

# Weird Tales

REGISTERED IN U.S. PATENT OFFICE

A MAGAZINE of the



BIZARRE and UNUSUAL

VOLUME VII

NUMBER 2

Published monthly by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company, 408 Holliday Building, Indianapolis, Ind. Entered as second-class matter March 20, 1923, at the postoffice 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. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts, although every care will be taken of such material while in their possession. English office: G. M. Jeffries Agency, Hopefield House, Hanwell, London, W. 7. 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. FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor.  
Copyright, 1926, by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company

## Contents for February, 1926

- Cover Design.....O. Barker Petrie, Jr.  
*"Light as brilliant as the day broke about him. Automatically he leaped backward, caught his heel on a stone, and fell."*
- Red Ether.....Pettersen Marzoni 149  
*Two-part Scientific Romance of Death-Dealing Rays*
- The Isle of Missing Ships.....Seabury Quinn 173  
*Complete Novelette—Pirates—Cannibals—a Giant Octopus*
- The Word of Santiago.....E. Hoffmann Price 193  
*Malik Taus, the Stranger from Kurdistan, Abandons his Follower*
- The Avenging Hand.....Roy Wallace Davis 200  
*Weird Surgery—Manlike Beasts—and a Frightful Revenge*

(Continued on Next Page)

(Continued from Preceding Page)

Phantom Billiards.....	Frank E. Walker	205
<i>Real Old-Fashioned Ghost Tale With a Thrill to It</i>		
<b>Weird Story Reprints</b>		
No. 8. The White Dog.....	Feodor Sologub	211
<i>It Lay in the Grass, Bayed the Moon, Looked Like a Werewolf</i>		
The Thing in the Glass Box.....	Sewell Peaslee Wright	215
<i>Arvin Separated Soul From Body, and Could not Unite Them Again</i>		
Italian Love.....	William James Price	222
<i>Verse</i>		
The Kidnaper's Story.....	Walter G. Detrick	223
<i>The Notorious Man-Wolf Falls a Victim of Dual Personality</i>		
On the Dead Man's Chest (Part 2).....	Eli Colter	232
<i>Occult Serial—Spirit Return—Belief and Unbelief</i>		
The Other Half.....	Edwin L. Sabin	245
<i>The Old Man Found His Answer in the Bleached Bones of a Skeleton</i>		
The Twa Corbies.....	Author Unknown	251
<i>Old Ballad</i>		
The Cats of Ulthar.....	H. P. Lovecraft	252
<i>A Short, Fantastic Tale</i>		
Spleen .....	Charles Bandelaire	254
<i>Verse, Translated for Weird Tales by Clark Ashton Smith</i>		
The Waning of a World (Conclusion).....	W. Elwyn Backus	255
<i>Four-part Novel About a Voyage to Mars</i>		
The Eyrie .....		272
<i>A Chat With the Readers</i>		

