

ACME

No. 7

JANUARY

50¢

M A G A Z I N E O F
HORROR

STRANGE TALES AND SCIENCE FICTION

**THE THING FROM —
OUTSIDE**

by George Allan England

THE SHUTTERED ROOM


by H. P. Lovecraft &
August Derleth

**THE PHANTOM
FARMHOUSE**

by Seabury Quinn

JOSEPH PAYNE BRENNAN

MARY WILKINS-FREEMAN



New Stories and Great Classics of
**THE BIZARRE, THE GRUESOME
THE FRIGHTENING**

HOPE • CONTENTMENT • UNDERSTANDING • ENTERTAINMENT

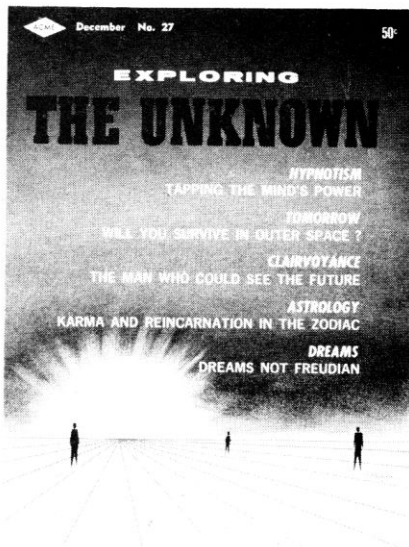
All these are yours when you read **EXPLORING THE UNKNOWN** — the bi-monthly magazine that inspires you and helps you to understand:

the meaning of life — is there a life after death — can astrology guide our lives — psychic experiences — all the manifold mysteries of existence.

This comforting magazine can be yours to enjoy every other month at the following special prices:

Instead of the regular \$2.50 cost to you; just send \$2. for **EXPLORING THE UNKNOWN** for one year (six issues). Or send \$4. for two years (twelve issues). (Add 50c for foreign subscriptions.)

Use the coupon below, or a facsimile, if you do not want to mutilate this magazine.



EXPLORING THE UNKNOWN, Dept. 7
HEALTH KNOWLEDGE, INC.
119 FIFTH AVE., NEW YORK, N. Y. 10003

Enclosed is my remittance of \$..... for my subscription to **EXPLORING THE UNKNOWN** as follows:

- ☐ 1 year subscription (6 issues)
☐ 2 year subscription (12 issues)

NAME Please
ADDRESS print
CITY, STATE, ZIP No. legibly

m a g a z i n e o f HORROR Strange Tales and Science Fiction

Volume 2

CONTENTS FOR JANUARY

Number 1

INTRODUCTION	4
THE THING FROM - OUTSIDE <i>George Allan England</i>	5
BLACK THING AT MIDNIGHT <i>Joseph Payne Brennan</i>	22
THE SHADOWS ON THE WALL <i>Mary Wilkins-Freeman</i>	28
THE PHANTOM FARMHOUSE <i>Seabury Quinn</i>	42
THE OBLONG BOX <i>Edgar Allan Poe</i>	64
A WAY WITH KIDS <i>Ed M. Clinton</i>	75
THE DEVIL OF THE MARSH <i>E. B. Marriott-Watson</i>	84
THE SHUTTERED ROOM (novelet) <i>H. P. Lovecraft & August Derleth</i>	89
IT IS WRITTEN (Readers' Letters and Editor's Comment)	121

While the greatest diligence has been used to ascertain the owners of rights, and to secure necessary permissions, the editor and publisher wish to offer their apologies in any possible case of accidental infringements.

Robert A. W. Lowndes, *Editor*

MAGAZINE OF HORROR, Vol. 2, No. 1, January 1965 (whole number 7). Published bi-monthly by Health Knowledge, Inc. Executive and editorial offices at 119 Fifth Ave., New York, N. Y. 10003. Second class entry pending, Buffalo, New York. Annual subscription (6 issues) \$2.50 in the U. S., Canada and Pan American Union. Foreign \$3.00. Single copy, 50c. Manuscripts accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes will be carefully considered, but the publisher and editors will not be responsible for loss or damage. © 1964 by Health Knowledge, Inc. All rights reserved under Universal, International and Pan American copyright conventions. Printed in U. S. A.

Introduction

OUR INCLUSION of science fiction as a regular part of the fare has raised once again the perennial question of how you define science fiction. Many attempts have been made, including previous ones of our own, and thus far no universally agreed-upon definition has come forth. We propose, however, that science fiction be divided from fantasy on the following basis: The fundamental assumption underlying science fiction is that The Universe (the sum total of all that exists, past, present, and future) is orderly; the fundamental assumption underlying fantasy is that the Universe is arbitrary. Neither assumption might be explicitly stated in any given story, and in most cases the assumption probably is not stated. And we must further allow that many stories containing the assumption of orderliness will not necessarily be science fiction, many stories assuming arbitrariness will not necessarily be fantasy.

If we assume that The Universe is orderly, then appearances of disorder and arbitrariness are an illusion. Now an illusion is not a hallucination. It's there, it's real. It just isn't what it appears to be at the moment. Disorderly appearances in an orderly Universe, therefore, are local and temporary; eventually balance and order will appear. That does not mean that any of us, perceiving disorder, will necessarily see the underlying order, although it is possible at times.

If we assume that The Universe is arbitrary, then appearances of order are an illusion; balance and stability are purely local and temporary, and in the long run everything dissolves into chaos.

We can decide that an orderly Universe is the creation of God or that it just sort of grew or proceeded from some impersonal force or forces which maintain the fundamental order. We can assume that a disorderly Universe is the creation of an arbitrary God (who's an awful fussbudget) or that while there may be "gods" — vast, superhuman entities with tremendous powers — they, too, will be brought down in the end by underlying chaos.

(Turn To Page 126)

The Thing From - Outside

by George Allan England

Christmas 1929 will always be memorable to your editor, since it was during that season when parental permission was granted to buy and subscribe to some science fiction magazines. SCIENCE WONDER STORIES and AIR WONDER STORIES were issued by the publishers of respectable radio magazines, so these were okayed. And the first story in the current (January 1930) issue of AIR WONDER was the opening installment of *The Flying Legion*, by George Allan England. Many years later, we obtained a complete set of AMAZING STORIES, to find England's *The Thing From - Outside* in the first issue. It was not until some time after his death that we learned that he was one of the top "names" in pulp adventure stories, although we had frequently heard of his famous "Darkness and Dawn" trilogy, which fans were constantly begging the editors of science fiction magazines to reprint. These three finally did appear in FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES, and FANTASTIC NOVELS reprinted *The Golden Blight* and *The Flying Legion*. *The Elixir of Hate* was reprinted twice in these magazines; in FFM, in 1942, and in the final issues of A. MERRITT'S FANTASY MAGAZINE in 1950. England was born in 1877 and died in 1936. He was a Harvard graduate, but incipient TB sent him to the Maine woods to recuperate, where he took to writing. Brad Day's *Index on the Weird and Fantastica in Magazines* lists his first fantasy appearance as *The Time-Reflector*, BLUE BOOK, September 1905. The bulk of his work apparently was in the Munsey magazines, as he became one of Bob Davis' staff writers. We have heard conflicting reports about the circumstances of England's death, the most romantic being that he was lost on a wild exploration and treasure-hunting venture — he traveled widely and organized many such jaunts. The story is that he disappeared, much the way that Ambrose Bierce did, but we cannot vouch for this version. The present story was requested by Robert Stenzel.

THEY SAT about their campfire, that little party of Americans retreating southward from Hudson Bay before the oncoming menace of the great cold. Sat there, stolid under the awe of the North; under the uneasiness that the day's trek had laid upon their souls. The three men smoked; the two women huddled close to each other. Fireglow picked their faces from the gloom of night among the dwarf firs. A splashing murmur told of the Albany River's haste to escape from the wilderness, and reach the Bay.

"I don't see what there was in a mere circular print on a rock-ledge to make our guides desert," said Professor Thorburn. His voice was as dry as his whole personality. "Most extraordinary."

"*They* knew what it was, all right," answered Jandron, geologist of the party. "So do I." He rubbed his cropped mustache. His eyes glinted grayly. "I've seen things happen, where they were."

"Something surely happened to our guides, before they'd got a mile into the bush," put in the Professor's wife, while Vivian, her sister, gazed into the fire that revealed her as a beauty, not to be spoiled even by a tam and a rough-knit sweater. "Men don't shoot wildly, and scream like that, unless —"

"They're all three dead now, anyhow," said Jandron. "So

they're out of harm's way. While we — well, we're two hundred and fifty wicked miles from the C. P. R. rails."

"Forget it, Jandy!" said Marr, the journalist. "We're just suffering from an attack of nerves, that's all. Give me a fill of 'baccy. Thanks. We'll all be better in the morning. Ho-hum! Now, speaking of spooks and such —"

He launched into an account of how he had once exposed a fraudulent spiritualist Medium, thus proving — to his own satisfaction — that nothing existed beyond the scope of mankind's everyday life. But nobody gave him much heed, and silence fell upon the little night-encampment in the wilds; a silence that was ominous.

Pale, cold stars watched down from spaces infinitely far beyond man's trivial world.

NEXT DAY, stopping for chow on a ledge miles upstream, Jandron discovered another of the prints. He cautiously summoned the other two men. They examined the print, while the womenfolk were busy by the fire. A harmless thing the marking seemed; only a ring about four inches in diameter, a kind of cup-shaped depression with a raised center. A sort of glaze coated it, as if the granite had been fused by heat.

Jandron knelt, a well-knit figure in bright mackinaw and canvas leggings, and with a

shaking finger explored the smooth curve of the print in the rock. His brows contracted as he studied it.

"We'd better get along out of this as quick as we can," said he in an unnatural voice. "You've got your wife to protect, Thorburn, and I — well, I've got Vivian. And —"

"You have?" nipped Marr. The light of jealousy gleamed in his heavy-lidded look. "What you need is a psychiatrist."

"Really, Jandron," the Professor admonished, "you mustn't let your imagination run away with you."

"I suppose it's imagination that keeps this print cold!" the geologist retorted. His breath made faint, swirling coils of vapor above it.

"Nothing but a pot-hole," judged Thorburn, bending his spare, angular body to examine the print. The Professor's vitality all seemed centered in his big-bulged skull that sheltered a marvelous thinking machine. Now he put his lean hand to the base of his brain, rubbing the back of his head as if it ached. Then, under what seemed some powerful compulsion, he ran his bony finger around the print in the rock.

"By Jove, but it is cold!" he admitted. "And looks as if it had been stamped right out of the stone. Extraordinary"

"Dissolved out, you mean,"

corrected the geologist. "By cold."

The journalist laughed mockingly.

"Wait till I write this up!" "Noted Geologist Declares Frigid Ghost Dissolves Granitel!"

Jandron ignored him. He fetched a little water from the river and poured it into the print.

"Icel!" ejaculated the Professor. "Solid icel!"

"Frozen in a second," added Jandron, while Marr stared. "And it'll never melt, either. I tell you, I've seen some of these rings before; and every time, horrible things have happened. Incredible things. Something burned this ring out of the stone — burned it out with the cold of interstellar space. Something that can import cold as a permanent quality of matter. Something that can kill matter, and totally remove it."

"Of course that's all sheer poppycock." The journalist tried to laugh, but his brain felt numb.

"This something, this Thing," continued Jandron, "is a Thing that can't be killed by bullets. It's what caught our guides on the barrens, as they ran away — poor fools!"

A shadow fell across the print in the rock. Mrs. Thorburn had come up, was standing there. She had overheard a little of what Jandron had been saying.

"Nonsense!" she tried to ex-

claim, but she was shivering so she could hardly speak.

THAT NIGHT, after a long afternoon of paddling and portaging — laboring against inhibitions like those in a nightmare — they camped on shelving rocks that slanted to the river.

"After all," said the Professor, when supper was done, "we mustn't get into a panic. I know extraordinary things are reported from the wilderness, and more than one man has come out, raving. But we, by Jovel with our superior brains — we aren't going to let Nature play us any tricks!"

"And of course," added his wife, her arm about Vivian, "everything in the universe is a natural force. There's really no supernatural, at all."

"Admitted," Jandron replied. "But how about things *outside* the universe?"

"And they call you a scientist?" giped Marr; but the Professor leaned forward, his brows knit.

"Hm!" he grunted. A little silence fell.

"You don't mean, really," asked Vivian, "that you think there's life and intelligence — Outside?"

Jandron looked at the girl. Her beauty, haloed with ruddy gold from the firelight, was a pain to him as he answered.

"Yes, I do. And dangerous life, too. I know what I've seen,

in the North Country. I know what I've seen!"

Silence again, save for the crepitation of the flames, the fall of an ember, the murmur of the current. Darkness narrowed the wilderness to just that circle of flickering light ringed by the forest and the river, brooded over by the pale stars.

"Of course you can't expect a scientific man to take you seriously," commented the Professor.

"I know what I've seen! I tell you there's Something entirely outside man's knowledge."

"Poor fellow!" scoffed the journalist; but even as he spoke his hand pressed his forehead.

"There are Things at work," Jandron affirmed, with dogged persistence. He lighted his pipe with a blazing twig. Its flame revealed his face drawn, lined. "Things. Things that reckon with us no more than we do with ants. Less, perhaps."

The flame of the twig died. Night stood closer, watching.

"Suppose there are?" the girl asked. "What's that got to do with these prints in the rock?"

"They," answered Jandron, "are marks left by one of those Things. Footprints, maybe. That Thing is near us, here and now!"

Marr's laugh broke a long stillness. "And you," he exclaimed, "with an A.M. and a B.S. to write after your name."

"If you knew more," retorted Jandron, "you'd know a devilish

sight less. It's only ignorance that's cocksure."

"But," dogmatized the Professor, "no scientist of any standing has ever admitted any outside interference with this planet."

"No, and for thousands of years nobody ever admitted that the world was round, either. What I've seen, I know."

"Well, what *have* you seen?" asked Mrs. Thorburn, shivering.

"You'll excuse me, please, for not going into that just now."

"You mean," the Professor demanded, dryly, "if the — hm! — this suppositious Thing wants to —?"

"It'll do any infernal thing it takes a fancy to, yes! If it happens to want us —"

"But what *could* Things like that want of us? Why should They come here, at all?"

"Oh, for various reasons. For inanimate objects, at times, and then again for living beings. They've come here lots of times, I tell you," Jandron asserted with strange irritation, "and got what They wanted, and then gone away to — Somewhere. If one of them happens to want us, for any reason, It will take us, that's all. If it doesn't want us, It will ignore us, as we'd ignore gorillas in Africa, if we were looking for gold. But if it was gorilla-fur we wanted that would be different for the gorillas, wouldn't it?"

"What in the world," asked

Vivian, "could a — well, a Thing from Outside want of *us*?"

"What do men want, say, of guinea-pigs? Men experiment with 'em, of course. Superior beings use inferior, for their own ends. To assume that man is the supreme product of evolution is gross self-conceit. Might not some superior Thing want to experiment with human beings?"

"But how?" demanded Marr.

"The human brain is the most highly-organized form of matter known to this planet. Suppose, now —"

"Nonsense!" interrupted the Professor. "All hands to the sleeping-bags, and no more of this. I've got a wretched headache. Let's anchor in Blanket Bay!"

He, and both women, turned in. Jandron and Marr sat a while longer by the fire. They kept plenty of wood piled on it, too, for an unnatural chill transfixed the night air. The fire burned strangely blue, with greenish flicks of flame.

AT LENGTH, after vast acerbities of disagreement, the geologist and the newspaperman sought their sleeping-bags. The fire was a comfort. Not that a fire could avail a pin's weight against a Thing from interstellar space, but subjectively it was a comfort. The instincts of a million years, centering around protection by fire, cannot be obliterated.

After a time — worn out by a day of nerve-strain and of battling with swift currents, of flight from Something invisible, intangible — they all slept.

The depths of space, star-sprinkled, hung above them with vastness immeasurable, cold beyond all understanding of the human mind.

Jandron woke first, in a red dawn.

He blinked at the fire, as he crawled from his sleeping-bag. The fire was dead; and yet it had not burned out. Much wood remained unconsumed, charred over, as if some gigantic extinguisher had in the night been lowered over it.

"Hmmm!" growled Jandron. He glanced about him, on the ledge. "Prints, too. I might have known!"

He aroused Marr. Despite all the journalist's mocking hostility, Jandron felt more in common with this man of his own age than with the Professor, who was close on sixty.

"Look here, now!" said he. "*It* has been all around here. See? *It* put out our fire — maybe the fire annoyed *It*, some way — and *It* walked round us, everywhere." His gray eyes smoldered. "I guess, by gad, you've got to admit facts, now!"

The journalist could only shiver and stare.

"Lord, what a head I've got on me, this morning!" he chattered. He rubbed his forehead

with a shaking hand, and started for the river. Most of his assurance had vanished. He looked badly done up.

"Well, what s a y?" demanded Jandron. "See these fresh prints?"

"Damn the prints!" retorted Marr, and fell to grumbling some unintelligible thing. He washed unsteadily, and remained crouching at the river's lip, inert, numbed.

Jandron, despite a gnawing at the base of his brain, carefully examined the ledge. He found prints scattered everywhere, and some even on the river-bottom near the shore. Wherever water had collected in the prints on the rock, it had frozen hard. Each print in the river-bed, too, was white with ice. Ice that the rushing current could not melt.

"Well, by gad!" he exclaimed. He lighted his pipe and tried to think. Horribly afraid — yes, he felt horribly afraid, but determined. Presently, as a little power of concentration came back, he noticed that all the prints were in straight lines, each mark about two feet from the next.

"*It* was observing us while we slept," said Jandron.

"What nonsense are you talking, eh?" demanded Marr. His dark, heavy face sagged. "Fire, now, and grub!"

He got up and shuffled unsteadily away from the river. Then he stopped with a jerk, staring.

"Look! Look a' that axel!" he gulped, pointing.

Jandron picked up the axe, by the handle, taking care not to touch the steel. The blade was white-furred with frost. And deep into it, punching out part of the edge one of the prints was stamped.

"This metal," said he, "is clean gone. It's been absorbed. The Thing doesn't recognize any difference in materials. Water and steel and rock are all the same to *It*."

"You're crazy!" snarled the journalist. "How could a Thing travel on one leg, hopping along, making marks like that?"

"It could roll, if it was disk-shaped. And —"

A cry from the Professor turned them. Thorburn was stumbling toward them, hands out and tremulous.

"My wife —!" he choked.

Vivian was kneeling beside her sister, frightened, dazed.

"Something's happened!" stammered the Professor: "Here — come here —!"

Mrs. Thorburn was beyond any power of theirs to help. She was still breathing; but her respirations were stertorous, and a complete paralysis had stricken her. Her eyes, half-open and expressionless, showed pupils startlingly dilated. No resources of the party's drug-kit produced the slightest effect on the woman.

THE NEXT half-hour was a confused panic, breaking camp, getting Mrs. Thorburn into a canoe, and leaving that accursed place, with a furious energy of terror that could no longer reason. Upstream, ever up against the swirl of the current the party fought, driven by horror. With no thought of food or drink, paying no heed to landmarks, lashed forward only by the mad desire to be gone, the three men and the girl flung every ounce of their energy into the paddles. Their panting breath mingled with the sound of swirling eddies. A mist-blurred sun brooded over the northern wilds. Unheeded, hosts of black-flies sang high-pitched keenings all about the fugitives. On either hand the forest waited, watched.

Only after two hours of sweating toil had brought exhaustion did they stop, in the shelter of a cove where black waters circled, foam-flecked. There they found the Professor's wife — she was dead.

Nothing remained to do but bury her. At first Thorburn would not hear of it. Like a madman he insisted that through all hazards he would fetch the body out. But no — impossible. So, after a terrible time, he yielded.

In spite of her grief, Vivian was admirable. She understood what must be done. It was her voice that said the prayers; her hand that — lacking flowers —

laid the fir boughs on the cairn. The Professor was dazed past doing anything, saying anything.

Toward midafternoon, the party landed again, many miles upriver. Necessity forced them to eat. Fire would not burn. Every time they lighted it, it smouldered and went out with a heavy, greasy smoke. The fugitives ate cold food and drank water, then shoved off in two canoes and once more fled.

In the third canoe, hauled to the edge of the forest, lay all the rock-specimens, data and curios, scientific instruments. The party kept only Marr's diary, a compass, supplies, firearms and medicine-kit.

"We can find the things we've left — sometime," said Jandron, noting the place well. "Sometime — after *It* has gone."

"And bring the body out," added Thorburn. Tears, for the first time, wet his eyes. Vivian said nothing. Marr tried to light his pipe. He seemed to forget that nothing, not even tobacco, would burn now.

Vivian and Jandron occupied one canoe; the other carried the Professor and Marr. Thus the power of the two canoes was about the same. They kept well together, upstream.

THE FUGITIVES paddled and portaged with a dumb, desperate energy. Toward evening they struck into what they believed to be the Mamattawan. A

mile up this, as the blurred sun faded beyond a wilderness of ominous silence, they camped. Here they made determined efforts to kindle fire. Not even alcohol from the drug-kit would start it. Cold, they mumbled a little food; cold, they huddled into their sleeping-bags, there to lie with darkness leaden on their fear. After a long time, up over a world void of all sound save the river-flow, slid an amber moon notched by the ragged tops of the conifers. Even the wail of a timber-wolf would have come as welcome relief; but no wolf howled.

Silence and night enfolded them. And everywhere they felt *It* was watching.

Foolishly enough, as a man will do foolish things in a crisis, Jandron laid his revolver outside his sleeping-bag, in easy reach. His thought — blurred by a strange, drawing headache — was, *If It touches Vivian, I'll shoot!*

He realized the complete absurdity of trying to shoot a visitant from interstellar space; from the Fourth Dimension, maybe. But Jandron's ideas seemed tangled. Nothing would come out right. He lay there, absorbed in a kind of waking nightmare. Now and then, rising on an elbow, he hearkened; all in vain. Nothing so much as stirred.

His thought drifted to better days, when all had been health, sanity, optimism; when nothing

except jealousy of Marr, as concerned Vivian, had troubled him. Days when the sizzle of the frying pan over friendly coals had made friendly wilderness music; when the wind and the northern star, the whirr of the reel, the whispering vortex of the paddle in clear water had all been things of joy. Yes, and when a certain happy moment had, through some word or look of the girl, seemed to promise his heart's desire. But now —

"Damn it, I'll save *her*, anyhow!" he swore with savage intensity, knowing all the while that what was to be, would be, unmitigably. Do ants, by any waving of antennae, stay the down-crushing foot of man?

NEXT MORNING, and the next, no sign of the Thing appeared. Hope revived that possibly It might have flitted away elsewhere; back, perhaps, to outer space. Many were the miles the urging paddles spurned behind. The fugitives calculated that a week more would bring them to the railroad. Fire burned again. Hot food and drink helped, wonderfully. But where were the fish?

"Most extraordinary," all at once said the Professor, at noon-day camp. He had become *quite* rational again. "Do you realize Jandron, we've seen no traces of life in some time?"

The geologist nodded. Only too clearly he had noted just

that, but he had been keeping still about it.

"That's so, too!" chimed in Marr, enjoying the smoke that some incomprehensible turn of events was letting him have. "Not a muskrat or beaver. Not even a squirrel or bird."

"Not so much as a gnat or black-fly!" the Professor added. Jandron suddenly realized that he would have welcomed even those.

That afternoon, Marr fell into a suddenly vile temper. He mumbled curses against the guides, the current, the portages, everything. The Professor seemed more cheerful. Vivian complained of an oppressive headache. Jandron gave her the last of the aspirin tablets; and as he gave them, took her hand in his.

"I'll see *you* through, anyhow," said he. "I don't count, now. Nobody counts, only you!"

She gave him a long, silent look. He saw the sudden glint of tears in her eyes, felt the pressure of her hand, and knew they two had never been so near each other as in that moment under the shadow of the Unknown.

Next day — or it may have been two days later, for none of them could be quite sure about the passage of time — they came to a deserted lumber camp. Even more than two days might have passed; because now their bacon was all gone, and only coffee, tobacco, beef-cubes and pilot-bread remained. The lack

of fish and game had cut alarmingly into the duffle-bag. That day — whatever day it may have been — all four of them suffered terribly from headache of an odd, ring-shaped kind, as if something circular were being pressed down about their heads. The Professor said it was the sun that made his head ache. Vivian laid it to the wind and the gleam of the swift water, while Marr claimed it was the heat. Jandron wondered at all this, inasmuch as he plainly saw that the river had almost stopped flowing, and the day had become still and overcast.

THEY DRAGGED their canoes upon a rotting stage of fire-poles and explored the lumber-camp; a mournful place set back in an old "slash," now partly overgrown with scrub poplar, maple and birch. The log buildings, covered with tar-paper partly torn from the pole roofs, were of the usual North Country type. Obviously the place had not been used for years. Even the landing-stage where once logs had been rolled into the stream had sagged to decay.

"I don't quite get the idea of this," Marr exclaimed. "Where did the logs go to? Downstream, of course. But *that* would take 'em to Hudson Bay, and there's no market for spruce timber or pulpwood at Hudson Bay." He pointed down the current.

"You're entirely mistaken,"

put in the Professor. "Any fool could see this river runs the other way. A log thrown in here would go down toward the St. Lawrence!"

"But then," asked the girl, "why can't we drift back to civilization?" The Professor retorted:

"Just what we *have* been doing, all along! Extraordinary, that I have to explain the obvious!" He walked away in a huff.

"I don't know but he's right, at that," half admitted the journalist. "I've been thinking almost the same thing, myself, the past day or two — that is, ever since the sun shifted."

"What do you mean, shifted?" from Jandron.

"You haven't noticed it?"

"But there's been no sun at all, for at least two days!"

"Hanged if I'll waste time arguing with a lunatic!" Marr growled. He vouchsafed no explanation of what he meant by the sun's having "shifted," but wandered off, grumbling.

"What *are* we going to do?" the girl appealed to Jandron. The sight of her solemn, frightened eyes, of her palm-outward hands and (at last) her very feminine fear, constricted Jandron's heart.

"We're going through, you and I," he answered simply. "We've got to save them from themselves, you and I have."

Their hands met again, and for a moment held. Despite the

dead calm, a fir-tip at the edge of the clearing suddenly flicked aside, shrivelled as if frozen. But neither of them saw it.

The fugitives, badly spent, established themselves in the "bar-room" or sleeping-shack of the camp. They wanted to feel a roof over them again, if only a broken one. The traces of men comforted them: a couple of broken peavies, a pair of snowshoes with the thongs all gnawed off, a cracked bit of mirror, a yellowed almanac dated 1899.

Jandron called the Professor's attention to this almanac, but the Professor thrust it aside.

"What do I want of a Canadian census-report?" he demanded, and fell to counting the bunks, over and over again. His big bulge of his forehead, that housed the massive brain of him, was oozing sweat. Marr cursed what he claimed was sunshine through the holes in the roof, though Jandron could see none; claimed the sunshine made his head ache.

"But it's not a bad place," he added. "We can make a blaze in that fireplace and be comfortable. I don't like that window, though."

"What window?" asked Jandron. "Where?"

Marr laughed, and ignored him. Jandron turned to Vivian, who had sunk down on the "deacon-seat" and was staring at the stove.

"Is there a window here?" he demanded.

"Don't ask me," she whispered. "I — I don't know."

With a very thriving fear in his heart, Jandron peered at her a moment. He fell to muttering.

"I'm Wallace Jandron. Wallace Jandron, 37 Ware Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts. I'm quite sane, and I'm going to stay so. I'm going to save her! I know perfectly well what I'm doing, and I'm sane. Quite, quite sane!"

After a time of confused and purposeless wrangling, they got a fire going and made coffee. This, and cube bouillon with hardtack, helped considerably. The camp helped, too. A house, even a poor and broken one, is a wonderful barrier against a Thing from — Outside.

PRESENTLY darkness folded down. The men smoked, thankful that tobacco still held out. Vivian lay in a bunk that Jandron had piled with spruce boughs for her, and seemed to sleep. The Professor fretted like a child, over the blisters his paddle had made upon his hands. Marr laughed, now and then; though what he might be laughing at was not apparent. Suddenly he broke out, "After all, what should *It* want of us?"

"Our brains, of course," the Professor answered, sharply.

"That lets Jandron out," the journalist mocked.

"But," added the Professor, "I can't imagine a Thing callously destroying human beings. And yet —"

He stopped short, with surging memories of his dead wife.

"What was it," Jandron asked, "that destroyed all those people in Valladolid, Spain, that time so many of 'em died in a few minutes after having been touched by an invisible Something that left a slight red mark on each? The newspapers were full of it."

"Piffle!" yawned Marr.

"I tell you," insisted Jandron, "there are forms of life as superior to us as we are to ants.

We can't see 'em. No ant ever saw a man. These Things have left thousands of traces, all over the world. If I had my reference-books —"

"Tell that to the marines!"

"Charles Fort, the greatest authority in the world on unexplained phenomena," persisted Jandron, "gives innumerable cases of happenings that science can't explain, in his *Book of the Damned*. He claims that Earth was once a No-Man's land where all kinds of Things explored and colonized and fought for possession. And he says that now everybody's warned off, except the Owners. I happen to remember a few sentences of his: 'In the past, inhabitants of a host of worlds have dropped here, hopped here, wafted here, sailed, flown, motored, walked here;

have come singly, have come in enormous numbers; have visited for hunting, trading, mining. They have been unable to stay here, have made colonies here, have been lost here.'"

"Poor fish, to believe that!" mocked the journalist, while the Professor blinked and rubbed his bulging forehead.

"I *do* believe it!" insisted Jandron. "The world is covered with relics of dead civilizations, that have mysteriously vanished, leaving nothing but their temples and monuments."

"Rubbish!"

"How about Easter Island? How about all the gigantic works there and in a thousand other places — Peru, Yucatan and so on — which certainly no primitive race ever built?"

"That's thousands of years ago," said Marr, "and I'm sleepy. For heaven's sake can, it!"

"Oh, all right. But *how* explain things, then?"

"What the devil could one of those Things want of our brains?" suddenly put in the Professor. "After all, what?"

"Well, what do we want of lower forms of life? Sometimes food. Again, some product or other. Or just information. Maybe *It* is just experimenting with us, the way we poke an anthill. There's always this to remember, that the human brain-tissue is the most highly-organized form of matter in this world."

"Yes," admitted the Professor, "but what —?"

"It might want brain-tissue for food, for experimental purposes, for lubricant — how do I know?"

Jandron fancied he was still explaining things; but all at once he found himself waking up in one of the bunks. He felt terribly cold, stiff, sore. A sift of snow lay here and there on the camp floor, where it had fallen through holes in the roof.

"Vivian!" he croaked hoarsely. "Thorburn! Marri!"

NOBODY answered. There was nobody to answer. Jandron crawled with immense pain out of his bunk, and blinked round with bleary eyes. All of a sudden he saw the Professor, and gulped.

The Professor was lying stiff and straight in another bunk, on his back. His waxen face made a mask of horror. The open, staring eyes, with pupils immensely dilated, sent Jandron shuddering back. A livid ring marked the forehead, that now sagged inward as if empty.

