of the world
And tost upon the last of seas,

Saw Islay suddenly through haze,
By some wild shaft of sunshine lit,
Its heather gleaming in the rays,
And Jura gazing down on it.

A Word In Season

A new thing came and they could not see,
A new wind blew and they would not feel it.
Out of a world of wizardry,
With a scent picked up in Araby,
And a charm for the hurried mind to heal it,
And a song blown west from Arcady,
A new wind blew and they would not feel it.

Their watchers looked for a wind to blow;
And the new wind sang, and they could not hear it.
It slipped at dusk by the mean dull row
Of their narrow houses from fields of snow
In a magical land: they were very near it
For wonderful moments, and did not know.
The new wind sang and they could not hear it.

If they had heard it, who could not hear,
If they had learned it, who would not listen,
They had seen lost fairyland near, so near,
And the tarns of elf-land shimmering clear;
They had seen those pinnacles beckon and glisten
That now will never be seen by them here;
If they had heard: but they would not listen.

The Quest

What are those hills so strange that stand
Where I knew none before?
Are they the slopes of Fairyland
Above the fields of yore?

How long, how long, we thought of it
As fabulous and far;
And is it now before me, lit
By light of no known star?

It may be so; I shall not ask
Of any man the way;
Those hills are far beyond our task
And, sought for, fade away.

It is enough that in the change
Of light from sun to moon
I have one moment seen that range
That will float homewards soon.

Homewards to where those towers stand,
And where those mountains rise,
That do not rest in any land,
And know none of our skies.

That is the home I travel t'wards,
Though well this truth is conned,
That if I ever find its swards
My quest will lie beyond.

OTHER TALES

Editor's Note

Although his verse is charming and his plays display a sure dramatic sense, I suspect Lord Dunsany would be of only negligible interest to the world of fantasy today, were it not for those eight superb volumes of short tales of wonder.

We have already sampled *The Gods of Pegana* and *Time and the Gods;* here follow two exquisite tales from his next book of short stories, which was called *The Sword of Welleran* (1908). The two tales are "The Kith of the Elf-Folk," which has never been in paperback before, and that famous story, "The Sword of Welleran" itself. I included "The Sword of Welleran" in my "keynote" anthology which introduced readers to the Adult Fantasy Series, and to some of the major writers we would be publishing. The anthology was called *The Young Magicians* and it appeared in 1969; that was some time ago, so I am reprinting the story here, for those latecomers to the Series who may have missed it.

—L.C.

The Kith of the Elf-Folk

CHAPTER I

The north wind was blowing, and red and golden the last days of Autumn were streaming hence. Solemn and cold over the marshes arose the evening.

It became very still.

Then the last pigeon went home to the trees on the dry land in the distance, whose shapes already had taken upon themselves a mystery in the haze.

Then all was still again.

As the light faded and the haze deepened, mystery crept nearer from every side.

Then the green plover came in crying, and all alighted.

And again it became still, save when one of the plover arose and flew a little way uttering the cry of the waste. And hushed and silent became the earth, expecting the first star. Then the duck came in, and the widgeon, company by company: and all the light of day faded out of the sky saving one red band of light. Across the light appeared, black and huge, the wings of a flock of geese beating up wind to the marshes. These, too, went down among the rushes.

Then the stars appeared and shone in the stillness, and there was silence in the great spaces of the night.

Suddenly the bells of the cathedral in the marshes broke out, calling to evensong.

Eight centuries ago on the edge of the marsh men had built the huge cathedral, or it may have been seven centuries ago, or perhaps nine—it was all one to the Wild things.

So evensong was held, and candles lighted, and the lights through the windows shone red and green in the water, and the sound of the organ went roaring over the marshes. But from the deep and perilous places, edged with bright mosses, the Wild Things came leaping up to dance on the reflection of the stars, and over their heads as they danced the marsh-lights rose and fell.

The Wild Things are somewhat human in appearance, only all brown of skin and barely two feet high. Their ears are pointed like the squirrel's, only far larger, and they leap to prodigious heights. They live all day under deep pools in the loneliest marshes, but at night they come up and dance. Each Wild Thing has over its head a marsh light, which moves athe Wild Thing moves; they have no souls, and cannot die, and are of the kith of the Elf-Folk.

All night they dance over the marshes treading upon the reflection of the stars (for the bare surface of the water will not hold them by itself); but when the stars begin to pale, they sink down one by one into the pools of their home. Or if they tarry longer, sitting upon the rushes, their bodies fade from view as the marsh-fires pale in the light, and by daylight none may see the Wild Things of the kith of the Elf-folk. Neither may any see them at night unless they were born, as I was,

in the hour of dusk, just at the moment when the first star appears.

Now, on the night that I tell of, a little Wild Thing had gone drifting over the waste, till it came right up to the walls of the cathedral and danced upon the images of the coloured saints as they lay in the water among the reflection of the stars. And as it leaped in its fantastic dance, it saw through the painted windows to where the people prayed, and heard the organ roaring over the marshes. The sound of the organ roared over the marshes, but the song and prayers of the people streamed up from the cathedral's highest tower like thin gold chains, and reached to Paradise, and up and down them went the angels from Paradise to the people, and from the people to Paradise again.

Then something akin to discontent troubled the Wild Thing for the first time since the making of the marshes; and the soft grey ooze and the chill of the deep water seemed to be not enough, nor the first arrival from northwards of the tumultuous geese, not the wild rejoicing of the wings of the wildfowl when every feather sings, nor the wonder of the calm ice that comes when the snipe depart and beards the rushes with frost and clothes the hushed waste with a mysterious haze where the sun goes red and low, nor even the dance of the Wild Things in the marvellous night; and the little Wild Thing longed to have a soul, and to go and worship God.

And when evensong was over and the lights were out, it went back crying to its kith.

But on the next night, as soon as the images of the stars appeared in the water, it went leaping away from star to star to the farthest edge of the marshlands, where

a great wood grew where dwelt the Oldest of the Wild Things.

And it found the Oldest of Wild Things sitting under a tree, sheltering itself from the moon.

And the little Wild Thing said: "I want to have a soul to worship God, and to know the meaning of music, and to see the inner beauty of the marshlands and to imagine Paradise."

And the Oldest of the Wild Things said to it: "What have we to do with God? We are only Wild Things, and of the kith of the Elf-folk."

But it only answered, "I want to have a soul."

Then the Oldest of the Wild Things said: "I have no soul to give you; but if you got a soul, one day you would have to die, and if you knew the meaning of music you would learn the meaning of sorrow, and it is better to be a Wild Thing and not to die."

So it went weeping away.

But they that were kin to the Elf-folk were sorry for the little Wild Thing; and though the Wild Things cannot sorrow long, having no souls to sorrow with, yet they felt for awhile a soreness where their souls should be when they saw the grief of their comrade.

So the kith of the Elf-folk went abroad by night to make a soul for the little Wild Thing. And they went over the marshes till they came to the high fields among the flowers and grasses. And there they gathered a large piece of gossamer that the spider had laid by twilight; and the dew was on it.

Into this dew had shone all the lights of the long banks of the ribbed sky, as all the colours changed in the restful spaces of evening. And over it the marvelous night had gleamed with all its stars.

Then the Wild Things went with their dew-bespangled gossamer down to the edge of their home. And there they gathered a piece of the grey mist that lies by night over the marshlands. And into it they put the melody of the waste that is borne up and down the marshes in the evening on the wings of the golden plover. And they put into it, too, the mournful songs that the reeds are compelled to sing before the presence of the arrogant North Wind. Then each of the Wild Things gave some treasured memory of the old marshes, "For we can spare it," they said. And to all this they added a few images of the stars that they gathered out of the water. Still the soul that the kith of the Elf-folk were making had no life.

Then they put into it the low voices of two lovers that went walking in the night, wandering late alone. And after that they waited for the dawn. And the queenly dawn appeared, and the marsh-lights of the Wild Things paled in the glare, and their bodies faded from view; and still they waited by the marsh's edge. And to them waiting came over field and marsh, from the ground and out of the sky, the myriad song of the birds.

This, too, the Wild Things put into the piece of haze that they had gathered in the marshlands, and wrapped it all up in their dew-bespangled gossamer. Then the soul lived.

And there it lay in the hands of the Wild Things no larger than a hedgehog; and wonderful lights were in it, green and blue; and they changed ceaselessly, going round and round, and in the grey midst of it was a purple flare.

And the next night they came to the little Wild Thing and showed her the gleaming soul. And they

said to her: "If you must have a soul and go and worship God, and become a mortal and die, place this to your left breast a little above the heart, and it will enter and you will become a human. But if you take it you can never be rid of it to become a mortal again unless you pluck it out and give it to another; and *we* will not take it, and most of the humans have a soul already. And if you cannot find a human without a soul you will one day die, and your soul cannot go to Paradise because it was only made in the marshes."

Far away the little Wild Thing saw the cathedral windows alight for evensong, and the song of the people mounting up to Paradise, and all the angels going up and down. So it bid farewell with tears and thanks to the Wild Things of the Kith of Elf-folk, and went leaping away towards the green dry land, holding the soul in its hands.

And the Wild Things were sorry that it had gone, but could not be sorry long because they had no souls.

At the marsh's edge the little Wild Thing gazed for some moments over the water to where the marsh-fires were leaping up and down, and then pressed the soul against its left breast a little above the heart.

Instantly it became a young and beautiful woman, who was cold and frightened. She clad herself somehow with bundles of reeds, and went towards the lights of a house that stood close by. And she pushed open the door and entered, and found a farmer and a farmer's wife sitting over their supper.

And the farmer's wife took the little Wild Thing with the soul of the marshes up to her room, and clothed her and braided her hair, and brought her down again,

and gave her the first food that she had ever eaten. Then the farmer's wife asked many questions.

"Where have you come from?" she said.

"Over the marshes."

"From what direction?" said the farmer's wife.

"South," said the little Wild Thing with the new soul.

"But none can come over the marshes from the south," said the farmer's wife.

"No, they can't do that," said the farmer.

"I lived in the marshes."

"Who are you?" asked the farmer's wife.

"I am a Wild Thing, and have found a soul in the marshes, and we are kin to the Elf-folk."

Talking it over afterwards, the farmer and his wife agreed that she must be a gipsy who had been lost, and that she was queer with hunger and exposure.

So that night the little Wild Thing slept in the farmer's house, but her new soul stayed awake the whole night long dreaming of the beauty of the marshes.

As soon as dawn came over the waste and shone on the farmer's house, she looked from the window towards the glittering water, and saw the inner beauty of the marsh. For the Wild Things only love the marsh and know its haunts, but now she perceived the mystery of its distances and the glamour of its perilous pools, with their fair and deadly mosses, and felt the marvel of the North Wind who comes dominant out of unknown icy lands, and the wonder of that ebb and flow of life when the wildfowl whirl in at evening to the marshlands and at dawn pass out to sea. And she knew that over her head above the farmer's house stretched wide Paradise, where perhaps God was now imagining

a sunrise while angels played low on lutes, and the sun came rising up on the world below to gladden fields and marshes.

And all that heaven thought, the marsh thought too; for the blue of the marsh was as the blue of heaven, and the great cloud shapes in heaven became the shapes in the marsh, and through each ran momentary rivers of purple, errant between banks of gold. And the stalwart army of reeds appeared out of the gloom with all their pennons waving as far as the eye could see. And from another window she saw the vast cathedral gathering its ponderous strength together, and lifting it up in towers out of the marshlands.

She said, "I will never, never leave the marsh."

An hour later she dressed with great difficulty and went down to eat the second meal of her life. The farmer and his wife were kindly folk, and taught her how to eat.

"I suppose the gipsies don't have knives and forks," one said to the other afterwards.

After breakfast the farmer went and saw the Dean, who lived near his cathedral, and presently returned and brought back to the Dean's house the little Wild Thing with the new soul.

"This is the lady," said the farmer. "This is Dean Murnith." Then he went away.

"Ah," said the Dean, "I understand you were lost the other night in the marshes. It was a terrible night to be lost in the marshes."

"I love the marshes," said the little Wild Thing with the new soul.

"Indeed! How old are you?" said the Dean.

"I don't know," she answered.

"You must know about how old you are," he said.

"Oh, about ninety," she said, "or more."

"Ninety years!" exclaimed the Dean.

"No, ninety centuries," she said; "I am as old as the marshes."

Then she told her story—how she had longed to be a human and go and worship God, and have a soul and see the beauty of the world, and how all the Wild Things had made her a soul of gossamer and mist and music and strange memories.

"But if this is true," said Dean Murnith, "this is very wrong. God cannot have intended you to have a soul. What is your name?"

"I have no name," she answered.

"We must find a Christian name and a surname for you. What would you like to be called?"

"Song of the Rushes," she said.

"That won't do at all," said the Dean.

"Then I would like to be called Terrible North Wind, or Star in the Waters," she said.

"No, no, no," said Dean Murnith; "that is quite impossible. We could call you Miss Rush if you like. How would Mary Rush do? Perhaps you had better have another name—say Mary Jane Rush."

So the little Wild Thing with the soul of the marshes took the names that were offered her, and became Mary Jane Rush.

"And we must find something for you to do," said Dean Murnith. "Meanwhile we can give you a room here."

"I don't want to do anything," replied Mary Jane; "I want to worship God in the cathedral and live beside the marshes."

Then Mrs. Murnith came in, and for the rest of that day Mary Jane stayed at the house of the Dean.

And there with her new soul she perceived the beauty of the world; for it came grey and level out of misty distances, and widened into grassy fields and ploughlands right up to the edge of an old gabled town; and solitary in the fields far off an ancient windmill stood and his honest hand-made sails went round and round in the free East Anglian winds. Close by, the gabled houses leaned out over the streets, planted fair upon sturdy timbers that grew in the olden time, all glorying among themselves upon their beauty. And out of them, buttress by buttress, growing and going upwards, aspiring tower by tower, rose the cathedral.

And she saw the people moving in the streets all leisurely and slow, and unseen among them, whispering to each other, unheard by living men and concerned only with bygone things, drifted the ghosts of very long ago. And wherever the streets ran eastwards, wherever gaps in the houses, always there broke into view the sight of the great marshes, like to some bar of music weird and strange that haunts a melody, arising again and again, played on the violin by one musician only, who plays no other bar, and he is swart and lank about the hair and bearded about the lips, and his moustache droops long and low, and no one knows the land from which he comes.

All these were good things for a new soul to see.

Then the sun set over green fields and ploughlands and the night came up. One by one the merry lights of cheery lamp-lit windows took their stations in the solemn night.

Then the bells rang, far up in a cathedral tower, and

their melody fell on the roofs of the old houses and poured over their eaves until the streets were full, and then flooded away over green fields and ploughlands till it came to the sturdy mill and brought the miller trudging to evensong, and far away eastwards and seawards the sound rang out over the remoter marshes. And it was all as yesterday to the old ghosts in the streets.

Then the Dean's wife took Mary Jane to evening service, and she saw three hundred candles filling all the aisle with light. But sturdy pillars stood there in unlit vastnesses; great colonnades going away into the gloom where evening and morning, year in year out, they did their work in the dark, holding the cathedral roof aloft. And it was stiller than the marshes are still when the ice has come and the wind that brought it has fallen.

Suddenly into this stillness rushed the sound of the organ, roaring, and presently the people prayed and sang.

No longer could Mary Jane see their prayers ascending like thin gold chains, for that was but an elfin fancy, but she imagined clear in her new soul the seraphs passing in the ways of Paradise, and the angels changing guard to watch the World by night.

When the Dean had finished service, a young curate, Mr. Millings, went up into the pulpit.

He spoke of Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus: and Mary Jane was glad that there were rivers having such names, and heard with wonder of Nineveh, that great city, and many things strange and new.

And the light of the candles shone on the curate's

fair hair, and his voice went ringing down the aisle, and Mary Jane rejoiced that he was there.

But when his voice stopped she felt a sudden loneliness, such as she had not felt since the making of the marshes; for the Wild Things never are lonely and never unhappy, but dance all night on the reflection of the stars, and having no souls desire nothing more.

After the collection was made, before any one moved to go, Mary Jane walked up the aisle to Mr. Millings.

"I love you," she said.

CHAPTER II

Nobody sympathised with Mary Jane. "So unfortunate for Mr. Millings," every one said; "such a promising young man."

Mary Jane was sent away to a great manufacturing city of the Midlands, where work had been found for her in a cloth factory. And there was nothing in that town that was good for a soul to see. For it did not know that beauty was to be desired; so it made many things by machinery, and became hurried in all its ways, and boasted its superiority over other cities and became richer and richer, and there was none to pity it.

In this city Mary Jane had had lodgings found for her near the factory.

At six o'clock on those November mornings, about the time that, far away from the city, the wildfowl rose up out of the calm marshes and passed to the troubled spaces of the sea, at six o'clock the factory uttered a prolonged howl and gathered the workers to-

gether, and there they worked, saving two hours for food, the whole of the daylit hours and into the dark till the bells tolled six again.

There Mary Jane worked with other girls in a long dreary room, where giants sat pounding wool into a long thread-like strip with iron, rasping hands. And all day long they roared as they sat at their soulless work. But the work of Mary Jane was not with these, only their roar was ever in her ears as their clattering iron limbs went to and fro.

Her work was to tend a creature smaller, but infinitely more cunning.

It took the strip of wool that the giants had threshed, and whirled it round and round until it had twisted it into hard thin thread. Then it would make a clutch with fingers of steel at the thread that it had gathered, and waddle away about five yards and come back with more.

