

# Weird Tales

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## Contents for December, 1927

Cover Design .....	Hugh Rankin	
<i>Illustrating a scene in "The Infidel's Daughter"</i>		
The Eyrie .....		724
<i>A chat with the readers</i>		
The Saturnienne .....	Clark Ashton Smith	728
<i>Versé</i>		
The Infidel's Daughter .....	E. Hoffmann Price	731
<i>Landon built a ziggurat in Feringhistan that he might aspire to the Hundred and One Strange Kisses of Sarpanit</i>		
The Sword of Jean Lafitte .....	W. K. Mashburn, Jr.	753
<i>The shade of the old pirate returns to wreak vengeance upon the last descendant of his enemy's family</i>		
The Swooping Wind .....	Wilford Allen	764
<i>A strange little tale about a scientist who was the sport and creature of the winds, and under their protection</i>		

(Continued on Next Page)

(Continued from Preceding Page)

- The Witch-Baiter** ----- **R. Anthony** 769  
*A torture-tale of the witchcraft craze in Holland—a Dutch zealot, fanatic superstition, and a day of reckoning*
- The Devils of Po Sung** ----- **Bassett Morgan** 775  
*A creepy, powerful tale of brain transplantation—a pirate story of the South Seas*
- White Lilies** ----- **Josie McNamara Lydon** 788  
*Verse*
- The Canal** ----- **Everil Worrell** 789  
*Through the night flapped evil shapes, vampire-things of loathsome aspect—a shuddery horror-tale*
- The Jungle** ----- **Cristel Hastings** 802  
*Verse*
- Bells of Oceana** ----- **Arthur J. Burks** 803  
*A gooseflesh story of the sea by the author of "The Invading Horde" and "The Ghosts of Steamboat Coulee"*
- Folks Used to Believe**  
**The Dragon and His Kinsmen** ----- **Alvin F. Harlow** 812  
*The dragon, the griffin, the wyvern and the hippogriff*
- The Dream** ----- **Maurice Rothman** 813  
*A peculiar story is this, a fantastic tale about a dreamer whose dreams were more vivid than reality*
- White Orchids** ----- **Gordon Philip England** 819  
*The extravagant passion for rare flowers led to a weird and grisly adventure, and disaster*
- When the Dead Return** ----- **Percy B. Prior** 826  
*It is sometimes unpleasant to have a husband return from the grave, especially if the widow is married again*
- The Sleepers** ----- **August W. Derleth** 829  
*A five-minute ghost-story—the passenger was annoyed at finding his berth occupied by a specter*
- The Time-Raider (Part 3)** ----- **Edmond Hamilton** 832  
*A four-part serial story about an entity that sweeps back through time to seize its victims*
- Weird Story Reprint**  
**Dracula's Guest** ----- **Bram Stoker** 849  
*This story was originally intended to be part of the book, "Dracula," but was excised before the book was published*

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# Folks Used to Believe

by ALVIN F.  
HARLOW

## The Dragon and his Kinsmen



**F**OR 2,000 years and more no fabulous animal was more universally accepted as really existing than the dragon in its various forms. The dragon which St. George, an early Christian hero, slew, was of the usual type—a thick, scaly body somewhat resembling a lizard's, bat-like wings, four legs with clawed feet like an eagle's, the body tapering into a tail which, like the tongue, had a sting in the end of it.

Even after 1700, a nature writer, though admitting that some doubted the existence of the dragon, said that there were "in Arabia Serpents called Sirenæ, which have Wings; being very swift, running or flying, at Pleasure; and when they wound a Man, he dieth instantly. These are supposed to be a kind of Dragons. . . . Dragons are also said to be bred in India and Africa; those of India are much the largest, being of incredible Length; and of these there are two Kinds, one living in the Marshes, which are slow of Pace and without Combs on their Heads; the other in the Mountains, which are bigger and have Combs. Some are of a yellow, fiery Colour; having sharp Backs, like Saws. These also have Beards. When they set up their Scales, they shine like Silver. The Apples of their Eyes are (as it is said) precious Stones, and as bright as Fire, in which, it is affirmed, there is great Virtue against many Diseases. Their Aspect is very

fierce and terrible . . . Some do affirm that the Dragon is a black Colour; the Belly somewhat green and very beautiful; that it has a triple Row of Teeth in each Jaw, and very bright, shining Eyes; that it has also two Dewlaps under the Chin, which hang down, of a red Colour."

Pliny, the old Roman writer, tells of how dragons in India concealed themselves in trees and sprang down on elephants, fixing their teeth in the elephant's neck and sucking its blood. The elephant's blood, Pliny declared, is very cold, and was therefore much sought by the dragon in hot weather. One dragon could drink all the blood in an elephant's body, but was made so stupid by it that when the elephant finally fell from weakness, the dragon was frequently crushed beneath its body.

Closely akin to the dragon was the griffin, whose head, shoulders, wings and forefeet resembled an eagle's, while the body, hind legs and tail were a lion's. Griffins were the monsters who guarded the deposits of gold in the mountains of Scythia in ancient times. The wyvern had a body and feet (only two) somewhat like an eagle's, save with scales instead of feathers, bat wings, and the head and tail of a dragon. The hippogriff had four legs; the forepart and wings were those of a griffin, the rear half of the body was that of a horse. A famous magician named Atlantes did his traveling on the back of a hippogriff.