"Vivian!" croaked Jandron, staggering away from the body. He fumbled to the bunk where the girl had lain. The bunk was quite deserted.

On the stove, in which lay half-charred wood — wood smothered out as if by some noxious gas — still stood the coffee-pot. The liquid in it was frozen

solid. Of Vivian and the journalist, no trace remained.

Along one of the sagging beams that supported the roof, Jandron's horror-blasted gaze perceived a straight line of frosted prints, ring-shaped, bitten deep.

"Vivian! Vivian!"

No answer.

Shaking, sick, gray, half-blind with a horror not of this world, Jandron peered slowly around. The duffle-bag and supplies were gone. Nothing was left but that coffee-pot and the revolver at Jandron's hip.

Jandron turned, then. A-stare, his skull feeling empty as a burst drum, he crept lamely to the door and out — out into the snow.

Snow. It came slanting down. From a gray sky it steadily filtered. The trees showed no leaf. Birches, poplars, rock-maples all stood naked. Only the conifers drooped sickly-green. In a little shallow across the river snow lay white on thin ice.

Ice? Snow? Rapt with terror, Jandron stared. Why, then, he must have been unconscious three or four weeks? But how —?

Suddenly, all along the upper branches of trees that edged the clearing, puffs of snow flicked down. The geologist shuffled after two half-obliterated sets of footprints that wavered toward the landing.

His body was leaden. He wheezed, as he reached the river. The light, dim as it was, hurt his eyes. He blinked in a confusion that could just perceive one canoe was gone. He pressed a hand to his head where an iron band seemed screwed up tight, tighter.

"Vivian! Marr! Halloooo!"

Not even an echo. Silence clamped the world; silence, and a cold that gnawed. Everything had gone a sinister gray.

After a certain time — though time now possessed neither reality nor duration — Jandron dragged himself back to the camp and stumbled in. Heedless of the staring corpse he crumpled down by the stove and tried to think, but his brain had been emptied of power. Everything blent to a gray blur. Snow kept slithering in through the roof.

"Well, why don't you come and get me, Thing?" suddenly snarled Jandron. "Here I am. Damn you, come and get me!"

VOICES. Suddenly he heard voices. Yes, somebody was outside, there. Singularly aggrieved, he got up and limped to the door. He squinted out into the gray, saw two figures down by the landing. With numb indifference he recognized the girl and Marr.

"Why should they bother me again?" he wondered. Can't they go away and leave me

alone?" He felt peevish irritation.

Then, a modicum of reason returning, he sensed that they were arguing. Vivian, beside a canoe freshly dragged from thin ice, was pointing; Marr was gesticulating. All at once Marr snarled, turned from her, plodded with bent back toward the camp.

"But listen!" she called, her rough-knit sweater all powdered with snow. "*That's* the way!" She gestured downstream.

"I'm not going either way!" Marr retorted. "I'm going to stay right here!" He came on, bare-headed. Snow grayed his stubble of beard; but on his head it melted as it fell, as if some fever there had raised the brain-stuff to improbable temperatures. "I'm going to stay right here, all summer." His heavy lids sagged. Puffy and evil, his lips showed a glint of teeth. "Let me alone!"

Vivian lagged after him, kicking up the ash-like snow. With indifference, Jandron watched them. Trivial human creatures!

Suddenly Marr saw him in the doorway and stopped short. He drew his gun; he aimed at Jandron.

"You get out!" he mouthed. "Why in — can't you stay dead?"

"Put that gun down, you idiot!" Jandron managed to retort. The girl stopped and seemed trying to understand. "We can

get away yet, if we all stick together."

"Are you going to get out and leave me alone?" demanded the journalist, holding his gun steadily enough.

Jandron, wholly indifferent, watched the muzzle. Vague curiosity possessed him. Just what, he wondered, did it feel like to be shot?

Marr pulled the trigger.

Snap!

The cartridge missed fire. Not even powder would burn.

Marr laughed, horribly, and shambled forward.

"Serves him right!" he mouthed. "He'd better not come back again!"

Jandron understood that Marr had seen him fall. But still he felt himself standing there, alive. He shuffled away from the door. No matter whether he was alive or dead, there was always Vivian to be saved.

The journalist came to the door, paused, looked down, grunted and passed into the camp. He shut the door. Jandron heard the rotten wooden bar of the latch drop. From within echoed a laugh, monstrous in its brutality.

Then quivering, the geologist felt a touch on his arm.

"Why did you desert us like that?" he heard Vivian's reproach. "Why?"

He turned, hardly able to see her at all.

"Listen," he said thickly. "I'll admit anything. It's all right.

But just forget it, for now. We've got to get out o' here. The Professor is dead, in there, and Marr's gone mad and barricaded himself in there. So there's no use staying. There's a chance for us yet. Come along!"

HE TOOK HER by the arm and tried to draw her toward the river, but she held back. The hate in her face sickened him. He shook in the grip of a mighty chill.

"Go with — you?" she demanded.

"Yes, by God!" he retorted, in a swift blaze of anger, "or I'll kill you where you stand. *It* shan't get you, anyhow!"

Swiftly piercing, a greater cold smote to his inner marrows. A long row of the cup-shaped prints had just appeared in the snow beside the camp. And from these marks wafted a faint, bluish vapor of unthinkable cold.

"What are you staring at?" the girl demanded.

"Those prints! In the snow, there — see?" He pointed a shaking finger.

"How can there be snow at this season?"

He could have wept for the pity of her, the love of her. On her red tam, her tangle of rebel hair, her sweater, the snow came steadily drifting; yet there she stood before him and prated of summer. Jandron heaved himself out of a very slough of

down-dragging lassitudes. He whipped himself into action.

"Summer, winter — no matter!" he flung at her. "You're coming along with me!" He seized her arm with the brutality of desperation that must hurt, to save. And murder, too, lay in his soul. He knew that he would strangle her with his naked hands, if need were, before he would ever leave her there, for *It* to work *Its* horrible will upon.

"You come with me," he mouthed, "or by the Almighty —!"

Marr's scream in the camp, whirled him toward the door. That scream rose higher, higher, even more and more piercing, just like the screams of the runaway Indian guides in what now appeared the infinitely long ago. It seemed to last hours; and always it rose, rose, as if being wrung out of a human body by some kind of agony not conceivable in this world. Higher, higher —

Then it stopped.

Jandron hurled himself against the plank door. The bar smashed; the door shivered inward.

With a cry, Jandron recoiled. He covered his eyes with a hand that quivered, claw-like.

"Go away, Vivian! Don't come here — don't look —"

He stumbled away, babbling.

OUT OF THE door crept something like a man. A queer,

broken, bent-over thing; a thing crippled, shrunken and flabby, that whined.

This thing — yes, it was still Marr — crouched down at one side, quivering, whimpering. It moved its hands as a crushed ant moves its antennæ, jerkily, without significance.

All at once Jandron no longer felt afraid. He walked quite steadily to Marr, who was breathing in little gasps. From the camp issued an odor unlike anything terrestrial. A thin, grayish grease covered the sill.

Jandron caught hold of the crumbling journalist's arm. Marr's eyes leered, filmed, unseeing. He gave the impression of a creature whose back has been broken, whose whole essence and energy have been wrenched asunder, yet in which life somehow clings, palpitant. A creature vivisected.

Away through the snow Jandron dragged him. Marr made no resistance; just let himself be led, whining a little, palsied, rickety, shattered. The girl, her face whitely cold as the snow that fell on it, came after.

Thus they reached the landing at the river.

"Come, now, let's get away!" Jandron made shift to articulate. Marr said nothing. But when Jandron tried to bundle him into a canoe, something in the journalist revived with swift, mad hatefulness. That something lashed him into a spasm

of wiry, incredibly venomous resistance. Slavers of blood and foam streaked Marr's lips. He made horrid noises, like an animal. He howled dismally, and bit, clawed, writhed and grovelled! he tried to sink his teeth into Jandron's leg. He fought appallingly, as men must have fought in the inconceivably remote days even before the Stone Age. And Vivian helped him. Her fury was a tiger-cat's.

Between the pair of them, they almost did him in. They almost dragged Jandron down — and themselves, too — into the black river that ran swiftly sucking under the ice. Not till Jandron had quite flung off all vague notions and restraints of gallantry; not until he struck from the shoulder — to kill, if need were — did he best them.

He beat the pair of them unconscious, trussed them hand and foot with the painters of the canoes, rolled them into the larger canoe, and shoved off.

After that, the blankness of a measureless oblivion descended.

ONLY FROM what he was told, weeks after, in the Royal Victoria Hospital at Montréal, did Jandron ever learn how and when a field-squad of Dominion Foresters had found them drifting in Lake Moosawamkeag. And that knowledge filtered slowly into his brain during a

period inchoate as Iceland fogs. That Marr was dead and the girl alive — that much, at all events, was solid. He could hold to that; he could climb back, with that, to the real world again.

Jandron climbed back, came back. Time healed him, as it healed the girl. After a long, long while, they had speech together. Cautiously he sounded her wells of memory. He saw that she recalled nothing. So he told her white lies about cap-sized canoes and the sad death — in realistically-described rapids — of all the party except herself and him.

Vivian believed. Fate, Jandron knew, was being very kind to both of them.

But Vivian could never understand in the least, why her husband, not very long after marriage, asked her not to wear a wedding-ring or any ring whatever.

"Men are so queer!" covers a multitude of psychic agonies.

Life, for Jandron — life, softened by Vivian — knit itself up into some reasonable semblance of a normal pattern. But when Jandron sees a ring of any sort, his heart chills with a cold that reeks of the horrors of Infinity.

And from shadows past the boundaries of our universe seem to beckon Things that, God grant, can never till the end of time be known on Earth.

Black Thing At Midnight

by Joseph Payne Brennan

First seen in the latter days of WEIRD TALES, Joseph Payne Brennan has had two collections of his stories published in hard covers: *Scream at Midnight*, and *The Dark Returners*. He is also known for his weird verse; and a short story of his will appear in Arkham House's 25th Birthday Anthology (see our last issue for a complete table of contents), which should be out by the time you read this.

JENKINS, janitor (or "building superintendent" as he called himself, at Seabreeze Manor, stepped onto the deserted veranda of the now empty structure and looked up at the autumn sky. It was gray and unpromising.

For a minute or two he remained staring out at the choppy sea. A cold wind whined through the salty dune grass. The rhythmic grate of a rising tide growled along the desolate beaches.

Shaking his head, Jenkins

went back inside. Every year he hated his lonely vigil a little bit more. It was his duty to remain until the power was shut off; then he had to lock up the building for the winter. Meanwhile, he was supposed to sweep out the rooms and set things in order. In the spring, Mr. Pastorfield, the proprietor, liked to come back to an orderly guest house.

After sweeping out the lobby in a desultory fashion, Jenkins went back onto the veranda. He was depressed and restless; they were closing earlier this year, and already the empty building was getting on his nerves. It was cold and bleak enough out on the open veranda, but it was better, he thought, than staying alone inside.

Three sooty gallinules flew out of the dune grass and disappeared over adjacent marshes. Jenkins watched until they were out of sight.

Looking down the long abandoned beach, he noticed a jumbled pile of tarpaper, tine, and timbers which marked the site of the old beachcomber's shack.

What was the old cuss' name? Felton? Felman? Fallon! That was it. Old man Fallon. A queer devil, Jenkins mused, with his bony yellow face and huge hands.

Since his disappearance, an ugly rumor had got around. They whispered that after his

tarpaper shack collapsed in a severe storm, he had staggered up the beach near midnight, seeking succor at Seabreeze Manor. Mr. Pastorfield, it was said, had refused to admit him. Subsequently, he had wandered away down the dunes and disappeared. It was believed that, stumbling too close to the great crashing breakers which pounded the shore that night, he had been pulled out to sea and drowned.

Jenkins shrugged. Well, it was nothing to him. Mr. Pastorfield had been within his rights, legally, at least. Besides, old Fallon might have been drunk, and he had a nasty temper when he was soused.

A rising wind from the sea cut through Jenkins' thin summer suit. Shivering, he went back inside.

AS HE WALKED into the lobby, he saw with surprise that it was already beginning to get dark. Then he noticed that the desk light was off; ordinarily, it was left on all the time.

Frowning, he strode over and pulled the chain. Nothing happened. "Must be the bulb," he muttered to himself. On second thought, however, he hurried behind the desk and flipped the switch which would turn on the big overhead lights. Again nothing happened.

A sudden twinge of apprehension coursed through him. Had the electric company shut off

the power without letting him know?

Striding to the telephone, he dialed the company number. The telephone remained silent; it, too, had apparently been disconnected.

Exasperation, abetted by the stirring of a small panic, possessed Jenkins. Cursing the utility companies, he glanced at his watch. Too late. The last bus from Harmony Corners left at three-thirty; it was almost that time now. He knew that he could never walk the two miles in time, and there was no other transportation available.

Somehow, the electric company and the telephone company had received the wrong instructions — or misinterpreted the instructions they did receive. Or perhaps Mr. Pastorfield had been seen leaving early that morning. That would have been their cue to disconnect. It was just like a small resort town; word of mouth, casual assumptions, and a cut-off without any final check.

"And did you see Mr. Pastorfield leavin' this mornin'?"

"Oh, he left did he? I must tell Eddie, my nephew. Eddie works at the power plant. They'll want to shut off the electricity at the manor, you know. One year Mr. Pastorfield forgot to call in."

And so it went. Jenkins hated the whole meddling, muddling crew of them. Now he'd have to

spend the night in a darkened building, without a telephone or any other means of communication.

He'd be cut off completely until the first bus reached Harmony Corners at ten the next morning. And of course he'd walk there to meet it.

GRUMBLING, he went into the kitchen and fixed himself a cold cheese sandwich and a glass of milk, instead of the good hot soup he'd planned on having. Finished, he groped his way up the stairs to his room.

The wind was still rising. Waves were now striking the beach with an ominous roar. It would be a wild night.

Darkness pressed in swiftly. He lay on his bed, wide-awake, and listened to the storm's accelerating fury. The wind moaned and whined about the hotel; the building was besieged by buffeting gusts.

Dozing briefly, he awoke suddenly to the scream of near-hurricane winds and a thudding, tumultuous sea which threatened to sweep over the beaches into the corridors and rooms of the hotel itself.

Hurrying to the window, he found that he could see nothing. Rain sprayed against the panes as if someone were dousing the window with a high-powered hose.

Frowning, he sat down near the bed. Well, there was little or

nothing he could do, he reflected somberly. If he felt the building going, he'd make a run for it; otherwise, he'd just sit it out. He could never get back to town in such a storm; if he didn't drown, he'd likely die of exhaustion.

Hours passed while the wind roared and great leaping walls of water pummeled the shoreline. Occasionally Jenkins drowsed, only to awaken abruptly with a start.

Towards midnight the storm began to subside. The wind died away; the crashing of waves dwindled into the routine sliding of surf.

For some reason, Jenkins found the sudden relative silence disturbing. It was disconcerting, eerie. He found himself listening to every slight sound.

He was just beginning to relax when he heard a muffled *thud* somewhere below stairs. He sat up straight; his heart began to pound. *Thud*. There it was again. It sounded like — *Thud*. Yes, there was no sense in denying it. The thumps resembled the sound of heavy footfalls on the hotel's front veranda steps. He went on listening, motionless, as they continued across the veranda toward the door.

Jenkins knew that the door was locked and now he hoped that the midnight visitor, finding the building bolted, would depart.

The door rattled and shook

as if someone were vigorously tugging at the handle. There was a rather long pause; Jenkins waited, hoping that those ominous footsteps — for such they must be — would thud down the steps and off into the night.

He could not understand the cocoon of fear which was casting itself about him. It was illogical, childish. Along with it went a disturbing sense of guilt. Probably some unfortunate had been caught in the storm and was now rather desperately seeking shelter. Possibly the late guest was ill or injured. Why, then, did he sit listening with hammering heart instead of hurrying down to unfasten the door?

As he hesitated, trying to come to some decision, the solution to his dilemma was suddenly and dramatically forced upon him.

The hotel's entrance door crashed inward with a great screeching and groaning of hinges, a splintering of panels which sounded like rifle shots.

A cold draft of air, laden with the odors of the sea, swept up the stairs.

JENKINS' impulse was to flee — to dash out of his room, down the rear stairs and into the night — but a rush of unreasoning terror locked him in its grip. He was unable to move.

As in a familiar nightmare he heard those fearful footsteps

clump across the lobby toward the stairs. There was something unnatural about the sound of them — something that stirred the faded hairs on the back of his neck.

There was another pause as they reached the bottom of the stairwell. Jenkins had just managed to move when they began their slow but inexorable ascent.

He froze again, paralyzed with an icy dread which all his rationalizing could not dissolve.

The footsteps were two-thirds of the way up before he managed to lurch across the room and lock the door. He waited, breathing heavily, as they reached the top.

As he listened, imbued with a terror he could not fathom, there came a clumsy shuffle down the corridor. He heard a door flung open, heard it smash against the wall. A brief pause and then the crash of another door. Two more and it would be his turn.

He edged toward a window as the third door was hurled open. *Crash!* That would be the one next to his. He began opening the window. Better chance death on the ground below than deliverance into the hands of whatever maniac intruder was prowling that hall! He was sure, now, that it was no mere refugee from the storm.

He had the window open and one leg raised toward the sill

when his own door burst inward.

THE THING that swayed in open doorway surpassed his wildest fears. It resembled a corpse that had lain for a long time at the bottom of the sea. It was covered with black slime and bits of gray seaweed, and its entire face appeared to have been clawed or bitten away. Yet it was filled with a fierce questioning animation and about the black pitted eye-sockets there shown a phosphorescent glow.

For one awful, endless half-minute Jenkins remained motionless, held in the grip of mind-searing fear which deadened every muscle. And that final pause was fatal.

Opening its puckered shapeless half-mouth in a gurgling squeal of rage, the black thing leaped across the room and caught him before he could get through the window. Its huge hands, more bone than flesh, closed upon him.

It was said, later, that his screams could be heard far past Harmony Corners, almost to the edge of town.

The local police, baffled and inwardly outraged, retreated behind such statements as "murder during the course of a robbery attempt" and "possibly the work of an escaped mental patient."

But nothing was stolen from

the hotel and even Jenkins' wallet was found unrifled in his shredded clothing. And there was no report of an escaped mental patient addicted to violence.

Both the coroner and the police glossed over the condition of poor Jenkins' remains. "He looked," said one of the investigators to a private friend, "as if he'd been flayed, and his whole

face was gone, torn into bloody ribbons."

When someone in town pointed out that Old Man Fallon, the beachcomber, had disappeared during a storm exactly one year previous to Jenkins' abrupt and horrible departure, there was sudden silence and later a furtive reaching for whiskey or aspirin bottles.

The murder, of course, was never solved.

Lovers of H. P. Lovecraft and amateur journalism may be interested in a long article by Harry Warner, Jr., in the May 1964 issue of *NEW FRONTIERS*, published by Norm Metcalf, PO Box 336, Berkeley, California, 94701, at 50c per copy

This article tells of Lovecraft, Jules Verne, and others who built up considerable "fan" following long before there were such things as science-fiction magazines. While some of the HPL material was familiar to your editor, quite a bit of it was new to me.

The magazine also contains other interesting and well-written items, particularly a very perceptive comment on L. Sprague de Camp's excellent historical adventure novel, *The Bronze God Of Rhodes*.

The Shadows On The Wall

by Mary Wilkins-Freeman

In his introduction to this story, upon reprinting it in his collection, *Who Knocks?*, Twenty Masterpieces of the Spectral For The Connoisseur (Rhinehart & Company, Inc., 1946) August Derleth pays tribute to Mary Wilkins-Freeman's economical style, her feeling for just the right details, and the flexible ease of her manner. These qualities, he says, "contributed to her tales of the supernatural a singular felicitous reality, which has not been equalled by any other American writer, though Edith Wharton approached her manner very closely." This story first appeared in a collection entitled *The Wind In The Rose-Bush* (first edition copyright 1902 by John Wana-maker) and was published under her maiden name, Mary E. Wilkins.

"HENRY HAD words with Edward in the study the night before Edward died," said Caroline Glynn.

She was elderly, tall, and harshly thin, with a hard colorlessness of face. She spoke not with acrimony, but with grave severity. Rebecca Ann Glynn, younger, stouter and rosy of

face between her crinkling puffs of gray hair, gasped, by way of assent. She sat in a wide flounce of black silk in the corner of the sofa, and rolled terrified eyes from her sister Caroline to her sister Mrs. Stephen Brigham, who had been Emma Glynn, the one beauty of the family. She was beautiful still, with a large,

splendid, full-blown beauty; she filled a great rocking-chair with her superb bulk of femininity, and swayed gently back and forth, her black silks whispering and her black frills fluttering.

Even the shock of death (for her brother Edward lay dead in the house) could not disturb her outward serenity of demeanor. She was grieved over the loss of her brother: he had been the youngest, and she had been fond of him, but never had Emma Brigham lost sight of her own importance amidst the waters of tribulation. She was always awake to the consciousness of her own stability in the midst of vicissitudes and the splendor of her permanent bearing.

But even her expression of fore her sister Caroline's anmasterly placidity changed benouncement and her sister Rebecca Ann's gasp of terror and distress in response.

"I think Henry might have controlled his temper, when poor Edward was so near his end," said she with an asperity which disturbed slightly the roseate curves of her beautiful mouth.

"Of course he did not *know*," murmured Rebecca Ann in a faint tone strangely out of keeping with her appearance.

One involuntarily looked again to be sure that such a feeble pipe came from that full-swelling chest.

"Of course he did not know it," said Caroline quickly. She turned on her sister with a strange sharp look of suspicion. "How could he have known it?" said she. Then she shrank as if from the other's possible answer. "Of course you and I both know he could not," said she conclusively, but her pale face was paler than it had been before.

REBECCA GASPED again. The married sister, Mrs. Emma Brigham, was not sitting up straight in her chair; she had ceased rocking, and was eyeing them both intently with a sudden accentuation of family likeness in her fact. Given one common intensity of emotion and similar lines showed forth, and the three sisters of one race were evident.

"What do you mean?" said she impartially to them both. Then she, too, seemed to shrink before a possible answer. She even laughed an evasive sort of laugh. "I guess you don't mean anything," said she, but her face wore still the expression of shrinking horror.

"Nobody means anything," said Caroline firmly. She rose and crossed the room toward the door with grim decisiveness.

"Where are you going?" asked Mrs. Brigham.

"I have something to see to," replied Caroline, and the others at once knew by her tone that she had some solemn and sad

duty to perform in the chamber of death.

"Oh," said Mrs. Brigham.

After the door had closed behind Caroline, she turned to Rebecca.

"Did Henry have many words with him?" she asked.

"They were talking very loud," replied Rebecca evasively, yet with an answering gleam of ready response to the other's curiosity in the quick lift of her soft blue eyes.

Mrs. Brigham looked at her. She had not resumed rocking. She still sat up straight with a slight knitting of intensity on her fair forehead, between the pretty rippling curves of her auburn hair.

"Did you — hear anything?" she asked in a low voice with a glance toward the door.

"I was just across the hall in the south parlour, and that door was open and this door ajar," replied Rebecca with a slight flush.

"Then you must have . . ."

"I couldn't help it."

"Everything?"

"Most of it."

"What was it?"

"The old story?"

"I suppose Henry was mad, as he always was, because Edward was living on here for nothing, when he had wasted all the money father left him."

Rebecca nodded with a fearful glance at the door.

WHEN EMMA spoke again her voice was still more hushed. "I know how he felt," said she. "He had always been so prudent himself, and worked hard at his profession, and there Edward had never done anything but spend, and it must have looked to him as if Edward was living at his expense, but he wasn't."

"No, he wasn't."

"It was the way father left the property — that all the children should have a home here — and he left money enough to buy the food and all if we had all come home."

"Yes."

"And Edward had a right here according to the terms of father's will, and Henry ought to have remembered it."

"Yes, he ought."

"Did he say hard things?"

"Pretty hard from what I heard."

"What?"

"I heard him tell Edward that he had no business here at all, and he thought he had better go away."

"What did Edward say?"

"That he would stay here as long as he lived and afterward, too, if he was a mind to, and he would like to see Henry get him out; and then . . ."

"What?"

"Then he laughed."

"What did Henry say?"

"I didn't hear him say anything, but . . ."

"But what?"

"I saw him when he came out of this room."

"He looked mad?"

"You've seen him when he looked so."

Emma nodded; the expression of horror on her face had deepened.

"Do you remember that time he killed the cat because she had scratched him?"

"Yes. Don't!"

Then Caroline re-entered the room. She went up to the stove in which a wood fire was burning — it was a cold, gloomy day of fall — and she warmed her hands, which were reddened from recent washing in cold water.

MRS. BRIGHAM LOOKED at her and hesitated. She glanced at the door, which was still ajar, as it did not easily shut, being still swollen with the damp weather of the summer. She rose and pushed it together with a sharp thud which jarred the house. Rebecca started painfully with a half exclamation. Caroline looked at her disapprovingly.

"It is time you controlled your nerves, Rebecca," said she.

"I can't help it," replied Rebecca with almost a wail. "I am nervous. There's enough to make me so, the Lord knows."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Caroline with her old air of sharp suspicion, and some-

thing between challenge and dread of its being met.

Rebecca shrank.

"Nothing," said she.

"Then I wouldn't keep speaking in such a fashion."

Emma, returning from the closed door, said imperiously that it ought to be fixed, it shut so hard.

"It will shrink enough after we have had the fire a few days," replied Caroline. "If anything is done to it, it will be too small; there will be a crack at the sill."

"I think Henry ought to be ashamed of himself for talking as he did to Edward," said Mrs. Brigham abruptly, but in an almost inaudible voice.

"Hush!" said Caroline, with a glance of actual fear at the closed door.

"Nobody can hear with the door shut."

"He must have heard it shut, and . . ."

"Well, I can say what I want to before he comes down, and I am not afraid of him."

"I don't know who is afraid of him! What reason is there for anybody to be afraid of Henry?" demanded Caroline.

Mrs. Brigham trembled before her sister's look. Rebecca gasped again. "There isn't any reason, of course. Why should there be?"

"I wouldn't speak so, then. Somebody might overhear you and think it was queer. Miranda

Joy is in the south parlor sewing, you know."

"I thought she went upstairs to stitch on the machine."

"She did, but she has come down again."

"Well, she can't hear."

"I say again I think Henry ought to be ashamed of himself. I shouldn't think he'd ever get over it, having words with poor Edward the very night before he died. Edward was enough sight better disposition than Henry, with all his faults. I always thought a great deal of poor Edward, myself."

MRS. BRIGHAM PASSED a large fluff of handkerchief across her eyes; Rebecca sobbed outright.

"Rebecca," said Caroline admonishingly, keeping her mouth stiff and swallowing determinately.

"I never heard him speak a cross word, unless he spoke cross to Henry that last night. I don't know, but he did from what Rebecca overheard," said Emma.

"Not so much cross as sort of soft, and sweet, and aggravating," sniffled Rebecca.

"He never raised his voice," said Caroline; "but he had his way."

"He had a right to in this case."

"Yes, he did."

"He had as much of a right here as Henry," sobbed Rebecca, "and now he's gone, and

he will never be in this home that poor father left him and the rest of us again."

"What do you really think ailed Edward?" asked Emma in hardly more than a whisper. She did not look at her sister.

Caroline sat down in a nearby armchair, and clutched the arms convulsively until her thin knuckles whitened. "I told you," said she.

Rebecca held her handkerchief over her mouth, and looked at them above it with terrified, streaming eyes.

"I know you said that he had terrible pains in his stomach, and had spasms, but what do you think made him have them?"

"Henry called it gastric trouble. You know Edward has always had dyspepsia."

Mrs. Brigham hesitated a moment. "Was there any talk of an — examination?" asked she.

Then Caroline turned on her fiercely. "No," said she in a terrible voice. "No."

THE THREE SISTERS' souls seemed to meet on one common ground of terrified understanding through their eyes. The old-fashioned latch of the door was heard to rattle, and a push from without made the door shake ineffectually. "It's Henry," Rebecca sighed rather than whispered. Mrs. Brigham settled herself after a noiseless rush across the floor into her rocking-chair again, and was swaying back

and forth with her head comfortably leaning back, when the door at last yielded and Henry Glynn entered.

He cast a covertly sharp, comprehensive glance at Mrs. Brigham with her elaborate calm; at Rebecca quietly huddled in the corner of the sofa with her handkerchief to her face and only one small reddened ear as attentive as a dog's uncovered and revealing her alertness for his presence; at Caroline sitting with a strained composure in her armchair by the stove. She met his eyes quite firmly with a look of inscrutable fear, and defiance of the fear and of him.

Henry Glynn looked more like this sister than the others. Both had the same hard delicacy of form and feature, both were tall and almost emaciated, both had a sparse growth of gray blond hair far back from high intellectual foreheads, both had an almost noble aquiline of feature. They confronted each other with the pitiless immovability of two statues in whose marble lineaments emotions were fixed for all eternity.

Then Henry Glynn smiled and the smile transformed his face. He looked suddenly years younger, and an almost boyish recklessness and irresolution appeared in his face. He flung himself into a chair with a gesture which was bewildering from its incongruity with his general appearance. He leaned his head back,

flung one leg over the other, and looked laughingly at Mrs. Brigham.

"I declare, Emma, you grow younger every year," he said.

She flushed a little, and her placid mouth widened at the corners. She was susceptible to praise.

"Our thoughts today ought to belong to the one of us who will *never* grow older," said Caroline in a hard voice.

Henry looked at her, still smiling. "Of course, we none of us forget that," said he, in a deep, gentle voice, "but we have to speak to the living, Caroline, and I have not seen Emma for a long time, and the living are as dear as the dead."

"Not to me," said Caroline.

She rose, and went abruptly out of the room again. Rebecca also rose and hurried after her, sobbing loudly.

HENRY LOOKED slowly after them.

"Caroline is completely unstrung," said he.

Mrs. Brigham rocked. A confidence in him inspired by his manner was stealing over her. Out of that confidence she spoke quite easily and naturally. "His death was very sudden," said she.

Henry's eyelids quivered slightly but his gaze was unswerving. "Yes," said he; "it was very sudden. He was sick only a few hours."

"What did you call it?"

"Gastric."

"You did not think of an examination?"

"There was no need. I am perfectly certain as to the cause of his death."

Suddenly Mrs. Brigham felt a creep as of some live horror over her very soul. Her flesh prickled with cold, before an inflection of his voice. She rose, tottering on weak knees.

"Where are you going?" asked Henry in a strange, breathless voice.

Mrs. Brigham said something incoherent about some sewing which she had to do, some black for the funeral, and was out of the room. She went up to the front chamber which she occupied. Caroline was there. She went close to her and took her hands, and the two sisters looked at each other.

"Don't speak, don't; I won't have it!" said Caroline finally in an awful whisper.

"I won't," replied Emma.

That afternoon the three sisters were in the study, the large front room on the ground floor across the hall from the south parlor, when the dusk deepened.

Mrs. Brigham was hemming some black material. She sat close to the west window for the waning light. At last she laid her work on her lap.

"It's no use, I cannot see to sew another stitch until we have a light," said she.

