

Weird Tales

REGISTERED IN U.S. PATENT OFFICE

A MAGAZINE of the



BIZARRE and UNUSUAL

VOLUME IX

NUMBER 4

Published monthly by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company, 2457 E. Washington Street, Indianapolis, Ind. Entered as second-class matter March 20, 1923, at the post office at Indianapolis, Ind., under the act of March 3, 1879. Single copies, 25 cents. Subscription, \$2.50 a year in the United States; \$3.00 a year in Canada. English office: G. M. Jeffries Agency, Hopefield House, Hanwell, London, W. 7. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts, although every care will be taken of such material while in their possession. The contents of this magazine are fully protected by copyright and must not be reproduced either wholly or in part without permission from the publishers.

NOTE—All manuscripts and communications should be addressed to the publishers' Chicago office at 450 East Ohio Street, Chicago, Ill. FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor.
Copyright, 1927, by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company

Contents for April, 1927

- Cover Design C. C. Senf
Illustrating a scene from "Explorers Into Infinity"
- Explorers Into Infinity (Part 1)..... Ray Cummings 437
A three-part interplanetary serial about a madcap adventure and a thrilling voyage through space
- The Castle of Tamara..... Maria Moravsky 451
A weird romance of the Caucasus Mountains—a dramatic love-tale through which runs a thread of horror
- The Death of Time..... W. E. Underwood 462
Verse
- The Endocrine Monster..... R. Anthony 463
Those who came near the cabin of the beautiful Bonita were found in the jungle with the life crushed out of their bodies

(Continued on Next Page)

(Continued from Preceding Page)

- The Ruler of Destiny**-----**Charles Hilan Craig** 475
A master scientist seeks to destroy the world with a deadly gas that kills every living thing it touches
- Out of the Earth**-----**Flavia Richardson** 481
Out of the old hill on which had stood a Roman encampment came an elemental, seeking to work evil on the two lovers
- The Return** -----**G. G. Pendarves** 486
By the Well of Tiz in the Desert of Tlat Jim McCurdie was buried, at least so thought Arnold Drysdale
- Shadows Cast Behind**-----**Otto E. A. Schmidt** 489
A weird ghost-tale of the San Francisco waterfront in the days of the gold-hunting fever
- The Chairs of Stuyvesant Baron**-----**Victor Rousseau** 495
The eighth in a series of stories, each complete in itself, dealing with Dr. Ivan Brodsky, "The Surgeon of Souls"
- Ship Magic** -----**A. Leslie** 502
Versé
- The Youth-Maker** -----**W. Elwyn Backus** 503
Perry trusted the mad chemist's treatments to make him grow younger—and erry were the results of his faith
- Windows of Destiny**-----**James B. M. Clark, Jr.** 513
From the mystic land of China came two Great Ones to circumvent the evil power of an American financial wizard
- Faces** -----**Arthur J. Burks** 532
Strange shapes and weird faces peered out of the jungle at the American officer—a ghost-story of Santo Domingo
- Drome (Part 4)**-----**John Martin Leahy** 537
Five-part serial novel about a weird voyage into the bowels of the earth under Mount Rainier, amid strange monsters
- Weird Story Reprint**
Markheim -----**Robert Louis Stevenson** 556
He killed the curio-dealer, but met a presence in the shop—whether angel or devil he could not know
- The Eyrie** -----**567**
A chat with the readers

For Advertising Rates in WEIRD TALES Apply Direct to

WEIRD TALES

Western Advertising Office:
WEIRD TALES
450 E. Ohio Street
Chicago, Ill.
Phone, Superior 5556

Eastern Advertising Office:
GEORGE W. STEARNS, Mgr.
Flatiron Building
New York, N. Y.
Phone, Ashland 7329

FACES

A Ghost-tale of Santo Domingo

By ARTHUR J. BURKS

PEOPLE who know me say that I am insane. Many of them tell me so to my face. They do it jokingly, but in their eyes I read that they half believe it.

But who wouldn't be crazy after going through what I experienced during those dread hours when, huddled in the after cockpit of a wrecked airplane, in the very center of the dread Gran Estero, the pilot dead in the seat ahead of me with his brains dashed out, I sat the hours away with my eyes peering into the shadows of the great swamp?