It had mastered all the subtlety of skilled workers, and had gradually displaced them; one thing only it could not do, it was unable to pick up the ends if a piece of the thread broke, in order to tie them together again. For this a human soul was required, and it was Mary Jane's business to pick up broken ends; and the moment she placed them together the busy soulless creature tied them for itself.

All here was ugly; even the green wool as it whirled round and round was neither the green of the grass nor yet the green of the rushes, but a sorry muddy green that befitted a sullen city under a murky sky.

When she looked out over the roofs of the town, there too was ugliness; and well the houses knew it, for with hideous stucco they aped in grotesque mimicry

the pillars and temples of old Greece, pretending to one another to be that which they were not. And emerging from these houses and going in, and seeing the pretence of paint and stucco year after year until it all peeled away, the souls of the poor owners of those houses sought to be other souls until they grew weary of it.

At evening Mary Jane went back to her lodgings. Only then, after the dark had fallen, could the soul of Mary Jane perceive any beauty in that city, when the lamps were lit and here and there a star shone through the smoke. Then she would have gone abroad and beheld the night, but this the old woman to whom she was confided would not let her do. And the days multiplied themselves by seven and became weeks, and the weeks passed by, and all days were the same. And all the while the soul of Mary Jane was crying for beautiful things, and found not one, saving on Sundays, when she went to church, and left it to find the city greyer than before.

One day she decided that it was better to be a Wild Thing in the lonely marshes than to have a soul that cried for beautiful things and found not one. From that day she determined to be rid of her soul, so she told her story to one of the factory girls, and said to her:

"The other girls are poorly clad and they do soulless work; surely some of them have no souls and would take mine."

But the factory girl said to her: "All the poor have souls. It is all they have."

Then Mary Jane watched the rich whenever she saw them, and vainly sought for some one without a soul.

One day at the hour when the machines rested and

the human beings that tended them rested too, the wind being at that time from the direction of the marshlands, the soul of Mary Jane lamented bitterly. Then, as she stood outside the factory gates, the soul irresistibly compelled her to sing, and a wild song came from her lips hymning the marshlands. And into her song came crying her yearning for home and for the sound of the shout of the North Wind, masterful and proud, with his lovely lady the snow; and she sang of tales that the rushes murmured to one another, tales that the teal knew and the watchful heron. And over the crowded streets her song went crying sway, the song of waste places and of wild free lands, full of wonder and magic, for she had in her elf-made soul the song of the birds and the roar of the organ in the marshes.

At this moment Signor Thompsoni, the well-known English tenor, happened to go by with a friend. They stopped and listened; every one stopped and listened.

"There has been nothing like this in Europe in my time," said Signor Thompsoni.

So a change came into the life of Mary Jane.

People were written to, and finally it was arranged that she should take a leading part in the Covent Garden Opera in a few weeks.

So she went to London to learn.

London and singing lessons were better than the City of the Midlands and those terrible machines. Yet still Mary Jane was not free to go and live as she liked by the edge of the marshlands, and she was still determined to be rid of her soul, but could find no one that had not a soul of their own.

One day she was told that the English people would

not listen to her as Miss Rush, and was asked what more suitable name she would like to be called by.

"I would like to be called Terrible North Wind," said Mary Jane, "or Song of the Rushes."

When she was told that this was impossible and Signorina Maria Russiano was suggested, she acquiesced at once, as she had acquiesced when they took her away from her curate; she knew nothing of the ways of humans.

At last the day of the Opera came round, and it was a cold day of the winter.

And Signorina Russiano appeared on the stage before a crowded house.

And Signorina Russiano sang.

And into the song went all the longing of her soul, the soul that could not go to Paradise, but could only worship God and know the meaning of music, and the longing pervaded that Italian song as the infinite mystery of the hills is borne along the sound of distant sheep-hills. Then in the souls that were in that crowded house arose little memories of a great while since that were quite, quite dead, and lived awhile again during that marvellous song.

And a strange chill went into the blood of all that listened, as though they stood on the border of bleak marshes and the North Wind blew.

And some it moved to sorrow and some to regret, and some to an unearthly joy,—then suddenly the song went wailing away like the winds of the winter from the marshlands when Spring appears from the South.

So it ended. And a great silence fell fog-like over all that house, breaking in upon the end of a chatty

conversation that Celia, Countess of Birmingham, was enjoying with a friend.

In the dead hush Signorina Russiano rushed from the stage; she appeared again running among the audience, and dashed up to Lady Birmingham.

"Take my soul," she said; "it is a beautiful soul. It can worship God, and knows the meaning of music and can imagine Paradise. And if you go to the marshlands with it you will see beautiful things; there is an old town there built of lovely timbers, with ghosts in its streets."

Lady Birmingham stared. Every one was standing up. "See," said Signorina Russiano, "it is a beautiful soul."

And she clutched at her left breast a little above the heart, and there was the soul shining in her hand, with the green and blue lights going round and round and the purple flare in the midst.

"Take it," she said, "and you will love all that is beautiful, and know the four winds, each one by his name, and the songs of the birds at dawn. I do not want it, because I am not free. Put it to your left breast a little above the heart."

Still everybody was standing up, and Lady Birmingham felt uncomfortable.

"Please offer it to some one else," she said.

"But they all have souls already," said Signorina Russiano.

And everybody went on standing up. And Lady Birmingham took the soul in her hand.

"Perhaps it is lucky," she said.

She felt that she wanted to pray.

She half-closed her eyes, and said "Unberufen."

Then she put the soul to her left breast a little above the heart, and hoped that the people would sit down and the singer go away.

Instantly a heap of clothes collapsed before her. For a moment, in the shadow among the seats, those who were born in the dusk hour might have seen a little brown thing leaping free from the clothes, then it sprang into the bright light of the hall, and became invisible to any human eye.

It dashed about for a little, then found the door, and presently was in the lamplit streets.

To those that were born in the dusk hour it might have been seen leaping rapidly wherever the streets ran northwards and eastwards, disappearing from human sight as it passed under the lamps and appearing again beyond them with a marsh-light over its head.

Once a dog perceived it and gave chase, and was left far behind.

The cats of London, who are all born in the dusk hour, howled fearfully as it went by.

Presently it came to the meaner streets, where the houses are smaller. Then it went due north-eastwards, leaping from roof to roof. And so in a few minutes it came to more open spaces, and then to the desolate lands, where market gardens grow, which are neither town nor country. Till at last the good black trees came into view, with their demonaic shapes in the night, and the grass was cold and wet, and the night-mist floated over it. And a great white owl came by, going up and down in the dark. And at all these things the little Wild Thing rejoiced elvishly.

And it left London far behind it, reddening the sky,

and could distinguish no longer its unlovely roar, but heard again the noises of the night.

And now it would come through a hamlet glowing and comfortable in the night; and now to the dark, wet, open fields again; and many an owl it overtook as they drifted through the night, a people friendly to the Elf-folk. Sometimes it crossed wide rivers, leaping from star to star; and, choosing its way as it went, to avoid the hard rough roads, came before midnight to the East Anglian lands.

And it heard there the shout of the North Wind, who was dominant and angry, as he drove southwards his adventurous geese; while the rushes bent before him chaunting plaintively and low, like enslaved rowers of some fabulous trireme, bending and swinging under blows of the lash, and singing all the while a doleful song.

And it felt the good dank air that clothes by night the broad East Anglian lands, and came again to some old perilous pool where the soft green mosses grew, and there plunged downward and downward into the dear dark water till it felt the homely ooze once more coming up between its toes. Thence, out of the lovely chill that is in the heart of the ooze, it arose renewed and rejoicing to dance upon the image of the stars.

I chanced to stand that night by the marsh's edge, forgetting in my mind the affairs of men; and I saw the marshfires come leaping up from all the perilous places. And they came up by flocks the whole night long to the number of a great multitude, and danced away together over the marshes.

And I believe that there was a great rejoicing all that night among the kith of the Elf-folk.

The Sword of Welleran

Where the great plain of Tarphet runs up, as the sea in estuaries, among the Cyresian mountains, there stood long since the city of Merimna well nigh among the shadows of the crags. I have never seen a city in the world so beautiful as Merimna seemed to me when first I dreamed of it. It was a marvel of spires and figures of bronze, and marble fountains, and trophies of fabulous wars, and broad streets given over wholly to the Beautiful. Right through the centre of the city there went an avenue fifty strides in width, and along each side of it stood likenesses in bronze of the kings of all the countries that the people of Merimna had ever known. At the end of that avenue was a colossal chariot with three bronze horses driven by the winged figure of Fame, and behind her in the chariot the huge form of Welleran, Merimna's ancient hero, standing with extended sword. So urgent was the mien and attitude of Fame, and so swift the pose of the horses, that you had sworn that the chariot was instantly upon you, and that its dust already veiled the faces of the kings. And in the city was a mighty hall, wherein were stored the trophies of Merimna's heroes. Sculptured it was, and domed, the glory of the art of masons a long while dead, and on the summit of the dome the image

of Rollory sat gazing across the Cyresian mountains towards the wide lands beyond, the lands that knew his sword. And beside Rollory, like an old nurse, the figure of Victory sat, hammering into a golden wreath of laurels for his head the crowns of fallen kings.

Such was Merimna, a city of sculptured Victories and warriors of bronze. Yet in the time of which I write the art of war had been forgotten in Merimna, and the people almost slept. To and fro and up and down they would walk through the marble streets, gazing at memorials of the things achieved by their country's swords in the hands of those that long ago had loved Merimna well. Almost they slept, and dreamed of Welleran, Soorenard, Mommolek, Rollory, Akanax, and young Irain.

Of the lands beyond the mountains that lay all round about them they knew nothing, save that they were the theater of the terrible deeds of Welleran, that he had done with his sword. Long since these lands had fallen back into the possession of the nations that had been scourged by Merimna's armies. Nothing now remained to Merimna's men save their inviolate city and the glory of the remembrance of their ancient fame. At night they would place sentinels far out in the desert, but these always slept at their posts, dreaming of Rollory, and three times every night a guard would march around the city, clad in purple, bearing lights and singing songs of Welleran. Always the guard went unarmed, but as the sound of their song went echoing across the plain towards the looming mountains, the desert robbers would hear the name of Welleran and steal away to their haunts. Often dawn would come across the plain, shimmering marvellously upon Merim-

na's spires, abashing all the stars, and find the guard still singing songs of Welleran, and would change the colour of their purple robes and pale the lights they bore. But the guard would go back leaving the ramparts safe, and one by one the sentinels in the plain would awake from dreaming of Rollory and shuffle back into the city quite cold. Then something of the menace would pass away from the faces of the Cyresian mountains, that from the north and the west and the south lowered upon Merimna, and clear in the morning the statues and the pillars would arise in the old inviolate city.

You would wonder that an unarmed guard and sentinels that slept could defend a city that was stored with all the glories of art, that was rich in gold and bronze, a haughty city that had erst oppressed its neighbours, whose people had forgotten the art of war. Now this is the reason that, though all her other lands had long been taken from her, Merimna's city was safe. A strange thing was believed or feared by the fierce tribes beyond the mountains, and it was credited among them that at certain stations round Merimna's ramparts there still rode Welleran, Soorenard, Mommolek, Rollory, Akanax, and young Irain. Yet it was close on a hundred years since Irain, the youngest of Merimna's heroes, fought his last battle with the tribes.

Sometimes indeed there arose among the tribes young men who doubted, and said: "How may a man forever escape death?"

But graver men answered them: "Hear us, ye whose wisdom has discerned so much, and discern for us how a man may escape death when two score horsemen assail him with their swords, all of them sworn

to kill him, and all of them sworn upon their country's gods; as often Welleran hath. Or discern for us how two men alone may enter a walled city by night, and bring away from it that city's king, as did Soorenard and Mommolek. Surely men that have escaped so many swords and so many sleety arrows shall escape the years and Time."

And the young men were humbled and became silent. Still, the suspicion grew. And often when the sun set on the Cyresian mountains, men in Merimna discerned the forms of savage tribesmen black against the light, peering towards the city.

All knew in Merimna that the figures round the ramparts were only statues of stone, yet even there a hope lingered among a few that some day their old heroes would come again, for certainly none had ever seen them die. Now, it had been the wont of these six warriors of old, as each received his last wound and knew it to be mortal, to ride away to a certain deep ravine and cast his body in, as somewhere I have read great elephants do, hiding their bones away from lesser beasts. It was a ravine steep and narrow even at the ends, a great cleft into which no man could come by any path. There rode Welleran alone, panting hard; and there later rode Soorenard and Mommolek, Mommolek with a mortal wound upon him not to return, but Soorenard was unwounded and rode back alone from leaving his dear friend resting among the mighty bones of Welleran. And there rode Soorenard, when his day was come, with Rollory and Akanax, and Rollory rode in the middle and Soorenard and Akanax on either side. And the long ride was a hard and weary thing for Soorenard and Akanax, for they both had

mortal wounds; but the long ride was easy for Rollory, for he was dead. So the bones of these five heroes whitened in an enemy's land, and very still they were though they had troubled cities, and none knew where they lay saving only Irain, the young captain, who was but twenty-five when Mommolek, Rollory, and Akanax rode away. And among them were strewn their saddles and their bridles, and all the accoutrements of their horses, lest any man should ever find them afterwards and say in some foreign city: "Lo! the bridles or the saddles of Merimna's captains, taken in war," but their beloved trusty horses they turned free.

Forty years afterwards, in the hour of a great victory, his last wound came upon Irain, and the wound was terrible and would not close. And Irain was the last of the captains, and rode away alone. It was a long way to the dark ravine, and Irain feared that he would never come to the resting-place of the old heroes, and he urged his horse on swiftly, and clung to the saddle with his hands. And often as he rode he fell asleep, and dreamed of earlier days, and of the times when he first rode forth to the great wars of Welleran, and of the time when Welleran first spake to him, and of the faces of Welleran's comrades when they led charges in the battle. And ever as he awoke a great longing arose in his soul, as it hovered on his body's brink, a longing to lie among the bones of the old heroes. At last when he saw the dark ravine making a scar across the plain, the soul of Irain slipped out through his great wound and spread its wing, and pain departed from the poor hacked body and, still urging his horse forward, Irain died. But the old true horse cantered on, till suddenly he saw before him the dark

ravine and put his forefeet out on the very edge of it and stopped. Then the body of Irain came toppling forward over the right shoulder of the horse, and his bones mingle and rest as the years go by with the bones of Merimna's heroes.

Now there was a little boy in Merimna named Rold. I saw him first, I, the dreamer, that sit before my fire asleep, I saw him first as his mother led him through the great hall where stand the trophies of Merimna's heroes. He was five years old, and they stood before the great glass casket wherein lay the sword of Welleran, and his mother said: "The sword of Welleran." And Rold said: "What should a man do with the sword of Welleran?" And his mother answered: "Men look at the sword and remember Welleran." And they went on and stood before the great red cloak of Welleran, and the child said: "Why did Welleran wear this great red cloak?" And his mother answered: "It was the way of Welleran."

When Rold was a little older he stole out of his mother's house quite in the middle of the night when all the world was still, and Merimna asleep, dreaming of Welleran, Soorenard, Mommolek, Rollory, Akanax, and young Irain. And he went down to the ramparts to hear the purple guard go by, singing of Welleran. And the purple guard came by with lights, all singing in the stillness, and dark shapes out in the desert turned and fled. And Rold went back again to his mother's house with a great yearning towards the name of Welleran, such as men feel for very holy things.

And in time Rold grew to know the pathway all round the ramparts, and the six equestrian statues that were there, guarding Merimna still. These statues were

not like the other statues, they were so cunningly wrought of many-coloured marbles that none might be quite sure until very close that they were not living men. There was a horse of dappled marble, the horse of Akanax. The horse of Rollory was of alabaster, pure white, his armour was wrought out of a stone that shone, and his horseman's cloak was made of a blue stone. He looked northwards.

But the marble horse of Welleran was pure black, and there sat Welleran upon him, looking solemnly westwards. His horse it was whose cold neck Rold most loved to stroke, and it was Welleran whom the watchers at sunset on the mountains the most clearly saw as they peered towards the city. And Rold loved the red nostrils of the great black horse and his rider's jasper cloak.

Now, beyond the Cyresians the suspicion grew that Merimna's heroes were dead, and a plan was devised that a man should go by night and come close to the figures upon the ramparts and see whether they were Welleran, Soorenard, Mommolek, Rollory, Akanax, and young Irain. And all were agreed upon the plan, and many names were mentioned of those who should go, and the plan matured for many years. It was during these years that watchers clustered often at sunset upon the mountains, but came no nearer. Finally, a better plan was made, and it was decided that two men who had been by chance condemned to death should be given a pardon if they went down into the plain by night and discovered whether or not Merimna's heroes lived. At first the two prisoners dared not go, but after a while one of them, Seejar, said to his companion, Sajar-Ho: "See now, when the King's axeman smites a man upon the neck that man dies."

And the other said that this was so. Then said Seejar: "And even though Welleran smite a man with his sword, no more befalleth him than death."

Then Sajar-Ho thought for a while. Presently he said: "Yet the eye of the King's axeman might err at the moment of his stroke or his arm fail him, and the eye of Welleran hath never erred nor his arm failed. It were better to bide here."

Then said Seejar: "Maybe that Welleran is dead and that some other holds his place upon the ramparts, or even a statue of stone."

