

# WEIRD TALES *The Unique Magazine*

EDWIN BAIRD, *Editor*

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*Have You Been Reading About King Tut?  
If so, You'll be Interested in*

# OSIRIS

*The Weird Tale of an Egyptian Mummy*

By ADAM HULL SHIRK

THE recent and lamentable death of Sir Richard Parmenter, F. R. G. S., is too fresh in the public's mind to warrant further reference, and were it not that I feel myself capable of throwing light upon the incidents contributing to the sudden and apparently unnecessary snuffing out of a valuable life, I should refrain from again alluding to it.

It is well known that the physicians at the time decided that valvular weakness of the heart must have been responsible for the death of the noted Egyptologist, but the statement of his own doctor that Sir Richard had never theretofore exhibited indications of such weakness, and that he was, to all appearances, in the best of health just prior to his death, caused considerable wonder.

I had thought to let the facts remain buried, but, for certain reasons, I shall reconsider my determination and tell what I know.

I shall always remember the night on which Sir Richard summoned me, as his counselor, to attend him at his apartments in the Albermarle. It was a night of storm, and the London streets were a mass of slime and slush. A beastly wind had sprung up, and as I left my chambers at the Temple it almost took me off my feet. Therefore, it was with no little satisfaction that I found a cheery log fire awaiting me in the library of my distinguished client's home, and the nip of brandy he provided was a life saver.

I noted, however, that for all his assumption of cheerfulness, something was preying upon his mind, and I determined to get at the root of the matter without delay:

"How can I serve you, Sir Richard?" I asked, briskly. "I see there is something troubling you."

"Is it as apparent as that?" he asked, trying to appear unconcerned; but his strong, homely features belied his effort at calmness.

Before I could reply, he went on: "But never mind that: I want you to write my will—now."

"Your will?" My expression of surprise and incredulity was natural, for

*"Mandrake"*

By

ADAM HULL SHIRK

*Will appear in the July  
WEIRD TALES*

*It's a Strange Yarn of  
Superstitious Fear*

*Don't Miss It!*

since I had been retained by him I had marked it as one of his few idiosyncrasies that he had never made his will. When I had mentioned to him the advisability of doing so, he had put it by with a whimsical remark about being superstitious.

"I am in earnest," he declared, "and it will be very simple—just a brief form, and I'll sign it with my man as witness."

"But why the haste?" I said. "Why not wait till I can have the document properly drawn up at my office tomorrow—"

"No; now!" he said, and there was such finality in his tone I had no choice.

My concern for my client, whom I really liked and respected immensely, prompted me to ask:

"You're not ill, Sir Richard?"

He shook his head, with the ghost of a smile on his rugged face.

"Physically—no. But—"

He paused, and after a moment he again urged me to proceed with the making of the will.

I drew up the document, which was a simple one, leaving the bulk of his large properties to his sister in Surrey, with numerous small bequests to friends and distant relatives, and a handsome sum and his private collection to the British Museum and the Imperial Museum of Egyptology. We had in his man, and the document was duly signed, after which he drew a long breath of relief and, with a return of something like his natural manner, passed me his cigar-case and leaned back in his chair, smoking comfortably.

"I've a story to tell you, Madden," he said between puffs, "and it's a queer yarn, too. You'll think—but never mind. Listen first, and say what you like afterward. Only—" he glanced about him with an apprehensive expression that fairly set my nerves atingle. "I hope we have time."

"Time for what?" I asked.

He relaxed again and smiled:

"It's all right," he declared. "I'm a bit nervous, I guess, but it's all right. Have another brandy."

We drank solemnly together. Then he settled back once more and I prepared to listen.

"Madden," said he, "perhaps you'll smile at what has seemed to me serious enough to warrant the steps I have just taken—making my will, I mean—but, however you look at it, I want you to know it's true—every word of it.

"My last trip to Egypt—from which I just returned a fortnight ago—was to have been my final one, anyway. I've made six trips out there in my life, and I've collected enough information to fill a dozen volumes. Also, I've contributed many fine specimens to the museum and corrected many misapprehensions concerning the interpretation of some of the

hieroglyphs. So, all in all, I think I've done pretty well.

"This last visit was in many respects the most satisfactory, and indeed it witnessed a triumph in my career as an Egyptologist that would be a crowning achievement, were it not for—but we won't speak of that—yet.

