

Weird Tales



The Occult • The Supernatural • The Bizarre

WINTER 1973

VOLUME 47 NUMBER 3

47961

CONTENTS

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| The Balloon Tree | <i>Albert Page Mitchell</i> | 2 |
| Sea Curse | <i>Robert E. Howard</i> | 7 |
| The Terror of the Water-Tank | <i>William Hope Hodgson</i> | 11 |
| Chicken Soup | <i>Katherine MacLean and Mary Kornbluth</i> | 19 |
| The Figure With the Scythe | <i>August Derleth and Mark Schorer</i> | 23 |
| The House (verse) | <i>H. P. Lovecraft</i> | 25 |
| How We Found Circe | <i>A. Merritt</i> | 26 |
| The Cats of Rome and Ghostly Hands | <i>Miriam Allen deFord</i> | 29 |
| Time (verse) | <i>Olaf Stapledon</i> | 34 |
| William Hope Hodgson-The Final Years | <i>Sam Moskowitz</i> | 35 |
| The Double Tower | <i>Clark Ashton Smith and Lin Carter</i> | 49 |
| The Mysterious Card and The Card Unveiled | <i>Cleveland Moffett</i> | 53 |
| The Splendid Apparition | <i>Robert W. Chambers</i> | 68 |
| The Dramatic in My Destiny | <i>Emma Frances Dawson</i> | 84 |
| Challenge (verse) | <i>Virgil Finlay</i> | 92 |
| The Eyrie | <i>Your Letter Department</i> | 93 |

Publisher
LEO MARGULIES

Editor
SAM MOSKOWITZ

Managing Editor
CYLVIA KLEINMAN

Published quarterly by **Weird Tales**, 8230 Beverly Boulevard, Los Angeles, California, 90048. Vol. 47, No. 3, Winter 1973. In corresponding with this magazine, please include your postal zip code number. Manuscripts must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope and are submitted at the sender's risk. © 1973 by **Weird Tales**. All rights reserved. Copyright secured under the International and Pan-American copyright convention. Cover by Bill Edwards. Printed in the United States of America at the Holyoke Magazine Press, 1 Appleton St., Holyoke, Mass. 01040.

THE REAL DEVOTEES of A. Merritt know that during the years he was editor of THE AMERICAN WEEKLY, at a time when it claimed the largest circulation of any periodical in the world, being included in the Sunday edition of every Hearst newspaper, he wrote virtually no fiction. All the stories he completed were done before he became top editor, and even those were relatively few. The appearance of a new A. Merritt story in ARGOSY was an event heralded with the blare of editorial trumpets. Therefore, any valid piece of A. Merritt's writing is cause for considerable interest.

How We Found Circe was originally a chapter in a book of his titled *The Story Behind the Story*, published in 1942 by THE AMERICAN WEEKLY for the purpose of showing prospective advertisers the care that went into the preparation of the features in their publication. In presenting the steps in the thinking by which he arrived at putting together a story on Circe, Merritt also reveals the thought processes he utilized in researching his many remarkable fantasies, *The Moon Pool*, *The Ship of Ishtar* and *The Snake Mother* among them.

There were other chapters that also would interest fantasy lovers, such as *The Great Stone Dog That Howled King Solomon's Doom* or the more "timely" one on *Planning an Expedition to the Moon*. Lest readers dash out offering fantastic sums of money for the volume, most of the chapters were on subjects like *The Story Behind Our Science Pages* or *The Story Behind the Housewife's Food Almanack*.

In his last years, Merritt was not permitted to retreat into his fictional fantasies, but had to spend even his spare time on the firing line with the sales department, helping to sell the advertisements that paid his salary.

This chapter is reprinted with the permission of THE AMERICAN WEEKLY, granted for an earlier edition of WEIRD TALES that was delayed in materializing.

How We Found Circe

By A. MERRITT

ARCHEOLOGICAL stories are the most difficult of all to present.

The subjects are, as a rule, as dry as the dust the diggers raise. But often beneath that dust lie treasures for thought and imagination as real as the material ones the workers uncover.

Yet although the matter may have its glowing core, it is not easy to siphon the heat out to warm the hearts or stimulate the brains of our readers; draw it through layers of crumbling brick and stone and re-invest it with the glamour of its youth; to make re-echo the voices that once laughed or wept within their walls; re-echo to the very tread of the feet, comely or masterful, that sped to happiness or lagged to sorrow through the time-gnawed chambers.

Without this sorcery, this careful

creation of illusion of life, the average archeological article is as dead as those who built the monuments.

Says Omar Khayyam—

*"They say the Lion and the
Lizard keep
The Courts where Jamsyd
gloried and drank deep;
And Bahram, that great Hunter—
the Wild Ass
Stamps o'er his Head but
cannot break his sleep."*

Nobody is much interested in the lion and the lizard; their place is in natural history stories. The trick is to wipe out the intruders and recreate Jamsyd and Bahram.

The value of the article to the reader depends upon how well we can

Copyright 1942, by THE AMERICAN WEEKLY

(Reprinted by permission.)

do this and, of course, upon how interesting the men and women were when they were alive.

