

Weird Tales

REGISTERED IN U.S. PATENT OFFICE



Published monthly by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company, 2457 E. Washington Street, Indianapolis, Ind. Entered as second-class matter March 20, 1923, at the post office 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. English office: G. M. Jeffries Agency, Hopefield House, Hanwell, London, W. 7. 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.

NOTE—All manuscripts and communications should be addressed to the publishers' Chicago office at 450 East Ohio Street, Chicago, Ill. FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor. Copyright, 1927, by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company

Contents for July, 1927

- Cover Design ----- C. C. Senf
Illustrating a scene in "The Return of the Master"
- The Return of the Master ----- H. Warner Munn 6
The Werewolf of Ponkert returns from the pit of Hell to thwart the sinister Master who has wrought his downfall
- Gray Ghouls ----- Bassett Morgan 21
A creepy weird tale of the South Seas, giant apes and ery murders—a startling story of surgery
- The Impossible ----- Don Robert Catlin 35
Travis sought out the source of the tricks of Black Magic, and was trailed across the world by a malignant Chinaman
- The Unchained Devil ----- Roscoe Gilmore Stott 42
The violinist made an evil pledge to a statue, and was redeemed from utter ruin by the love of a girl

(Continued on Next Page)

(Continued from Preceding Page)

- The Curse of Everard Maundy**-----**Seabury Quinn** 49
An eldritch tale of voodoo, reanimated corpses, and the intrepid little French ghost-breaker, Jules de Grandin
- Tangled Skeins** -----**Mary McEnnery Erhard** 69
An utterly strange adventure was that of the Rev. Wilfred Cumberland—a story of transposed personality
- A Fable** -----**Clark Ashton Smith** 76
Verse
- The Ultimate Problem**-----**Victor Rousseau** 77
The last of a series of stories, each complete in itself, dealing with Dr. Ivan Brodsky, "The Surgeon of Souls"
- The El Dorado of Death**-----**Percy B. Prior** 84
A ghost-story of the gold-diggings of Australia—the tragic adventure of two brothers
- As Always** -----**A. Leslie** 86
Verse
- The Mystery of Sylmare** -----**Hugh Irish** 87
Strange suicides shocked the artist-colony at Sylmare—the story of a conspiracy of plant-life against humanity
- The Edge of the Shadow**-----**R. Ernest Dupuy** 102
A tale of the terror that hides in the night—a story of an evil entity, and the howling of dogs in the darkness
- The Old Crow of Cairo**-----**T. Lovell Beddoes** 105
Verse
- The Algerian Cave**-----**Dick Heine** 106
Reincarnation played strange pranks in the lives of Paul Mitrande and Louis Fanon
- The Dark Chrysalis (Part 2)**-----**Eli Colter** 113
The epic of the microbe-hunters—a three-part serial novel dealing with the terrible scourge of cancer
- Weird Story Reprint**
The Dragon Fang -----**Fitz-James O'Brien** 125
A bizarre and fantastic tale of China under the emperors—a story of strange magic, and love, and a phantom duck
- The Eyrie** ----- 138
A chat with the readers

For Advertising Rates in WEIRD TALES Apply Direct to

WEIRD TALES

Western Advertising Office:
WEIRD TALES
450 E. Ohio Street
Chicago, Ill.
Phone, Superior 5556

Eastern Advertising Office:
GEORGE W. STEARNS, Mgr.
Flatiron Building
New York, N. Y.
Phone, Ashland 7329

THE EDGE OF THE SHADOW

By R. ERNEST DUPUY

THAT you should believe this would be remarkable. I have no explanation. Limited knowledge I have, and hearsay for the rest. The hearsay at first I did not believe. But when the man who lifted the curtain had gone West—and he was a hard-headed soldier man—I wondered. For his going, when one takes everything into consideration, fitted in. And to that, at least, I can bear witness.

