

MIRAGE

No. 5

Summer, 1962

VOLUME ONE

"The Amateur Magazine of Fantasy"

JACK L. CHALKER, editor

NUMBER FIVE

I do not know if it ever existed--
That lost world floating dimly on Time's stream--
And yet I see it often, violet-misted,
And shimmering at the back of some vague dream.
There were strange towers and curious lapping rivers,
Labyrinths of wonder, and low vaults of light,
And bough-crossed skies of flame, like that which quivers
Wistfully, just before a winter's night.

Great moors led off to sedgy shores unpeopled,
Where vast birds wheeled, while on a windswept hill
There was a village, ancient and white-steeped,
With evening chimes for which I listen still.
I do not know what land it is--or dare
Ask when or why I was, or will be, there.

.....H.P. Lovecraft*

contents...

cover by Dave Prosser

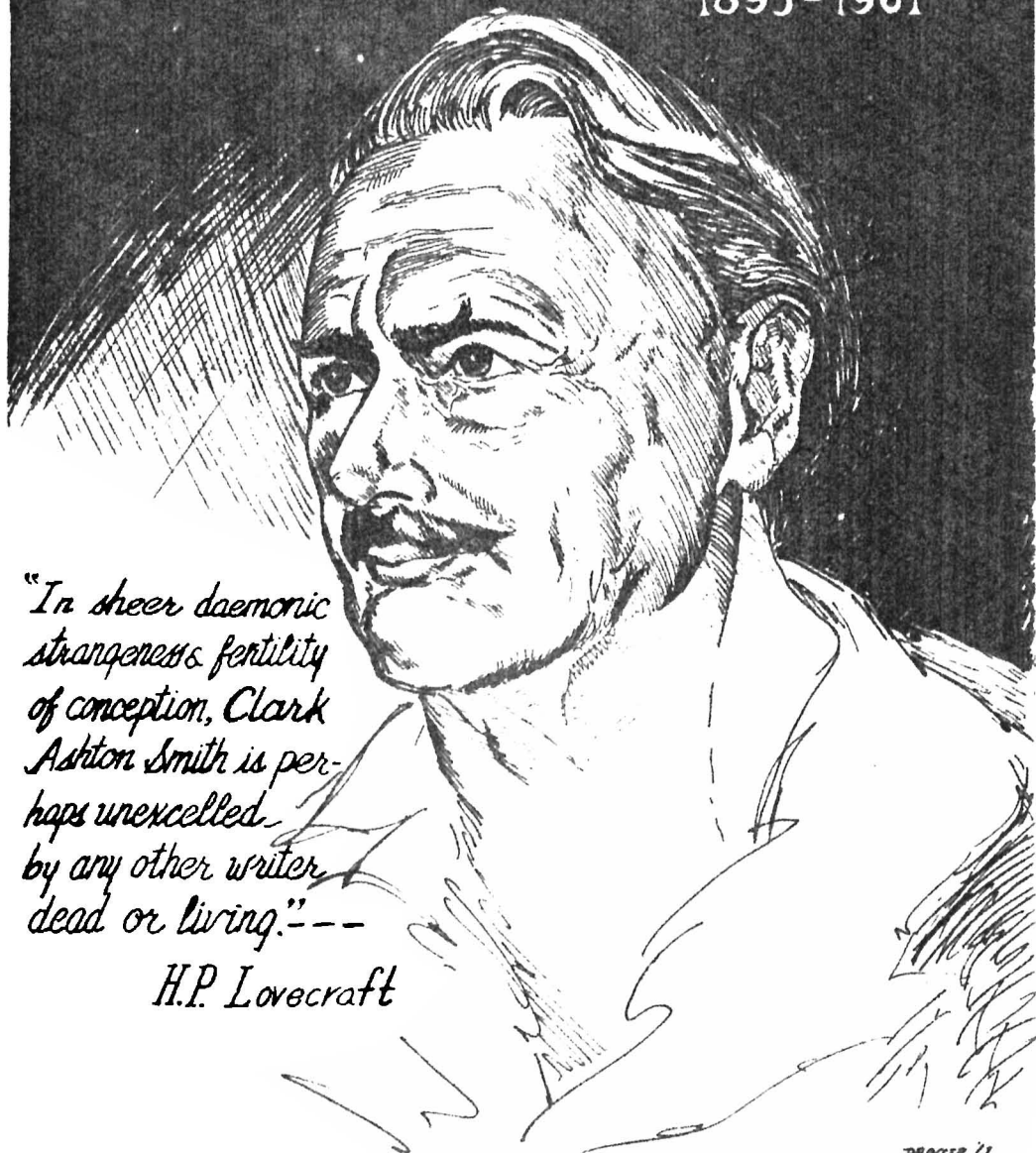
- OVER THE EDGE (editorials) = page 4
- MOTHER OF DARKNESS (fiction) by John Pesta - P. 8
- NOTES ON STURGEON (article) by David H. Keller, M.D. - P. 14
- THE QUEST OF IRANON (fiction) by H.P. Lovecraft - P. 18
- CLARK ASHTON SMITH: a portrait in art - P. 21
a portrait in words, by George Haas - 22
- THE GNOME PRESS CHECKLIST, compiled by Martin Greenberg - 38
- HOWARD PHILLIPS LOVECRAFT: POETIC TRIBUTES, compiled by
John E. Vetter - 42
- HINDSIGHT; (lettercolumn)
- THE BOOKSHELF - page 50
- VERSE:
- The Disillusionment - C. Jon DeCles--15
 - Malignant Love - John E. Vetter--20
 - The Old Water-Wheel - Clark Ashton Smith--37
 - The Usufruct Mortuary - Thomas B. Haughey--41
 - Missile War - Thomas B. Haughey--41
 - The Witch of Sherwood Forest - John E. Vetter--45

Interiors by Prosser, Southwailo, and Jooovs

MARY-61

CLARK ASHTON SMITH

1893 - 1961



*"In sheer daemonic
strangeness, fertility
of conception, Clark
Ashton Smith is per-
haps unexcelled
by any other writer,
dead or living."---*

H.P. Lovecraft

AS I REMEMBER

KLARKASH-TON

BY GEORGE F. HAAS

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following excellent memoir of the late, great Clark Ashton Smith is the first tribute to that great writer since his death last August. Anthon Fress will bring out late this year a booklet of 50 or more pages titled IN MEMORIAM: CLARK ASHTON SMITH. The piece you are about to read -- as well as the superb Fresser portrait-- is taken from the contents of that booklet. For one of the finest memoirs, and a sterling example of our varied contents -- which include reprints of CAS, memoirs by his friends, fans, and contemporary writers, critiques, etc., we present this piece. We think that George F. Haas has, more than anyone, captured the man, Clark Ashton Smith, in words which present one of the greatest -- yet oddly obscure -- fantasy writers who ever lived.

.....
AS I REMEMBER KLARKASH-TON

I have been asked to write of the late, eminent Clark Ashton Smith, for they say I know him better and longer than most others; that I should tell what manner of man he was; that I should make comments on his varied talents. Yet to write adequately of Klarkash-Ton, I should take for pen the quill of the wing-tip of the fabled Gazolba-bird, dipped deep in the wetted dust of powdered mummies, and write ebulliently with rare hieroglyphs on parchment fashioned from the skins of serpent-men.