---

For Advertising Rates in WEIRD TALES Apply Direct to

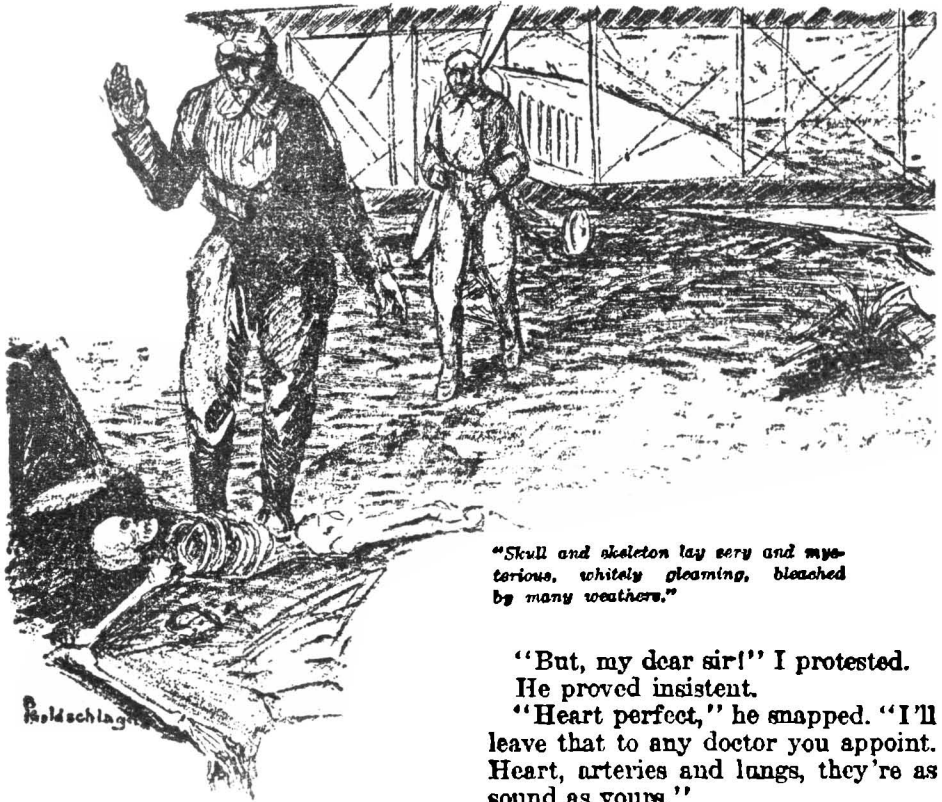
**WEIRD TALES**

408 Holiday Building

Indianapolis, Ind.

# The Other Half

By EDWIN  
L. SABIN



*"Skull and skeleton lay very and mysterious, whitely gleaming, bleached by many weathers."*

"But, my dear sir!" I protested.

He proved insistent.

"Heart perfect," he snapped. "I'll leave that to any doctor you appoint. Heart, arteries and lungs, they're as sound as yours."

"Just why do you wish to make the trip, may I ask?" said I. "Business or pleasure?"

"Business." He eyed me sharply.

"There'll be no woman aboard?"

"Scarcely," I assured.

"All right. No woman. I've been across time and again, by train—and there were women; by auto—drove my own car, alone, but there were the women, before, behind, and no way to avoid them." He grumbled almost savagely. "I'll go by air," he resumed. "I want to get to San Francisco at once. I want to look around. Do you stop at Denver? Salt Lake? Cheyenne?"

"Straight to San Francisco," said I. "We may have to land en route,

perhaps Cheyenne, perhaps Reno; but not for long and I make no promises."

"All right. I'll look around San Francisco. I may have missed something. Then I can work back. I'm not through. You'll have to take me. I'll pay you double. I'm sounder than most of the younger men; I have no family——"

"You're not married, sir?" I queried.

"No, no! Thank God, no! You accept me?"

He noted me hesitate. Perhaps he sensed that I deemed him a trifle off center.

"I'll give you references," he proffered with dignity. "I'm not crazy—not quite. Look me up, for I mean to go. San Francisco, again: then I can work back. There's always the chance," he muttered. "Yes, there's always the chance." And he challenged: "If you find me sane and sound, it's a bargain, is it?"

"Possibly so, in case——"

"And we start at once?"

"Tomorrow."

He paused.

"You're a Westerner?"

"Born and raised in Leadville, Colorado," I assured.

He seized upon the fact.

"Ah! Leadville! We couldn't stop there?"

"Hardly."

"But it was a busy camp, once, wasn't it? A typical camp; a rendezvous, with dance halls, gambling dens, and men and women of all kinds gathered?"

"A boom camp, and wide open," I said. "That was before my day, however."

"Yes," he pursued. "So it was. I've been there. I must look into it again. It's one more place. You were born and raised there, you say?" Lived there some time? Wait! Did you ever happen to see the mate to this, in curiosity shops, say, or among relics of the old-timers?"

Thereupon he unsnapped a small protective leather case and passed me the half of a silver coin, pierced as if it once had been strung.

"An old half dollar?" I hazarded.

"Yes. If you've aviator's eyes you can read the lettering around the rim, young man."

So I could. "God Be With You——" was the legend, unfinished as if cut short. He was gazing anxiously at me, his lips atremble. I turned the piece over and passed it back.

"No," said I; "I never happened to see the other half. A keepsake?"

His face set sternly. He restored the half coin to its case.

"A keepsake. You are married, young man?"

"Not yet."

"Don't," he barked. "Don't. Pray God you may be spared that."

A woman-hater, he; odd in a man who should be mellowing. But upon looking him up I found that this was his only apparent defection. A strange, restless man, however, with few friends; antecedents unknown; personal history taboo with him; and wanderlust possessing him today as yesterday and the day before.

"Again?" his banker blurted. "Bound across again? He only just got back from San Francisco, by automobile, via Salt Lake, Cheyenne and Denver. Drove alone. So he's going through with you? That'll be his fifth or sixth trip this year. He's a regular Wandering Jew."

"And his business?" I invited.

"Business? None."

