

A MAGAZINE OF THE BIZARRE AND UNUSUAL

Weird Tales

REGISTERED IN U.S. PATENT OFFICE

Volume 26

CONTENTS FOR JULY, 1935

Number 1

Cover Design	M. Brundage	
<i>"The Avenger from Atlantis"</i>		
The Avenger from Atlantis	Edmond Hamilton	2
<i>An amazing tale that sweeps across the dusty centuries to our own time</i>		
Waiter Number 34	Paul Ernst	22
<i>A powerful weird story of war and death</i>		
Why Was My Dream So Real?	June Power Reilly	29
<i>Verse</i>		
Jirel Meets Magic	C. L. Moore	30
<i>A tremendous adventure beyond the castle windows, by the author of "Shambleau"</i>		
There Is a Might	Elma Dean	53
<i>Verse</i>		
Satan in Exile (part 2)	Arthur William Bernal	54
<i>An astounding weird-scientific story about a Robin Hood of the airways</i>		
The Curse of the Valedi	Captain S. P. Meek	78
<i>An evry tale of the dark powers that infest the slopes of the Carpathians</i>		
A Grave Must Be Deep	Aalla Zaata	88
<i>A strange weird story of India and a child's grave</i>		
On a Train with a Madman	Roy Temple House	97
<i>A tale of stark terror, adapted from the German of Pan-Appan</i>		
The Honor of Don Pedro	Wallace J. Knapp	103
<i>A bizarre ghost story of old Spain</i>		
The Violet Death	Gustav Meyrink	108
<i>A story of Tibet and the gruesome power of a shouted word</i>		
Weird Story Reprint:		
The Wondersmith	Fitz-James O'Brien	112
<i>A fascinating novelette of eighty years ago</i>		
The Eyrie		138
<i>The readers express their opinions</i>		

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, \$3.00 a year in the United States. English office: Charles Lavell, 13, Serjeants' Inn, Fleet Street, E. C. 4, London. 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 840 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Ill. FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor.

Copyright 1935, by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company.

COPYRIGHTED IN GREAT BRITAIN



WEIRD TALES ISSUED 1st OF EACH MONTH

The Violet Death

By GUSTAV MEYRINK*

*A brief story of Tibet and the gruesome power of a
shouted word*

A DAY or two before Pompejus Jaburek died in the hospital in Lucknow, he called the head nurse, entrusted to her a bulky envelope which he had been keeping under his pillow, and urged her, after his death, to see that its contents were given as wide publicity as possible. She might turn it over to the Government, to the press—she would know better than he how it could be made widely known. He had no doubt that the information contained in it was profoundly important—at least it was extremely strange and curious—and the only reason why he had not told his whole story when he had first got back to civilization and safety was that he was afraid of being tempted to betray a secret which might do the world incalculable harm. Well—she would understand what he meant when she had read his story, and after all, the delay was not important, since he was growing so much weaker that he knew he could not live a great deal longer. And when he died, carrying the secret with him, the danger would be over, at least the danger of any harm for which he should be responsible, and only the strange and perhaps valuable information would remain.

Pompejus Jaburek was a nondescript southeast European who had been a servant of the British explorer Sir Roger Thornton. The most remarkable thing about him was that he was as deaf as a post—he had told the nurse once that he

had gone stone-deaf as a child and had never heard a sound since—but that he was so expert at lip-reading that in a good light he could talk to you for hours, so easily and intelligently that you would have had no suspicion of his deafness if it had not been for the careful, singsong tone that all deaf persons acquire, like the extraordinarily cautious step of a blind man. Aside from this, his English was perfect.

He had been brought to the hospital from somewhere off to the north, two or three months before, in a very dilapidated condition, with a bad wound in his foot, and apparently with his mind clean gone. He had recovered his faculties in time, and had grown so much better that he was able to sit up in bed and write, industriously, for hours—hence the manuscript which he was bequeathing to the hospital—but although he talked intelligently and sometimes rather freely, his eyes glittered with terror when anything was said about his relations with Sir Roger, and he would cut the discussion short with a curt declaration that he was sure the English explorer would never be seen again. And since no one was sure that Pompejus Jaburek was entirely sane, no one pressed him for an explanation. He wasted away from what seemed to be the effects of a slow poison, and one morning he did not awaken.

His manuscript, written in spite of great weakness and distress of mind, was almost impossible to decipher and was full of gaps and inconsistencies. But its drift was approximately as follows:

* Adapted by Roy Temple House from the German.

