

# THE FANTASY FAN

## THE FANS' OWN MAGAZINE

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### OUR READERS SAY

"Clark Ashton Smith's story 'The Ghoul,' is fascinating all the way through and the plot one that fits in with the treatment. I am anxiously waiting for more poems by him.

" 'Supernatural Horror in Literature' grows even more absorbing with the dawn of the Horror Tale. It is certainly something to tuck away and think over. Especially interesting is how the germ started and gained force in our own country from the European elements and the fact that superstition is more prevalent in northern blood than in southern, speaking racially—Latin and the like.

"The 'Annals of the Jinns' continues well and R. H. Barlow can get quite a story in so few words."

— Duane W. Rimel

You will notice an excellent long poem by Clark Ashton Smith in this issue. We intend to lengthen the installments of Lovecraft's article in future issues—the next part will take over two full pages. Barlow's sixth "Annals" will probably appear next month.

"Very glad to see the new issue. Smith's article is extremely apt and timely. I find that James tends to be

popularly under-appreciated. Barlow's tale is the best yet—he seems to improve constantly. The verses of Messrs Lumley and Searight are haunting and excellent. It's a good idea to substitute a department of general discussion for 'The Boiling Point'."

— H. P. Lovecraft

"I enjoyed the January issue of THE FANTASY FAN. Barlow's little tales are certainly clever, and I hope you will print many of them. I second the wish that you express in your note at the end of the current 'Boiling Point' column."

— Clark Ashton Smith

"I just got the February issue of THE FANTASY FAN and I find that it's o.k., as usual. Marianne Ferguson's article was great!"

— Ted. H. Lutwin

"Just finished the February issue of THE FANTASY FAN, and in common words, it's a honey! Marianne Ferguson's article about her visit to Jules de Grandin was superb! I want to cast my vote right now for another article by Miss Ferguson real soon!

"THE FANTASY FAN is now six months old and should celebrate! 'The Dweller' by William Lumley was a masterpiece, and Richard F.



Searight's poem takes high honors in this issue.

"All in all; I think this semi-birth-day issue is fine. But there are a few things I would like to make comments about. 'The Boiling Point' should be eliminated, but the readers' column should not be shortened! I agree with Mrs. Wooley—you should not insert a contents page, and thus cut out some interesting feature that could occupy the space. THE FANTASY FAN is going places!"

— Bob Tucker

As this is only our seventh issue, we don't believe it's quite time to celebrate our success(?)—however, we will be one year old in September and might be better off by then and feel justified in whooping it up.

We take great pleasure in presenting the following letter from H. Koenig. His letters are always thoroughly interesting and instructive and we value them as much as some of our articles:

"The February issue of THE FANTASY FAN was splendid and a marked improvement over the previous issue. It is rather difficult to pick out any high spot; but the articles and stories by Lovecraft, Barlow, Smith, and Petaja were all fine, to say nothing of the column, 'Howl. from the Ether.'

"I particularly enjoyed Clark Ashton Smith's article on M. R. James. It was an admirable essay on an author who is far too little known and appreciated on this side of the water, and I dare say, on the other side also. Dr. James, who apparently has a tremendous amount of antiquarian and archeological information at his finger

tips, is also, in my humble opinion, the greatest modern exponent of the ghost story. I heartily second Smith's recommendation that all lovers of the weird and supernatural procure a copy of the Longman's Green and Company volume. They will not be disappointed. Incidentally, for the information of readers who are perhaps interested in the separate volumes of James' work rather than in the complete collection, the individual titles of his books (not mentioned in Smith's article) are as follows:

1. Ghost Stories of an Antiquary
2. More Ghost Stories of an Antiquary
3. A Thin Ghost and Others
4. A Warning to the Curious

"By the way, M. R. James should not be confused with G. P. R. James who wrote that interesting romance, 'The Castle of Ehrenstein, Its Lords Spiritual and Temporal; Its Inhabitants Earthly and Unearthly.' This is a book, which, while probably somewhat tiresome to the general reader, should prove of considerable interest to the student of the ghost story (I am fortunate to have a first edition of this book in three volumes published in 1847).