We were lying in our dugout at Romagne, waiting for zero hour. Outside, Fritz's counter preparation was messing things up considerably. Through an instant's lull came the long-drawn howl of a dog—if it was a dog. And something scratched and slithered against the sturdy logs of our shelter. A spray of shrapnel, perhaps.

"It's calling me," was all that he said.

I can still see his face and the quizzical lift of his eyebrows in the glare of our gasoline lantern—we were motorized artillery and did things in style. And as I returned his stare, his yarn, forgotten for two years, came back.

He had to go out a few minutes later to check up data at the guns, and when we found him in the dawning a splinter—or something—had ripped away his throat. Nothing else. But even now, when a dog gives dismal tongue in the quiet of the night, I feel

my hackles rise and the ice creep up my backbone, and I wonder.

It was a book that had made him open up to me in the first place—a book called *Dracula*. Ever read it? No? Well, sometime when you want a good crawly chill, look it over. He noticed it on the shelf one night when he had dropped in at my quarters for a chat, some time before we went into the war. And he asked me what I thought of it. He didn't pay much attention to my opinion, I guess, but sat there sucking his pipe and nodding while I talked. And then he said:

"I've scraped against the edge of that stuff. Just the edge. It's not so good."

Now, he wasn't at all the type of man that one would link up with that sort of yarn. And for that reason it made all the more impression on me. He didn't attempt any explanation either; just told it as it struck him. And do not get the idea that he was boasting of his conquest. I didn't know the girl, never would know her. And we had been friends too long for him to fear that I might blab. His thoughts had just come to a boil, I imagine, looking at the book and bringing back the thing, so he had to get it out of his system.

It seems that he had met her in a casual way, but first glance had been like fire to tow. Headlong they went into it, with open eyes, a well-matched

pair. She must have been a wonder. A Russian, with all the Slavic grasp of the *ars amandi*, one moment all fire and passion, the next an iceberg. A thoroughbred, too. "Gone wrong," if you will, but always a thoroughbred. And he—was my friend. Not that he elaborated on their adventure. I simply filled in, in my mind's eye, the brief, bold outline he blocked out.

THE climax came one night when they were riding. They had had several nocturnal prowls on horseback, I gathered; brief intervals of dalliance. This night they took a trail that was new to both. Imagine them jogging side by side, the August moon rising over the treetops, throwing the masses of foliage into deep relief; great blocks of velvet blackness against the cloudless sky. About them fields shining silver in the moonlight.

The shadows swallowed them up as the trail twisted into the woods, the man leading, his white-shirted back gleaming vaguely to the woman following close, the horses picking their way up hill and down. Through brush and trees the trail ran, now sloping upward on hillsides whose inky depths defied the faint moonlight; now plunged in woodland pockets. I could feel the gloom that closed them in, as he talked; a tangible thing seemingly, ever surrounding, yet ever giving way before their advance until at last they broke through to a moonlit plateau and cantered together over the swelling ridges to draw rein on the very crest of the cliff.

Below them the lowlands spread in tawny languor till they touched the silver-flashing edge of the moon-swept sea on the horizon; behind them the swale of plateau ran clear to the curtain of the woods.

And then, he said, they decided to explore farther. Again they entered the woods—this time a clump of trees

guarded by a fringe of stunted, desolate-looking deadwood. And somehow the air felt different. There was a chill and dankness about it he had not noticed in the other woods. The girl shivered. Up a slight incline and then into the open again and on their right a dark mass—the gloomy pile of a deserted house, its empty windows black leering dead eyes, the moonlight heaping fantastic shadows about its front and through the ruins of what had once been a noble portecochère. A bit of broken pane in one of the lower windows flickered eerily in the moon-rays. The girl brought her animal close to his, her eyes shielded with one hand as she passed the house with averted head.

"What's the matter, dear?" he joked. "Afraid that you will see the goblins holding carnival inside?"

But she only cowered closer in the saddle. And that was so odd, so different from her usual bold demeanor that it chilled him. And then something, vague, unformed, brushed between them. He felt it touch his boot, he said.

