

Weird Tales

REGISTERED IN U.S. PATENT OFFICE



Published monthly by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company, 317 Baldwin Building, Indianapolis, Ind. Entered as second-class matter March 20, 1923, at the postoffice at Indianapolis, Ind., under the act of March 3, 1879. Single copies, 25 cents. Subscription, \$2.50 a year in the United States; \$3.00 a year in Canada. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts, although every care will be taken of such material while in their possession. The contents of this magazine are fully protected by copyright and must not be reproduced either wholly or in part without permission from the publishers. FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor.

Copyright, 1925, by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company

Contents for June, 1925

- Cover Design Andrew Brosnatch
- Monsters of the Pit Paul S. Powers 341
A Thrilling Tale of Gigantic Spiders
- The Devil-God Frank Belknap Long, Jr. 349
The King Read Poetry, so the State Took Measures to Protect Itself
- Black Hill Frank Owen 357
The Golden Buddha Brought Misery and Terror to Cass Ledyard
- The Third Thumb-print Mortimer Levitan 369
A Scientist Makes a Horrifying Discovery About Himself
- Marble Laurence D'Orsay 375
Evil Was the Brilliant and Inventive Mind of This Physician

(Continued on Next Page)

(Continued from Preceding Page)

- The Clock** ----- **Arthur Styron 382**
A Five-Minute Story of a Terrible Obsession
- The Soul That Waited** ----- **Louis B. Capron 385**
A Passion for a Mummy—a Love That Bridged the Centuries
- An Arc of Direction** ----- **Junius B. Smith 393**
His Horoscope Said He Would Be Hanged on a Certain Day
- Hurled Into the Infinite (First Part)** ----- **J. Schlossel 397**
Two-Part Astronomical Story
- The Witch of Kravetz** ----- **Michael V. Simko 415**
A Barbarous Russian Custom—and a Famous Beauty
- Lips of the Dead** ----- **W. J. Stamper 422**
A Gruesome Tale From the History of Haiti
- The House, the Light, and the Man** .. **Gordon Philip England 427**
A Specter Rose From the Coffin—and the Man's Mind Gave Way
- Invaders From the Dark (Conclusion)** ----- **Greya La Spina 431**
Serial Novel of Werewolves and Occult Powers of Evil
- Loo Tun Sin** ----- **Everett Boston 450**
The Dawn Clouded the Moon With Trouble, so Loo Marred the Dawn
- Strange Tales From Santo Domingo** ----- **Arthur J. Burks 453**
No. 5. The Phantom Chibo.
The Bandit José Espinosa Lures His Victims to a Quagmire
- Dead Hands** ----- **Walter G. Detrick 458**
They Stretched From the Grave, These Hands of His Grandmother
- Servants of Satan** ----- **Seabury Quinn 463**
No. 4. George Burroughs, Martyr.
True Tale of New England Witchcraft
- The Hanging of Aspara** ----- **Leavenworth Macnab 468**
Sensational Newspaper Hoaxes Give Tang to an Execution
- The Eyrie** ----- **472**
A Chat With the Readers

For Advertising Rates in WEIRD TALES Apply Direct to

WEIRD TALES

317 Baldwin Building

Indianapolis, Ind.

*The Monotonous Ticktock of the Timepiece
Filled Him with Unreasoning Rage*

THE CLOCK

By ARTHUR STYRON

Author of "The Lip"

ALL my life I have had a deep and abiding dread of monotony. The unvarying and wearisome sameness of life irks me and fills me with depression. I fear and hate all men because I am compelled to shun them in order to avoid that hideous mother of monotony, Habit, which tears my nerves to shreds and flings them mockingly in my twitching face. Regularity of any sort fills me with resentment and impotent rage against the scheme of things. The steady patter of rain-drops drives me, hysterical and gibbering, to bury my face amongst the pillows, under a mattress—any place where the steady drip-drop, drip-drop, is not audible. The sound of drum-beats fills me with such uncontrolled rage and fury that I shriek aloud in my distress, and hurl stones or any missiles available at the miscreants who dare to provoke me. I cannot—I dare not—I will not—endure drab uniformity! My imaginative and excitable temperament demands variety.

Since I am thus constituted, is it any wonder that clocks fill me with hatred and terror?—those prosaic engineers of space, with their dreadful, unfailling cadence, their ceaseless vigil over man's allotted time, their steady and untiring ticktock, ticktock, toward eternity! They terrify me—poison me—madden me!—those hideous reminders of inexorable Time—Time,

the faithful ally of unrelenting and unyielding Death!

I LIVED alone with an old woman who had taken me when I was a child, from a foundlings' home. Her I loved in a way, for she was kind, and very old and feeble. Yet she always insisted upon regularity,—eating, sleeping and working at set times. And when I undertook to vary my life from day to day, such as retiring at noon, and rising for breakfast at midnight, in order that I might thus break the monotony of my existence, I met with such determined opposition from the old woman that her, too, I began to fear and hate.

The house in which we lived was an old, rambling country place, of splendid and pretentious proportions, though with an air of pervading gloom and loneliness. The furnishings were mostly heirlooms and antiques of great beauty and value, of which the old woman was very proud.

Among the chattels were two ancient and costly clocks, of rare and unusual design and workmanship. They stood side by side in the great hall, tall, grim and spectral, regulating the household by their minute divisions of space. At least, one of them did so. The other had not run for many, many years. The old woman had frequently related to me how that one had stopped at a quarter past midnight, the very minute—ay, the

very second—her husband had died: stopped of its own accord, so she said, or by the hand of some unseen guest! With her own hands she cared for and cleaned and polished the two clocks. Every night, with unvarying regularity, she wound the *living* clock, which, she told me with the utmost confidence, would stop at the moment of her death just as the other one had stopped when her husband died!

