

# 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: Charles Lavell, 13, Serjeant's 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, 1930, by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company

## Contents for January, 1931

Cover Design .....	C. C. Senf
<i>Illustrating a scene in "The Lost Lady"</i>	
The Eyrie .....	4
<i>A chat with the readers</i>	
Fungi from Yuggoth:	
6. Nyarlathotep; 7. Azathoth .....	H. P. Lovecraft 12
<i>Verse</i>	
The Lost Lady .....	Seabury Quinn 14
<i>A beautiful white dancer in the temple of Angkor is persecuted by a fondish Chinese doctor—a tale of Jules de Grandin</i>	

[CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE]

[CONTINUED FROM PRECEDING PAGE]

- The Horror from the Hills (Part 1)**—Frank Belknap Long, Jr. 32  
*A powerful story of shuddery horror—a goose-flesh tale about a stone idol brought from China*
- The Necromantic Tale** ..... Clark Ashton Smith 54  
*An occult story of much power, in which a man's life is tied to the personality of a long-dead ancestor*
- The Galley Slave**..... Lieutenant Edgar Gardner 62  
*An unusual story about a man who retained a vivid memory of the voyage of Odysseus*
- The Portal to Power (Conclusion)** ..... Greye La Spina 69  
*A four-part serial story about a cult of devil-worshippers in a hidden valley of the Rocky Mountains*
- The Avenging Shadow**..... Ashton Eakie 86  
*Taso Vitelli sought to outwit the Prince of Darkness—a story of forbidden arts in medieval Naples*
- Passing of a God**..... Henry S. Whitehead 98  
*A weird story of surgery and the dark rites of the Black people in the island of Haiti*
- Tales of the Werewolf Clan:**
3. **The Master Has a Narrow Escape** ..... H. Warner Munn 111  
*A tale of the Thirty Years War and the first case of witchcraft in New England*
- The Game** ..... Dorothy Norwich 128  
*It was a grim game the husband played, with doubt as the inevitable end—yet he won the game*

---

For Advertising Rates in WEIRD TALES Apply Direct to

### WEIRD TALES

Western Advertising Office  
HARLEY E. WARD, ENC., Mgr.  
260 N. Michigan Ave.,  
Chicago, Ill.  
Phone, Central 6869

Eastern Advertising Office  
D. P. EIKER, Mgr.  
303 Fourth Ave.,  
New York, N. Y.  
Phone, Gramercy 6380

# The Necromantic Tale

By CLARK ASHTON SMITH

*Sir Roderick Hagdon's life was tied to the personality of an infamous, long-dead ancestor*

IN ONE sense, it is a mere truism to speak of the evocative power of words. The olden efficacy of subtly woven spells, of magic formulas and incantations, has long become a literary metaphor; though the terrible reality which once underlay and may still underlie such concepts has been forgotten. However, the necromancy of language is more than a metaphor to Sir Roderick Hagdon: the scars of fire on his ankles are things which no one could possibly regard as having their origin in a figure of speech.

Sir Roderick Hagdon came to his title and his estate with no definite expecta-

tion of inheriting them, nor any first-hand knowledge of the sort of life and surroundings entailed by his inheritance. He had been born in Australia; and though he had known that his father was the younger brother of Sir John Hagdon, he had formed only the vaguest idea of the ancestral manor; and the interest that he felt therein was even vaguer. His surprise was little short of consternation when the deaths of his father, of Sir John Hagdon and Sir John's only son, all occurring within less than a year, left clear his own succession and brought a letter from the family lawyers informing him of this fact—which otherwise might

have escaped his attention. His mother, too, was dead; and he was unmarried; so, leaving the Australian sheep-range in charge of a competent overseer, he had sailed immediately for England to assume his hereditary privileges.

