

# Letters

Volume. I



H.P Lovecraft

**BERSERKER**

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**BOOKS**

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**H. P. LOVECRAFT**

**SELECTED LETTERS**

**1925-1929**

**Edited by August Derleth and Donald Wandrei**



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**SELECTED LETTERS II**



179. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Via Clintonia  
Feby. 16, 1925

To His Serene High Mightiness, Ferdinand II, Commander of the Antique, Curious, and Exotick, Sire:—

.....  
And now, Sire, if you have not wholly put behind you your antient custom of sometimes journeying incognito among commoners, may we of this wretched abode—Sir George Willard Kirke, Bt., and Lewis, 23d Viscount Theobald—not look forward to the felicity of a Royal visit on the evening of Wednesday next—18th February—when at this castle will assemble the regular conclave of feudal baronage, including Lord Francis de Long, of Belknap Manor, Sir Arthur Leeds, K. C. B., Cardinal Samuel Loveman, Bishop St. John of Bushwick, and your miserable hosts? Suitable verses will be compos'd in your honour, singing the praises of vested rank both vertically and horizontally.

And so it goes! Here, Sir, is our esteem the most profound, (colloq. Late XVIII cent.) which in all humility do we proffer, soliciting that, unworthy tho' it be, you do for some brief space preserve it in the Museum of your heart!

Shantih, Shantih, Shantih!  
Council of Peers,  
per. L. Theobald,  
Exalted Secretary

180. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Friday, March 1926

Iacobe Maxime:—

..... One of the price statements—21.50—lured me on in and up—and before I reeled out I had fallen for the aforementioned scenery.

Since then I've been fussing about alterations, and when I finally get the thing—today—I expect to sport the most acceptable false facade that I've sported for some little while. And if any \_\_\_\_\_ thief touches *this* outfit; why, by \_\_\_\_\_, I'll smash his \_\_\_\_\_ for him with one fist whilst I pulverise his \_\_\_\_\_ with the other, meanwhile kicking him posteriorly with both feet in their most pointed shoes and manner! I. E., if I catch him.

Well—back to the \_\_\_\_\_ envelope addressing! A patriarch's new-suited blessing on thy head! Pax vobiscum!

Theobaldus

181. TO MRS. F. C. CLARK

169 Clinton St.  
Brooklyn, N.Y.  
April 21, 1925

My dear Daughter:—

Being at last possess'd of a spare moment, I take my pen in hand to acquaint you with the particulars of my late delightful visit to the Federal City of Washington, and the adjacent parts of Virginia. Tho' my time of observation was short, I endeavour'd to employ it to the best advantage; so that I feel certain of having procur'd a very fair notion of the antient region I travers'd. The eve of my departure was markt with exceeding great bustle; Messrs. Kleiner and Loveman supping with the departing travellers—George Kirk, Esq., and myself—at the Italian ordinary in Downing-Street, and later accompanying us not only home, where we completed our final preparations, but to the station as well; bidding us adieu at midnight as we stood in line outside the gate, awaiting the readiness of the coach.

Being admitted to our seats, we found the company less promiscuous than the publick nature of the vehicle had led us to expect; and finding a pleasing bench on the left-hand side, we proceeded to make ourselves comfortable—my companion insisting that I take the seat next the window, since the route was new to me, whilst he had been over it before. . . . .



Of Baltimore itself—founded in 1729 and doubtless possessing many engrossing antiquities—we saw but little; since the route thro' most of it lay in a pair of tunnels, the space between which holds the station. What I did behold was quite promising—rows of red brick houses with marble steps and window lintels—and I hope some day to indulge in further exploration of the place. At present, however, we hurry'd on; penetrating a country of no great attractiveness and studying our guide-books of Washington, to keep fresh in our minds the desired sights of a goal so swiftly drawing near. The actual arrival was abrupt and undramatic. Quite of a sudden, and whilst we were still in a region so fresh and countrified as to suggest no sign of a large town, the guard call'd out "Washington!", and everyone seized garments to prepare for alighting. No buildings of great size or frequency were visible, and I had quite begun to doubt the word of the postilion when Georgius sustain'd his contention by pointing out a misty skyward obelisk in the dim distance, which I cou'd not but recognise from pictures as the fam'd Washington Monument. Another second, and the coach was still, safe within the commodious trainshed. . . . .

And so I emerg'd from under the Roman arch and beheld the city. The morning sun was high and brilliant, and the summerish air told me at once that I had at last set foot in that gentle Old South of which I have so often dream'd. Green and white were omnipresent—springtime leaves and grass, and delectable expanses of aethereal cherry-blossoms; which latter, indeed, were past their greatest profusion, and beginning to be replac'd by the gay and multi-colour'd flowers of the many gardens. The town, brooding quietly in the Sabbath radiance despite the herds of sightseers unloos'd upon it, does not at first impress one. The Monument is so distant, the sky so vacant of tall buildings, and the ground so devoted to parks, malls, and wide spaces, that one cannot gather the sense of compact and active life which one usually associates with large cities. Then, too, near the station are certain temporarily undeveloped tracts, and a plenitude of large, low buildings which—though having an elderly and colonial aspect—are really only the temporary lath-and-cement structures put up in war-time to house the excess of special government workers. I saw the capitol dome looming importantly through the delicate verdure of young foliage, and was on every hand conscious of a note of leisure and reposefulness at once bespeaking the austral milieu. Now came stamps—bought at a post office next

the station where a grandly cloistral air animated an interior of vast size and drowsily ornate dimness—and a matutinal meal, snatched at a modest refectory but little suggestive of background and glamour. Supplies on board, we set out with buoyant step for the Capitol; observing as we went the temporary war buildings, which on closer inspection display'd some highly attractive Georgian characteristicks. The general landskip was still unimpressive, tho' a peculiar atmospherick quality induc'd a sense of mild exaltation—perhaps thro' aesthetick channels, since the sky was bluer, the foliage greener, the flowers gayer, and the marble structures whiter, than such things seem in the North. We did not omit noticing the Library of Congress, which fail'd to captivate us, or the House and Senate buildings; and once in a while a vista wou'd open up and enhance our impression of semi-rural spaciousness and freshness, whilst the charm of the low skyline grew on us each moment. At last, after traversing a delectable bit of park, we reacht the Capitol on its commanding elevation, and began to circumnavigate it till we attain'd that central and original portion whose corner-stone was laid by Genl. Washington, with Masonick ceremonies, in 1793, whose north wing was first occupy'd in 1800, and whose south wing was completed in 1811, under the architectural superintendence of Latrobe, designer of the United States Bank at Philadelphia and of the Popish cathedral at Baltimore. The central or connecting part, as all know, was erected after the burning of the city in 1814 during the war, and modell'd from the plans of the mighty Boston architect Charles Bulfinch, who to his native city was a veritable Christopher Wren, and whose crowning work is the golden-domed Boston State House on Beacon Hill, put up in 1795. The original Capitol building—central portion with dome, and the two wings—was finisht in 1827; the two extensions being added during the 'fifties. The present dome, as most are aware, is not the first one; but a replacement, of a stranger material, completed in 1865. As I gaz'd upon this gigantick construction, I cou'd not but compare it with other similar buildings I have seen; and I will confess that some of its rivals did not suffer by the estimate. For perfect artistry of form, delicacy of detail, and purity of material, it cannot compete with our own modern Rhode-Island State House; and I am certain no true Providence man can help feeling pride when he reflects that its superior constantly looms majestick and marmoreal over his native place, giving background and dignity to Exchange-Place and Market-Square, and forming a magnifi-

cent focus for the upper end of Narragansett Bay. God Save His Majesty's Province of Rhode-Island and Providence-Plantations! . . . . .

Yr. aff: Parent & Obt: Servt:  
H. P. L.

182. TO EDGAR J. DAVIS

May 12, 1925

My Child:—

Up to last October, your description of hospital life would have excited no visual mnemonic imagery in my consciousness, for I had never seen the interior of such an institution at any great length. In that month, however, my wife was ill for some time at the Brooklyn Hospital, and from visiting her each day I acquired no little familiarity with the sights, sounds, and atmospheric touches peculiar to the temples of Hygeia. I trust that your emergence from pamper'd solitude to the relative publicity of a limited ward is not attended by any serious regrets. Your soul and personality are still your own, and if the burthen of the herd mind presses too seriously upon you, you can always retire haughtily within their impregnable recesses. . . . .

Your most obt great-grandfather and humble Servnt  
H. P. Lovecraft

183. TO MRS. F. C. CLARK

Wednesday Morning  
May 20, 1925

My dear Daughter Lillian:—

. . . . . Here I'll have to admit a fall from grace so far as non-purchasing is concern'd, for a great volume of Bulwer-Lytton, with most of the weird novels complete—*Zanoni*, *A Strange Story*, and *The House and the Brain*—for only *ten cents*,

proved a fatal bait; and I departed from the Schulte Emporium with less in my pocket and more in my hand. But only a dime, remember! . . . . . You may smilingly doubt the genuineness of Old Theobald's retirement from the world—but look sharp! The hour was two p. m., and Kirk was ready for an afternoon of empty dawdling around bookstalls and cafeterias—already he had proposed some coffee at the Sheridan Square place, (where you got the breaded veal you didn't like) since the Downing Street joint is weak on that beverage—but what do you suppose Grandpa did? I'll tell you! The old gentleman made exceedingly polite excuses, bowed low, and took the underground stage-coach home—straight home, James!—where he sat tight reading and writing all the rest of the day, retired at night, and arose on the morrow to tuck his books under his arm and start for a solitary open-air day in nearby Fort Greene Park. There, on a bench against a secluded verdant slope, I read continuously all day; stopping only at twilight, when I wended my homeward way, pausing at John's Spaghetti place for my usual Sunday dinner of meat balls and spaghetti, vanilla ice cream, and coffee. Incidentally—not many doors away, on the other side of Willoughby St., I found a restaurant which specialises in home-baked beans. It was closed on Sunday, but I shall try it some time soon. Beans, fifteen cents, with pork, twenty cents. With Frankfort sausages, twenty-five cents. Yes—here is a place which will repay investigation!