Is it any wonder, then, that I feared these damnable machines almost as much as I hated them? I might have borne the awe and dread with which I regarded them, but the continual ticking of the living clock—the old woman's life-piece, as I called it—lashed my nerves to such a state of frenzy that, goaded beyond endurance, I would rush, trembling and screaming, from the house, into the night, the cold, the storm—anywhere, anywhere, away from that gruesome monotony, that eternal cadence! . . .

There was a chime, too; a chime that gave out a thick, gloomy, resonant sound, filling me with foreboding and terror; a sound that brought to mind grim death and a grimmer reckoning; that told of unsubdued passions and stern retribution. Each quarter the time increased until upon the hour it became a complete stanza. So gruesome was the effect of this music upon my imagination that I could not rid my thoughts of it: I could not sleep, I could not rest; always I was anticipating, waiting for the next installment. Sometimes in the small of the night I would creep from my sleepless bed and crouch in the dark, chilly hall, in order that I might hear the ticking and chiming more plainly, waiting for the dreadful music to start again, and then for the next sound, and the next, and so on until morning. . . . At times I would make a determined effort to throw off the spell: I would say to myself, "After the next quarter chimes I shall hurry to bed and fall

asleep before it sounds again." Then as soon as the quarter's direful melody had ceased, I would hasten to my room, shivering with cold and nervousness, and lie with tightly closed eyes, courting sleep. But big, pointed hands would clutch at my heart; brassy voices would laugh musically and mockingly in my ears until, unable to endure it longer, I would rush back to the dark, cold hall where I could count the steady ticktacks and listen for the unvarying chime the rest of the long night!

AS TIME wore on, I realized that my condition was becoming grave. Thoughts of destroying the clock occupied me constantly, but I could not do it, because I feared the frightful thing with all my soul.

On one occasion I did approach the old woman with cunning and clever arguments as to why she herself should stop the clock, but she indignantly refused. After that, so it seemed to me, I began to detect her stealing furtive and suspicious glances at me. She suspected my trouble! She knew! Dear God, I verily believe she knew my suffering and agony, and yet she would not stop that fiendish clock! So I began to burn with a remorseless hatred for the old woman; a desire for revenge.

Then it was that I cunningly devised a scheme to appease my hatred of the old woman and rid myself of the monster at the same time. The old woman had said that the clock *would stop of its own accord when she died!* Very well. In this way she should accomplish what she had refused to do, and what I myself feared to do.

Yes, I resolved to kill the old woman. I felt sorry for her, because she had been kind to me, and she was very old and feeble; but she stood between me and my happiness and she must die! That very night I would per-

petrate the deed and rid myself forever of this lesion upon my soul! . . .

After dark I began to make my arrangements. They were very simple. The house stood in a lonely neighborhood. No one would hear. The old woman was very aged and infirm, and could make no resistance. . .

She retired early, as was her wont, and I went to my room to listen and wait. I planned to wait until the midnight hour had struck and then accomplish the deed before the clock should begin another day with its quarter's melody.

Hardly breathing, I crouched in my room until the midnight hour had struck; waited until the last note of the awful dirge had faded into the dreadful stillness of the night. Then, carrying in my hands a small hatchet, I made my way stealthily toward the old woman's room. I moved very slowly and cautiously, inch by inch, creeping on my hands and knees so as to make no sound. On my way I paused before the tall, grim clock to gloat.

"Monster!" I gibbered in a high, thin voice (for I did not wish the old woman to hear and become alarmed). "Fiend! Damned soul! Never again will you raise your hellish voice! Never again shall I tremble and shake with terror at your taunting melody! Never again—for soon you will be forever stilled!

In my excitement, I had unconsciously allowed my voice to rise to a shrill, piercing treble. Rage possessed me. I rose to my feet and shook my fist at its evil shape. I screamed maledictions and curses at it, and laughed with fiendish joy and triumph.

"Agent of Hell!" I shrieked, brandishing my hatchet, and dancing about in a frenzy of hate; "you have spoken your last! You shall never, never, use your brassy lungs again!"

The words were scarcely out of my mouth when on the clear, dread still-

ness of the night there broke a sound—hoarse, bold, mocking!—a sound that froze my blood, that made my hair rise with terror, that filled me with surging fury. I had miscalculated my time *because I had not gone by the clock!* The demon was beginning to strike the quarter—to mock me! Beginning—but no more! For with the first note such a wave of rage and loathing swept over me—hatred of the monster, and fury at having been thwarted in my plans—that I forgot my fear, forgot everything save that I was mad! I uttered an awful cry and leapt upon it. With superhuman strength I dashed it to the floor, where it fell with a terrific crash. Shrieking invectives, I tore into its vitals with my bare hands, destroying, mangling.

"Devil," I raved, "you shall not speak! You shall not! You shall—*NOT!*"

IN A few minutes it was a complete wreck. It lay on the floor, bruised, broken, seeming, in my excited imagination, like a murdered thing.

Laughing loudly and shrilly, and clutching in my wounded and blood-stained hands the remnants of the mutilated machine, I rushed to the old woman's room.

She lay quietly on the bed, gazing at me with horror-dilated eyes.

"See," I screamed, throwing the bloody remnants upon the floor. "See, old woman! There is your clock! Now it will hardly stop when you die! Ha, ha!"

Then a strange feeling of awe crept over me. I ceased raving and looked intently at the old woman. In the pale light of a flickering candle I could see that she still gazed at me with horror-dilated eyes, but now I saw that they were sightless. The old woman was dead! She had died when the clock stopped!