"Emil Petaja's article on 'Famous Fantasy Fiction' was also fine but to me far too short. I could add dozens of other interesting anthologies to his list but a few of the more important ones will suffice. Mr. Petaja called attention to Dorothy Sayer's 'Omnibus of Crime.' It should be noted that Miss Sayer edited a second series of stories entitled, 'Detection, Mystery, (continued on page 112)



# Gods of the North

by Robert E. Howard

The clangor of the swords had died away, the shouting of the slaughter was hushed; silence lay on the red-stained snow. The pale bleak sun that glittered so blindingly from the ice-fields and the snow-covered plains struck sheens of silver from rent corselet and broken blade, where the dead lay in heaps. The nerveless hand yet gripped the broken hilt; helmeted heads, back-drawn in the death throes, tilted red beards and golden beards grimly upward, as if in last invocation to Ymir the frost-giant.

Across the red drifts and mail-clad forms, two figures approached one another. In that utter desolation only they moved. The frosty sky was over them, the white illimitable plain around them, the dead men at their feet. Slowly through the corpses they came, as ghosts might come to a tryst through the shambles of a world.

Their shields were gone, their corselets dented. Blood smeared their mail; their swords were red. Their horned helmets showed the marks of fierce strokes.

One spoke, he whose locks and beard were red as the blood on the sunlit snow.

"Man of the raven locks," said he, "tell me your name, so that my brothers in Vanaheim may know who was the last of Wulfhere's band to fall before the sword of Heimdul."

"This is my answer," replied the black-haired warrior: "Not in Vanaheim, but in Vallahalla will you tell your brothers the name of Amra of Akbitana."

Heimdul roared and sprang, and his

sword swung in a mighty arc. Amra staggered and his vision was filled with red sparks as the blade shivered into bits of blue fire on his helmet. But as he reeled he thrust with all the power of his great shoulders. The sharp point drove through brass scales and bones and heart, and the red-haired warrior died at Amra's feet.

Amra stood swaying, trailing his sword, a sudden sick weariness assailing him. The glare of the sun on the snow cut his eyes like a knife and the sky seemed shrunken and strangely far. He turned away from the trampled expanse where yellow-bearded warriors lay locked with red-haired slayers in the embrace of death. A few steps he took, and the glare of the snow fields was suddenly dimmed. A rushing wave of blindness engulfed him, and he sank down into the snow, supporting himself on one mailed arm, seeking to shake the blindness out of his eyes as a lion might shake his mane.

A silvery laugh cut through his dizziness, and his sight cleared slowly. There was a strangeness about all the landscape that he could not place or define—an unfamiliar tinge to earth and sky. But he did not think long of this. Before him, swaying like a sapling in the wind, stood a woman. Her body was like ivory, and save for a veil of gossamer, she was naked as the day. Her slender bare feet were whiter than the snow they spurned. She laughed, and her laughter was sweeter than the rippling of silvery fountains, and poisonous with cruel mockery.



"Who are you?" demanded the warrior.

"What matter?" Her voice was more musical than a silver-stringed harp, but it was edged with cruelty.

"Call up your mens" he growled, grasping his sword. "Though my strength fail me, yet they shall not take me alive. I see that you are of the Vanir."

"Have I said so?"

He looked again at her unruly locks, which he had thought to be red. Now he saw that they were neither red nor yellow, but a glorious compound of both colors. He gazed spell-bound. Her hair was like elfin-gold, striking which, the sun dazzled him. Her eyes were neither wholly blue nor wholly grey, but of shifting colors and dancing lights and clouds of colors he could not recognize. Her full red lips smiled, and from her slim feet to the blinding crown of her billowy hair, her ivory body was as perfect as the dream of a god. Amra's pulse hammered in his temples.

"I can not tell," said he, "whether you are of Vanaheim and mine enemy, or of Asgard and my friend. Far have I wandered, from Zingara to the Sea of Vilayet, in Stygia and Kush, and the country of the Hyrkanians; but a woman like you I have never seen. Your locks blind me with their brightness. Not even among the fairest daughters of the Aesir have I seen such hair, by Ymir!"

"Who are you to swear by Ymir?" she mocked. "What know you of the gods of ice and snow, you who have come up from the south to adventure among strangers?"