"On the trips, I mean."

"My dear man, nobody knows. He goes and comes, goes and comes. You'd think he was hunting a lost mine; or a lost child, only he says he isn't married. I believe he has covered the West from end to end and border to border. Did he show you his pocketpiece?"

"A half coin? Yes. And asked me if I'd ever seen the other half."

"That's it. He asks everybody the same, especially if they're Western people. What he wants of the other half, no one knows. A fad, maybe; an excuse to keep moving. He'll not find it in the air, that's certain."

"Not in the air," I agreed. "He must have other reasons for going by that route. To avoid women, he intimated."

"And to get there quickly. He never comes home satisfied. No sooner gets here than something seems to call him; you'd think he had an S. O. S. wireless by the way he hustles out again, maybe over the very same trail. Always searching, always searching; that's the life of old John. And never finding."

"He's past sixty?" I asked.

"Past sixty! He's past seventy, but nobody'd guess it."

And I accepted John Brown as passenger. No one else offered as likely. I notified him to be ready. We hopped off in the morning.

**T**HE iron rails crushed the romance of plains travel. With the airplane also the crossing of the West, like the crossing of the East, is business. In the long overland stretches the aviator pays scant attention to the dead epics that he violates with the drumming blast of his propeller when he bores through the atmosphere above those plains where the spirits still dance in little dust whirls that pivot and career with no breath of wind. But I've often wondered what imploring shades we dislocate when we ride in that half-world ether which is neither heaven nor earth.

My passenger and I made our first leg without event. Out of Cheyenne the motor began to buck, and a rudder control jammed annoyingly. There was only one thing to do. Spiraling and slanting like a wing-tipped bird we sought a landing place.

The country below, as revealed, was rugged, inhospitable desert—a bad-lands desert with deeply graven face upturned immutable. Plunging from high covert as we did, and bursting into full earth-view, we should have appeared like a prodigy from the nethermost. But no buffalo rooked in flight, no antelope scoured flashily, no red warriors hammered their ponies for refuge. I saw, however, far, far away toward the horizon, the smoke thread of a train, and I read in the signal a message of derision.

We skimmed above a flattish uplift. Fissures and canyons yawned for us. My passenger's voice dinned hollowly into my ear, through our 'phone.

"A country God forgot. And there's nothing here. Useless, useless! We must go on."

But I had to do it. Passing with a great rush we turned into the wind, and breasting, fluttering, managed to strike just at the edge of a flat-top butte or mesa. We bounded, rolled, checked, halted, and there we were.

My passenger was out first, divested of his safety harness. He acted like one distraught. Our brief stop near Cheyenne had vexed him—he had wished to spend either more time there, or less time. Now this impromptu stop enraged him.

"What a place, what a place!" he stormed. "There's nothing here; there *can* be nothing here. We must get on. I'm wasting time. I paid to get on, to San Francisco; even Salt Lake. Then I can work back. But what am I to do here? And I'm growing old. How long will you be?"

"Not long. And meanwhile," I retorted, "you'll not be bothered with women. You can be thankful for that."

He snorted.

"Women! No women here; yes. A spot without woman: man and God. We've got to get on. I'll pay you well to get me on. Do you hear? To San

Francisco—to Salt Lake; some center where I can look, look, and then work back. I must look again.”

He strode frenziedly. A glance about as I stripped myself of incumbrances showed me that we were isolated. The mesa dropped abruptly on all sides; by a running start we might soar from an edge like a seaplane from the platform of a battleship. And I noted also that without doubt we should have to depend upon our own resources, for if this was a country God forgot it moreover seemed to be a country by man forgotten, granted that man ever before had known it. All furrowed and washed and castlemented, it was a region where we might remain pancaked and unremarked, as insignificant as a beetle.

I WAS hunting our engine trouble, when on a sudden he called, and beckoned.

“Here, you! What’s this?”

I went over. Something quickened me, electric and prickling as when one’s flesh crawls in contact with a presence unseen. Skull and skeleton lay eery and mysterious, whitely gleaming, bleached by many weathers. He stooped—

“Great God!” he stammered.

“You’ve found it?” I asked: and I knew that he had, even while he was polishing it against his sleeve.

“I don’t know, I don’t know. Look at it. Tell me. I can’t see. What is it?”

His hand shook as with palsy as he extended it to me; then the half of a silver coin, plucked from the loosened grip of skeleton fingers; the date—

“Give it to me,” he cried, and snatched at it.

