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Contents for February, 1926

Cover Design.....O. Barker Petrie, Jr.

"Light as brilliant as the day broke about him. Automatically he leaped backward, caught his heel on a stone, and fell."

Red Ether.....Pettersen Marzoni 149

Two-part Scientific Romance of Death-Dealing Rays

The Isle of Missing Ships.....Seabury Quinn 173

Complete Novelette—Pirates—Cannibals—a Giant Octopus

The Word of Santiago.....E. Hoffmann Price 193

Malik Taus, the Stranger from Kurdistan, Abandons his Follower

The Avenging Hand.....Roy Wallace Davis 200

Weird Surgery—Manlike Beasts—and a Frightful Revenge

(Continued on Next Page)

(Continued from Preceding Page)

Phantom Billiards.....	Frank E. Walker	205
<i>Real Old-Fashioned Ghost Tale With a Thrill to It</i>		
Weird Story Reprints		
No. 8. The White Dog.....	Feodor Sologub	211
<i>It Lay in the Grass, Bayed the Moon, Looked Like a Werewolf</i>		
The Thing in the Glass Box.....	Sewell Peaslee Wright	215
<i>Arvin Separated Soul From Body, and Could not Unite Them Again</i>		
Italian Love.....	William James Price	222
<i>Verse</i>		
The Kidnaper's Story.....	Walter G. Detrick	223
<i>The Notorious Man-Wolf Falls a Victim of Dual Personality</i>		
On the Dead Man's Chest (Part 2).....	Eli Colter	232
<i>Occult Serial—Spirit Return—Belief and Unbelief</i>		
The Other Half.....	Edwin L. Sabin	245
<i>The Old Man Found His Answer in the Bleached Bones of a Skeleton</i>		
The Twa Corbies.....	Author Unknown	251
<i>Old Ballad</i>		
The Cats of Ulthar.....	H. P. Lovecraft	252
<i>A Short, Fantastic Tale</i>		
Spleen	Charles Bandelaire	254
<i>Verse, Translated for Weird Tales by Clark Ashton Smith</i>		
The Waning of a World (Conclusion).....	W. Elwyn Backus	255
<i>Four-part Novel About a Voyage to Mars</i>		
The Eyrie		272
<i>A Chat With the Readers</i>		

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SPLEEN

BY CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

Translated by Clark Ashton Smith

When the low sky weighs oppressive like a coffin-cover
 Upon the groaning spirit, prey to long ennui;
 When all the horizons, and the charnel clouds that hover,
 Pour out a black day sadder than the darknesses;

When the earth is changed into a humid prison-house,
 Where Hope, with futile fearful wing, time after time,
 Beats on the dripping wall as might a flittermouse,
 Or soars to meet the ceiling's rottenness and grime;

When all the suns are impotent to succor us,
 In a vast dungeon barred with ever-shafting rain;
 And when a silent people of spiders infamous
 Have come to weave their filaments upon our brain.

The bells of all the town, with rage funereal,
 Leap out and launch toward the heaven a frightful howling,
 Like that of demons homeless and inimical
 Who whine for blood and souls, about the steeples prowling.

—And the long hearses, with no music and no drums,
 Defile with lentor in my mournful soul; Despair
 Weeps, even as Hope, and dire, despotic Anguish comes
 To hang her stifling sable draperies everywhere.