"By the dark gods of my own race!" he cried in anger. "Have I been back-

ward in the sword-play, stranger or no? This day I have seen four score warriors fall, and I alone survive the field where Wulfhere's reavers met the men of Bragi. Tell me, woman, have you caught the flash of mail across the snow-plains, or seen armed men moving upon the ice?"

"I have seen the hoar-frost glittering in the sun," she answered. "I have heard the wind whispering across the everlasting snows."

He shook his head.

"Niord should have come up with us before the battle joined. I fear he and his warriors have been ambushed. Wulfhere lies dead with all his weapon-men.

"I had thought there was no village within many leagues of this spot, for the war carried us far, but you can have come no great distance over these snows, naked as you are. Lead me to your tribe, if you are of Asgard, for I am faint with the weariness of strife."

"My dwelling place is further than you can walk, Amra of Akbitana!" she laughed. Spreading wide her arms she swayed before him, her golden head lolling wantonly, her scintillant eyes shadowed beneath long silken lashes. "Am I not beautiful, man?"

"Like Dawn running naked on the snows," he muttered, his eyes burning like those of a wolf.

"Then why do you not rise and follow me? Who is the strong warrior who falls down before me?" she chanted in maddering mockery. "Lie down and die in the snow with the other fools, Amra of the black hair. You can not follow where I would lead."

With an oath the man heaved himself upon his feet, his blue eyes blazing his dark scarred face convulsed. Rage



shook his soul, but desire for the taunting figure before him hammered at his temples and drove his wild blood riotously through his veins. Passion fierce as physical agony flooded his whole being so that earth and sky swam red to his dizzy gaze, and weariness and faintness were swept from him in madness.

He spoke no word as he drove at her fingers hooked like talons. With a shriek of laughter she leaped back and ran, laughing at him over her white shoulder. With a low growl Amra followed. He had forgotten the fight, forgotten the mailed warriors who lay in their blood, forgotten Niord's belated reavers. He had thought only for the slender white shape which seemed to float rather than run before him.

Out across the white blinding plain she led him. The trampled red field fell out of sight behind him, but still Amra kept on with the silent tenacity of his race. His mailed feet broke through the frozen crust; he sank deep in the drifts and forged through them by sheer strength. But the girl danced across the snow as light as a feather floating across a pool; her naked feet scarcely left their imprint on the hoar-frost. In spite of the fire in his veins, the cold bit through the warrior's mail and furs; but the girl in her gossamer veil ran as lightly and as gaily as if she danced through the palms and rose gardens of Poitain.

Black curses drooled through the warrior's parched lips. The great veins swelled and throbbed in his temples, and his teeth gnashed spasmodically.

"You can not escape me!" he roared. "Lead me into a trap and I'll pile the heads of your kinsmen at your feet.

Hide from me and I'll tear apart the mountains to find you! I'll follow you to hell and beyond hell!"

Her maddening laughter floated back to him, and foam flew from the warrior's lips. Further and further into the wastes she led him, till he saw the wide plains give way to low hills, marching upward in broken ranges. Far to the north he caught a glimpse of towering mountains, blue with the distance, or white with the eternal snows. Above these mountains shone the flaring rays of the borealis. They spread fan-wise into the sky, frosty blades of cold flaming light, changing in color, growing and brightening.

Above him the skies glowed and crackled with strange lights and gleams. The snow shone weirdly, now frosty blue, now icy crimson, now cold silver. Through a shimmering icy realm of enchantment Amra plunged doggedly onward, in a crystalline maze where the only reality was the white body dancing across the glittering snow beyond his reach—ever beyond his reach.

Yet he did not wonder at the necromantic strangeness of it all, not even when two gigantic figures rose up to bar his way. The scales of their mail were white with hoar-frost; their helmets and their axes were sneathed in ice. Snow sprinkled their locks; in their beards were spikes of icicles; their eyes were cold as the lights that streamed above them.

"Brothers!" cried the girl, dancing between them. "Look who follows! I have brought you a man for the feasting! Take his heart that we may lay it smoking on our father's board!"