After dinner I laid in some supplies at the cheapest place open on Sunday, thence proceeding home—where I took one of our 454 dining-room chairs and went "out" for the evening—to my alcove with a pile of books! A knock came at the door—but I was not there. Windows and door-cracks show'd no light. Whose business whither I had gone? And so till bedtime, when I quietly turned in, awaking Monday noon and resuming my reading and writing. Having supplies, I didn't go out or dress, but when evening came I decided it wouldn't be politic to be "out" again. Two nights in succession would seem odd *at first*, though that will come very soon when the gang's habit is weakened a trifle more. Thus I let the light show—and surely enough Loveman called. Now grasp the subtle work! I was cordial—but in slippers and dressing-gown, and with room not picked up. I apologised, but introduced no new or personal topics. With the sight of my writing all heaped about me. and with the burthen of conversation all thrown on him, my





A self-portrait of Lovecraft.

guest did not loll in the morris-chair by the hour as usual; but shortly adjourned to Kirk's den—though not without a promise to call on his way down. Another half-hour passes, and still I write. Now come Kirk's three familiar taps on the radiator pipe—to which I have to respond, since he knows I'm home. But my response is slow, and when I arrive I am cordial but not inventive of conversation. Another half-hour and Loveman leaves—with perfect cordiality—whilst Kirk puts himself in line for a favour—a thing I am particularly glad to grant him, since he has virtually forced so many substantial courtesies upon me. He, it appears, had also been loafing about—or working about—in his dressing-gown, and was greatly in want of a meal yet reluctant to bother to dress. Now I too was about to dine, so with the utmost hospitality I invited him down, treated him to A & P spaghetti, cheese, bread, and vanilla wafers off my best blue china, and bade him a courtly adieu almost immediately afterward—for he too felt the inadvisability of lingering in view of the obvious air of preoccupation about the place. All this while I had been lightly and banteringly alluding to my literary reform, both to Kirk and to Loveman; and speaking of the solid work ahead of me. Thus it was easy to capture the morrow by taking the initiative about when I would meet them again—saying that I would see them at the regular Boys' meeting *Wednesday*, and thus virtually exempting Tuesday. By this step, I could be sure of a quiet Tuesday night WITHOUT retiring to the alcove.

And so it was, I rested, was up again Tuesday afternoon, wrote letters undisturbed well into the night, rested again, and am now on deck once more, without having looked on a human face in the interim. Today I must do some shopping—perhaps I'll take in that grey suit and see how much it will come to, and maybe I'll be bold enough to graduate to a straw hat and let my felt be cleaned—and in the evening I shall have to be host at a Boys' Meeting. This is a McNeil meeting, and will probably be dull since Morton doubts if he can come whilst Sonny is by no means certain. These formal meetings I won't try to dodge just yet—the big thing is to get rid of the daily dropping-in and cafeteria loafing, which is death to any personal intellectual life or creative accomplishment. It'll be hard to shelve the gang, but with tact I am certainly doing it. Just now my prime difficulty is how to not to offend Loveman by refusing his proposition for a Philadelphia excursion some Sunday soon. He wants to see the colonial prrt of the town, and wishes my ser-

vices as a guide—being eager to pay my fare at the special excursion rate of three dollars. Now if I had the money, I'd be glad enough of the trip—Heaven knows I want to see a real white man's town badly enough—but unless I pay my own fare, there will be an inescapable atmosphere of obligation which will lessen my sense of independence in breaking free. It is such dubious taste to let a fellow treat one to a trip on Sunday, and refuse to open the door to him Monday evening! So I'll have to squirm out—though how to do it without offence, in view of the pressing cordiality, will certainly require allopathic doses of the subtlety I've been detailing in the past few pages! Saturday night is the Blue Pencil meeting at the Simonton studio, but I rather think I'll cut it despite the oratorical reproofs which Mortonius will heap upon my head. I may, though, take in their New Jersey picnic and "hike" Memorial Day. And in June Sechrist is coming to New York again for a day or so, bringing two of his children—an occasion on which I'll feel it a duty to repay the consideration he show'd me in Washington.

Yr. most aff: nephew and obt. Servt: H. P. L.

184. TO MRS. F. C. CLARK

Monday Evening  
May 25, 1925

My dear Daughter Lillian:—

.....  
The bad news is this—that while I slept, (for it couldn't have been while I was in the alcove, on account of the sounds I'd have instantly heard) my dressing-alcove was entered, either through the door to the next room or through my door by someone having a key; and *all* my suits except the thin blue, my Flatbush overcoat, a wicker suitcase of S. H.'s, Loveman's radio material, and I know not what else, have been stolen. .... It must have happened whilst I slept—roughly, between six a. m. and eight-thirty p. m. Sunday, eight a. m. and three-thirty p. m. Monday, or nine p. m. and one-thirty a. m. (just now) Monday-Tuesday. ....



I can't yet accustom myself to the shock—to the grim truth that I haven't a suit of clothes to my back save the thin, blue summer one. What I shall ever do if the property isn't recovered, Heaven alone knows! . . . . .

. . . . I could curse the atmosphere blue!! Just as I had decided to try to look more respectable by keeping my clothes in good order, here comes this blasted, infernal thunderbolt to deprive me of the battery of four suits and one really decent overcoat needed as a minimum of neat appearance. To Hades with everything!

Yr. aff: Nephew and obt. Servt.  
H. P. L.

185. TO MRS. F. C. CLARK

Thursday Night  
May 28, 1925

My dear daughter Lillian:—

Thanks prodigiously for the sympathy on the recent disaster—but don't let it worry you! Never waste emotion on the other fellow's plight—if any expressiveness is needed, I can furnish enough cuss-words to fill the suppressed part of a censored dictionary of synonyms! Yah! If I were writing a primer at this moment I'd cut out the A B C's altogether, and start in with a really vital and graphic letter—in double-size, heavy-faced, capitalised italic form! Yes—it takes real rhetoric to expound the sensations of one suddenly stripped of raiment which formed not only a tasteful adornment of the present, but a relique of former youth and a legacy of past ages amounting—the case of the older garments—to the virtual sentimental equivalent of an heirloom! Alas for the robes of my infancy, perennial in their bloom, and now cut off—or snatched off—in the finest flowering of their first few decades! They knew the slender youth of old, and expanded to accommodate the portly citizen of middle life—aye, and condensed again to shroud the wizened shanks of old age! And now they are gone—gone—and the grey, bent wearer still lives to bemoan his nudity; gathering around his

lean sides as best he may the strands of his long white beard to serve him in the office of a garment!

.....

YES, WE HAVE NO  
new Flatbush overcoat 1924.  
old 1915 thick suit  
newer 1921 thick suit  
newest 1923 thin grey suit  
TODAY

OTHER  
ABSTRACTIONS  
S. H.'s wicker  
suitcase  
Loveman's radio  
set

BUT WE DO HAVE  
1918 thin blue suit  
1909 light overcoat  
1917 light overcoat  
1918 winter overcoat  
moth-eaten old flannel  
trousers—grey  
odd grey skeleton coat—  
shapeless  
straw hat—clean and  
shapely  
newly renovated felt hat  
old brown felt hat for  
rainy days  
all gloves, ties, and linen  
all shoes and rubbers and  
slippers

STILL

..... By seven it was over; and bidding the Longs farewell at the 96th St. station I proceeded forthwith to the Public Library in 42nd St.—where we saw the manuscripts—to read a new Arthur Machen tale, *The Shining Pyramid*, obtainable there but not removable from the building. Belknap had told me about it. In this calling my evenings my own, to read in or do what I please in, I am achieving a sense of balance, freedom, and regained individual personality which I have long lacked. I had been asked to spend that evening around the Fourth Avenue and Downing Street slums with the gang, and would have felt myself compelled by courtesy to do so a couple of months ago. Now, however, I am severely and relentlessly my own master; and politely countered the well-meant invitation with the statement that my own affairs might make it impossible, great as would be my regret, and so on. What I wanted to do I did—read *The Shining Pyramid* and found it fair though not Machen's best, took the subway home to a peaceful hearth, gave Kirk and Loveman a civil welcome (though with such indications of early retiring—opened couch, etc.—as did not encourage long mooning and staring over nothing) when they called about midnight, and settled down to finish my Conrad book before

finally seeking my couch. Neat? I'm getting the world in training! The old vacuously gregarious spirit is shrinking without any decrease in cordiality, and in my recaptured peace and quiet I am laying the foundations of a concentrative power which may yet enable me to do something—financially as well as artistically—and win back the more active mind and sense of humour which once upon a time I enjoyed; a power which not even the sickening shock of sudden robbery and lack of adequate wardrobe can impair.

The next day was up at noon, surveyed the odds and ends discovered in the freebooters' nest, and did considerable writing and reading before it was time to go up to Sonny's for the meeting. . . . . Leeds and I had talked very seriously about the Yesley writing venture; and when I rode down town with Leeds I continued the conversation, getting more and more workable details from his kindly and willing lips. So keen on the trail of industrial facts did I become, indeed, that I broke my anti-loafing rule and had coffee with him at a restaurant near his hotel; absorbing the general "hang" of his proposition and learning exactly what I would and wouldn't be expected to do if I definitely decided to go in for it and "play the market" for real money with some of my new and hard-won time, energy, and independence. He agreed to show me the ropes thoroughly, and see that my articles (which need not be signed) received proper sales treatment; and predicted that I ought to stand as good a chance at making money as himself or anybody else who has proved he can do it. And I told him I would tackle the thing—and he means to send me my first assignment in a week or two, when he can get together the leads best suited to me (real estate, largely) and find the right models for imitation among his old magazines. Of course, I am no longer moved or excited over any outlook of this sort. I know all these business vistas turn very swiftly to mirages before one's eyes, and make one kick oneself for any naive enthusiasm one may have shown in advance. But it is at least no crime to indulge in frankly fantastic speculation, and I can see myself—in an imaginatively fictional way—with an actual income and possible future for the first time in my life. My first act on achieving any really regular stipend would be to return to New England;—for location is immaterial to the venture—the Boston district (out Salem—Marblehead way) at first, till I could really acquire some solidity; and finally, after a proper Hub apprenticeship, the sacred soil of *Providence*, re-won through pain and labour, and nev-

er-more to be quitted by a sedate old gentleman who sampled the world and found that its dearest jewel was the hearthstone he left behind! . . . . .