The date, 1866; and the legend, upon the side less tarnished, “—Till We Meet Again.” He fumbled in his pocket. The two halves matched sufficiently—“God Be With You Till We Meet Again.”

“What you’ve been looking for?” I prompted.

He stared dazedly at me.

“Looking for! A thousand times. A thousand years. No, no; not that long, but more than fifty years. Denver, Cheyenne, Salt Lake, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Helena, Laramie, Creede, Deadwood, Leadville, Dodge City—wherever men and women of her kind gathered in her day and his I’ve searched again and again. Not for her! She must be dead, and long dead. But for word of this; for this, or trace of this. It was mine. I gave it. And now, here! How came it here? Those bones won’t speak.” He angrily kicked them. “Speak! What were you doing with this half coin? Where was she? Were you man or woman?”

“Woman, Mr. Brown,” said I.

His jaw tautened as he faced me full.

“You say woman? How do you know? What woman?”

“I know,” said I. “And what woman? A young woman, a girl, somebody’s wife who was supposed to have run away with a breed on the Overland Trail fifty odd years ago—but didn’t.”

He recoiled a step, tottering, countenance blanched.

“What? Supposed! Supposing I say there was such a woman—my own wife, sir—my bar sinister—my cross that has ruined my life and made me doubt God and man and woman for half a century. And this half coin! I vowed I’d have it back. When at old Fort Bridger I got word that she had deserted me—deserted me for a scoundrelly half-breed—I swore that I’d trail her down till I got back the only bond between us. It’s been my passion; it’s been something to live for. That was 1867; this is 1920. I am seventy-four years of age. I have covered the West, and cursed women while cursing her. And to what end? This forsaken spot, a mess of bones,

and no word! Oh, God! I thought I didn't care—she deserved the worst that could happen to her. This is the keepsake token. Yes. But where is she? I loved her. I want to know."

He shut his face in his quivering hands.

I put my hand upon his shoulder.

"Come, come," said I. "The half of the coin and the half of the story have been yours. Shall I tell you the other half of the story, to match this other half of the coin? It says 'Till We Meet Again', remember."

Then he faced me once more.

"We halved the coin when we parted in the States, I for Fort Bridger as a government clerk there, she to wait till I should send for her. Yes, yes. Fifty and more years ago. 'Till We Meet Again'! And mine: 'God Be With You'! Ah! What do you know? How can you stand and tell me of *her*? Did you ever see her—did you ever see her?" He clutched me by the arm. "Did you ever see her, that hussy, that scarlet woman, that—that—yes, and my own wife who made me lose faith in woman, man, and God; took my youth from me, sent me wandering about without home and without charity? Curse her! The end of the trail, and what do I find? Dry bones. Whose bones?" He faltered, and he implored, simply: "You guessed? You're too young to have been on the plains in those days. Did you know *him*?"

"Pierre Lavelle?"

"Ah!" he quavered. He dashed down the half coin. "Are you going to tell me these bones are his? No, no! Such men as he live long. And this keepsake! Tell me she died miserably; that will be something. You did know him? You did? Or do you dare to allege you can rebuild a past, from this dunghheap? What?"

"You wrong her, Mr. Brown," I answered. "I never knew Lavelle, never saw him. I never knew her—I

do not even know her name, except by yours. But——"

"Catherine," he murmured. "Kitty. A beautiful girl, and false as hell."

"You wrong her," I repeated. "You wrong those poor bones. Will you listen?"

"Go on." He steadied himself.

"They won't speak. Can you?"

"I'll speak for them," I continued.

"In 1867 a government wagon train was en route from Leavenworth for old Fort Bridger of Utah."

"Very likely," he sneered.

"There was a young wife with it, to join her husband at the post. And there was a train attaché named Pierre Lavelle, half Spanish and half Indian—a handsome scoundrel."

"I'll take your word for that."

"He coveted the girl. She was innocent—she had no notion. One evening after supper he and she rode up into a narrow draw, here in western Wyoming, to seek flowers. He roped her and gagged her and left her while he returned to the camp, on one pretext or another. He succeeded in fastening a note inside her tent: 'Tell my husband I've gone with a better man.'"

"I got the note," nodded the old man grimly. "Well?"

"The note was a forgery and a lie," said I.

He sneered again.

"How do you know?"

"I know. This first night he rode with the woman tied to her saddle; the second night he freed her. He didn't fear pursuit, and the trail and the train were fifty miles behind. It was a lowering evening, and a wild land. He advanced upon her, she smiled as if she had yielded, but when he reached for her she struck him across the mouth and snatched his knife from his belt and defied him."