But I have only this poor typewriter and the words will not come at my command. I am rich in memories of a close and dear friend, and I have but to glance about my library as I write this to be reminded of him. There are evidences of him everywhere. There, in a case, is my collection of his memorable carvings in stone, many of which he carved especially for me, and I hold in my hand an ancient and battered jack-knife with which he fashioned some of them. His paintings and drawings hang on the walls. And here is the first photograph I took of him, at our initial meeting. There is a photograph taken of him long, long ago, in 1912, when he was but nineteen years old, every inch the poet, with long, tousled hair and the sad eyes that even then were beginning to look down vistas wherein we mortals fear to follow. In that case are all his books, all with personal inscriptions, his published volumes of poetry and prose. In this chest are all the issues of the fabulous WEIRD TALES magazine which contain the first printings of the bulk of his published works. This mandarin-red cabinet holds our correspondence and further files of Klarkash-Toniana -- photographs, notes, manuscripts, all the memorabilia I have been able to collect and treasure over the years. I have but to turn a switch on the tape recorded behind me to hear his voice intoning the haunting, measured cadences of his "From the Crypts of Memory."

For many years now it has been my fancy to call my library-don "The Vaults of Yoh-Vombis" after the title of Klarkash-Ton's famous story, one of his most memorable tales
- - - - -
Quotations from H.P. Lovecraft are printed through the courtesy of the H.P. Lovecraft estate, and of Arkham House, who are compiling Lovecraft's SELECTED LETTERS.

(which first appeared in WEIRD TALES in May, 1932). It is well known that when the noted fantasy fan R.H. Barlow was but seventoon, Lovecraft visited him at his home in Florida and stayed a month. Barlow had a locked closet in which he kept his collection of fantasy magazines and books and he had named it "The Vault of Yoh-Vombis." After Barlow's untimely death in Mexico in 1951, I had appropriated the name for my own library-don with Klarkash-Ton's subsequent, somewhat bemused, approval. Not the least of the treasures here in the "Vaults" is Klarkash-Ton's own copy of that issue of WEIRD TALES containing that story.

Yes, memories still linger here in the "Vaults" where Klarkash-Ton visited many times. I can see him now, sitting quietly in that wicker chair with a glass of red wine in one hand and a pipe in the other. Or I see him thurbing through an ancient copy of WEIRD TALES or moving slowly about the shadowed room examining curious books.

But I think I shall always want to remember Klarkash-Ton as I first saw him on that day long ago, on the occasion of my first visit to him at his unbrageous abode among the blue oak trees near Auburn. And I am glad I met him when he was still the fabled, strange, and darkling genius of Auburn; still the lone "Star Troader," the far wanderer among pallid suns, the legendary "Emperor of Dreams." After he married and moved to Pacific Grove, it was never quite the same. He was still the same Klarkash-Ton, but the image of the strange recluse, the hermit of Auburn, had somehow disappeared.

That first visit was the culmination of a period of long years of admiration from afar. That admiration extended far back into the early days of WEIRD TALES magazine, and to no Klarkash-Ton was always a fabulous figure - remote, legendary, and far removed in both time and space. For lengthy years, and on end, I had held the eminent "Master of Fantasy" in great awe and high regard, and little dreamed that I would, or could, ever meet him. Does one dream of meeting Poe?

It was not until September 11, 1953, that I took courage to actually make the pilgrimage to Auburn to seek out the sinister sorcerer himself in his dark cabin among the blue oak trees. Not the least of my hesitations might be attributed to having read, not so long before, the fine tribute to him in FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES magazine, in the August, 1949, issue. They had indeed most fittingly scheduled him as the 13th in their famous series. They had referred to "those who have made the pilgrimage to his unbrageous abode in Auburn - and returned alive (and in full possession of their faculties." Nevertheless, I think it was that tribute in FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES that finally decided me to accept the dare.

At that time few people in the fantasy world had ever met him. Of the writers, I know of only a few: Henry Kuttner and E. Hoffman Price visited him in 1942. Donald Wandrei had paid him a visit, and August Derleth had met him at the cabin a few weeks before I did in 1953. Henry Hesse and Emil Potaja, both writers for WEIRD TALES, together with R.H. (R.A. Hoffman) and Paul Freuchen, made the pilgrimage in the early forties. R.H. Barlow had visited Klarkash-Ton, probably in the late forties, with a small group from the Los Angeles area. At that time Klarkash-Ton gave him the original manuscript of "The Hashish Eater" which Barlow later bound in coral-snake skin! One wonders where that manuscript is now. In spite of my own hesitations, I still find it incredible that other writers or fantasy fans never found it convenient to make the trip to Auburn to express in person their appreciation to one who, on the death of Lord Dunsany, was to become the dean of living fantasy writers.

Before proceeding a word regarding the term "Klarkash-Ton" might be in order and of some interest. It is well known that H.P. Lovecraft used pet nicknames for a few of his favored correspondents in the so-called "Lovecraft Circle." For example, he address-

of Robert E. Howard as "Two-Gun Bob," Frank Belknap Long as "Belnapius," and August Derleth as "M. le Comte d'Erlotto." But it was surely a happy stroke of genius when, early in their long correspondence, he began addressing Clark Ashton Smith as "Klarkash-Ton." There is something about the look of the name when you see it in print that typifies the man and his works. It conjures up Atlantean images intoning dread spells, of dark necromancers of far Zothique distilling strange potions under a dying sun. For indeed Klarkash-Ton's poetry and prose are intonations and distillations of the very essence of all that is strange, exotic, forbidden - potions few of us dare to quaff.

Lovecraft signed many of his letters "Ech-Pi-El," which simply signifies his initials spelled phonetically, and it is pronounced as one would pronounce his initials--H.P.L. "Klarkash-Ton," of course, is pronounced "Clark Ashton."

I have always called Clark Ashton Smith "Klarkash-Ton" and the term has meant a great deal to me personally. Shortly after we first met and began corresponding, he started signing his letters to me as "Klarkash-Ton." He addressed me as "Ji-Ech," saying "We might as well keep up the Lovecraft tradition." He has inscribed most of his books for me as "For Ji-Ech from Klarkash-Ton." Over the years I have become so used to addressing him in letters and in person as Klarkash-Ton that I actually think Klarkash-Ton and not Clark Ashton.

I had written Klarkash-Ton on the 31st of August asking if I could come to Auburn on September 11th and if he could spare me an hour or so on that date. His prompt reply was so utterly delightful, so reminiscent of the directions in Poe's "The Gold Bug" that I want to share it here:

Auburn, Calif.,
Sept. 5th, 1953

"Dear Mr. Haas:

I'll be glad to see you next Friday, Sept. 11th. If you come in on the Greyhound, I suggest having the driver let you off in Lower Auburn at the junction of the speedway with Lincoln Way. Follow Lincoln Way to Sacramento St. (right turns in each case) and come out Sacramento St., which becomes the Folsom Highway at the town limits, going south. One fourth mile farther on, take the left turn marked Caroline St., going east, then turn south again at the next right hand turn. Open, and shut behind you the wire gate at the end of the lane, and follow rough tracks to my cabin, a distance of about 250 yards. Horse-trails may confuse the issue, but bear a little to the right of the dark-green pine which you will perceive rising above the woods.