More bulletins later. For the present I will subscribe myself Yr. most aff: Nephew and obt. Servt.: H. P. L.

186. TO MRS. F. C. CLARK

Friday Afternoon  
June 5, 1925

My dear Daughter Lillian:—

. . . . . As to clothing—since I am keeping clear of people as much as possible, I shan't get anything quite yet. Mostly I am here in my night-shirt, (thanks for those coming—I have on the other newly mended one at this moment!) and on my solitary tramps to the park I shall (weather permitting) wear the old limp skeleton coat and flannel trousers. When making an ordinary trip in company, I shall wear the blue coat (for truly, the other is quite absurd!) with the light flannel trousers, (a permissible combination, though not greatly to my taste) saving the blue trousers well pressed for nicer occasions—as when I go up to Sonny's house for lunch. Otherwise, the blue trousers will soon be gone; for they are grievously thin, threadbare, and shiny in the seat, and the cloth is worn off round the edges of the pockets, showing bits of a yellowish lining beneath. Like you, I wouldn't believe that one could buy a decent suit for twenty-five dollars nowadays—especially a two-trousers suit—yet here is Little Belknap with the actual, irrefutable proof. He paid just that—yet I can see how well the suit becomes him, and how finely it wears. Come to think of it, *you* saw him in a twenty-five dollar grey which he put on for the first time about the period of your call there. I have thought of trying for still cheaper bargains—old models or out-of-season goods, to which Leeds might tip me off. A *winter* suit *now* might be very cheap, or a *summer* suit next *September or October*—the latter bargain being the more likely, since winter goods have a tendency to be regarded as year-round staples, whilst summer materials occasionally go at ridiculous reductions as autumn advances. What a devil of a predicament! One can never be really at ease with

less than four suits—two of each weight, so that one of the right sort can always be ready in good condition for whatever occasion may require it.

With renewed assurances of my high consideration, I am, Madam,  
Yr. most affec: Nephew and obt: Servt.  
H. P. L.

187. TO MAURICE W. MOE

169 Clinton Street  
Brooklyn, N. Y.  
June 15, 1925

Mocrates, My Son:—

But to return to chronological order—in October, not long after my aunt's departure for Providence, the indifferent health of my wife culminated in a double breakdown, nervous and gastric. Being without servants in the apartment, my wife did not wish to cke along with any home treatment—especially since an operation for removal of the gall-bladder was threatened—so she took up her quarters on the fourth floor of the Brooklyn Hospital, in a sunny room whose windows opened on a spacious balcony and overlooked both the verdant hills of Fort Greene Park and the picturesque steeples of eastern Brooklyn. Expert medical advice from three leaders of the profession—Dr. Westbrook, a general practitioner descended in direct line from my architect-hero Sir Christopher Wren, Dr. Kingman, a nerve specialist, and Dr. Crane, a nasal specialist who thought some of the nerve trouble came from a misplaced septum—did much to mitigate the acuteness of the trouble; and after three weeks of dieting and reclining the patient was discharged with instructions to rest at least six weeks in the country. Westbrook wanted to operate on the gall-bladder, but layman that I am, I urged my spouse not to let him without the concurrent opinion of several first-rate physicians. Such an operation was the immediate cause of my mother's death, and I had heard of other methods of dealing with obstinate liver complaints. Later I was very glad I thus held out—for a subsequent physician, a woman graduate of the Sorbonne with a high Paris reputation, has done wonders with milder dietetic methods, and advises

against surgery. During this hospital period I had my first experience in lone housekeeping. Aided by the written instructions of my wife I made coffee that I could actually drink, and cooked spaghetti that I could actually eat—and as a matter of personal pride I kept the house swept and dusted. I may have said that after my advent the furnishing was changed; the dining-room which you saw becoming my study, with all my own things from Providence, and the living-room becoming a combination dining-living room after a plan first adopted by Frank B. Long's mother. I visited the hospital each day; bringing books, papers, and such edibles as were permitted, and meanwhile gained a practice in solitary food preparation which was later to serve me in good stead. On Hallowe'en I welcomed back the mistress of the manse, having previously decorated the living-room with appropriate black and orange streamers, and paper witches at strategic points. As soon as possible after this, we located what seemed to be a good rustic retreat for an invalid or convalescent; and one evening in early November set out for the agrestic acres of one Mrs. R. A. Craig in South Somerville, N. J., something over half way to Philadelphia. Reaching the farmhouse by motor from the station, we found it quite tolerable though somewhat lonely; and to my mind vastly enhanced by the lively presence of a large family of irresistible gray kittens. The next day we explored the surrounding country, which proved rather flattish as compared with New England, yet which was by no means unattractive. The nearest village—Somerville—possessed considerable quaintness and charm. Now as just mentioned, this region is more than half way from N. Y. to Philadelphia—so that I thought the opportunity for further antiquarian exploration in the Quaker metropolis too good to miss. Accordingly it was not for N. Y. but for Dr. Franklin's thriving town that I set out when I finally took my leave of Somerville, where the superior nine-tenths seemed comfortably settled. . . . . . Meanwhile my wife was improving so much that she began to take notice of professional things; and when, in December, she received a sudden offer of an important and highly salaried post in the largest department-store of Cincinnati she determined to try it for a while—I to engage a room until some permanent system could be devised. Looking about for quarters with the assistance of my aunt, we finally hit upon this old place in the Brooklyn Heights region of brick and brown-stone, within sight of the sea, and with an old-world air of musty stateliness which to many suggests parts of London. Since my wife was, as part of her new work, to be in N. Y.

frequently for a week at a time, we had to secure arrangements large enough for two. This we did by taking a spacious corner room with two alcoves, one for dressing materials and the other with washing paraphernalia. . . . . Shortly after my advent here I persuaded George Kirk to take the room above me; and when Loveman dwelt only a few squares off, we certainly had the makings of quite a little literary colony. On Dec. 31st the last load left Parkside Ave.—some goods here, some in storage,—and my wife took the train for Cincinnati, where she had found an excellent boarding place—an almost family-like circle where her two principal associates were a pair of high-school teachers from Maine, the Misses Parington and Curtis. I began the new year at 169 Clinton St., exceedingly active in the affairs of our local gang—Morton, Kleiner, Loveman, Leeds, McNeil, Long, Kirk, etc.—and frequently serving as host to them in the quarters whose furnishings they complimented so generously. They do me the honour to say that my place looks exceptionally classic and restful, and that its mellow sedateness suggests continuous occupancy for years if not for generations. When my wife visited, she acted as hostess with the most extreme graciousness; and all agreed that we did remarkably well with the limited space at our command.

But the exact state of things was not for long. The strain of the new position told on my wife's health; so that she was twice in a private hospital—a well known establishment conducted by a Dr. Beyer—in Cincinnati, and finally thought it advisable to relinquish the responsibilities of her arduous post. From the middle of February to the middle of March she rested here, then taking belatedly the advice of last October and seeking prolonged rural retirement; this time under ideal conditions in the household of a woman physician at Saratoga Springs. There she remained till a week ago, when she returned hither for an indefinite period. She now seems fairly well, though easily fatigued. The turmoil and throngs of N. Y. depress her, as they have begun to do me, and eventually we hope to clear out of this Babylonish burg for good. I find it a bore after the novelty of the museums, skyline and bolder architectural effects has worn off, and hope to get back to New England for the rest of my life—the Boston district at first, and later Providence, if I ever get the money to live there as befits a member of my family. As it is, my principal pastime these days is getting away from the atmosphere of New York. Last summer and this spring I have spent much time exploring the colonial reaches of Staten Island and the adjacent New Jer-

sey shore—especially ancient Elizabeth-town, a pure Georgian city which I haunt continually, and where my wife and I spent the afternoon only two days ago.

But my most spectacular feat of the season is *reducing*. You know how fat I was in 1923, and how bitterly I resented the circumstance. In 1924 I grew even worse, till finally I had to adopt a #16 collar! During the combined period of my wife's hospital sojourn and my Philadelphia trip, I had the opportunity of regulating my own diet for the first time in my entire career—eating just as much as I wanted, rather than as much as someone else thought I ought to have. Upon the close of this period I had thinned perceptibly, returning to a 15¾ collar . . . . I don't know how much I lost, for after passing the one hundred ninety-three mark on the upward course a year before, I had refused to mount a pair of scales! During the winter I kept a sterner guard of my diet, and managed not to regain the tonnage I had lost—and then, when in January I became absolute autocrat of my breakfast, dinner, and supper table, I flung my hat in the air—or ring—and started reducing *in earnest!!* And I didn't even need to be fat at all! It was all the result of acquiescing spinelessly in the dicta of one's solicitous family! How the pounds flew! I helped the course along by exercise and outdoor walks, and every time my friends saw me they were either pleased or frightened at the startling shrinkage. Fortunately I had not been fat for so many years that the skin must needs suffer radical distension. Instead, it shrunk neatly along with the tissue beneath, leaving a firm surface and simply restoring the lost outlines of 1915 and before. And what a story the scales and my clothing told! The latter had to be thoroughly re-tailored, whilst every week I bought smaller and smaller collars. It was dramatic—breathless—sensational—this reclamation of a decade-lost statue from the vile mud which had so long encrusted it. As you may imagine, my wife protested fearfully at what seemed an alarming decline. I received long scolding letters from my aunts, and was lectured severely by Mrs. Long every time I went up to see Little Belknap. But I knew what I was doing, and kept on like grim death. I had simply changed my dietetic standard to the normal, and—as I hope—permanently broken the fat-accumulating tendency. When I had condensed to my old pre-war figure, I ceased to apply the extremes of my method—yet not only did I escape a subsequent increase, but have even lost nine additional pounds—this last year without even trying. I now publicly



avow my personal mastery of my diet, and do not permit my wife to feed me in excess of it. If you were to meet me on the street tomorrow you would not know me except from the very earliest pictures you ever saw—the story is told by figures like these: weight, *one hundred forty-six* pounds; waist with shirt and underclothing on, thirty inches; collar (and a loose fit at that)  $14\frac{3}{4}$ . And I mean to stay that way a long, long while! Here is a snapshot of Little Belknap and me, taken a month ago when my weight was one hundred fifty-four. Some difference from the old porpoise you saw a couple of years ago, eh? And as Fate would have it, Sonny is beginning to get fat!