But Sajar-Ho made answer: "How can Welleran be dead when he escaped from two score horsemen with swords that were sworn to slay him and all sworn upon our country's gods?"

And Seejar said: "This story his father told my grandfather concerning Welleran. On the day that the fight was lost on the plains of Kurlistan he saw a dying horse near to the river, and the horse looked piteously towards the water but could not reach it. And the father of my grandfather saw Welleran go down to the river's brink and bring water from it with his own hand and give it to the horse. Now we are in as sore a plight as was that horse, and as near to death; it may be that Welleran will pity us, while the King's axeman cannot, because of the commands of the King."

Then said Sajar-Ho: "Thou wast ever a cunning arguer. Thou broughtest us into this trouble with thy cunning and thy devices, we will see if thou canst bring us out of it. We will go."

So news was brought to the King that the two prisoners would go down to Merimna.

That evening the watchers led them to the mountain's

edge, and Seejar and Sajar-Ho went down towards the plain by the way of a deep ravine, and the watchers watched them go. Presently their figures were wholly hid in the dusk. Then night came up, huge and holy, out of waste marshes to the eastwards and low lands and the sea; and the angels that watched over all men through the day closed their great eyes and slept, and the angels that watched over all men through the night woke and ruffled their deep blue feathers and stood up and watched. But the plain became a thing of mystery filled with fears. So the two spies went down the deep ravine, and coming to the plain sped stealthily across it. Soon they came to the line of sentinels asleep upon the sand, and one stirred in his sleep calling on Rollory, and a great dread seized upon the spies and they whispered "Rollory lives," but they remembered the King's axeman and went on. And next they came to the great bronze statue of Fear, carved by some sculptor of the old glorious years in the attitude of flight towards the mountains, calling to her children as she fled. And the children of Fear were carved in the likeness of the armies of all the trans-Cyresian tribes, with their backs towards Merimna, flocking after Fear. And from where he sat on his horse behind the ramparts the sword of Welleran was stretched out over their heads, as ever it was wont. And the two spies kneeled down in the sand and kissed the huge bronze foot of the statue of Fear, saying: "O Fear, Fear." And as they knelt they saw lights far off along the ramparts coming nearer and nearer, and heard men singing of Welleran. And the purple guard came nearer and went by with their lights, and passed on into the distance round the ramparts still singing of Welleran. And all the while the two spies

clung to the foot of the statue, muttering: "O Fear, Fear." But when they could hear the name of Welleran no more they arose and came to the ramparts and climbed over them and came at once upon the figure of Welleran, and they bowed low to the ground, and Seejar said: "O Welleran, we came to see whether thou didst yet live." And for a long while they waited with their faces to earth. At last Seejar looked up towards Welleran's terrible sword, and it was still stretched out pointing to the carved armies that followed after Fear. And Seejar bowed to the ground again and touched the horse's hoof, and it seemed cold to him. And he moved his hand higher and touched the leg of the horse, and it seemed quite cold. At last he touched Welleran's foot, and the armour on it seemed hard and stiff. Then as Welleran moved not and spake not, Seejar climbed up at last and touched his hand, the terrible hand of Welleran, and it was marble. Then Seejar laughed aloud, and he and Sajar-Ho sped down the empty pathway and found Rollory, and he was marble too. Then they climbed down over the ramparts and went back across the plain, walking contemptuously past the figure of Fear, and heard the guard returning round the ramparts for the third time, singing of Welleran: and Seejar said: "Ay, you may sing of Welleran, but Welleran is dead and a doom is on your city."

And they passed on and found the sentinel still restless in the night and calling on Rollory. And Sajar-Ho muttered: "Ay, you may call on Rollory, but Rollory is dead and naught can save your city."

And the two spies went back alive to their mountains again, and as they reached them the first ray of the sun came up red over the desert behind Merimna and lit

Merimna's spires. It was the hour when the purple guard were wont to go back into the city with their tapers pale and their robes a brighter colour, when the cold sentinels came shuffling in from dreaming in the desert; it was the hour when the desert robbers hid themselves away, going back to their mountain caves, it was the hour when gauze-winged insects are born that only live for a day, it was the hour when men die that are condemned to death, and in this hour a great peril, new and terrible, arose for Merimna and Merimna knew it not.

Then Seejar turning said: "See how red the dawn is and how red the spires of Merimna. They are angry with Merimna in Paradise and They bode its doom."

So the two spies went back and brought the news to their king, and for a few days the kings of those countries were gathering their armies together; and one evening the armies of four kings were massed together at the top of the deep ravine, all crouching below the summit waiting for the sun to set. All wore resolute and fearless faces, yet inwardly every man was praying to his gods, unto each one in turn.

Then the sun set, and it was the hour when the bats and the dark creatures are abroad and the lions come down from their lairs, and the desert robbers go into the plains again and fevers rise up winged and hot out of chill marshes, and it was the hour when safety leaves the thrones of kings, the hour when dynasties change. But in the desert the purple guard came swinging out of Merimna with their lights to sing of Welleran, and the sentinels lay down to sleep.

Now, into Paradise no sorrow may ever come, but may only beat like rain against its crystal walls, yet the

souls of Merimna's heroes were half aware of some sorrow far away as some sleeper feels that someone is chilled and cold, yet knows not in his sleep that it is he. And they fretted a little in their starry home. Then unseen there drifted earthward across the setting sun the souls of Welleran, Soorenard, Mommolek, Rollory, Akanax, and young Irain. Already when they reached Merimna's ramparts it was just dark, already the armies of the four kings had begun to move, jingling, down the deep ravine. But when the six warriors saw their city again, so little changed after so many years, they looked towards her with a longing that was nearer to tears than any that their souls had known before, crying to her:

"O Merimna, our city: Merimna, our walled city.

"How beautiful thou art with all thy spires, Merimna. For thee we left the earth, its kingdoms and little flowers, for thee we have come away for a while from Paradise.

"It is very difficult to draw away from the face of God—it is like a warm fire, it is like dear sleep, it is like a great anthem; yet there is a stillness all about it, a stillness full of lights.

"We have left Paradise for a while for thee, Merimna.

"Many women have we loved, Merimna, but only one city.

"Behold now all the people dream, all our loved people. How beautiful are dreams! In dreams the dead may live, even the long dead and the very silent. Thy lights are all sunk low, they have all gone out, no sound is in thy streets. Hush! Thou art like a maiden that shutteth up her eyes and is asleep, that draweth her

breath softly and is quite still, being at ease and untroubled.

"Behold now the battlements, the old battlements. Do men defend them still as we defended them? They are worn a little, the battlements," and drifting nearer they peered anxiously. "It is not by the hand of man that they are worn, our battlements. Only the years have done it and indomitable Time. Thy battlements are like the girdle of a maiden, a girdle that is round about her. See now the dew upon them, they are like a jewelled girdle.

"Thou art in great danger, Merimna, because thou art so beautiful. Must thou perish tonight because we no more defend thee, because we cry out and none hear us, as the bruised lilies cry out and none have known their voices?"

Thus spake those strong-voiced, battle-ordering captains, calling to their dear city, and their voices came no louder than the whispers of little bats that drift across the twilight in the evening. Then the purple guard came near, going round the ramparts for the first time in the night, and the old warriors called to them, "Merimna is in danger! Already her enemies gather in the darkness." But their voices were never heard, because they were only wandering ghosts. And the guard went by and passed unheeding away, still singing of Welleran.

Then said Welleran to his comrades: "Our hands can hold swords no more, our voices cannot be heard, we are stalwart men no longer. We are but dreams, let us go among dreams. Go all of you, and thou too, young Irain, and trouble the dreams of all the men that sleep, and urge them to take the old swords of their grand-

sires that hang upon the walls, and to gather at the mouth of the ravine; and I will find a leader and make him take my sword."

Then they passed up over the ramparts and into their dear city. And the wind blew about, this way and that, as he went, the soul of Welleran, who had upon his day withstood the charges of tempestuous armies. And the souls of his comrades, and with them young Irain, passed up into the city and troubled the dreams of every man who slept, and to every man the souls said in their dreams: "It is hot and still in the city. Go out now into the desert, into the cool under the mountains, but take with thee the old sword that hangs upon the wall for fear of the desert robbers."

And the god of that city sent up a fever over it, and the fever brooded over it and the streets were hot; and all that slept woke from dreaming that it would be cool and pleasant where the breezes came down the ravine out of the mountains: and they took the old swords that their grandsires had, according to their dreams, for fear of the desert robbers. And in and out of dreams passed the souls of Welleran's comrades, and with them young Irain, in great haste as the night wore on; and one by one they troubled the dreams of all Merimna's men and caused them to arise and go out armed, all save the purple guard, who, heedless of danger, sang of Welleran still, for walking men cannot hear the souls of the dead.

But Welleran drifted over the roofs of the city till he came to the form of Rold, lying fast asleep. Now, Rold was grown strong and was eighteen years of age, and he was fair of hair and tall like Welleran, and the

soul of Welleran hovered over him and went into his dreams as a butterfly flits through trellis-work into a garden of flowers, and the soul of Welleran said to Rold in his dreams: "Thou wouldst go and see again the sword of Welleran, the great curved sword of Welleran. Thou wouldst go and look at it in the night with the moonlight shining upon it."

And the longing of Rold in his dreams to see the sword caused him to walk still sleeping from his mother's house to the hall wherein were the trophies of the heroes. And the soul of Welleran urging the dreams of Rold caused him to pause before the great red cloak, and there the soul said among the dreams: "Thou art cold in the night; fling now a cloak around thee."

And Rold drew round about him the huge red cloak of Welleran. Then Rold's dreams took him to the sword, and the soul said to the dreams: "Thou hast a longing to hold the sword of Welleran: take up the sword in thy hand."

But Rold said: "What should a man do with the sword of Welleran?"

And the soul of the old captain said to the dreams: "It is a good sword to hold: take up the sword of Welleran."

And Rold, still sleeping and speaking aloud, said: "It is not lawful; none may touch the sword."

And Rold turned to go. Then a great and terrible cry arose in the soul of Welleran, all the more bitter for that he could not utter it, and it went round and round his soul finding no utterance, like a cry evoked long since by some murderous deed in some old haunted chamber that whispers through the ages heard by none.

And the soul of Welleran cried out to the dreams of Rold: "Thy knees are tied! Thou art fallen in a marsh! Thou canst not move."

And the dreams of Rold said to him: "Thy knees are tied, thou art fallen in a marsh," and Rold stood still before the sword. Then the soul of the warrior wailed among Rold's dreams, as Rold stood before the sword.

"Welleran is crying for his sword, his wonderful curved sword. Poor Welleran, that once fought for Merimna, is crying for his sword in the night. Thou wouldst not keep Welleran without his beautiful sword when he is dead and cannot come for it, poor Welleran who fought for Merimna."

And Rold broke the glass casket with his hand and took the sword, the great curved sword of Welleran; and the soul of the warrior said among Rold's dreams: "Welleran is waiting in the deep ravine that runs into the mountains, crying for his sword."

And Rold went down through the city and climbed over the ramparts, and walked with his eyes wide open but still sleeping over the desert to the mountains.

Already a great multitude of Merimna's citizens were gathered in the desert before the deep ravine with old swords in their hands, and Rold passed through them as he slept holding the sword of Welleran, and the people cried in amaze to one another as he passed: "Rold hath the sword of Welleran!"

And Rold came to the mouth of the ravine, and there the voices of the people woke him. And Rold knew nothing that he had done in his sleep, and looked in amazement at the sword in his hand and said: "What art thou, thou beautiful thing? Lights shimmer in thee,

thou art restless. It is the sword of Welleran, the great curved sword of Welleran!"

And Rold kissed the hilt of it, and it was salt upon his lips with the battle-sweat of Welleran. And Rold said: "What should a man do with the sword of Welleran?"

And all the people wondered at Rold as he sat there with the sword in his hand muttering, "What should a a man do with the sword of Welleran?"

Presently there came to the ears of Rold the noise of a jingling up in the ravine, and all the people, the people that knew naught of war, heard the jingling coming nearer in the night; for the four armies were moving on Merimna and not yet expecting an enemy. And Rold gripped upon the hilt of the great curved sword, and the sword seemed to lift a little. And a new thought came into the hearts of Merimna's people as they gripped their grandsires' swords. Nearer and nearer came the heedless armies of the four kings, and old ancestral memories began to arise in the minds of Merimna's people in the desert with their swords in their hands, sitting behind Rold. And all the sentinels were awake, holding their spears, for Rollory had put their dreams to flight, Rollory that once could put to flight armies and now was but a dream struggling with other dreams.

And now the armies had come very near. Suddenly Rold leaped up, crying—

"Welleran, and the sword of Welleran!"

And the savage, lusting sword that had thirsted for a hundred years went up with the hand of Rold and swept through a tribesman's ribs. And with the warm

blood all about it there came a joy into the curved soul of that mighty sword, like to the joy of a swimmer coming up dripping out of warm seas after living for long in a dry land. When they saw the red cloak and that terrible sword a cry ran through the tribal armies, "Welleran lives!" And there arose the sounds of the exulting of victorious men, and the panting of those that fled; and the sword singing softly to itself as it whirled dripping through the air. And the last that I saw of the battle as it poured into the depth and darkness of the ravine was the sword of Welleran sweeping up and falling, gleaming blue in the midnight whenever it arose and afterwards gleaming red, and so disappearing into the darkness.

But in the dawn Merimna's men came back, and the sun arising to give new life to the world, shone instead upon the hideous things that the sword of Welleran had done. And Rold said: "O sword, sword! How horrible thou art! Thou art a terrible thing to have come among men. How many eyes shall look upon gardens no more because of thee? How many fields must go empty that might have been fair with cottages, white cottages with children all about them? How many valleys must go desolate that might have nursed warm hamlets, because thou hast slain long since the men that might have built them? I hear the wind crying against thee, thou sword! It comes from the empty valleys. It comes over the bare fields. There are children's voices in it. They were never born. Death brings an end to crying for those that had life once, but these must cry for ever. O sword! sword! why did the gods send thee among men?" And the tears of Rold fell down upon the proud sword but could not wash it clean.

And now that the ardour of battle had passed away, the spirits of Merimna's people began to gloom a little, like their leader's, with their fatigue and with the cold of the morning: and they looked at the sword of Welleran in Rold's hand and said: "Not any more, not any more for ever will Welleran now return, for his sword is in the hand of another. Now we know indeed that he is dead. O Welleran, thou wast our sun and moon and all our stars. Now is the sun fallen down and the moon broken, and all the stars are scattered as the diamonds of a necklace that is snapped of one who is slain by violence."

Thus wept the people of Merimna in the hour of their great victory, for men have strange moods, while beside them their old inviolate city slumbered safe. But back from the ramparts and beyond the mountains and over the lands that they had conquered of old, beyond the world and back again to Paradise, went the souls of Welleran, Soorenard, Mommolek, Rollory, Akanax, and young Irain.

Editor's Note

The next two stories are from *A Dreamer's Tales* (1910). Lord Dunsany's autobiography contains an interesting note on the origin of the first of the stories, "The Madness of Andelsprutz."

> In March we went to Paris . . . [and] Paris was again an inspiration to me. The inspiration this time coming from one single thing, the statue of Strasburg with its mournful wreaths about it, among the statues of the principal cities of France in the Place de la Concorde. The tower-crowned figure with the wreaths at its feet gave me the idea for the tale called "The Madness of Andelsprutz," in which the soul of a city, after waiting thirty years for deliverance from an invader, goes mad and leaves the city and goes away to a desolate place, where the souls of Camelot and all dead cities come to comfort her.
>
> —L.C.

The Madness of Andelsprutz

I first saw the city of Andelsprutz on an afternoon in spring. The day was full of sunshine as I came by the way of the fields, and all that morning I had said, "There will be sunlight on it when I see for the first time the beautiful conquered city whose fame has so often made for me lovely dreams." Suddenly I saw its fortifications lifting out of the fields, and behind them stood its belfries. I went in by a gate and saw its houses and streets, and a great disappointment came upon me. For there is an air about a city, and it has a way with it, whereby a man may recognize one from another at once. There are cities full of happiness and cities full of pleasure, and cities full of gloom. There are cities with their faces to heaven, and some with their faces to earth; some have a way of looking at the past and others look at the future; some notice you if you come among them, others glance at you, others let you go by. Some love the cities that are their neighbours, others are dear to the plains and to the heath; some cities are bare to the wind, others have purple cloaks and others brown cloaks, and some are clad in white. Some tell the old tale of their infancy, with others it is secret; some cities sing and some mutter, some are angry, and some have broken hearts, and each city has her way of greeting Time.

I had said: "I will see Andelsprutz arrogant with her beauty," and I had said: "I will see her weeping over her conquest."

I had said: "She will sing songs to me," and "she will be reticent," "she will be all robed," and "she will be bare but splendid."

But the windows of Andelsprutz in her houses looked vacantly over the plains like the eyes of a dead madman. At the hour her chimes sounded unlovely and discordant, some of them were out of tune, and the bells of some were cracked, her roofs were bald and without moss. At evening no pleasant rumour arose in her streets. When the lamps were lit in the houses no mystical flood of light stole out into the dusk, you merely saw that there were lighted lamps; Andelsprutz had no way with her and no air about her. When the night fell and the blinds were all drawn down, then I perceived what I had not thought in the daylight. I knew then that Andelsprutz was dead.