CAROLINE, WHO was writing some letters at the table, turned to Rebecca, in her usual place on the sofa. "Rebecca, you had better get a lamp," she said.

Rebecca started up; even in the dusk her face showed her agitation. "It doesn't seem to me that we need a lamp quite yet," she said in a piteous, pleading voice like a child's.

"Yes, we do," returned Mrs. Brigham peremptorily. "We must have a light. I must finish this tonight or I can't go to the funeral, and I can't see to sew another stitch."

"Caroline can see to write letters, and she is farther from the window than you are," said Rebecca.

"Are you trying to save kerosene or are you lazy, Rebecca Glynn?" cried Mrs. Brigham. "I can go and get the light myself, but I have this work all in my lap."

Caroline's pen stopped scratching.

"Rebecca, we must have the light," said she.

"Had we better have it in here?" asked Rebecca weakly.

Of course! Why not?" cried Caroline sternly.

"I am sure I don't want to take my sewing into the other room, when it is all cleaned up for tomorrow," said Mrs. Brigham.

"Why, I never heard such a to-do about lighting a lamp."

Rebecca rose and left the

room. Presently she entered with a lamp — a large one with a white porcelain shade. She set it on a table, an old-fashioned card-table which was placed against the opposite wall from the window. That wall was clear of bookcases and books, which were only on three sides of the room. That opposite wall was taken up with three doors, the one small space being occupied by the table. Above the table on the old-fashioned paper, of a white satin gloss, traversed by an indeterminate green scroll, hung quite high a small gilt and black-framed ivory miniature taken in her girlhood of the mother of the family. When the lamp was set on the table beneath it, the tiny pretty face painted on the ivory seemed to gleam out with a look of intelligence.

"What have you put that lamp over there for?" asked Mrs. Brigham, with more of impatience than her voice usually revealed. "Why didn't you set it in the hall and have done with it. Neither Caroline nor I can see if it is on that table."

"I thought perhaps you would move," replied Rebecca hoarsely.

"If I do move, we can't both sit at that table. Caroline has her paper all spread around. Why don't you set the lamp on the study table in the middle of the room, then we can both see?"

face was very pale. She looked with an appeal that was fairly agonizing at her sister Caroline.

"Why don't you put the lamp on this table, as she says?" asked Caroline, almost fiercely.

"I should think you *would* ask her that," said Mrs. Brigham. "She doesn't act like herself at all."

Rebecca took the lamp and set it on the table in the middle of the room without another word. Then she turned her back upon it quickly and seated herself on the sofa, and placed a hand over her eyes as if to shade them, and remained so.

"Does the light hurt your eyes, and is that the reason why you didn't want the lamp?" asked Mrs. Brigham kindly.

"I always like to sit in the dark," replied Rebecca chokingly. Then she snatched her handkerchief hastily from her pocket and began to weep. Caroline continued to write, Mrs. Brigham to sew.

Suddenly Mrs. Brigham as she sewed glanced at the opposite wall. The glance became a steady stare. She looked intently, her work suspended in her hands. Then she looked away again and took a few more stitches, then she looked again, and again turned to her task. At last she laid her work in her lap and stared concentratedly. She looked from the wall around the room, taking note of the various objects; she looked at the

REBECCA HESITATED. Her

wall long and intently. Then she turned to her sisters.

"What is that?" said she.

"What?" asked Caroline harshly; her pen scratched loudly across the paper.

Rebecca gave one of her convulsive gasps.

"That strange shadow on the wall," replied Mrs. Brigham.

Rebecca sat with her face hidden: Caroline dipped her pen in the inkstand.

"Why don't you turn around and look?" asked Mrs. Brigham in a wondering and somewhat aggrieved way.

"I am in a hurry to finish this letter, if Mrs. Wilson Ebbitt is going to get word in time to come to the funeral," replied Caroline shortly.

MRS. BRIGHAM ROSE, her work slipping to the floor, and she began walking around the room, moving various articles of furniture, with her eyes on the shadow.

Then suddenly she shrieked out: "Look at this awful shadow! What is it? Caroline, look, look! Rebecca, look! *What is it?*"

All Mrs. Brigham's triumphant placidity was gone. Her handsome face was livid with horror. She stood stiffly pointing at the shadow. "Look!" said she, pointing her finger at it. "Look! What is it?"

Then Rebecca burst out in a wild wail after a shuddering glance at the wall: "Oh, Caro-

line, there it is again! There it is again!"

"Caroline Glynn, you look!" said Mrs. Brigham. "Look! What is that dreadful shadow?"

Caroline rose, turned, and stood confronting the wall.

"How should I know?" she said.

"It has been there every night since he died," cried Rebecca.

"Every night?"

"Yes. He died Thursday and this is Saturday; that makes three nights," said Caroline rigidly. She stood as if holding herself calm with a vise of concentrated will.

"It — it looks like — like . . ." stammered Mrs. Brigham in a tone of intense horror.

"I know what it looks like well enough," said Caroline. "I've got eyes in my head."

"It looks like Edward," burst out Rebecca in a sort of frenzy of fear. "Only . . ."

"Yes, it does," assented Mrs. Brigham, whose horror-stricken tone matched her sister's, "only . . . Oh, it is awful! What is it, Caroline?"

"I ask you again, how should I know?" replied Caroline. "I see it there like you. How should I know any more than you?"

"It *must* be something in the room," said Mrs. Brigham, staring wildly around.

"We moved everything in the room the first night it came," said Rebecca; "it is not anything in the room."

CAROLINE TURNED upon her with a sort of fury. "Of course it is something in the room," said she. "How you act! What do you mean by talking so? Of course it is something in the room."

"Of course, it is," agreed Mrs. Brigham, looking at Caroline suspiciously. "Of course it must be. It is only a coincidence. It just happens so. Perhaps it is that fold of the window curtain that makes it. It must be something in the room."

"It is not anything in the room," repeated Rebecca with obstinate horror.

The door opened suddenly and Henry Glynn entered. He began to speak, then his eyes followed the direction of the others'. He stood stock still staring at the shadow on the wall. It was life size and stretched across the white parallelogram of a door, half across the wall space on which the picture hung.

"What is that?" he demanded in a strange voice.

"It must be due to something in the room," Mrs. Brigham said faintly.

"It is not due to anything in the room," said Rebecca again with the shrill insistency of terror.

"How you act, Rebecca Glynn," said Caroline.

Henry Glynn stood and stared a moment longer. His face showed a gamut of emotions — horror, conviction, then furious in-

credulity. Suddenly he began hastening hither and thither about the room. He moved the furniture with fierce jerks, turning ever to see the effect upon the shadow on the wall. Not a line of its terrible outlines wavered.

"It must be something in the room!" he declared in a voice which seemed to snap like a lash.

HIS FACE CHANGED. The inmost secrecy of his nature seemed evident until one almost lost sight of his lineaments. Rebecca stood close to her sofa, regarding him with woeful, fascinated eyes. Mrs. Brigham clutched Caroline's hand. They both stood in a corner out of his way. For a few moments he raged about the room like a caged wild animal. He moved every piece of furniture; when the moving of a piece did not affect the shadow, he flung it to the floor, the sisters watching.

Then suddenly he desisted. He laughed and began straightening the furniture which he had flung down.

"What an absurdity," he said easily. "Such a to-do about a shadow."

"That's so," assented Mrs. Brigham, in a scared voice which she tried to make natural. As she spoke she lifted a chair near her.

"I think you have broken the

chair that Edward was so fond of," said Caroline.

Terror and wrath were struggling for expression on her face. Her mouth was set, her eyes striking. Henry lifted the chair with a show of anxiety.

"Just as good as ever," he said pleasantly. He laughed again, looking at his sisters. "Did I scare you?" he said. "I should think you might be used to me by this time. You know my way of wanting to leap to the bottom of a mystery, and that shadow does look — queer, like — and I thought if there was any way of accounting for it I would like to without any delay."

"You don't seem to have succeeded," remarked Caroline dryly, with a slight glance at the wall.

Henry's eyes followed hers and he quivered perceptibly.

"Oh, there is no accounting for shadows," he said, and he laughed again. "A man is a fool to try to account for shadows."

Then the supper bell rang, and they all left the room, but Henry kept his back to the wall, as did, indeed, the others.

Mrs. Brigham pressed close to Caroline as she crossed the hall. "He looked like a demon!" she breathed in her ear.

Henry led the way with an alert motion like a boy; Rebecca brought up the rear; she could scarcely walk, her knees trembled so.

"I can't sit in that room again

this evening," she whispered to Caroline after supper.

"Very well, we will sit in the south room," replied Caroline. "I think we will sit in the south parlor," she said aloud; "it isn't as damp as the study, and I have a cold."

SO THEY ALL sat in the south room with their sewing. Henry read the newspaper, his chair drawn close to the lamp on the table. About nine o'clock he rose abruptly and crossed the hall to the study. The three sisters looked at one another. Mrs. Brigham rose, folded her rustling skirts compactly around her, and began tiptoeing toward the door.

"What are you going to do?" inquired Rebecca agitatedly.

"I am going to see what he is about," replied Mrs. Brigham cautiously.

She pointed as she spoke to the study door across the hall; it was ajar. Henry had striven to pull it together behind him, but it had somehow swollen beyond the limit with curious speed. It was still ajar and a streak of light showed from top to bottom. The hall lamp was not lit.

"You had better stay where you are," said Caroline with guarded sharpness.

"I am going to see," repeated Mrs. Brigham firmly.

Then she folded her skirts so tightly that her bulk with its swelling curves was revealed in

a black silk sheath, and she went with a slow toddle across the hall to the study door. She stood there, her eye at the crack.

In the south room Rebecca stopped sewing and sat watching with dilated eyes. Caroline sewed steadily. What Mrs. Brigham, standing at the crack in the study door, saw this:

Henry Glynn, evidently reasoning that the source of the strange shadow must be between the table on which the lamp stood and the wall, was making systematic passes and thrusts all over and through the intervening space with an old sword which had belonged to his father. Not an inch was left unpierced. He seemed to have divided the space into mathematical sections. He brandished the sword with a sort of cold fury and calculation; the blade gave out flashes of light, the shadow remained unmoved. Mrs. Brigham, watching, felt herself cold with horror.

FINALLY HENRY ceased and stood with the sword in hand and raised as if to strike, surveying the shadow on the wall threateningly. Mrs. Brigham toddled back across the hall and shut the south room door behind her before she related what she had seen.

"He looked like a demon!" she said again. "Have you got any of that old wine in the

house, Caroline? I don't feel as if I could stand much more."

Indeed, she looked overcome. Her handsome placid face was worn and strained and pale.

"Yes, there's plenty," said Caroline; "you can have some when you go to bed."

"I think we had all better take some," said Mrs. Brigham. "Oh, my God, Caroline, what

"Don't ask and don't speak," said Caroline.

"No, I am not going to," replied Mrs. Brigham; "but . . ."
Rebecca moaned aloud.

"What are you doing that for?" asked Caroline harshly.

"Poor Edward," returned Rebecca.

"That is all you have to groan for," said Caroline. "There is nothing else."

"I am going to bed," said Mrs. Brigham. "I shan't be able to be at the funeral if I don't."

Soon the three sisters went to their chambers and the south parlor was deserted. Caroline called Henry in the study to put out the light before he came upstairs. They had been gone about an hour when he came into the room bringing the lamp which had stood in the study. He set it on the table and waited a few minutes, pacing up and down. His face was terrible, his fair complexion showed livid; his blue eyes seemed dark blanks of awful reflections.

Then he took the lamp up and

returned to the library. He set the lamp on the center table, and the shadow sprang out on the wall. Again he studied the furniture and moved it about, but deliberately, with none of his former frenzy. Nothing affected the shadow. Then he returned to the south room with the lamp and again waited. Again he returned to the study and placed the lamp on the table, and the shadow sprang out upon the wall. It was midnight before he went upstairs. Mrs. Brigham and the other sisters, who could not sleep, heard him.

THE NEXT DAY was the funeral. That evening the family sat in the south room. Some relatives were with them. Nobody entered the study until Henry carried a lamp in there after the others had retired for the night. He saw again the shadow on the wall leap to an awful life before the light.

The next morning at breakfast Henry Glynn announced that he had to go to the city for three days. The sisters looked at him with surprise. He very seldom left home, and just now his practice had been neglected on account of Edward's death. He was a physician.

"How can you leave your patients now?" asked Mrs. Brigham wondering.

"I don't know how to, but there is no other way," replied

Henry easily. "I have had a telegram from Doctor Mitford."

"Consultation?" inquired Mrs. Brigham.

"I have business," replied Henry.

Doctor Mitford was an old classmate of his who lived in a neighboring city and who occasionally called upon him in the case of a consultation.

After he had gone Mrs. Brigham said to Caroline that after all Henry had not said that he was going to consult with Doctor Mitford, and she thought it very strange.

"Everything is very strange," said Rebecca with a shudder.

"What do you mean?" inquired Caroline sharply.

"Nothing," replied Rebecca.

Nobody entered the library that day, nor the next, nor the next. The third day Henry was expected home, but he did not arrive and the last train from the city had come.

"I call it pretty queer work," said Mrs. Brigham. "The idea of a doctor leaving his patients for three days anyhow, at such a time as this, and I know he has some very sick ones; he said so. And the idea of a consultation lasting three days! There is no sense in it, and *now* he has not come. I don't understand it, for my part."

"I don't either," said Rebecca.

THEY WERE ALL in the south parlor. There was no

light in the study opposite, and the door was ajar.

Presently Mrs. Brigham rose — she could not have told why; something seemed to impel her, some will outside her own. She went out of the room, again wrapping her rustling skirts around that she might pass noiselessly, and began pushing at the swollen door of the study.

"She has not got any lamp," said Rebecca in a shaking voice.

Caroline, who was writing letters, rose again, took a lamp (there were two in the room) and followed her sister. Rebecca had risen, but she stood trembling, not venturing to follow.

The doorbell rang, but the

others did not hear it; it was on the south door on the other side of the house from the study. Rebecca, after hesitating until the bell rang the second time, went to the door; she remembered that the servant was out.

Caroline and her sister Emma entered the study. Caroline set the lamp on the table. They looked at the wall. "Oh, my God," gasped Mrs. Brigham, "there are — there are *two* — shadows." The sisters stood clutching each other, staring at at awful things on the wall. Then Rebecca came in, staggering, with a telegram in her hand. "Here is — a telegram," she gasped. "Henry is — dead."

CORRECTION AND APOLOGY

Our sincere apologies to Mr. August Derleth of Arkham House: Publishers (Sauk City, Wisconsin) for the error on page 33 of our last issue, wherein we told you that the price of the first volume of H. P. Lovecraft's selected letters was \$6.00.

The correct price is \$7.50.

This volume, first of a series, contains the best of the available letters from the earliest letter found, through the year 1924. It documents in fascinating detail some of the material in the Harry Warner article, which we mentioned in another place, and presents an unforgettable portrait of a personality only partly set forth in HPL's fiction.

The Phantom Farmhouse

by Seabury Quinn

I HAD BEEN at the new Briarcliff Sanitarium nearly three weeks before I actually saw the house.

Every morning as I lay abed after the nurse had taken my temperature, I wondered what was beyond the copse of fir and spruce at the turn of the road. The picture seemed incomplete without chimneys rising among the evergreens. I thought about it so much I finally convinced myself there really was a house in the wood — a house where people lived and worked and were happy.

All during the long, trying days when I was learning to navigate a wheelchair, I used to picture the house and the people who lived in it. There would be a father, I was sure; a stout, good-natured father, somewhat bald, who sat on the porch and smoked a cob pipe in the evening. And there was a mother, too — a waistless, plaid-skirted mother with hair smoothly parted over her forehead, who sat beside the father as he rocked and smoked, and who had a brown work-basket in her lap. She spread the stocking feet ov-

Copyright 1923 by Popular Fiction Publishing Company;
Copyright 1946 by August Derleth; by special arrangement
with author.

The October 1923 issue of *WEIRD TALES* introduced three authors who would become favorites with the readers: H. P. Lovecraft (with *Dagon*), Frank Owen (with *The Man Who Owned the World*), and Seabury Quinn, who had the distinction of making a double debut: the story, *The Phantom Farmhouse*, and the first in a series of articles about weird crimes: *Bluebeard*. Of the three, Quinn was the most prolific, and two years later saw the publication of *The Horror on the Links*, a weird-mystery story. In this tale, Samuel Trowbridge, M.D., of Harrisonville, New Jersey, is aided by one Professor Jules de Grandin of the Paris Police. The story was very well received, and Quinn had apparently written a second tale about his two characters, as *The Tenants of Broussac* appeared two months later. By the third story, *The Isle of Missing Ships*, de Grandin had received his doctorate, and the demands for continuing the series became louder and more insistent. For nearly a decade, Seabury Grandin Quinn (born 1889) appeared in WT only with de Grandin stories, and complaints were loud when editor Wright brought out an issue without another of the exploits of the French occultist. Although not a doctor like Conan Doyle, Quinn was a mortician and was well-versed in the occult, so that the medical aspects of the stories are authentic, and the occult speculations based upon solid lore. But like Conan Doyle, the author of the de Grandin stories — there are over a hundred of them — often chafed under the necessity of planning only such stories as his two popular characters would fit into; and although he did not try to kill them off, the year 1935 saw non-series stories beginning to appear, although new de Grandin stories were written now and then. However, Mr. Quinn has one satisfaction that Conan Doyle sought in vain: neither of his most famous weird tales contain the characters with which he was saddled so long. One of them, *Roads*, received a special, illustrated hard-cover edition; the other, which was urged upon us by James Turner, is presented here.

er her out-stretched fingers and her vigilant needle spied out and closed every hole with a cunning no mechanical loom could rival.

Then there was a daughter. I was a little hazy in my conception of her; but I knew she was tall and slender as a hazel wand, and that her eyes were blue and wide and sympathetic.

Picturing the house and its people became a favorite pastime with me during the time I was acquiring the art of walk-

ing all over again. By the time I was able to trust my legs on the road I felt I knew my way to my vision-friends' home as well as I knew the byways of my own parish: though I had as yet not set foot outside the sanitarium.

Oddly enough, I chose the evening for my first long stroll. It was unusually warm for September in Maine, and some of the sturdier of the convalescents had been playing tennis during the afternoon. After dinner they

sat on the veranda, comparing notes on their respective cases of influenza, or matching experiences in appendicitis operations.

After building the house bit by bit from my imagination, as a child pieces together a picture puzzle, I should have been bitterly disappointed if the woods had proved empty; yet when I reached the turn of the road and found my dream house a reality, I was almost afraid. Bit for bit and part for part, it was as I had visualized it.

A long, rambling, comfortable-looking farmhouse it was, with a wide porch screened by vines, and a white-washed picket fence about the little clearing before it. There was a tumble-down gate in the fence, one of the kind that is held shut with a weighted chain. Looking closely, I saw the weight was a disused plowshare. Leading from gate to porch was a path of flat stones, laid unevenly in the short grass, and bordered with a double row of clam shells. A lamp burned in the front room sending out cheerful golden rays to meet the silver moonlight.

A strange, eery sensation came over me as I stood there. Somehow, I felt I had seen that house before — many, many times before; yet I had never been in that part of Maine till I came to Briarcliff, nor had anyone ever described the place

to me. Indeed, except for my idle dreams, I had had no intimation that there was a house in those pines at all.

"WHO LIVES in the house at the turn of the road?" I asked the fat man who roomed next to me.

He looked at me as blankly as if I had addressed him in Chocktaw, then countered, "What road?"

"Why, the south road," I explained. "I mean the house in the pines — just beyond the curve, you know."

If such a thing had not been obviously absurd, I should have thought he looked frightened at my answer. Certainly his already prominent eyes started a bit further from his face.

"Nobody lives there," he assured me. "Nobody's lived there for years. There isn't any house there."

I became angry. What right had this fellow to make my civil question the occasion for an ill-timed jest? "As you please," I replied. "Perhaps there isn't any house there for *you*; but I saw one there last night."

"My God!" he ejaculated, and hurried away as if I'd just told him I was infected with smallpox.

Later in the day I overheard a snatch of conversation between him and one of his acquaintances in the lounge.

"I tell you it's so," he was

saying with great earnestness. "I thought it was all a lot of poppycock, myself; but that clergyman saw it last night. I'm going to pack my traps and get back to the city, and not waste any time about it, either."

"Rats!" his companion scoffed. "He must have been stringing you."

Turning to light a cigar, he caught sight of me. "Say Mr. Weatherby," he called, "you didn't mean to tell my friend here that you really saw a house down by those pines last night, did you?"

"I certainly did," I answered, "and I tell you, too. There's nothing unusual about it, is there?"

"Is there?" he repeated. "Is there? Say, what'd it look like?"

I described it to him as well as I could, and his eyes grew as wide as those of a child hearing the story of Bluebeard.

"Well. I'll be a Chinaman's uncle!" he declared as I finished. "I sure will!"

"See here," I demanded, "What's all the mystery about that farmhouse? Why shouldn't I see it? It's there to be seen, isn't it?"

He gulped once or twice, as if there were something hot in his mouth, before he answered. "Look here, Mr. Weatherby, I'm telling you this for your own good. You'd better stay in o' nights; and you'd better stay a-

way from those pines in particular."

Nonplussed at this unsolicited advice, I was about to ask an explanation, when I detected the after-tang of whisky on his breath. I understood, then. I was being made the butt of a drunken joke by a pair of race-course followers.

"I'm very much obliged, I'm sure," I replied with dignity, "but if you don't mind, I'll choose my own comings and goings."

"Oh, go as far as you like" — he waved his arms wide in token of my complete free-agency — "go as far as you like. I'm going to New York."

And he did. The pair of them left the sanitarium that afternoon.

A SLIGHT recurrence of my illness held me housebound for several days after my conversation with the two sportively inclined gentlemen, and the next time I ventured out at night the moon had waxed to the full, pouring a flood of light upon the earth that rivaled midday. The minutest objects were as readily distinguished as they would have been before sunset; in fact, I remember comparing the evening to a silver-plated noon.

As I trudged along the road to the pine copse I was busy formulating plans for intruding into the family circle at the

farmhouse; devising all manner of pious frauds by which to scrape acquaintance.

"Shall I feign having lost my way, and inquire direction to the sanitarium; or shall I ask if some mythical acquaintance, a John Squires, for instance, lives there?" I asked myself as I neared the turn of the road.

Fortunately for my conscience, all these subterfuges were unnecessary, for as I neared the whitewashed fence, a girl left the porch and walked quickly to the gate, where she stood gazing pensively along the moonlit road. It was almost as if she were coming to meet me, I thought, as I slackened my pace and assumed an air of deliberate casualness.

Almost abreast of her, I lowered my cadence still more, and looked directly at her. Then I knew why my conception of the girl who lived in that house had been misty and indistinct. For the same reason the venerable John had faltered in his description of the New Jerusalem until his vision of the Isle of Patmos.

From the smoothly parted hair above her wide, forget-me-not eyes, to the hem of her white cotton frock, she was as slender and lovely as a Rossetti saint; as wonderful to the eye as a medieval poet's vision of his lost love in paradise. Her forehead, evenly framed in the beaten bronze of her hair, was wide and high, and startlingly white,

and her brows were delicately penciled as if laid on by an artist with a camel's-hair brush. The eyes themselves were sweet and clear as forest pools mirroring the September sky, and lifted a little at the corners, like an Oriental's, giving her face a quaint, exotic look in the midst of these Maine woods.

So slender was her figure that the swell of her bosom was barely perceptible under the light stuff of her dress, and, as she stood immobile in the nimbus of moon rays, the undulation of the line from her shoulders to ankles was what painters call a "curve of motion."

One hand rested lightly on the gate, finely cut as a bit of Italian sculpture, and scarcely less white than the limed wood supporting it. I noticed idly that the forefinger was somewhat longer than its fellows, and that the nails were almond-shaped and very pink — almost red — as if they had been rouged and brightly polished.

NO MAN CAN take stock of a woman thus, even in a cursory, fleeting glimpse, without her being aware of the inspection, and in the minute my eyes drank up her beauty, our glances crossed and held.

The look she gave back was as calm and unperturbed as though I had been non-existent; one might have thought I was an invisible wraith of the night;

yet the faint suspicion of a flush quickening in her throat and cheeks told me she was neither unaware nor unappreciative of my scrutiny.

Mechanically, I raised my cap, and, wholly without conscious volition, I heard my own voice asking, "May I trouble you for a drink from your well? I'm from the sanitarium — only a few days out of bed, in fact — and I fear I've overdone myself in my walk."

A smile flitted across her rather wide lips, quick and sympathetic as a mother's reponse to her child's request, as she swung the gate open for me.

"Surely," she answered, and her voice had all the sweetness of the south wind southing through her native pines, "surely you may drink at our well, and rest yourself, too — if you wish."

She preceded me up the path, quickening her pace as she neared the house, and running nimbly up the steps to the porch. From where I stood beside the old-fashioned well, fitted with windlass and bucket, I could hear the sound of whispering voices in earnest conversation. Hers I recognized, lowered though it was, by the flutelike purling of its tones; the other two were deeper, and, it seemed to me, hoarse and throaty. Somehow, odd as it seemed, there was a queer, canine note in them, dimly reminding me

of the muttering of not too friendly dogs — such fractious growls as I had heard while doing missionary duty in Alaska, when the savage, half-wolf malamutes were not fed promptly at the relay stations.

Her voice rose a thought higher, as if in argument, and I fancied I heard her whisper, "This one is mine, I tell you — mine. I'll brook no interference. Go to your own hunting."

AN INSTANT more and there was a reluctant assenting growl from the shadow of the vines curtaining the porch, and a light laugh from the girl as she descended the steps, swinging a bright tin cup in her hand. For a second she looked at me, as she sent the bucket plunging into the stone-curbed well; then she announced, in explanation, "We're great hunters here, you know. The season is just in, and Dad and I have the worst quarrels about whose game is whose."

She laughed in recollection of their argument, and I laughed with her. I had been quite a Nimrod as a boy, myself, and well I remembered the heated controversies as to whose charge of shot was responsible for some luckless bunny's demise.

The well was very deep, and my breath was coming fast by the time I had helped her wind the bucket-rope upon the windlass; but the water was cold

as only spring-fed well water can be. As she poured it from the bucket it shone almost like foam in the moonlight, and seemed to whisper with a half-human voice, instead of gurgling as other water does when poured.

I had drunk water in nearly every quarter of the globe, but never such water as that. Cold as the breath from a glacier, limpid as visualized air, it was yet so light and tasteless in substance that only the chill in my throat and the sight of the liquid in the cup told me I was doing more than going through the motions of drinking.

"And now, will you rest?" she invited, as I finished my third draft. "We've an extra chair on the porch for you."

BEHIND THE screen of vines I found her father and mother seated in the rays of the big kitchen lamp. They were just as I had expected to find them — plain, homely, sincere country folk, courteous in their reception and anxious to make a sick stranger welcome. Both were stout, with the comfortable stoutness of middle age and good health; but both had surprisingly slender hands. I noticed, too, that the same characteristic of an over-long forefinger was apparent in their hands as in their daughter's, and that the nails of both were

trimmed to points and stained almost a brilliant red.

"My father, Mr. Squires," the girl introduced, "and my mother, Mrs. Squires."

I could not repress a start. These people bore the very name I had casually thought to use when inquiring for some imaginary person. My lucky stars had surely guided me away from that attempt to scrape an acquaintance. What a figure I should have cut if I had actually asked for Mr. Squires!

Though I was not aware of it, my curious glance must have stayed longer on their reddened nails than I had intended, for Mrs. Squires looked deprecatingly at her hands. "We've all been turning in, putting up fox-grapes" — she included her husband and daughter with a comprehensive gesture. "And the stain just won't wash out; has to wear off, you know."

I SPENT, perhaps, two hours with my new-found friends, talking of everything from the best methods of potato culture to the surest way of landing a nine-pound bass. All three joined in the conversation and took a lively interest in the topics under discussion. After the vapid talk of the guests at the sanitarium, I found the simple, interested discourse of these country people as stimulating as wine, and when I left them

it was with a hearty promise to renew my call at an early date.

"Better wait until after dark," Mr. Squires warned. "We'd be glad to see you any time; but we're so busy these fall days, we haven't much time for company."

I took the broad hint in the same friendly spirit it was given.

It must have grown chillier than I realized while I sat there, for my new friends' hands were clay-cold when I took them in mine at parting.

Homeward bound, a whimsical thought struck me so suddenly I laughed aloud. There was something suggestive of the dog tribe about the Squires family, though I could not for the life of me say what it was. Even Mildred, the daughter, beautiful as she was, with her light eyes, her rather prominent nose and her somewhat wide mouth, reminded me in some vague way of a lovely silver collie I had owned as a boy.

I struck a tassel of dried leaves from a cluster of weeds with my walking-stick as I smiled at the fanciful conceit. The legend of the werewolves — those horrible monsters formed as men, but capable of assuming bestial shape at will, and killing and eating their fellows — was as old as mankind's fear of the dark, but no mythology I had ever read contained a reference to dog-people.

Strange fancies strike us in the moonlight sometimes.

SEPTEMBER RIPENED to October, and the moon, which had been as round and bright as an exchange-worn coin when I first visited the Squires house, waned as thin as a shaving from a silversmith's lathe.

I became a regular caller at the house in the pines. Indeed, I grew to look forward to my nightly visits with those homely folks as a welcome relief from the tediously gay companionship of the over-sophisticated people at the sanitarium.

My habit of slipping away shortly after dinner was the cause of considerable comment and no little speculation on the part of my fellow convalescents, some of whom set it down to the eccentricity which, to their minds, was the inevitable concomitant of a minister's vocation, while others were frankly curious. Snatches of conversation I overheard now and then led me to believe that the object of my strolls was the subject of wagering, and the guarded questions put to me in an effort to solve the mystery became more and more annoying.

I had no intention of taking any of them to the farmhouse with me. The Squires were my friends. Their cheerful talk and unassuming manners were as delightful a contrast to the atmosphere of the sanitarium as

a breath of mountain balsam after the fetid air of a hothouse; but to the city-centered crowd at Briarcliff they would have been only the objects of less than half-scornful patronage, the source of pitying amusement.

IT WAS Miss Leahy who pushed the impudent curiosity farther than any of the rest, however. One evening, as I was setting out, she met me at the gate and announced her intention of going with me.

"You must have found something *dreadfully* attractive to take you off every evening this way, Mr. Weatherby," she hazarded as she pursed her rather pretty, rouged lips at me and caught step with my walk. "We girls really *can't* let some little country lass take you away from us, you know. We simply *can't*."

I made no reply. It was scarcely possible to tell a pretty girl, even such a vain little flirt as Sara Leahy, to go home and mind her business. Yet that was just what I wanted to do. But I would not take her with me; to that I made up my mind. I would stop at the turn of the road, just out of sight of the farmhouse, and cut across the fields. If she wanted to accompany me on a cross-country hike in high-heeled slippers, she was welcome to do so.

Besides, she would tell the

others that my wanderings were nothing more mysterious than nocturnal explorations of the near-by woods; which bit of misinformation would satisfy the busybodies at Briarcliff and relieve me of the espionage to which I was subjected, as well.

