

YOU may recall the letter from H. P. Lovecraft, published here last month. A bit caustic, that letter; and today we have pleasure in offering another, which, if less stinging, is none-the-less enjoyable. Our friend Lovecraft always has something to say when he writes. Thus:

"Dear Mr. Baird: I should apologise if my former letter seemed to tax WEIRD TALES with seeking conventional material. Such was not my intention in any way. I only meant that I presumed you would not wish too subtle or cryptical material for presentation to the general public. There is a difference between mere originality and delicate symbolism, or hideously nebulous adumbration. How many American readers outside the frankly 'high-brow' class, for example, would find any pleasure or coherent impression in Arthur Machen's 'The White People,' or in the fantastic passages of the same author's 'Hill of Dreams'? In a word, I take it that WEIRD TALES wants definite stories, with a maximum of plot, tension of situation, explosive climax, and statement rather than too elusive suggestion—this rather than the Baudelairean prose-poem of spiritual Satanism, where chiseled phrase, lyrical tone, color, and an opiate luxuriance of exotic imagery form the chief sources of the macabre impression. . . .

"I lately read the May WEIRD TALES, and congratulate you on Mr. Humphrey's 'The Floor Above.' [for a moment I had a shiver which the author didn't intend—I thought he was going to use an idea which I am planning to use myself! But it wasn't so, after all], which is a close second to my favorite, 'Beyond the Door.' Evidently my taste runs to the architectural! 'Penelope' is clever—but Holy Pete! If the illustrious Starrett's ignorance of astronomy is an artfully conceived attribute of his character's whimsical narrative, I'll say he's right there with the verisimilitude! I wrote monthly astronomical articles for the daily press between 1906 and 1918, and have a vast affection for the celestial spheres.

"Some day I may send you a possible filler, beginning:

"Through the ghoul-guarded gateways of slumber,
Past the wan-moon'd abysses of night,
I have lived o'er my lives without number,
I have sounded all things with my sight—
And I struggle and shriek ere the daybreak, being
driven to madness and fright."

Mr. Lovecraft, you will observe, is quite as deft with poetry as he is with prose; and, as further evidence of this,

we submit the prologue to a 300-line heroic poem of his that we may print some day:

"I am he who howls in the night;
I am he who moans in the snow;
I am he who hath never seen light;
I am he who mounts from below.
My ear is the ear of death;
My wings are the wings of dread;
My breath is the north wind's breath;
My prey are the cold and dead."

As you know, we are publishing a series of Mr. Lovecraft's prose pieces, beginning with "Dagon;" and of this story he wrote us, in part:

"I shall venture 'Dagon' as a sort of test of my stuff in general. If you don't care for this, you won't care for anything of mine. . . . It is not that 'Dagon' is the best of my tales, but that it is perhaps the most direct and least subtle in its 'punch'; so that for popular publication it is most likely to please most. In copying it I have touched up one or two crude spots—it having been written in 1917, directly after a lull of nine years in my fiction-writing. Naturally I was a bit rusty in the management of the prose. A friend of mine—Clark Ashton Smith, the California poet of horror, madness and morbid beauty—showed this yarn to George Sterling, who declared he liked it very much, though suggesting (absurdly enough, as I view it!) that I have the monolith topple over and kill the 'thing' . . . a piece of advice which makes me feel that poets should stick to their sonnetsteering. . . .

"My love of the weird makes me eager to do anything I can to put good material in the path of a magazine which so gratifyingly cultivates that favorite element. I shall await with interest the next issues, with the tales you mention, and am meanwhile trying to get the opening number through a newsdealer. I am sure the venture will elicit some notable contributions as its fame spreads—and the extent of that fame may be judged from the fact that people in Massachusetts, New York, Ohio and California have been equally prompt in calling my attention to it and urging me to try my luck!"

In a way, "Dagon" is a radically different sort of story, even for WEIRD TALES, and those that will follow it are even more so. For this reason, we shall be particularly interested in hearing what our readers think of the Lovecraft tales. THE EDITOR.



Table of Contents

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THE AMAZING ADVENTURE OF JOE SCRANTON.....	3
EFFIE W. FIFIELD	
THE PHANTOM FARM HOUSE.....	15
SEABURY QUINN	
DAGON	23
H. P. LOVECRAFT	
THE MAN WHO OWNED THE WORLD.....	25
FRANK OWEN	
GREY SLEEP	27
CHARLES HORN	
THE PEOPLE OF THE COMET.....	32
AUSTIN HALL	
THE SIGN FROM HEAVEN.....	38
A. HAVDAL	
THE INN OF DREAD.....	39
ARTHUR EDWARDS CHAPMAN	
THE HAIRY MONSTER.....	42
NEIL MILLER	
DEVIL MANOR	47
E. B. JORDAN	
THE CASE OF THE GOLDEN LILY.....	60
FRANCIS D. GRIERSON	
WEIRD CRIMES	63
SEABURY QUINN	
AN ADVENTURE IN THE FOURTH DIMENSION.....	69
FARNSWORTH WRIGHT	
THE PIT AND THE PENDULUM.....	71
EDGAR ALLAN POE	
AFTER THE STORM.....	74
SARAH HARBINE WEAVER	
THE CAULDRON	78
PRESTON LANGLEY HICKEY	
THE EYRE	80
THE EDITOR	

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