It was a strange experience for him; and, strangest of all, in view of the fact that he had never before visited England, was the inexplicable feeling of familiarity aroused by his first sight of the Hagdon manor. He seemed to know the farm-lands, the cottages of the tenants, the wood of ancient oaks with their burdens of Druidic mistletoe, and the old manor-house half hidden among gigantic yews, as if he had seen them all in some period that was past recollection. Being of an analytic trend, he attributed all this to that imperfect simultaneousness in the action of the brain-hemispheres by which psychologists account for such phenomena. But the feeling remained and grew upon him; and he yielded more and more to its half-sinister charm, as he explored his property and delved in the family archives. He felt also an unexpected kinship with his ancestors—a feeling which had lain wholly dormant during his Australian youth. Their portraits, peering upon him from the never-dissipated shadows of the long hall wherein they hung, were like well-known faces.

The manor-house, it was said, had been built in the reign of Henry the Seventh. It was mossed and lichened with antiquity; and there was a hint of beginning dilapidation in the time-worn stone of the walls. The formal garden had gone a little wild from neglect; the trimmed hedges and trees had taken on fantastic sprawling shapes; and evil, poisonous weeds had invaded the flower-beds. There were statues of cracked marble and verdigris-eaten bronze amid the shrubbery; there were fountains that had long ceased to flow; and dials on

which the foliage-intercepted sun no longer fell. About it all there hung an air of shadow-laden time and subtle decadence. But though he had never known anything but the primitive Australian environment, Hagdon found himself quite at home in this atmosphere of Old World complexities—an atmosphere that was made from the dissolving phantoms of a thousand years, from the breathings of dead men and women, from loves and hates that had gone down to dust. Contrary to his anticipations, he felt no nostalgia whatever for the remote land of his birth and upbringing.

Sir Roderick came to love the sunless gardens and the overtowering yews. But, above and beyond these, he was fascinated by the manor-house itself, by the hall of ancestral portraits and the dark, dusty library in which he found an amazing medley of rare tomes and manuscripts. There were many first editions of Elizabethan poets and dramatists; and mingled with these in a quaint disorder, were antique books on astrology and conjuration, on demonism and magic. Sir Roderick shivered a little, he knew not why, as he turned the leaves of some of these latter volumes, from whose ancient vellum and parchment arose to his nostrils an odor that was like the mustiness of tombs. He closed them hastily; and the first editions were unable to detain him; but he lingered long over certain genealogies and manuscript records of the Hagdon family, filled with a strange eagerness to learn as much as he could concerning these shadowy forebears of his.

In going through the records, he was struck by the brevity of the mention accorded to a former Sir Roderick Hagdon, who had lived in the early Seventeenth Century. All other members of the direct line had been dealt with at some length; their deeds, their marriages, and their

various claims to distinction (often in the rôle of soldiers or scholars) were usually set forth with a well-nigh vainglorious unction. But concerning Sir Roderick, nothing more was given than the bare dates of his birth and death, and the fact that he was the father of one Sir Ralph Hagdon. No mention whatever was made of his wife.

Though there was no obvious reason for more than a passing surmise, the present Sir Roderick wondered and speculated much over these singular and perhaps sinister omissions. His curiosity increased when he found that there was no portrait of Sir Roderick in the gallery, and none of his mysterious unnamed lady. There was not even a vacant place between the pictures of Sir Roderick's father and son, to indicate that there ever had been a portrait. The new baronet determined to solve the mystery, if possible: an element of vague but imperative disquietude was now mingled with his curiosity. He could not have analyzed his feelings; but the life and fate of this unknown ancestor seemed to take on for him a special significance, a concern that was incomprehensibly personal and intimate.

At times he felt that his obsession with this problem was utterly ridiculous and uncalled-for. Nevertheless, he ransacked the manor-house in the hope of finding some hidden record; and he questioned the servants, the tenants and the people of the parish to learn if there were any legendry concerning his namesake. The manor-house yielded nothing more to his search; and his inquiries met with blank faces and avowals of ignorance: no one seemed to have heard of this elusive Seventeenth Century baronet.