The giants answered with roars like



the grinding of ice-bergs on a frozen shore, and heaved up their shining axes as the maddened Akbitanan hurled himself upon them. A frosty blade flashed before his eyes, blinding him with its brightness, and he gave back a terrible stroke that sheared through his foe's thigh. With a groan the victim fell, and at the instant Amra was dashed into the snow, his left shoulder numb from the blow of the survivor, from which the warrior's mail had barely saved his life. Amra saw the remaining giant looming above him like a colossus carved of ice, etched against the glowing sky. The axe fell, to sink through the snow and deep into the frozen earth as Amra hurled himself aside and leaped to his feet. The giant roared and wrenched the axe-head free, but even as he did so, Amra's sword sang down. The giant's knees bent and he sank slowly into the snow which turned crimson with the blood that gushed from his half-severed neck.

Amra wheeled, to see the girl standing a short distance away, staring in wide-eyed horror, all mockery gone from her face. He cried out fiercely and the blood-drops flew from his sword as his hand shook in the intensity of his passion.

"Call the rest of your brothers!" he roared. "Call the dogs! I'll give their hearts to the wolves!"

With a cry of fright she turned and fled. She did not laugh now, nor mock him over her shoulder. She ran as for her life, and though he strained every nerve and threw, until his temples were like to burst and the snow swam red to his gaze, she drew away from him, dwindling in the witch-fire of the skies, until she was a figure no bigger than a

child, then a dancing white flame on the snow, then a dim blur in the distance. But grinding his teeth until the blood started from his gums, he reeled on, and he saw the blur grow to a dancing white flame, and the flame to a figure big as a child; and then she was running less than a hundred paces ahead of him, and slowly the space narrowed, foot by foot.

She was running with effort now, her golden locks blowing free; he heard the quick panting of her breath, and saw a flash of fear in the look she cast over her alabaster shoulder. The grim endurance of the warrior had served him well. The speed ebbed from her flashing white legs; she reeled in her gait. In his untamed soul flamed up the fires of hell she had fanned so well. With an inhuman roar he closed in on her, just as she wheeled with a haunting cry and flung out her arms to fend him off.

His sword fell into the snow as he crushed her to him. Her supple body bent backward as she fought with desperate frenzy in his iron arms. Her golden hair blew about his face, blinding him with its sheen; the feel of her slender figure twisting in his mailed arms drove him to blinder madness. His strong fingers sank deep into her smooth flesh, and that flesh was cold as ice. It was as if he embraced not a woman of human flesh and blood, but a woman of flaming ice. She writhed her golden head aside, striving to avoid the savage kisses that bruised her red lips.

"You are cold as the snows," he mumbled dazedly. "I will warm you with the fire in my own blood—"

With a desperate wrench she twisted from his arms, leaving her single gossamer



garment in his grasp. She sprang back and faced him, her golden locks in wild disarray, her white bosom heaving, her beautiful eyes blazing with terror. For an instant he stood frozen, awed by her terrible beauty as she posed naked against the snows.

And in that instant she flung her arms toward the lights that glowed in the skies above her and cried out in a voice that rang in Amra's ears for ever after:

*"Ymir! Oh, my father, save me!"*

Amra was leaping forward, arms spread to seize her, when with a crack like the breaking of an ice mountain, the whole skies leaped into icy fire. The girl's ivory body was suddenly enveloped in a cold blue flame so blinding that the warrior threw up his hands to shield his eyes. A fleeting instant, skies and snowy hills were bathed in crackling white flames, blue darts of icy light, and frozen crimson fires. Then Amra staggered and cried out. The girl was gone. The glowing snow lay empty and bare; high above him the witch-lights flashed and played in a frosty sky gone, mad, and among the distant blue mountains there sounded a rolling thunder as of a gigantic war-chariot rushing behind steeds whose frantic hoofs struck lightning from the snows and echoes from the skies.

Then suddenly the borealis, the snowy hills and the blazing heavens reeled drunkenly to Amra's sight; thousands of fire-balls burst with showers of sparks, and the sky itself became a titanic wheel which rained stars as it spun. Under his feet the snowy hills heaved up like a wave, and the Akbitanan crumpled into the snows to lie motionless.