I saw a fair-haired man who drank beer in a café, and I said to him:

"Why is the city of Andelsprutz quite dead, and her soul gone hence?"

He answered: "Cities do not have souls and there is never any life in bricks."

And I said to him: "Sir, you have spoken truly."

And I asked the same question of another man, and he gave me the same answer, and I thanked him for his courtesy. And I saw a man of a more slender build, who had black hair, and channels in his cheeks for tears to run in, and I said to him:

"Why is Andelsprutz quite dead, and when did her soul go hence?

And he answered: "Andelsprutz hoped too much. For thirty years would she stretch out her arms toward the land of Akla every night, to Mother Akla from whom she had been stolen. Every night she would be hoping and sighing and stretching out her arms to Mother Akla. At midnight, once a year, on the anniversary of the terrible day, Akla would send spies to lay a wreath against the walls of Andelsprutz. She could do no more. And on this night, once in every year, I used to weep, for weeping was the mood of the city that nursed me. Every night while other cities slept did Andelsprutz sit brooding here and hoping, till thirty wreaths lay mouldering by her walls, and still the armies at Akla would not come.

"But after she had hoped so long, and on the night that faithful spies had brought the thirtieth wreath, Andelsprutz went suddenly mad. All the bells clanged hideously in the belfries, horses bolted in the streets, the dogs all howled, the stolid conquerors awoke and turned in their beds and slept again; and I saw the grey shadowy form of Andelsprutz rise up, decking her hair with the phantasms of cathedrals, and stride away from her city. And the great shadowy form that was the soul of Andelsprutz went away muttering to the mountains, and there I followed her—for had she not been my nurse? Yes, I went away alone into the mountains, and for three days, wrapped in a cloak, I slept in their misty solitudes. I had no food to eat, and to drink I had only the water of the mountain streams. By day no living thing was near to me, and I heard nothing but the noise of the wind, and the mountain streams roaring. But for three nights I heard all round me on the mountain the sounds of a great city: I saw the lights of tall

cathedral windows flash momently on the peaks, and at times the glimmering lantern of some fortress patrol. And I saw the huge misty outline of the soul of Andelsprutz sitting decked with her ghostly cathedrals, speaking to herself, with her eyes fixed before her in a mad stare, telling of ancient wars. And her confused speech for all those nights upon the mountains was sometimes the voice of traffic, and then of church bells, and then of the bugles, but oftenest it was the voice of red war; and it was all incoherent, and she was quite mad.

"The third night it rained heavily all night long, but I stayed up there to watch the soul of my native city. And she still sat staring straight before her, raving; but her voice was gentler now, there were more chimes in it, and occasional song. Midnight passed, and the rain still swept down on me, and still the solitudes of the mountain were full of the mutterings of the poor mad city. And the hours after midnight came, the cold hours wherein sick men die.

"Suddenly I was aware of great shapes moving in the rain, and heard the sound of voices that were not of my city nor yet of any that I ever knew. And presently I discerned, though faintly, the souls of a great concourse of cities, all bending over Andelsprutz and comforting her, and the ravines of the mountains roared that night with the voices of cities that had lain still for centuries. For there came the soul of Camelot that had so long ago forsaken Usk; and there was Ilion, all girt with towers, still cursing the sweet face of ruinous Helen; I saw there Babylon and Persepolis, and the bearded face of bull-like Ninevah, and Athens mourning her immortal gods.

"All these souls of cities that were dead spoke that

night on the mountain to my city and soothed her, until at last she muttered of war no longer, and her eyes stared wildly no more, but she hid her face in her hands and for some while wept softly. At last she arose, and, walking slowly and with bended head, and leaning upon Ilion and Carthage, went mournfully eastwards; and the dust of her highways swirled behind her as she went, a ghostly dust that never turned to mud in all that drenching rain. And so the souls of the cities led her away, and gradually they disappeared from the mountain, and the ancient voices died away in the distance.

"Never since then have I seen my city alive; but once I met with a traveller who said that somewhere in the midst of a great desert are gathered together the souls of all dead cities. He said that he was lost once in a place where there was no water, and he heard their voices speaking all the night."

But I said: "I was once without water in a desert and heard a city speaking to me, but knew not whether it really spoke or not, for on that day I heard so many terrible things, and only some of them were true."

And the man with the black hair said: "I believe it to be true, though whither she went I know not. I only know that a shepherd found me in the morning faint with hunger and cold, and carried me down here; and when I came to Andelsprutz it was, as you have perceived it, dead."

The Sword and the Idol

It was a cold winter's evening late in the Stone Age; the sun had gone down blazing over the plains of Thold; there were no clouds, only the chill blue sky and the imminence of stars; and the surface of the sleeping Earth began to harden against the cold of the night. Presently from their lairs arose, and shook themselves and went stealthily forth, those of Earth's children to whom it is the law to prowl abroad as soon as the dusk has fallen. And they went pattering softly over the plain, and their eyes shone in the dark, and crossed and recrossed one another in their courses. Suddenly there became manifest in the midst of the plain that fearful portent of the presence of Man—a little flickering fire. And the children of Earth who prowl abroad by night looked sideways at it and snarled and edged away; all but the wolves, who came a little nearer, for it was winter and the wolves were hungry, and they had come in thousands from the mountains, and they said in their hearts, "We are strong." Around the fire a little tribe was encamped. They, too, had come from the mountains, and from lands beyond them, but it was in the mountains that the wolves first winded them; they picked up bones at first that the tribe had dropped, but they were closer now and on all sides. It was Loz who

had lit the fire. He had killed a small furry beast, hurling his stone axe at it, and had gathered a quantity of reddish brown stones, and had laid them in a long row, and placed bits of the small beast all along it; then he lit a fire on each side, and the stones heated, and the bits began to cook. It was at this time that the tribe noticed that the wolves who had followed them so far were no longer content with the scraps of deserted encampments. A line of yellow eyes surrounded them, and when it moved it was to come nearer. So the men of the tribe hastily tore up brushwood, and felled a small tree with their flint axes, and heaped it all over the fire that Loz had made, and for a while the great heap hid the flame, and the wolves came trotting in and sat down again on their haunches much closer than before; and the fierce and valiant dogs that belonged to the tribe believed that their end was about to come while fighting, as they had long since prophesied it would. Then the flame caught the lofty stack of brushwood, and rushed out of it, and ran up the side of it, and stood up haughtily far over the top, and the wolves seeing this terrible ally of Man revelling there in his strength, and knowing nothing of his frequent treachery to his masters, went slowly away as though they had other purposes. And for the rest of that night the dogs of the encampment cried out to them and besought them to come back. But the tribe lay down all round the fire under thick furs and slept. And a great wind arose and blew into the roaring heart of the fire till it was red no longer, but all pallid with heat. With the dawn the tribe awoke.

Loz might have known that after such a mighty conflagration nothing could remain of his small furry beast,

but there was hunger in him and little reason as he searched among the ashes. What he found there amazed him beyond measure; there was no meat, there was not even his row of reddish brown stones, but something longer than a man's leg and narrower than his hand, was lying there like a great flattened snake. When Loz looked at its thin edges and saw that it ran to a point, he picked up stones to chip it and make it sharp. It was the instinct of Loz to sharpen things. When he found that it could not be chipped his wonderment increased. It was many hours before he discovered that he could sharpen the edges by rubbing them with a stone; but at last the point was sharp, and all one side of it except near the end, where Loz held it in his hand. And Loz lifted it and brandished it, and the Stone Age was over. That afternoon in the little encampment, just as the tribe moved on, the Stone Age passed away, which, for perhaps thirty or forty thousand years, had slowly lifted Man from among the beasts and left him with his supremacy beyond all hope of reconquest.

It was not for many days that any other man tried to make for himself an iron sword by cooking the same kind of small furry beast that Loz had tried to cook. It was not for many years that any thought to lay the meat along stones as Loz had done; and when they did, being no longer on the plains of Thold, they used flints or chalk. It was not for many generations that another piece of iron ore was melted and the secret slowly guessed. Nevertheless one of Earth's many veils was torn aside by Loz to give us ultimately the steel sword and the plough, machinery and factories; let us not blame Loz if we think that he did wrong, for he did all in ignorance. The tribe moved on till it came to water,

and there it settled down under a hill, and they built their huts there. Very soon they had to fight with another tribe, a tribe that was stronger than they; but the sword of Loz was terrible and his tribe slew their foes. You might make one blow at Loz, but then would come one thrust from that iron sword, and there was no way of surviving it. No one could fight with Loz. And he became the ruler of the tribe in the plaze of Iz, who hitherto had ruled it with his sharp axe, as his father had before him.

Now Loz begat Lo, and in his old age gave his sword to him, and Lo ruled the tribe with it. And Lo called the name of the sword Death, because it was so swift and terrible.

And Iz begat Ird, who was of no account. And Ird hated Lo because he was of no account by reason of the iron sword of Lo.

One night Ird stole down to the hut of Lo, carrying his sharp axe, and he went very softly, but Lo's dog, Warner, heard him coming, and he growled softly by his master's door. When Ird came to the hut he heard Lo talking gently to his sword. And Lo was saying, "Lie still, Death. Rest, rest, old sword," and then, "What, again, Death? Be still. Be still."

And then again: "What, art thou hungry, Death? Or thirsty, poor old sword? Soon, Death, soon. Be still only a little."

But Ird fled, for he did not like the gentle tone of Lo as he spoke to his sword.

And Lo begat Lod. And when Lo died Lod took the iron sword and ruled the tribe.

And Ird begat Ith, who was of no account, like his father.

Now when Lod had smitten a man or killed a terrible beast, Ith would go away for a while into the forest rather than hear the praises that would be given to Lod.

And once, as Ith sat in the forest waiting for the day to pass, he suddenly thought he saw a tree trunk looking at him as with a face. And Ith was afraid, for trees should not look at men. But soon Ith saw that it was only a tree and not a man, though it was like a man. Ith used to speak to this tree, and tell it about Lod, for he dared not speak to any one else about him. And Ith found comfort in talking about Lod.

One day Ith went with his stone axe into the forest, and stayed there many days.

He came back by night, and the next morning when the tribe awoke they saw something that was like a man and yet was not a man. And it sat on the hill with his elbows pointing outwards and was quite still. And Ith was crouching before it, and hurriedly placing before it fruits and flesh, and then leaping away from it and looking frightened. Presently all the tribe came out to see, but dared not come quite close because of the fear that they saw on the face of Ith. And Ith went to his hut, and came back again with a hunting spear-head and valuable stone knives, and reached out and laid them before the thing that was like a man, and then sprang away from it.

And some of the tribe questioned Ith about the still thing that was like a man, and Ith said, "This is Ged." They then asked, "Who is Ged?" and Ith said, "Ged sends the crops and the rain; and the sun and the moon are Ged's."

Then the tribe went back to their huts, but later in the day some came again, and they said to Ith, "Ged is only

as we are, having hands and feet." And Ith pointed to the right hand of Ged, which was not as his left, but was shaped like the paw of a beast, and Ith said, "By this ye may know that he is not as any man."

Then they said, "He is indeed Ged." But Lod said, "He speaketh not, nor doth he eat," and Ith answered, "The thunder is his voice and the famine is his eating."

After this the tribe copied Ith, and brought little gifts of meat to Ged; and Ith cooked them before him that Ged might smell the cooking.

One day a great thunderstorm came trampling up from the distance and raged among the hills, and the tribe all hid away from it in their huts. And Ith appeared among the huts looking unafraid. And Ith said little, but the tribe thought that he had expected the terrible storm because the meat that they had laid before Ged had been tough meat, and not the best parts of the beasts they slew.

And Ged grew to have more honour among the tribe than Lod. And Lod was vexed.

One night Lod arose when all were asleep, and quieted his dog, and took his iron sword and went away to the hill. And he came on Ged in the starlight, sitting still, with his elbows pointing outwards, and his beast's paw, and the mark of the fire on the ground where his food had been cooked.

And Lod stood there for a while in great fear, trying to keep to his purpose. Suddenly he stepped up close to Ged and lifted his iron sword, and Ged neither hit nor shrank. Then the thought came into Lod's mind, "Ged does not hit. What will Ged do instead?"

And Lod lowered his sword and struck not, and his

imagination began to work on that, "What will Ged do instead?"

And the more Lod thought, the worse was his fear of Ged.

And Lod ran away and left him.

Lod still ruled the tribe in battle or in the hunt, but the chiefest spoils of battle were given to Ged, and the beasts that they slew were Ged's; and all questions that concerned war or peace, and questions of law and disputes, were always brought to him, and Ith gave the answers, after speaking to Ged by night.

At last Ith said, the day after an eclipse, that the gifts which they brought to Ged were not enough, that some far greater sacrifice was needed, that Ged was very angry even now, and not to be appeased by any ordinary sacrifice.

And Ith said that to save the tribe from the anger of Ged he would speak to Ged that night, and ask him what new sacrifice he needed.

Deep in his heart Lod shuddered, for his instinct told him that Ged wanted Lod's only son, who should hold the iron sword when Lod was gone.

No one would dare touch Lod because of the iron sword, but his instinct said in his slow mind again and again, "Ged loves Ith. Ith has said so. Ith hates the sword-holders."

"Ith hates the sword-holders. Ged loves Ith."

Evening fell and the night came when Ith should speak with Ged, and Lod became even surer of the doom of his race.

He lay down but could not sleep.

Midnight had barely come when Lod arose and went with his iron sword again to the hill.

And there sat Ged. Had Ith been to him yet? Ith whom Ged loved, who hated the sword-holders.

And Lod looked long at the old sword of iron that had come to his grandfather on the plains of Thold.

Good-bye, old sword! And Lod laid it on the knees of Ged, then went away.

And when Ith came, a little before dawn, the sacrifice was found acceptable unto Ged.

Editor's Note

The next three tales are from *The Book of Wonder,* which appeared in 1912 when Dunsany was at the height of his powers. Most of us consider that volume his single finest collection of fantasy stories; in that one book were brought together most of his supreme achievements in the literary form he was soon to abandon forever.

The fourth tale is "A Story of Land and Sea," from *Tales of Wonder* (1919), which I have added to give you a sample of his work in the longer lengths—for "A Story of Land and Sea," at 10,000 words, is almost too long to properly be termed a short story.

It is also an amusing example of one of Dunsany's idiosyncrasies as a writer. I refer to his fondness for certain of his stories, which led him to follow them with sequels, as he followed "Idle Days on the Yann" and "Bethmoora" with "The Avenger of Perdóndaris" and "The Hashish-Man." "A Story of Land and Sea" is another tale about that resourceful rogue, Shard, the pirate captain of the *Desperate Lark,* who was first introduced in a tale called "The Loot of Bombasharna." It was one of the stories I included in *At The Edge of the World* several years ago. Readers of that first collection may recall the droll, delightful manner in which Lord Dunsany opened that tale:

> Things had grown too hot for Shard, captain of pirates, on all the seas he knew. The ports of Spain were closed to him; they knew him in San Domingo; men winked in Syracuse when he went by; the two Kings of the Sicilies never smiled within an hour of speaking of him; there were huge rewards for his head in every capital city, with pictures of it for identification—*and all the pictures were unflattering . . .*

I'm afraid that when I assembled that collection several years ago, it slipped my mind that "A Story of Land and Sea" was the sequel to "The Loot of Bombasharna." Otherwise I would certainly have included both tales in the same book. Still, it's never too late to correct an error, and the story is too good to pass over; so you'll find it in this section.

—L.C.

Miss Cubbidge and the Dragon of Romance

This tale is told in the balconies of Belgrade Square and among the towers of Pont Street; men sing it at evening in the Brompton Road.

Little upon her eighteenth birthday thought Miss Cubbidge, of Number 12A Prince of Wales' Square, that before another year had gone its way she would lose the sight of that unshapely oblong that was so long her home. And, had you told her further that within that year all trace of that so-called square and of the day when her father was elected by a thumping majority to share in the guidance of the destinies of the empire, should utterly fade from her memory, she would merely have said in that affected voice of hers, "Go to!"

There was nothing about it in the daily Press, the policy of her father's party had no provision for it, there was no hint of it in conversation at evening parties to which Miss Cubbidge went: there was nothing to warn her at all that a loathsome dragon with golden scales that rattled as he went should have come up clean out of the prime of romance and gone by night (so far as we know) through Hammersmith, and come to Ardle Mansions, and then have turned to his left, which of course brought him to Miss Cubbidge's father's house.

There sat Miss Cubbidge at evening on her balcony quite alone, waiting for her father to be made a baronet. She was wearing walking-boots and a hat and a low-necked evening dress; for a painter was but just now painting her portrait and neither she nor the painter saw anything odd in the strange combination. She did not notice the roar of the dragon's golden scales, nor distinguish above the manifold lights of London the small, red glare of his eyes. He suddenly lifted his head, a blaze of gold, over the balcony; he did not appear a yellow dragon then, for his glistening scales reflected the beauty that London puts upon her only at evening and night. She screamed, but to no knight, nor knew what knight to call on, nor guessed where were the dragons' overthrowers of far, romantic days, nor what mightier game they chased, or what wars they waged; perchance they were busy even then arming for Armageddon.

Out of the balcony of her father's house in Prince of Wales' Square, the painted dark-green balcony that grew blacker every year, the dragon lifted Miss Cubbidge and spread his rattling wings, and London fell away like an old fashion. And England fell away, and the smoke of its factories, and the round material world that goes humming round the sun vexed and pursued by time, until there appeared the eternal and ancient lands of Romance lying low by mystical seas.