At last, from the family butler, James Wharton, an octogenarian who had served three generations of Hagdons, Sir Roderick obtained the clue which he

sought. Wharton, who was now on the brink of senility, and had grown forgetful and taciturn, was seemingly ignorant as the rest; but one day, after repeated questioning, he remembered that he had been told in his youth of a secret closet behind one of the book-shelves, in which certain manuscripts and heirlooms had been locked away several hundred years before; and which, for some unknown reason, no Hagdon had ever opened since that time. Here, he suggested, something might be found that would serve to illumine the dark gap in the family history. There was a cunning, sardonic gleam in his rheumy eyes as he came forth with this tardy piece of information, and Sir Roderick wondered if the old man were not possessed of more genealogical lore than he was willing to admit. All at once, he conceived the disquieting idea that perhaps he was on the verge of some abominable discovery, on the threshold of things that had been forgotten because they were too dreadful for remembrance.

However, he did not hesitate: he was conscious of a veritable compulsion to learn whatever could be learned. The bookcase indicated by the half-senile butler was the one which contained most of the volumes on demonism and magic. It was now removed; and Sir Roderick went over the uncovered wall inch by inch. After much futile fumbling, he located and pressed a hidden spring, and the door of the sealed room swung open.

It was little more than a cupboard, though a man could have concealed himself within it in time of need. Doubtless it had been built primarily for some such purpose. From out its narrow gloom the moldiness of dead ages rushed upon Sir Roderick, together with the ghosts of queer exotic perfumes such as might have poured from the burning of unholy censers in Satanic rites. It was an effluence of mystery and of evil. Within, there

were several ponderous brazen-bound volumes of mediæval date, a thin manuscript of yellowing parchment, and two portraits whose faces had been turned to the wall, as if it were unlawful for even the darkness of the sealed closet to behold them.

SIR RODERICK brought the volumes, the manuscript and the portrait forth to the light. The pictures, which he examined first, represented a man and woman who were both in the bloom of life. Both were attired in Seventeenth Century costumes; and the new Sir Roderick did not doubt for a moment that they were the mysterious couple concerning whom the family records were so reticent.

He thrilled with a strange excitement, with a feeling of some momentous revelation that he could not wholly comprehend, as he looked upon them. Even at a glance, he saw the singular resemblance of the first Sir Roderick to himself—a likeness otherwise unduplicated in the family, which tended to an almost antinomian type. There were the same falcon-like features, the same pallor of brow and cheek, the same semi-morbid luster of eyes, the same bloodless lips that seemed to be carven from a marble that had also been chiselled for the long hollow eyelids. The majority of the Hagdons were broad and sanguine and ruddy; but in these two, a darker strain had repeated itself across the centuries. The main difference was in the expression, for the look of the first Sir Roderick was that of a man who has given himself with a passionate devotion to all things evil and corrupt; who has gone down to damnation through some inevitable fatality of his own being.

Sir Roderick gazed on the picture with a fascination that was partly horror, and partly the stirring of emotions which he could not have named. Then he turned

to the woman, and a wild agitation overmastered him before the sullen-smiling mouth and the malign oval of the lovely cheeks. She, too, was evil, and her beauty was that of Lilith. She was like some crimson-lipped and honey-scented flower that grows on the brink of hell; but Sir Roderick knew, with the terror and fearful rapture of one who longs to fling himself from a precipice, that here was the one woman he might have loved, if haply he had known her. Then, in a moment of reeling and whirling confusion, it seemed to him that he *had* known and loved her, though he could not remember when nor where.

The feeling of eery confusion passed; and Sir Roderick began to examine the brass-bound volumes. They were written in a barbarous decadent Latin, and dealt mainly with methods and formulas for the evocation of such demons as Acheront, Amaimon, Asmodi and Ashtoreth, together with innumerable others. Sir Roderick shuddered at the curious drawings with which they were illuminated; but they did not detain him long. With a thrill of actual trepidation, like one who is about to enter some awful and unhallowed place, he took up the manuscript of yellowing parchment.