The distance is about one and one-quarter miles from Lower Auburn. If this seems too far to walk, a taxi called from one of the down-town bars or stores would bring you as far as the wire gate for (probably) 75¢.

Hasta la vista!

Sincerely yrs.,
Clark Ashton Smith"

When I got off the bus in Auburn I was hungry so I had lunch at a small cafe' in now or upper Auburn. I decided to walk the mile and a quarter, southward, to Klarkash-Ton's abode, holding in my hand as I went his intricate directions. I had never been in Auburn before and I wanted to sense the flavor of his home town where he had, up to now, lived the major portion of his life. And I wanted to survey the countryside along the road I know he traveled almost daily as he came into town to shop and get his mail. Perhaps, too, I subconsciously wanted to postpone as long as possible this first meeting with the forbidding and legendary recluse.

Klarkash-Ton met me at the wire gate; he opened and closed it for me. He had been watching and waiting for me, lingering at the edge of the grassy, wood-strown glade.

I had no idea how I would be received but after the initial handshake and introductory words, almost immediately there was established between us an unspoken rapport that was never to be broken, that was to endure until the very end. I have never known anyone with whom I have been more comfortable or more completely at ease. It would also be trite to say I felt as if I had always known him, but it was like that. Any lingering doubts I may have had as to my welcome, or any lingering fear I may still have harbored of this Atlantean necromancer, faded away as quickly as the struck note of a gong.

I examined him with interest since I had seen no picture of him other than the rather indistinct photographs of him in MARGINALIA or the drawings made of him for the old WONDER STORIES magazine. Klarkash-Ton was sixty years old that year when I first met him. He was slightly stooped, but, I should judge, about five foot eleven inches in height. He wore a short mustache. His hair was light brown, straight, and although I looked later, I could not detect a single gray hair. His wide, high-domed forehead was quite wrinkled. He seemed somewhat frail, yet he had an amazing barrel-chest. His brown eyes were those of the dreamer, of the mystic, of one who has looked far into unfathomed depths, and indeed his had. They were the eyes of a poet; they were gentle and kindly eyes, yet there was about them an infinite sadness. He was plainly but neatly dressed in an old pair of brown slacks and a short-sleeved, rather loudly-colored sports shirt. On his feet were blue-cloth, rubber-soled sneakers, while on his head, to keep his fine, silky hair from flying, was what was almost a trademark with him - a bright red beret.

We walked the 250 yards through the grove of blue oak trees along a more horse trail. The oak trees, Quercus douglasii, are really blue; the leaves of some specimens have an almost luminous blue sheen. On other specimens the leaves are blue-green, but all have light, ashy-gray bark. Many trees were bearded with hanging moss and there were bunches of mistletoe in the branches. High, wild grasses and curious woods, now dead and brown, bordered the path and covered the openings between the trees. I was to visit Klarkash-Ton's land again in an earlier season and find it green and lush, a tapestry of wild flowers. But now his landscape was brown and dead, seared by the hot summer sun. I recall it in detail because it was a desolate, fantastic setting, almost macabre, in its sterile dryness. I recall thinking then: "It is a fitting site for the habitation of one 'who has sailed in galleys of Zothique,' or trodden the pale planets of the nether suns. It was a bit of moon scape with odd scattered boulders, with the deadness relieved only by the blue of the oaks, and the dark green of the single pine.

His cabin sat in the open, under the hot sun, a little way out from the southern edge of the grove. Beyond lay space and open fields with only a barbed-wire fence in the distance to suggest any neighbors. The cabin itself was old and small with a lean-to at the back and a wide sleeping porch extending the full length of the front. The wide boards and wood-shingles of the sides were silvered and gray; on the roof were dark, tar-paper shingles. We passed through an opening in a low, stone wall, reminiscent of those in New England, which extended across the front of the cabin on the west side. He had built this wall himself, long years ago, using the lava and granite boulders with which the cabin site is strewn.

Here in this simple cabin Klarkash-Ton had lived since earliest childhood (he was born in Long Valley, a few miles away); here he had lived with his mother and father until their deaths - first his father, and then later his mother, in 1937. Originally the land, a homestead, had comprised forty acres, but on the death of his father he had sold all but a little over two acres immediately surrounding the cabin, in order to pay funeral expenses. His father's death grieved him deeply, and it was to recover from this sorrow in the forgetfulness of heavy labor, that he set about building the wall of stones. Klarkash-Ton greatly revered both his mother and father and at the time he visited him their ashes reposed in urns on an honored shelf in the cabin's main room.

Klarkash-Ton, of necessity, lived simply and frugally since his income from the sale of his writing was never large. WEIRD TALES, which published the bulk of his writings, never paid over a cent a word. To supplement his meager funds he worked at part-time labor at such tasks as thinning fruit or pruning trees in orchards in the area. In times past he had worked at mining, gardening, picking and packing fruit, typing, wood-chopping, or at anything else that came to hand. However, in later years, after the death of his parents, his expenses had been few except for food, as he had no rent or utilities to pay. Fuel for cooking and heating was wood he cut himself from his own oak trees; he burned kerosene in old wick lamps for light; water was obtained from his own spring, a few feet from his cabin. When I asked why he did not grow vegetables, he explained that he had tried it but his spring did not supply sufficient water for irrigation.

When I entered his cabin for the first time it was evident that he had spent some time, shortly before, cleaning up in preparation for my arrival. The floor, of wide, plain boards, had been swept clean and he had kept down the dust by lightly sprinkling it with water before sweeping. There were still patches of splattered dampness and I smiled at this old country custom -- I had done the same thing a thousand times in old houses in past years.

I glanced around with the greatest interest, but I am afraid that in my excitement I did not take in many details. There seemed to be several small rooms but we proceeded into what was evidently a combination living-room, study, library, and kitchen. A pot of beans simmered on the back of an ancient wood stove and the fragrance was so good as to almost make me hungry again. My remembrances now recall an impression of cluttered orderliness. There were low bookcases around the walls jammed with books -- overflowing onto the floor! -- and to shelves and chairs. There were bulging cartons and boxes everywhere filled with papers, manuscripts, magazines, and, in a corner, I spotted a high pile of old WEIRD TALES. Dust was everywhere, as befits a bachelor's mountain cabin, except on the recently swept floor. I remember Klarkash-Ton picking up one of Montague Summers' books on vampires to show me. He blew on it, and the cloud of dust oddled and swirled in the dim room leaving us almost choking and gasping. Since it was so hot in the cabin that early afternoon hour, he suggested that we go out and sit under the trees.