You had not pictured Miss Cubbidge stroking the golden head of one of the dragons of song with one hand idly, while with the other she sometimes played with pearls brought up from lonely places of the sea. They filled huge haliotis shells with pearls and laid

them there beside her, they brought her emeralds which she set to flash among the tresses of her long black hair, they brought her threaded sapphires for her cloak: all this the princes of fable did and the elves and the gnomes of myth. And partly she still lived, and partly she was one with long-ago and with those sacred tales that nurses tell, when all their children are good, and evening has come, and the fire is burning well, and the soft pat-pat of the snowflakes on the pane is like the furtive tread of fearful things in old, enchanted woods. If at first she missed those dainty novelties among which she was reared, the old, sufficient song of the mystical sea singing of faery lore at first soothed and at last consoled her. Even, she forgot those advertisements of pills that are so dear to England; even, she forgot political cant and the things that one discusses and the things that one does not, and had perforce to content herself with seeing sailing by huge golden-laden galleons with treasure for Madrid, and the merry skull-and-crossbones of the pirateers, and the tiny nautilus setting out to sea, and ships of heroes trafficking in romance or of princes seeking the enchanted isles.

It was not by chains that the dragon kept her there, but by one of the spells of old. To one to whom the facilities of the daily press had for so long been accorded spells would have palled—you would have said—and galleons after a time and all things out-of-date. After a time. But whether the centuries passed her or whether the years or whether no time at all, she did not know. If anything indicated the passing of time it was the rhythm of elfin horns blowing upon the heights. If the centuries went by her the spell that bound her

gave her also perennial youth, and kept alight for ever the lantern by her side, and saved from decay the marble palace facing the mystical sea. And if no time went by her there at all, her single moment on those marvellous coasts was turned as it were to a crystal reflecting a thousand scenes. If it was all a dream, it was a dream that knew no morning and no fading away. The tide roamed on and whispered of mystery and of myth, while near that captive lady, asleep in his marble tank the golden dragon dreamed: and a little way out from the coast all that the dragon dreamed showed faintly in the mist that lay over the sea. He never dreamed of any rescuing knight. So long as he dreamed, it was twilight; but when he came up nimbly out of his tank night fell and starlight glistened on the dripping, golden scales.

There he and his captive either defeated Time or never encountered him at all; while, in the world we know, raged Roncesvalles or battles yet to be—I know not to what part of the shore of Romance he bore her. Perhaps she became one of those princesses of whom fable loves to tell, but let it suffice that there she lived by the sea: and kings ruled, and Demons ruled, and kings came again, and many cities returned to their native dust, and still she abided there, and still her marble palace passed not away nor the power that there was in the dragon's spell.

And only once did there ever come to her a message from the world that of old she knew. It came in a pearly ship across the mystical sea; it was from an old school-friend that she had had in Putney, merely a note, no more, in a little, neat, round hand: it said, "It is not Proper for you to be there alone."

Chu-bu and Sheemish

It was the custom on Tuesdays in the temple of Chu-bu for the priests to enter at evening and chant, "There is none but Chu-bu."

And all the people rejoiced and cried out, "There is none but Chu-bu." And honey was offered to Chu-bu, and maize and fat. Thus was he magnified.

Chu-bu was an idol of some antiquity, as may be seen from the colour of the wood. He had been carved out of mahogany, and after he was carved he had been polished. Then they had set him up on the diorite pedestal with the brazier in front of it for burning spices and the flat gold plates for fat. Thus they worshipped Chu-bu.

He must have been there for over a hundred years when one day the priests came in with another idol into the temple of Chu-bu, and set it up on a pedestal near Chu-bu's and sang, "There is also Sheemish."

And all the people rejoiced and cried out, "There is also Sheemish."

Sheemish was palpably a modern idol, and although the wood was stained with a dark-red dye, you could see that he had only just been carved. And honey was offered to Sheemish as well as Chu-bu, and also maize and fat.

The fury of Chu-bu knew no time-limit; he was furious all that night, and next day he was furious still. The situation called for immediate miracles. To devastate the city with a pestilence and kill all his priests was scarcely within his power, therefore he wisely concentrated such divine powers as he had in commanding a little earthquake. "Thus," thought Chu-bu, "will I reassert myself as the only god, and men shall spit upon Sheemish."

Chu-bu willed it and willed it and still no earthquake came, when suddenly he was aware that the hated Sheemish was daring to attempt a miracle too. He ceased to busy himself about the earthquake and listened, or shall I say felt, for what Sheemish was thinking; for gods are aware of what passes in the mind by a sense that is other than any of our five. Sheemish was trying to make an earthquake too.

The new god's motive was probably to assert himself. I doubt if Chu-bu understood or cared for his motive; it was sufficient for an idol already aflame with jealousy that his detestable rival was on the verge of a miracle. All the power of Chu-bu veered round at once and set dead against an earthquake, even a little one. It was thus in the temple of Chu-bu for some time, and then no earthquake came.

To be a god and to fail to achieve a miracle is a despairing sensation; it is as though among men one should determine upon a hearty sneeze and as though no sneeze should come; it is as though one should try to swim in heavy boots or remember a name that is utterly forgotten: all these pains were Sheemish's.

And upon Tuesday the priests came in, and the people, and they did worship Chu-bu and offered fat to

him, saying, "O Chu-bu who made everything," and then the priests sang, "There is also Sheemish," and again the people rejoiced and cried out, "There is also Sheemish"; and Chu-bu was put to shame and spake not for three days.

Now there were holy birds in the temple of Chu-bu, and when the third day was come and the night thereof, it was as it were revealed to the mind of Chu-bu, that there was dirt upon the head of Sheemish.

And Chu-bu spake unto Sheemish as speak the gods, moving no lips nor yet disturbing the silence, saying, "There is dirt upon thy head, O Sheemish." All night long he muttered again and again, "There is dirt upon Sheemish's head." And when it was dawn and voices were heard far off, Chu-bu became exultant with Earth's awakening things, and cried out till the sun was high, "Dirt, dirt, dirt, upon the head of Sheemish," and at noon he said, "So Sheemish would be a god." Thus was Sheemish confounded.

And with Tuesday one came and washed his head with rose-water, and he was worshipped again when they sang "There is also Sheemish." And yet was Chu-bu content, for he said, "The head of Sheemish has been defiled," and again, "His head was defiled, it is enough." And one evening lo! there was dirt on the head of Chu-bu also, and the thing was perceived of Sheemish.

It is not with the gods as it is with men. We are angry one with another and turn from our anger again, but the wrath of the gods is enduring. Chu-bu remembered and Sheemish did not forget. They spake as we do not speak, in silence yet heard of each other, nor

were their thoughts as our thoughts. We should not judge them by merely human standards. All night long they spake and all night said these words only: "Dirty Chu-bu," "Dirty Sheemish." "Dirty Chu-bu," "Dirty Sheemish," all night long. Their wrath had not tired at dawn, and neither had wearied of his accusation. And gradually Chu-bu came to realize that he was nothing more than the equal of Sheemish. All gods are jealous, but this equality with the upstart Sheemish, a thing of painted wood a hundred years newer than Chu-bu, and this worship given to Sheemish in Chu-bu's own temple, were particularly bitter. Chu-bu was jealous even for a god; and when Tuesday came again, the third day of Sheemish's worship, Chu-bu could bear it no longer. He felt that his anger must be revealed at all costs, and he returned with all the vehemence of his will to achieving a little earthquake. The worshippers had just gone from his temple when Chu-bu settled his will to attain this miracle. Now and then his meditations were disturbed by the now familiar dictum, "Dirty Chu-bu," but Chu-bu willed ferociously, not even stopping to say what he longed to say and had already said nine hundred times, and presently even these interruptions ceased.

They ceased because Sheemish had returned to a project that he had never definitely abandoned, the desire to assert himself and exalt himself over Chu-bu by performing a miracle, and the district being volcanic he had chosen a little earthquake as the miracle most easily accomplished by a small god.

Now an earthquake that is commanded by two gods has double the chance of fulfilment than when it is willed by one, and an incalculably greater chance than

when two gods are pulling different ways; as, to take the case of older and greater gods, when the sun and the moon pull in the same direction we have the biggest tides.

Chu-bu knew nothing of the theory of tides, and was too much occupied with his miracle to notice what Sheemish was doing. And suddenly the miracle was an accomplished thing.

It was a very local earthquake, for there are other gods than Chu-bu or even Sheemish, and it was only a little one as the gods had willed, but it loosened some monoliths in a colonnade that supported one side of the temple and the whole of one wall fell in, and the low huts of the people of that city were shaken a little and some of their doors were jammed so that they would not open; it was enough, and for a moment it seemed that it was all; neither Chu-bu nor Sheemish commanded there should be more, but they had set in motion an old law older than Chu-bu, the law of gravity that that colonnade had held back for a hundred years, and the temple of Chu-bu quivered and then stood still, swayed once and was overthrown, on the heads of Chu-bu and Sheemish.

No one rebuilt it, for nobody dared go near such terrible gods. Some said that Chu-bu wrought the miracle, but some said Sheemish, and thereof schism was born. The weakly amiable, alarmed by the bitterness of rival sects, sought compromise and said that both had wrought it, but no one guessed the truth that the thing was done in rivalry.

And a saying arose, and both sects held this belief in

common, that whoso toucheth Chu-bu shall die or whoso looketh upon Sheemish.

That is how Shu-bu came into my possession when I travelled once beyond the Hills of Ting. I found him in the fallen temple of Chu-bu with his hands and toes sticking up out of the rubbish, lying upon his back, and in that attitude just as I found him I keep him to this day on my mantelpiece, as he is less liable to be upset that way. Sheemish was broken, so I left him where he was.

And there is something so helpless about Chu-bu with his fat hands stuck up in the air that sometimes I am moved out of compassion to bow down to him and pray, saying, "O Chu-bu, thou that made everything, help thy servant."

Chu-bu cannot do much, though once I am sure that at a game of bridge he sent me the ace of trumps after I had not held a card worth having for the whole of the evening. And chance could have done as much as that for me, but I do not tell this to Chu-bu.

How Nuth Would Have Practised His Art Upon the Gnoles

Despite the advertisements of rival firms, it is probable that every tradesman knows that nobody in business at the present time has a position equal to that of Mr. Nuth. To those outside the magic circle of business, his name is scarcely known; he does not need to advertise, he is consummate. He is superior even to modern competition, and, whatever claims they boast, his rivals know it. His terms are moderate, so much cash down when the goods are delivered, so much in blackmail afterwards. He consults your convenience. His skill may be counted upon; I have seen a shadow on a windy night move more noisily than Nuth, for Nuth is a burglar by trade. Men have been known to stay in country houses and to send a dealer afterwards to bargain for a piece of tapestry that they saw there—some article of furniture, some picture. This is bad taste; but those whose culture is more elegant invariably send Nuth a night or two after their visit. He has a way with tapestry; you would scarcely notice that the edges had been cut. And often when I see some huge, new house full of old furniture and portraits from other ages, I say to myself, "These mouldering chairs, these full-length ancestors

and carved mahogany are the produce of the incomparable Nuth."

It may be urged against my use of the word incomparable that in the burglary business the name of Slith stands paramount and alone; and of this I am not ignorant; but Slith is a classic, and lived long ago, and knew nothing at all of modern competition; besides which the surprising nature of his doom has possibly cast a glamour upon Slith that exaggerates in our eyes his undoubted merits.

It must not be thought that I am a friend of Nuth's; on the contrary such politics as I have are on the side of Property; and he needs no words from me, for his position is almost unique in trade, being among the very few that do not need to advertise.

At the time that my story begins Nuth lived in a roomy house in Belgrave Square: in his inimitable way he had made friends with the caretaker. The place suited Nuth, and, whenever anyone came to inspect it before purchase, the caretaker used to praise the house in the words that Nuth had suggested. "If it wasn't for the drains," they would say, "it's the finest house in London," and when they pounced on this remark and asked questions about the drains, she would answer them that the drains also were good, but not so good as the house. They did not see Nuth when they went over the rooms, but Nuth was there.

Here in a neat black dress on one spring morning came an old woman whose bonnet was lined with red, asking for Mr. Nuth; and with her came her large and awkward son. Mrs. Eggins, the caretaker, glanced up the street, and then she let them in, and left them to

wait in the drawing-room amongst furniture all mysterious with sheets. For a long while they waited, and then there was a smell of pipe-tobacco, and there was Nuth standing quite close to them.

"Lord," said the old woman whose bonnet was lined with red, "you did make me start." And then she saw by his eyes that that was not the way to speak to Mr. Nuth.

And at last Nuth spoke, and very nervously the old woman explained that her son was a likely lad, and had been in business already but wanted to better himself, and she wanted Mr. Nuth to teach him a livelihood.

First of all Nuth wanted to see a business reference, and when he was shown one from a jeweller with whom he happened to be hand-in-glove the upshot of it was that he agreed to take young Tonker (for this was the surname of the likely lad) and to make him his apprentice. And the old woman whose bonnet was lined with red went back to her little cottage in the country, and every evening said to her old man, "Tonker, we must fasten the shutters of a night-time, for Tommy's a burglar now."

The details of the likely lad's apprenticeship I do not propose to give; for those that are in the business know those details already, and those that are in other businesses care only for their own, while men of leisure who have no trade at all would fail to appreciate the gradual degrees by which Tommy Tonker came first to cross bare boards, covered with little obstacles in the dark, without making any sound, and then to go silently up creaky stairs, and then to open doors, and lastly to climb.

Let it suffice that the business prospered greatly, while glowing reports of Tommy Tonker's progress were sent from time to time to the old woman whose bonnet was lined with red in the laborious handwriting of Nuth. Nuth had given up lessons in writing very early, for he seemed to have some prejudice against forgery, and therefore considered writing a waste of time. And then there came the transaction with Lord Castlenorman at his Surrey residence. Nuth selected a Saturday night, for it chanced that Saturday was observed as Sabbath in the family of Lord Castlenorman, and by eleven o'clock the whole house was quiet. Five minutes before midnight Tommy Tonker, instructed by Mr. Nuth, who waited outside, came away with one pocketful of rings and shirt-studs. It was quite a light pocketful, but the jewellers in Paris could not match it without sending specially to Africa, so that Lord Castlenorman had to borrow bone shirt-studs.

Not even rumour whispered the name of Nuth. Were I to say that this turned his head, there are those to whom the assertion would give pain, for his associates hold that his astute judgment was unaffected by circumstance. I will say, therefore, that it spurred his genius to plan what no burglar had ever planned before. It was nothing less than to burgle the house of the gnoles. And this that abstemious man unfolded to Tonker over a cup of tea. Had Tonker not been nearly insane with pride over their recent transaction, and had he not been blinded by a veneration for Nuth, he would have—but I cry over spilt milk. He expostulated respectfully: he said he would rather not go; he said it was not fair, he allowed himself to argue; and in the

end, one windy October morning with a menace in the air found him and Nuth drawing near to the dreadful wood.

Nuth, by weighing little emeralds against pieces of common rock, had ascertained the probable weight of those house-ornaments that the gnoles are believed to possess in the narrow, lofty house wherein they have dwelt from of old. They decided to steal two emeralds and to carry them between them on a cloak; but if they should be too heavy one must be dropped at once. Nuth warned young Tonker against greed, and explained that the emeralds were worth less than cheese until they were safe away from the dreadful wood.

Everything had been planned, and they walked now in silence.

No track led up to the sinister gloom of the trees, either of men or cattle; not even a poacher had been there snaring elves for over a hundred years. You did not trespass twice in the dells of the gnoles. And, apart from the things that were done there, the trees themselves were a warning, and did not wear the wholesome look of those that we plant ourselves.

The nearest village was some miles away with the backs of all its houses turned to the wood, and without one window at all facing in that direction. They did not speak of it there, and elsewhere it is unheard of.

Into this wood stepped Nuth and Tommy Tonker. They had no firearms. Tonker had asked for a pistol, but Nuth replied that the sound of a shot "would bring everything down on us," and no more was said about it.

Into the wood they went all day, deeper and deeper. They saw the skeleton of some early Georgian poacher

nailed to a door in an oak tree; sometimes they saw a fairy scuttle away from them; once Tonker stepped heavily on a hard, dry stick, after which they both lay still for twenty minutes. And the sunset flared full of omens through the tree trunks, and night fell, and they came by fitful starlight, as Nuth had foreseen, to that lean, high house where the gnoles so secretly dwelt.

All was so silent by that unvalued house that the faded courage of Tonker flickered up, but to Nuth's experienced sense it seemed too silent; and all the while there was that look in the sky that was worse than a spoken doom, so that Nuth, as is often the case when men are in doubt, had leisure to fear the worst. Nevertheless he did not abandon the business, but sent the likely lad with the instruments of his trade by means of the ladder to the old green casement. And the moment that Tonker touched the withered boards, the silence that, though ominous, was earthly, became unearthly like the touch of a ghoul. And Tonker heard his breath offending against that silence, and his heart was like mad drums in a night attack, and a string of one of his sandals went tap on a rung of a ladder, and the leaves of the forest were mute, and the breeze of the night was still; and Tonker prayed that a mouse or a mole might make any noise at all, but not a creature stirred, even Nuth was still. And then and there, while yet he was undiscovered, the likely lad made up his mind, as he should have done long before, to leave those colossal emeralds where they were and have nothing further to do with the lean, high house of the gnoles, but to quit this sinister wood in the nick of time and retire from business at once and buy a place in the

country. Then he descended softly and beckoned to Nuth. But the gnoles had watched him through knavish holes that they bore in trunks of trees, and the unearthly silence gave way, as it were with a grace, to the rapid screams of Tonker as they picked him up from behind —screams that came faster and faster until they were incoherent. And where they took him it is not good to ask, and what they did with him I shall not say.