I think I mentioned the Great Robbery on my card of t'other day. Yes—on Sunday, May 24, thieves operating from the next room (which they had hired) cleaned out my dressing alcove, with which their room has a perpetually locked door in common. They picked the lock and made a thorough job—leaving me not a rag to my name save the old blue suit which you saw me in in Providence—but which I changed before we went to Boston because I didn't think it was good enough to wear there! I had hung that carelessly on a chair in the room proper, which they did not enter—noble argument for carelessness, since if I'd hung it up where it belonged, in the alcove, I'd be parading around in a barrel these days! It was a fearful financial blow—my whole wardrobe wiped out, and just after everything had been tailored over to fit my reduced figure. Nothing has turned up from the police—the whole loss included a blanket, a suit case of my wife's, and an expensive radio set I was storing for Loveman.

.....

And meanwhile pray consider me  
Yr. most obt. Servt.  
Lo.

188. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

Sunday, Aug. 2, 1925

Hello, Sonny!

I like a tale to be told as directly and impersonally as possible, from an angle of utter and absolute detachment. Which reminds me that I have just finished a new attempt at fiction—the story I told you I would

write, with Brooklyn as a setting. The title is *The Horror at Red Hook*, and it deals with hideous cult-practices behind the gangs of noisy young loafers whose essential mystery has impressed me so much. The tale is rather long and rambling, and I don't think it is very good; but it represents at least an attempt to extract horror from an atmosphere to which you deny any qualities save vulgar commonplaceness. . . . .

Morton is all excited about this museum business—wants me to go to Paterson at the next trustee meeting and talk with the Men Higher Up. I haven't much hope of being accepted, for it's clear to me that what they want is a person with a *naturalist's* inclinations. Of course I can read up, and all that sort of thing, but they wouldn't be likely to take a man who had to cram at the eleventh hour when the woods are full of people who already possess ample interest and preparation in the desiderate line. . . . .

The last gang meeting was at my place; and duly warned by you, I imported coffee for Friend Henry Everett in a nice new aluminum pail or milk-can which I bought for 49¢ for that especial purpose. I gave him all he could drink, and stuffed him also with cake and apple tarts; so that if in future he ever impugns his Grandpa Theobald's hospitality, he will not be the conscientious Presbyterian I take him to be! Only he and Kleiner were present, but we had a good time for all that—discussing the Greek art tradition (McNeil thinks modern monument designers ought to be original, and not to copy such old-fashioned foreign things) and the late William Jennings Bryan. The next meeting will be a Leeds one—also at my place. Kleiner and I mean to discharge our responsibilities as hosts during your absence, since when you are here we want to meet in places where you can be more certain of attending. . . . .

Yr. obt. ancestor  
H P

189. TO (UNKNOWN)

Aug. 8, 1925

It so happens that I am unable to take pleasure or interest in anything but a mental re-creation of other & better days—for in sooth, I see no possibility of ever encountering a really congenial milieu or living among civilised people with old Yankee historic memories again—so in order to avoid the madness which leads to violence & suicide I must cling to the few shreds of old days & old ways which are left to me. Therefore no one need expect me to discard the ponderous furniture & paintings & clocks & books which help to keep 454 always in my dreams. When they go, I shall go, for they are all that make it possible for me to open my eyes in the morning or look forward to another day of consciousness without screaming in sheer desperation & pounding the walls in a frenzied clamour to be waked up out of the nightmare of "reality" to my own room in Providence. Yes—such sensitivenesses of temperament are very inconvenient when one has no money—but it's easier to criticise than to cure them. When a poor fool possessing them allows himself to get exiled & sidetracked through temporarily false perspective & ignorance of the world, the only thing to do is to let him cling to his pathetic scraps as long as he can hold them. They are life for him.

H. P. Lovecraft

190. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

Castle Theobald  
Monday Afternoon  
August 10, 1925

Thou poor Lambkin!

First aid! Here is something to criticise! It's the literary part of the new *United Amateur*, which Cook ought to have mailed long ago, but which has for some reason or other been held up, so that I have only one advance copy besides this manuscript. Keep the manuscript—I'm

through with it—the non-literary part has already gone in the waste basket! Write what you like about anything you like. If you feel too modest to do justice to your own contributions, you have plenty of latitude with the Lovemanick prose-poem, the Galpinian review of Smith, and the verses by Smith, Goodenough, Van Dusen, Kuntz, and Whitaker. Send the stuff back through Grandpa, if you like—the Old Gentleman will supply any dictionaryal niceties which isolation may deny you. By the way, though—Grandpa *did* tell you that you were to be Critick. I recall most distinctly the occasion on which I sought this boon from you—and the Wildean, Verlainish sigh of resignation with which you reluctantly breathed your disillusioned acquiescence . . . or at least, your absence of active rebellion. So I thought you were all ready, if not avidly eager, for your share in sustaining the great *United* tradition! I should say Bacon might use about a couple of pages to good advantage—that's four double-spaced typewriter sheets. The *Amateur* will be an eight-pager, printed by Harry R. Marlow for the really notable cut rate of \$20.00.

Well—we're all expecting Sonny back on the 15th! Samuelus has secured a room at his old hangout—78 Columbia Heights—and has become so readjusted that it's hard to realise he was ever away. He is doing provisional work in Martin's Book Shop for \$12.00 a week (Martinus offered him fifteen, but he wouldn't take it, saying that his benevolent employer couldn't afford it!)

I think his health and nerves have much improved. He is awaiting word from Brentano's in September about a position, and his kindly old landlady is meanwhile letting him have his room at greatly reduced rates. I helped him get his room and move last Wednesday, and helped him migrate upstairs Saturday evening. The preceding Tuesday I had dinner with him and accompanied him to his temporary quarters at the Kamin flat—an occasion on which he displayed many of his rare literary treasures, including the completed *Sphinx. The Hermaphrodite* he has again declared unfinished—being dissatisfied with the ending he has given it.

The Wednesday meeting was very good—with Mortonius, Lovemanus, Kleinerus, and Arturus present besides the lowly and ignoble host. The returned prodigal exhibited some of his autographs and literary relicks, and enough general discussion arose to spice the proceedings agreeably. I had laid in a vast supply of refreshments—including the

inevitable Kleinerian crumb-cake—(the left-overs nourished me all the next day!) and at eleven o'clock went out for hot coffee with my new aluminum pail.

Well—so it goes. Don't let the critical assignment scare you, write your prettiest, and be an unimpeachably good boy.

Yr. most obt.  
Grandpa

191. TO (UNKNOWN)

Aug. 13, 1925

... At a small shop I bought a dime composition book; & having a pencil & pencil sharpener (in a case, which SH gave me) in my pocket, proceeded to select a site for literary creation. Scott-Park ... was the place I chose; & there, pleasantly intoxicated by the wealth of delicate un-metropolitan greenery & the yellow & white Colonialism of the gambrel-roofed Scott house, I settled myself for work. Ideas welled up unbidden, as never before for years, & the sunny actual scene soon blended into the purple & red of a hellish midnight tale—a tale of cryptical horrors among tangles of antediluvian alleys in Greenwich Village—wherein I wrote not a little poetick description, & the abiding terror of him who comes to New-York as to a faery flower of stone & marble, yet finds only a verminous corpse—a dead city of squinting alienage with nothing in common either with its own past or with the background of America in general. I named it *He*, & had it nearly done by three, when ... my engagement called me back to Babylon. Finishing the tale en route ...

H. P. Lovecraft

192. TO MRS. ALFRED GALPIN

169 Clinton Street  
Brooklyn, New York  
August 16, 1925

Dear Mrs. Galpin:—

Your gifted young husband having informed our local circle of aesthetic dilettanti of your impending arrival on the S. S. *Majestic*, and having delegated to us the agreeable responsibility of shewing you such sights and salient points of interest as you may care to inspect here, I herewith take it upon myself to facilitate your location and identification of the circle in question. . . .

. . . I herewith enclose the rudiments of a portrait gallery in which the physiognomies of the two representatives likeliest to be on hand are rather explicitly treated. You will not, I think, find it hard to pick out either one or both of these individuals—Mr. Samuel Loveman and myself when you observe them at any designated point in attitudes of expectancy. . . .

And may I not add, as an individual, that my wife and I are both very anxious to meet the bride of our young prodigy-friend? Since my wife will be called imperatively West on business by Wednesday at the latest, she bids me ask you if you will not favour us with your company at dinner on Tuesday evening—at a restaurant, perforce, since we are this year existing in a rented room instead of housekeeping. . . .

I have the honour to remain, Madam,:

Yr. most obt. humble Servt.:

H. P. Lovecraft.

193. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

169 Clinton St.,  
Brooklyn, N. Y.  
(c. Sept. 1, 1925)

My dear Smith:—

..... Most certainly, the abysses of interstellar space form your province *par excellence*, & I hope you will in time add a large body of cosmic literature—both in verse & in prose—to that you have already evolved in this field. Your perspective & manner are, so far as I can see, absolutely unique; & I only wish your work could receive the attention it deserves from critics & literary historians. I shall mention you very prominently in the article on weird literature which I am writing for W. Paul Cook's coming magazine.

I shall see that De Casseres—via Loveman—gets an early view of your drawings, & hope he may have enough influence to bring them to the attention of some art authority of adequate standing. I don't know how exhibitions are managed, but fear it's exceedingly difficult for a new artist to get a hearing. .... Recognition seems to be largely a matter of chance, & the wise artist is he who permits his work to form its own reward—the joy of creation, & the sense of beauty nourished. I hope that you can some day arrange to come to N. Y.; for although the streets are not paved with either gold or recognition passports, there is certainly less active hostility to art than in other sections, & a much better chance of meeting those who are able to help through contacts with the reigning aesthetic powers. ....