A little way from the cabin, under a group of gnarled and lichen-littered blue oak trees, was a metal army cot spread with a tattered sleeping bag. Before it there was a small table, homebuilt, of rough, weathered boards. The site commanded a view to the south and west of the over-decending blue foothills and on into the haze of the great valley itself. It was here at this rickety table, under these ancient blue oak trees, -- in summer, at least -- that Clark Ashton Smith composed and wrote the bulk of his literary works -- his stories as well as his poems -- and it was here that he worked on many of his memorable carvings. Here he slept on hot summer nights.

We sat on the old army cot, talked, and began to get acquainted. It was a quiet, peaceful spot with no sound of the traffic on the distant highway and only the occasional drone of a passing aircraft. Red dragonflies darted over the scorched summer grasses and there was but a suggestion of a breeze rustling the long needles of the tall Western Yellow pine just beyond us. It was warm, but not uncomfortably so in the shade.

Finally, "Do you like wine?" he asked, and when I assented he added, "All fantasy fans like wine." He went back into the cabin and came out with two glasses and a bottle of Marsala which we sipped as we began discussing everything from avatars to Zothique.

When I asked about his paintings he brought from his cabin a large, battered portfolio of paintings and drawings, and he held them up, one by one, for my inspection and comments. To me this was a rare and almost overwhelming experience. Here were the "feverishly distorted visions" as soon by Klarkash-Ton himself, drawn by his own hand and here that same hand was holding them up for me. I noted that many were time-yellowed and worn by handling, obviously dating back many years. Also scattered through the pile were original drawings by other artists illustrating Klarkash-Ton's stories and poems from WEIRD TALES. There were several by Virgil Finlay and two or three by Hugh Rankin.

Few of those who admire his literary work have ever seen a painting or drawing by Klarkash-Ton. Some will remember his drawings in the old WEIRD TALES, but many of the younger generation do not have access to these. His paintings in water colors, inks, and other media are unknown even to many collectors.

I have no idea how many paintings or drawings he produced over the years, nor do I think anyone else does. Certainly the figure runs well into the hundreds. I saw perhaps fifty in that portfolio when I first visited him. In past years he had sold some and given others to admirers. I am led to believe that the bulk of his artwork was produced in his earlier life -- in the twenties and thirties. All of the specimens I saw were old -- one painting, which I later bought, bore the date 1927.

Klarkash-Ton worked with a great variety of materials -- with water colors, inks, crayons, show-card colors, and oils. All of the paintings I saw were done on common drawing paper or on heavy board. If he ever used canvas I am not aware of it. A few were done on silk, saton, or similar material, however.

In order to acquaint those interested, it might be of value if I try to describe those few I have in my own collection... but any evaluation or art criticism I will leave for those who are more qualified:

1. WORSHIP. A painting done with colored inks. Depicts a lizard-like creature, with a tail wrapped around a tree, groveling before a weird, green, horned creature seated on a pedestal. A high mountain scene with dead back sky, with huge, gold-colored boulders in the background, almost luminous and metallic. 8" X 11 1/2".
2. HYPERBOREAN LANDSCAPE. A water color. A scene in the high mountains with red, willow-like trees, fantastic peaks and white clouds. Bears the date 1927 in one corner. 12" X 15".
3. SCENE IN ATLANTIS. Almost entirely done in green oils except for a few red seaweeds. A shadowy scene of weird, sunken buildings, statuary and marine monsters. The central figure is a sundial! 8 1/2" X 12".
4. THE SCALPODS. Two nude figures, male and female, of the sciapods of ancient Greek and also Hindu mythology. They are "upside down" with roots where their hair should be, and they shade themselves with their wide, leaf-like foot. The setting is a weird landscape with grotesque and multi-colored trees and shrubs. Show-card colors, 11" X 12 1/2".
5. UNTITLED. A tiny drawing done with purple ink on drawing paper 2" X 3 3/4". A weird monster with a long neck and a hungry grin. On the back of the drawing is the date 1918. Klarkash-Ton sent this to George Sterling, who returned it.
6. GRYPHON GAZING ON THE GULF. A pen and ink drawing to illustrate Lovecraft's "The Lurking Fear" in HOME BREV in 1923. Depicts a gryphon with outspread wings gazing into a deep gulf with lightning striking from a huge black cloud. 4 1/2" X 8 3/4ths". This is one of a set done by Klarkash-Ton and is one of the drawings not used. Lovecraft himself saw this drawing and liked it. In a letter to Klarkash-Ton, March 26, 1923, he says: "And the 'Lurking Fear' illustrations! I have already told you how the gryphon gazing on the gulf impressed me."

Under his blue oak trees, laden with moss and mistletoe, while cicadas crackled in

the tall dried grasses and curious woods nearby, Klarkash-Ton read his poetry to me, intoning the verses in a low, haunting, somewhat droning voice. He had brought out a bulging manuscript file -- his working file for his projected **SELECTED POEMS**. The ones he selected to read to me were those he thought I would like, or were his own favorites. I particularly recall the melancholy "The Old Water Wheel" and I remember thinking then that it was Klarkash-Ton's own voice "whose all-monotonous cadence haunts the air." He read "Calenture" and I realized then that it was here on this self-same spot that he had written it -- here among the grasses "...that bore the seed of the same grass on which (we) now recline(d)." He read, at my request, "Hellenic Sequel" and intoned the over-haunting cadences of "Zothiquo." All of these had appeared in his Arkham House volume **THE DARK CHATEAU** two years before. I vividly recall his reading his lilting "Yorba Buena," long a favorite of mine. This is a pantoum, one of the rarest and most difficult forms of poetry, of ancient Maylay origin. It had first appeared in the *Winter*, 1946, issue of **WINGS**, the little poetry magazine edited by Stanton A. Coblentz. Later, Klarkash-Ton was to record it for me on tape.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of Klarkash-Ton's literary work is his tremendous vocabulary. It is, I think, without parallel in literature. I know of no other writer, dead or living, who has had at his command such an incredible, comprehensive vocabulary and the ability to so effectively use it. When I asked Klarkash-Ton how he had acquired such a remarkable vocabulary, he replied that when young he had simply gone through an unabridged dictionary from A to Z and had learned and studied all the words. Not only did he study and learn the spellings, meanings, and usages, but he also delved into the word origins; going back, in most cases, to the original Sanskrit. All this was on his own; his formal schooling had ended in the grammar grades. Likewise, he taught himself to read and write in both Spanish and French, mainly so that he could read and translate his favorite poets in these languages. His favorite French poets were, of course, Arthur Rimbaud and Charles Baudelaire. His translations of the latter appeared in his own **SANDALWOOD**, and, with those of others, in the Limited Editions Club edition of Baudelaire's **FLOWERS OF EVIL** in 1940.

Klarkash-Ton's poetry and prose are the purest distillations of the essence of fantasy, and there is a timeless quality about his fiction tales that is the hallmark of all classic fantasy. A hundred years from now we may be plying the trade lanes to Procyon or gawking at sights on Antares, but Klarkash-Ton's fantasy fiction tales will be as sought-after and enjoyed then as they are by his devotees today. So broad is his scope, so cosmic his concepts, so timelessly universal his visions, that it is certain his tales will long endure. While most of us in the fantasy world will remember his stories, his exotic and beautiful prose, or even his sculptures, his first love, and his last, was poetry. Klarkash-Ton would want to be remembered primarily as a poet.