SOMEWHERE up on the Tibetan frontier, Sir Roger Thornton had been visited by a Tibetan "Sannyasin" or penitential pilgrim, on his way to Benares. Sir Roger had a profound respect for the Sannyasin. He knew that they are pretty sure to be intelligent, and that they are filled with an earnestness that makes them entirely honest. He did not know why the Sannyasin told him the story of the strange Tibetan colony in the isolated valley, but he had seen and heard so many mysterious things in his contacts with this strange race that nothing he heard about them surprized him. He knew that they hate the Europeans and that they cherish magic secrets with which they hope some day to destroy them. But Sir Hannibal Roger Thornton was one of the bravest men who ever lived, and he determined at once to see with his own eyes whether this colony possessed the magical powers which the Sannyasin imputed to them.

Sir Roger had a group of Asiatic guides and servants with him, but he knew that they were superstitious and cowardly, and that they would be entirely useless on such an expedition as this. So he touched his deaf Balkan lieutenant with his stick, and he told him in detail all that he had learned from the Tibetan ascetic.

Some twenty days' journey from their camp, in a side valley of the Himavat, which had been so carefully described to him that he could go directly to it, it appeared that there was a very curious bit of territory. It was a tiny valley, and on three sides of it the mountains rose almost perpendicularly, so that there was no entrance or egress except from the fourth side, and the fourth side was very strangely cut off by gaseous exhalations which rose constantly from the spongy earth, and which were so deadly poisonous that any living being which tried to cross would be almost certain to be suffocated and

never reach the other side. In the ravine itself, which was reported to be in dimensions perhaps half a dozen miles each way, lived a little tribe, in the midst of the most luxuriant vegetation, a tribe belonging to the Tibetan race, wearing a characteristic pointed red cap, and worshipping a Satanic being in the form of a peacock. This devilish being, in the course of the centuries, had taught the tribe a potent black magic, and had transmitted secrets to them which were capable, in time, of changing the face of the earth. Thus, they had perfected a kind of melody, which if properly executed would destroy the strongest man in an instant. . . .

Pompejus grinned sarcastically.

Sir Roger explained to him that he had thought out a way of passing the poison-gas region with the help of diving-helmets and reservoirs of compressed air, and that he was sure there would be no serious difficulty about reaching the valley in this way. Pompejus Jaburek nodded approval, and rubbed his dirty hands together delightedly.

THE Tibetan pilgrim had told the exact truth. The two Europeans reached a spot where the strange ravine was plainly visible, with its marvelous vegetation; and between it and them stretched a yellow-brown, desert-like girdle of loose, friable earth, not more than a mile wide, and cutting the marvelous valley completely off from the rest of the world.

The exhalations which rose incessantly from the girdle of desert were pure carbonic acid gas. Sir Roger Thornton climbed a little hill and studied the situation very carefully. Then he decided to cross the poisonous belt the next morning. The diving-outfits which he had ordered from Bombay worked perfectly.

Pompejus carried two repeating rifles and various other articles which his chief deemed necessary.

An intrepid Afghan adventurer who had first thought of accompanying the two had flatly refused to go along when he had learned that the black art was involved. He had remarked that he was perfectly willing to crawl into a tiger's den, but that he declined to embark on an enterprise which might imperil his immortal soul. So Sir Roger and Jaburek constituted the expeditionary force.

THE copper helmets glittered in the sun. The poison-gas crept out of the spongy soil in numberless tiny bubbles. Sir Roger had set out at a rapid, swinging gait, so that there would be no danger that the supply of air would be exhausted before the gas-zone was passed. The mountain-backed valley in front of the two floated and swayed before the eyes of the invaders like the bed of a moving brook. The sunlight had a ghostly green tinge and colored the distant glaciers—the "Roof of the World"—with its gigantic profile, like a wonderful landscape of death.

Sir Roger and Pompejus had passed the arid belt, had stepped out on the beautiful green turf, and with the help of a match or two had convinced themselves that good oxygen was present at every distance from the ground. Then the two removed their diving-outfits.

Behind them the wall of gas wavered like a strangely tenuous stream. The air was filled with a heady perfume, like the odor of amberia blossoms. Gleaming, party-colored butterflies as big as your hand, with markings these white men had never seen before, sat on the silent flowers with their wings spread wide, like open conjurers' books.

The two, several steps apart, moved toward the little wood which cut off their view of the main part of the valley. . . .

Sir Roger gave his deaf servant a sign—he was sure he had heard a noise. Pompejus lifted the trigger of his gun. . . .