Yr most oblig'd & obt. Servt.  
H P L

194. TO MRS. F. C. CLARK

Sept. 12-13, 1925

As I have always said, missionaries are infernal nuisances who ought to be kept at home—dull, solemn asses without scientific acumen or his-

torical perspective; & cursed with an eternal blindness to the obvious fact that different lands, races, & conditions naturally develop & demand different cultural standards & usages & different ethical & social codes.

H. P. Lovecraft

195. TO MRS. F. C. CLARK

Sept. 15, 1925

Yesterday I answered the enclosed *Times* advertisement for commercial writers, which Sonny-child sent me after having answered it himself. Here's hoping for an early fortune, which I shall spend on buying 454 & the barn, tearing down Angell Court & putting back the stone wall, & rebuilding my "Engine House" . . . . I shall place an early order for brown paint.

H. P. Lovecraft

196. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

169 Clinton St.,  
Brooklyn, N. Y.  
Sept. 20, 1925

My dear Smith:—

I enclose the newest of my tales, which (as oddity would have it) I've typed before the other three previously written. If I have the energy I'll type another & insert it before sealing this envelope, but the others are too damned long! The enclosed was written up from an idea given me by an interesting old fellow in Massachusetts—the idea of an undertaker imprisoned in a village vault where he was removing winter coffins for spring burial, & his escape by enlarging a transom reached by the piling-up of the coffins. This is all my venerable friend suggested—the *motivation* & denouement, together with the actual writing, were all my own. I tried to employ a homely, prosaic style more or less in harmony with the theme. Your remarks on my fiction naturally elate me



considerably, & I only hope you will not find my recent pieces a falling-off from the ancient standard. There are many things I wish to write, but every now & then I have the feeling of the aging workman that perhaps my hand has lost what little cunning it ever possessed. When my stuff is done it always disappoints me—never quite presenting the fulness of the picture I have in mind—but since a crude fixation of the image is better than nothing, I plug along & do the feeble best I can.

Yr most obt Servt  
H P L

197. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

169 Clinton St.  
Brooklyn, N. Y.  
Octr. 9, 1925

Dear C A S:—

. . . . . No—I've never read any of the jargon of formal "occultism", since I have always thought that weird writing is more effective if it avoids the hackneyed superstitions & popular cult formulae. I am, indeed, an absolute materialist so far as actual belief goes; with not a shred of credence in any form of supernaturalism—religion, spiritualism, transcendentalism, metempsychosis, or immortality. It may be, though, that I could get the germs of some good ideas from the current patter of the psychic lunatic fringe; & I have frequently thought of getting some of the junk sold at an occultists book shop in 46th St. The trouble is, that it costs too damned much for me in my present state. How much is the brochure you have just been reading? If any of these crack-brained cults have free booklets & "literature" with suggestive descriptive matter, I wouldn't mind having my name on their "sucker lists". The idea that black magic exist in secret today, or that hellish antique rites still survive in obscurity, is one that I have used & shall use again. When you see my new tale *The Horror at Red Hook*, you will see what use I make of the idea in connexion with the gangs of young loafers & herds of evil-looking foreigners that one sees everywhere in New York.

I have a nest of devil-worshippers & devotees of Lilith in one of the squalid Brooklyn neighbourhoods, & describe the marvels & horrors that ensued when these ignorant inheritors of hideous ceremonies found a learned & initiated man to lead them. I bedeck my tale with incantations copied from the "Magic" article in the 9th edition of the *Britannica*, but I'd like to draw on less obvious sources if I knew of the right reservoirs to tap. Do you know of any good works on magic & dark mysteries which might furnish fitting ideas & formulae? For example—are there any good translations of any mediaeval necromancers with directions for raising spirits, invoking Lucifer, & all that sort of thing? One hears of lots of names—Albertus Magnus, Eliphas Levi, Nicholas Flamel—&c., but most of us are appallingly ignorant of them. I know I am—but fancy you must be better informed. Don't go to any trouble, but some time I'd be infinitely grateful for a more or less brief list of magical books—ancient & mediaeval preferred—in English or English translations. Meanwhile let me urge you, as I did over a year ago, to read *The Witch Cult in Western Europe*, by Margaret A. Murray. It ought to be full of inspiration for you.

Most cordially & sincerely yrs,  
H P L

198. TO (UNKNOWN)

Octr. 24-27, 1925

I think I have developed an eye for the difference between the clothing a gentleman wears & that which a gentleman doesn't. What has sharpened this sense is the constant sight of these accursed & filthy rables that infest the N. Y. streets, and whose clothing presents such systematic differences from the normal clothing of real people along Angell St. & in Butler Ave. or Elmgrove Ave. cars that the eye comes to feel a tremendous homesickness & to pounce avidly on any gentleman whose clothes are proper & tasteful. . . . And so pining for the sight of a Swan Point car full of regular men, I have resolved to dress like Butler Ave. or not at all. Confound it, I'll be either in good Providence taste or in a bally bathrobe!! Certain lapel cuts, textures & fits tell the story. It amuses me to see how some of these flashy young "boobs" &

foreigners spend fortunes on various kinds of expensive clothes which they regard as evidence of meritorious taste, but which in reality are their absolute social & aesthetick damnation—being little short of placards shrieking in bold letters: "*I am an ignorant peasant*", "*I am a mongrel gutter-rat*", or "*I am a tasteless & unsophisticated yokel*." And yet perhaps these creatures are not, after all, seeking to conform to the absolute artistic standard of gentle-folk. Possibly their object is entirely different; involving a recognition of their non-membership in the cultivated part of the community, & a desire simply to dress in accordance with the frankly different standard of their own candidly acknowledged type & class—as a Breton or Catalan peasant affects the grotesque finery of his kind, regardless of the attire of general European society. Sonny & I have frequently discussed the possible rise of a definite American plebeian costume, & we think we can already see evidences of it. Its present visible signs are tight, waist-fitting coats, with narrow lapels & buttons near together; extremely low-cut waistcoats, approximating evening waistcoats & probably derived from the rabble's ignorant admiration of the dress-suited heroes of their favourite cinemas; & exotick & effeminate "pastel" tones of colour—purple, lavender, & the like. The whole general trend of this growing peasant garb is toward the conspicuous & the feminine—infallible marks of a decadent slave-stock as opposed to the classically subdued & loosely but finely hung garments characteristic of a genuinely refined & wholesomely masculine ruling or conquering class or race-stock. The phenomenon . . . is a perfect parallel of the degradation of the Roman toga into the fussy gaudiness of the Byzantine mob. Eventually, as the whole civilisation decays, this artistic corruption will spread to the upper classes as well as the herd; but for the present it is possible to divide clothing pretty clearly into what gentlemen wear & what they don't. Better far to wear the frayed & tattered rags of something with taste, than to sport the newest & freshest suit whose cut & texture bear the ineffaceable stigmata of plebeianism & decadence.

H. P. Lovecraft

199. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Saturday-Sunday Midnight  
November, 1925

O Sage:—

Peste! Sacrebleu! Nom d'um Cochon vert! O Saint Dieu et Notre Dame de Montreal! THIS GAWD-DAMN COLD!!!! I can't navigate a pen, although my present attire consists of the following strata:

- (a) Suit
- (b) Winter Overcoat
- (c) Heavy Blanket
- (d) Waves from the electrick heater one foot away.

But maybe I'll survive through the night, since I see a fire has just been started in the furnace.

.....

..I can't form a bally letter more—hands simply paralysed unless I hold' em over the heater and thaw' em out afresh for every beastly word. Gawd help your hike de luxe if the weather doesn't turn!!

Yr. most obt.  
Theobaldus

200. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Sunday Novr. 22, 1925

Sire:—

Incidentally, Belknap has three questions to ask you about his coming book and its contents—questions to which he'd profoundly appreciate an early written answer if you can't get to see him at the Kirk birthday orgy. They are these!

(1) Is the following phrase grammatically permissible?

"The golden roofs were throng'd with *heads of ev'ry lad* alive"

Does this imply hydra-like qualities in Everylad, or is the expression

ev'ry lad sufficiently plural in significance to justify its coupling with the plural noun *heads*?

(2) Is the following phrase too rococo, and too suggestive of the epletives that their feeble aid *do* join, to be permissible?

*Thy sons . . . . . did praise thee*

This is in a stately sonnet to the city of Florence.

(3) Is it good form to add to the signature of the writer of the *introduction* of a book (in this case Loveman) a list of his literary achievements? (As—Editor of *21 Letters of Ambrose Bierce, A Round Table in Poictesme*, etc.) Sonny thinks it will add to the prestige of his work if it is introduced by a man who has edited items connected with Bierce and Cabell. Bierce—Cabell—Long—a logical triad . . . . . The titlepage would read thus.

A  
MAN FROM GENOA,  
and other poems;  
by  
Frank Belknap Long, Jr.

---

introduction  
by  
Samuel Loveman,  
Editor, *Twenty-One Letters of  
Ambrose Bierce, A Round Table  
in Poictesme, Etc.*

---

New York  
1926

Is this disproportionate, topheavy, steatopygous, or otherwise gibbous and malform'd? Let the Child know and he'll be your debtor aeternally.