Tributes to Klarkash-Ton during his lifetime were few, but these were marked with unbounded enthusiasm. He was, of course, highly revered and appreciated by most of his fellow writers in the fantasy field. Biographical details have been scanty and for most of those we must turn to the excellent article "Clark Ashton Smith: Master of Fantasy," by August Dorloth and Donald Wandrei in their Arkham House collection of Klarkash-Ton's stories **OUT OF SPACE AND TIME**. There are other, briefer, details and evaluations on the dust-jackets of his other Arkham House books.

Concerning the poetry of Klarkash-Ton, perhaps no more glowing tribute will ever be penned than that by his revered early friend and mentor, George Sterling, himself a famous California poet and playwright. On October 28, 1922, Sterling wrote the preface to Klarkash-Ton's most memorable collection of poetry, **EBONY AND CRYSTAL**, in which he said:

"Because he has lent himself the more innocently to the whispers of his subconscious daemon, and because he has set those murmurs to purer and harder crystal than we others,

by so much longer will the poems of Clark Ashton Smith endure. Here indeed is loot against the forays of moth and rust. Here we shall find none or little of the sentimental fat with which so much of our literature is loaded. Rather shall one in Imagination's 'misty mid-region', see elfin rubies burn at his feet, witch-fires glow in the nearer cypresses, and feel upon his brow a wind from the unknown... But let him who is worthy by reason of his clear eye and unjaded heart wander across these borders of beauty and be glad."

In the ranks of amateur journalism, Stanley Mullen contributed perhaps the finest tribute to Klarkash-Ton in the July, 1947, issue of his excellent fantasy fan magazine, THE GORGON, Vol. 1, No. 3. His tribute was titled "Cartouche - Clark Ashton Smith." I have always liked his first paragraph and I hope he will not mind if I quote it here: "The Writings of Clark Ashton Smith have been compared to rich wines and rare old brandies— too strong for some tastes, to exotic for others -- but for the devotee of truly outré literature, there can be no finer vintage." This I quite concur with, but let the wine be a rare old Mavrodaphne -- no lesser nectar could quite suffice!

But it remained for his fellow "Master of Fantasy," the late H.P. Lovecraft, to express so eloquently and so adequately the distinguishing outré-ness, the unique weirdness, that is the special flavor of Klarkash-Ton's prose and poetry. Klarkash-Ton had sent, shortly after publication, a copy of his EBONY AND CRYSTAL to Lovecraft, who had replied to thank him for it, first by postcard in February, and then by letter on March 25, 1923. I borrowed that letter from Klarkash-Ton in April of 1954 and deciphered, with some difficulty, Lovecraft's spidery scrawl. I have that transcript, which comprised five pages of single-spaced typing, before me and I quote the pertinent remarks:

"But my card sent from Salem last month attempted in a feeble way to express the delirious delight and unboundedly enthusiastic admiration which EBONY AND CRYSTAL aroused in me. It is truly titanic -- it is a breath of divine and daemoniac beauty, horror, madness, and wonder which perfumed and pestilential night-winds have whirled through bat-thronged abysses of infinity and older time from dead cities and moon-cursed peaks of Saturn, Lemuria, and Uis. It is genius, if genius ever existed! As I have said before, there is no author but yourself who seems to have glimpsed fully those tenebrous wastes, immeasurable gulfs, grey topless pinnacles, crumbling corpses of forgotten cities, slimy, stagnant, cypress-bordered rivers, and alien, indefinable, antiquity-ridden gardens of strange decay, with which my own dreams have been crowded since earliest childhood. I read your work as the record of the only other human eye which has seen the things I have seen in far planets."

In that letter Lovecraft was, of course, commenting on Klarkash-Ton's poetry, but his evaluation applies equally to his prose. The same eloquent enthusiasm was expressed later in H.P.L.'s fine essay SUPERNATURAL HORROR IN LITERATURE, in which he commented on Klarkash-Ton's prose tales. A portion of this tribute is quoted on the portrait of Klarkash-Ton to head this, my own tribute.

Klarkash-Ton, like Lovecraft, also had a "commonplace book," a notebook filled with his notes, suggestions for stories, plots, names, ideas, and all the other jottings he had made and saved over the years. In it are pages of odd and exotic names, lists of the carvings he had sold and to whom and for what prices. There are first drafts of poems, or single lines of poetry. Scattered through are epigrams, addresses of friends and correspondents, lists of paintings sold with names of buyers and prices paid. Klarkash-Ton called his notebook the "BLACK BOOK." It is evidently very old; he had used it all the major portion of his writing life and it was always at his side. It is a loose-leaf book with ruled pages 5 X 7 3/4ths inches in size. The cover is black, of limp, pebbled leather, with an inside pocket. It is worn and polished with handling over the years with the leather rubbed thin at the corners.

Most of the entries in the BLACK BOOK are impossible for anyone but Klarkash-Ton to read. Here is a display of an amazing variation of the handwriting of one man. Some of the entries are so plainly written that anyone could decipher them; but others, hurriedly scrawled, resemble nothing so much as Arabic shorthand!

I first saw the BLACK BOOK that day at the cabin, but on later visits I was to have the rare privilege of poring through its pages. I have it now, on loan from his widow, before me as I write, and I have her kind permission to quote from it. Some of the more easily deciphered story ideas follow:

"A disabled space-ship of unmeltable metal, landing on an alien planet, and carried for an immense distance on a volcanic river of molten lava --"

"An old soldier who meets and rejoins the phantom army, wandering forever through lost lands, of his former captain and comrade."

"A strange, furtive, tatterdemonian who is seen frequently in a certain locality. No one knows anything about him. Out of curiosity, one follows him and sees him melt and disappear mistily, diffused and dismembered into the features of a desolate landscape."

Few writers of fantasy-fiction ever had quite the flair for inventing names as had Klarkash-Ton. His names for places, things, titles of stories, or of the denizens of space and time, have a shudder-provoking quality about them that has seldom, if ever, been equalled. No devotee of his weird fiction will ever forget such provoking titles as "The Vaults of Yoh-Vombis," "Nooromaney in Nant," such places as "Avariogno" or "Zothiquo," such names as "Xoothra," "Tsathoggua," or "Vulphoon."

It would be interesting to list all the names and titles found in the BLACK BOOK, but lack of space permits but a few here. Most of the titles listed were later used in his stories, but here are a few: "Zanzanga, Milanab, Xactura, Qualk, Zylae, Zabdamar, Uori, Mygou, Encyola, Loyla, Pornox, Chronomazo, Frollantha."

An insight into Klarkash-Ton's estimate of his own fiction tales is found, written in his own scrawl, on one page of the BLACK BOOK. This is in one of the drafts he had jotted down for a proposed advertisement for THE DOUBLE SHADOW AND OTHER FANTASIES. He had written: "For lovers of weird atmosphere and imaginative writing. Poetic rather than plotty. Will not appeal to devotees of action."