In a cold dark universe, whose sun was extinguished eons ago, Amra felt the

movement of life, alien and unguessed. An earthquake had him in its grip and was shaking him to and fro, at the same time chafing his hands and feet until he yelled in pain and fury and groped for his sword.

"He's coming to, Horsa," grunted a voice. "Haste—we must rub the frost out of his limbs, if he's ever to wield sword again."

"He won't open his left hand," growled another, his voice indicating muscular strain. "He's clutching something—"

Amra opened his eyes and stared into the bearded faces that bent over him. He was surrounded by tall golden-haired warriors in mail and furs.

"Amra! You live!"

"By Crom, Niord," gasped he, "am I alive, or are we all dead and in Valhalla?"

"We live," grunted the Acsir, busy over Amra's half-frozen feet. "We had to fight our way through an ambush, else we had come up with you before the battle was joined. The corpses were scarce cold when we came upon the field. We did not find you among the dead, so we followed your spoor. In Ymir's name, Amra, why did you wander off into the wastes of the north? We have followed your tracks in the snow for hours. Had a blizzard come up and hidden them, we had never found you, by Ymir!"

"Swear not so often by Ymir," muttered a warrior, glancing at the distant mountains. "This is his land and the god bides among yonder mountains, the legends say."

"I followed a woman," Amra answered hazily. "We met Bragi's men in the plains. I know not how long



we fought. I alone lived. I was dizzy and faint. The land lay like a dream before me. Only now do all things seem natural and familiar. The woman came and taunted me. She was beautiful as a frozen flame from hell. When I looked at her I was as one mad, and forgot all else in the world. I followed her. Did you not find her tracks. Or the giants in icy mail I slew?"

Niord shook his head.

"We found only your tracks in the snow, Amra."

"Then it may be I was mad," said Amra dazedly. "Yet you yourself are no more real to me than was the golden haired witch who fled naked across the snows before me. Yet from my very hands she vanished in icy flame."

"He is delirious," whispered a warrior.

"Not so!" cried an older man, whose eyes were wild and weird. "It was Atali, the daughter of Ymir, the frost-giant! To fields of the dead she comes, and shows herself to the dying! Myself when a boy I saw her, when I lay half-slain on the bloody field of Wolraven. I saw her walk among the dead in the snows, her naked body gleaming like ivory and her golden hair like a blinding flame in the moonlight. I lay and howled like a dying dog because I could not crawl after her. She lures men from stricken fields into the wastelands to be slain by her brothers, the ice-giants, who lay men's red hearts smoking on Ymir's board. Amra has seen Atali, the frost-giant's daughter!"

"Bah!" grunted Horsa. "Old Gorm's mind was turned in his youth by a sword cut on the head. Amra was delirious with the fury of battle. Look how his helmet is dented. Any of those blows

## FANTASY BOOK

by Lester Anderson

"Gandle Follows His Nose" by Heywood Broun (Boni & Liveright 1926) Our Scripps-Howard correspondent turns out a short allegorical fantasy which concerns itself with the adventures of one Bunny Gandle who, when 18 years of age, was taken, by his uncle, to the sorcerer Boaz, wherefrom he managed to escape with the cape of invisibility. We travel with him to strange lands. We hear of his finding and the subsequent loss of the magic lamp, his victory over the God Kla, the repulsion of the armies of King Helgas, and his sojourn in the Land of the Flying Sword. We meet our old friend, Yom, the genie who is much perturbed when Gandle orders him to bring a poached egg, of all things. Yom, incidentally, tenders young Gandle some sage advice concerning Life which the youth cannot grasp. Who can blame him, as the genie had 5694 years of experience. The underlying current in this piece is that of "wishfulfilment," which I think, was what Broun primarily had in mind. It makes novel reading from all angles.

might have addled his brain. It was an hallucination he followed into the wastes. He is from the south; what does he know of Atali?"

"You speak truth, perhaps," muttered Amra. "It was all strange and weird—by Crom!"

He broke off, glaring at the object that still dangled from his clenched left fist; the others gaped silently at the veil he held up—a wisp of gossamer that was never spun by human distaff.