Theobaldus

201. TO (UNKNOWN)

Dec. 22-23, 1925

... As for the matter of permanent locations—bless my soul! but SH would only too gladly cooperate in establishing me wherever my mind would be most tranquil & effective! What I meant by "a threat of having to return to N. Y." was the matter of industrial opportunity, as exemplified in the Paterson possibility; for in my lean financial state almost any remunerative opening would constitute something which I could not with any degree of good sense or propriety refuse. . . . . SH's attitude on all such matters is so kindly & magnanimous that any design of permanent isolation on my part would seem little short of barbaric, & wholly contrary to the principles of taste which impel one to recognise & revere a devotion of the most unselfish quality & uncommon intensity. I have never beheld a more admirable attitude of disinterested & solicitous regard; in which each financial shortcoming of mine is accepted & condoned as soon as it is proved inevitable, & in which acquiescence is extended even to my statements (as determined by my observation of the effect of varying conditions on my nerves) that the one *essential* ingredient of my life is a certain amount of quiet & freedom for literary composition—to be snatched whether or not I am otherwise employed, & whether or not it conflicts with that schedule of early hours & regularity which a more simply industrial regime stamps as normal. A devotion which can accept this combination of incompetence & aesthetick selfishness without a murmur, contrary tho' it must be to all expectations originally entertained, is assuredly a phenomenon so rare, & so akin to the historic quality of saintliness, that no one with the least sense of artistic proportion could possibly meet it with other than the keenest reciprocal esteem, admiration, & affection—as indeed it was met at first, when manifested under less trying circumstances & with far less comprehension of the chronicle of failure stretching ahead. It is one of the marks of an old-fashion'd gentleman, as distinguished from the herd of crude & careless moderns, that he recognises his harmonious relation to the pattern in which Fate has set him, & never ceases to live up as fully as he may to such aesthetic responsibilities as may arise from his previous decisions. Ineffective & in-

judicious I may be, but I trust I may never be inartistic or ill-bred in my course of conduct. Harsh or sudden revolts & repudiations are alien to an Englishman of taste; & when one's profoundest admiration, deference, & regard are elicited by the conditions one encounters, it is not difficult to follow that conservative course which all the canons of art & all the precepts of gentle breeding map out as the only proper one. But to turn from abstractions to the concrete—SH fully endorses my design of an ultimate return to New England, & herself intends to seek industrial openings in the Boston district after a time—tho' for the present this second Cleveland position seems to present great advantages & to offer conditions which are unusually congenial for a thing of the sort. The remuneration is not great, but the prospects of advance are considerable. . . . And so you may be assured that the Paterson possibility holds me in New York. The slightest chance of a position in New England would bring me home at any minute with a haste almost comical to a spectator; & indeed, the definite disappearance of the Paterson possibility would cause me to migrate anyhow—to secure quarters near Boston & begin a systematic hunt for work through *Transcript* advertisements much (tho' I hope not as vainly!) as I hunted in New York through *Times* advertisements during the first year. In Boston, indeed, I might be able to put more inward heart (tho' I certainly could put no more patience & diligence!) into the quest; for there would be around me a world to which I bear at least some semblance of relation, instead of the alien desert that is the Gotham of today.

H. P. Lovecraft

202. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Brooklyn, N. Y.

December 27, 1925

Dear CAS:—

Yes—Loveman said that De Casseres (whom I haven't met) was getting into pretty close & interested correspondence with you, & I understand that De Casseres & George Sterling have been exchanging affirmative opinions as to the genuine genius of your work. I'm further told—if I may repeat gossip in the approved small-town fashion—that they

agree in preferring your weird, cosmic, Saturn's-ring attitude & mood to your more mundane phases of expression—an opinion in which I concur, notwithstanding the high merit & unfailing charm of your amatory verses. What they mean, I take it, is exactly what I have contended—that your supreme gift of vision, the gift which towers above all others & carves out for you an unique place in literature, is that which reveals to you strange shapes beyond the Milky Way, & portentous patterns in the dark stars about undreamt-of spiral nebulae. This gift involves an outlook & attitude which no one has ever had before, (for others can't help linking up their allegedly cosmic vistas with petty terrestrial considerations) & which probably no one will ever have again. It is admittedly caviar to the herd—but no less great on that account, & no less to be fostered & developed to its maximum for the benefit of the few who can give it their awed & breathless appreciation. . . . .

Most faithfully & sincerely yrs—  
H P L

203. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Decr. 27, 1925

Welcome back from Paradise, O Commander of the Faithful!

. . . We had a great time up at Belknap's Christmas, and I came home absolutely bulging with gifts. To start with, the Child gave Grandpa a nice conservative dark blue cravat and a piece of rock from Spitzbergen. Then we all had silk handkerchiefs from the pack of the Santa-Claus on the dining table. Then—having trooped back to the parlour—we were treated to a grab-bag session—a huge red stocking being passed around among the five recipients—Loveman, McNeil, Pa Long, Sonny Belknap, and Grandpa—until its bounteous store of Woolworth utilities was exhausted. It made nine trips, and I lugged off the following items—

- |                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| 1 stick shaving soap      | 1 reel tape measure                     |
| 1 tin talcum powder       | 1 penholder                             |
| 1 toothbrush              | 1 pair sleeve garters                   |
| 1 ivory-handled nail file | 1 pkg. large envelopes—in one of which  |
| 1 card shirt studs        | I enclose this epistle and its precious |
|                           | enclosures.                             |



But Gawd 'elp us, this wa'nt all! There was a game of identifying advertising pictures in which—despite a bland ignorance of all contemporary magazines and their posterior pages which caused me to tag only *six* out of *twenty-five*—I won because the others were even worse than I. Sonny could only spot *three*, and Loveman and honest old McNeil *five* apiece. Thus I walked off with still more merchandise—the prize—consisting of a fine circular tin of chocolates with a golden peacock and crescent moon on the cover. After a collective trip to the cinema we all returned to supper and found at each place a "lollypop" on a wooden base and enclosed in a Janus-bodied cardboard Santa Claus. This further added to my load, and when I got home I certainly had a festive little dump to heap around my submarine tower—which, by the way, I keep on my desk in plain sight, mounted on a miniature cedar chest labelled "Providence, R. I.", which formed part of my home Christmas Box. . . .

Theobaldus

204. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Tuesday the 5th  
Jan. 5, 1926

O Caelestial Omnipotence:—

I am drowned in the fountains of my weeping, and sunk into the caverns of my sorrow! Counting the golden dinars in my shabby purse after the latest extortions of the launderer, I abase myself at discovering that my stomach and intellectuals are at war, so that if I starve not the one I must needs starve the other! In other words—a survey of my unwontedly depleted coffers reveals the embarrassing circumstance that if I attempt the scholarly Paterson pilgrimage tomorrow night (.62 plus .62 equals \$1.24) I shan't have pence enough left to finance my meals (and very narrowly computed feasts, at that!) till the next cargo of gold, ivory, apes and peacocks ambles along from down Ophir way! This is tragedy indeed, and I touch my forehead thrice to the dust in recognition thereof! Of course, if any miracle comes to my aid at the final moment, I'll be with you to belie this lugubrious bulletin—but if not, then I must lachrymosely solicit a vigintillion pardons, and ask you to trans-

mit my most melancholy regrets to all such sages as may add to the illumination of your already genius-illuminated palace on this joyous occasion. Misery is mine, and I grovel appropriately!

But for the Blessed Vargin's sake, repay me not in evil kind by getting too broke to shew up here at the McNeiler on Jany. 13th! My felicity depends upon the adornment of my wretched feast with the most refulgent of gems! Possess, O Flambeau of Patersonic Tenebrosity, a cardiac organ; and heap upon my valueless cranium the carbonaceous symbols of Eblis' aeternal conflagrations! Be here as much before VIII as fancy and circumstance determine to allow, and rest assured that—salutorily warned by the horrible example of this week's fiasco—I shall have parked enough jack aside to make certain (I add, absolutely certain!) of the refreshments!

I herewith enclose a supply of the drug to date, and shall have another for you to claim here on Wednesday the 13th. My own favourite pastime lately has been writing that weird-tale article for Cook, and doing the incidental reading essential thereto.

With my rotten memory I lose the details of half the stuff I read in six months' or a year's time, so that in order to give any kind of intelligent comment on the high spots I selected, I had to give said spots a thorough re-reading. Thus I'd get as far as *Otranto*, and then have to rake the damn thing out and see what the plot really was. Ditto the *Old English Baron*. And when I came to *Melmoth* I carefully went over the two anthology fragments which constitute all I can get of it—it's a joke to consider the rhapsodies I've indulged in without having ever perused the opus as a whole! *Vathek* and the *Episodes* came in for another once-over, and night before last I did *Wuthering Heights* again from kiver to kiver. Ere long—as soon as I can get a fresh batch of correspondence out of the way—I'm going to give your Bulwer-Lytton favourites another chance to amuse and instruct me. Yes—all told, Grandpa's a pretty busy old gentleman—though at that I'm only on page twenty of the bally manuscript. It'll be a young book when I'm through with it—and Culinarius will greatly lament that sentence of his—"there is absolutely no limit as to length."

But to return to our mourning—it's a damn shame that fracture thus overtakes my financial essence at this inapropos hour—but the allotments of the Immortal Ones are not to be questioned. One must be a philosopher, and be surprised or dismay'd at nothing. So slip my most

cordial compliments to all my fellow-guests—I say fellow-guests because I shall be present in spirit—and don't fail to be at the McNeil meeting here on Wednesday the 13th. . . .

With recrudescient saline rivers blinding my soulful gaze, and splashing musically on the sheets before me, I remain, Sir,

Your high mightness's most despicable Servant  
Theobaldus the Tearful

205. TO MRS. F. C. CLARK

Jan. 11, 1926

This course of reading & writing I am going through for the Cook article is excellent mental discipline, & a fine gesture of demarcation betwixt my aimless, lost existence of the past year or two & the resumed Providence-like hermitage amidst which I hope to grind out some tales worth writing. In the first place, it furnishes an admirable excuse for my absenting myself from engagements—breaking the social ties, as it were, that chained me too closely to the gang. In the second place, it exercises my literary inventiveness & prose style. And in the third place, it restores my mind to its natural field of bookish seclusion & accelerates my speed & retentiveness in reading to something like their old Providence standard. This article done—as it will be in two or three weeks—I shall devote myself to the composition of more stories to submit to *Weird Tales*—that magazine now having but four of mine awaiting publication.

