

# THE ACOLYTE

AN AMATEUR MAGAZINE OF FANTASY AND THE SUPERNATURAL  
(An Outsider Publication)

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THIS ISSUE OF THE ACOLYTE IS DEDICATED  
TO THE MEMORY OF PAUL FREEHAFFER

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FRANCIS T. LANEY  
SAMUEL D. RUSSELL

# LITTLE-KNOWN FANTASISTS

## BY HAROLD WAKEFIELD

### 5. A. M. BURRAGE

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A. M. Burrage began to write stories while still at school, and became a professional author at 17. Serving as a private in the Artists' Rifles during the last war, he was invalided home in 1918, and has been contributing stories and articles to most of the better known English magazines since that time. Under the pen-name of "Ex-Private X", he has published two books, War Is War and Someone in the Room, and then later under his own name another collection of creepy tales entitled Some Ghost Stories.

Though obviously a disciple of M. R. James, he will never achieve the stature of his master, but on occasion he conveys a potent thrill to his readers.

In one of the best of Burrage's stories, Snee, a game of hide-and-seek is played by a group of twelve grownups at a christmas party. Into this game a thirteenth player intrudes, and it is not until one of the players seeking refuge in an already occupied alcove actually talks to and touches his companion that the true nature of the grisly occupant is revealed. The reader will readily discern the influence here of M. R. James.

Another powerful piece of writing is One Who Saw. It tells of a mysterious woman who sits at night in a garden with her face always averted, death or madness awaiting any man with the hardihood to gaze on her features.

In Nobody's House, a fine example of mounting suspense, a man reconstructs a murder of twenty years ago, an experiment which ends in death for himself.

The Waxwork is a psychological horror story in which the victim is killed by his own imagination. Laid in the chamber of horrors at a waxworks museum, this story builds up a powerful atmosphere.

The very trite theme of the ghost of an unjustly executed man returning to prove his innocence is saved by fine handling in Browdean Farm. Though very similar in theme, I consider this story to be far superior in treatment to E. F. Benson's The Hanging of Alfred Wadham.

An unusual and pathetic story is The Oak Saplings, in which the spirits of two murdered young lovers haunt a pair of saplings. The

LITTLE-KNOWN FANTASISTES. (concluded from page 13)

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trees sometimes appear to the chance passer-by as a pair of lovers murmuring endearments to each other while clasped in one another's arms. No reader will feel sympathy for the girl's murderous old father when the trees finally exact vengeance.

All the stories mentioned above deserve reading, though they perhaps reveal more the able craftsman than the master. In this connection, it is interesting to note that M. R. James thought highly of Burrage's work, saying: "Of living writers I have some hesitation in speaking, but on any list that I was forced to compile, the names of E. F. Benson, Algernon Blackwood, Walter de la Mare, H. R. Wakefield, and A. M. Burrage would find a place."