Perhaps I did not see all the things memory brings to mind from that dread page of the past. For the silver plate in my head suggests many things, added to which there is a long blank in it somewhere during which I somehow won free of the mysterious region of rotting slime and bubbling ooze—a blank that I find myself glad I can not fill. For it must have contained terrible things.

We had taken off from the flying field at Santo Domingo City with plenty of time to spare ere we should be due at Santiago. It only takes a little over an hour, and it still lacked three hours of sundown when we lifted, in a series of climbing turns, into the sunny sky of the Dominican Republic.

But we had forgotten the fog which sometimes rises suddenly in the Pass through the Cordilleras.

We were half-way through when the fog was upon us, shutting us out from the ground below as effectually as though we both had suddenly gone

blind, and were hurtling through a sea of mist at more than a hundred miles an hour—quite too fast to think of piling up on some unseen mountainside. I could scarcely see the pilot in the seat ahead. He looked back at me once and shook his head. Then he tried to see the ground below us, as did I. But whichever way we looked there was nothing but that sea of impenetrable white. Even the roaring of the engines was muffled by the density of the fog.

The pilot came back on his stick, and I knew by the way my back pressed against the cowling in rear that he was pointing her nose into the sky in the hope of climbing above the clouds.

Minutes that seemed like hours passed as we continued to climb, on a slant just great enough to keep from stalling, but great enough that I knew we had already cleared the tops of the mountains on either hand. Yet the fog held steadily. It must have been miles high.

Then the aviator got confused. I don't blame him. Though I have never flown a plane I have ridden in planes many times, and know what it means to be caught in a fog or among heavy clouds which shut out the earth. Had he flown straight he might have ridden through the fog; but he did a turn or two in an attempt to find an opening, and lost us completely. Only by the slackness of the belt which held me in could I be sure that we were flying right-side up—which was all I did know!

The altimeter said 10,000 feet, with the needle crawling slowly toward the 11,000 mark! And still the fog.

Finally the flyer held her nose in one direction, at least he tried to, and plunged like a mad thing through the fog. Yet we didn't penetrate the mist wall.

Long after we should have reached Santiago we were still in the fog, still above 8,000 feet, and darkness was settling down upon us.

There was enough gas in the tanks when we left the field to keep us in the air for four hours. My wrist-watch told me that we lacked but fifteen minutes of that time! In God's name, where were we? We might as easily have been far out over the Atlantic Ocean, the Caribbean Sea or Mona Passage.

I know now that we came down within five miles of Bahia de Escocesa, which is an arm of the Atlantic, and that, had our luck held for a few minutes more, we might have made a fairly safe landing on the broad shelving beach. Just a few minutes, as time is figured, and a life is lost—while another man lives to hear himself called a madman!

The engine spluttered and died. What a dread silence after the roaring of the motors!

The humming of the wind through the wires and braces told me that we were spiraling downward. We might be headed for a mountaintop or for the open sea and certain drowning—or might be heading directly into the field at Santiago, though only a fool could have hoped for such great good fortune. And still the fog about us held.

The pilot flung his helmet and goggles over the side and looked back at me, grinning widely.

"We're through, kid!" he said. "Ain't one chance in ten thousand of getting out of this with our hides. Let's hope that they find the remains sometime."

I am not ashamed to confess that I could not take it so light-heartedly as this; but then I am not made of the stuff of which flyers are constructed.

The aviator turned his eyes back to the instruments on the board before him, and our spiral continued to the tune of the wind in the struts, a tune that had a sinister meaning, a tune that sang of death up-rushing to meet us. The altimeter said 1,500 feet now, with the needle fairly dancing down toward zero.

WHEN we broke through the fog we were directly above a forest of nodding treetops, with scarcely a breathing space before the inevitable crash, which could have been avoided only did a miracle happen and the propeller start whirling again.

It seemed to me that we leveled and seemed to sink straight into the forest, though common sense told me that we must have struck at a speed of not less than ninety miles an hour. We hit the treetops and crashed through.

My head banged against the cowl- ing when we hit, and I remember nothing afterward—until I opened my eyes in the shadows which hold sway in El Gran Estero, and found that the safety belt still held me in my seat. What was left of our right wing was above the dank waters of the vast swamp, while on my left I could see nothing but shadows, and the oozy slime of the dread quagmire. Only the main part of our ship had held together, and this was steadily sinking forward because of the dead weight of the motor.