I smiled grimly to myself as I pictured her climbing over fences and ditches in her flimsy party frock and beaded pumps, and lengthend my stride toward the woods at the road's turn.

We marched to the limits of the field bordering the Squires' grove in silence, I thinking of the mild revenge I should soon wreak upon the pretty little busybody at my side, Miss Leahy too intent on holding the pace I set to waste breath in conversation.

As we neared the woods she halted, an expression of worry, almost fear, coming over her face.

"I don't believe I'll go any farther," she announced.

"No?" I replied a trifle sarcastically. "And is your curiosity so easily satisfied?"

"It's not that" — she turned half round, as if to retrace her steps — "but I'm afraid of those woods."

"Indeed?" I queried. "And what is there to be afraid of? Bears, Indians, or wildcats? I've been through them several times without seeing anything terrifying." Now she had come this

far, I was anxious to take her through the fields and underbrush.

"No-o," Miss Leahy answered, a nervous quaver in her voice, "I'm not afraid of anything like that; but — oh, I don't know what you call it. Pierre told me all about it the other day. Some kind of dreadful thing — loop — loop — something or other. It's a French word, and I can't remember it."

I WAS PUZZLED. Pierre Geronte was the ancient French-Canadian gardener at the sanitarium, and, like all doddering old men, would talk for hours to anyone who would listen. Also, like all *habitants*, he was full of the wild folklore his ancestors brought overseas with them generations ago.

"What did Pierre tell you?" I asked.

"Why, he said that years ago some terrible people lived in these woods. They had the only house for miles around, and travelers stopped there for the night, sometimes. But no stranger was ever seen to leave that place, once he went in. One night the farmers gathered about the house and burned it, with the family that lived there. When the embers had cooled down they made a search, and found nearly a dozen bodies buried in the cellar. That was why no one ever came away from that dreadful place.

"They took the murdered men to the cemetery and buried them, but they dumped the charred bodies of the murderers into graves in the barnyard, without even saying a prayer over them. And Pierre says — oh, look! *Look!*"

She broke off her recital of the old fellow's story and pointed a trembling hand across the field to the edge of the woods. A second more and she shrank against me, clutching at my coat with fear-stiffened fingers and crying with excitement and terror.

I looked in the direction she indicated, myself a little startled by the abject fear that had taken such sudden hold on her.

SOMETHING WHITE and ungainly was running diagonally across the field from us, skirting the margin of the woods and making for the meadow that adjoined the sanitarium pasture. A second glance told me it was a sheep, probably one of the flock kept to supply our table with fresh meat.

I was laughing at the strength of the superstition that could make the girl see a figure of horror in an innocent mutton that had strayed away from its fellows and was scared out of its silly wits, when something else attracted my attention.

Loping along in the trail of the fleeing sheep, somewhat to the rear and a little to each side,

were two other animals. At first glance they appeared to be a pair of large collies; but as I looked more intently, I saw that these animals were like nothing I had ever seen before. They were much larger than any collie — nearly as high as St. Bernards — yet shaped in a general way like Alaskan sledge-dogs — huskies.

The farther one was considerably the large of the two, and ran with a slight limp, as if one of its hind paws had been injured. As nearly as I could tell in the indifferent light, they were a rusty brown color, very thick-haired and unkempt in appearance. But the strangest thing about them was the fact that both were tailless, which gave them a terrifyingly grotesque look.

As they ran, a third form, similar to the other two in shape, but smaller, slender as a greyhound, with much lighter-hued fur, broke from the thicket of short brush edging the wood and took up the chase, emitting a series of short, sharp yelps.

"Sheep-killers," I murmured, half to myself. "Odd. I've never seen dogs like that before."

"They're not dogs," wailed Miss Leahy against my coat. "They're not dogs. Oh, Mr. Weatherby, let's go away. Please, please take me home!"

She was rapidly becoming hysterical, and I had a difficult time with her on the trip back.

She clung whimpering to me, and I had almost to carry her most of the way. By the time we reached the sanitarium, she was crying bitterly, shivering as if with a chill, and went in without stopping to thank me for my assistance.

I turned and made for the Squires farm with all possible speed, hoping to get there before the family had gone to bed. But when I arrived the house was in darkness, and my knock at the door received no answer.

As I retraced my steps to the sanitarium I heard faintly, from the fields beyond the woods, the shrill, eery cry of the sheep-killing dogs.

A TORRENT OF rain held us marooned the next day. Miss Leahy was confined to her room, with a nurse in constant attendance and the house doctor making hourly calls. She was on the verge of a nervous collapse, he told me, crying with a persistence that bordered on hysteria, and responded to treatment very slowly.

An impromptu dance was organized in the great hall and half a dozen bridge tables set up in the library; but as I was skilled in neither of these rainy day diversions, I put on a waterproof and patrolled the veranda for exercise.

On my third or fourth trip around the house I ran into old Geronte shuffling across the

porch, wagging his head and muttering portentously to himself.

"See here, Pierre," I accosted him, "what sort of nonsense have you been telling Miss Leahy about those pine woods down the south road?"

The old fellow regarded me unwinkingly with his beady eyes, wrinkling his age-yellowed forehead for all the world like an elderly baboon inspecting a new sort of edible. "*M'sieur* goes out alone much at nights, *nest-ce-pas?*" he asked, at length.

"Yes, *Monsieur* goes out alone much at night," I echoed, "but what *Monsieur* particularly desires to know is what sort of tales you have been telling Mademoiselle Leahy. *Comprenez vous?*"

The network of wrinkles about his lips multiplied as he smiled enigmatically, regarding me askance from the corners of his eyes.

"*M'sieur* is *Anglais*," he replied. "He would not understand — or believe."

"Never mind what I'd believe," I retorted. "What is this story about murder and robbery being committed in those woods? Who were the murderers, and where did they live? *Hein?*"

FOR A FEW seconds he looked fixedly at me, chewing the cud of senility between his toothless gums; then, glancing

carefully about, as if he feared being overheard, he tiptoed up to me and whispered:

"*M'sieur* mus' stay indoors these nights. W'en the moon, she shine, yes; w'en she not show her face, no. There are evil things abroad at the dark of the moon, *M'sieur*. Even las' night they keel t'ree of my bes' sheep. Remembair, *M'sieur*, the *loup-garou*, he is out when the moon hide her light."

And with that he turned and left me; nor could I get another word from him save his cryptic warning, "Remembair, *M'sieur*, the *loup-garou*. Remembair."

In spite of my annoyance, I could not get rid of the unpleasant sensation the old man's words left with me. "The *loup-garou* — werewolf" — he had said, and to prove his goblin-wolf's presence, he had cited the death of his three sheep.

As I paced the rain-washed porch I thought of the scene I had witnessed the night before, when the sheep-killers were at their work.

"Well," I reflected, "I've seen the *loup-garou* on his native heath at last. From causes as slight as this, no doubt, the horrible legend of the werewolf had sprung. Time was when all France quaked at the sound of the *loup-garou's* hunting-call and the bravest knights in Christendom trembled in their castles and crossed themselves fearfully because some renegade shep-

herd dog quested his prey in the night. On such a foundation are the legends of a people built."

WHISTLING A snatch from *Pinafore* and looking skyward in search of a patch of blue in the clouds, I felt a tug at my raincoat sleeve, such as a neglected terrier might give. It was Geronte again.

"*M'sieur*," he began in the same mysterious whisper, "the *loup-garou* is a verity, certainly. I, myself, have nevair seen him" — he paused to bless himself — "but my cousin, Baptiste, was once pursued by him. Yes.

"It was near the shrine of the good Sainte Anne that Baptiste lived. One night he was sent to fetch the curé for a dying woman. They rode fast through the trees, the curé and my cousin Baptiste, for it was at the dark of the moon, and the evil forest folk were abroad. And as they galloped, there came a *loup-garou* from the woods, with eyes as bright as hell-fire. It followed hard, this tailless hound from the devil's kennel; but they reached the house before it, and the curé put his book, with the Holy Cross on its cover, at the doorstep. The *loup-garou* wailed under the windows like a child in pain until the sun rose; then it slunk back to the forest.

"When my cousin Baptiste and the curé came out, they found its hand marks in the soft

earth around the door. Very like your hand, or mine, they were, *M'sieur*, save that the first finger was longer than the others."

"And did they find the *loup-garou*?" I asked, something of the old man's earnestness communicated to me.

"Yes, *M'sieur*; but of course," he replied gravely. "Tree weeks before, a stranger, drowned in the river, had been buried without the office of the Church. W'en they opened his grave they found his fingernails as red as blood, and sharp. Then they knew. The good curé read the burial office over him, and the poor soul that had been snatched away in sin slept peacefully at last."

He looked quizzically at me, as if speculating whether to tell me more; then, apparently fearing I would laugh at his outburst of confidence, he started away toward the kitchen.

"Well, what else, *Pierre*?" I asked, feeling he had more to say.

"*Non, non, non*," he replied. "There is nothing more, *M'sieur*. I did but want *M'sieur* should know my own cousin, Baptiste Geronte, had seen the *loup-garou* with his very eyes."

"Hearsay evidence," I commented, as I went in to dinner.

DURING THE rainy week that followed I chafed at my

confinement like a privileged convict suddenly deprived of his liberties, and looked as wistfully down the south road as any prisoned gypsy ever gazed upon the open trail.

The quiet home circle at the farmhouse, the unforced conversation of the old folks, Mildred's sweet companionship, all beckoned me with an almost irresistible force. For in this period of enforced separation I discovered what I had dimly suspected for some time — I loved Mildred Squires. And, loving her, I longed to tell her of it.

No lad intent on visiting his first sweetheart ever urged his feet more eagerly than I when, the curtains of rain at last drawn up, I hastened toward the house at the turn of the road.

As I hoped, yet hardly dared expect, Mildred was standing at the gate to meet me as I rounded the curve, and I yearned toward her like a hummingbird seeking its nest.

She must have read my heart in my eyes, for her greeting smile was as tender as a mother's as she bends above her babe.

"At last you have come, my friend," she said, putting out both hands in welcome. "I am very glad."

We walked silently up the path, her fingers still resting in mine, her face averted. At the steps she paused, a little embarrassment in her voice as she

explained, "Father and Mother are out; they have gone to a — meeting. But you will stay?"

"Surely," I acquiesced. And to myself I admitted my gratitude for this chance of Mildred's unalloyed company.

WE TALKED but little that night. Mildred was strangely distraught, and, much as I longed to, I could not force a confession of my love from my lips. Once, in the midst of a long pause between our words, the cry of the sheep-killers came faintly to us, echoed across the fields and woods, and as the weird, shrill sound fell on our ears she threw back her head with something of the gesture of a hunting dog scenting its quarry.

Toward midnight she turned to me, a panic of fear having apparently laid hold of her.

"You must go," she exclaimed, rising and laying her hand on my shoulder.

"But your father and mother have not returned," I objected. "Won't you let me stay until they get back?"

"Oh, no, no!" she answered, her agitation increasing. "You must go at once — please." She increased her pressure on my shoulder, almost as if to shove me from the porch.

Taken aback by her sudden desire to be rid of me, I was picking up my hat, when she uttered a stifled little scream

and ran quickly to the edge of the porch, interposing herself between me and the yard. At the same moment I heard a muffled sound from the direction of the front gate, a sound like a growling and snarling of savage dogs.

I leaped forward, my first thought being that the sheep-killers I had seen the other night had strayed to the Squires place. Crazed with blood I knew they would be almost as dangerous to men as to sheep, and every nerve in my sickness-weakened body cried out to protect Mildred.

TO MY blank amazement, as I looked from the porch I beheld Mr. and Mrs. Squires walking sedately up the path, talking composedly together. There was no sign of the dogs or any other animals about.

As the elderly couple neared the porch I noticed that Mr. Squires walked with a pronounced limp, and that both their eyes shone very brightly in the moonlight, as though they were suffused with tears.

They greeted me pleasantly enough; but Mildred's anxiety seemed increased, rather than diminished, by their presence, and I took my leave after a brief exchange of civilities.

On my way back I looked intently in the woods bordering the road for some sign of the house of which Pierre had told

Miss Leahy; but everywhere the pines grew as thickly as though neither axe nor fire had ever disturbed them.

"Geronte is in his second childhood," I reflected, "and like an elder child, he loves to terrify his juniors with fearsome witch-tales."

Yet an uncomfortable feeling was with me till I saw the gleam of the sanitarium's lights across the fields; and as I walked toward them it seemed to me that more than once I heard the bay-ing of the sheep-killers in the woods behind me.

A BUZZ OF conversation, like the sibilant arguments of a cloud of swarming bees, greeted me as I descended the stairs to breakfast next morning.

It appeared that Ned, one of the pair of great mastiffs attached to the sanitarium, had been found dead before his kennel, his throat and brisket torn open and several gaping wounds in his flanks. Boris, his fellow, had been discovered whimpering and trembling in the extreme corner of the dog house, the embodiment of canine terror.

Speculation as to the animal responsible for the outrage was rife, and, as usual, it ran the gamut of possible and impossible surmises. Every sort of beast from a grizzly bear to a lion escaped from the circus was in turn indicted for the crime,

only to have a complete alibi straightway established.

The only one having no suggestion to offer was old Geronte, who stood sphinxlike in the outskirts of the crowd, smiling sardonically to himself and wagging his head sagely. As he caught sight of me he nodded sapiently, as if to include me in the joint tenancy to some weighty secret.

Presently he worked his way through the chattering group and whispered, "*M'sieur*, he was here last night — and with him was the other tailless one. Come and see."

Plucking me by the sleeve, he led me to the rear of the kennels, and, stooping, pointed to something in the moist earth. "You see?" he asked, as if a printed volume lay for my reading in the mud.

"I see that someone has been on his hands and knees here," I answered, inspecting the hand prints he indicated.

"*Something*," he corrected, as if reasoning with an obstinate child. "Does not *M'sieur* behold that the first finger is the longest?"

"Which proves nothing," I defended. "There are many hands like that."

"Oh — yes?" he replied with that queer upward accent of his. "And where has *M'sieur* seen hands like that before?"

"Oh, many times," I assured him somewhat vaguely, for

there was a catch at the back of my throat as I spoke. Try as I would, I could recall only three pairs of hands with that peculiarity.

HIS LITTLE black eyes rested steadily on me in an unwinking stare, and the corners of his mouth curved upward in a malicious grin. It seemed, almost as if he found a grim pleasure in thus driving me into a corner.

"See here, *Pierre*," I began testily, equally annoyed at myself and him, "you know as well as I that the *loup-garou* is an old woman's tale. Someone was looking here for tracks, and left his own while doing it. If we look among the patients here we shall undoubtedly find a pair of hands to match these prints."

"God forbid!" he exclaimed, crossing himself. "That would be an evil day for us, *M'sieur*."

"Here, *Bor-ees*," he snapped his fingers to the surviving mastiff, "Come and eat."

The huge beast came wallowing over to him with the ungainly gait of all heavily muscled animals, stopping on his way to make a nasal investigation of my knees. Scarcely had his nose come into contact with my trousers when he leaped back, every hair in his mane and along his spine stiffly erect, every tooth in his great mouth bared in a savage snarl. But instead of the mastiff's fighting growl, he emit-

ted only a low, frightened whine, as though he were facing some animal of greater power than himself, and knew his own weakness.

"Good heavens!" I cried, thoroughly terrified at the friendly brute's sudden hostility.

"Yes, *M'sieur*," Geronte cut in quickly, putting his hand on the dog's collar and leading him a few paces away. "It is well you should call upon the heavenly ones; for surely you have the odor of hell upon your clothes."

"What do you mean?" I demanded angrily. "How dare you . . .?"

He raised a thin hand deprecatingly.

"*M'sieur* knows that he knows," he replied evenly, "and that I also know."

And leading Boris by the collar, he shuffled to the house.

MILDRED WAS waiting for me at the gate that evening, and again her father and mother were absent at one of their meetings.

We walked silently up the path and seated ourselves on the porch steps, where the waning moon cast oblique rays through the pine branches.

I think Mildred felt the tension I was drawn to, for she talked trivialities with an almost feverish earnestness, stringing her sentences together, and changing her subjects as a Nav-

ajo rug-weaver twists and breaks her threads.

At last I found an opening in the abattis of her small talk.

"Mildred," I said, very simply, for great emotions tear the ornaments from our speech, "I love you, and I want you for my wife. Will you marry me, Mildred?" I laid my hand on hers. It was cold as lifeless flesh, and seemed to shrink beneath my touch.

"Surely, dear, you must have read the love in my eyes," I urged, as she averted her face in silence. "Almost from the night I first saw you, I've loved you, dear. I . . ."

"O-o-h, don't," her interruption was a strangled moan, as if wrung from her by my words.

I leaned nearer to her. "Don't you love me, Mildred?" I asked. As yet she had not denied it.

For a moment she trembled, as if a sudden chill had come on her; then, leaning to me, she clasped my shoulders in her arms, hiding her face against my jacket.

"John, John, you don't know what you say," she whispered disjointedly, as though a sob had torn the words before they left her lips. Her breath was on my cheek, moist and cold as air from a vault.

I could feel the liveness of her through the thin stuff of her gown, and her body was as devoid of warmth as a dead thing.

"You're cold," I told her, put-

ting my arms shieldingly about her. "The night has chilled you."

A convulsive sob was her only answer.

"Mildred," I began again, putting my hand beneath her chin and lifting her face to mine, "tell me, dear, what is the matter?" I lowered my lips to hers.

WITH A CRY that was half scream, half weeping, she thrust me suddenly from her, pressing her hands against my breast and lowering her head until her face was hidden between her outstretched arms. I, too, started back, for in the instant our lips were about to meet, hers had writhed back from her teeth, like a dog's when he is about to spring, and a low, harsh noise, almost a growl, had risen in her throat.

"For God's sake," she whispered hoarsely, agony in every note of her shaking voice, "never do that again! Oh, my dear, dear love, you don't know how near to a horror worse than death you were."

"A — horror — worse — than — death?" I echoed dully, pressing her cold little hands in mine. "What do you mean, Mildred?"

"Loose my hands," she commanded with a quaint reversion to the speech of our ancestors, "and hear me. I do love you. I love you better than life, better than death. I love you so I have overcome something stronger than the walls of the grave for

your sake; but John, my very love, this is our last night together. We can never meet again. You must go, now, and not come back until tomorrow morning."

"Tomorrow morning?" I repeated blankly. What wild talk was this?

Headless of my interruption, she hurried on "Tomorrow morning, just before the sun rises over those trees, you must be here, and have your prayer-book with you."

I listened speechless, wondering which of us was mad.

"By that corner there," she waved a directing hand, "you will find three mounds. Stand beside them and read the office for the burial of the dead. Come quickly, and pause for nothing on the way. Look back for nothing; heed no sound from behind you. And for your own safety, come no sooner than to allow yourself the barest time to read your office."

BEWILDERED, I attempted to reason with the madwoman; begged her to explain this folly; but she refused all answer to my fervid queries, nor would she suffer me to touch her.

Finally, I rose to go. "You will do what I ask?" she implored.

"Certainly not," I answered firmly.

"John, John, have pity!" she cried, flinging herself to the earth before me and clasping

my knees. "You say you love me. I only ask this one favor of you — only this. Please, for my sake, for the peace of the dead and the safety of the living, promise you will do this thing for me."

Shaken by her abject supplication, I promised, though I felt myself a figure in some grotesque nightmare as I did it.

"Oh, my love, my precious love," she wept, rising and taking both my hands. "At last I shall have peace, and you shall bring it to me. No," she forbade as I made to take her in my arms at parting. "The most I can give you, dear, is this." She held her icy hands against my lips. "It seems so little, dear; but oh! it is so much."

Like a drunkard in his cups I staggered along the south road, my thoughts gone wild with the strangeness of the play I had just acted.

Across the clearing came the howls of the sheep-killers, a sound I had grown used to of late. But tonight there was a deeper, fiercer timbre in their bay, a note that boded ill for man as well as beast. Louder and louder it swelled; it was rising from the field itself, now, drawing nearer and nearer the road.

I TURNED AND looked. The great beasts I had seen pursuing the luckless sheep the other night were galloping toward me.

A cold finger seemed traced down my spine; the scalp crept and tingled beneath my cap. There was no other object of their quest in sight. I was their elected prey.

My first thought was to turn and run, but a second's reasoning told me this was worse than useless. Weakened with long illness, with an uphill road to the nearest shelter, I should soon be run down.

No friendly tree offered asylum; my only hope was to stand and fight. Grasping my stick, I spread my feet, bracing myself against their charge.

And as I waited their onslaught, there came from the shadow of the pines the shriller, sharper cry of the third beast. Like the crest of a flying, wind-lashed wave, the sligher, silver-furred brute came speeding across the meadow, its ears laid back, its slender paws spurning the sod daintily. Almost it seemed as if the pale shadow of a cloud were racing toward me.

The thing dashed slantwise across the field, its flight converging on the line of the other two's attack. Midway between me and them it paused, hairs bristling, limbs bent for a spring.

My eyes went wide with incredulity. It was standing in my defense.

All the savageness of the larger beasts' hunting-cry was echoed in the smaller creature's bay,

and with it a defiance that needed no interpretation.

The attackers paused in their rush, halted, and looked speculatively at my ally. They took a few tentative steps in my direction, and a fierce whine, almost an articulate curse went up from the silver-haired beast. Slowly the tawny pair circled and trotted back to the woods.

I hurried toward the sanitarium, grasping my stick firmly in readiness for another attack.

But no further ~~crises~~ came from the woods, and ~~once~~, as I glanced back, I saw the light-haired beast trotting slowly in my wake, looking from right to left, as if to ward off danger.

Half an hour later I looked from my window toward the house in the pines. Far down the south road, its muzzle pointed to the moon, the bright-furred animal crouched and poured out a lament to the night. And its cry was like the wail of a child in pain.

FAR INTO THE night I paced my room, like a condemned convict when the vigil of the death watch is on him. Reason and memory struggled for the mastery; one urging me to give over my wild act, the other bidding me obey my promise to Mildred.

Toward morning I dropped into a chair, exhausted with my objectless marching. I must have fallen asleep, for when I started

up the stars were dimming in the zenith, and bands of slate, shading to amethyst, slanted across the horizon.

A moment I paused, laughing cynically at my fool's errand; then, seizing cap and book, I bolted down the stairs, and ran through the paling dawn to the house in the pines.

There was something ominous and terrifying in the two-toned pastel of the house that morning. Its windows stared at me with blank malevolence, like the half-closed eyes of one stricken dead in mortal sin. The little patches of hoar-frost on the lawn were like leprous spots on some unclean thing. From the trees behind the clearing an owl hooted mournfully, as if to say, "Beware, beware!" and the wind sighing through the black pine boughs echoed the refrain ceaselessly.

Three mounds, sunken and weed-grown, lay in the unkempt thicket behind the corner. I paused beside them, throwing off my cap and adjusting my stole hastily. Thumbing the pages to the committal service, I held the book close, that I might see the print through the morning shadows, and commenced: "*I know that my Redeemer liveth. . .*"

ALMOST BESIDE me, under the branches of the pines, there rose such a chorus of howls and yelps I nearly dropped my book.

Like all the hounds in the kennels of hell, the sheep-killers clamored at me, rage and fear and mortal hatred in their eyes. Through the bestial cadences, too, there seemed to run a human note — the sound of voices heard before beneath these very trees. Deep and throaty and raging mad two of the voices came to me, and, like the tremolo of a violin lightly played in an orchestra of brass, the shriller cry of a third beast sounded.

As the infernal hubbub rose at my back, I half turned to fly. Next instant I grasped my book more firmly and resumed my office; for, like a beacon in the dark, Mildred's words flashed on my memory: "*Look back for nothing; heed no sound behind you.*"

Strangely, too, the din approached no nearer, but as though held by an invisible bar, stayed at the boundary of the clearing.

"Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live and is full of misery . . . deliver us from all our offenses . . . O Lord, deliver us not into the bitter pains of eternal death . . ." and to such an accompaniment, surely, as no priest ever before chanted the office, I pressed through the brief service to the final amen.

Tiny gouty spots of moisture stood out on my forehead and my breath struggled in my throat

as I gasped out the last word. My nerves were frayed to shreds and my strength nearly gone as I let fall my book and turned upon the beasts among the trees.

They were gone. Abruptly as it had begun, their clamor stopped, and only the rotting pine needles, lightly gilded by the morning sun, met my gaze. A light touch fell in the palm of my open hand, as if a pair of cool, sweet lips had laid a kiss there.

A vapor like swamp-fog enveloped me. The outbuildings, the old, stone-curbed well where I had drunk the night I first saw Mildred, the house itself — all seemed fading into mist and swirling away in the morning breeze.

"EH, EH, EH; but *M'sieur* will do himself an injury, sleeping on the wet earth!" Old Geronte bent over me, his arm beneath my shoulders. Behind him, great Boris, the mastiff, stood wagging his tail, regarding me with doggish good humor.

"Pierre," I muttered thickly, "how came you here?"

"This morning, going to my tasks, I saw *M'sieur* run down the road like a thing pursued. I followed quickly, for the woods hold terrors in the dark, *M'sieur*."

I looked toward the farmhouse. Only a pair of chimneys, rising stark and bare from a crumbling foundation, were

there. Fence, well, barn — all were gone, and in their place was a thicket of sumac and briars, tangled and overgrown as though undisturbed for thirty years.

"The house, Pierrel! Where is the house?" I croaked, sinking my fingers into his withered arm.

"Ouse?" he echoed. "Oh, but of course! There is no 'ouse here, *M'sieur*; nor has there been for years. This is an evil place, *M'sieur*; it is best we quit it, and that quickly. There be evil things that run by night . . ."

"No more," I answered, staggering toward the road, leaning

heavily on him. "I brought them peace, Pierre."

He looked dubiously at the English prayer book I held. A Protestant clergyman is a thing of doubtful usefulness to the orthodox French-Canadian. Something of the heartsick misery in my face must have touched his kind old heart, for at last he relented, shaking his head pityingly and patting my shoulder gently as one would soothe a sorrowing child.

"Perhaps, *M'sieur*," he conceded. "Perhaps; who shall say no? Love and sorrow are the purchase price of peace. Yes. Did not *le bon Dieu* so buy the peace of the world?"

We are still receiving votes on the subject of reprinting H. P. Lovecraft's essay, *Supernatural Horror in Literature*. Were we to do this, it would have to run in six installments, which, at the very least, would take a year to complete, under our present publication schedule.

Meanwhile, we have learned that Arkham House intends to include this essay in a forthcoming volume, publication of which will complete putting all the Lovecraft fiction back into print. So consider this when you vote — though we shall respect the majority wish, if we can, as soon as sufficient votes have been received.

The Oblong Box

by Edgar Allan Poe

The September 1844 issue of GODEY'S LADY BOOK saw the first publication of this story. In that year, Poe moved from Philadelphia to New York City, and he and his wife (now realized to be incurable) lived first at 130 Greenwich Street, then on a country farm located at what is now 84th Street and Broadway, and in the Fall at 15 Amity Street. During this year, Poe partook of one of his favorite stunts, writing a false news story, which was published in the NEW YORK SUN. Hoaxes of this nature were not only common in those days but very popular, and newspaper editors were known to indulge in them. But Poe's stunt, *The Balloon Hoax*, is one of the most famous of the century, second only to Richard Locke's *Moon Hoax*. The tale is among Poe's best and remains good reading today; it deceived thousands, and not only the uneducated. 1844 was not among the few "good" years in Poe's career. For the most part, he managed to eke out a precarious existence by doing hack work for Nathaniel P. Willis, editor of the NEW YORK EVENING MIRROR, for a time holding a minor editorial position, which his mother-in-law had persuaded Willis to offer Poe. The present tale is among the lesser-known works, and was requested by Bruce E. Dunn.

SOME YEARS AGO, I engaged passage from Charleston, S. C., to the city of New York, in the fine packet-ship *Independence*, Captain Hardy. We were

to sail on the fifteenth of the month (June), weather permitting; and on the fourteenth, I went on board to arrange some matters in my stateroom.

I found that we were to have a great many passengers, including a more than usual number of ladies. On the list were several of my acquaintances; and among other names, I was rejoiced to see that of Mr. Cornelius Wyatt, a young artist, for whom I entertained feelings of warm friendship. He had been with me a fellow-student at C—University, where we were very much together. He had the ordinary temperament of genius, and was a compound of misanthropy, sensibility, and enthusiasm. To these qualities he united the warmest and truest heart which ever beat in a human bosom.

I observed that his name was carded upon *three* staterooms: and, upon again referring to the list of passengers, I found that he had engaged passage for himself, wife, and two sisters — his own. The staterooms were sufficiently roomy, and each had two berths, one above the other. These berths, to be sure, were so exceedingly narrow as to be insufficient for more than one person; still, I could not comprehend why there were three staterooms for four persons. I was, just at that epoch, in one of those moody frames of mind which make a man abnormally inquisitive about trifles: and I confess, with shame, that I busied myself in a variety of ill-bred and preposterous conjectures about this matter of the

supernumerary stateroom. It was no business of mine, to be sure; but with nonetheless pertinacity did I occupy myself in attempts to resolve the enigma.

At last I reached a conclusion which wrought in me great wonder why I had not arrived at it before. "It is a servant, of course," I said; "what a fool I am, not sooner to have thought of so obvious a solution!" And then I again repaired to the list — but here I saw distinctly that no servant was to come with the party: although, in fact, it had been the original design to bring one — for the words "and servant" had been first written and then overscored. "Oh, extra baggage, to be sure," I now said to myself — "something he wishes not to be put in the hold — something to be kept under his own eye — ah, I have it — a painting or so — and this is what he has been bargaining about with Nicolino, the Italian Jew." This idea satisfied me, and I dismissed my curiosity for the nonce.

WYATT'S TWO sisters I knew very well, and most amiable and clever girls they were. His wife he had newly married, and I had never yet seen her. He had often talked about her in my presence, however, and in his usual style of enthusiasm. He described her as of surpassing beauty, wit, and accomplish-

ment. I was, therefore, quite anxious to make her acquaintance.

On the day in which I visited the ship (the fourteenth), Wyatt and party were also to visit it — so the captain informed me — and I waited on board an hour longer than I had designed, in hope of being presented to the bride; but then an apology came. "Mrs. W. was a little indisposed, and would decline coming on board until tomorrow, at the hour of sailing."

The morrow having arrived, I was going from my hotel to the wharf, when Captain Hardy met me and said that, "owing to circumstances" (a stupid but convenient phrase), "he rather thought the *Independence* would not sail for a day or two, and that when all was ready, he would send up and let me know." This I thought strange, for there was a stiff southerly breeze; but as "the circumstances" were not forthcoming, although I pumped for them with much perseverance, I had nothing to do but to return home and digest my impatience at leisure.

I did not receive the expected message from the captain for nearly a week. It came at length, however, and I immediately went on board. The ship was crowded with passengers, and everything was in the bustle attendant upon making sail. Wyatt's party arrived in about ten

minutes after myself. There were the two sisters, the bride, and the artist — the latter in one of his customary fits of moody misanthropy. I was too well used to these, however, to pay them any special attention. He did not even introduce me to his wife — this courtesy devolving, perforce, upon his sister Marian — a very sweet and intelligent girl, who, in a few hurried words, made us acquainted.