It was late afternoon when he began to read; and rays of dusty amber were slanting through the low panes of the library windows. As he read on, he gave no heed to the sinking of the light; and the last words were plain as runes of fire when he finished his perusal in the dusk. He closed his eyes, and could still see them:

"And Sir Roderick Hagdonne was now deemed a moste infamous warlocke, and hys Ladye Elinore a nefandous witch. . . . And both were burned at the stake on Hagdonne Common for their crimes against God and man. And their sorcerous deedes and practices were thought so foule a blotte on ye knighthoode of England, that no man speaks thereof, and no grandam tells the tale to the children at her knee. So, by God Hys mercy, the memorie of thys founnesse shall haply be forgotten; for

surely itte were an ill thing that such should be recalled."

Then, at the very bottom of the page, there was a brief, mysterious footnote in a finer hand than the rest:

"There be those amid the thronge who deemed that they saw Sir Rodericke vanish when the flames leaped high; and thys, if true, is the moste damnable proof of hys compact and hys commerce with the Evill One."

Sir Roderick sat for a long while in the thickening twilight. He was unstrung, he was abnormally shaken and distraught by the biographical record he had just read—a record that had been written by some unknown hand in a bygone century. It was not pleasant for any man to find a tale so dreadful amid the archives of his family history. But the fact that the narrative concerned the first Sir Roderick and his Lady Elinor was hardly enough to account for all the spiritual turmoil and horror into which he was plunged. Somehow, in a way that was past analysis, that was more intimate than his regard for the remote blot on the Hagdon name, he felt that the thing concerned himself also. A terrible nervous perturbation possessed him, his very sense of identity was troubled, he was adrift in a sea of abominable confusion, of disoriented thoughts and capsizing memories. In this peculiar state of mind, by an automatic impulse, he lit the floor-lamp beside his chair and began to re-read the manuscript.

**A**LMOST in the casual manner of a modern tale, the story opened with an account of Sir Roderick's first meeting, at the age of twenty-three, with Elinor D'Avenant, who was afterward to become his wife.

This time, as he read, a peculiar hallucination seized the new baronet. It seemed to him that the words of the old writing had begun to waver and change beneath his scrutiny; that, under the black

lines of script on yellowing parchment, the picture of an actual place was forming. The page expanded, the letters grew dim and gigantic; they seemed to fade out in midair, and the picture behind them was no longer a picture, but the very scene of the narrative. As if the wording were a necromantic spell, the room about him had vanished like the chamber of a dream; and he stood in the open sunlight of a windy moor. Bees were humming around him, and the scent of heather was in his nostrils. His consciousness was indescribably dual; somewhere, he knew, one part of his brain was still reading the ancient record; but the rest of his personality had become identified with that of the first Sir Roderick Hagdon. Inevitably, with no surprise or astonishment, he found himself living in a bygone age, with the perceptions and memories of an ancestor who was long dead.

"Now Sir Roderick Hagdonne, being in the flower of hys youth, became instantlie enamoured of the beauteous Elinore D'Avenant, whenas he mette her of an Aprile morn on Hagdonne heathe."

Sir Roderick saw that he was not alone on the moor. A woman was coming toward him along the narrow path amid the heather. Though clad in the conventional gown and bodice of the period, she was somehow foreign and exotic to that familiar English landscape. She was the woman of the portrait which, in a later life, as another Sir Roderick, he had found in a sealed room of the manor-house. (But this, like much else, he had now forgotten.) Walking with a languid grace amid the homely blossoms of the heath, her beauty was like that of some opulent and sinister lily from Saracenic lands. He thought that he had never seen any one half so strange and lovely.

He stood to one side in the stiff growth, and bowed before her with a knightly courtesy as she passed. She nodded slight-

ly in acknowledgment, and gave him an unfathomable smile and an oblique flash of her dark eyes. From that time, Sir Roderick was her slave and her devotee: he stared after her as she disappeared on the curving slope, and felt the mounting of an irresistible flame in his heart, and the stirring of hot desires and curiosities. He seemed to inhale the spice of a languorous alien perfume with every breath of the homeland air, as he walked onward, musing with ingenuous rapture on the dark, enigmatic beauty of the face he had seen.