Few know that Klarkash-Ton conducted a newspaper column in THE AUBURN JOURNAL over a period of years. This was a short column and consisted mostly of epigrams -- witty, wise, humorous, and philosophic. I have before me one yellowed clipping of a single "Clark Ashton Smith's Column." It bears no date but internal evidence suggests that it might have been printed in the late twenties or early thirties. The editors of that venerable journal write me: "Unfortunately, no one here now remembers when he wrote the column as it was so long ago. I will quote a few of his better epigrams from a tape recording made for me by Klarkash-Ton here in the "Vaults" on October 18, 1957. He selected and read them from the BLACK BOOK and the sounds of its crinkling pages can be heard in the background as he turned them.

"One may chase his tail around the globe a hundred times and not be an inch nearer to the center of the infinite and the eternal; a truth known to few occidentals."

"Communism: The apotheosis of the piss-ant."

"In art or literature, it is better to err on the side of over-flamboyance or exuberance than to prune everything down to a drab, dead, and flat level. The former vice is at least on the side of growth; the latter represses or even tends to extirpate all growth."

"Knowledge is often most concealed when most divulged; and happily none will harken if I whisper."

"Strange pleasures are known to him who flaunts the inmarable purple of poetry before the color-blind."

"The true lover of mysteries is not likely to feel any lasting interest in detective stories. Not the least proof of Poe's genius is that he abandoned this genre of writing as soon as he had mastered it."

Klarkash-Ton had tried his hand at many literary forms. How many know he wrote a play? He wrote one, many years ago, a drama in one act and six scenes titled THE DEAD WILL CUCKOLD YOU. The play has never been published nor performed. The scenes are laid in Farad, capital of Yores, in Zothique. It is a play of necromancy done in blank verse in the best Smith style. There are some magnificent passages. In my opinion, some of his best and most colorful lines of poetry are here.

Klarkash-Ton and I often talked of his reading the play into my recorder with a background of low, suitable music. He wanted for background a wild, fantastic music, preferably something oriental. Finally he decided that some of the ragas performed on the sitar by Ravi Shankar, that incredible musician of India, were just what he wanted. It is regrettable that we never found the time nor the opportunity to do this recording.

Klarkash-Ton had a few carvings on hand in the cabin at the time of my visit. Avid collectors and admirers, both here and abroad, always kept his current stock of carving at a minimum. August Derleth had purchased some on his recent visit, and another shipment had just been made to a purchaser in Copenhagen. I examined with great interest those few he did have, and I bought three to take home. There were a few discarded and broken specimens on a shelf by a window in the large room. One such remnant impressed and fascinated me -- the horned head of a faun. I asked Klarkash-Ton if he would carve another one just like it for me, and he did so by the following spring. It is perhaps the favorite piece in my collection. It is an impudent, looting face with a mocking grin and half-lidded eyes. The tongue protrudes slightly; the ears are pointed sharply and the two horns stand out above thick, curly hair. The whole head is light brown in color and was done in fired talc. The workmanship is superb and in fine detail. He reminds me of Coix, the faun immortalized by the late Edon Phillipotts in his THE GIRL AND THE FAUN.

Klarkash-Ton's carvings are distillations of fantasy frozen in imperishable stone; hence, they may last the longest of any of his works. The archaeologists of Zothique, digging in that latter day under a pallid and waning sun, will find twenty-seven of them in the ruins of Berkoley and they will be at a sore loss to place them in any category -- as indeed they would in any age. There has never been anything quite like them.

The materials for Klarkash-Ton's carvings were beautiful, rare rocks and minerals, scoured out and picked up in the foothills near his old home in Auburn or in the hills near Carmel. Many came from great depths in the earth, from the tailings of old mines of the Mother Lode. His favorite material from the Carmel area, which he used in carving most of his later pieces, was what he called diatomite -- a white, chalky material he obtained from the thick vein in an old road bank.

Klarkash-Ton experimented with many materials but he naturally preferred those that were more easily worked such as talc or diatomite. These could be worked with a small knife. Other materials, such as lava or basalt, could be picked up almost anywhere; but these needed hammer and chisel. Regardless of his preferences, if the subject called for such harder materials he did not hesitate to use it.

The rough pieces if the soft talc or diatomite were blocked out roughly to some semblance of their final shape with the aid of a large jack-knife. The final finishing work was done with a small, red-handled, pen-knife. On a very few specimens a further polishing was done with sandpaper or emery cloth. All of this work with talc or dia-

tonite entailed a great deal of dust. This necessitated working outside in the open air -- under his blue oak trees in Auburn or in his tiny, fern-ringed back patio in Pacific Grove.

Carvings in diatomite or talc needed firing to harden them. This was accomplished simply by placing the finished pieces, completely surrounded by dry sand, in an old tin can and placing the whole in a wood fire -- in the firebox of his Auburn cabin or in the fireplace at Pacific Grove in later years. Many pieces cracked or crumbled in the firing process and had to be discarded.

Firing brought out surprisingly beautiful and happy combinations of colors in such materials as diatomite and, to a lesser extent, talc. Many indeed for fortuitous combinations of hues -- but Klarkash-Ton never knew what they would look like before firing. One such piece in my own collection, "Dagon," the fish-god, has a pink nose and forehead, with delicate mauve shading on one side suggesting the shadows of great sea depths.

Each carving entailed many long hours of patient, intensive, painstaking labor and care, far overshadowing the value of the small prices Klarkash-Ton charged for them. Each is an original and unique work of art in itself and there were never any exact copies. Klarkash-Ton did, however, sometimes carve several versions of the same subject. There are several "Outsiders," for example. One such famous carving by that name is pictured on the dust jacket of BEYOND THE WALL OF SLEEP (Lovecraft). In the spring of 1954 he carved a similar one for me. Several others bear the title "Nameless Entity."

Many of those who possess Klarkash-Ton's carvings, or who have seen and examined them, will have noted, and been puzzled by, the curious letters inscribed on the flat bases. They are the letters "K" and "A" with the "K" backwards. This was his brand, or signature, and he signed most of his carvings with it -- except when he forgot to do so before firing. When I asked for an explanation he replied that in the ancient Etruscan alphabet the "K" backwards stood for either a "C" or an "A." In this case it stood for a "C," the signature being his initials, "C A" for Clark Ashton.

Klarkash-Ton's carvings are the static, frozen scenes of his visualized concepts. They are his "feverishly distorted visions" caught and held forever in stone. Inspiration for them came from many sources. Many depict the fabled gods and creatures of the "Cthulhu Mythos" of Lovecraft and his "Circle" or writers; others represent the figures of the classical mythologies of Greece, Rome, India, and of other ancient cultures. Still others were dredged from the depths of his own subconscious, from dreams.