Archeological stories are interesting, therefore, in direct proportion to their appeal to the imaginations of the reader, how ably we can open a magic window through which he can peer into the past, the importance of the personages he sees or the historic scenes that we unroll before him.

Particularly appealing are they if they can be linked up with Biblical personages or episodes.

If they interest and entertain the reader, these articles will add considerably to his knowledge.

I select two varying types of such stories to illustrate what I mean. Here are their headlines:

**MYSTERY OF THE GREAT
STONE DOG THAT HOWLED
KING SOLOMON'S DOOM**

*For Ages the Carven Idol
Guarded the Path to Judea,
Sounding Its Weird Warnings of
Invaders; Lured the Wise Ruler to
Desert Jehovah For His Wives' False
Gods; Was Torn from Its Pedestal
By Fanatic Arabs to Vanish For
Centuries Until Modern Army
Engineers By Sheer Chance Un-
covered It.*

**CIRCE WHO TURNED MEN
INTO SWINE—A MEMORY OF THE
HALF BEAST NEANDERTHAL?**

*A Landslide On the Italian Coast
Reveals a Cavern With a 70,000
Year Old Skull Which Throws New
and Astonishing Light Upon the
Ancient Sorceress of the Greek
Poet Homer's Strange Story—And
Professor Whitnall, Distinguished
Geologist, Suggests What May Be
the Real Explanation of That
Age-Old Legend, Old Testament
and Homer the Greek poet.*

Let's discuss the story of the Sorceress Circe.

It is a striking example of the trouble we take to build up one of these archeological features to secure, besides accuracy, the maximum of general human interest. Curiously enough, it didn't start out with the

slightest thought of that lady about whom the poet Milton wrote in *Comus*:

*"Who knows not Circe,
The daughter of the Sun, whose
charmed cup
Whoever tasted lost his upright
shape,
And downward fell into a grovelling
swine."*

We had received from Professor Harold O. Whitnall, distinguished geologist and anthropologist, a manuscript upon the possible reasons for the extinction of the Neanderthal race, curious beast-men who never had a chance to grow up into real men.

There have been several tons of stories printed about the Neanderthals, and I looked at the Professor's manuscript with a certain lack of interest. It did present a new point, however, and I was considering it for a one-page feature.

Then, happening upon a copy of the LONDON ILLUSTRATED NEWS, I saw an account of a very remarkable discovery—that of a cave in Monte Circeo on Capo Circeo, that is, Mount Circe on Cape Circe, in Italy, which a landslip had sealed up some 70,000 years ago and in which had been found the most perfect Neanderthal skulls and the oldest; with evidence that the whole place had been a Neanderthal settlement.

Having a somewhat extensive knowledge of and interest in mythology, if I do say it myself who shouldn't, it immediately occurred to me that there was something peculiar about the naming of that particular spot of land—Cape Circe and Mount Circe.

Were there any legends that this had actually been the home of Homer's enchantress? There was no reference to the ancient lady in the LONDON ILLUSTRATED NEWS article, nor suggestion of any connection between her and the brutish Neanderthal people.

Brutish people? A synonym for "brutish" is "swinish" a place named after the celebrated witch who "turned men into swine" and, in that place, relics of an actually swinish people.

I cabled over to Italy to find out

why the place had been named after Circe. Nobody knew—it had been so called from remote antiquity. But our correspondent dug up the fact that an extraordinary formation of rocks resembling a castle was known by the natives as Circe's Palace, and that curious rites connected with the Spring festival had been practiced there for generations—and still were. Masks were used in these rites and *many of them were masks of pigs*. Between festivals, the place was shunned as being "unlucky."

Well, there *was* something; something that might clothe with life those age-old Neanderthal bones.

Could this have been the legendary "Island of Circe" where Homer's heroic Odysseus was supposed to have landed and where his men were turned into swine?

Homer, it is known, wove many ancient legends into his epics. Could Circe's have been one of them? Might there not be a perfectly factual basis for the myth after all?

To more advanced man, the Neanderthals would have appeared as beasts; maybe swine, since the pig and man have remarkable resemblances. Pig's eyes, for example, are the only eyes of animals which are almost exactly like ours.

Women of advanced races have been captured by men of inferior

races and have at times ruled them.

Africa is full of legends of white queens—white women captives who by superior intelligence and force of character governed their captors.

Was it not possible that here was the origin of the whole Circe legend?

I submitted this theory to Dr. E. E. Free, who, until his untimely passing, was our advisor on all scientific matters. He was much struck by it. We made other researches and submitted the whole matter to Professor Whitnall.

So, finally the matter grew into a double-page—I forgot to say that there was the further curious confirmation that Cape Circe and Mount Circe would have been right on the line of Odysseus' journey, as given by Homer.

That it was interest-evoking was shown by the fact that at once we had several requests from scientific digests for permission to reprint parts of it.

To my mind, it was perfect treatment of a subject which ordinarily would have made dry reading. In it, and legitimately, we could combine fascinating myth, woman interest, picturesque information, explain the possible source of a story as world-widely popular as Cinderella or Snow-White, and at the same time give the reader a look-in upon an age whose people have been dust for some seventy millenniums.