Mrs. Wyatt had been closely veiled; and when she raised her veil, in acknowledging my bow, I confess that I was very profoundly astonished. I should have been much more so, however, had not long experience advised me not to trust, with too implicit a reliance, the enthusiastic descriptions of my friend, the artist, when indulging in comments upon the loveliness of woman. When beauty was the theme, I well knew with what facility he soared into the regions of the purely ideal.

The truth is, I could not help regarding Mrs. Wyatt as a decidedly plain-looking woman. If not positively ugly, she was not, I think, very far from it. She was dressed, however, in exquisite taste — and then I had no doubt that she had captivated my friend's heart by the more enduring graces of the intellect and soul. She said very few words, and passed at once into her stateroom with Mr. W.

MY OLD inquisitiveness now returned. There was no servant — that was a settled point. I looked, therefore, for the extra baggage. After some delay, a cart arrived at the wharf, with an oblong pine box, which was everything that seemed to be expected. Immediately upon its arrival we made sail, and in a short time were safely over the bar and standing out to sea.

The box in question was, as I say, oblong. It was about six feet in length by two and a half in breadth — I observed it attentively, and like to be precise. Now this shape was peculiar; and no sooner had I seen it, than I took credit to myself for the accuracy of my guessing. I had reached the conclusion, it will be remembered, that the extra baggage of my friend, the artist, would prove to be pictures, or at least a picture; for I knew he had been for several weeks in conference with Nicolino — and now here was a box, which, from its shape, *could* possibly contain nothing in the world but a copy of Leonardo's "Last Supper;" and a copy of this very "Last Supper," done by Rubini the younger, at Florence, I had known, for some time, to be in the possession of Nicolino. This point, therefore, I considered as sufficiently settled. I chuckled excessively when I thought of my acumen. It was the first time I had ever known Wyatt to keep from me any of

his artistical secrets; but here he evidently intended to steal a march upon me, and smuggle a fine picture to New York, under my very nose; expecting me to know nothing of the matter. I resolved to quiz him *well*, now and hereafter.

One thing, however, annoyed me not a little. The box did *not* go into the extra stateroom. It was deposited in Wyatt's own; and there, too, it remained, occupying very nearly the whole of the floor — no doubt to the exceeding discomfort of the artist and his wife — this the more especially as the tar or paint with which it was lettered in sprawling capitals, emitted a strong, disagreeable, and, to *my* fancy, a peculiarly disgusting odor. On the lid were painted the words — "*Mrs. Adelaide Curtis, Albany, New York. Charge of Cornelius Wyatt, Esq. This side up. To be handled with care.*"

NOW, I WAS aware that Mrs. Adelaide Curtis, of Albany, was the artist's wife's mother — but then I looked upon the whole address as a mystification, intended especially for myself. I made up my mind, of course, that the box and contents would never get farther north than the studio of my misanthropic friend, in Chambers Street, New York.

For the first three or four days we had fine weather, although

the wind was dead ahead; having chopped round to the northward immediately upon our losing sight of the coast. The passengers were, consequently, in high spirits and disposed to be social. I must except, however, Wyatt and his sisters, who behaved stiffly, and, I could not help thinking, uncourteously to the rest of the party. Wyatt's conduct I did not so much regard. He was gloomy, even beyond his usual habit — in fact he was morose — but in him I was prepared for eccentricity. For the sisters, however, I could make no excuse. They secluded themselves in their staterooms during the greater part of the passage, and absolutely refused, although I repeatedly urged them, to hold communication with any person on board.

Mrs. Wyatt herself was far more agreeable. That is to say, she was *chatty*; and to be chatty is no slight recommendation at sea. She became excessively intimate with most of the ladies; and, to my profound astonishment, evinced no equivocal disposition to coquet with the men. She amused us all very much. I say "amused" — and scarcely know how to explain myself. The truth is, I soon found that Mrs. W. was far oftener laughed *at* than *with*. The gentlemen said little about her; but the ladies, in a little while, pronounced her "a good-hearted thing, rather indifferent-looking,

totally uneducated, and decidedly vulgar." The great wonder was, how Wyatt had been entrapped into such a match. Wealth was the general solution — but this I knew to be no solution at all; for Wyatt had told me that she neither brought him a dollar nor had any expectations from any source whatever. He had married, he said, for love, and for love only; and his bride was far more than worthy of his love.

When I thought of these expressions, on the part of my friend, I confess that I felt indescribably puzzled. Could it be possible that he was taking leave of his senses? What else could I think? *He*, so refined, so intellectual, so fastidious, with so exquisite a perception of the faulty, and so keen an appreciation of the beautiful! To be sure, the lady seemed especially fond of *him* — particularly so in his absence — when she made herself ridiculous by frequent quotations of what had been said by her "beloved husband, Mr. Wyatt." The word "husband" seemed forever — to use one of her own delicate expressions — forever "on the tip of her tongue." In the meantime, it was observed by all on board, that he avoided *her* in the most pointed manner, and, for the most part, shut himself up alone in his stateroom, where, in fact, he might have been said to live altogether, leaving his wife at

full liberty to amuse herself as she thought best, in the public society of the main cabin.

My conclusion, from what I saw and heard, was, that the artist, by some unaccountable freak of fate, or perhaps in some fit of enthusiastic and fanciful passion, had been induced to unite himself with a person altogether beneath him, and that the natural result, entire and speedy disgust had ensued. I pitied him from the bottom of my heart — but could not, for that reason, quite forgive his incommunicativeness in the matter of the "Last Supper." For this I resolved to have my revenge.

ONE DAY he came upon deck, and, taking his arm as had been my wont, I sauntered with him backward and forward. His gloom, however (which I considered quite natural under the circumstances), seemed entirely unabated. He said little, and that moodily, and with evident effort. I ventured a jest or two, and he made a sickening attempt at a smile. Poor fellow! — as I thought of his wife, I wondered that he could have heart to put on even the semblance of mirth. At last I ventured a home thrust. I determined to commence a series of covert insinuations, or innuendoes, about the oblong box — just to let him perceive, gradually, that I was *not* altogether the butt, or victim, of

this little bit of pleasant mystification. My first observation was by way of opening a masked battery. I said something about the "peculiar shape of *that* box;" and, as I spoke the words, I smiled knowingly, winked, and touched him gently with my forefinger in the ribs.

The manner in which Wyatt received this harmless pleasure was mad. At first he stared at me as if he found it impossible to comprehend the witticism of my remark; but as its point seemed slowly to make its way into his brain, his eyes, in the same proportion, seemed protruding from their sockets. Then he grew very red — then hideously pale — then, as if highly amused with what I had insinuated, he began a loud and boisterous laugh, which, to my astonishment, he kept up, with gradually increasing vigor, foring, of course. I avoided him ten minutes or more. In conclusion, he fell flat and heavily upon the deck. When I ran to uplift him, to all appearance he was dead.

I called assistance, and, with much difficulty, we brought him to himself. Upon reviving, he spoke incoherently for some time. At length we bled him and put him to bed. The next morning he was quite recovered, so far as regarded his mere bodily health. Of his mind I say nothing convinced me, at once, that during the rest of the passage,

by advice of the captain, who seemed to coincide with me altogether in my views of his insanity, but cautioned me to say nothing on this head to any person on board.

SEVERAL circumstances occurred immediately after this fit of Wyatt which contributed to heighten the curiosity with which I was already possessed. Among other things, this: I had been nervous — drank too much strong green tea, and slept ill at night — in fact, for two nights I could not be properly said to sleep at all. Now, my stateroom opened into the main cabin, or dining-room, as did those of all the single men on board. Wyatt's three rooms were in the after-cabin, which was separated from the main one by a slight sliding door, never locked even at night. As we were almost constantly on a wind, and the breeze was not a little stiff, the ship heeled to leeward very considerably; and whenever her starboard side to leeward, the sliding door between the cabins slid open, and so remained, nobody taking the trouble to get up and shut it. But my berth was in such a position, that when my own stateroom door was open, as well as the sliding door in question, (and my own door was *always* open on account of the heat,) I could see into the after-cabin quite distinctly, and just at that portion of it, too, where were

situated the staterooms of Mr. Wyatt.

Well, during two nights (*not* consecutive) while I lay awake, I clearly saw Mrs. W., about eleven o'clock upon each night, steal cautiously from the stateroom of Mr. W., and enter the extra room, where she remained until daybreak, when she was called by her husband and went back. That they were virtually separated was clear. They had separate apartments — no doubt in contemplation of a more permanent divorce; and here, after all, I thought, was the mystery of the extra stateroom.

There was another circumstance, too, which interested me much. During the two wakeful nights in question, and immediately after the disappearance of Mrs. Wyatt into the extra stateroom, I was attracted by certain singular, cautious, subdued noises in that of her husband. After listening to them for some time, with thoughtful attention, I at length succeeded perfectly in translating their import. They were sounds occasioned by the artist in prying open the oblong box, by means of a chisel and mallet — the latter being apparently muffled, or deadened, by some soft woollen or cotton substance in which its head was enveloped.

In this manner I fancied I could distinguish the precise moment when he fairly disen-

gaged the lid — also, that I could determine when he removed it altogether, and when he deposited it upon the lower berth in his room; this latter point I knew, for example, by certain slight taps which the lid made in striking against the wooden edges of the berth, as he endeavored to lay it down *very* gently — there being no room for it on the floor. After this there was a dead stillness, and I heard nothing more, upon either occasion, until nearly day-break; unless, perhaps, I may mention a low sobbing, or murmuring sound, so very much suppressed as to be nearly inaudible — if, indeed, the whole of this latter noise were not rather produced by my own imagination.

I say it seemed to *resemble* sobbing or sighing — but, of course, it could not have been either. I rather think it was a ringing in my own ears. Mr. Wyatt, no doubt, according to custom, was merely giving the rein to one of his hobbies — indulging in one of his fits of artistic enthusiasm. He had opened his oblong box, in order to feast his eyes on the pictorial treasure within. There was nothing in this however, to make him *sob*. I repeat, therefore, that it must have been simply a freak of my own fancy, distempered by good Captain Hardy's green tea. Just before dawn, on each of the two nights of which I

speak, I distinctly heard Mr. Wyatt replace the lid upon the oblong box, and force the nails into their old places by means of the muffled mallet. Having done this, he issued from his stateroom, fully dressed, and proceeded to call Mrs. W. from hers.

WE HAD BEEN at sea seven days, and were now off Cape Hatteras, when there came a tremendously heavy blow from the southwest. We were, in a measure, prepared for it, however, as the weather had been holding out threats for some time. Everything was made snug, aloft and aloft; and as the wind steadily freshened, we lay to, at length, under spanker and foretopsail, both double-reefed.

In this trim we rode safely enough for forty-eight hours — the ship proving herself an excellent sea-boat in many respects, and shipping no water of any consequence. At the end of this period, however, the gale had freshened into a hurricane, and our after-sail split into ribbons, bringing us so much in the trough of the water that we shipped several prodigious seas, one immediately after the other. By this accident we lost three men overboard with the cabin, and nearly the whole of the larboard bulwarks. Scarcely had we recovered our senses, before the foretopsail went into shreds, when we got up a storm stay-sail, and with this did pret-

ty well for some hours, the ship heading the sea much more steadily than before.

The gale still held on, however, and we saw no signs of its abating. The rigging was found to be ill-fitted, and greatly strained; and on the third day of the blow, about five in the afternoon, our mizzen-mast, in a heavy lurch to windward, went by the board. For an hour or more, we tried in vain to get rid of it, on account of the prodigious rolling of the ship; and, before we had succeeded, the carpenter came aft and announced four feet of water in the hold. To add to our dilemma, we found the pumps choked and nearly useless.

All was now confusion and despair — but an effort was made to lighten the ship by throwing overboard as much of her cargo as could be reached, and by cutting away the two masts that remained. This we at last accomplished — but we were still unable to do anything at the pumps; and, in the meantime, the leak gained on us very fast.

At sundown, the gale had sensibly diminished in violence, and, as the sea went down with it, we still entertained faint hopes of saving ourselves in the boats. At eight P.M., the clouds broke away to windward, and we had the advantage of a full moon — a piece of good fortune

which served wonderfully to cheer our drooping spirits.

After incredible labor we succeeded, at length, in getting the long-boat over the side without material accident, and into this we crowded the whole of the crew and most of the passengers. This party made off immediately, and, after undergoing much suffering, finally arrived, in safety, at Ocracoke Inlet, on the third day after the wreck.

FOURTEEN passengers, with the captain, remained on board, resolving to trust their fortunes to the jolly-boat at the stern. We lowered it without difficulty, although it was only by a miracle that we prevented it from swamping as it touched the water. It contained, when afloat, the captain and his wife, Mr. Wyatt and party, a Mexican officer, wife, four children, and myself, with a Negro valet.

We had no room, of course, for anything except a few positively necessary instruments, some provisions, and the clothes upon our backs. No one had thought of even attempting to save anything more. What must have been the astonishment of all, then, when having proceeded a few fathoms from the ship, Mr. Wyatt stood up in the stern-sheets, and coolly demanded of Captain Hardy that the boat should be put back for the purpose of taking in his oblong box!

"Sit down, Mr. Wyatt," replied

the captain, somewhat sternly, "you will capsize us if you do not sit quite still. Our gunwhale is almost in the water now."

"The box!" vociferated Mr. Wyatt, still standing — "the box, I say! Captain Hardy, you cannot, you *will* not refuse me. Its weight will be but a trifle — it is nothing — mere nothing. By the mother who bore you — for the love of Heaven — by your hope of salvation, I *implore* you to put back for the box!"

The captain, for a moment, seemed touched by the earnest appeal of the artist, but he regained his stern composure, and merely said:

"Mr. Wyatt, you are *mad*. I cannot listen to you. Sit down, I say, or you will swamp the boat. Stay — hold him — seize him! — he is about to spring overboard! There — I knew it — he is over!"

As the captain said this, Mr. Wyatt, in fact, sprang from the boat, and, as we were yet in the lee of the wreck, succeeded, by almost superhuman exertion, in getting hold of a rope which hung from the fore-chains. In another moment he was on board, and rushing frantically down into the cabin.

In the meantime, we had been swept astern of the ship, and being quite out of her lee, were at the mercy of the tremendous sea which was still running. We made a determined effort to put back, but our little boat was like

a feather in the breath of the tempest. We saw at a glance that the doom of the unfortunate artist was sealed.

As our distance from the wreck rapidly increased, the madman (for as such only could we regard him) was seen to emerge from the companionway, up which by dint of strength that appeared gigantic, he dragged, bodily, the oblong box. While we gazed in the extremity of astonishment, he passed, rapidly, several turns of a three-inch rope, first around the box and then around his body. In another instant both body and box were in the sea — disappearing suddenly, at once and forever.

We lingered awhile sadly upon our oars, with our eyes riveted upon the spot. At length we pulled away. The silence remained unbroken for an hour. Finally, I hazarded a remark.

"Did you observe, captain, how suddenly they sank? Was not that an exceedingly singular thing? I confess that I entertained some feeble hope of his final deliverance, when I saw him lash himself to the box, and commit himself to the sea."

"They sank as a matter of course," replied the captain, "and that like a shot. They will soon rise again, however — *but not until the salt melts.*"

"The salt!" I ejaculated.

"Hush!" said the captain,

pointing to the wife and sisters of the deceased. "We must talk of these things at some more appropriate time."

WE SUFFERED much, and made a narrow escape; but fortune befriended us, as well as our mates in the long-boat. We landed, in fine, more dead than alive, after four days of intense distress, upon the beach opposite Roanoke Island. We remained here a week, were not ill-treated to the wreckers, and at length obtained a passage to New York.

About a month after the loss of the *Independence*, I happened to meet Captain Hardy in Broadway. Our conversation turned, naturally, upon the disaster, and especially upon the sad fate of poor Wyatt. I thus learned the following particulars.

The artist had engaged passage for himself, wife, two sisters and a servant. His wife was, indeed, as she had been represented, a most lovely, and most accomplished woman. On the morning of the fourteenth of June (the day in which I first visited the ship), the lady suddenly sickened and died. The young husband was frantic with grief — but circumstances imperatively forbade the deferring his voyage to New York. It was necessary to take to her mother the corpse of his adored wife, and, on the other hand, the uni-

versal prejudice which would prevent his doing so openly was well known. Nine-tenths of the passengers would have abandoned the ship rather than take passage with a dead body.

In this dilemma, Captain Hardy arranged that the corpse, being first partially embalmed, and packed, with a large quantity of salt, in a box of suitable dimensions, should be conveyed on board as merchandise. Nothing was to be said of the lady's decease; and, as it was well understood that Mr. Wyatt had engaged passage for his wife, it became necessary that some person should personate her during the voyage. This the deceased's lady's-maid was easily prevailed on to do. The extra stateroom, originally engaged for this girl, during her mistress' life, was now merely retained. In this stateroom the pseudo-wife, slept, of course, every night. In the daytime she performed, to the best of her ability, the part of her mistress — whose person, it had been carefully ascertained, was unknown to any of the passengers on board.

My own mistake arose, naturally enough, through too careless, too inquisitive, and too impulsive a temperament. But of late, it is a rare thing that I sleep soundly at night. There is a countenance which haunts me, turn as I will. There is a hysterical laugh which will forever ring within my ears.

A Way With Kids

by Ed M. Clinton

This story was submitted to us in 1959 when we were handling FUTURE SCIENCE FICTION magazine. We accepted it with pleasure, but unfortunately, distribution difficulties forced a suspension of the publication before the tale could be used. When inquiry disclosed that it was still available, we lost no time in asking for another look at it, and re-reading after several years, has merely confirmed our original impression. Ed M. Clinton is a Californian from whom we hope to see many more tales.

TO: The President of the United States

From: The President's Special Committee Investigating *Babysit*

Title: Final Report (Summary)

Babysit was invented 22 years ago this month by Dr. Waldo Erdley, at that time an obscure professor of physiology at Northeastern College of Science. Previous to this, Erdley's life has been described as "personally exciting but professionally unimportant." His college classmates (Central University)

characterized him in the class yearbook as "a real *bon vivant*." In postgraduate life, however, this happy existence was terminated by a remarkably fecund marriage which produced in rapid succession seven children.

It is difficult for the average parent today to realize the effect of such a situation on the social life of an individual of that time. Today, because of *Babysit*, the problem simply does not exist. However, for approximately fifty years prior to the invention of *Babysit*, the increasing attraction being offered

in response to man's quest for pleasure had led to the development of what was at first merely a minor social phenomenon but ultimately became a vast, organized trade union: babysitting (The Babysitters' Motherhood, organized in July 1971).

Babysitters were nothing more nor less than proxy parents, hired for an evening or a day or for such a period of time as was required, to permit parents to take part in social and cultural activities which would otherwise have been inaccessible to them.

At the time Waldo Erdley's seventh child was born, the cost of professional babysitting, a thoroughly closed-shop operation, had become phenomenally high. Trade unionism, while protecting the professional interests and integrity of those who were devoting their lives to this special social function, by the same token imposed a serious financial burden on those parents who wished to enjoy to the utmost the advantages of modern civilization.

For a man of Erdley's temperament and inclinations, such a situation was particularly difficult. The pressure of his growing family responsibilities forced him to accept the quiet, conservative existence of a small college professor. He stated in his autobiography (*Escape From Oblivion*, Cheyney, 1998), that this period of his life was "utterly dull, a gray existence in a

world of color, a monkey-keeper living in the cage with his charges."

THE FOLLOWING is an edited transcript from a portion of *The City of New York vs Erdley* (1987), a hearing, instigated by the Humane Society, in which the legality of Erdley's invention was first questioned:

Mr. District Attorney: And would you tell us how you came to develop this formula?

Dr. Erdley: Yes. I was tired of paying people to keep my kids.

D.A.: Not exactly what I meant. I was not asking your motives. I was asking about your science.

Erdley: Well, I had been conducting some lab courses at the University involving vivisection. There was an injection we were using on animals at that time to prepare them for vivisection —

D.A.: You mean, this chemical which you are injecting into your children is used in vivisection?

Erdley: Oh, no. It is merely derivative. Unfortunately, I cannot enlarge upon that, as the formula is currently in the process of being patented.

D.A.: Do I infer from this that you are considering commercial applications of this formula?

Erdley: There is that possibility.

D.A.: Well, Mr. Erdley . . .

Erdley: Doctor Erdley.

D.A.: Pardon. Dr. Erdley, would you describe the use and effect of your solution?

Erdley: Certainly. Ten cc of the chemical are injected anywhere intravenously into the body of a person not yet physically mature —

D.A.: Excuse me, Dr. Erdley, but could you clarify that last phrase?

Erdley: One whose growth processes are still functioning.

D.A.: Thank you. Please continue.

Erdley: Yes. Ten cc are injected. Between 22 and 36 minutes later, depending upon such physical factors as age and general health, the child will pass into a state of suspended animation.

D.A.: I'd like you to tell the court what you mean by that phrase, "suspended animation".

Erdley: A condition in which all bodily functions are temporarily halted, without any impairment of their ability to resume.

D.A.: And how long will this condition continue?

Erdley: Several hours, depending upon the individual. It can be calculated.

D.A.: Now, this is very important. Is the use of this injection habit-forming?

Erdley: Not for the youngsters.

D.A.: Does this injection

contain any of the chemicals which this state defines as narcotic?

Erdley: Absolutely none.

D.A.: What harmful effects might be expected to accrue from the continued use of this injection?

Erdley: After seven months, my children are exhibiting every sign of extremely good health, except my youngest who has the mumps. Absolutely none, sir.

AS THIS extract indicates, the efforts of the Humane Society to curb Erdley at the outset were a complete failure. He was violating no law. He appeared to be harming nobody.

The possible commercial application to which he had admitted, was, in fact, in preparation. Not long before this brief hearing, Erdley had formed a secret partnership with a university associate, Professor Wayne Overholt. The details of this partnership were revealed in *The State of New York vs Erdley* (1991). By this time, the entire weight of the Babysitters' Motherhood was being thrown against the commercial product called *Babysit*, which was sweeping the country. The Motherhood was in fact engaged in a life-and-death struggle. Pertinent extracts are herewith included for your information.

State's Attorney: Your orig-

inal intent, then, was simply to provide yourself with a means of escaping the high cost of babysitting?

Erdley: This is true.

S.A.: Yet you permitted this to become twisted into a commercial enterprise, at the expense of our young —

Defense Attorney: Objection.

His Honor: Sustained.

S.A.: Would you kindly tell the court, as briefly as possible, how you came to make a commercial venture out of your formula.

Erdley: Certainly. I had been using *Babysit* for about five months — of course, I hadn't named it yet, it was just something I mixed up for my own use as the occasion arose. Anyway, about this time there was a big social affair in the city, and I again took advantage of my formula so that my wife and I could attend. It was a delightful party, by the way.

S.A.: You injected all seven of your children?

Erdley: This is true.

S.A.: Then what did you do with them?

Erdley: Put them to bed, naturally.

S.A.: I see. Please continue, Dr. Erdley.

Erdley: At this affair, I ran into Professor Wayne Overholt, Dean of the School of Business Administration at the University. He commented that I seemed to be getting around again

these days — yes, I believe those were his exact words, "getting around again." He asked me if it wasn't a bit costly, paying babysitters for seven children. The Motherhood, you know, charges per head per hour. Then — I remember him winking — he asked me if I were putting them on ice. I said, sort of.

S.A.: You said you put them on ice?

Defense: Objection. There is no need to emphasize the remark to the distortion of its actual significance.

His Honor: Sustained.

S.A.: Please continue, Dr. Erdley.

Erdley: Well, Wayne was a bit shocked. I told him I wasn't kidding. We had a couple of drinks, and I took him home and showed the kids to him. I remember his first words: "My God, you've a gold mine here!"

S.A.: He referred to the injection as a gold mine?

Erdley: Yes. "Gold mine" were his exact words. I said I hadn't thought about it in that way. We had a couple more drinks and he made me sit down and listen while he sketched out a plan of action. What a quick thinker Wayne is! I must admit I was turned on fire. It seemed to me that I had been blind to miss such a possibility. I demurred at first, however, feeling that it must be somewhat less than honorable to take advantage of the Motherhood this

way. He pointed out what a fine service I would be doing to parents of this country, and that convinced me.

Later in the same hearing:

S.A.: Dr. Erdley, with your permission, I've called you back to the stand for a second time to clear up a small detail. It is regarding the method of applying *Babysit*.

Erdley: Yes?

S.A.: There are certain groups which object to the use of a needle. There is the feeling that this lends considerable barbarity to the process.

Defense: Objection! I will not let my client stand as a witness if such inflammatory remarks are made!

His Honor: The State's Attorney will please respect the fact that Dr. Erdley is allowing himself to be questioned as a State's witness. I must emphatically sustain the objection.

S.A.: Let us put it this way. There is a general feeling —

Defense: Objection, Your Honor. This so-called feeling has yet to be established.

His Honor: Sustained.

S.A.: Very well. The feeling has been expressed in some quarters that the use of the needle is . . . ah . . . unfortunate. What is your attitude regarding this, Dr. Erdley?

Erdley: We at *Babysit* have long been disturbed by this fact, I assure you. As a consequence,

we have conducted continuing research toward the end of obviating the use of the needle. It pleases me to be able to announce at this time that we are going into immediate production of a capsule which takes the place of the injection — and at considerably lower cost to the consumer, I might add.

S.A.: A pill?

Erdley: Yes, a pill. The American adult has been living on all kinds of pills for seventy years now. They certainly can't harm his children.

THIS technological advance effectively demoralized the *Babysitters' Motherhood* and led to the total acceptance of *Babysit*. The one hindrance to its nearly universal acceptance had been overcome.

However, the real significance of *Babysit*, and its ultimate effect on the American culture, was lost to the distraught *Babysitters' Motherhood* and to Erdley and his associates as well. It has remained for us, the inheritors of the cumulative effect, to find ourselves faced with a problem that threatens the very foundations of our nation. It is this, of course, which led you to appoint this Committee.

When Waldo Erdley died "of dissipation", according to the *NEW YORK TIMES*, at the early age of 46, he was rich, revered, and famous, and he still honestly believed he was a true de-

liverer, a view shared by most of the nation's parents. In an interview for the sports section of the *NEW YORK TIMES*, October 11, 1997, he stated: "It is my fervent hope that I be remembered . . . as the man who freed the modern parent from the age-old chains . . . that have often made parenthood seem . . . less than desirable . . . I have put in one small pill the cure for the worst of childhood's ills . . . being one . . ."

The first hint of the crisis to come appeared in *The Doctor's Journal*, January, 1999. This was slightly more than twelve years after Erdley had first injected one of his children with his variation of the vivisection tranquilizer. It consisted of a brief article reporting a strange case of "arrested development" in Hollywood, California: "The parents of this child, television performers, showed me her birth certificate, and it was an entirely valid one, dated August 3, 1992, and signed by Dr. Hugo Lamont. I was acquainted with Dr. Lamont before his recent death and so recognized the signature. Yet upon examination of this child, it was impossible to establish her physical age as greater than four years . . . I would consider her a thoroughly normal child of that age . . . but this simply did not correspond to her calendar age . . ."

Appearing as it did in a professional journal of specialized

circulation, this story did not reach a mass audience for a considerable time. When it did, however, its effect was catalytic; doctors across the country were flooded with similar, if usually less extreme, complaints.

As you know, this case in time became a classic study (cf. Jones, *A Study of Physical Age*, Norcroft, 2001). It developed that the little girl's parents had been on constant tour for many years, with all the attendant night life and other professional demands upon their time. It had not even occurred to Dr. H. Macy, the examining physician, to ask whether or not these people were using *Babysit*. When the case did become generally known, parents who had been reluctant to reveal their private problems approached physicians with their own "arrested" children. The cause was soon apparent. (E.g.: "It's getting so you can tell who are the biggest gadabouts on any given block," television wit George Hartman commented nationally, "by lining up their kids and picking out the youngest one.")

THERE WAS certainly no general reaction against the use of *Babysit*, for the parents of this country were enjoying themselves too much. There was, however, an unsuccessful attempt to salvage the all-but-defunct *Babysitters' Motherhood*. The slogan, "*Babysitters* are

safe," was widely broadcast. A popular psychologist-philosopher was commissioned to write an article for a certain mass circulation journal; he appears to have made a mistake in turning the matter into a religious and moral issue.

"The use of *Babysit*," he wrote, "casts into a shadow the eternal joy that springs from carrying out the divinely imposed duties of parenthood. If the mothers and fathers of our nation must flit from bar to bistro, let them at least do so knowing that their children are in the loving care of an understanding babysitter, not drugged senseless by an insidious pill that has stolen from them their God-given right to cherish their children . . . this is a special kind of slavery . . ."

But parents had tasted the narcotic of escape, and were in no mood to be lectured. The magazine in which the article appeared ceased publication six months later because of sharply falling circulation, and the author lost his Sunday afternoon television show and became an obscure continuity editor for one of the large television networks.

The situation as it has become today is best summed up in the three cases pending before the Supreme Court at this time. Mr. Chief Justice Leadwater has promised that the first of these cases will be heard shortly. Inasmuch as whatever decisions

are rendered will have considerable political repercussion, and will elicit great public reaction besides establishing bases for certain legal interpretations which heretofore have not been possible, they will in large degree determine the further activities and recommendations of this committee. For your convenience, these three cases are herewith briefly summarized. (Copies of the complete transcripts of the lower court hearings are provided as attachments to this report.)

The United States of America vs John McCoy

This is a criminal suit, based on John McCoy's refusal to serve in the Army.

In May, 2008, John McCoy was called up for military service under the current National Military Responsibility Act. Through his parents, he refused to respond; they claimed he was not old enough. He was advised that the local board's records indicated that he had been born in April of 1989, which made him 19 years of age and hence, subject to call. McCoy then appeared, and the board director was startled to see a youngster of at most 12 years facing him. The board director immediately directed a memo to General Hanson Baker, the National Director of Military Responsibility, regarding the case. A full-scale investigation was launched

by the Defense Department through General Baker's office. The following is a transcript of General Merlin Evermore's statement at the staff meeting following the initial report of the investigating group. (This is classified security data.)

The implications of what we have discovered are shocking. The whole military establishment is threatened by this fact. If the use of *Babysit* continues nationally on the scale it has been for the past twenty years, it will become impossible for us to carry forward our long-range plans for the military organization. Based as these plans are on the normal statistics of birth rate, growth, and the statistical spread of physical defects, *Babysit*, in inhibiting the rate of growth of today's young men, will in effect cancel all our plans. This young man, McCoy, may be 19 years of age by the calendar, but I wouldn't want him in my army. And he is only one.

The Secretary of Defense, Mr. Nailey Moulder, issued the following statement to the investigating group. (This is classified security data.)

Is *Babysit* de facto subversive? I think it must be our job to begin a campaign of publicity to inculcate in the popular mind a feeling that the use of *Babysit* is unpatriotic. I suggest we stay clear of such issues as morality. We must stick to the anti-American angle. And I think we'd all like to see this kept from becoming a political football, for the good of our country.

*Norman Norfair
vs Adolph Gronski*
This is a civil suit.