## SUPERNATURAL HORROR IN LITERATURE

### Part Six

by H. P. Lovecraft

(Copyright 1927, W. Paul Cook)

Through the seventeenth and into the eighteenth century, we behold a growing mass of fugitive legendry and balladry of darksome cast; still, however, held down beneath the surface of polite and accepted literature. Chapbooks of horror and weirdness multiplied, and we glimpse the eager interest of the people through fragments like DeFoe's *Apparition of Mrs. Veal*, a homely tale of a dead woman's spectral visit to a distant friend, written to advertise covertly a badly selling theological disquisition on death. The upper orders of society were now losing faith in the supernatural, and indulging in a period of classic rationalism. Then, beginning with the translations of Eastern tales in Queen Anne's reign and taking definite form toward the middle of the century, comes the revival of romantic feeling—the era of new joy in Nature, and in the radiance of past times, strange scenes, bold deeds, and incredible marvels. We feel it first in the poets, whose utterances take on new qualities of wonder, strangeness, and shuddering. And finally, after the timid appearance of a few weird scenes in the novels of the day—such as Smollett's *Adventures of Ferdinand, Count Fathom*—the released instinct precipitates itself in the birth of a new school of writing; the "Gothic" school of horrible and fantastic prose fiction, long and short,

[continued on page 112]

## YOUR VIEWS

You will remember that, in the closing statement in the last department of "The Boiling Point" last month, we asked you, the readers, to tell us what you think of horror stories. Is there any virtue to them? Why do people delight in being horrified?—etc suggested by Forrest J. Ackerman. H. P. Lovecraft honors us with the first opinion, which we present to you as follows:

"It can be said that anything which vividly embodies a basic human emotion or captures a definite and typical human mood is genuine art. The subject matter is immaterial. It requires an especial morbidity to enjoy any authentic word-depiction, whether it is conventionally 'pleasant' or not. Indeed, it argues a somewhat immature and narrow prospection when our judgment is by the mere conventional appeal of its subject-matter or its supposed social effects. The question to ask is not whether it is 'healthy' or 'pleasant,' but whether it is *genuine* and *powerful*."

Have you another idea concerning the horror story? If so, let us know what it is. However, if your opinion differs, don't tell Mr. Lovecraft that he is crazy or has a deceased mind for thinking as he does, or this department will just become another 'Boiling Point.' Or bring up something new, if you will. This is your department, and anything you wish to say concerning weird fiction in general or any of its branches in particular will be printed here. Here's hoping to hear from you.



## R E V E N A N T

by Clark Ashton Smith

I am the specter who returns  
Unto some desolate world in ruin borne afar  
On the black flowing of Lethean skies:  
Ever I search, in cryptic galleries,  
The void sarcophagi, the broken urns  
Of many a vanished avatar:  
Or haunt the gloom of grumbling pylons vast  
In temples that enshrine the shadowy past.  
Viewless, impalpable and fleet,  
I roam stupendous avenues, and greet  
Familiar sphinxes carved from everlasting stone,  
Or the fair, brittle gods of long ago,  
Decayed and fallen low.  
And there I mark the tall clepsammiae  
That time has overthrown,  
And empty clepsydrae,  
And dials drowned in umbrage never-lifting;  
And there, on rusty parapegms,  
I read the ephemerides  
Of antique stars and elder planets drifting  
Oblivionward in night.  
And there, with purples of the tomb bedight,  
And crowned with funeral gems,  
I hold awhile the throne  
Whereon mine immemorial selves have sate,  
Canopied by the triple-tinted glory  
Of the three suns forever paled and flown.  
I am the specter who returns  
And dwells content with his forlorn estate  
In mansions lost and hoary  
Where no lamp burns;  
Who feasts within the sepulcher,  
And finds the ancient shadows lovelier  
Than gardens all emblazed with sevenfold noon,  
Or topaz-builed towers  
That throng below some iris-pouring moon.  
Exiled and homeless in the younger stars,  
Henceforth I shall inhabit that grey clime  
Whose days belong to primal calendars;



Nor would I come again  
 Back to the garish terrene hours;  
**For I am free of vaults unfathomable**  
 And treasures lost from time:  
 With bat and vampire there  
 I flit through somber skies immensurable  
 Or fly adown the unending subterranean;  
 Mummied and ceremented,  
 I sit in councils of the kingly dead;  
 And oftentimes for vestiture I wear  
 The granite of great idols looming darkly  
 In atlantean fanes;  
 Or closely now and starkly  
 I cling as clings the attenuating air  
 About the ruins bare.