Nuth looked on for a while from the corner of the house with a mild surprise on his face as he rubbed his chin, for the trick of the holes in the trees was new to him; then he stole nimbly away through the dreadful wood.

"And did they catch Nuth?" you ask me, gentle reader.

"Oh, no, my child" (for such a question is childish). "Nobody ever catches Nuth."

A Story of Land and Sea

It is written in the first Book of Wonder how Captain Shard of the bad ship Desperate Lark, having looted the seacoast city Bombasharna, retired from active life; and resigning piracy to younger men, with the good will of the North and South Atlantic, settled down with a captured queen on his floating island.

Sometimes he sank a ship for the sake of old times but he no longer hovered along the trade-routes; and timid merchants watched for other men.

It was not age that caused him to leave his romantic profession; nor unworthiness of its traditions, nor gunshot wound, nor drink; but grim necessity and force majeure. Five navies were after him. How he gave them the slip one day in the Mediterranean, how he fought with the Arabs, how a ship's broadside was heard in Lat. 23 N. Long. 4E. for the first time and the last, with other things unknown to Admiralties, I shall proceed to tell.

He had had his fling, had Shard, captain of pirates, and all his merry men wore pearls in their ear-rings; and now the English fleet was after him under full sail along the coast of Spain with a good North wind behind them. They were not gaining much on Shard's

rakish craft, the bad ship Desperate Lark, yet they were closer than was to his liking, and they interferred with business.

For a day and a night they had chased him, when off Cape St. Vincent at about six a. m. Shard took that step that decided his retirement from active life, he turned for the Mediterranean. Had he held on Southwards down the African coast it is doubtful whether in face of the interference of England, Russia, France, Denmark and Spain, he could have made piracy pay; but in turning for the Mediterranean he took what we may call the penultimate step of his life which meant for him settling down. There were three great courses of action invented by Shard in his youth, upon which he pondered by day and brooded by night, consolations in all his dangers, secret even from his men, three means of escape as he hoped from any peril that might meet him on the sea. One of these was the floating island that the Book of Wonder tells of, another was so fantastic that we may doubt if even the brilliant audacity of Shard could ever have found it practicable, at least he never tried it so far as is known in that tavern by the sea in which I glean my news, and the third he determined on carrying out as he turned that morning for the Mediterranean. True he might yet have practised piracy in spite of the step that he took, a little later when the seas grew quiet, but that penultimate step was like that small house in the country that the business man has his eye on, like some snug investment put away for old age, there are certain final courses in men's lives which after taking they never go back to business.

He turned then for the Mediterranean with the English fleet behind him, and his men wondered.

What madness was this,—muttered Bill the Boatswain in Old Frank's only ear,—with the French fleet waiting in the Gulf of Lyons and the Spaniards all the way between Sardinia and Tunis: for they knew the Spaniard's ways. And they made a deputation and waited upon Captain Shard, all of them sober and wearing their costly clothes, and they said that the Mediterranean was a trap, and all he said was that the North wind should hold. And the crew said they were done.

So they entered the Mediterranean and the English fleet came up and closed the straits. And Shard went tacking along the Moroccan coast with a dozen frigates behind him. And the North wind grew in strength. And not till evening did he speak to his crew, and then he gathered them all together except the man at the helm, and politely asked them to come down to the hold. And there he showed them six immense steel axles and a dozen low iron wheels of enormous width which none had seen before; and he told his crew how all unknown to the world his keel had been specially fitted for these same axles and wheels, and how he meant soon to sail to the wide Atlantic again, though not by the way of the straits. And when they heard the name of the Atlantic all his merry men cheered, for they looked on the Atlantic as a wide safe sea.

And night came down and Captain Shard sent for his diver. With the sea getting up it was hard work for the diver, but by midnight things were done to Shard's satisfaction, and the diver said that of all the jobs he had done—but finding no apt comparison, and being

in need of a drink, silence fell on him and soon sleep, and his comrades carried him away to his hammock. All the next day the chase went on with the English well in sight, for Shard had lost time overnight with his wheels and axles, and the danger of meeting the Spaniards increased every hour; and evening came when every minute seemed dangerous, yet they still went tacking on towards the East where they knew the Spaniards must be.

And at last they sighted their topsails right ahead, and still Shard went on. It was a close thing, but night was coming on, and the Union Jack which he hoisted helped Shard with the Spaniards for the last few anxious minutes, though it seemed to anger the English, but as Shard said, "There's no pleasing everyone," and then the twilight shivered into darkness.

"Hard to starboard," said Captain Shard.

The North wind which had risen all day was now blowing a gale. I do not know what part of the coast Shard steered for, but Shard knew, for the coasts of the world were to him what Margate is to some of us.

At a place where the desert rolling up from mystery and from death, yea, from the heart of Africa, emerges upon the sea, no less grand than her, no less terrible, even there they sighted the land quite close, almost in darkness. Shard ordered every man to the hinder part of the ship and all the ballast too; and soon the Desperate Lark, her prow a little high out of the water, doing her eighteen knots before the wind, struck a sandy beach and shuddered, she heeled over a little, then righted herself, and slowly headed into the interior of Africa.

The men would have given three cheers, but after the first Shard silenced them and, steering the ship himself, he made them a short speech while the broad wheels pounded slowly over the African sand, doing barely five knots in a gale. The perils of the sea he said had been greatly exaggerated. Ships had been sailing the sea for hundreds of years and at sea you knew what to do, but on land this was different. They were on land now and they were not to forget it. At sea you might make as much noise as you pleased and no harm was done, but on land anything might happen. One of the perils of the land that he instanced was that of hanging. For every hundred men that they hung on land, he said, not more than twenty would be hung at sea. The men were to sleep at their guns. They would not go far that night; for the risk of being wrecked at night was another danger peculiar to the land, while at sea you might sail from set of sun till dawn: yet it was essential to get out of sight of the sea for if anyone knew they were there they'd have cavalry after them. And he had sent back Smerdrak (a young lieutenant of pirates) to cover their tracks where they came up from the sea. And the merry men vigorously nodded their heads though they did not dare to cheer, and presently Smerdrak came running up and they threw him a rope by the stern. And when they had done fifteen knots they anchored, and Captain Shard gathered his men about him and, standing by the land-wheel in the bows, under the large and clear Algerian stars, he explained his system of steering. There was not much to be said for it, he had with considerable ingenuity detached and pivoted the portion of the keel that held the leading

axle and could move it by chains which were controlled from the land-wheel, thus the front pair of wheels could be deflected at will, but only very slightly, and they afterwards found that in a hundred yards they could only turn their ship four yards from her course. But let not captains of comfortable battleships, or owners even of yachts, criticise too harshly a man who was not of their time and who knew not modern contrivances; it should be remembered also that Shard was no longer at sea. His steering may have been clumsy but he did what he could.

When the use and limitations of his land-wheel had been made clear to his men, Shard bade them all turn in except those on watch. Long before dawn he woke them and by the very first gleam of light they got their ship under way, so that when those two fleets that had made so sure of Shard closed in like a great crescent on the Algerian coast there was no sign to see of the Desperate Lark either on sea or land; and the flags of the Admiral's ship broke out into a hearty English oath.

The gale blew for three days and, Shard using more sail by daylight, they scudded over the sands at little less than ten knots, though on the report of rough water ahead (as the lookout man called rocks, low hills or uneven surface before he adapted himself to his new surroundings) the rate was much decreased. Those were long summer days and Shard who was anxious while the wind held good to outpace the rumour of his own appearance sailed for nineteen hours a day, lying to at ten in the evening and hoisting sail again at three a. m. when it first began to be light.

In those three days he did five hundred miles; then

the wind dropped to a breeze though it still blew from the North, and for a week they did no more than two knots an hour. The merry men began to murmur then. Luck had distinctly favoured Shard at first for it sent him at ten knots through the only populous districts well ahead of the crowds except those who chose to run, and the cavalry were away on a local raid. As for the runners they soon dropped off when Shard pointed his cannon though he did not dare to fire, up there near the coast; for much as he jeered at the intelligence of the English and Spanish Admirals in not suspecting his manoeuvre, the only one as he said that was possible in the circumstances, yet he knew that cannon had an obvious sound which would give his secret away to the weakest mind. Certainly luck had befriended him, and when it did so no longer he made out of the occasion all that could be made; for instance while the wind held good he had never missed opportunities to re-victual, if he passed by a village its pigs and poultry were his, and whenever he passed by water he filled his tanks to the brim, and now that he could only do two knots he sailed all night with a man and a lantern before him: thus in that week he did close on four hundred miles while another man would have anchored at night and have missed five or six hours out of the twenty-four. Yet his men murmured. Did he think the wind would last for ever, they said. And Shard only smoked. It was clear that he was thinking, and thinking hard. "But what is he thinking about?" said Bill to Bad Jack. And Bad Jack answered: "He may think as hard as he likes but thinking won't get us out of the Sahara if this wind were to drop."

And towards the end of that week Shard went to his chart-room and laid a new course for his ship a little to the East and towards cultivation. And one day towards evening they sighted a village, and twilight came and the wind dropped altogether. Then the murmurs of the merry men grew to oaths and nearly to mutiny. "Where were they now?" they asked, and were they being treated like poor honest men?

Shard quieted them by asking what they wished to do themselves and when no one had any better plan than going to the villagers and saying that they had been blown out of their course by a storm, Shard unfolded his scheme to them.

Long ago he had heard how they drove carts with oxen in Africa, oxen were very numerous in these parts wherever there was any cultivation, and for this reason when the wind had begun to drop he had laid his course for the village: that night the moment it was dark they were to drive off fifty yoke of oxen; by midnight they must all be yoked to the bows and then away they would go at a good round gallop.

So fine a plan as this astonished the men and they all apologised for their want of faith in Shard, shaking hands with him every one and spitting on their hands before they did so in token of good will.

The raid that night succeeded admirably, but ingenious as Shard was on land, and a past-master at sea, yet it must be admitted that lack of experience in this class of seamanship led him to make a mistake, a slight one it is true, and one that a little practice would have prevented altogether: the oxen could not gallop. Shard swore at them, threatened them with his pistol, said they

should have no food, and all to no avail: that night and as long as they pulled the bad ship Desperate Lark they did one knot an hour and no more. Shard's failures like everything that came his way were used as stones in the edifice of his future success, he went at once to his chart-room and worked out all his calculations anew.

The matter of the oxen's pace made pursuit impossible to avoid. Shard therefore countermanded his order to his lieutenant to cover the tracks in the sand, and the Desperate Lark plodded on into the Sahara on her new course trusting to her guns.

The village was not a large one and the little crowd that was sighted astern next morning disappeared after the first shot from the cannon in the stern. At first Shard made the oxen wear rough iron bits, another of his mistakes, and strong bits too. "For if they run away," he had said, "we might as well be driving before a gale and there's no saying where we'd find ourselves," but after a day or two he found that the bits were no good and, like the practical man he was, immediately corrected his mistake.

And now the crew sang merry songs all day bringing out mandolins and clarionets and cheering Captain Shard. All were jolly except the captain himself whose face was moody and perplexed; he alone expected to hear more of those villagers; and the oxen were drinking up the water every day, he alone feared that there was no more to be had, and a very unpleasant fear that is when your ship is becalmed in a desert. For over a week they went on like this doing ten knots a day and the music and singing got on the captain's nerves, but

he dared not tell his men what the trouble was. And then one day the oxen drank up the last of the water. And Lieutenant Smerdrak came and reported the fact.

"Give them rum," said Shard, and he cursed the oxen. "What is good enough for me," he said, "should be good enough for them," and he swore that they should have rum.

"Aye, aye, sir," said the young lieutenant of pirates.

Shard should not be judged by the orders he gave that day, for nearly a fortnight he had watched the doom that was coming slowly towards him, discipline cut him off from anyone that might have shared his fear and discussed it, and all the while he had had to navigate his ship, which even at sea is an arduous responsibility. These things had fretted the calm of that clear judgment that had once baffled five navies. Therefore he cursed the oxen and ordered them rum, and Smerdrak had said "Aye, aye, sir," and gone below.

Towards sunset Shard was standing on the poop, thinking of death; it would not come to him by thirst; mutiny first, he thought. The oxen were refusing rum for the last time, and the men were beginning to eye Captain Shard in a very ominous way, not muttering, but each man looking at him with a sidelong look of the eye as though there were only one thought among them all that had no need of words. A score of geese like a long letter "V" were crossing the evening sky, they slanted their necks and all went twisting downwards somewhere about the horizon. Captain Shard rushed to his chart-room, and presently the men came in at the door with Old Frank in front looking awkward and twisting his cap in his hand.

"What is it?" said Shard as though nothing were wrong.

Then Old Frank said what he had come to say: "We want to know what you be going to do."

And the men nodded grimly.

"Get water for the oxen," said Captain Shard, "as the swine won't have rum, and they'll have to work for it, the lazy beasts. Up anchor!"

And at the word water a look came into their faces like when some wanderer suddenly thinks of home.

"Water!" they said.

"Why not?" said Captain Shard. And none of them ever knew that but for those geese, that slanted their necks and suddenly twisted downwards, they would have found no water that night nor ever after, and the Sahara would have taken them as she has taken so many and shall take so many more. All that night they followed their new course: at dawn they found an oasis and the oxen drank.

And here, on this green acre or so with its palm-trees and its well, beleaguered by thousands of miles of desert and holding out through the ages, here they decided to stay: for those who have been without water for a while in one of Africa's deserts come to have for that simple fluid such a regard as you, O reader, might not easily credit. And here each man chose a site where he would build his hut, and settle down, and marry perhaps, and even forget the sea; when Captain Shard having filled his tanks and barrels peremptorily ordered them to weigh anchor. There was much dissatisfaction, even some grumbling, but when a man has twice saved his fellows from death by the sheer freshness of his mind

they come to have a respect for his judgment that is not shaken by trifles. It must be remembered that in the affair of the dropping of the wind and again when they ran out of water these men were at their wits' end: so was Shard on the last occasion, but that they did not know. All this Shard knew, and he chose this occasion to strengthen the reputation that he had in the minds of the men of that bad ship by explaining to them his motives, which usually he kept secret. The oasis he said must be a port of call for all the travellers within hundreds of miles: how many men did you see gathered together in any part of the world where there was a drop of whiskey to be had! And water here was rarer than whiskey in decent countries and, such was the peculiarity of the Arabs, even more precious. Another thing he pointed out to them, the Arabs were a singularly inquisitive people and if they came upon a ship in the desert they would probably talk about it; and the world having a wickedly malicious tongue would never construe in its proper light their difference with the English and Spanish fleets, but would merely side with the strong against the weak.

And the men sighed, and sang the capstan song and hoisted the anchor and yoked the oxen up, and away they went doing their steady knot, which nothing could increase. It may be thought strange that with all sail furled in dead calm and while the oxen rested they should have cast anchor at all. But custom is not easily overcome and long survives its use. Rather enquire how many such useless customs we ourselves preserve: the flaps for instance to pull up the tops of hunting-boots though the tops no longer pull up, the bows

on our evening shoes that neither tie nor untie. They said they felt safer that way and there was an end of it.

Shard lay a course of South by West and they did ten knots that day, the next day they did seven or eight and Shard hove to. Here he intended to stop, they had huge supplies of fodder on board for the oxen, for his men he had a pig or so, plenty of poultry, several sacks of biscuits and ninety-eight oxen (for two were already eaten), and they were only twenty miles from water. Here he said they would stay till folks forgot their past, someone would invent something or some new thing would turn up to take folks' minds off them and the ships he had sunk: he forgot that there are men who are well paid to remember.

Half way between him and the oasis he established a little depot where he buried his water-barrels. As soon as a barrel was empty he sent half a dozen men to roll it by turns to the depot. This they would do at night, keeping hid by day, and next night they would push on to the oasis, fill the barrel and roll it back. Thus only ten miles away he soon had a store of water, unknown to the thirstiest native of Africa, from which he could safely replenish his tanks at will. He allowed his men to sing and even within reason to light fires. Those were jolly nights while the rum held out; sometimes they saw gazelles watching them curiously, sometimes a lion went by over the sand, the sound of his roar added to their sense of the security of their ship; all round them level, immense lay the Sahara: "This is better than an English prison," said Captain Shard.

And still the dead calm lasted, not even the sand whispered at night to little winds; and when the rum

gave out and it looked like trouble, Shard reminded them what little use it had been to them when it was all they had and the oxen wouldn't look at it.

And the days wore on with singing, and even dancing at times, and at nights round a cautious fire in a hollow of sand with only one man on watch they told tales of the sea. It was all a relief after arduous watches and sleeping by the guns, a rest to strained nerves and eyes; and all agreed, for all that they missed their rum, that the best place for a ship like theirs was the land.

This was in Latitude 23 North, Longitude 4 East, where, as I have said, a ship's broadside was heard for the first time and the last. It happened this way.