Eighteen months ago Norman Norfair's \$40,000 Connecticut home was destroyed by fire, later proven to have resulted from childish pranks performed by Adolph Gronski. Mr. Gronski is 21 years of age by the calendar, and thus completely liable for his actions. However, a medical estimate of his actual age is 13 years. As of now, Norfair can sue only Gronski and not his parents, since the law is clear regarding the legal responsibility of a person 21 years of age. Lower courts have failed to grant the suit, perhaps moved by the sight of an apparently 13-year-old defendant. In point of fact, this is only the most spectacular of several similar cases, in which the whole relationship of legal responsibility to age is under test.

*The State of California
vs John Larch*

This is a criminal action.

This case is relevant to California's statutory rape law. The lower courts have upheld the conviction of Larch on the charge of this crime against Anne Ellis, who has a calendar age of 24 but approximate physical age of 16. Larch's attorneys have appealed his conviction, insisting the incident was a "mutually romantic moment between two adults both of the age of consent."

Miss Ellis has since married.

AS YOU ARE aware, Mr. President, two plans have currently been advanced to meet the problem of *Babysit*. These can be summarized briefly as follows:

The Laughlin-Marindell Plans This plan is sponsored by several major labor groups and by the remnants of the Babysitters' Motherhood. It calls for out-and-out prohibition of *Babysit*.

The Committee respectfully calls your attention to a previous effort at prohibition — that time in the area of liquor control — attempted early in the last century in this country. The net result was to stimulate the production of vast amounts of inferior and often deadly liquor and to convert what had been a nation of moderate drinking habits into an alcoholic society. The law was finally annulled. The Committee is almost unanimously in agreement that to deny *Babysit* would be to make it more attractive, and to spread it farther and on a more insidious level.

The Leverett-Haynes-Carson-Wentworth Plan: This proposal calls for regulation of both the sale and use of *Babysit*. While agreeing with the implied concept, the Committee finds it difficult to see how the use of *Babysit* could effectively be regulated in the meaning of this plan without instituting a serious invasion of personal privacy which would certainly be politically

disastrous. As you will recall, this scheme calls for a monthly tabulation of the number of dosages of *Babysit* each parent uses with each offspring, this tabulation to be filed much on the order of a tax return. Aside from the fact that the plan overlooks the variation in time-of-effect per dose per individual, its enforcement would require a vast new regulatory organization.

While the Committee believes that neither of the two plans so far advanced offers an adequate, feasible, politically practical solution, it is in unanimous agreement that the Leverett *et al* program is the more acceptable of the two.

The Committee would like to editorialize at this point. There is need for much serious thought on this whole problem. Your attention is called to a trend which so far has been officially overlooked, and which the Committee feels may ultimately be of the most extreme importance. Our older population is aging at an increasingly faster rate than our youth. There is a growing gap in population distribution between the very young and the very old. The Committee is of the opinion that this may in time have a somewhat disruptive effect upon the society as a whole.

J. Barnham Bisbee, Chairman
For the Committee:

The Devil Of The Marsh

by E. B. Marriott-Watson

The Victorians loved to dwell upon the mood of horror and strangeness at great length, and sometimes to little purpose. However, as this example suggests, they were capable of powerful effects at times.

IT WAS NIGH upon dusk when I drew close to the Great Marsh, and already the white vapors were about, riding across the sunken levels like ghosts in a churchyard. Though I had set forth in a mood of wild delight, I had sobered in the lonely ride across the moor and was now uneasily alert. As my horse jerked down the grassy slopes that fell away to the jaws of the swamp I could see thin streams of mist rise slowly, hover like

wraiths above the long rushes, and then, turning gradually more material, go blowing heavily away across the flat. The appearance of the place at this desolate hour, so remote from human society and so darkly significant of evil presences, struck me with a certain wonder that she should have chosen this spot for our meeting. She was a familiar of the moors, where I had invariably encountered her; but it was like her caprice to

test my devotion by some such dreary assignation.

The prospect depressed me me beyond reason, but the fact of her neighborhood drew me on, and my spirits mounted at the thought that at last she was to put me in possession of herself. Tethering my horse upon the verge of the swamp, I soon discovered the path that crossed it, and entering struck out boldly for the heart. The track could have been little used, for the reeds, which stood high above the level of my eyes upon either side, straggled everywhere across in low arches, through which I dodged, and broke my way with some inconvenience and much impatience. A full half hour I was solitary in that wilderness, and when at last a sound other than my own footsteps broke the silence the dusk had fallen.

I was moving very slowly at the time, with a mind half disposed to turn from the expedition, which it seemed to me now must surely be a jest she had played upon me. While some such reluctance held me, I was suddenly arrested by a hoarse croaking which broke out upon my left, sounding somewhere from the reeds in the black mire. A little farther it came again from close at hand, and when I had passed on a few more steps in wonder and perplexity, I heard it for the third time. I stopped and listened, but the

marsh was as a grave, and so taking the noise for the signal of some raucous frog, I resumed my way. But in a little the croaking was repeated, and coming quickly to a stand I pushed the reeds aside and peered into the darkness.

I could see nothing, but at the immediate moment of my pause I thought I detected the sound of somebody trailing through the rushes. My distaste for the adventure grew with this suspicion, and had it not been for my infatuation I had assuredly turned back and ridden home. The sound pursued me at intervals along the track, until at last, irritated beyond endurance by the sense of this persistent and invisible company, I broke into a sort of run. This, it seemed, the creature (whatever it was) could not achieve, for I heard no more of it, and continued my way in peace. My path at length ran out from among the reeds upon the smooth flat of which she had spoken, and here my heart quickened, and the gloom of the place lifted.

The flat lay in the very center of the marsh, and here and there in it a gaunt bush or withered tree rose like a specter against the white mists. At the farther end I fancied some kind of building loomed up; but the fog which had been gathering ever since my entrance upon the passage sailed down upon

me at that moment and the prospect went out with suddenness. As I stood waiting for the clouds to pass, a voice cried to me out of its center, and I saw her next second with bands of mist swirling about her body, come rushing to me from the darkness. She put her long arms about me, and, drawing her close, I looked into her deep eyes. Far down in them, it seemed to me, I could discern a mystic laughter dancing in the wells of light.

"AT LAST," she said, "at last, my beloved!" I caressed her.

"Why," said I, tingling at the nerves, "why have you put this journey between us? And what mad freak is your presence in this swamp?" She uttered her silver laugh, and nestled to me again.

"I am the creature of this place," she answered. "This is my home. I have sworn you should behold me in my native sin ere you ravished me away."

"Come, then," said I; "I have seen; let there be an end of this. I know you, what you are. This marsh chokes up my heart. God forbid you should spend more of your days here. Come."

"You are in haste," she cried. "There is yet much to learn. Look, my friend," she said, "you who know me, what I am. This is my prison, and I have inherited its properties. Have you no fear?"

For answer I pulled her to me, and her warm lips drove out the horrid humours of the night; but the swift passage of a flickering mockery over her eyes struck me as a flash of lightning, and I grew chill again.

"I have the marsh in my blood," she whispered; "the marsh and the fog of it. Think ere you vow to me, for I am the cloud in a starry night."

A lithe and lovely creature, palpable of warm flesh, she lifted her magic face to mine and besought me plaintively with these words. The dews of the nightfall hung on her lashes, and seemed to plead with me for her forlorn and solitary plight.

"Behold!" I cried, "witch or devil of the marsh, you shall come with me! I have known you on the moors, a roving apparition of beauty; nothing more I know, nothing more I ask. I care not what this dismal haunt means, nor again these strange and mystic eyes. You have powers and senses above me; your sphere and habits are as mysterious and incomprehensible as your beauty. But that." I said, "is mine, and the world that is mine shall be yours also."

SHE MOVED HER head nearer to me with an antic gesture, and her gleaming eyes glanced up at me with a sudden

flash, the similitude (great heavens!) of a hooded snake. Starting, I fell away, but at that moment she turned her face and set it fast towards the fog that came rolling in thick volumes over the flat. Noiselessly the great cloud crept down upon us, and all dazed and troubled I watched her watching it in silence. It was as if she awaited some omen, and I too trembled in the fear of its coming.

Then suddenly out of the night issued the hoarse and hideous croaking I had heard upon my passage. I reached out my arm to take her hand, but in an instant the mists broke over us, and I was groping in the vacancy. Something like panic took hold of me, and, beating through the blind obscurity, I rushed over the flat, calling upon her. In a little the swirl went by, and I perceived her upon the margin of the swamp, her arm raised as in imperious command. I ran to her, but stopped, amazed and shaken by a fearful sight. Low by the dripping reeds crouched a small squat thing, in the likeness of a monstrous frog, coughing and choking in its throat. As I stared, the creature rose upon its legs and disclosed a human resemblance. Its face was white and thin, with long black hair; its body gnarled and twisted as with the ague of a thousand years. Shaking, it whined in a breathless

voice, pointing a skeleton finger at the woman by my side.

"Your eyes were my guide," it quavered. "Do you think that after all these years I have no knowledge of your eyes? Lo, is there aught of evil in you I am not instructed in? This is the Hell you designed for me, and now you would leave me to a greater."

The wretch paused, and panting leaned upon a bush, while she stood silent, mocking him with her eyes, and soothing my terror with her soft touch.

"Hear!" he cried, turning to me, "hear the tale of this woman that you may know her as she is. She is the Presence of the marshes. Woman or Devil I know not, but only that the accursed marsh has crept into her soul and she herself is become its Evil Spirit; she herself, that lives and grows young and beautiful by it, has its full power to blight and chill and slay. I, who was once as you are, have this knowledge. What bones lie deep in this black swamp who can say but she? She has drained of health, she has drained of mind and of soul; what is between her and her desire that she should not drain also of life? She has made me a devil in her Hell, and now she would leave me to my solitary pain, and go search for another victim. But she shall not!" he screamed through his chattering

teeth; "she shall not! My Hell is also hers! She shall not!"

HER SMILING untroubled eyes left his face and turned to me: she put out her arms, swaying towards me, and so fervid and so great a light glowed in her face that, as one distraught of superhuman means, I took her into my embrace. And then the madness seized me.

"Woman or devil," I said, "I will go with you! Of what account this pitiful past? Blight me even as that wretch, so be only you are with me."

She laughed, and, disengaging herself, leaned, half-clinging to me, towards the coughing creature by the mire.

"Come," I cried, catching her by the waist. "Come!" She laughed again a silver-ringing laugh. She moved with me slowly across the flat to where the track started for the portals of the marsh. She laughed and clung to me.

But at the edge of the track I was startled by a shrill, hoarse screaming; and behold, from my very feet, that loathsome creature rose up and wound his long black arms about her shrieking

and crying in his pain. Stooping I pushed him from her skirts, and with one sweep of my arm drew her across the pathway; as her face passed mine her eyes were wide and smiling.

Then of a sudden the still mist enveloped us once more; but ere it descended I had a glimpse of that contorted figure trembling on the margin, the white face drawn and full of desolate pain. At the sight an icy shiver ran through me. And then through the yellow gloom the shadow of her darted past me to the further side. I heard the hoarse cough, the dim noise of a struggle, a swishing sound, a thin cry, and then the sucking of the slime over something in the rushes. I leapt forward: and once again the fog thinned, and I beheld her, woman or devil, standing upon the verge, and peering with smiling eyes into the foul and sickly bog. With a sharp cry wrung from my nerveless soul, I turned and fled down the narrow way from that accursed spot; and as I ran the thickening fog closed round me, and I heard far off and lessening still the silver sound of her mocking laughter.

The Shuttered Room

by H.P. Lovecraft & August Derleth

Throughout the short stories and novels dealing with Sherlock Holmes, Dr. Watson makes references to other cases, notes for which are in his files and which he says he will write up some day — or regrets that they cannot be told during his lifetime. H. P. Lovecraft did not tantalize his readers with such hints in his published stories, but his *Commonplace Book* and his personal correspondence abound with suggestions, partial outlines, etc. In some instances stories were started, then apparently put aside. Just as John Dickson Carr and Arthur Conan Doyle worked up a number of cases hinted at by Dr. Watson, August Derleth has completed a number of stories which Lovecraft started, or has worked up tales which he suggested. The ones signed Lovecraft & Derleth, however, are ones wherein HPL had done some preliminary work, perhaps even getting into a first draft. The present tale, requested by *Robert Smith*, combines the Dunwich and Innsmouth themes.

AT DUSK, the wild, lonely country guarding the approaches to the village of Dunwich in north central Massachusetts seems more desolate and forbid-

ding than it ever does by day. Twilight lends the barren fields and domed hills a strangeness that sets them apart from the country around that area; it

Copyright 1959 by August Derleth; by permission of
Arkham House

reflected ruefully that such relatives as still lived in or near Dunwich might well resent his return in their curious inward growing and isolated rustication which had kept most of the Whateleys in this immediate region, particularly since the shocking events which had overtaken the country branch of the family on Sentinel Hill.

THE HOUSE appeared to be unchanged. The river-side of the house was given over to the mill, which had long ago ceased to function, as more and more of the fields around Dunwich had grown barren; except for one room above the mill-wheel — Aunt Sarey's room — the entire side of the structure bordering the Miskatonic had been abandoned even in the time of his boyhood, when Abner Whately had last visited his grandfather, then living alone in the house except for the never seen Aunt Sarey who abode in her shuttered room with her door locked, never to move about the house under prohibition of such movement by her father, from whose domination only death at last freed her.

A veranda, fallen in at the corner of the house, circled that part of the structure used as a dwelling; from the lattice-work under the eaves great cobwebs hung, undisturbed by anything save the wind for years. And dust lay over everything, inside as

well as out, as Abner discovered when he had found the right key among the lot the lawyer had sent him. He found a lamp and lit it, for Grandfather Whateley had scorned electricity. In the yellow glow of light, the familiarity of the old kitchen with its nineteenth century appointments smote him like a blow. Its sparseness, the hand-hewn table and chairs, the century-old clock on the mantel, the worn broom — all were tangible reminders of his fear-haunted childhood visits to this formidable house and its even more formidable occupant, his mother's aged father.

The lamplight disclosed something more. On the kitchen table lay an envelope addressed to him in handwriting so crabbed that it could only be that of a very old or infirm man — his grandfather. Without troubling to bring the rest of his things from the car, Abner sat down to the table, blowing the dust off the chair and sufficiently from the table to allow him a resting place for his elbows, and opened the envelope.

The spidery script leapt out at him. The words were as severe as he remembered his grandfather to have been. And abrupt, with no term of endearment, not even the prosaic form of greeting.

Grandson:

When you read this, I will be some months dead. Perhaps more, unless

they find you sooner than I believe they will. I have left you a sum of money — all I have and die possessed of — which is in the bank at Arkham under your name now. I do this not alone because you are my own and only grandson but because among all the Whateleys — we are an accursed clan, my boy — you have gone forth into the world and gathered to yourself learning sufficient to permit you to look upon all things with an inquiring mind ridden neither by the superstition of ignorance nor the superstition of science. You will understand my meaning.

It is my wish that at least the mill section of this house be destroyed. Let it be taken apart, board by board. If anything in it lives, I adjure you solemnly to kill it. No matter how small it may be. No matter what form it may have, for if it seem to you human it will beguile you and endanger your life and God knows how many others.

Heed me in this.

If I seem to have the sound of madness, pray recall that worse than madness has spawned among the Whateleys. I have stood free of it. It has not been so of all that is mine. There is more stubborn madness in those who are unwilling to believe in what they know not of and deny that such exists, than in those of our blood who have been guilty of terrible practices, and blasphemy against God, and worse.

YOUR GRANDFATHER,
LUTHER S. WHATELEY.

HOW LIKE Grandfather! thought Abner. He remembered, spurred into memory by this enigmatic, self-righteous communication, how on one occasion when his mother had mentioned her sister Sarah, and clapped her fingers across her

mouth in dismay, he had run to his grandfather to ask, "Grandpa, where's Aunt Sarey?"

The old man had looked at him out of eyes that were basilisk and answered, "Boy, we do not speak of Sarah here."

Aunt Sarey had offended the old man in some dreadful way — dreadful, at least, to that firm disciplinarian — for from that time beyond even Abner Whateley's memory, his aunt had been only the name of a woman, who was his mother's older sister, and who was locked in the big room over the mill and kept forever invisible within those walls, behind the shutters nailed to her windows. It had been forbidden both Abner and his mother even to linger before the door of that shuttered room, though on one occasion Abner had crept up to the door and put his ear against it to listen to the snuffling and whimpering sounds that went on inside, as from some large person; and Aunt Sarey, he had decided, must be as large as a circus fat lady, for she devoured so much, judging by the great platters of food — chiefly meat, which she must have prepared herself, since so much of it was raw — carried to the room twice daily by old Luther Whately himself, for there were no servants in that house, and had not been since the time Abner's mother had married, after Aunt Sarey had come back, strange

and mazed, from a visit to distant kin in Innsmouth.

He refolded the letter and put it back into the envelope. He would think of its contents another day. His first need now was to make sure of a place to sleep. He went out and got his two remaining bags from the car and brought them to the kitchen. Then he picked up the lamp and went into the interior of the house. The old-fashioned parlor, which was always kept closed against that day when visitors came — and none save Whateleys called upon Whateleys in Dunwich — he ignored. He made his way instead to his grandfather's bedroom; it was fitting that he should occupy the old man's bed now that he, and not Luther Whateley, was master here.

The large, double bed was covered with faded copies of the *Arkham Advertiser*, carefully arranged to protect the fine cloth of the spread, which had been embossed with an armigerous design, doubtless a legitimate Whateley heritage. He set down the lamp and cleared away the newspapers. When he turned down the bed, he saw that it was clean and fresh, ready for occupation; some cousin of his grandfather's had doubtless seen to this, against his arrival, after the obsequies.

Then he got his bags and transferred them to the bedroom, which was in that corner

of the house away from the village; its windows looked along the river, though they were more than the width of the mill from the bank of the stream. He opened the only one of them which had a screen across its lower half, then sat down on the edge of the bed, bemused, pondering the circumstances which had brought him back to Dunwich after all these years.

He was tired now. The heavy traffic around Boston had tired him. The contrast between the Boston region and this desolate Dunwich country depressed and troubled him. Moreover, he was conscious of an intangible uneasiness. If he had not had need of his legacy to continue his research abroad into the ancient civilizations of the South Pacific, he would never have come here. Yet family ties existed, for all that he would deny them. Grim and forbidding as old Luther Whateley had always been, he was his mother's father, and to him his grandson owed the allegiance of common blood.

Round Mountain loomed close outside the bedroom; he felt its presence as he had when a boy, sleeping in the room above. Trees, for long untended, pressed upon the house, and from one of them at this hour of deep dusk, a screech owl's bell-like notes dropped into the still summer air. He lay back for a moment, strangely lulled by the owl's pleasant song. A thousand

thoughts crowded upon him, a myriad memories. He saw himself again as the little boy he was, always half-fearful of enjoying himself in these foreboding surroundings, always happy to come and happier to leave.

But he could not lie here, however relaxing it was. There was so much to be done before he could hope to take his departure that he could ill afford to indulge himself in rest and make a poor beginning of his nebulous obligation. He swung himself off the bed, picked up the lamp again, and began a tour of the house.

HE WENT from the bedroom to the dining room, which was situated between it and the kitchen — a room of stiff, uncomfortable furniture, also hand-made — and from there across to the parlor, the door of which opened upon a world far closer in its furniture and decorations to the eighteenth century than to the nineteenth, and far removed from the twentieth. The absence of dust testified to the tightness of the doors closing the room off from the rest of the house. He went up the open stairs to the floor above, from bedroom to bedroom — all dusty, with faded curtains, and showing every sign of having remained unoccupied for many years even before old Luther Whateley died.

Then he came to the passage

which led to the shuttered room — Aunt Sarey's hideaway — or prison — he could now never learn what it might have been, and, on impulse, he went down and stood before that forbidden door. No snuffling, no whimpering greeted him now — nothing at all, as he stood before it, remembering, still caught in the spell of the prohibition laid upon him by his grandfather.

But there was no longer any reason to remain under that adjuration. He pulled out the ring of keys, and patiently tried one after another in the lock, until he found the right one. He unlocked the door and pushed; it swung protestingly open. He held the lamp high.

He had expected to find a lady's boudoir, but the shuttered room was startling in its condition — bedding scattered about, pillows on the floor, the remains of food dried on a huge platter hidden behind a bureau. An odd, ichthyic smell pervaded the room, rushing at him with such musty strength that he could hardly repress a gasp of disgust. The room was in shambles; moreover, it wore the aspect of having been in such wild disorder for a long, long time.

Abner put the lamp on a bureau drawn away from the wall, crossed to the window above the mill wheel, unlocked it, and raised it. He strove to open the shutters before he remembered that they had been nailed shut.

Then he stood back, raised his foot, and kicked the shutters out to let a welcome blast of fresh, damp air into the room.

He went around to the adjoining outer wall and broke away the shutters from the single window in that wall, as well. It was not until he stood back to survey his work that he noticed he had broken a small corner out of the pane of the window above the mill wheel. His quick regret was as quickly repressed in the memory of his grandfather's insistence that the mill and this room above it be torn down or otherwise destroyed. What mattered a broken pane!

He returned to take up the lamp again. As he did so, he gave the bureau a shove to push it back against the wall once more. At the same moment he heard a small, rustling sound along the baseboard, and, looking down, caught sight of a long-legged frog or toad — he could not make out which — vanishing under the bureau. He was tempted to rout the creature out, but he reflected that its presence could not matter — if it had existed in these locked quarters for so long on such cockroaches and other insects as it had managed to uncover, it merited being left alone.

He went out of the room, locked the door again, and returned to the master bedroom downstairs. He felt, obscurely,

that he had made a beginning, however trivial; he had scouted the ground, so to speak. And he was twice as tired for his brief look around as he had been before. Though the hour was not late, he decided to go to bed and get an early start in the morning. There was the old mill yet to be gone through — perhaps some of the machinery could be sold, if any remained — and the mill wheel was now a curiosity, having continued to exist beyond its time.

He stood for a few minutes on the veranda, marking with surprise the welling stridulation of the crickets and katydids, and the almost overwhelming choir of the whippoorwills and frogs, which rose on all sides to assault him with a deafening insistence of such proportion as to drown out all other sounds, even such as might have risen from Dunwich. He stood there until he could tolerate the voices of the night no longer; then he retreated, locking the door, and made his way to the bedroom.

He undressed and got into bed, but he did not sleep for almost an hour, bedeviled by the chorus of natural sounds outside the house and from within himself by a rising confusion, about what his grandfather had meant by the "dissolution" he himself had not been able to make. But at last he drifted into a troubled sleep.

II

HE WOKE with the dawn, little rested. All night he had dreamed of strange places and beings that filled him with beauty and wonder and dread — of swimming in the ocean's depths and up the Miskatonic among fish and amphibia and strange men, half batrachian in aspect — of monstrous entities that lay sleeping in an eerie stone city at the bottom of the sea — of utterly outre music as of flutes accompanied by weird ululations from throats far, far from human — of Grandfather Luther Whateley standing accusingly before him and thundering forth his wrath at him for having dared to enter Aunt Sarey's shuttered room.

He was troubled, but he shrugged his unease away before the necessity of walking into Dunwich for the provisions he had neglected to bring with him in his haste. The morning was bright and sunny; pewees and thrushes sang, and dew pearled on leaf and blade reflected the sunlight in a thousand jewels along the winding path that led to the main street of the village. As he went along, his spirits rose; he whistled happily, and contemplated the early fulfillment of his obligation, upon which his escape from this desolate, forgotten pocket of ingrown humanity was predicated.

But the main street of Dun-

wich was no more reassuring under the light of the sun than it had been in the dusk of the past evening. The village huddled between the Miskatonic and the almost vertical slope of Round Mountain, a dark and brooding settlement which seemed somehow never to have passed 1900, as if time had ground to a stop before the turn of the last century. His gay whistle faltered and died away; he averted his eyes from the buildings falling into ruin; he avoided the curiously expressionless faces of passersby, and went directly to the old church with its general store, which he knew he would find slovenly and ill-kept, in keeping with the village itself.

A gaunt-faced storekeeper watched his advance down the aisle, searching his features for any familiar lineament.

Abner strode up to him and asked for bacon, coffee, eggs and milk.

The storekeeper peered at him. He made no move. "Ye'll be a Whateley," he said at last. "I dun't expeck ye know me. I'm yer cousin Tobias. Which one uv 'em are ye?"

"I'm Abner — Luther's grandson." He spoke reluctantly.

Tobias Whateley's face froze. "Libby's boy — Libby, that married cousin Jeremiah. Yew folks ain't back — back at Luther's? Yew folks ain't a-goin' to start things again?"

"There's no one but me," said

Abner shortly. "What things are you talking about?"

"If ye dun't know, tain't fer me to say."

Nor would Tobias Whateley speak again. He put together what Abner wanted, took his money sullenly, and watched him out of the store with ill-concealed animosity.

Abner was disagreeably affected. The brightness of the morning had dimmed for him, though the sun shone from the same unclouded heaven. He hastened away from the store and main street, and hurried along the lane toward the house he had but recently quitted.

He was even more disturbed to discover, standing before the house, an ancient rig drawn by an old work-horse. Beside it stood a boy, and inside it sat an old, white-bearded man, who, at sight of Abner's approach, signaled to the boy for assistance, and by the lad's aid, laboriously descended to the ground and stood to await Abner.

As Abner came up, the boy spoke, unsmiling. "Great-grampa'll talk to yew."

"Abner," said the old man quaveringly, and Abner saw for the first time how very old he was.

"This here's Great-grampa Zebulon Whateley," said the boy.

Grandfather Luther Whateley's brother — the only living Whately of his generation.

"Come in, sir," said Abner, offering the old man his arm.

Zebulon Whateley took it.

THE THREE of them made slow progress toward the veranda, where the old man halted at the foot of the steps, turning his dark eyes upon Abner from under their bushy white brows, and shaking his head gently.

"Naow, if ye'll fetch me a cheer, I'll set."

"Bring a chair from the kitchen, boy," said Abner.

The boy sped up the steps and into the house. He was out as fast with a chair for the old man, and helped to lower him to it, and stood beside him while Zebulon Whateley caught his breath.

Presently he turned his eyes full upon Abner and contemplated him, taking in every detail of his clothes, which, unlike his own, were not made by hand.

"Why have ye come, Abner?" he asked, his voice firmer now.

Abner told him, as simply and directly as he could.

Zebulon Whateley shook his head. "Ye know no more'n the rest, and less'n some," he said. "What Luther was abaout, only God knowed. Naow Luther's gone, and ye'll have it to dew. I kin tell ye, Abner, I vaow afur God, I dun't know why Luther took on so and locked hisself up and Sarey that time she come back Innsmouth — but I kin say it was suthin' turrible, turrible —

and the things what happened was turrible. Ain't nobody left to say Luther was to blame, nor poor Sarey — but take care, take care, Abner."

"I expect to follow my grandfather's wishes," said Abner.

The old man nodded. But his eyes were troubled, and it was plain that he had little faith in Abner.

"How'd you find out I was here, Uncle Zebulon?" Abner asked.

"I had the word ye'd come. It was my bounden duty to talk to ye. The Whateleys has a curse on 'em. Thar's been them naow gone to graoun' has had to dew with the devil, and thar's some what whistled turrible things aout o' the air, and thar's some what had to dew with things that wasn't all human nor all fish but lived in the water and swum aout — way aout — to sea, and thar's some what growed in on themselves and got all mazed and queer — and thar's what happened on Sentinel Hill that time — Lavinny's Wilbur — and that other one by the Sentinel Stone — Gawd, I shake when I think on it. . . ."

Now, Grandpa — don't ye git yer dander up," chided the boy.

"I wun't, I wun't," said the old man tremulously. "It's all died away naow. It's forgot — by all but me and them what took the signs daown — the signs that pointed to Dunwich, sayin', it was too turrible a place to know

about. . . ." He shook his head and was silent.

"Uncle Zebulon," said Abner. "I never saw my Aunt Sarah."

"No, no, no — she was locked up that time. Afore you was borned, I think it was."

"Why?"

"Only Luther knowed — and Gawd. Now Luther's gone, and Gawd dun't seem like He knowed Dunwich was still here."

"What was Aunt Sarah doing in Innsmouth?"

"Visitin' kin."

"Are there Whateleys there, too?"

"Not Whateleys. Marshes. Old Obed Marsh that was Pa's cousin. Him and his wife that he faound in the trade — at Ponape, if ye know whar that is."

"I do."

"Ye dew? I never knowed. They say Sarey was visitin' Marsh kin — Obed's son or grandson — I never knowed which. Never heered. Dun't care. She was thar quite a spell. They say when she come back she was different. Flighty. Unsettled. Sassed her pa. And then, not long after, he locked her up in that room till she died."

"How long after?"

"Three, four months. And Luther never said what fer. Nobody saw her again after that till the day she wuz laid aout in her coffin. Two year, might be three year ago. Thar was that time nigh onto a year after she

come back from Innsmouth thar was sech goins-on here at this house — a-fightin' and a-scream-in' and a-screechin' — most everyone in Dunwich heerd it, but no one went to see whut it was, and next day Luther he said it was only Sarey took with a spell. Might be it was. Might be it was suthin' else. . . .

"What else, Uncle Zebulon?"

"Devil's work," said the old man instantly. "But I fergit — ye're the eddicated one. Ain't many Whateleys ever bin eddicated. Thar was Lavinny — she read them turrible books what was no good for her. And Sarey — she read some. Them as has only a little learnin' might's well have none — they ain't fit to handle life with only a little learnin', they're fitter with none a-tall."

Abner smiled.

"Dun't ye laugh, boy!"

"I'm not laughing, Uncle Zebulon. I agree with you."

"Then ef ye come face to face with it, ye'll know what to dew. Ye wun't stop and think — ye'll jest dew."

"With what?"

"I wisht I knowed, Abner. I dun't. Gawd knows. Luther knowed. Luther's dead. It comes on me Sarey knowed, too. Sarey's dead. Now nobody knows whut turrible thing it was. Ef I was a prayin' man, I'd pray you dun't find aout — but ef ye dew, dun't stop to figger it aout by eddication, — jest dew whut ye

have to dew. Yer Grandpa kep' a record — look fer it. Ye might learn whut kind a people the Marshes was — they wasn't like us — suthin' turrible happened to 'em — and might be it reached aout and tetched Sarey. . . ."

Something stood between the old man and Abner Whateley — something unvoiced, perhaps unknown; but it was something that cast a chill about Abner for all his conscious attempt to belittle what he felt.

"I'll learn what I can, Uncle Zebulon," he promised.

The old man nodded and beckoned to the boy. He signified that he wished to rise, to return to the buggy. The boy came running.

"Ef ye need me, Abner, send word to Tobias," said Zebulon Whateley. "I'll come — ef I can."

"Thank you."

Abner and the boy helped the old man back into the buggy. Zebulon Whateley raised his forearm in a gesture of farewell, the boy whipped up the horse, and the buggy drew away.

ABNER STOOD for a moment looking after the departing vehicle. He was both troubled and irritated — troubled at the suggestion of something dreadful which lurked beneath Zebulon Whateley's words of warning, irritated because his grandfather, despite all his adjurations, had left him so little to act upon. Yet this must have

been because his grandfather evidently believed there might be nothing untoward to greet his grandson when at last Abner Whateley arrived at the old house. It could be nothing other by way of explanation.