## THE WORDS IN THE SKY

(A True Experience)

by Kenneth B. Pritchard

On one evening in 1916, before the United States had entered the World War, I happened to be out with my mother. The place was Bridgeport, Connecticut, near the corner of Main and State Streets. The stars were shining, as usual, though I gave them no particular notice.

We had turned the corner and traversed several feet, when I chanced to look up into the sky. Lo and behold, the stars had formed themselves into one great patch in the heavens, in the form of letters, and those letters spelled words!

I could read some, at the time, but I tugged at my mother's arm and asked her what it said. I am hazy as to her answer. Perhaps she told me that there was nothing there, or ignored the childish gesture entirely. At any

rate, I looked up again and the words were still there. I don't believe that my mother even glanced at them.

You are anxious to learn what it said? Well, it took years for that memory to come back to me, but I now have it, in what I am fairly sure are the correct words. The exact ones do not make any difference, for I am sure of their meaning. The message in the sky read, "The United States of America will run red with blood!"

A short time after peering at the stars, some invisible forces took hold of them. The brilliant orbs were shifted as by a mighty hand. They moved like checkers on a vast board. And then, the stars ceased their journeyings; they were once more on their accustomed courses. I lowered my head; the gigantic show was over!

Delusion, you say? I'm afraid I don't agree with you.



## HOW TO WRITE A WEIRD TALE

by Hoy Ping Pong

Unlike its sister, the science fiction story, the weird tale needs a plot. To go about this, select the plot which has been used most since 1926 and write your tale around it. I said *around*. Don't touch the plot itself; editors won't stand for that! Above all, *don't* invent an original one. Readers won't know what you're talking about if you don't use one that has been plotted 6,438,900 and a fraction times more or less. At this point, you can discard the plot altogether, because the editor would send your brain-child back if you didn't, on the grounds that there are too many stories with plots in them as it is. They would rather have action.

Action—that is the keynote! The hero must dash hither and thither over the landscape, saving the beautiful blue eyed heroine, who lisps in baby-talk, from the snakey clutches of the villain who, incidently, is about to let loose on the city a horde of terrible monsters. Where he got them from is none of your business, so you'd do much better to worry yourself about something else—where your next meal is coming from, for instance. I would suggest that pre-historic monsters be used, for they are easier to account for than ones from other dimensions. Editors have an annoying habit of asking authors where their monsters came from. You had better have the monsters destroy New York City. The inhabitants of this city are so used to being destroyed that they now take it with a chuckle of

droll humor. The tax payers might protest a bit though, but don't mind them.

Here to add a bit of flavor to the tale, bring in a new plot. Discard it and bring in a third. Throw that one away too. Plots are cheap—\$1.75 an acre in Missouri. Small plots will do. Then, while the stunned readers are still gasping over the plots, throw in a barrage of big words that none of them will understand, including Webster and Clark Ashton Smith. This will stupify them.

About this time, put in something really weird and spine-chilling. Ice might do, but it melts too rapidly in warm climes, and a southern reader wouldd't get his spine thoroughly chilled, so you had better devise something else.

As a final bit of advice, it would be best to have some sort of recommendation to the editor in order to have your story more readily acceptable. So have your Uncle Silas, who has a friend that knows a friend who is an acquaintance with someone that knows the printer who publishes the said editor's magazine, put in a good word for you.

If this fails (as it undoubtedly will) take your brain-child to him in person. This will save postage both ways, because editors never fail to reject manuscripts from beginners (I object—Editor). Don't worry over this tho. Let it lay around home a few weeks mellowing with age, and then send it in again, untouched. This time it will be accepted. Maybe.

If you go in person, buy a plot in a local cemetery.



## A SAD STORY OF THE FUTURE

by Forrest J. Ackerman

(Following is a brief summary of a recent radio broadcast taken from the story "We Buy Us a Robot and What Happened" in the American Weekly.)