They skirted the little forest, and came out on a broad meadow. A quarter of a mile from the wood, they saw perhaps a hundred men, evidently Tibetans, all topped with pointed red caps, and drawn up in a semicircle. They must have had wind of their visitors' coming, and they were ready to receive them. Sir Roger and his servant walked intrepidly, abreast of each other, but several feet apart, toward the waiting phalanx.

These Tibetans were dressed in the sheepskin coats which are the usual garb of the race; but as the Europeans came nearer to them they were startled by the unearthly ugliness of all the faces, which were naturally hideous and were moreover distorted by expressions of violent loathing, hatred and malice. They allowed the two to come very near them; then all at once, in perfect unison like one man, at a signal from a leader they all raised their hands and held them tight against their ears. Then they all shouted something at the top of their voices.

Pompejus Jaburek looked toward his master for instructions, and brought his gun into position, for the strange maneuver of the group seemed to presage some hostile intention. But what he saw as he glanced at Sir Roger drove every drop of his blood from his heart.

About the Englishman a trembling, floating garment of gas had formed, like that which the two had traversed a short time before. Sir Roger's form began to lose its contours, as if it had been attacked by the gas and were disintegrating under its influence. The head seemed to grow pointed; then the whole mass began

to sink into itself as if it were dissolving, and on the spot where a few moments before the big, athletic Englishman had stood, nothing was visible any longer but a clear violet cone like a great lump of colored sugar. . . .

Deaf Pompejus was seized with an impulse of mad rage. The Tibetans continued to scream, and with his uncanny skill at lip-reading, he noticed that they were uttering the same word or phrase again and again. His anger seemed to have given him a clairvoyant clearness of intelligence, and his lips began to form the sound which he saw on all those ugly lips in front of him. . . .

Suddenly their leader sprang out before them, and they all stopped yelling and took their hands away from their ears. Like panthers they all rushed at Pompejus. The deaf man began to fire into the mob like a madman with his repeating rifle. This stopped them for a moment.

Then, obeying some mysterious impulse, he began to bawl at the company the syllables which he had learned from their lips. He had caught the thing perfectly, and he bellowed it with his mighty lungs like a whole army shouting a war-cry.

He grew dizzy, everything went dim and dark before him. The earth began to sway under his feet, and he came near falling. But the feeling of dizziness lasted only a few seconds, and his mind and his senses cleared again.

The Tibetans had disappeared—disappeared exactly as his master had done—and in their place he saw a great number of the little violet cones.

Their leader was still alive. His legs were already transformed into a bluish paste, and the upper part of his body was shrinking away. It seemed as if his substance were being digested in a great

transparent or invisible stomach. This man did not wear a red cap like the others, but an elaborate head-dress like a bishop's miter, in which yellow, living eyes could be seen moving to and fro. . . .

Jaburek stepped up to the creature and struck him on the head with the butt of his rifle, but his enemy still had the strength to hurl a sickle-shaped weapon at him and wound him in the foot. . . .

The victor stood and looked about him. No living thing was visible anywhere on the plain. . . .

The odor of amberia blossoms had grown so intense that it was almost suffocating. It seemed to be given out by the violet cones, which Pompejus now examined with some care. They were almost entirely uniform, and all consisted of the same clear violet gelatinous slime. Since the Tibetans had moved forward to surround him, Pompejus could not distinguish the remains of Sir Roger from the other violet pyramids.

Mad with rage, Pompejus crushed the pitiful substance of the half-dissolved leader under his heavy heels; then he made his way back to the edge of the green island. The copper helmets lay shining in the sun. . . . He pumped one of the reservoirs full of air and started back across the gas-zone. He struggled on over the strip of desert, his head buzzing with confusion, grief and horror. The ice-topped giants of the Himalayas towered toward heaven—what cared they for the pain and perplexity of a poor deaf vagabond who had lost his best friend and who would have gone to eternity in the same moment with him if it had not been for the accident of his deafness? . . .

* * * * *

“THE knife the fellow threw was poisoned,” Pompejus had traced painfully at the end of his manuscript,

"but I think I might have worked the poison out of my system if I hadn't grieved so at the death of Sir Roger, and especially if I had not been tormented all the time by the fear that I should blurt out the awful word some time or other and exterminate a whole roomful, or a

hallful, or a streetful, of innocent victims. The crazy thing rings in my head all the time and I can't forget it. But I am so near the end now that I think the world is safe from me. And when I die, the danger will be past. The word will die with me——"