H. P. Lovecraft

206. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Jan. 12, 1926

Sire:—

As for me—my current diversion is still the writing of that Culinary article on the weird tale, and the reading and re-reading appertaining thereto. I want to know, to a slight extent, what I'm talking about—

though I shall doubtless mention scores of things I never even glanced at. I wonder if William Harrison Ainsworth is worth reading?

Well—such is which. Again the ocean of my tears drowns the flow of my rhetoric. Yr. sorrowful and obt. Servt.

Theobaldus

207. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

169 Clinton St.,  
Brooklyn, N. Y.  
Feby. 9, 1926

Dear C A S:—

But if psychological encouragement have any physical effect, your pictures ought to make you rebound on the spot by virtue of the wildly favourable reception they have had from everyone who has seen them. My own reaction has been duplicated almost perfectly by all our local group—Loveman & Long prominent among them—& best of all, from the standpoint of your advancement in public recognition, Loveman tells me that De Casseres is utterly ecstatic & eloquent in his responsive appreciation & spontaneous praise. He is absolutely charmed & carried away, as indeed those who knew him were sure he would be. Here's hoping he may be able to do something practical in the way of promoting your fame—certainly, he will be overjoyed to do anything within his power. Long's ardent admiration takes the form of an acute desire for possession; & though his purse will not admit of lavish payments, he is anxious to know whether you would consider *five dollars each* an insultingly low figure for the two magic landscapes—*A Lemurian Landscape* & *Jungle Phantasy*. These two, together with the *Witch's Tower* & certain of the faces & beasts, were what appealed most violently to me; & I was glad to see my taste confirmed by as sound & sincere an aesthete as Little Belknap. Your own collection must be a marvellous sight, & I wish that I might some day view it in its entirety. I treasure each of the specimens which come my way; & believe, all in all, that my own collection is nothing to be sneered at so far as smaller pieces go. . . . .

Yr most obt  
H P L

208. TO (UNKNOWN)

Febr. 12, 1926

Incidentally—it was this very day of 1903—Feb'y 12th—(which fell, however, on *Thursday*) that I bought the very first *new* book on *astronomy* that I ever owned. It was Young's *Lessons in Astronomy*, & I got it at the R. I. News Co., for \$1.25. Previously I had had only Grandma's copy of Burritt's *Geography of the Heavens*. As I returned in the evening darkness on the rear platform of an Elmgrove Ave. car—415, I think it was; one of the graceful J. M. Jones cars—I looked over the pictures & chapter headings with perhaps the most delightful sense of breathless anticipation I have ever known. Most literally, a strange cosmos of new worlds lay before me!

H. P. Lovecraft

209. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Friday, March 1926

Lux Mundi:—

And here's your dollar back! Nothing any good for so little at the Met. . . .

But gawdamighty! The sale as a whole is an infinite tantalisation! *Piles* of stuff if a guy can cough up anywhere from five bucks toward the sky. Little terra-cotta *heads* of excellent Graeco-Roman design, but even the worst of 'em sets yuh back four berries. However—get this—the sale is a *semi-permanent* affair; since there's enough truck to last years at the present buying rate, and they mean to clean it all out if it takes till Mexico freezes over! I certainly expect to rake in an item or two during its course—preferably a Roman head of fairly decent grade. During the summer, with rigid aeconomy, I might feel justified in taking even a ten or fifteen fish plunge, if I knew I could get a really good piece of Roman workmanship to stare at me for the rest of my life. . . . .

Insignificantly thine—

Θεοβαλδύς

Theobaldus

210. TO MRS. F. C. CLARK

March 4, 1926

Dear Aunt Lillian:—

This is a sort of farewell to the world for a period of perhaps several weeks—the result of a modest but feasible & welcome *money-making* scheme. It seems that Loveman's firm need the temporary services of an envelope-addresser to help in mailing their catalogues; & since I was able to do such rapid & effective work in connection with Kirk's catalogues, I am resolved to try my hand at the present venture. It will be very confining, involving regular hours at the establishment each day beginning at 9 a.m., but it will *not* be *mentally* exacting—having a purely mechanical cast & leaving my faculties free for whatever creative work they may accomplish. There are about 10,000 catalogues to be sent out, so that the work may last several weeks at (Loveman thinks) \$17.50 per week. I shall use this matter as an excuse to abandon much correspondence; for if I thus sacrifice the major portion of each day, I certainly intend to have the leisure residue *purely & simply for myself*—my own personal reading & literary composition. I shall, too, indulge in at least two & perhaps three wholly recreational extravagances which I shall deem justified in view of the inconvenience with which I purchase them.—(a) a \$3.00 Philadelphia excursion, (b), a \$5.00 Washington excursion, & (c) possibly a Roman terracotta head from that marvellous sale at the Metropolitan Museum. The addressing would seem to begin Monday at 9 a.m., but I shall of course reap no financial rewards till the following Saturday. I'll let you know how it turns out—& whether anything arises at the last moment to nullify the entire design.

H. P. Lovecraft





Sonia Greene Lovcraft



211. TO WALTER J. COATES

169 Clinton Street  
Brooklyn, New York  
March 30, 1926

My dear Mr. Coates:—

... In my younger days I was fond of these philosophical speculations, but finally reached so complete a degree of scepticism that the very process of philosophising ceased to interest me. I am an absolute sceptic and materialist, and regard the universe as a wholly purposeless and essentially temporary incident in the ceaseless and boundless rearrangements of electrons, atoms, and molecules which constitute the blind but regular mechanical patterns of cosmic activity. Nothing really matters, and the only thing for a person to do is to take the artificial and traditional values he finds around him and pretend they are real; in order to retain that illusion of significance in life which gives to human events their apparent motivation and semblance of interest. I'm through with intellectualism now—my tastes are wholly those of an antiquarian, and of one who is amused by certain special trifles in literature and the arts. An epicurean and dilettante, in short.

H. P. Lovecraft

212. TO WILFRED BLANCH TALMAN

Brooklyn, N. Y.  
Wednesday; April, 1926

Dear WBT:—

*Chetwode Arms* is splendid—far and away your best yet! .....

... If any suggestions or recommendations are in order, I suppose the thing to urge would be a more bizarre, cosmically external, and utterly nonhuman set of motives and phenomena—in order to achieve that effect of *the unknown outside clawing at the rim of the known*

which forms spectral horror in its acutest form. But heaven knows the tale has enough dark necromancy as it is—the suggestion is merely a general one, that there are things more terrible to the imagination than any phenomena connected with the nature, passions, and aspirations of mankind.

If this note is incoherent, lay it to the truly cacodaemoniacal *tooth-ache* which is at this moment convulsing me! I have a triad of dental appointments just ahead—beginning next Monday—but now phone the former occupant of 258 Benefit St for an emergency sitting this afternoon!

Yr. obt. servt.

HPL

213. TO MRS. F. C. CLARK

April 8, 1926

Dear Aunt Lillian:—

I really won't need to bother about the mattress, for I'm not at all particular about sleeping arrangements at all. Half the time I don't go to bed at all but sleep in my clothes on top of the couch. . . .

No—I don't think I shall miss such social activities as I have had here—the Longs excepted. And I can discuss things as well by post as by word of mouth with Sonny. What I want are rest & oblivion—or at least, a seclusion amidst ancient scenes wherein I may cast off the actual modern world in a quiet round of reading, writing, & pilgrimages to quaint & historick places. I want to dream in an atmosphere of my childhood—to sit on Prospect Terrace with an old book or a pad & pencil in my hands. . . .

H. P. Lovecraft

214. TO WILFRED BLANCH TALMAN

Providence  
April 23, 1926

Dear WBT:—

I trust the Kalem outfit still functions harmoniously, and that you still get around to most of the meetings. I have begun to emerge from hibernation, and took a long scenic ramble (both urban and agrestic) night before last, during the course of which I discovered one of the most hellish slums ever imagined by mankind. It was in a place whose existence I had not before realised—the end of Chalkstone Ave. near Randall Sq. and the railway—and its dark hilly courts approach the very ultimates of blasphemous horror.

Yrs. for ghouls, afreets, and undertakers—

HPL

215. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

Providence  
April 23, 1926

Young Man:—

I took a sunset-and-evening walk Thursday—a Machenesque Slum-and-Suburb pilgrimage in quest of mystery and horror—and found many things of striking and even of terrible novelty. It is astonishing what a wealth of hidden and tangled lanes and obscure, surprising quarters Providence possesses. A good three-quarters of my recent trip took place over territory my feet had never before trodden, and I found one monstrous and blasphemous neighbourhood whose existence I had never suspected—a region actually inhabited by degraded and quasi-human forms of life where I had always fancied there were merely factories and railway yards. God, that frightful and cacodaemoniacal valley of grey tottering houses and black earth and choking smoke and nameless labyrinthine courts straggling up steep coal-dusty hillsides without

pavement, plan, or purpose! The houses are very tall and ancient and grey, with shaky clapboards and shingles, and windows rheumy with unmentionable elder morbidities. Oozing out of various apertures and dragging themselves along the narrow lanes are shapeless forms of organic entity whose dead faces hint fiendishly of the rites and orgies and incantations in the hideous leaning synagogue whose wormy, unpainted boards hold strange Eastern signs and unholy marks taken from the cabala and the *Necronomicon*. Awful things have been evoked in the pits under that accursed temple—one can read it in the puffy, malformed faces of the slug-like beings (half Jew and half Negro, apparently) which crawl about and wheeze in the acrid smoke which pours from passing trains . . . or from secret nether altars. Ngrrrth . . . . I shall weave all this into a tale some day! Later phases of the walk gave me my first glimpse of the new local university of the Papists—Providence College, (a fine Gothick pile in a superb landscape setting) and introduced me to a tangle of horrible and infinitely alluring alleys of blackness in the Federal Hill Italian quarter—which the lateness of the hour prevented me from exploring. Truly, I have not yet examined so much as an eighth of my native town!

Yrs. for wholesome and uplifting Nordick influences—  
Grandpa

216. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

10 Barnes Street  
Providence, R. I.  
May 1, 1926

Eminent and Middle-Aged Bard:—

Grandpa was delighted to receive your graceful and news-filled epistle of the 28th, and wishes to extend his belated congratulations upon your 24th birthday (my! what a big, grown-up man!) last Tuesday. The old gentleman meant to drop you a line, but was so inundated with miscellaneous tasks that his aged memory failed until such procedure was too late. . . . .