A married couple had an eight year old robot, and decided that it was about time to get a new one as 'Willy' was becoming worn and creaky and inefficient; so, they went to look over the newest models. They selected Julius, a most capable iron-man who could not tell a lie. This proved a disadvantage, however, as, upon entering their home he declared in his deep hollow, mechanical voice: "Dust—much dust!"

As the wife would grow lonely when her husband was away, she a phonograph record made of him assuring her how much he loved her. This she inserted into Julius, and listened to him. But this made Julius become very pensive and sad. One day he was found reading love poems and crying. Julius was in love! He realized the hopelessness of the situation.

One day he was found missing. "Oh! He's committed suicide!" the wife cried, "I know it!"

"But that's impossible!" her husband assured her, "if he tries to drown himself, he will only be short-circuited and rusted, and could be revitalized and polished up just like new. If he shoots himself, but a few parts need be replaced. Jumping from a window would merely dent him a little. He cannot hang himself; he cannot poison

## THE TIME MACHINE

(A Bibliographical Note)

by R. H. Barlow

The first publication of the tale that later became Wells' most famous short novel, was in a paper issued at his school. The magazine, *The Science Schools Quarterly*, serialized a story of the same underlying plot, dealing with a Welsh professor. This was, broadly speaking, the debut of the story. It was later re-written, and some decade afterwards, after being published in both the *National Observer* and *The New Review*, appeared in a modest little volume published by Wm. Heinemann. Preceding it were two text-books and *Conversations With An Uncle* came out the day immediately before.

The book in its first English edition, was a modest duodecimo volume measuring approximately 7 X 5 X 1 ins. It was bound in a coarse linen-like grey cloth, and bore in purple lettering as well as the title a peculiar device of a rather emaciated sphinx. It contained pages 152 and XVI. The text, besides the title page was virtually the same as that recently issued in *Short Stories of H. G. Wells*, but differed in several respects from that *Amazing Stories* used in their May, 1927 issue.

It appeared simultaneously both in the bound edition and wrappers, the former at the price of 3s, and the latter at 2s 6d.

himself; he cannot die by fire. Anyhow, our contract guarantees us against loss by suicide.

(continued on page 112)



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## Supernatural Horror in Literature

(continued from page 105)

whose literary posterity is destined to become so numerous, and in many cases so resplendent in artistic merit. It is, when one reflects upon it, genuinely remarkable that weird narration as a fixed and academically recognized literary form should have been so late of final birth. The impulse and atmosphere are as old as man, but the typical weird tale of standard literature is a child of the eighteenth century.

(Next month we will give you a much longer instalment of this article, in which Mr. Lovecraft takes up the third section, "The Early Gothic Novel.")

## ADVERTISEMENT

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WEIRD TALES, dated 1923, 1924, 1925, and some later issues are wanted. If you have any old numbers that you are willing to part with, please communicate with the Editor.

## Our Readers Say

(continued from page 98)

and Horror.' Another worth-while group of stories has been collected and edited by Montague Summers under the title, 'The Supernatural Omnibus.' This volume has a splendid introduction by the Rev. Summers and contains, among other stories, 'The Upper Berth' by Crawford, and 'The Damned Thing' by Bierce. Another well-rounded collection was gotten together by Colin de la Mare under the title, 'They Walk Again.' This book contains 'The Voice of the Night' by Hodgson and 'The Beckoning Fair One' by Oliver Onions.

"Perhaps at times I have been somewhat harsh in my criticisms, but I am glad that you have taken them in the right spirit."

We know that you will be pleased to note that we are lengthening the installments of Lovecraft's article hereafter.

## A Sad Story of the Future

(continued from page 109)

Just then the televisior flashed on. I was an upstairs neighbor.

"My son's all dirty and greasy," he bellowed, "and it's your fault!"

"Our fault? How so?" they asked.

He gave a serial number. "That's your robot, isn't it? Well, he went out into the park and called a lot of kids around him; told them he wasn't feeling well; gave them screw-drivers and asked to find out what was the matter with him. In a few minutes he was scattered all over six blocks."

Julius, the mechanical man, had taken the only method an automaton knew of committing suicide——