They had been there several weeks and had eaten perhaps ten or a dozen oxen and all that while there had been no breath of wind and they had seen no one: when one morning about two bells when the crew were at breakfast the lookout man reported cavalry on the port side. Shard who had already surrounded his ship with sharpened stakes ordered all his men on board, the young trumpeter who prided himself on having picked up the ways of the land, sounded "Prepare to receive cavalry"; Shard sent a few men below with pikes to the lower port-holes, two more aloft with muskets, the rest of the guns, he changed the "grape" or "canister" with which the guns were loaded in case of surprise, for shot, cleared the decks, drew in ladders, and before the cavalry came within range everything was ready for them. The oxen were always yoked in order that Shard could manoeuvre his ship at a moment's notice.

When first sighted the cavalry were trotting but they

were coming on now at a slow canter. Arabs in white robes on good horses. Shard estimated that there were two or three hundred of them. At sixty yards Shard opened with one gun, he had had the distance measured, but had never practised for fear of being heard at the oasis: the shot went high. The next one fell short and ricochetted over the Arabs' heads. Shard had the range then and by the time the ten remaining guns of his broadside were given the same elevation as that of his second gun the Arabs had come to the spot where the last shot pitched. The broadside hit the horses, mostly low, and ricochetted on amongst them; one cannon-ball striking a rock at the horses' feet shattered it and sent fragments flying amongst the Arabs with the peculiar scream of things set free by projectiles from their motionless harmless state, and the cannon-ball went on with them with a great howl, this shot alone killed three men.

"Very satisfactory," said Shard rubbing his chin. "Load with grape," he added sharply.

The broadside did not stop the Arabs nor even reduce their speed but they crowded in closer together as though for company in their time of danger, which they should not have done. They were four hundred yards off now, three hundred and fifty; and then the muskets began, for the two men in the crow's-nest had thirty loaded muskets besides a few pistols, the muskets all stood round them leaning against the rail; they picked them up and fired them one by one. Every shot told, but still the Arabs came on. They were galloping now. It took some time to load the guns in those days. Three hundred yards, two hundred and fifty, men dropping

all the way, two hundred yards; Old Frank for all his one ear had terrible eyes; it was pistols now, they had fired all their muskets; a hundred and fifty; Shard had marked the fifties with little white stones. Old Frank and Bad Jack up aloft felt pretty uneasy when they saw the Arabs had come to that little white stone, they both missed their shots.

"All ready?" said Captain Shard.

"Aye, aye, sir," said Smerdrak.

"Right," said Captain Shard raising a finger.

A hundred and fifty yards is a bad range at which to be caught by grape (or "case" as we call it now), the gunners can hardly miss and the charge has time to spread. Shard estimated afterwards that he got thirty Arabs by that broadside alone and as many horses.

There were close on two hundred of them still on their horses, yet the broadside of grape had unsettled them, they surged round the ship but seemed doubtful what to do. They carried swords and scimitars in their hands, though most had strange long muskets slung behind them, a few unslung them and began firing wildly. They could not reach Shard's merry men with their swords. Had it not been for that broadside that took them when it did they might have climbed up from their horses and carried the bad ship by sheer force of numbers, but they would have had to have been very steady, and the broadside spoiled all that. Their best course was to have concentrated all their efforts in setting fire to the ship but this they did not attempt. Part of them swarmed all round the ship brandishing their swords and looking vainly for an easy entrance; perhaps they expected a door, they were not sea-faring

people; but their leaders were evidently set on driving off the oxen not dreaming that the Desperate Lark had other means of travelling. And this to some extent they succeeded in doing. Thirty they drove off, cutting the traces, twenty they killed on the spot with their scimitars though the bow gun caught them twice as they did their work, and ten more were unluckily killed by Shard's bow gun. Before they could fire a third time from the bows they all galloped away, firing back at the oxen with their muskets and killing three more, and what troubled Shard more than the loss of his oxen was the way that they manoeuvred, galloping off just when the bow gun was ready and riding off by the port bow where the broadside could not get them, which seemed to him to show more knowledge of guns than they could have learned on that bright morning. What, thought Shard to himself, if they should bring big guns against the Desperate Lark! And the mere thought of it made him rail at Fate. But the merry men all cheered when they rode away. Shard had only twenty-two oxen left, and then a score or so of the Arabs dismounted while the rest rode further on leading their horses. And the dismounted men lay down on the port bow behind some rocks two hundred yards away and began to shoot at the oxen. Shard had just enough of them left to manoeuvre his ship with an effort and he turned his ship a few points to the starboard so as to get a broadside at the rocks. But grape was of no use here as the only way he could get an Arab was by hitting one of the rocks with shot behind which an Arab was lying, and the rocks were not easy to hit except by chance, and as often as he manoeuvred his ship the Arabs changed

their ground. This went on all day while the mounted Arabs hovered out of range watching what Shard would do; and all the while the oxen were growing fewer, so good a mark were they, until only ten were left, and the ship could manoeuvre no longer. But then they all rode off.

The merry men were delighted, they calculated that one way and another they had unhorsed a hundred Arabs and on board there had been no more than one man wounded: Bad Jack had been hit in the wrist; probably by a bullet meant for the men at the guns, for the Arabs were firing high. They had captured a horse and had found quaint weapons on the bodies of the dead Arabs and an interesting kind of tobacco. It was evening now and they talked over the fight, made jokes about their luckier shots, smoked their new tobacco and sang; altogether it was the jolliest evening they'd had. But Shard alone on the quarter-deck paced to and fro pondering, brooding and wondering. He had chopped off Bad Jack's wounded hand and given him a hook out of store, for captain does doctor upon these occasions and Shard, who was ready for most things, kept half a dozen or so of neat new limbs, and of course a chopper. Bad Jack had gone below swearing a little and said he'd lie down for a bit, the men were smoking and singing on the sand, and Shard was there alone. The thought that troubled Shard was: What would the Arabs do? They did not look like men to go away for nothing. And at back of all his thoughts was one that reiterated guns, guns, guns. He argued with himself that they could not drag them all that way on the sand, that the Desperate Lark was not worth it, that

they had given it up. Yet he knew in his heart that that was what they would do. He knew there were fortified towns in Africa, and as for its being worth it, he knew that there was no pleasant thing left now to those defeated men except revenge, and if the Desperate Lark had come over the sand why not guns? He knew that the ship could never hold out against guns and cavalry, a week perhaps, two weeks, even three: what difference did it make how long it was, and the men sang:

Away we go,
Oho, Oho, Oho,
A drop of rum for you and me
And the world's as round as the Letter O
And round it runs the sea.

A melancholy settled down on Shard.

About sunset Lieutenant Smerdrak came up for orders. Shard ordered a trench to be dug along the port side of the ship. The men wanted to sing and grumbled at having to dig, especially as Shard never mentioned his fear of guns, but he fingered his pistols and in the end Shard had his way. No one on board could shoot like Captain Shard. That is often the way with captains of pirate ships, it is a difficult position to hold. Discipline is essential to those that have the right to fly the skull-and-cross-bones, and Shard was the man to enforce it. It was starlight by the time the trench was dug to the captain's satisfaction and the men that it was to protect when the worst came to the worst swore all the time as they dug. And when it was finished they clamoured to make a feast on some of the killed oxen,

and this Shard let them do. And they lit a huge fire for the first time, burning abundant scrub, they thinking that Arabs daren't return, Shard knowing that concealment was now useless. All that night they feasted and sang, and Shard sat up in his chart-room making his plans.

When morning came they rigged up the cutter as they called the captured horse and told off her crew. As there were only two men that could ride at all these became the crew of the cutter. Spanish Dick and Bill the Boatswain were the two.

Shard's orders were that turn and turn about they should take command of the cutter and cruise about five miles off to the North East all the day but at night they were to come in. And they fitted the horse up with a flagstaff in front of the saddle so that they could signal from her, and carried an anchor behind for fear she should run away.

And as soon as Spanish Dick had ridden off Shard sent some men to roll all the barrels back from the depot where they were buried in the sand, with orders to watch the cutter all the time and, if she signalled, to return as fast as they could.

They buried the Arabs that day, removing their water-bottles and any provisions they had, and that night they got all the water-barrels in, and for days nothing happened. One event of extraordinary importance did indeed occur, the wind got up one day, but it was due South, and as the oasis lay to the North of them and beyond that they might pick up the camel track Shard decided to stay where he was. If it had looked to him like lasting Shard might have hoisted sail but it dropped

at evening as he knew it would, and in any case it was not the wind he wanted. And more days went by, two weeks without a breeze. The dead oxen would not keep and they had had to kill three more, there were only seven left now.

Never before had the men been so long without rum. And Captain Shard had doubled the watch besides making two more men sleep at the guns. They had tired of their simple games, and most of their songs, and their tales that were never true were no longer new. And then one day the monotony of the desert came down upon them.

There is a fascination in the Sahara, a day there is delightful, a week is pleasant, a fortnight is a matter of opinion, but it was running into months. The men were perfectly polite but the boatswain wanted to know when Shard thought of moving on. It was an unreasonable question to ask of the captain of any ship in a dead calm in a desert, but Shard said he would set a course and let him know in a day or two. And a day or two went by over the monotony of the Sahara, who for monotony is unequalled by all the parts of the earth. Great marshes cannot equal it, nor plains of grass nor the sea, the Sahara alone lies unaltered by the seasons, she has no altering surface, no flowers to fade or grow, year in year out she is changeless for hundreds and hundreds of miles. And the boatswain came again and took off his cap and asked Captain Shard to be so kind as to tell them about his new course. Shard said he meant to stay until they had eaten three more of the oxen as they could only take three of them in the hold, there were only six left now. But what if there was no wind,

the boatswain said. And at that moment the faintest breeze from the North ruffled the boatswain's forelock as he stood with his cap in his hand.

"Don't talk about the wind to *me*," said Captain Shard: and Bill was a little frightened for Shard's mother had been a gipsy.

But it was only a breeze astray, a trick of the Sahara. And another week went by and they ate two more oxen.

They obeyed Captain Shard ostentatiously now but they wore ominous looks. Bill came again and Shard answered him in Romany.

Things were like this one hot Sahara morning when the cutter signalled. The lookout man told Shard and Shard read the message, "Cavalry astern" it read, and then a little later she signalled, "With guns."

"Ah," said Captain Shard.

One ray of hope Shard had; the flags on the cutter fluttered. For the first time for five weeks a light breeze blew from the North, very light, you hardly felt it. Spanish Dick rode in and anchored his horse to starboard and the cavalry came on slowly from the port.

Not till the afternoon did they come in sight, and all the while that little breeze was blowing.

"One knot," said Shard at noon. "Two knots," he said at six bells and still it grew and the Arabs trotted nearer. By five o'clock the merry men of the bad ship Desperate Lark could make out twelve long old-fashioned guns on low wheeled carts dragged by horses and what looked like lighter guns carried on camels. The wind was blowing a little stronger now. "Shall we hoist sail, sir?" said Bill.

"Not yet," said Shard.

By six o'clock the Arabs were just outside the range of cannon and there they halted. Then followed an anxious hour or so, but the Arabs came no nearer. They evidently meant to wait till dark to bring their guns up. Probably they intended to dig a gun epaulment from which they could safely pound away at the ship.

"We could do three knots," said Shard half to himself as he was walking up and down his quarter-deck with very fast short paces. And then the sun set and they heard the Arabs praying and Shard's merry men cursed at the top of their voices to show that they were as good men as they.

The Arabs had come no nearer, waiting for night. They did not know how Shard was longing for it too, he was gritting his teeth and sighing for it, he even would have prayed, but that he feared that it might remind Heaven of him and his merry men.

Night came and the stars. "Hoist sail," said Shard. The men sprang to their places, they had had enough of that silent lonely spot. They took the oxen on board and let the great sails down, and like a lover coming from over sea, long dreamed of, long expected, like a lost friend seen again after many years, the North wind came into the pirates' sails. And before Shard could stop it a ringing English cheer went away to the wondering Arabs.

They started off at three knots and soon they might have done four but Shard would not risk it at night. All night the wind held good, and doing three knots from ten to four they were far out of sight of the Arabs when daylight came. And then Shard hoisted more sail and they did four knots and by eight bells they were

doing four and a half. The spirits of those volatile men rose high, and discipline became perfect. So long as there was wind in the sails and water in the tanks Captain Shard felt safe at least from mutiny. Great men can only be overthrown while their fortunes are at their lowest. Having failed to depose Shard when his plans were open to criticism and he himself scarce knew what to do next it was hardly likely they could do it now; and whatever we think of his past and his way of living we cannot deny that Shard was among the great men of the world.

Of defeat by the Arabs he did not feel so sure. It was useless to try to cover his tracks even if he had had time, the Arab cavalry could have picked them up anywhere. And he was afraid of their camels with those light guns on board, he had heard they could do seven knots and keep it up most of the day and if as much as one shot struck the mainmast . . . . and Shard taking his mind off useless fears worked out on his chart when the Arabs were likely to overtake them. He told his men that the wind would hold good for a week, and, gipsy or no, he certainly knew as much about the wind as is good for a sailor to know.

Alone in his chart-room he worked it out like this, mark two hours to the good for surprise and finding the tracks and delay in starting, say three hours if the guns were mounted in their epaulments, then the Arabs should start at seven. Supposing the camels go twelve hours a day at seven knots they would do eighty-four knots a day, while Shard doing three knots from ten to four, and four knots the rest of the time, was doing ninety and actually gaining. But when it came to it he

wouldn't risk more than two knots at night while the enemy were out of sight, for he rightly regarded anything more than that as dangerous when sailing on land at night, so he too did eighty-four knots a day. It was a pretty race. I have not troubled to see if Shard added up his figures wrongly or if he under-rated the pace of camels, but whatever it was the Arabs gained slightly, for on the fourth day Spanish Jack, five knots astern on what they called the cutter, sighted the camels a very long way off and signalled the fact to Shard. They had left their cavalry behind as Shard supposed they would. The wind held good, they had still two oxen left and could always eat their "cutter," and they had a fair, though not ample, supply of water, but the appearance of the Arabs was a blow to Shard for it showed him that there was no getting way from them, and of all things he dreaded guns. He made light of it to the men: said they would sink the lot before they had been in action half an hour: yet he feared that once the guns came up it was only a question of time before his rigging was cut or his steering gear disabled.

One point the Desperate Lark scored over the Arabs and a very good one too, darkness fell just before they could have sighted her and now Shard used the lantern ahead as he dared not do on the first night when the Arabs were close, and with the help of it managed to do three knots. The Arabs encamped in the evening and the Desperate Lark gained twenty knots. But the next evening they appeared again and this time they saw the sails of the Desperate Lark.

On the sixth day they were close. On the seventh

they were closer. And then, a line of verdure across across their bows, Shard saw the Niger River.

Whether he knew that for a thousand miles it rolled its course through forest, whether he even knew that it was there at all; what his plans were, or whether he lived from day to day like a man whose days are numbered he never told his men. Nor can I get an indication on this point from the talk that I hear from sailors in their cups in a certain tavern I know of. His face was expressionless, his mouth shut, and he held his ship to her course. That evening they were up to the edge of the tree trunks and the Arabs camped and waited ten knots astern and the wind had sunk a little.

There Shard anchored a little before sunset and landed at once. At first he explored the forest a little on foot. Then he sent for Spanish Dick. They had slung the cutter on board some days ago when they found she could not keep up. Shard could not ride but he sent for Spanish Dick and told him he must take him as a passenger. So Spanish Dick slung him in front of the saddle "before the mast" as Shard called it, for they still carried a mast on the front of the saddle, and away they galloped together. "Rough weather," said Shard, but he surveyed the forest as he went and the long and short of it was he found a place where the forest was less than half a mile thick and the Desperate Lark might get through: but twenty trees must be cut. Shard marked the trees himself, sent Spanish Dick right back to watch the Arabs and turned the whole of his crew on to those twenty trees. It was a frightful risk, the Desperate Lark was empty, with an enemy no more than ten knots

astern, but it was a moment for bold measures and Shard took the chance of being left without his ship in the heart of Africa in the hope of being repaid by escaping altogether.

The men worked all night on those twenty trees, those that had no axes bored with bradawls and blasted, and then relieved those that had.

Shard was indefatigable, he went from tree to tree showing exactly what way every one was to fall, and what was to be done with them when they were down. Some had to be cut down because their branches would get in the way of the masts, others because their trunks would be in the way of the wheels; in the case of the last the stumps had to be made smooth and low with saws and perhaps a bit of the trunk sawn off and rolled away. This was the hardest work they had. And they were all large trees, on the other hand had they been small there would have been many more of them and they could not have sailed in and out, sometimes for hundreds of yards, without cutting any at all. and all this Shard calculated on doing if only there was time.

The light before dawn came and it looked as if they would never do it at all. And then dawn came and it was all done but one tree, the hard part of the work had all been done in the night and a sort of final rush cleared everything up except that one huge tree. And then the cutter signalled the Arabs were moving. At dawn they had prayed, and now they had struck their camp. Shard at once ordered all his men to the ship except ten whom he left at the tree, they had some way to go and the Arabs had been moving some ten minutes before they got there. Shard took in the cutter which

wasted five minutes, hoisted sail short-handed and that took five minutes more, and slowly got under way.

The wind was dropping still and by the time the Desperate Lark had come to the edge of that part of the forest through which Shard had laid his course, the Arabs were no more than five knots away. He had sailed East half a mile, which he ought to have done overnight so as to be ready, but he could not spare time or thought or men away from those twenty trees. Then Shard turned into the forest and the Arabs were dead astern. They hurried when they saw the Desperate Lark enter the forest.