The girl screamed, the horses plunged, and she wheeled her beast, crowding the man into the brush as she spurred past him. He followed, only to see her throw her horse once more upon its haunches as she turned again, squarely in front of the house. And the thought passed through his mind of the house as a finite being, an unclean object squatting there inside its circle of blasted trees.

He rode up beside her as she sat, with staring eyes and heaving breasts. And to his question she answered simply.

"It is the end," she said.

And then her mood changed and her lips sought his and covered them with voluptuous kisses.

"Dismount," she whispered. I could see the perspiration gather on his forehead as he told this part, although his voice never changed.

"Dismount," she coaxed again, and her lips caressed his throat. Her arms were about him now as they pressed closely, the horses jammed against one another.

"We are going in there together, dear boy," and the white teeth touched his flesh. And through him passed a wave of pure terror.

"I'm damned if we are!" he snapped, and tearing himself loose, snatched at her bridle and urged the horses into a gallop. He didn't remember how they got out, he said. The horses must have found the way. All he remembered was a rush through the restraining underbrush, the girl sobbing as they went, until at last they broke through to the high road and sanity.

That night she told him her story. Told him, with his arms about her; and he quivered now and then at the telling, and once, as a dog howled somewhere in the distance, he pushed her from him for a moment. She understood and laughed, though the tears were close beneath.

She was twelve, she said, when the Terror first came to her. In her home on the Dniester, almost in the shadow of the Carpathians—a feudal hold whose foundations went back to time immemorial, one wing was forbidden territory. Blocked off from the rest of the old castle it was, with its own tiny court, the only entrance a door giving from the east tower to the courtyard. The gatekeeper, old Portal, was the only human she had ever seen go through its entrance.

Playing with her jacks one afternoon she found the courtyard door open, and with the curiosity of a child overcoming the strict injunction, had slipped in.

It was late and the rays of the setting sun were striking the massive tower door. Sitting on the lintel she idly threw the jackstones against the oak. Deeper the shadows grew except

for one bright spot, at the height of a man's head, where the sunlight struck. Once again she carelessly tossed the jacks against the door. There was a rattle and stir inside, and with a creaking groan the door swung inward and the child found herself staring at something that lurked and mewed in the opaque shadow. Startled, she rose to her feet, and it rose too, and stood with head and shoulders framed in the light of the dying sun, gazing down on her.

Terror froze the girl, for through the dusk she could see the body—the body of the Thing That Should Not Have Been. And she cowered there. It bent toward her and she felt herself picked up in arms that were not human, crushed against a form not human, while the face that was human but should not have been blew its fetid breath upon her. In a voice rasping and metallic, like no human voice, it spoke, in a horrid, unforgettable monotone that thrilled and bit deep into her brain.

"You have come to me of your own free will; you have called me. Again will I come to you and yet again. And you shall belong to me, body and soul, to do my bidding, for the ages and ages to come."

One arm forced the girl's head back, passing over her neck in a dreadful caress. The Face bent over her throat, the slaving lips touched her skin, the pointed teeth pressed against her flesh. Came one shriek of terror from her and then oblivion.

She was sixteen when she met the Terror again. Riding through the woods near Garenstein with her cousin Ivan, the pair of them madly in love, she had felt the icy blast of a wave of horror and sensed the shadowy Thing that loped on all fours by her stirrup, its hot breath on her boot and the touch of fearsome lips on its leather. All that evening she had cowered in her room, gazing

at the boot that lay where she had flung it, a broad white mark blasted on its shining surface. For she was certain then, she told him, that what they had said was a terrible dream, four years ago, had been no dream at all.

Ivan, called to the colors the next day by the mobilization, lay, a few months later, a sprawling corpse in

the blood-soaked morasses of the Mazurian lakes, she told him.

Whether or not my friend ever saw the girl after that I don't know. At any rate he never mentioned the thing to me from that day until the night he died. So there the matter lies. I can not give any explanation. Perhaps you can. But the howl of a dog at night annoys me.