What I have to relate here in connection with his inspiration from dreams many sound incredible, but it is true and it may give an insight into the mystical aspects of the man and the workings of his "Subconscious daemon." The first carving I bought from Klarkash-Ton, on that September afternoon in 1953, is one of his largest. It is fashioned from black lava or basalt, stands eight inches high and is nearly five inches across at the base. It is the head of Ialdabaoth, the demiurge mentioned by Anatole France in THE REVOLT OF THE ANGELS. It was the first carving I saw that day at his cabin and it sat outside on the little wall of stones near the entrance. This is one of his earliest carvings, perhaps his very earliest. He told me that he had carved it about nine or ten years before and that it had stood outside on the wall ever since. It had been outside so long, exposed to the elements, that orange lichens had begun to form in blotches about the head, and larger patches of gray lichens had begun to creep over the rest of the frowning visage. The lichens, dormant now in the dry air of my library case, are still there.

It is a stern and frowning visage with a rounded, bald, head; the eyes are large and

staring; the nose is flat with flaring nostrils; the mouth is open as if speaking The Word; the pointed beard below the mouth is formed by horizontal lines. The whole aspect of the carving suggests something Mayan, Polynesian, or ancient Sumorian. It well could have been dug from the ruins of Sumor or recovered from the tangled vines of Nuka hiva.

Here is the coincidence, so startling as to be almost unbelievable: there is a photograph, an almost perfect likeness of Klarkash-Ton's carving, in *AKU-AKU*, Thor Hvyordahl's book on Easter Island, published in 1958. It can be found in the lower left hand corner of the double-page spread following page 304 of the hardbound edition. It is included with other photographs of carvings in hard lava rocks; carvings which were discovered in secret family caves on the island and which were completely unknown except to their owners until Hvyordahl brought them to light in 1956. Remember, Klarkash-Ton's carving was executed at least fifteen years before...

The resemblance between the two carvings -- Ialdabaoth and the Easter Island piece -- is astonishing. There is the same rounded head, the same eyes, nose, and mouth. The Easter Island piece shows long ears, but there is a suggestion of long ears on Ialdabaoth, as if they had been there but had been broken off or chipped away. They are done in the same material; only the beard is different. Klarkash-Ton's is formed by horizontal lines, the other with vertical lines. However, Klarkash-Ton stated that he had often used vertical lines in depicting beards on other carvings.

When I pointed out, in 1958, the strange coincidence to Klarkash-Ton, and accused him jokingly of having worked secretly on Easter Island, he said that about the time he had carved Ialdabaoth, long years before, he had had a series of vivid, recurring dreams -- dreams in which he found himself way underground in small caves which were filled with hundreds of small carvings in stone!

Students of Klarkash-Ton's sculptures will be quite startled if they compare them with other stone figures from the secret caves of Easter Island. On that same double-page spread in *AKU-AKU*, but in the lower right hand corner, there appears the weird profile of a head. There is an amazing resemblance between this and another of Klarkash-Ton's in my collection called "The Nameless One." This, too, is one of his earlier efforts, roughly executed with bold-stroked lines.

So much of interest happened on that day long ago that I find it difficult to recall all that transpired. But I do remember the afternoon hours passed all too quickly. The shadows lengthened and a light breeze rustled the leaves of the blue oaks. At length Klarkash-Ton suggested that it might be cool enough to go inside and examine his library and to look over his letters from Lovecraft.

It is said that to look at a man's library is to know the man, so I was interested in examining Klarkash-Ton's. There were many hundreds of books, many old, many rare, many collector's items. It was obvious, however, that the library had been selected with care; this was no ordinary collection of books; this was the library of a scholar. The bulk of the library consisted of the standard classics of prose and poetry, of histories, of the mythologies of Greece and Rome, India, and other ancient cultures. There were volumes on witchcraft, and I saw first editions of all those by Montague Summers including his two books on vampires. There were many volumes of poetry, classic and modern, and of the latter many were personal presentations inscribed by the authors. Klarkash-Ton pointed out what was perhaps a complete set, mostly first editions, of the works of Lafcadio Hoarn and expressed his appreciation of Hoarn's colorful and exotic prose. Later I was to borrow this set at Klarkash-Ton's prodding and become another Hoarn devotee.

There were many volumes of fantasy and science fiction -- mostly collections or anthologies -- and many were copies signed by the authors and inscribed with sentiments of appreciation to Klarkash-Ton. Many were Arkham House books but missing were *THE OULSIDER AND OTHERS* and *BEYOND THE WALL OF SLEEP*. Later I was to learn that he had been forced to sell them to raise money for expenses, chosing them because of their great value. This was a working library -- not a collector's collection of volumes hoarded in pristine condition -- these books bespoke use. Every book, and all of the innumerable magazines, showed signs of having been read many times; each was well-thumbed, some slightly battered, and all dust-covered. This was the library of a man well-grounded in the ancient mythologies and histories of the ancient world; in art, literature, in fantasy of all forms from Poe to Matheson. Here was a well-rounded collection of the macabre, the weird, the unusual, the exotic in both prose and poetry.

There were copies, of course, of all of his own published works, and it was here for the first time that I saw and handled a copy of the fabulous *SANDALWOOD*. I have this copy before me now, on loan from Mrs. Smith. It is dirty and battered and worn from much use over the years. Both covers are separate, torn from the spine. Inside are innumerable changes in his handwriting -- some in pencil, some in ink. There are deletions, additions, corrections, and changes; most of them are quite indécipherable to one not used to his handwriting. In many cases whole verses were rewritten and added in the margins. This is copy #3 of the 250 copy edition of October, 1925. This was always Klarkash-Ton's own copy, a fabulous treasure beyond price.

Klarkash-Ton kept the Lovecraft letters in a paper carton, and there were perhaps 150 to 200 of them. He brought them out, dusted them off, and allowed me to examine them, which I did with great interest. Later I was to have the time to look them over more thoroughly and read many of them. There were postcards, too, and it has often been said that Lovecraft could get more on a postcard than most people could get on a lengthy letter. I remember one card on which HPL commented on "The Vaults of Yoh-Vombis." The correspondence between Lovecraft and Klarkash-Ton covered many years; it started when both were just beginning to seriously experiment with fiction tales and it endured all through the years until Lovecraft's death in 1937 of cancer.

What matter what Klarkash-Ton was like; what matter the day-by-day details of his life, the facts and figures of his existence? Those are interesting but unimportant. What is important is that he was CLARK ASHTON SMITH, one of the immortals. There have been few his equal since Hyppoborea and I see him marching forward towards Zethique with "the wind from between the worlds" in his face, and I am glad he paused here briefly and that I know him for a little while.

But of course I made estimate of Klarkash-Ton as a man, as a person, that day at the cabin, and my estimate of him never had cause nor reason to be revised. I saw that here was a gentleman in the very real sense of the term; he was, as they say, a gentleman of the old school. He was quiet, dignified, polite, and the impression he gave was that of the highest culture. But this was not an obvious, studied, or cultivated pose. He was perfectly and flawlessly natural -- the highest type of civilized man. He was, and I think it well to put it as plainly, as bluntly, as simply as possible, a truly good man -- you felt it, you know it whenever you were with him. You could not possibly imagine him doing or thinking harm to anyone.