"Doing ten knots," said Shard as he watched them from the deck. The Desperate Lark was doing no more than a knot and a half for the wind was weak under the lee of the trees. Yet all went well for a while. The big tree had just come down some way ahead, and the ten men were sawing bits off the trunk.

And then Shard saw a branch that he had not marked on the chart, it would just catch the top of the main-mast. He anchored at once and sent a hand aloft who sawed it half way through and did the rest with a pistol, and now the Arabs were only three knots astern. For a quarter of a mile Shard steered them through the forest till they came to the ten men and that bad big tree, another foot had yet to come off one corner of the stump for the wheels had to pass over it. Shard turned all hands on to the stump and it was then that the Arabs came within shot. But they had to unpack their gun. And before they had it mounted Shard was away. If they had charged things might have been different. When they saw the Desperate Lark under way again the

Arabs came on to within three hundred yards and there they mounted two guns. Shard watched them along his stern gun but would not fire. They were six hundred yards away before the Arabs could fire and then they fired too soon and both guns missed. And Shard and his merry men saw clear water only ten fathoms ahead. Then Shard loaded his stern gun with canister instead of shot and at the same moment the Arabs charged on their camels; they came galloping down through the forest waving long lances. Shard left the steering to Smerdrak and stood by the stern gun, the Arabs were within fifty yards and still Shard did not fire; he had most of his men in the stern with muskets beside him. Those lances carried on camels were altogether different from swords in the hands of horsemen, they could reach the men on deck. The men could see the horrible barbs on the lance-heads, they were almost at their faces when Shard fired, and at the same moment the Desperate Lark with her dry and suncracked keel in air on the high bank of the Niger fell forward like a diver. The gun went off through the tree-tops, a wave came over the bows and swept the stern, the Desperate Lark wriggled and righted herself, she was back in her element.

The merry men looked at the wet decks and at their dripping clothes. "Water," they said almost wonderingly.

The Arabs followed a little way through the forest but when they saw that they had to face a broadside instead of one stern gun and perceived that a ship afloat is less vulnerable to cavalry even than when on shore, they abandoned ideas of revenge, and comforted themselves with a text out of their sacred book which

tells how in other days and other places our enemies shall suffer even as we desire.

For a thousand miles with the flow of the Niger and the help of occasional winds, the Desperate Lark moved seawards. At first he sweeps East a little and then Southwards, till you come to Akassa and the open sea.

I will not tell you how they caught fish and ducks, raided a village here and there and at last came to Akassa, for I have said much already of Captain Shard. Imagine them drawing nearer and nearer the sea, bad men all, and yet with a feeling for something where we feel for our king, our country or our home, a feeling for something that burned in them not less ardently than our feelings in us, and that something the sea. Imagine them nearing it till sea birds appeared and they fancied they felt sea breezes and all sang songs again that they had not sung for weeks. Imagine them heaving at last on the salt Atlantic again.

I have said much already of Captain Shard and I fear lest I shall weary you, O my reader, if I tell you any more of so bad a man. I too at the top of a tower all alone am weary.

And yet it is right that such a tale should be told. A journey almost due South from near Algiers to Akassa in a ship that we should call no more than a yacht. Let it be a stimulus to younger men.

Guarantee to the Reader

Since writing down for your benefit, O my reader, all this long tale that I heard in the tavern by the sea I have travelled in Algeria and Tunisia as well as in the Desert. Much that I saw in those countries seems to throw doubt on the tale that the sailor told me. To begin with the Desert does not come within hundreds of miles of the coast and there are more mountains to cross than you would suppose, the Atlas mountains in particular. It is just possible Shard might have got through by El Cantara, following the camel road which is many centuries old; or he may have gone by Algiers and Bou Saada and through the mountain pass El Finita Dem, though that is a bad enough way for camels to go (let alone bullocks with a ship) for which reason the Arabs call it Finita Dem—the Path of Blood.

I should not have ventured to give this story the publicity of print had the sailor been sober when he told it, for fear that he should have deceived you, O my reader; but this was never the case with him as I took good care to ensure: "in vino veritas" is a sound old proverb, and I never had cause to doubt his word unless that proverb lies.

If it should prove that he has deceived me, let it pass; but if he has been the means of deceiving you there are little things about him that I know, the common gossip of that ancient tavern whose leaded bottle-glass windows watch the sea, which I will tell at once to every judge of my acquaintance, and it will be a pretty race to see which of them will hang him.

Meanwhile, O my reader, believe the story, resting assured that if you are taken in the thing shall be a matter for the hangman.

Afterword:

The Naming of Names

NOTES ON LORD DUNSANY'S INFLUENCE ON MODERN FANTASY WRITERS

In this book I have noted that stories like those you have just read strongly influenced the writers who came after him in the genre of fantasy: I would like briefly to expand on this notion for a moment.

It is the lot of few writers to do something wholly new; most of those whom we laud as writers of great originality, founders of schools and suchlike, deserve the accolade only in part. For example, it is generally conceded that Robert E. Howard, in founding the popular school of "Sword & Sorcery," was a writer of originality. Even a cursory look at the facts shows this simply is not so. The indomitable warrior-hero who brawls and battles his way through adversaries human, divine, demonic and monstrous did not originate with Howard's Conan of Cimmeria but can be seen in Beowulf and Siegfried, Hercules and Gilgamesh. What Howard actually did was literally bring the hero myth up to date: recast it in the form of colorful, fast-moving pulp adventure fiction.

Lord Dunsany, on the other hand, actually did invent the fantasy short story laid in imaginary landscapes. It is not impossible to find a story or two here and there written before him; however, he was the writer who specialized in the form, and it was through his stories that the subsequent early masters of fantasy discovered it. Almost everyone in the field read him, whether or not he was visibly influenced by him—Cabell, for example, admired his stories and has remarked upon a couple of them in print. Although I cannot document the fact, I personally have no doubt that A. Merritt and C. S. Lewis and Professor Tolkien as well read Dunsany's short stories of fantasy.

(It must be kept clearly in mind that fantasy, as we know it, is actually a very recent literary innovation: after all, the *first* novel in the genre was only published in 1895. That may seem like the first gasp of the Stone Age to some of my younger readers, but it was only seventy-seven years ago, which is not really very ancient. At the time George MacDonald, the author of *Phantastes* and *Lilith,* was seventy-one; George Meredith, the author of *The Shaving of Shagpat,* was sixty-seven; Dunsany himself was a boy of seventeen, and Cabell only a year younger; E. R. Eddison was a boy of thirteen, and A. Merritt was eleven, while Lovecraft was five years old, Tolkien three, and Clark Ashton Smith two. These ten men—including William Morris, who wrote that first fantasy novel, and had yet a year to live in 1895—these giants who between them forged out of the fiery crucible of their burning imagination the world of fantasy literature as we know it today

were all alive during that same landmark year of 1895.)

Now there are several ways to demonstrate the influence of one writer upon another. You can trace the influence of one prose style on another, of one kind of plot on another, of one technique of storytelling or fad of dialogue or innate philosophy—and so on. I will briefly explore Dunsany's impact on the writers who arose after him through their use of invented names, one of the unique "tricks of the trade" peculiar to fantasy writers of the imaginary kingdoms genre. I think I hardly need point out to my reader that when a writer is literally creating a new world on paper, a world that has no real historical or geographical or even mythological relation to the world we live in, he must invent all sorts of names—names of people, kings and warriors, magicians and prophets, gods and monsters, countries and oceans, mountains and rivers, and more. This is a highly intricate literary task, an integral part of the artistry of fantasy writing, and Dunsany was its first and probably its greatest master. Each of the great fantasy masters has handled it in a highly characteristic manner. Let us briefly look at Lord Dunsany's influence on later writers through this single facet, the naming of names.

Dunsany has admitted that his own prose style was influenced by two sources, the King James Bible and Herodotus. I don't know enough about the actual literary style of the ancient Greek historian to detect any signs of his influence on Dunsany's prose, but I can see it in his choice of story material, for Herodotus didn't really write history, in the sense we use the term history

today (the art has evolved in very different directions since his time), what he really did was to set down marvel tales told to him by Persian magi and Egyptian priests, and such. Of course, Dunsany teems with much the same sort of fabulous material. And from Greek writers such as Herodotus, Dunsany became infected with a love of the very sound and flavor of Greek names.

Dunsany himself admits this in his autobiographical writings: he tells of how, during his schooldays at Cheam, he studied the Greek and Latin classics, and reported the result: "My head began to fill with the sounds of Greek and Latin words, and continued to do so afterwards at Eton, until my memory held the echoes of more stately syllables than I knew the meaning of; and, when geography was tumbled on top of this, my mind was very full of the material needed for the names of strange rivers and cities."

Stately syllables . . . those of us who write fantasy, and who have been involved with the small, curious art of name invention for most of our lives, know what Lord Dunsany means by this odd phrase. Those of my readers who are laymen in this must trust that I know what I am talking about. The art of coining names is a strange one, half intuitive, half mystical; we learn to listen to the sound and music of a coined name, and to become sensitive to the connotations it evokes. For an invented name conjures up a host of connotations just as a brilliant image in a line of poetry does.

I wish I could discuss this technically, using all the proper scientific terminology, making learned references to phonemes and such, but I must leave that to the

linguists among my readers: perhaps Professor Tolkien could best explain why certain sounds and combinations of sounds connote certain cultures, certain associations. I can explain it only vaguely, with a poet's intuition as my guide. But surely you will understand what Dunsany means by "stately syllables" if you will pronounce aloud, and slowly, listening to their intrinsic rhythm and innate music, such of his splendid names as Erlathdronion or Sardathrion, which savor (to my ear) of proud, imperial capitals; or Zretazoola and Ong Zwarba and Ziroonderel, which have a weird unearthliness all their own.

Now it did not take Dunsany to introduce the sound and music of those grand Greek and Latin names to us fantasy writers who have come along after him: but what he did in fact do was to introduce us to Hebrew.

The influence of the King James Bible is far more obvious in Dunsany's work than is that of Herodotus. It seeped all the way down into his very plot structure. Look at any of his tales of proud, doomed cities, tottering on the brink of catastrophe, with ragged prophets foretelling their ominous and impending fall—for example, a tale like "The Fall of Babbulkund," which I have included in my recent anthology, *New Worlds For Old*—and see whether or not it reminds you of doomed Biblical metropoleis, like glorious Nineveh, to whom the prophet Jonah was dispatched to announce its destruction. The Biblical flavor can be seen also in his slow, rolling prose style, in its odd mingling of simplicity and grandeur—but it appears most clearly in his invented names. The typically-Dunsanian invented name has a peculiarly Hebraic sound to it.

It comes and it goes, but it is clearly there in such names as Wornath-Mavai, and Yoharneth-Lahai (both of which he perhaps derived from Ramath-lehi in *Judges* 16, the battlefield whereon Samson slew the Phillistines with the jawbone of an ass). Dunsany's stories teem with Hebraic-sounding names, like Hobith and Habaniah, which sound very much like Biblical prophets or patriarchs. Other languages appear in his names, too: Japanese, in such names as Limpang-Tung; and there is a clear ring of Greek in such names as Segastrion, Araxes, Zadres, and Hyraglion. But in general, the Hebrew flavor predominates throughout the texture of his invented names; he was the first fantasy writer to use such names.

Now (you may ask), just exactly what do I mean by "the Hebrew sound" in the names in Dunsanian fantasy? Again, I wish I were a scholar of comparative linguistics, a professional like Tolkien, but I am not, and must set aside the proper technical terms, to speak vaguely of mere sound alone.

At any rate, when I think of Hebrew, I think of the peculiar and unique style and look and sound of names such as Japheth and Tarshish, Mizraim and Haggai and Haggar, Kadesh and Napish and Timnath, Shaddai and Elohim. Names—to be brief about it, that are soft and breathy—names that lack the hard angular clarity of a name like Araxes or Sardinac—names, finally, in which appear very frequently diphthongs like "ai" and "ae" or consonants like "th" and "sh" and "ph" and the peculiar double g, used immediately after a vowel. Such names do not appear prior to Dunsany: William Beckford and George Meredith used Persian or Arabic

names, and William Morris worked chiefly with Saxon or English-derived names. As for E. R. Eddison, who came a bit later, his names are sometimes Gaelic (Brandoch Daha, Koshtra Pivrarcha), sometimes Greek (Sophonisba, Zia, Gorice, Prezmyra), very often Roman (Corinius, Gallandus, Flaminius, and Mezentius, which he borrowed from the *Aeneid* of Virgil), and occasionally purely his own (as with Goldry Bluszco, which sounds like nothing in the world except pure Lilliputian: recall Dean Swift's coinage of Quinbus Flestrin and Glumdalclitch?).

This Dunsanian element in invented names entered the field of modern fantasy through the work of his most ardent enthusiast, H. P. Lovecraft. Lovecraft adored and emulated Dunsany, whose books he first encountered in 1919. Thereafter, his letters to his friends are sprinkled with such phrases as "though Pegana knows I need a haircut!" and imprecations addressed to Mana-Yood-Sushai. Starting with "Polaris," written, rather curiously, in 1918, a year before he first discovered Dunsany, he wrote some twenty-two stories in various degrees of "Dunsanity," the period culminating in 1926 with the short novel, *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath.* Thereafter he turned his efforts towards his better-known Cthulhu Mythos stories: but the habits of Dunsanian name-coining had become second nature, and continued through his career. In names like Sarnath and Yog-Sothoth and Yuggoth, Lovecraft carried into his own fiction what I fancy to be the Hebraic-sounding name styles introduced by Dunsany. Some of them were extremely close to the Hebrew, as Azathoth is to Azazel, and Shaggai to Haggai, and Kadath

to Kadesh and Timnath; and some of them were extremely close to the Dunsanian originals; as Nyarlathotep seems to echo Dunsany's Alhireth-Hotep and Ooth-Nargai echoes Yoharneth-Lahai.

Lovecraft encouraged the fellow-writers among his correspondents to contribute their own stories to his growing Cthulhu Mythos; among those who did so were Robert E. Howard and Clark Ashton Smith. Both writers doubtless had read their Dunsany, but Smith, at least, claimed to be unaware of any Dunsanian influence on his own work. But Lovecraft was a powerful influence upon both writers, and through that channel the Dunsanian style of names entered their imaginations. Thus we see Howard echoing the Dunsanian/Hebraic at second-hand in names like Bal-Sagoth and Koth and Yag-Kosha, and Smith echoing the same with names like Ubbo-Sathla, Tsathoggua and Zon Mezzamalech. Smith, in fact, teems with names that sound, to my ear, at least, *very* Dunsanian: Commoriom and Uzuldaroum, Avoosl Wuthoqquan and Voormithadreth are precisely the sort of elaborate and musical names Dunsany might coin.

Through Lovecraft and Smith and Howard, this vaguely Hebraic style of name-coining passed into the literature, and you will find traces of it in most modern fantasy writers. A strongly Dunsanian flavor can be seen in the sort of names Fritz Leiber invented for his world of Nehwon, the locale of his famous stories of Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser, names like Ilthmar and Ningauble and Ool Hrusp, and the same sort of thing can be found in the various heroic fantasies of L. Sprague

de Camp and Jack Vance, Michael Moorcock and John Jakes, and in my own work in that genre.

As for Jakes, his demon god Yob-Haggoth seems obviously derived from a combination of Lovecraft's Yog-Sothoth and Yuggoth or Shoggoth or some similar coinage, and many of his other names—Timtar, Simdan, Tamar, and so on—savor of the Hebrew and are probably ultimately traceable to Dunsany. To turn briefly to my own work, in my Lemurian Books I have a Chaos-god named Iao-Thaumungazoth; the elements of the name are very Semitic, and the flavor of the name derives obviously from the sort of name Lovecraft coined for his Cthulhuoid pantheon. The most Dunsanian of my fiction is the Simrana series—and I rather imagine I coined the name Simrana half remembering such Dunsanian names as Imbaun or Izbahn or Ildaun or Imrana (the River of Silence in *The Gods of Pegana*). I cannot be certain of its exact origin, because the name was coined many years ago and lay in my notebooks awaiting the right kind of story to occur to me. Readers who may recall such of my Simrana cycle as the story "The Whelming of Oom" in *The Young Magicians* and "The Gods of Neol-Shendis" in L. Sprague de Camp's anthology *Warlock and Warriors* and "Zingazar" in *New Worlds For Old* are well aware they are deliberate and loving pastiches of Dunsany.

These few brief notes, I think, serve to demonstrate that the impact of Lord Dunsany on modern fantasy, beginning in 1919 with Lovecraft, still continues and by now has spread to most of the living masters of the genre. I very much doubt that this influence will dwindle or cease in the years ahead; indeed, our work in reviving

Dunsany's prismatic fiction through the Adult Fantasy Series has probably spread his influence through a new generation of young readers who will write the fantasy of tomorrow. I wish them well: and suggest they read their Dunsany carefully and study his techniques, for of all the fantasy writers from William Beckford to John Bellairs, Dunsany remains supreme: the best fantasy writer who ever lived, as some of the work in this book clearly attests.

—*Lin Carter*

. . . little cottages that stand
Midway between the fields we know
And where through windows dimly show
The hills and dales of Fairyland
And elfin mountains tipped with snow.

Lord Dunsany

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