"Indeed? And how do you happen to know that, sir?"

"Wait. This stopped him for a

moment. She fell upon her knees and prayed to God for help. He wiped his lips and laughed. Can you imagine that little scene, Mr. Brown? She in white, as she was——”

“She always loved white. There you are right,” conceded the old man.

“And disheveled and at bay; he in his buckskins and greasy black Indian hair, his lips bloody and his teeth glistening; and all the country around promising no succor for her?”

“My imagination is dead,” he said. “Yours seems much alive. Well, go on, go on.”

“Lavelle wiped his lips and laughed. ‘There’s no God in this region, my lady,’ he mocked. ‘There’s only you and me.’”

“God-forsaken, God-forsaken,” the old man muttered. “A land God-forsaken it is, as I have been.”

“Is it?” I challenged. “Wait. She prayed, and these are her very words: ‘God, lift me from this fiend’s hands, or give me strength to lift myself.’ Lavelle taunted: ‘Why not call upon your husband? He’ll be hot to know. I left him just enough word to make him curious.’ And he told her of the note. She cried: ‘Oh! How I hate you! Some day he shall know, and know the truth. I hope he kills you.’ ‘Not for you, he won’t,’ Lavelle answered. ‘He won’t want you after you’ve lived in my Sioux lodge for a while.’”

The old man’s hands had clenched. He gazed fixedly as if witnessing the scene.

“At this,” I proceeded. “she saw something in the fellow’s eyes that alarmed her. When he rushed her she dodged and lunged, and snapped the knife blade close to the hilt, upon his belt buckle. Then she ran, leaving a strip of her dress in his fingers. She ran for higher ground—ran like a hunted rabbit; sprang across a fissure, and gained the top of a butte—a flat butte or mesa. And he made after, jeering, for he knew that she had

trapped herself. The mesa top ended abruptly. Further flight was barred. He came on slowly, enjoying her plight.”

The old man rasped:

“You say all this. How do you know? Answer me that.”

“Wait,” I bade. “Then she again fell on her knees, panting like a nun of old Panama facing a buccaneer. But suddenly she called out, this time gladly, and flung up her two arms, to the sky. And Lavelle saw that which frightened even him. The north was strangely black and jagged; out of the black there issued a roaring, and a gigantic spectacle speeding very swiftly. It might have been the thunder bird of the Sioux, said Lavelle, or a winged canoe, or monstrous devouring demon—and it might have been an avalanching cloud of wind and rain. But to her it was as if God were riding in upon a thunderbolt chariot, and she had reached up her two arms to be taken into that driving shelter.”

“And this happened, you say; did it?” smiled my old man, sarcastically. “And you happen to know!”

“It happened, and I happen to know,” said I. “Lavelle was stopped short again. The Indian in him recoiled. Then his ruffian courage surged back within him. Whether god or spirit, it should not have her. So he threw his rifle to his shoulder, and just as the blackness swooped roaring and whistling to envelop her he touched trigger. Then he ran headlong, in retreat out of the way. The cloud descended, it passed, the rush of air in its wake knocked him flat, the terror and the rain and the hail and the thunder and lightning plastered him, face to the ground, at the foot of the mesa.

“**I**N THE morning the sun rose clear. But Lavelle could not get atop that mesa again. The cloudburst had sheered away the approaches, like a



hydraulic stream, and washed them down as mud and gravel. The mesa rose rimrocked and precipitous, like a biscuit to an ant. He halloosed and got no answer. One horse had broken its tether; he rode the other to a near-by ridge and gazed across. He could see the girl lying white and motionless. His hawk eyes told him that she was dead. So, being a coward in heart, he made off at speed. He quit the country altogether, changed his name, drifted down into border Arizona, and was shot at a gambling table in Tombstone some forty years ago. The girl, you see," said I, "has been lying here ever since, the half coin—that half coin of promise in her fingers, waiting for you and your understanding."

"But," he cried fiercely, "you say so. You weave a story. How am I to know? Where is your proof? Why should I believe? How does it happen—?"

"Because," I answered, "these bones and this half coin 'happen' to be here; and you 'happen' to be my passenger; and we 'happen' to land together upon this 'God-forsaken' spot. And my middle name," said I, "'happens' to be Lavelle, from the line of my grandfather who in his private memoirs confessed to a great wrong."

My old man plumped to his knees; he groped for the half coin. I left him pressing it to his lips and babbling a name, and I went back to the plane.

---