

The Howard Collector

Spring 1967
Volume 2, Number 3
Whole Number 9

CONTENTS

Editorial Notes		2
Letter	E. Hoffman Price	4
The Curse of the Golden Skull.	Robert E. Howard	8
The Day That I Die	Robert E. Howard	13
Stranger in the Twilight	Wade Wellman	15
A Sonnet of Good Cheer	Robert E. Howard	16
To R. E. H.	L. Sprague de Camp	17
Letter	Robert E. Howard	18
Untitled Fragment	Robert E. Howard	21
Sentiment	Robert E. Howard	24
Letter	Robert E. Howard	25
Skulls Over Judah	Robert E. Howard	29
Addenda: Fiction Index		30

THE HOWARD COLLECTOR is edited and published by Glenn Lord, P. O. Box 775, Pasadena, Texas 77501. Single copy 60 cents. Copyright © 1967 by Glenn Lord. All rights reserved. Printed in U. S. A.

LETTER:

ROBERT E. HOWARD to
HAROLD PREECE,
postmarked September 5, 1928

Salaam:

Yes, I like the idea of Eldorado - we do need an organ as you say and I think that would fill the bill nicely. I like the title, it's great.

Clyde came over here and spent a few days. Not much to write about - I have little entertainment to offer and we spent most of the time in idle conversation. Our usual procedure is to drive or walk some miles out on the highway or some country road late at night and there sit and converse, varying this with strolls up and down in the vicinity, while our conversation ranges from metazoa to dinosaurs, and from prize fights to ancient religions. Some times we talk this way until three or four o'clock in the morning, sometimes until dawn. Quite often we stay up all night. This time rain interfered with our program to a large extent. We talk better, both our brains work better at night out under the stars. Both the sun and being indoors seem to hamper our thoughts. There must be a real reason for this - thoughts soar like birds and a roof will hinder their flights. Otherwise a man's thoughts may fly up and perch on the god-faced moon. Though really, words and thoughts are so futile and such a waste - had I my life to live over again I would deal not with words but with actions - but I have followed this road too far.

One day, following another custom we walked out on the highway, with no program in view, no idea or especial wish. Whoever gave us a ride, we would accompany and we would ride with who ever asked us, man or woman. This

time we were taken up by a friend of ours, a most interesting man, who was in his younger days a rover and a wanderer, a detective, a tramp, and other things better left unmentioned. Now close to the age of forty, he is struggling to overcome a lack of education and become a writer. A strong, powerful man, fearless, ruthless and unpolished. With him was a young school teacher, a genial, harum-scarum young fellow, as far from the accepted idea of school teachers as might be. They asked us where we were going and upon our response of anywhere, they resigned themselves to our company.

They did not say where they were going nor did we ask them, for it is usually much more pleasant not to know or care, so long as the blue sky is over you, green fields racing on each side and carefree company to talk to. We went all over the country and finally arrived at Coleman, a town some thirty miles west of Cross Plains. We spent some time at a bootleg joint just outside the outskirts of the town, both going there and returning thence.

There I saw an old man, some eighty years of age, worth thousands of dollars, but dressed in dirty old clothes and gloriously drunk. I've known him for years - a good hearted harmless old fellow who was one of the first settlers of this country and who has probably not drawn a sober breath for forty years. I bought him a bottle of beer, for he had spent all the money he had with him and he was still singing my praises when I left. A strange character - a kind hearted old sot with the mind of a child, though he was a shrewd man of business in his time. In all the years he has drunk, the effect has been nearly always the same, as far as I can see, producing a vague and not-to-be-understood but nonetheless jubilant feeling of fellowship, inducing loud laughter and leaping and prancing and vague maunderings - never an uncanny uplift, a sense of clarified vision beyond mortal eyes, a sense of omnipotence combined with impotency, of vision and futility - how different is the effect

of alcohol upon two men - the thinker and the non-thinker. Yet not long ago the old man tried to commit suicide.

I notice this much - Truett or Clyde, together or alone, quite often are taken up by girls, but that the dames usually pass me up, even if they know me - and pass us all up when I am with the crowd. I suppose that there is something forbidding about my appearance, which is usually unshaven and careless and God knows I was never accused of beauty.

Since writing the above I went, Sunday, to Cisco, a town some forty miles north of Cross Plains, and saw John Gilbert in "The Cossacks". God, what a picture. I take back all the anathemas I have ever hurled at John Gilbert. The picture was very accurate, as near as I could judge and because that wild, fierce race always had a peculiar appeal to me, I have devoted some study to their manners and customs. Living only to fight and drink, knowing nothing else! I wish to God I had been born in some such environment and grown up, knowing nothing else, wishing nothing else, knowing not even how to read or write.

At the dam at Cisco, the largest of its kind in the world, we stopped awhile and watched the bathers and I mentally compared them with those I have seen at Corpus Christi and other like places. Skinny, stooped, or burdened with great folds of tallow which is much worse. But at Cisco - God, what a race of glorious young pagans is growing up in this country. Even the young boys and girls were splendidly built; the girls with fine flowing lines of young womanhood, the boys deep chested and finely muscled. I saw not one man, woman or child who was underdeveloped or much over-developed. Certainly West Texas is the cradle of a coming race of giants.

So I looked on them and revelled in their perfection until it came upon me like a cold wind that these people were purely material, non-thinkers - sworn foes to such dreamers as myself. And for awhile as I saw their evident

strength and self confidence, I hated them as the weak must ever hate the strong, as I thought how these splendid swine could by virtue of their physical prowess, trample the dreams of the dreamers and bend the dreamers themselves to their selfish and materialistic will. Then, Hell, my self confidence came back and it came to me that I saw no man whose ribs I could not crush, whose skull I could not shatter with one blow of my clenched hand - whose thoughtless, handsome face I could not batter.

So, diablo, I am a victim and a creature of whims, for now my mood sends me to the ocean bottom of despair and self-humiliation, and then carries me up to heights I cannot really hope to attain - first I feel too inferior to men, then far too superior.

But there is to me nothing more utterly soul destroying than a dreamer being crushed beneath the brazen heel of physical superiority.

Life loves life to live. So we must create our own delusions to live so if superiority is one of them, eh bein, what the Hell ever that means - that much bueno.

Today at town I saw the hang-over of some old and lascivious custom - a girl had a birthday and her girl and boy friends pounced upon her and indulged in a spanking debauch. I have never been able to find just how that custom originated, but have an idea its roots lie in the old superstition that spanking a woman or whipping her with a switch makes her bear children oftener and easier.

But to return to the fine bodied young barbarians I saw at the Cisco lake - I despise their mentalities but I envy their physiques. I was never finely built, though always strong. As a young boy I was gaunt, spare and wiry, with lean hard and unbeautiful limbs. As a young man I am simply ponderous and bulky. I frankly envy these youths their trim, tapering figures, their smoothly muscled bodies, smaller than mine mostly, but much better formed. Ho hum. Dreams and shadows of dreams. Answer soon.