Yet Abner was not entirely convinced. Was the matter one of such horror that Abner should not know of it unless he had to? Or had Luther Whateley laid down a key to the riddle elsewhere in the house? He doubted it. It would not be grandfather's way to seek the devious when he had always been so blunt and direct.

He went into the house with his groceries, put them away, and sat down to map out a plan of action. The very first thing to be accomplished was a survey of the mill part of the structure, to determine whether any machinery could be salvaged. Next he must find someone who would undertake to tear down the mill and the room above it. Thereafter he must dispose of the house and adjoining property, though he had a sinking feeling of futility at the conviction that he would never find anyone who would want to settle in so forlorn a corner of Massachusetts as Dunwich.

He began at once to carry out his obligations.

His search of the mill, however, disclosed that the machinery which had been in it — save for such pieces as were fixed to the

running of the wheel — had been removed, and presumably sold. Perhaps the increment from the sale was part of that very legacy Luther Whateley had deposited in the bank at Arkham for his grandson. Abner was thus spared the necessity of removing the machinery before beginning the planned demolition. The dust in the old mill almost suffocated him; it lay an inch thick over everything, and it rose in great gusts to cloud about him when he walked through the empty, cobwebbed rooms. Dust muffled his footsteps and he was glad to leave the mill to go around and look at the wheel.

He worked his way around the woden ledge to the frame of the wheel, somewhat uncertain, lest the wood give way and plunge him into the water beneath; but the construction was firm, the wood did not give, and he was soon at the wheel. It appeared to be a splendid example of middle nineteenth century work. It would be a shame to tear it apart, thought Abner. Perhaps the wheel could be removed, and a place could be found for it either in some museum or in some one of those buildings which were forever being reconstructed by wealthy persons interested in the preservation of the American heritage.

He was about to turn away from the wheel, when his eye was caught by a series of small

wet prints on the paddles. He bent closer to examine them, but, apart from ascertaining that they were already in part dried, he could not see in them more than marks left by some small animal, probably batrachian — a frog or toad — which had apparently mounted the wheel in the early hours before the rising sun. His eyes, raising, followed the line of the wheel to the broken out shutters of the room above.

He stood for a moment, thinking. He recalled the batrachian creature he had glimpsed along the baseboard of the shuttered room. Perhaps it had escaped through the broken pane? Or, more likely, perhaps another of its kind had discovered its presence and gone up to it. A faint apprehension stirred in him, but he brushed it away in irritation that a man of his intelligence should have been sufficiently stirred by the aura of ignorant, superstitious mystery clinging to his grandfather's memory to respond to it.

Nevertheless, he went around and mounted the stairs to the shuttered room. He half expected, when he unlocked the door, to find some significant change in the aspect of the room as he remembered it from last night, but, apart from the unaccustomed daylight streaming into the room, there was no alteration.

He crossed to the window.

There were prints on the sill. There were two sets of them. One appeared to be leading out, the other entering. They were not the same size. The prints leading outward were tiny, only half an inch across. Those leading in were double that size. Abner bent close and stared at them in fixed fascination.

He was not a zoologist, but he was by no means ignorant of zoology. The prints on the sill were like nothing he had ever seen before, not even in dream. Save for being or seeming to be webbed, they were the perfect prints in miniature of human hands and feet.

Though he made a cursory search for the creature, he saw no sign of it, and finally, somewhat shaken, he retreated from the room and locked the door behind him, already regretting the impulse which had led him to it in the first place and which had caused him to burst open the shutters which for so long had walled the room away from the outer world.

III

HE WAS NOT entirely surprised to learn that no one in Dunwich could be found to undertake the demolition of the mill. Even such carpenters as those who had not worked for a long time were reluctant to undertake the the task, pleading a variety of excuses, which

Abner easily recognized as a disguise for the superstitious fear of the place under which one and all labored. He found it necessary to drive into Aylesbury, but, though he encountered no difficulty in engaging a trio of husky young men who had formed partnership to tear down the mill, he was forced to wait upon their previous commitments and had to return to Dunwich with the promise that they would come "in a week or ten days."

Thereupon he set about at once to examine into all the effects of Luther Whateley which still remained in the house. There were stacks of newspapers — chiefly the *Arkham Advertiser* and the *Aylesbury Transcript* — now yellowing with age and mouldering with dust, which he set aside for burning. There were books which he determined to go over individually in order that he might not destroy anything of value. And there were letters which he would have burned at once had he not happened to glance into one of them and caught sight of the name "Marsh", at which he read on.

Luther, what happened to cousin Obed is a singular thing. I do not know how to tell it to you. I do not know how to make it credible. I am not sure I have all the facts in this matter. I cannot believe but that it is a rigmarole deliberately invented to conceal something of a scandalous

nature, for you know the Marshes have always been given to exaggeration and had a pronounced flair for deception. Their ways are devious. They have always been.

But the story, as I have it from cousin Alizah, is that when he was a young man Obed and some others from Innsmouth, sailing their trading ships into the Polynesian Islands, encountered there a strange people who called themselves the "Deep Ones" and who had the ability to live either in the water or on the earth. Amphibians, they would then be. Does this sound credible to you? It does not to me. What is most astonishing is that Obed and some others married women of these people and brought them home to live with them.

Now that is the *legend*. Here are the *facts*. Ever since that time, the Marshes have prospered mightily in the trade. Mrs. Marsh is never seen abroad, save on such occasions as she goes to certain closed affairs of the Order of Dagon Hall. "Dagon" is said to be a sea god. I know nothing of these pagan religions, and wish to know nothing. The Marsh children have a *very strange* look. I do not exaggerate, Luther, when I tell you that they have such wide mouths and such chinless faces and such large staring eyes that I swear they sometimes look more like frogs than human beings! They are not, at least, so far as I can see, *gilled*. The "Deep Ones" are said to be possessed of gills, and to belong to Dagon or to some other deity of the sea whose name I cannot even pronounce, far less set down. No matter. It is such a rigmarole as the Marshes might well invent to serve their purposes, but by God, Luther, judging by the way the ships Captain Marsh has in the East India trade keep afloat without a smitchin of damage done to them by storm or wear — the brigantine *Columbia*, the barque *Sumatra Queen*, the brig *Hetty* and some others — it might almost seem as if

he has made some sort of bargain with Neptune himself!

Then there are all the doings off the coast where the Marshes live. Night swimming. They swim way out off Devil Reef, which, as you know, is a mile and a half out from the harbor here at Innsmouth. People keep away from the Marshes — except the Martins and some such others among them who were also in the East India trade. Now that Obed is gone — and I suppose Mrs. Marsh may be also, since she is no longer seen anywhere — the children and the grandchildren of old Captain Obed follow in his strange ways.

The letter dwindled down to commonplaces about prices — ridiculously low figures seen from this vantage of over half a century later, for Luther Whateley must have been a young man, unmarried, at the time this letter had been written to him by Aariah, a cousin of whom Abner had never heard. What it had to say of the Marshes was nothing — or all, perhaps, if Abner had had the key to the puzzle of which, he began to believe with mounting irritation, he held only certain disassociated parts.

But if Luther Whateley had believed this rigmarole, would he, years later, have permitted his daughter to visit the Marsh cousins? Abner doubted it.

He went through other letters — bills, receipts, trivial accounts of journeys made to Boston. Newburyport, Kingsport — postcards, and came at last to another letter from Cousin Aariah. written, if a comparison of dates was sufficient evidence, immedi-

ately after the one Abner had just read. They were ten days apart, and Luther would have had time to reply to that first.

ABNER OPENED it eagerly.

The first page was an account of certain small family matters pertinent to the marriage of another cousin, evidently a sister of Aariah's; the second a speculation about the future of the East India trade, with a paragraph about a new book by Whitman — evidently Walt; but the third was manifestly in answer to something Grandfather Whateley had evidently written concerning the Marsh branch of the family.

Well, Luther, you may be right in this matter of race prejudice as responsible for the feeling against the Marshes. I know how people here feel about other races. It is unfortunate, perhaps, but such is their lack of education that they find much room for such prejudices. But I am not convinced that it is *all* due to race prejudice. I don't know what kind of race it is that would give the Marshes after Obed that strange look. The East India people — such as I have seen and recall from my early days in the trade — have features much like our own, and only a different color to the skin — copper, I would call it. Once I did see a native who had a similar appearance, but he was evidently not typical, for he was shunned by all the workers around the ships in the harbor where I saw him. I've forgotten now where it was, but I think Poape.

To give them their due, the Marshes keep pretty much to themselves — or to those families living here

under the same cloud. And they more or less run the town. It may be significant — it may have been accident — that one selectman who spoke out against them was found drowned soon after. I am the first to admit that coincidences more startling than this frequently occur, but you may be sure that people who disliked the Marshes made the most of this.

But I know how your analytical mind is cold to such talk; I will spare you more of it.

Thereafter not a word. Abner went through bundles of letters in vain. What Aariah wrote in subsequent letters dealt scrupulously with family matters of the utmost triviality. Luther Whateley had evidently made his displeasure with mere gossip clear; even as a young man, Luther must have been strictly self-disciplined. Abner found but one further reference to any mystery at Innsmouth — that was a newspaper clipping dealing in very vague terms, suggesting that the reporter who sent in the story did not really know what had taken place, with certain Federal activity in and near Innsmouth in 1928 — the attempted destruction of Devil Reef, and the blowing up of large sections of the waterfront, together with wholesale arrests of Marshes and Martins and some others. But this event was decades removed from Aariah's early letters.

Abner put the letters dealing with the Marshes into his pocket, and summarily burned the

rest, taking the mass of material he had gone through out along the riverbank and setting fire to it. He stood guarding it, lest a chance wind carry a spark to surrounding grass, which was unseasonably dry. He welcomed the smell of the smoke, however, for a certain dead odor lingered along the riverbank, rising from the remains of fish upon which some animal had feasted — an otter, he thought.

As he stood beside the fire, his eyes roved over the old Whateley building, and he saw, with a rueful reflection that it was high time the mill were coming down, that several panes of the window he had broken in the room had fallen out. Fragments of the window were scattered on the paddles of the mill wheel.

By the time the fire was sufficiently low to permit his leaving it, the day was drawing to a close. He ate a meager supper, and, having had his fill of reading for the day decided against attempting to turn up his grandfather's "record" of which Uncle Zebulon Whateley had spoken, and went out to watch the dusk and the night in from the veranda, hearing again the rising chorus of the frogs and whippoorwills.

He retired early, unwontedly weary.

Sleep, however, would not come. For one thing, the summer night was warm; hardly a breath

of air stirred. For another, even above the ululation of the frogs and the demoniac insistence of the whippoorwills, sounds from within the house invaded his consciousness — the creaks and groans of a many-timbered house settling in for the night; a peculiar scuffling or shuffling sound, half-drag, half-hop, which Abner laid to rats, which must abound in the mill section of the structure — and indeed, the noises were muffled, and seemed to reach him from some distance; and, at one time, the cracking of wood and the tinkle of glass, which, Abner guessed, very probably came from the window above the mill wheel. The house was virtually falling to pieces about him; it was as if he served as a catalytic agent to bring about the final dissolution of the old structure.

This concept amused him because it struck him that, willy-nilly, he was carrying out his grandfather's adjuration. And so bemused, he fell asleep.

HE WAS awakened early in the morning by the ringing of the telephone, which he had the foresight to have connected for the duration of his visit in Dunwich. He had already taken down the receiver from the ancient instrument attached to the wall before he realized that the call was on a party line and not intended for him. Nevertheless, the woman's voice that leapt out

at him, burst open his ear with such screaming insistence that he remained frozen to the telephone.

"I tell ye, Mis' Corey, I heard things las' night — the graoun' was a-talkin' agen, and along about midnight I heerd that scream — I never figgered a caow'd scream that way — jest like a rabbit, only deeper. That was Lutey Sawyer's caow — they faoun' her this morning — more'n haff et by animals. . . ."

"Mis' Bishop, you dun't s'pose . . . it's come back?"

"I dun't know. I hope t'Gawd it ain't. But it's the same as the las' time."

"Was it jest that one caow took?"

"Jest the one. I ain't heerd abaut no more. But that's how it begun the las' time, Mis' Corey."

Quietly, Abner replaced the receiver. He smiled grimly at this evidence of the rampant superstitions of the Dunwich natives. He had never really known the depths of ignorance and superstition in which dwellers in such out-of-the-way places as Dunwich lived, and this manifestation of it was, he was convinced, but a mild sample.

He had little time, however, to dwell upon the subject, for he had to go into town for fresh milk, and he strode forth into the morning of sun and clouds with a certain feeling of relief at

such brief escape from the house.

Toibas Whateley was uncommonly sullen and silent at Abner's entrance. Abner sensed not only resentment, but a certain tangible fear. He was astonished. To all Abner's comments Tobias replied in muttered monosyllables. Thinking to make conversation, he began to tell Tobias what he had overheard on the party line.

"I know it," said Tobias, curtly, for the first time gazing at Abner's face with naked terror.

Abner was stunned into silence. Terror vied with animosity in Tobias' eyes. His feelings were plain to Abner before he dropped his gaze and took the money Abner offered in payment.

"Yew seen Zebulon?" he asked in a low voice.

"He was at the house," said Abner.

"Yew talk to him?"

"We talked."

It seemed as if Tobias expected that certain matters had passed between them, but there was that in his attitude that suggested he was puzzled by subsequent events, which seemed to indicate that Zebulon had not told him what Tobias had expected the old man to tell him, or else that Abner had disregarded some of his Uncle's advice. Abner began to feel completely mystified: added to the superstitious talk of the native on the

telephone, to the strange hints Uncle Zebulon had dropped, this attitude of his cousin Tobias filled him with utter perplexity. Tobias, no more than Zebulon, seemed inclined to come out frankly and put into words what lay behind his sullen features — each acted as if Abner, as a matter of course, should know.

In his bafflement, he left the store, and walked back to the Whateley house determined to hasten his tasks as much as he could so that he might get away from this forgotten hamlet with its queer, superstition-ridden people, for all that many of them were his relatives.

To that end, he returned to the task of sorting his grandfather's things as soon as he had had his breakfast, of which he ate very little, for his disagreeable visit to the store had dulled the appetite which he had felt when he had set out for the store earlier.

It was not until late afternoon that he found the record he sought — an old ledger, in which Luther Whateley had made certain entries in his crabbed hand.

IV

BY THE light of the lamp, Abner sat down to the kitchen table after he had had a small repast, and opened Luther Whateley's ledger. The opening pages had been torn out, but, from an examination of the

fragments of sheets still attached to the threads of the sewing, Abner concluded that these pages were purely of accounts, as if his grandfather had taken up an old, not completely used account book for a purpose other than keeping accounts, and had removed such sheets as had been more prosaically utilized.

From the beginning, the entries were cryptic. They were undated, except for the day of the week.

This Saturday Aariah answered my inquiry. S. was seen sev times with Ralsa Marsh. Obed's great-grandson. *Swam* together by night.

Such was the first entry, clearly pertaining to Aunt Sarey's visit to Innsmouth, about which Grandfather had plainly inquired of Aariah. Something had impelled Luther to make such inquiry. From what he knew of his grandfather's character, Abner concluded that the inquiry had been made after Sarey had returned to Dunwich.

Why?

The next entry was pasted in, and was clearly part of a type-written letter received by Luther Whateley.

Ralsa Marsh is probably the most repellent of all the family. He is almost *degenerate* in his looks. I know you have said that it was Libby of your daughters who was the fairest; even so, we cannot imagine how Sarah came to take up with someone who is so repulsive as Ralsa, in whom

all those recessive characteristics which have been seen in the Marsh family after Obed's strange marriage to that Polynesian woman — (the Marshes have denied that Obed's wife was Polynesian, but of course, he was trading there at that time, and I don't credit those stories about that uncharted island where he was supposed to have dallied) — seem to have come to fullest fruit.

As far as I can ascertain — after all, it is over two months — close to four, I think — since her return to Dunwich — they were constantly together. I am surprised that Aariah did not inform you of this. None of us here had any mandate to halt Sarah's seeing Ralsa, and, after all, they are cousins and she was visiting at Marshes — not here.

Abner judged that this letter had been written by a woman, also a cousin, who bore Luther some resentment for Sarah's not having been sent to stay with her branch of the family. Luther had evidently made enquiry of her regarding Ralsa.

The third entry was once again in Luther's hand, summarizing a letter from Aariah.

Saturday. Aariah maintains Deep Ones a sect or quasi-religious group. Sub-human. Said to live in the sea and worship Dagon. Another God named Cthulhu. Gilled people. Resembling frogs or toads more than fish, but eyes ichthyic. Claims Obed's late wife was one. Holds that Obed's children all bore the marks. Marshes gilled? How else could they swim a mile and a half to Devil Reef, and back? Marshes eat sparingly, can go without food and drink a long time, diminish or expand in size rapidly.

(To this Luther had append-

ed four scornful exclamation marks.)

Zadok Allen swears he saw Sarah swimming out to Devil Reef. Marshes carrying her along. All *naked*. Swears he saw Marshes with tough, warty skin. Some with *scales*, like fish! Swears he saw them chase and eat fish! Tear them apart like animals.

The next entry was again a portion of a letter, patently a reply to one from Grandfather Whateley.

You ask who is responsible for those *ridiculous* tales about the Marshes. Well, Luther, it would be impossible to single out any one or a dozen people over several generations. I agree that old Zadok Allen talks too much, drinks, and may be romancing. But he is only one. The fact is this legendry — or *rigmarole*, as you call it — has grown up from one generation to the next. Through three generations. You have only to look at some of the descendants of Captain Obed to understand why this could have come about. There are some Marsh offspring said to have been too horrible to look upon. Old wives' tales? Well, Dr. Rowley Marsh was too ill to attend one of the Marsh women one time; so they had to call Dr. Gilman, and Gilman always said that what he delivered was less than human. And nobody ever saw that particular Marsh, though there were people later who claimed to have seen *things moving on two legs that weren't human*.

Following this there was but a brief but revealing entry in two words: "Punished Sarah."

THIS MUST then mark the date of Sarah Whateley's con-

finement to the room above the mill. For some time after this entry, there was no mention of his daughter in Luther's script. Instead, his jottings were not dated in any way, and, judging by the difference in the color of the ink, were made at different times, though run together.

Many frogs. Seem to bear in on the mill. Seem to be more than in the marshes across the Miskatonic. Sleeping difficult. Are whippoorwills on the increase, too, is this imagination? . . . Counted thirty-seven frogs at the porch steps tonight."

There were more entries of this nature. Abner read them all, but there was no clue in them to what the old man had been getting at. Luther Whateley had thereafter kept book on frogs, fog, fish and their movements in the Miskatonic — when they rose and leaped from the water, and so on. This seemed to be unrelated data, and was not in any way connected to the problem of Sarah.

There was another hiatus after this series of notes, and then came a single, underscored entry. "*Ariah was right!*"

But what had Ariah been right? Abner wondered. And how had Luther Whateley learned that Ariah had been right? There was no evidence that Ariah and Luther had continued their correspondence, or even that Ariah desired to write to the crochety Luther without a

letter of direct inquiry from Luther.

There followed a section of the record to which newspaper clippings had been pasted. These were clearly unrelated, but they did establish for Abner the fact that somewhat better than a year had passed before Luther's next entry, one of the most puzzling Abner found. Indeed, the time hiatus seemed to be closer to two years. "R. out again."

If Luther and Sarah were the only people in the house, who was "R."? Could it have been Ralsa Marsh come to visit? Abner doubted it, for there was nothing to show that Ralsa Marsh harbored any affection for his distant cousin, or certainly he would have pursued her before this.

The next notation seemed to be unrelated.

Two turtles, one dog, remains of woodchuck. Bishop's — two cows, found on the Miskatonic end of the pasture.

A little further along, Luther had set down further such data.

After one month a total of 17 cattle, 6 sheep. Hideous alterations; size commensurate with amt. of food. Z. over. Anxious about talk going around.

Could Z. stand for Zebulon?

Abner thought it did. Evidently then Zebulon had come in vain, for he had left him, Abner, with only vague and uncertain hints about the situation at the house when Aunt Sarey was confined to the shuttered room. Zebulon, on the evidence of such conversation as he had shared with Abner, knew less than Abner himself did after reading his grandfather's record. But he did know of Luther's record; so Luther must have told him he had set down certain facts.

These notations, however, were more in the nature of notes for something to be completed later; they were unaccountably cryptic, unless one had the key of basic knowledge which belonged to Luther Whateley. But a growing sense of urgency was clearly manifest in the old man's further entries.

Ada Wilkerson gone. Trace of scuffle. Strong feeling in Dunwich. John Sawyer shook his fist at me — safely across the street, where I couldn't reach him.

Monday. Howard Willie this time. They found one shoe, with the foot still in it!

The record was now near its end. Many pages, unfortunately, had been detached from it — some with violence — but no clue remained as to why this violence had been done to Grandfather Whateley's account. It could not have been

done by anyone but Luther himself; perhaps, thought Abner, Luther felt he had told too much, and intended to destroy anything which might put a later reader on the track of the true facts regarding Aunt Sarey's confinement for the rest of her life. He had certainly succeeded.

The next entry once again referred to the elusive "R."

"R. back at last."

Then, "Nailed the shutters to the windows of Sarah's room."

And at last: "Once he has lost weight, he must be kept on a careful diet and to a controllable size."

In a way, this was the most enigmatic entry of them all. Was "he" also "R."? If so, why must he be kept on a careful diet, and what did Luther Whateley mean by controlling his size? There was no ready answer to these questions in such material as Abner had read thus far, either in this record — or the fragmentary account still left in the record — or in letters previously perused.

HE PUSHED away the record-book, resisting an impulse to burn it. He was exasperated, all the more so because he was uneasily aware of an urgent need to learn the secret embalmed within this old building.

The hour was now late; darkness had fallen some time ago, and the ever-present clamor of

the frogs and the whippoorwills had begun once more, rising all around the house. Pushing from his thoughts briefly the apparently unconnected jottings he had been reading, he called from his memory the superstitions of the family, representing those prevalent in the countryside — associating frogs and the calling of whippoorwills and owls with death, and from this meditation progressed readily to the amphibian link which presented itself — the presence of the frogs brought before his mind's eye a grotesque caricature of one of the Marsh clan of Innsmouth, as described in the letters Luther Whateley had saved for so many years.

Oddly, this very thought, for all that it was so casual, startled him. The insistence of frogs and toads on singing and calling in the vicinity was truly remarkable. Yet, batrachia had always been plentiful in the Dunwich vicinity, and he had no way of knowing for how long a period before his arrival they had been calling about the old Whateley house. He discounted the suggestion that his arrival had anything at all to do with it; more than likely, the proximity of the Miskatonic and a low, swampy area immediately across the river on the edge of Dunwich, accounted for the presence of so many frogs.

His exasperation faded away; his concern about the frogs did

likewise. He was weary. He got up and put the record left by Luther Whateley carefully into one of his bags, intending to carry it away with him, and to puzzle over it until some sort of meaning came out of it. Somewhere there must exist a clue. If certain horrible events had taken place in the vicinity, something more in the way of a record must exist than Luther Whateley's spare notes. It would do no good to inquire of Dunwich people; Abner knew they would maintain a closemouthed silence before an "outsider" like himself, for all that he was related to many of them.

It was then that he thought of the stacks of newspapers, still set aside to be burned. Despite his weariness, he began to go through packs of the *Aylesbury Transcript*, which carried, from time to time, a Dunwich department.

After an hour's hasty search, he found three vague articles, none of them in the regular Dunwich columns, which corroborated entries in Luther Whateley's ledger. The first appeared under the heading: *Wild Animal Slays Stock Near Dunwich* —

Several cows and sheep have been slain on farms just outside Dunwich by what appears to be a wild animal of some kind. Traces left at the scenes of the slaughter suggest some large beast, but Professor Bethnall of Miskatonic University's anthropology department points out that it is not in-

conceivable that packs of wolves could lurk in the wild hill country around Dunwich. No beast of the size suggested by the traces reported was ever known to inhabit the eastern seaboard within the memory of man. County officials are investigating.

Search as he might, Abner could find no follow-up story. He did, however, come upon the story of Ada Wilkerson.

A widow-lady, Ada Wilkerson, 57, living along the Miskatonic out of Dunwich, may have been the victim of foul play three nights ago. When she failed to visit a friend by appointment in Dunwich, her home was visited. No trace of her was found. However, the door of her house had been broken in, and the furniture had been wildly thrown about, as if a violent struggle had taken place. A very strong musk is said to have pervaded the entire area. Up to press time today, Mrs. Wilkerson has not been heard from.

TWO SUBSEQUENT paragraphs reported briefly that authorities had not found any clue to Mrs. Wilkerson's disappearance. The account of a "large animal" was resurrected, lamely, and Professor Bethnall's beliefs on the possible existence of a wolf-pack, but nothing further, for investigation had disclosed that the missing lady had neither money nor enemies, and no one would have had any motive for killing her.

Finally, there was the account of Howard Willie's death, headed, *Shocking Crime at Dunwich*.

Some time during the night of the

twenty-first Howard Willie, 37, a native of Dunwich, was brutally slain as he was on his way home from a fishing trip along the upper reaches of the Miskatonic. Mr. Willie was attacked about half a mile past the Luther Whately property, as he walked through an arbored lane. He evidently put up a fierce fight, for the ground is badly torn up in all directions. The poor fellow was overcome, and must have been literally torn limb from limb, for the only physical remains of the victim consisted of his right foot, still encased in its shoe. It had evidently been cruelly torn from his leg by great force.

Our correspondent in Dunwich advises us that people there are very sullen and in a great rage of anger and fear. They suspect many of their number of being at least partly to blame, though they stoutly deny that anyone in Dunwich murdered either Willie or Mrs. Wilkerson, who disappeared a fortnight ago, and of whom no word has since been heard.

The account concluded with some data about Willie's family connections. Thereafter, subsequent editions of the *Transcript* were distinguished only for the lack of information about the events which had taken place in Dunwich, where authorities and reporters alike apparently ran up against blank walls in the stolid refusal of the natives to talk or even speculate about what had happened. There was, however, an insistent note which recurred in the comments of the investigators, relayed to the press, and that was that such trail or track as could be seen appeared to have disappeared into the

waters of the Miskatonic, suggesting that if an animal were responsible for the orgy of slaughter which had occurred at Dunwich, it may have come from and returned to the river.

Though it was now close to midnight, Abner massed the discarded newspapers together and took them out to the riverbank, where he set them on fire, having saved only torn pages relative to the occurrences at Dunwich. The air being still, he did not feel obligated to watch the fire, since he had already burned a considerable area, and the grass was not likely to catch on fire. As he started away, he heard suddenly above the ululation of the whippoorwills and frogs, now at a frenzied crescendo, the tearing and breaking sound of wood. He thought at once of the window of the shuttered room, and retraced his steps.

In the very dim light flickering toward the house from the burning newspapers, it seemed to Abner that the window gaped wider than before. Could it be that the entire mill part of house was about to collapse? Then, out of the corner of his eye, he caught sight of a singularly formless moving shadow just beyond the mill wheel, and a moment later heard a churning sound in the water. The voices of the frogs had now risen to such a volume that he could hear nothing more.

He was inclined to dismiss the shadow as the creation of the wild flames leaping upward from the fire. The sound in the water might well have been that of the movement made by a school of fish, darting forward in concert. Nevertheless, he thought, it would do no harm to have another look at Aunt Sarey's room.

He returned to the kitchen, took the lamp, and mounted the stairs. He unlocked the door of the shuttered room, threw open the door, and was almost felled by the powerful musk which pushed hallward. The smell of the Miskatonic, of the marshes, the odor of that slimey deposit left on the stones and sunken debris when the Miskatonic receded to its low water stage, the cloying pungence of some animal lairs — all these were combined in the shuttered room.

Abner stood for a moment, wavering on the threshold. True, the odor in the room could have come in through the open window. He raised the lamp so that more of its light fell upon the wall above the mill wheel. Even from where he stood, it was possible to see that not only was all the window itself now gone, but so was the frame. Even at this distance it was manifest that the frame had been broken out *from inside!*

He fell back, slammed the door shut, locked it, and fled

down stairs with the shell of his rationalizations tumbling about him.

V

DOWNSTAIRS, HE fought for self control. What he had seen was but one more detail added to the proliferating accumulation of seemingly unrelated data upon which he had stumbled ever since his coming to his grandfather's home. He was convinced now that however unlikely it had at first seemed to him, all these data must be related. What he needed to learn was the one basic fact or element which bound them together.

He was badly shaken, particularly because he had the uneasy conviction that he did indeed have all the facts he needed to know, that it was his scientific training which made it impossible for him to make the primary assumption, to state the premise which the facts before him would inevitably prove. The evidence of his senses told him that something laired in that room — some bestial creature; it was folly to assume that odors from outside could so permeate Aunt Sarey's room and not be noticeable outside the kitchen and at the windows of his own bedroom.

The habit of rational thinking was strong in him. He took out Luther Whateley's final letter to

him once more and read it again. That was what his grandfather had meant when he had meant when he had written "you have gone forth into the world and gathered to yourself learning sufficient to permit you to look upon all things with an inquiring mind ridden neither by the superstition of ignorance nor the superstition of science." Was this puzzle, with all its horrible connotations, beyond rationalization?

The wild ringing of the telephone broke in upon his confused thoughts. Slipping the letter back into his pocket, he strode rapidly to the wall and took the receiver off the hook.

A man's voice screamed over the wire, amid a chaos of inquiring voices as everyone on the line picked up his receiver as if they waited, like Abner Whately himself, for word of another tragedy. One of the voices — all three disembodied and unidentifiable for Abner — identified the caller.

"It's Luke Lang!"

"Git a posse up an' come quick," Luke shouted hoarsely over the wire. "It's jest aoutside my door. Snuffling araoun'. Tryin' the door. Feelin' at the winders."

"Luke, what is it?" asked a woman's voice.

"Oh, Gawd! It's some un-earthly thing. It's a hoppin' raoun' like it was too big to move right — like jelly. Oh, hur-

ry, hurry, afore it's too late. It got my dog . . ."

"Git off the wire so's we can call fer help," interrupted another subscriber.

But Luke never heard in his his extremity. "It's a-pushin' at the door — it's a-bowin' the door in . . ."

"Luke! Luke! Git off'n the wire!"

"It's a-tryin' the winder naow." Luke Lang's voice rose in a scream of terror. "There goes the glass. Gawd! Gawd! Hain't yew comin'? Oh, that hand! That turr'ble arm! Gawd! That face . . .!"

Luke's voice died away in a frightful screech. There was the sound of breaking glass and rending wood — then all was still at Luke Lang's, and for a moment all was still along the wire. Then the voices burst forth again in a fury of excitement and fear.

"Git help!"

"We'll meet at Bishops' place."

And someone put in, "It's Abner Whately done it!"