The aviator was asprawl in the forward cockpit, his arms hanging over the side. I noted that blood dripped from the fingers of his right hand.

I unfastened my belt and leaned forward, swaying dizzily as a terrible feeling of vertigo seized me.

I shook the aviator roughly by the shoulder.

"McKenzie!" I shouted. "Are you bad hurt, boy?"

He was. For, as I shook him, pulling him around by the shoulder, I caught a glimpse of his face. It was not a face, but a bloody smear, with a gaping wound in the forehead. His body was still warm, proof that I had been unconscious but a short time. There was no mark of blood on the cowling before McKenzie's face, and I wondered what had dealt him that blow which had dashed out his brains. Leaning forward carefully I strove to peer down into the cockpit.

When I saw what had done it I all but collapsed. For the forward cockpit had fallen squarely upon the jagged stump of a tree and this had gone through the light fabric and penetrated McKenzie's body in a way that I find myself unable to mention in cold print. He had been dead even before that blood-stained stump had come on through to bash out his brains.

There was nothing I could do for him. And there seemed little chance of saving myself.

I knew that I was somewhere within mysterious Gran Estero, in a plane that was gradually sinking of its own weight—and that I was mighty fortunate to have lived even this long. Besides which I knew that I was badly hurt, how badly I could only guess—as you can do when I tell you that a goodly portion of my skull is silver at the present moment.

How to get out, and what direction to take? How to reach land solid enough to support my weight? In the daytime I knew I could have done it, somehow—had I been in full possession of my faculties and my strength.

I studied the swamp around me, but as far as I could see in the darkness there was nothing but oozy morass, into which I should have dis-

appeared within a few minutes at most. Ever the plane seemed to sink lower, as though a great mouth were relentlessly sucking it down.

My head was aching terribly, and oddly colored dots were dancing before my eyes. Any moment I expected to lose consciousness—and rather hoped that, did I do so, I would never regain it. Death would be easy, and would save me untold trouble and privation, to say nothing of unplumbed suffering.

"Well, why don't you climb out of there and find us a way out?"

I started as though someone had suddenly placed a hot iron against my quivering flesh. In my mind I heard the words, yet I swear that my ears had heard nothing at all. Just an impression that someone had spoken—an impression that had the force of actuality.

The hair at the back of my neck seemed to lift oddly as I whirled and stared into the gloom which was now so deep in Gran Estero that I could scarcely see my hand before my face.

Under a tree with many great branches, in the very midst of an area acrawl with the ooze of the vast quagmire, stood Lieutenant McKenzie, boyishly smiling as he had smiled before the crash! From his puttees to his helmet and goggles he was dressed for flying—save for that ghastly red weal across his forehead!

My eyes must have bulged from their sockets as I stared at him; for he smiled again and the smile froze on his lips, never again to leave them. This time when he spoke his voice sounded hollow, and as cold as a voice from the tomb.

"Well, get going! We must get out of here!"

Yet I couldn't move a muscle!

Will you understand why when I mention that the dead body of McKenzie still lolled motionless in the forward cockpit?

McKenzie was dead, killed in a manner that has many times since caused me to waken from horrible nightmares with screams on my lips; yet he couldn't be dead when I could see him, as plainly as you see this page, standing there beneath that tree in the midst of Gran Estero!

I screamed aloud when I found that I could look through that figure under the tree and see the bole of the tree itself. Still that frozen smile rested upon those white lips; still that red weal showed on the forehead beneath the helmet—a red weal that seemed to be steadily dripping, dripping, dripping.

Then I began to laugh, a horrible laugh, in which my body shook so convulsively that I all but fell out of the cockpit into the slime.

And as I laughed the phantom of McKenzie disappeared as though a breath had erased it, leaving me alone in the sinking plane with the dead body for company.

But my laughter was short-lived.

For, looking around again for some possible footing place, my eyes found something in the swamp which had at first escaped my notice—a pair of bare feet, with their water-whitened soles just above the surface of the ooze! By some weird necromancy I could look down through the mud to the body which hung upside-down below those feet—the skeleton of a native who had been lost in the swamp.

For some reason my eyes darted back to where I had seen the phantom of McKenzie, to see the figure of a ragged native in his place. This one looked at me out of sunken eyes, and slowly his arm upraised as he pointed to the bare feet, which were all that I could now see of the gruesome thing just outside the plane. A voice issued from the motionless lips of the native—a voice that spoke soft words in gentle Spanish.