Now, in that queer necromantic dream, Sir Roderick seemed to live, or re-live, the events of an entire lustrum. Somewhere, in another existence, another self was conning briefly the paragraphs which detailed these events; but of this he was conscious only at long intervals, and then vaguely. So complete was his immersion in the progress of the tale (as if he had drunk of that Lethe which alone makes it possible to live again) that he was untroubled by any prevision of a future known to the Sir Roderick who sat re-reading an old manuscript. Even as it was written, he returned from the moor to Hagdon Hall with the vision of a fair stranger in his heart; he made inquiries concerning her, and learned that she was the daughter of Sir John D'Avenant, who had but recently received his knighthood for diplomatic services, and had now taken up his abode on the estate near Hagdon that went with his title. Sir Roderick was now doubly impelled to call on his new neighbors; and his first visit was soon repeated. He became an open suitor for the hand of Elinor D'Avenant; and, after a wooing of several months, he married her.

The passionate love with which she had inspired him was only deepened by their life together. Always her allurements were that of things but half understood, of

momentous revelations eternally half withheld. She seemed to love him truly in return; but ever her heart and soul were strange to him, ever they were mysterious and exotic, even as the first sight of her face had been. For this, mayhap, he loved her all the more. They were happy together; and she bore him one child, a son whom they named Ralph.

Now, in that other life, the Sir Roderick who was reading in the old library came to these words:

"No man knew how it happened; but anon there were dreary whispers and fowle rumours regarding the Lady Elinore; and people said that she was a witch. And in their time these rumours reached the ears of Sir Roderick."

A horror crept upon the happy dream—a horror scarce to be comprehended in this modern age. There were formless evil wings that came to brood above Hagdon Hall; and the very air was poisoned with malignant murmurs. Day by day, and night by night, the baronet was tortured with a vile, unholy suspicion of the woman he loved. He watched her with a fearful anxiety, with eyes that dreaded to discern a new and more ominous meaning in her strange beauty. Then, when he could bear it no longer, he taxed her with the infamous things he had heard, hoping she would deny them and by virtue of her denial restore fully his former trust and peace of mind.

To his utter consternation, the Lady Elinor laughed in his face, with a soft, siren-like mirth, and made open avowal that the charges were true.

"And I told," she added, "that you love me too well to disown or betray me; that for my sake, if need be, you will become a veritable wizard, even as I am a witch; and will share with me the infernal sports of the Sabbat."

Sir Roderick pleaded, he cajoled, he commanded, he threatened; but ever she answered him with voluptuous laughter



and Circean smiles; and ever she told him of those delights and privileges which are procurable only through damnation, through the perilous aid of demons and succubi. Till, through his exceeding love for her, even as she had foretold, Sir Roderick suffered himself to become an initiate in the arts of sorcery; and sealed his own pact with the powers of evil, that he might in all things be made forever one with her that he loved so dearly.

It was an age of dark beliefs and of practises that were no less dark; and witchcraft and sorcery were rampant throughout the land, among all classes. But in the Lilith-like Elinor there was a spirit of soulless depravity beyond that of all others; and beneath the seduction of her love the hapless Sir Roderick fell to depths wherefrom no man could return, and made mortgage of his soul and brain and body to Satan. He learned the varying malefic usages to which a waxen image could be put; he memorized the formulas that summon frightful things from their abode in the nethermost night, or compel the dead to do the abominable will of necromancers. And he was taught the secrets whereof it is unlawful to tell or even hint; and came to know the maledictions and involtuations which are lethal to more than the mortal flesh. And Hagdon Hall became the scene of pandemonian revels, of rites that were both obscene and blasphemous; and the terror and turpitude of hellish things were effluent therefrom on all the countryside. And amid her coterie of the damned, amid the witches and sorcerers and incubi that fawned upon her, the Lady Elinor exulted openly; and Sir Roderick was her partner in each new enormity or baleful deed. And in this atmosphere of noisome things, of Satanic crime and sacrilege, the child Ralph was alone innocent, being too young to be

harmd thereby as yet. But anon the scandal of it all was a horror in men's souls that could be endured no longer; and the justice of the law, which made a felony of witchcraft, was called upon by the people of Hagdon.

