

# Weird Tales

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FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor.

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## Contents for May, 1930

Cover Design .....	C. C. Senf
<i>Illustrating a scene in "The Brain-Thief"</i>	
The Eyrie .....	580
<i>A chat with the readers</i>	
Shadows on the Road .....	Robert E. Howard 586
<i>Verse</i>	
The Brain-Thief .....	Seabury Quinn 588
<i>An almost unthinkable weird situation tests Jules de Grandin's powers</i>	
The Sun People .....	Edmond Hamilton 606
<i>A thrilling novelette about a race of people living in the interior of a gigantic sun</i>	

[CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE]

[CONTINUED FROM PRECEDING PAGE]

- River of Lost Souls** ----- **R. C. Sandison** 625  
*An eery story of the undead—of a vampire of old Spain who was not bound by the ordinary limitations of vampires*
- Marmora** ----- **Donald Wandrei** 636  
*Verse*
- The End of the Story** ----- **Clark Ashton Smith** 687  
*A strange tale about a lamia who dwelt beneath the ruins of the Castle of Faussesflammes*
- The Land of Lur** ----- **Earl Leaston Bell** 649  
*A bizarre extravaganza about a weird country beset by terrible beings*
- The Black Monarch (Part 4)** ----- **Paul Ernst** 655  
*A stupendous five-part serial story of incarnate evil—a tale of an unthinkable doom hanging over mankind*
- Light-Echoes** ----- **Everil Worrell** 671  
*An occult-scientific story that goes beyond Einstein in the daring audacity of its science*
- The Whistler** ----- **August W. Derleth** 682  
*Who was it whose eery whistle came out of the darkness there on the African veldt?*
- The Footprint** ----- **G. G. Pendarves** 685  
*Back from the gates of hell came Jerry's grandfather—a grim story of black magic and evil rites*
- Recapture** ----- **H. P. Lovecraft** 693  
*Verse*
- Seven Drops of Blood** ----- **H. F. Jamison** 694  
*An outré story about a man who found out how to bring the dead back to life*
- Weird Story Reprint:**  
**The Magic Egg** ----- **Frank R. Stockton** 699  
*An American story-teller describes a strange exhibition devised by a magician to astonish his sweetheart*

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# Shadows on the Road

By ROBERT E. HOWARD

Nial of Ulster, welcome home!  
What saw you on the road to Rome?—  
Legions thronging the fertile plains?  
Shouting hordes of the country folk  
With the harvest heaped in their groaning wains?  
Shepherds piping under the oak?  
Laurel chaplet and purple cloak?  
Smokes of the feasting coiled on high?  
Meadows and fields of the rich, ripe green  
Lazing under a cobalt sky?  
Brown little villages sleeping between?  
What saw you on the road to Rome?  
“Crimson tracks in the blackened loam,  
“Skeleton trees and a blasted plain,  
“A heap of skulls and a child insane,  
“Ruin and wreck and the reek of pain  
“On the wrack of the road to Rome.”

Nial, what saw you in Rome?—  
Purple emperors riding there,  
Down aisles with walls like marble foam,  
To the golden trumpet's mystic flare?  
Dark-eyed women who bind their hair,  
As they bind men's hearts, with a silver comb?  
Spires that cleave through the crystal air,  
Arch and altar and amaranth stair?  
Nial, what saw you in Rome?  
“Broken shrines in the sobbing gloam,  
“Bare feet spurning the marble flags,  
“Towers fallen and walls dugged up,  
“A woman in chains and filthy rags.  
“Goths in the Forum howled to sup,  
“With an emperor's skull for a drinking-cup.  
“The black arch clave to the broken dome.  
“The Coliseum invites the bat,  
“The Vandal sits where the Cæsars sat;  
“And the shadows are black on Rome.”

Nial, Nial, now you are home,  
Why do you mutter and lonely roam?  
“My brain is sick and I know no rest;  
“My heart is stone in my frozen breast,  
“For the feathers fall from the eagle's crest  
“And the bright sea breaks in foam—  
“Kings and kingdoms and empires fall,  
“And the mist-black ruin covers them all,  
“And the honey of life is bitter gall  
“Since I traveled the road to Rome.”