Let me hasten to add that I do not wish to leave the impression or imply that Klarkash-Ton was a Saint, lest I incur and deserve the wrath and awful curses of Tsathoggua. He was a human being; he had lived and loved and indulged in many of the "frailties" of human nature. He drank, sometimes too much; he smoked both pipe and cigarettes. He had, of course, a deeply sensitive nature. He could be deeply hurt and he could become very angry. However, I do not remember ever seeing him give way to any noticeable display of

emotions. On the whole he exuded an almost Buddha-like serenity.

As for Klarkash-Ton's religion or philosophic leanings, he was, if he could be called anything, a Buddhist, but even that is a limiting term. Early in our acquaintance I had sent him my copy of Robert Payne's incredibly beautiful prose-poem on the life of Buddha, THE LORD COMES (American edition titled The Yellow Robe). He wrote me, on March 5, 1954: "Thanks so much for the loan of THE YELLOW ROBE (I think I prefer the English title). I read the book with so much interest that it set me to rereading all that I have on the life and doctrines of Buddha, as well as some stuff on Brahmanism and East Indian mythology. The book is beautifully written and I liked especially some of the passages you specified." Later, when I sent copies of books by Alan W. Watts, the great exponent of Zen, Klarkash-Ton replied: "By belated thanks for THE WISDOM OF INSECURITY, which expresses the philosophy toward which I have been tending a long time past." His philosophy is expressed, too, in his own poetry, and there are flashes of Zen everywhere. Perhaps the poem "Thobiad" in SPELLS AND PHILTRES best expresses his impatience with code, creed, or cult; and here too, one glimpses that inoffensive loneliness of one who has gone far. This is not a poem of fantasy, but the expression of an experience.

Now that I stop to think about it we seldom, if ever, discussed anything very seriously. I shall always remember a hike we had, in a later year, over the hills near Carmel. We were alone together for about two hours and we didn't talk much. He just liked along the dusty road, admired the views over the mountains, stopped often to examine curious plants, and we even picked a bouquet of wildlings to take home for his desk. We picked wild flowers, dried grasses, and rather odd and grotesque woods -- he loved such things. We stopped at a large patch of the real poison hemlock, Conium Maculatum, a European plant now gone wild in California, and whose juice had been quaffed by Socrates. Klarkash-Ton, appropriately enough, willingly posed in the midst of the tall stalks so that I could take color pictures. We talked little, merely calling each other's attention to this or that odd wood or curious sight, but it was then that I sensed fully that he was aware of everything. I learned more about the man on that hike than in all our previous visits.

The wild gardens of nature were the real gardens to him. At that time, although not really well enough or strong enough, he was trying to help earn a living doing gardening work on the Monterey Peninsula and he hated it. It was about that time too, that he wrote "The Tired Gardener" (SPELLS AND PHILTRES, p. 7) and I shall always like to think our hike through wild gardens that day had something to do with it or some inspiration for it. I treasure a copy of that poem he typed and sent me shortly thereafter -- long before it was published.

Klarkash-Ton's was a Fortean mind, ever questing, never denying. He was intensely interested in the unexplained, the unknown. I remember our discussing THE BOOKS OF CHARLES FORT and our discussion naturally turned to UFOs, the "flying saucers." Klarkash-Ton had seen one -- had seen something -- a year or two before. It was on a hot night and he had been lying outside on his sleeping bag gazing upwards into the depths of space. Suddenly he became aware of a large object, like an indistinct shadow, darker than the night, passing slowly above him blotting out the stars.

The shadows outside were lengthening outside of the cabin when we checked the time on his old kitchen clock. Klarkash-Ton and I decided to have dinner at some cafe of his choosing in Auburn, but first we paused outside so that I could take some pictures of him with a ronted camera I had brought along. Klarkash-Ton posed, rather stiffly, with his coat over his arm, against the lichen-blotched stones of his low wall with one of his blue oaks in the background.

We strolled slowly along on that trek into town, still talking, and Klarkash-Ton kept pointing out items of interest along the way. They were all sights he had known and loved for a lifetime; there was an old orchard, beautiful with changing seasons, there - an interesting rock; here, a gnarled tree with branches like reaching and clutching hands. He pointed out the spot where, years before, there had existed an old water wheel -- the one he described in his poem. Along this very road, then, Klarkash-Ton had trudged homeward as a youth with the "dolent, drear, complaining note" over haunting the air and dogging his footsteps.

We had now entered the outskirts of Auburn itself and we stopped to examine the "haunted" house he had used in his story "The Devotee of Evil." Across the street it was, on a little hill, and it stood at the end of a long walkway bordered with tangled vines and shrubs. It was an ancient house, half hidden by tall trees, and it did have a sinister air about it. Klarkash-Ton said that he didn't know whether it was haunted or not, but that was its reputation.

Auburn is situated in the heart of the famous Mother Lode mining area and the old, original section, Lower Auburn, dates back to the earliest days of the Gold Rush. Many of the old buildings, built of brick, masonry, or of weathered boards, are still in excellent condition and in use. We stopped at one, in the lower floor of which was a small grocery operated by a Chinese. Klarkash-Ton bought some cigarettos and introduced me to the proprietor as a "good friend" who had come "all the way from Berkeley" to visit him.

We dined together at a small cafe just across the highway from the ancient firehouse. As we looked over the menu trying to decide what to order I said, trying to be facetious, "Being a Lovocraft fan, I suppose I shouldn't order any seafood." Klarkash-Ton quickly came back with "Well, I'm a Lovocraft fan too, but I don't carry it quite that far. I'm going to order fried prawns." And he did.

Dusk was gathering as we strolled along the upward-loading streets toward the bus station, but it was still light enough for Klarkash-Ton to point out interesting old houses and curious plants along the way. He showed me the first crape-myrtle trees I had ever seen.

On a later visit Klarkash-Ton was to show me, in the garden of vacationing friends of his, where he had gone so that he could do needed watering, a clump of the rare and graceful black bamboo. The culms are indeed black -- as black as india ink -- but it takes a year before they turn fully black from the initial vivid green. At one stage of their development the stems are mottled, flecked with brown, resembling the skins of certain reptiles. Klarkash-Ton had cut some at this stage to use as stems to the few grotesquely-carved stone pipes he had once fashioned.

Since we still had a little time before my bus left for Berkeley, we entered a combination pool-hall, bar, and newsstand. We paused at the magazine racks and looked over the science-fiction and fantasy magazines and complained that the current offerings were not like they were in the old days. Klarkash-Ton bought beers for us and introduced me to the bartender, an old friend of his. Here, again, he introduced me as a good friend and stressed the fact that I had come all the way from Berkeley just to see him. The bartender ordered another copy of THE DARK CHATEAU, which he wanted to send to a friend.

The time came for my departure but when we arrived at the bus station we learned that the bus was to be late. We sat on a bench outside and passed the little time we had left, promising to write and agreeing to exchange more visits in the future. At

length the bus came and it was crowded, but I found a seat in the rear. As we pulled away slowly I looked out the window and could barely make out the figure of Clark Ashton Smith waving good-bye in the gathering gloom.....

.....George F. Haas

* Quotations of Clark Ashton Smith in the previous article are by permission of Mrs. Clark Ashton Smith.