It was no new thing for members of the nobility to be tried on such a charge before the secular or ecclesiastical courts. Such cases, in which the accusations were often doubtful or prompted by mere malice, had sometimes been fought at length. But this time the guilt of the defendants was so universally maintained, and the reprobation aroused thereby so profound, that only the briefest and most perfunctory trial was accorded them. They were condemned to be burnt at the stake; the sentence to be carried out on the following day.

**I**T WAS a chill, dank morning in autumn when Sir Roderick and Lady Elinor were borne to the place of execution and were tied to their respective stakes, with piles of dry fagots at their feet. They were set facing each other, so that neither might lose any detail of their mutual agony. A crowd was gathered about them, thronging the entire common—a crowd whose awful silence was unbroken by any outcry or murmur. So deep was the terror wrought by this infamous couple, that no one dared to execrate or mock them even in the hour of their downfall. Sir Roderick's brain was benumbed by the obloquy and shame and horror of his situation, by a realization of the ultimate depths to which he had fallen, of the bitter doom that was now imminent. He looked at his wife, and thought of how she had drawn him down from evil to evil through his surpassing love for her; and then he thought of the frightful searing pangs that would convulse her soft body; and thinking of these he forgot his own fate.

Then, in a dim, exiguous manner, he remembered that somewhere in another century there sat another Sir Roderick who was reading all this in an old manuscript. If he could only break the necromantic spell of the tale, and re-identify himself with that other Sir Roderick, he would be saved from the fiery doom that awaited him, but if he could not deny the spell, he would surely perish, even as a falling man who reaches bottom in a dream is said to perish.

He looked again, and met the gaze of the Lady Elinor. She smiled across her bonds and fagots, with all the old seduction that had been so fatal to him. In the re-attained duality of his consciousness, it seemed as if she were aware of his intention and had willed to deter him. The ache and anguish of a deadly lure was upon him, as he closed his eyes and tried very hard to picture the old library and the sheet of parchment which his other self was now perusing. If he could do this, the whole diabolical illusion would vanish, the process of visualization and sympathetic identification which had been carried to an hallucinative degree, would return to that which is normally experienced by the reader of an absorbing tale.

There was a crackling at his feet, for some one had lit the fagots. Sir Roderick opened his eyes a little, and saw that the pile at Lady Elinor's feet had likewise been lit. Threads of smoke were rising from each pile, with tiny tongues of flame that grew longer momentarily. He did not lift his eyes to the level of Lady Elinor's face. Resolutely he closed them again, and sought to re-summon the written page.

He was aware of a growing warmth underneath his soles; and now, with an agonizing flash of pain, he felt the licking of the flames about his ankles. But somehow, by a desperate effort of his will, like one who awakens voluntarily from a clutching nightmare, he saw before him the written words he was trying to visualize:

"And both were burned at the stake on Hagdonne Common for their crimes against God and man."

The words wavered, they receded and drew near on a page that was still dim and enormous. But the crackling at his feet had ceased; the air was no longer dank and chill, no longer charged with acrid smoke. There was a moment of madly whirling vertigo and confusion; and then Sir Roderick's two selves were re-united, and he found that he was sitting in the library chair at Hagdon, staring with open eyes at the last sentences of the manuscript in his hands.

He felt as if he had been through some infernal ordeal that had lasted many years; and he was still half obsessed by emotions of sorrow and regret and horror that could belong only to a dead progenitor. But the whole thing was manifestly a dream, albeit terrible and real to a degree that he had never before experienced. He must have fallen asleep over the old record. . . . But why, then, if it were only a dream, did his ankles still pain him so frightfully, as if they had been seared by fire?

He bent down and examined them: beneath the Twentieth Century hose in which they were attired, he found the upward-flaring marks of recent burns!