"I wonder, Madden, if you know anything about the ancient Egyptian religious ceremonies and forms of worship? Anyway, I may tell you that the Nile dwellers, as they were called, recognized as their supreme deity, Osiris, lord of the underworld. By some he has been identified with the Sun and, with the forty assessors of the dead, he was supposed to have judged the souls brought before him by Horus in the double halls of truth, after their good and evil deeds had been weighed by Anubis.

"The Egyptians revered Osiris with as devout worship as the Chinese give to Buddha, and the high priests of Osiris were regarded with almost as much awe as the deity himself.

"In all our studies and investigations, however, we have never been able actually to identify Osiris, but it is now generally conceded that he was believed to have lived on earth at one time and that it was only after his death that he assumed deific prerogatives. In this respect the modern Christian theology may be said to resemble the more ancient form to some extent.

"Osiris was pictured on many of the tablets as a creature with the head of a bull, though there is some disagreement on this score. In any event, his tomb was said to exist near Heliopolis, and it was to investigate this tradition that I made my last trip to Egypt."

Sir Richard paused to relight his cigar and listened to the storm which raged without. Again he gave that hasty, apprehensive glance about him, then proceeded:

"It would be impossible for me to explain to you, a layman, my inordinate

joy at finding—by what means and after what tedious labor, I won't stop to tell now—a deserted tomb which I knew, from certain hieroglyphic markings I found, was the very one of which I had been in search for the best part of half a year.

"Understand that this whole tradition of the tomb of Osiris was regarded by my fellow scientists as a myth, and if it had been publicly known that I was giving it sufficient credence to spend a lot of time and money searching for it I should have been looked upon as a madman and laughed out of the societies. This may enable you to appreciate more fully my sensations on actually locating at least the tomb. What I should find within, I hardly dared conjecture!

"The tomb of a God! Can you imagine it, Madden?

"And yet, if I had only stopped there! If only I had been content to pause with the knowledge I already possessed, without proceeding further and desecrating with sacrilegious hands that lonely sarcophagus in the desert!

"How I succeeded in penetrating this tomb, of the horrors of bats and crawling things that failed to stop me—of the almost supernatural awe that came upon me—I can not pause to tell. It is enough to say that I stood at last beside the tremendous coffin of stone, trembling from an unknown dread. And, as I stood there, something white fluttered by me and up through the opening into the outer air. A sacred Ibis—but how it had penetrated there and how it had lived, I can not say.

"Pour out another brandy, Madden—and throw that other log on the fire, too, if you don't mind. My, how the wind blows! Did you speak? . . . Pardon me—I'm nervous tonight as I said before, very nervous. . . . Where was I? Oh, yes—

"That great sarcophagus stood before me, and on it I saw inscribed the sacred scarabæus and the feather of truth, while

in the center was the word—the one, wonderful name—'Heseri'—which is the Egyptian for Osiris!

"Insatiable curiosity now took the place of the reverential awe—that should have possessed me, and with vandal hands I forced the stone lid from the casket. One glance I had of a great, bovine face, a *living* face, whose eyes looked into the depths of my soul—and then I fled as though all the devils of Amenti were at my heels. . . .

"That is all Madden, except that I am nervous—fearfully so. It is so unlike me. You know how small a part fear has played in my life. I have faced the dreaded simoon; I have been lost among savage tribes, I have confronted death in a hundred forms—but *never* have I felt as I do now. I tremble at a sound; my ears trick me into believing that I am always hearing some unusual noise; my appetite is failing, and I am feeling my age as I have never felt it until. . . . Good God! Madden! What was that sound? . . . Oh! *look behind you, Madden! Look! . . .*"

AND now I come to that portion of my statement that will probably be refused credence by those who read; but, as I live, it is the truth.

As Sir Richard uttered his last words, he fell forward to his full length upon the hearth rug, even as I turned in obedience to his command. The shadows were heavy in the far corner of the spacious room, but I could see a great, bulky something that swayed there, something that was a part, and yet, seemingly, was independent, of the shadows.

I had a vision of two burning eyes and a black shining muzzle—a heavy, misshapen head. A strange, animal-like, fetid odor was in my nostrils.

I shrieked, and, turning, ran madly from the room, stumbled to the stairs and fled into the wind-swept night.