

# Fantasy and Science Fiction

JULY *Including Venture Science Fiction*

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## THE END OF THE WINE

You think, if we sigh as we drink the last decanter,  
We're sensual toppers, and thence you are ready to prose  
And read your lecture. But need you? Why should you banter  
Or badger us? Better imagine it thus: We'll suppose

A man to have come from Atlantis eastward sailing—  
Lemuria has fallen in the fury of a tidal wave;  
The cities are fallen; the pitiless, all prevailing,  
Inhuman ocean is Numinor's salt grave.

To Europe he comes from Lemuria, saved from the wreck  
Of the gilded, loftily builded, countless fleet  
With the violet sails. A phial hangs from his neck,  
Holding the last of a golden cordial, subtle and sweet.

Untamed is Europe, untamed—a wet desolation.

Unwelcoming woods of the elk, of the mammoth and bear,  
The fen and the forest. The men of a barbarous nation,  
On the sand in a circle standing, await him there.

Horribly ridged are their foreheads. Weapons of stone,  
Unhandy and blunt, they brandish in their clumsy grips.  
Their females set up a screaming, their pipes drone,  
They gaze and mutter. He raises his flask to his lips.

And it brings to his mind the strings, the flutes, the tabors,  
How he drank with the poets at the banquet, robed and crowned;  
He recalls the pillared halls carved with the labours  
Of curious masters (Lemuria's cities lie drowned).

The festal nights, when each jest that flashed for a second,  
Light as a bubble, was bright with a thousand years  
Of nurture—the honour and the grace unreckoned  
That sat like a robe on the Atlantean peers.

It has made him remember ladies and the proud glances,  
Their luminous glances in Numinor and the braided hair,  
The ruses and mockings, the music and the grave dances  
(Where musicians played, the huge fishes goggle and stare).

So he sighs, like us; then rises and turns to meet  
Those naked men. Will they make him their spoil and prey,  
Or salute him as god and brutally fawn at his feet?  
And which would be worse? He pitches the phial away.

—C. S. LEWIS