"*Si, Señor,*" said the voice, "it is I whom you see there!"

Wildly I laughed, and the phantom of the native vanished as the shade of McKenzie had done at the sound of my maniacal laughter.

Wildly, since I knew that my mind was going because of this weird horror, I searched the jungle wall with frightened eyes.

THE night drew on apace, and I will not dwell on it unduly, for I know that in that direction lies madness—madness more mad, even, than is now mine.

For I discovered that El Gran Estero is the trysting place of countless shades!

Out of the shadows they came to stare at me—out of the shadows to stare, to smile coldly, and to vanish—while I laughed at each in turn.

It is strange that I laughed; but I could not help it, for my head ached abominably, and I laughed to ease the pain. Is that a good reason? To me at the time it seemed so; but perhaps I laughed at the faces.

The faces?

I lost count of their vast number, for assuredly there must have been many who have lost their lives in El Gran Estero—whose faces came up before me, for the lips to smile coldly, to smile coldly and to vanish, while others came to take their places.

As it grew cooler as the night drew on, will-o'-the-wisps came up from the ooze. Balls of weird flame, balls that had the shape of faces with smiling lips—all sorts of faces. Faces of negroes, men and women—yes, and children; faces of Dominicans, bronze-burnished by a smiling sun, with here and there the pale, staring faces of white men. Thank God there were but few of these! For I found myself unable to look into their staring eyes. It was as though the white men were brothers of mine, and that I had somehow failed them in the weary search for a way out of the vast quagmire. When they smiled

coldly, reproachfully, and I could give them no aid, they would shake their heads sadly and disappear, only to show again down some vista through the tree-lanes, always looking back at me sadly before they disappeared for good.

The saddest of them all was a white woman with a babe in her arms. She stood for many minutes where McKenzie and the native had stood, and her eyes were sunken caverns ablaze with a vast reproach. Her eyes searched ceaselessly the wall of trees, seeking, seeking, seeking. At last she wandered down a lane through the trees, gliding softly atop the ooze. She looked back several times as she wandered aimlessly away, and once I fancied I could hear the subdued wailing of the babe in her arms. She must have heard it, too, for her head bent as though she soothed the phantom infant. She did not look up again, and, thus soothing the baby with which she must have died, she vanished into the vastness of the swamp. I wondered what man had been the cause of her going to her death in Gran Estero. For there was that in her eyes that told me a man was to blame.

Faces, faces, always the faces! And the dead blackness of El Gran Estero.

When all the shades I had seen, together with a host I had never seen before, some of the latter aborigines who must have gone to their death in the swamp during the regime of Columbus and his governors, came at last and gathered in the ooze about me, to smile coldly and sadly into my face, I must have gone clear out of my head, for that is the last dread happening which I remember.

The plane had sunk so low that slime was beginning to trickle into the cockpit in which I still sat huddled, when the army of shades gathered about me—silent and motionless as though they waited for something.

Did they wait for me to lead them out of this never-ending thralldom of theirs? I do not know. I do not know anything about it.

I only know the next thing I remember is that I awoke in a cot in the hospital in Santiago, and that the colonel of the regiment occupying the city was sitting at my bedside. When I opened my eyes the colonel turned to the doctor.

“Can he talk now, Doctor?”

The doctor nodded.

I told the colonel all that had befallen me. As I talked I saw a queer light come into his eyes, and knew that he doubted my story, may perhaps even have blamed me a little for what happened. I wonder why. His questions took a queer trend at the last.

“Why didn’t you go back into the swamp with McKenzie and help him salvage the engine of the plane?”

“But McKenzie is dead, sir! He was killed in the crash!”

Again that queer light in his eyes.

“But the natives who found you at the edge of the swamp swear that a man in uniform was with you—a man in helmet and goggles, a man answering in every detail the description of McKenzie. They say he led you out; but that as soon as he had attracted their attention and saw that you would be taken in charge, he turned back into the swamp before they could come close to him. You should have gone back in with him.”

But assuredly the colonel must have been mistaken. Perhaps his limited Spanish caused him to misinterpret the reports of the natives. I know, in my heart, that McKenzie never left that forward cockpit after the crash into El Gran Estero.

But do I know? After all there is that blank to be accounted for, and often I waken in the middle of the night and lie awake until dawn, wondering.