SICK WITH shock and half-paralyzed with a growing awareness, Abner struggled to tear the receiver from his ear, to shut off the half-crazed bedlam on the party line. He managed it with an effort. Confused, upset, frightened himself, he stood for a moment with his head leaning against the wall. His thoughts seethed around but

one central point — the fact that the Dunwich rustics considered him somehow responsible for what was happening. And their conviction, he knew intuitively, was based on more than the countryman's conventional distrust of the stranger.

He did not want to think of what had happened to Luke Lang — and to those others. Luke's frightened, agonized voice still rang in his ears. He pulled himself away from the wall, almost stumbling over one of the kitchen chairs. He stood for a moment beside the table, not knowing what to do, but as his mind cleared a little, he thought only of escape. Yet he was caught between the desire to get away, and the obligation to Luther Whateley he had not yet fulfilled.

But he had come, he had gone through the old man's things — all save the books — he had made arrangements to tear down the mill part of the house — he could manage its sale through some agency; there was no need for him to be present. Impulsively, he hastened to the bedroom, threw such things as he had unpacked, together with Luther Whateley's note-filled ledger, into his bags, and carried them out to his car.

Having done this, however, he had second thoughts. Why should he take flight? He had done nothing. No guilt of any kind rested upon him. He re-

turned to the house. All was still, save for the unending chorus of frogs and whippoorwills. He stood briefly undecided; then he sat down at the table and took out Grandfather Whateley's final letter to read it once more.

He read it over carefully, thoughtfully. What had the old man meant when, in referring to the madness that had spawned among the Whateleys, he had said "It has not been so of all that is mine" though he himself had kept free of that madness? Grandmother Whateley had died long before Abner's birth; his Aunt Julia had died as a young girl; his mother had led a blameless life. There remained Aunt Sarey. What had been her madness then? Luther Whateley could have meant none other. Only Sarey remained. What had she done to bring about her imprisonment unto death?

And what had he intended to hint at when he adjured Abner to kill anything in the mill section of the house, anything that lived? *No matter how small it may be. No matter what form it may have.* . . . Even something so small as an inoffensive toad? A spider? A fly? Luther Whateley wrote in riddles, which in itself was an affront to an intelligent man. Or did his grandfather think Abner a victim to the superstition of sci-

ence? Ants, spiders, flies, various kinds of bugs, millers, centipedes, daddy long-legs — all occupied the old mill; and doubtless in its wall were mice as well. Did Luther Whateley expect his grandson to go about exterminating all these?

Behind him suddenly something struck the window. Glass fragmented to the floor, together with something heavy. Abner sprang to his feet and whirled around. From outside came the sound of running footsteps.

A rock lay on the floor amid the shattered glass. There was a piece of "store paper" tied to it by common store string. Abner picked it up, broke the string, and unfolded the paper.

Crude lettering stared up at him. "Git out before ye git kilt!" Store paper and string. It was not meant so much as a threat as a well-intentioned warning. And it was clearly the work of Tobias Whateley, thought Abner. He tossed it contemptuously to the table.

His thoughts were still in turmoil, but he had decided that precipitate flight was not necessary. He would stay, not only to learn if his suspicions about Luke Lang were true — as if the evidence of the telephone left room for doubt — but also to make a final attempt to fathom the riddle Luther Whateley had left behind.

He put out the light and went in darkness to the bedroom where he stretched out, fully clothed, upon the bed.

Sleep, however, would not come. He lay probing the maze of his thoughts, trying to make sense out of the mass of data he had accumulated, seeking always that basic fact which was the key to all the others. He felt sure it existed; worse, he was positive that it lay before his eyes — he had but failed to interpret it or recognize it.

He had been lying there scarcely half an hour, when he heard, rising above the pulsating choir of the frogs and whippoorwills, a splashing from the direction of the Miskatonic — an approaching sound, as if a large wave were washing up the banks on its seaward way. He sat up, listening. But even as he did so, the sound stopped and another took its place — one he was loath to identify, and yet could define as no other than that of someone trying to climb the mill-wheel.

He slid off the bed and went out of the room.

From the direction of the shuttered room came a muffled, heavy falling sound — then a curious, choking whimpering that sounded, horribly, like a child at a great distance trying to call out — then all was still, and it seemed that even the noise and clamor of the frogs diminished and fell away.

He returned to the kitchen and lit the lamp.

POOLED IN the yellow glow of light, Abner made his way slowly up the stairs toward the shuttered room. He walked softly, careful to make no sound.

Arriving at the door, he listened. At first he heard nothing — then a susurrations smote his ears.

Something in that room — *breathed!*

Fighting back his fear, Abner put the key in the lock and turned it. He flung open the door and held the lamp high.

Shock and horror paralyzed him.

There, squatting in the midst of the tumbled bedding from that long-abandoned bed, sat a monstrous, leathery-skinned creature that was neither frog nor man, one gorged with food, with blood still slavering from its batrachian jaws and upon its webbed fingers — a monstrous entity that had strong, powerfully long arms, grown from its bestial body like those of a frog, and tapering off into a man's hands, save for the webbing between the fingers . . .

The tableau held for only a moment.

Then, with a frenzied growling sound — "*Eh-ya-ya ya-yaa-haah — ngh'aaa — h'yuh, h'yuh* —" it rose up, towering, and launched itself at Abner.

His reaction was instantane-

ous, born of terrible, shattering knowledge. He flung the kerosene-filled lamp with all his might straight at the thing reaching toward him.

Fire enveloped the thing. It halted and began to tear frantically at its burning body, unmindful of the flames rising from the bedding behind it and the floor of the room, and at the same instant the caliber of its voice changed from a deep growling to a shrill, high wailing — "*Mama-mama — ma-aa-ma-aa-ma-aah!*"

Abner pulled the door shut and fled.

Down the stairs, half falling, through the rooms below, with his heart pounding madly, and out of the house. He tumbled into the car, almost bereft of his senses, half-blinded by the perspiration of his fear, turned the key in the ignition, and roared away from that accursed place from which the smoke already poured, while spreading flames in that tinder-dry building began to cast a red glow into the sky.

He drove like one possessed — through Dunwich — through the covered bridge — his eyes half-closed, as if to shut out forever the sight of that which he had seen, while the dark, brooding hills seemed to reach for him and the chanting whippoorwills and frogs mocked him.

But nothing could erase that final cataclysmic knowledge

seared into his mind — the key to which he had had all along and not known it — the knowledge implicit in his own memories as well as in the notes Luther Whateley had left — the chunks of raw meat he had childishly supposed were going to be prepared in Aunt Sarey's room instead of to be *eaten raw*, the reference to "R." who had come "back at last" after having escaped, back to the only home "R." knew — the seemingly unrelated references also in his grandfather's hand to missing cows, sheep, and the remains of other animals — the hideous suggestion clearly defined now in those entries of Luthre Whateley's about R.'s "size commensurate with amt. of food," and "he must be kept on a careful diet and to a controllable size" — like the Innsmouth people! — controlled to nothingness after Sarah's death, with Luther hoping that foodless confinement might shrivel the thing in the shuttered room and kill it beyond revival, despite the doubt

that had led him to adjure Abner to kill "anything in that lives," — *the thing Abner had unwittingly liberated when he broke the pane and kicked out the shutters, liberated to seek its own food and its hellish growth again, at first with fish from the Miskatonic, then with small animals, then cattle, and at last human beings — the thing that was half batrachian, half-human, but human enough to come back to the only home it had ever known and to cry out in terror for its Mother in the face of the fatal holocaust — the thing that had been born to the unblessed union of Sarah Whateley and Ralsa Marsh, spawn of tainted and degenerate blood, the monster that would loom forever on the perimeter of Abner Whateley's awareness — his cousin Ralsa, doomed by his grandfather's iron will, instead of being released long ago into the sea to join the Deep Ones among the mintons of Dagon and great Cthulhu!*

INTRODUCTION *(Continued From Page 4)*

IN AN orderly Universe, life is meaningful because nothing is superfluous; all has its part to play. If the underlying forces are impersonal laws, etc., then although life on the whole is meaningful, no individual is necessarily so. If God, Who created and sustains The Universe, is conscious and aware of His own existence and cares about His creations, then every individual life is meaningful — in the sense that it was created to be so. Since we all have free will and can choose between order and disorder, we can choose to live meaningfully or meaninglessly (which, of course, is not necessarily a guarantee of what will happen to us, although it will certainly play a crucial part in what happens **within** us); and thus a choice to be attuned with God will be beneficial in the long run. If the underlying forces are impersonal laws, then a choice of order may be of some value to our own personal adjustment — but then there is no real answer to the age-old question of why the “good” so often seem to get it in the neck and the “godless” seem to be having a whale of a fine time.

In a disorderly Universe, a philosophical resignation, the inculcation of attitudes and values more or less along the lines of the Stoics, may make an individual life reasonably meaningful and enjoyable to that person — and may be of value to others, too — but it really doesn't matter in the long run. In the Universe of an arbitrary God, it may pay in the long run to knuckle under — but there's no telling when the Deity will change His mind yet again. And even if He doesn't, if you're not one of the Elect . . . But better capitalize His name because He's bigger than all of us and may decide to send fire, flood, etc., at any moment. Who knows, if you're real subservient He may relent and make things nice for you. No point in being too curious about the underlying laws of the Universe, though, because any of them may be subject to change without notice.

IN AN orderly Universe — we won't keep you in suspense as to what side we are on; it's this one — where each of our lives are meaningful and precious to God, then there's no such thing as “forbidden” knowledge and it just isn't possible at all to break the laws. However, try to live as if you're the Almighty, and everything is or ought to be under your control, and sooner or later you get frustrated at the very least, with no hope at the end. Even if you take the side of impersonal

forces behind it all, your best choice is to try to find out what reality is and adjust to it — and adjustment of this nature will make it possible to bear the natural shocks and pains, etc., that we're all susceptible to no matter how we look at the Universe.

In a disorderly or arbitrary Universe, you try to pick the winning side — at least temporarily, and who knows, it might be temporary enough for you — and from then on it's a matter of luck, fate, or whatever you want to call it.

The Thing From — Outside, in this issue, postulates an orderly Universe. But we do not know everything about its laws or what goes on in it. Coming up against the Unknown can be just as frightening as coming up against some "supernatural" manifestation. We would call the George Allan England story science fiction, even though he offers no explanation of the full nature of the Thing.

A Way With Kids is a tale of the possible near-future, and a plausible-sounding discovery in biochemistry with some pretty gruesome results. It's amusing on the surface, horrifying when you think about it. In a corrupt world, as ours is, there are very good odds that any new scientific discovery will be used in a harmful manner. (But the world isn't totally corrupt or depraved, so there's always hope.)

NOW WE'D LIKE to add one more qualification to science fiction. Bearing in mind that we do not know all there is to know in the field of any science — or in all of them — and that very probably there are scientific fields of which we know nothing at all as yet, a ground rule has to be that to be science fiction, a story cannot contradict or repudiate what seems to be known scientific principles, laws, etc. unless a plausible explanation is offered. The author must account for his seeming violations. We do not have to agree; but it ought to seem reasonable. **The Phantom Farmhouse** must fall into the fantasy orbit simply because there is no reasonable-sounding explanation of how a human being can be transformed into a wolf, and then back again. It's a fine story and so long as no one misrepresents it, we can enjoy it.

What we have in mind, for our science fiction selections, then, is the strange, wonderful, and perhaps frightening. There are many fine science fiction horror stories. And, as the inclusion of Ed M. Clinton's tale indicates, we are open to new material here, too.

RAWL

It Is Written . . .

IF YOU do not particularly care about a magazine, then you will not bother to write to the editor and complain about what displeases you, or ask for things you want and feel that the magazine ought to give you. If you can read it on a take-it-or-leave-it basis, then dissatisfaction will be expressed by tossing the magazine aside and not bothering to pick up the next issue — and perhaps you'll never bother again. But addiction to a magazine is something like a love affair, and the "fan" demands perfection, showing all the jealousies and grievances and striving-to-reform as go on in man-woman relationships. Back in the Thirties, your editor wrote many letters to the editor of *AMAZING STORIES*, a publication for which we had a lasting fondness up to the time it left Dr. T. O'Connor Sloane's hands; but we just could not understand when Dr. Sloane would reply to a letter or criticism in words like these:

" . . . We receive so many letters about the contents of *AMAZING STORIES* that we do not know what to do to please everybody, and this is a task for a Napoleon. The proverb says, 'Please yourself and you will please one person.' The trouble with an Editor is that he has to please a multitude of people, yet has to please himself in a sense. This is because unless he does good work he will be displeased within himself, yet he runs the chance of not pleasing his readers. So you see the Editor is really between two fires in wanting to do what impresses one as right and also in wishing to publish what his readers will like. . . ."

At the time, we did not see it at all; but reading over those old "Discussions" departments today, after having had over twenty years' experience with readers' requests, pleas, and demands, we can see how right Dr. Sloane was — not, of course, in each and every decision he made, but in his over-all approach. His replies abound in patience, good humor, and integrity; even when he stated his position and policy firmly, "this is it", he managed to do so with genuine sympathy and toleration toward the most exasperating demands. We are like him in that we want to make this magazine the best of its kind, and in the realization that so long as perfection has not been reached (and it won't be in this world), then progress and improvement are not only possible but necessary. It was the personality of this fine old editor which kept the writer of these lines faithful to his magazine at a time when its rivals were publishing what we thought were far better stories. And we feel that while the quality of the fiction ought never to be put into second place, a magazine's personality makes for the most enduring appeal.

We had all this in mind when a reader asked us if we were going to publish *all* the stories by the old masters that anyone asked for (assuming their availability to us) regardless of quality. The answer must obviously be "no". Every tale by the old masters is not a masterpiece; the quality varies, and some of the tales are bad stories. We will not reprint a tale we consider to be a *bad* story, no matter who wrote it; but, remembering that we are not here merely to please ourselves, we will accede to such a request for a story for which we have little enthusiasm, which we feel is not among the author's best, so long as we are not convinced that it is really bad. Thus, we present Poe's *The Oblong Box*. But we shall not give you the other Poe story that was requested at the same time, *Never Bet The Devil Your Head*. Poe was never noted for humor, although some of the occasional touches that seem to come naturally in such tales as *Thou Art The Man*, are not too bad. However, when Poe set out to be

funny, the results were pathetic; and *Never Bet The Devil Your Head* is brimming with that painful sort of heavy, over-pedantic and trite jesting that you often find when an essentially grim person like Poe turns to humor. No doubt he thought it was all very funny, but some of it really brings more shudders than some of his attempts to frighten us.

"WEIRD TALES is gone," writes Charles R. Kearns from Yorkshire, England, "so, alas, is AVON FANTASY READER. MAGAZINE OF HORROR is here, and it's happening now, and it's the best of the bunch. Keep the *strange tales* coming, but no "contes cruels" or pure grue please — "maggots and worms" I cannot stand."

This reached us a little while before the September issue, containing *The House of the Worm*, was printed. But would it not be better not to read such stories, if you cannot stand them, rather than insist that no one be permitted to read them?

A Californian reader notes, "... this was my first reading of *Mark of the Beast*, and until I read *The Dreams in the Witch-House*, I was convinced I'd vote it first place. On sheer literary merit, perhaps I should, but Lovecraft's marvelous imagination overcame me. (Isn't it extraordinary the way Lovecraft was both drawn to knowledge and repulsed by it, afraid of it and in love with it? One wonders what it was he knew subconsciously or feared subconsciously and was afraid to admit to his conscious mind — and with his natural instinct for truth, was unable to let alone. A sexual matter, evidently, and the information that his father died of paresis is interesting.) However, my weakness for sheer imagination may have blinded me to "Beast's" virtues; I'm prone to that sort of thing. There is no question that it is a very fine story."

While a definite majority of those who wrote in rated the two top stories for May just as you did — HPL first, Kipling second — both stories received extreme reactions. One or two put Kipling somewhere in the middle, but nearly all the rest either put him second-best or second worst to Lovecraft. A single exception was a reader who disliked HPL but put Kipling in the second favored spot. And some voted *No Lovecraft, No Kipling!* You will see issues of this magazine without either, for sure, but the preponderance of opinion requires us to offer an occasional story from both authors, though probably not again in the same issue.

Terrence L. Conlin writes from Michigan, "Please reprint more stories that originally appeared in WEIRD TALES, for I am certain that they would attract a new generation of readers just as they charmed the older horror-fiction devotees. I missed many issues of that noteworthy publication, as did many others, so however old those tales would be, they would be new to me and perhaps to many others."

Writing to request more stories from Mary Wilkins-Freeman's collection, *The Wind in the Rosebush*, particularly the title story, C. G. Phelan adds, "One more thing — and this again reaches back about 45 years — I don't know the author, nor do I recall the magazine, but it preceded the WEIRD TALES era. It was about a little worm which increased to monstrous proportions as it ate its way through all things wooden. Do you have any knowledge of this story which, again, is one of our family traditions so that anything terrifying throughout the years, would be compared to *The Green Worm*."

The title and story are unfamiliar to us. Does it strike a bell with any of you readers?

Mrs. Muriel E. Eddy of 688 Prairie Avenue, Providence, RI, 02905, writes, "Having known Howard Phillips Lovecraft very well, from 1923 to the year of his death, 1937, I would like to share my memories of "HPL" with any of your readers who would care to write to me.

Coming Next Issue

The man lay prone in the graveyard path, face down where they dropped him. But he was not Kent! We saw it, even before we got there. This was an older man, a large, heavy-set fellow, with a head of iron-gray hair like a mop. Dr. French turned him over; his dead, pallid face stared up at me.

"Good Lord!"

"What is it, Doctor?"

I stood gripping Anne, and we both gazed down at the doctor, who was bending over the corpse.

"Why, I know this fellow," said Dr. French. "He died in the Maple Grove Hospital."

The small hospital of Maple Grove was well known to Dr. French, who spent most of his mornings there. This was an Italian importer, named Torelli, who lived in Maple Grove, and had his business in New York. He spoke almost no English; he had only been in this country a few months. Dr. French had been called in consultation over his case. He was suffering from a complication of afflictions: hardened arteries, high blood pressure, and a heart whose muscle was degenerating into fatty tissue. He had contracted a severe bronchial cold, and, in spite of medical efforts, his laboring, suddenly dilated heart had killed him. He had died three days ago and had been buried here in this cemetery, a few hours before Kent. His body, now, quite evidently, had been dug up by these grave-robbers, who were making off with it when Dr. French frightened them away.

The doctor told us this with swift, brief words. The look on his face as he gazed up at us in the moonlight carried mingled wonderment and horror.

"Died, Rollins! He died — he died last Tuesday, but he — he's not dead now!"

A low groan came from the figure lying in the path. I shoved Anne away and knelt down beside the doctor.

... His labored breath seemed to be choking him, but he was trying to speak and, as we bent lower, we heard his words.

"What — a — damn — fool!"

... It came again, in clear English, with no trace of Italian accent. "What a fool I was!"

Dr. French seized him. "Torelli! What happened to you? Tell us what happened!"

... He coughed weakly and went on, "What a fool! This damned body. It's no good! I say it's no good!"

You will not want to miss this macabre novelet by a master of imaginative fiction. It will appear complete in our next issue.

THE DEAD WHO WALK

by Ray Cummings

"HPL was a constant nocturnal caller at our home during those years. We discussed manuscripts constantly with him. We knew his aunts, too, and we often visit his grave, here in Providence, R. I."

"So you don't know who is Richard Marsh?" writes James L. Fleming, 1915-N.W. 24th Street, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73106, "Richard Marsh was an English writer of horror and detective stories. He was born in 1867 and died in August of 1915. At the time of his death, the NEW YORK TIMES carried an obituary about him which gave a lot of information on his life. If you can find a copy of that edition it should interest you. Marsh became famous when he published a horror novel called *The Beetle*. This was a sort of werewolf type novel in which the evil man of the story (who later turns out to really be a woman) is able to assume the form of an insect. It seems to be in the tradition of Stoker's *Dracula*. The story is written in four sections of books. Book One, "The House With the Open Window" is one of the best and most chilling horror pieces I have ever read. The three remaining sections don't quite maintain this high level, but I would be willing to bet that if you should reprint Book One, your readers will clamor for the other three. (HPL, by the way, mentions this book in *Supernatural Horror in Literature*.) . . .

" . . . I would like to request that you print my name and address if you will. I am interested in having pen pals from everywhere. Girls preferred, of course, but boys may write, too. Also any race. I would especially like to hear from Negroes and Puerto Ricans concerning racial problems. I am 33, and will graduate from O.C.U. in May, 1964."

Our thanks to Mr. Fleming for details about Marsh, and the photocopy of his listing from the *Nineteenth Century Readers' Guide*. His favorite Marsh story is *The Strange Occurrences in Canterstone Jail*, and he also made a photocopy of two pages from it. This is particularly interesting, since we have a Marsh story in preparation which also takes place in Canterstone Jail, and has some of the characters which appear in the excerpt. Perhaps Marsh wrote a series of tales in that setting.

Writing on our May issue, Daniel E. Lewis of Encino, California says, "*Beyond the Breakers*² was to me the best story in the book; the last sentence made me shiver. I hope you will have more of her (Anna Hunger), or more stories like that.

"The worst story in the magazine was *What Was It?* It may have been considered good in the last century but too much is known now about the effects of narcotics and that they were able to sit and talk while smoking opium is not possible.

"What I mean to say is, it showed its age. I know the story was primarily about the creature that attacked them, but the rather pompous confession soured the whole story for me, as it was obvious the author didn't know anything about the drug and therefore, it was contrived.

"This may seem very long-winded but that is my main objection to Gothic horror stories. It takes them forever to come to the point. (Like me.)"

Readers, what were your favorite stories in this issue? Which ones didn't you care for? Were there any that seemed superior, any positively atrocious? We've extended the space for writing in our preference coupon — now a full page — in case you haven't the time to write a letter.

Your votes and comments show the following to have been the best-liked stories in the September issue: (1) *The House of the Worm*, by Merle Prout; (2) *Cassius*, by Henry S. Whitehead; (3) *The Ghostly Rental*, by Henry James; (4) *Five Year Contract*, by J. Vernon Shea; (5) *Bones*, by Donald A. Wollheim tied with *The Morning the Birds Forgot to Sing*, by Walt Liebscher. Most controversial story this time was the Henry James. RAWL

YOU LIVE AFTER DEATH

A Heartening Message

By Harold Sherman

ARE YOU AFRAID TO DIE?

Harold Sherman says: "May I take you with me on the path of human thinking, the jungle of false concepts to final emergence into the clear, strong, revealing light of *Inner Knowledge*..."

In his book he tells you why he is convinced;

That Man possesses higher or spiritual powers of mind which can be developed by conscious effort.

That Man possesses a Soul, an ego, an identity which survives Death.

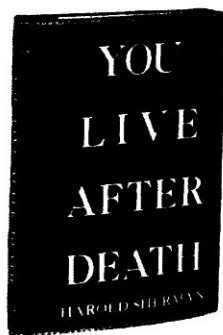
That the next existence is as real and as rational as this one.

These are but a small sampling of the concepts he has formed of Man's true self. Mr. Sherman makes his ideas clear and logical; his book should be read by all who have ever held any doubts about man's future in the great Unknown.

YOU LIVE AFTER DEATH 205 pp 3.00

CHAPTER HEADINGS

- Is There a Personal God?
- Do You Possess a Soul?
- Evidences of a Spirit Body
- A Verified Case of Projection of the Psyche
- The Nature of Your Soul
- The Value of Life Experience
- Are You Worthy of Survival?
- Your Link With The Infinite
- The After-life
- A Way of Communication
- How to Prepare for a Future Life
- How to Face Death



HEALTH KNOWLEDGE, Dept. H7

119 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10003

Please send me the book, "You Live After Death," by Harold Sherman.
I enclose \$3.00.

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY ZONE STATE

MAGAZINE OF HORROR

A subscription to MAGAZINE OF HORROR will assure you of getting your copy as each issue comes off the press. No need to wait for newsdealer to reorder if he sells out before you get your copy. Price \$2.50 per year (6 issues) in the U. S., Canada and the Pan American Union. Foreign \$3.00. Fill out the coupon below and rush it in NOW.

HEALTH KNOWLEDGE

119 Fifth Avenue

New York, N. Y. 10003

Please put me down for a year's subscription to MAGAZINE OF HORROR starting with the issue following the January, 1965, issue. I enclose (amount). (Please Print)

Name

Address

City Zone State

FOLLOW YOUR STARS TO SUCCESS

by June Marsden

Each of us has a definite Mission to fill in life. Miss Marsden, Australia's popular astrologer, shows how Astrology is used to tell us just what our Mission is, what our capabilities and inclinations are. Added to a wealth of exciting and factual information on astrology and the famous people who live by it, the author gives us simple instructions — without any mystery or complications — on casting the horoscope and interpreting it to gain understanding of yourself and others, to choose a vocation, to know your health and accident 'character', etc. She also includes practical chapters on color psychology and numerology. \$3.50

HEALTH KNOWLEDGE, Dept. H7

119 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10003

Please send me FOLLOW YOUR STARS TO SUCCESS. I enclose \$3.50.

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY ZONE STATE

If You Missed Our Previous Issues

There are still a few copies left. Here is a partial list of contents, showing best-liked stories in the first four issues.

Aug. 1963: *The Man With a Thousand Legs*, by Frank Belknap Long; *The Yellow Sign*, by Robert W. Chambers; *The Unbeliever*, by Robert Silverberg; *The Last Dawn*, by Frank Lillie Pollock; *Babylon: 70 M.*, by Donald A. Wollheim.

Nov. 1963: *Clarissa*, by Robert A. W. Lowndes; *The Space-Eaters* by Frank Belknap Long; *The Charmer*, by Archie Binns; *The Faceless Thing*, Edward D. Hoch; *The Strange Ride of Morrowbie Jukes*, by Rudyard Kipling.

Feb. 1964: *The Seeds of Death*, by David Keller; *The Repairer of Reputations*, by Robert W. Chambers; *The Place of the Pythons*, by Arthur J. Burks; *The Seeking Thing*, by Janet Hirsch; *They That Wait*, by H. S. W. Chibbett.

May 1964: *The Dreams in the Witch-House*, by H. P. Lovecraft; *The Mark of the Beast*, by Rudyard Kipling; *What Was It?*, by Fitz-James O'Brien; *Beyond the Breakers*, by Anna Hunger; *A Dream of Falling*, by Attila Hatvany.

Sept. 1964: *The House of the Worm*, by Merle Prout; *Cassius*, by Henry S. Whitehead; *The Ghostly Rental*, by Henry James; *Five Year Contract*, by J. Vernon Shea; *Bones* by Donald A. Wollheim.

Nov. 1964: *Caverns of Horror*, by Lawrence Manning; *The Door To Saturn*, by Clark Ashton Smith; *The Life-After-Death of Mr. Thaddeus Warde*, by Robert Barbour Johnson; *The Pacer*, by August Derleth; *Prodigy*, by Walt Liebscher.

The coupon beneath is for your convenience, but you need not use it if you don't want to cut up this magazine.

Please print name and address.

MAGAZINE OF HORROR, 119 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10003
Enclosed please find-----for a copy of your August— November, 1963—
February— May— September— November, 1964 issue. (Please check issues you want. 50c per copy.)

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY ZONE STATE

LOOK INTO THE FUTURE!

The Complete Prophecies of Nostradamus



For three hundred years the Prophecies of Nostradamus in a **complete** English edition has been one of the World's rarest and most wanted books.

Whenever available, this amazing and inspirational work has fetched hundreds of dollars.

This present edition includes all of the original Old French Text, an exact literal English Translation and an interpretation and explanation of each and every one of the more than 1,000 Predictions extending into the year 3797 A.D.

Mr. Henry C. Roberts, the editor, has spent a lifetime of research in the occult and metaphysical basis of Clairvoyance, Prophecy, and Extra-sensory Perception and has used this work as daily working guide to look into the future.

The **Complete Prophecies of Nostradamus** is priced at only \$6.00.

HEALTH KNOWLEDGE, Det. H7

119 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10003

Please send me the complete Prophecies of Nostradamus extending to year 3797 A.D. I enclose \$6.00.

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY ZONE STATE

Reader's Preference Page

(there's more space on the flip side)

I'd like to see these stories or authors:

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Mail this coupon to **MAGAZINE OF HORROR**, c/o Health Knowledge, Inc., 119 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10003
(or better still, write us a letter!)

Reader's Preference Page

(there's more space on the flip side)

Please rate the stories in the order of your preference, as many as possible. If you thought a story was bad (rather than just last place), put an "X" beside it. If you thought a story was truly outstanding, above just first place, mark a "O" beside it. (Then the next-best would be "I".)

THE THING FROM – OUTSIDE

BLACK THING AT MIDNIGHT

THE SHADOWS ON THE WALL

THE PHANTOM FARMHOUSE

THE OBLONG BOX

A WAY WITH KIDS

THE DEVIL OF THE MARSH

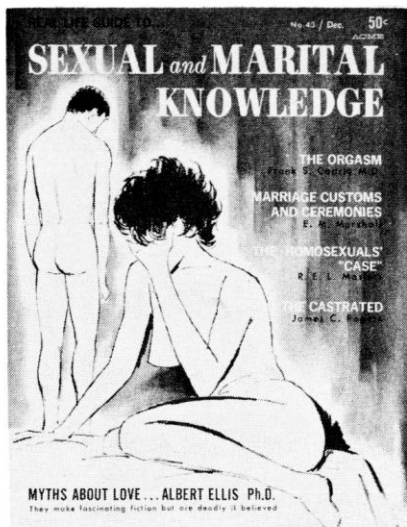
THE SHUTTERED ROOM

Comment:

THE PURSUIT OF SEXUAL HAPPINESS IS YOUR RIGHT —

*But You Need
Knowledge To
Attain It!*

This is not a collection of dry statistical facts, but a magazine of searching, vital information presented in a personal manner to help you understand your nature and your needs.



REAL LIFE GUIDE GIVES YOU MORE

*frank, honest articles on sex problems, marriage, and
sex instruction given in detail by America's foremost sexologists.*

Rush your subscription in now. \$2.50 for 1 year (6 issues). Fill out the coupon below and insure the regular delivery of this gold mine of vital sex information.

HEALTH KNOWLEDGE, INC.,
Dept. 7, 119 Fifth Ave., New York, N. Y. 10003

Please enter my subscription for **Real Life Guide**, starting with the December 1964 issue. Enclosed find \$2.50 (Foreign \$3.00).

Name

Address

City State & Zip No.

Please PRINT your name and address.

THRILLS! CHILLS! SUSPENSE!!

There's Many a Thrill for you in this great Magazine of Suspense —

CHASE — America's Most Exciting Crime Fiction Magazine.

These three issues made a hit with their colorful, suspense-ridden stories that held readers to the last line. The chase takes many forms, but each one will thrill you, page after page, so that you cannot lay the magazine down.

Don't wait a minute to take advantage of this special offer — three issues of this great magazine for only \$1.00. These copies can no longer be obtained on news-stands. Send in the coupon below (or a facsimile) and \$1.00, and all three are on their way to you. Please PRINT name and address.



CHASE — c/o Health Knowledge, Dept. 7
119 FIFTH AVE., NEW YORK, N. Y. 10003

Enclosed please find \$1.00 for three issues of **CHASE** — America's most most exciting crime fiction magazine.

Name

Address

City, State and Zip No.