Your preamble is delightfully flattering, and it tickles one's vanity agreeably to be nourished with the urbane illusion that one is missed

from the circle in which one has moved. The grain of sand loves to think that it is missed by the illimitable shore whence the tide hath borne it! I can assure you—individually and collectively—that I lament my inability to attend the meetings, and wish that some aeroplane service might enable me to be present on Wednesday nights whilst still residing in a civilised white man's country. Or better still, I wish youse guys would come to your senses, realise once for all that New York is a dead city without connexion with American life, and emigrate en masse to the States, where the heartiest and most grandfatherly of welcomes awaits you! . . . .

Enclosed are some Smithiana, and very shortly I shall send you by express a collection of XX Ashtonsmithick paintings which will *utterly and absolutely knock you out!* GAWD! THOSE COLOURS!! Opium madness unleashed . . . but wait till you see them! When you have glutted your own eyes, display them to the gang, and ask Samuelus to see that they reach Benjamin De Casseres. Then make sure that they get safely back to Clericus Ashtonius—who would die if anything adverse were to happen to them. Oh, boy! "Twilight"—"Sunset in Lemuria"—"The Witch's Wood"—and The Dunsany design! Sancta Pegāna, but I don't know that it's right to loose such diabolic provocation upon a young person already addicted to rhapsodick extravagances of diction!

And now Grandpa will tell you—all of you boys—about his return to normalcy and his awakening from the queer dream about being away from home. As supplementary material I send three items in care of Belknap, but design'd for the equal attention of all—a folder of modern Providence, a set of cards of historick Providence, and a newspaper extract describing and illustrating our splendid new art museum—whose opening was deferr'd till last week, as if to allow the Old Gentleman to get home in ample time to be in at the start.

Well—to begin with—back in the dream period Grandpa has some notion of having boarded a train somewhere. A blur of stations follow'd, and all at once there came a sight which presaged a return to the world of reality—an old-fashion'd wall of tumbled stone betwixt rolling meadows! Memory! Broken threads! But see! A little white farmhouse amidst green hills! A village steeple beyond a distant crest! A square wooden Georgian building on an eminence! Who am I? What am I? Where am I? I—a corpse—once lived, and here are the signs of a resurrection! The year? It must be 1923-24 . . . . and the place . . . look!

The old familiar billboards! Packer's Tar Soap! Gorton's Codfish! GOD, I AM ALIVE! And this is Home! *Novanglia Æterna! Novanglia Caput Mundi!* His Majesty's Province of Connecticut, which on the East adjoins the Centre of Civilisation! A sense of rushing through chartless corridors seized me, and I saw dates dancing in aether—1923—1924—1925—1926—1925—1924—1923—crash! Two years to the bad, but who the hell gives a damn? 1923 ends 1926 begins! Even the spring had delay'd so that I might see it break over Novanglia's antient hills! What does a blind spot or two in one's existence matter? America has lost New York to the mongrels, but the sun shines just as brightly over Providence and Portsmouth and Salem and Marblehead—I have lost 1924 and 1925, but the dawn of vernal 1926 is just as lovely as I view it from Rhodinsular windows! After all, a fantaisiste ought to like a little shaking-up or abnormality in chronology and geography—New York was a nightmare, and I have already form'd a most delightful picture of the gang as meeting in various Colonial Providence homes! As time passes, my selective imagination will form an idealised picture of those things in N. Y. which were really beautiful—the skyline, the sunsets over Central Park, the Pantheon model in the museum, the Japanese garden in the Bklyn. Museum Grounds, etc.—and they will stand out apart from the Babylonish squalor and parvenu garishness of a dead city, as delectable bits seen through an old-fashion'd stereoscope in some beautifully Victorian but fascinatingly familiar old high-ceiled parlour with Rogers groups and bearskin rugs, in the heart of a real Providence home. Now that I am learning to write 1926 instead of 1923 all will go on very much as usual—I, an essential Providentian, will die as I was born—and Brooklyn will take its place beside Cleveland, Washington, Philadelphia, and other distant towns which I have briefly visited. Well—the train sped on, and I experienced silent convulsions of joy in returning step by step to a waking and tri-dimensional life. New Haven—New London—and then quaint Mystic, with its colonial hillside and landlocked cove. Then at last a still subtler magick fill'd the air—nobler roofs and steeples, with the train rushing airily above them on its lofty viaduct—*Westerly*—in His Majesty's Providence of RHODE-ISLAND & PROVIDENCE-PLANTATIONS! GOD SAVE THE KING!! Intoxication follow'd—Kingston—East Greenwich with its steep Georgian alleys climbing up from the railway—Apponaug and its ancient roofs—Auburn—just outside the city limits

—I fumble with bags and wraps in a despearate effort to appear calm  
 —THEN—a delirious marble dome outside the window—a hissing of  
 air brakes—a slackening of speed—surges of ecstasy and dropping of  
 clouds from my eyes and mind—HOME—UNION STATION—  
 PROVIDENCE!!!! Something snapped—and everything unreal fell  
 away. There was no more excitement; no sense of strangeness, and no  
 perception of the lapse of time since last I stood on that holy ground.  
 Of disillusion, or of disparity betwixt expectation and fulfilment, there  
 was not the faintest microscopic suggestion, because the wildly improba-  
 ble notion of ever having been away had utterly receded into the gulfs  
 of fantasy and dream. What I had seen in sleep every night since I left  
 it, now stood before me in prosaic reality—precisely the same, line for  
 line, detail for detail, proportion for proportion. Simply, I was home—  
 and home was just as it had always been since I was born there thirty-  
 six years ago. There *is* no other place for me. My world is Providence.  
 We now took a taxicab for the house in Barnes Street—an ancient colo-  
 nial neighbourhood I had always known—and were soon greeting my  
 aunts and the faithful negress Delilah, whom they had hired to  
 straighten things out. Then followed a resumption of real life as I had  
 dropped it two years ago—the life of a settled American gentleman in  
 his ancestral environment. We went out to an exhibition of paintings at  
 the Art Club, (the colonial house in hilly Thomas Street, in front of  
 which I snap-shotted Mortonius last fall—I mean the fall of '23) (cir-  
 cular enclosed) and had dinner downtown at Shepard's (neo-) Colonial  
 Restaurant. In the evening a cinema show at the good old Strand in  
 Washington Street completed a memorable and well-rounded  
 day. . . . .

. . . . . I am fairly settled now so far as furniture is concern'd,  
 tho' I have not yet attempted the arrangement of my books. That task  
 will occupy next week—having been postponed whilst I wrestled with  
 the mountains of unanswered mail accumulating during the excited Res-  
 toration period.

As for the place—I have a fine large ground-floor room (a former  
 dining-room with fireplace) and kitchenette alcove in a spacious brown  
 Victorian wooden house at the 1880 period—a house, curiously enough,  
 built by some friends of my own family, now long dead. My furniture  
 fits in quite as neatly as in the Clinton Street place. . . . .

The house is immaculately clean, and inhabited only by select persons

of the good old families—a miniature painter of some fame, an official of the School of Design Museum, etc. etc. The neighbourhood is perfect—all old Yankee Providence homes, with a good percentage of the houses colonial. There is a little white Colonial cottage, just renovated for an artist, only three doors away at the corner of Prospect Street, and from the upper windows one may see the great brick Halsey Mansion, built in 1801 and reputed to be haunted. The vista from my pseudo-ariel desk corner is delectable—bits of antique houses, stately trees, urn-topp'd white Georgian fence, and an ecstatic old-fashion'd garden which will be breathlessly transporting in a couple of months. Westward, from the brow of the hill, the view is awesome and prodigious—all the roofs, spires, and domes of the lower town, and beyond them the violet expanse of the far rolling rural meadows. The walk down town can be varied to suit one's mood, but it is always colonial. One may choose shady, stately Prospect Street, past the mansions of the Sharpes and Metcalfs, (Kleinerus will recall the neo-Queen Anne brick manor-house in whose courtyard I photograph'd him) or select the narrow, crooked downhill lanes whose quaint doorways are so suggestive of Marblehead. In any case one has to the west the whole panorama of the lower town, with marble state house and exquisite First Baptist Steeple, (1775) and to the East (only a few blocks from my house) the colossal Roman bulk of the new Christian Science church, whose proud copper dome is the dominating feature of the Providence skyline. The view from this dome is said to be absolutely unparalleled—countless steepled towns, league on league of undulating countryside, and the beautiful blue bay to the south, gemmed with emerald islets. One can, the genial sexton says, see as far as Newport on good days; and he has promised to let me up there with a spy glass whenever I feel like making the climb.

Contented? Why, gentlemen, I am *home!* Up and down this colonial hill I have walk'd ever since I could walk at all—and it has always exerted upon me the greatest possible fascination, even though my native part of Angell Street is somewhat farther East, in a decidedly newer (middle and later Victorian) district. Let no one tell me that Providence is not the most beautiful city in the world! Line for line, atmospheric touch for atmospheric touch, it positively and absolutely *is!* Colour, shade, contour, diversity, quaintness, impressiveness—all are there; and nothing save an aesthetick blind spot could possibly prevent any



cultivated observer of Yankee tastes from recognising and reversing this supremacy at once. God knows I want no literature to feed my sense of beauty and variety when I live in the midst of this focus of scenick charm and historick richness! I must write about it—all other subjects seem flat and tame!

My aunt Mrs. Clark will probably move into a great sunny upper room here within a month, and my wife will be here either steadily or off and on, according to business arrangements now in progress. Many trips will engross me during the month to come—both pedestrian excursions to quaint or rural scenes close by, and 'bus or railway journeys to such places as Boston, Salem, Marblehead, Plymouth, (never seen by me!) New Bedford, (not seen by me since 1912) Newport, and the like. Visits from all of you gentlemen will be superlatively welcome, and each and any of you is promised the most enthusiastick if not the most expert antiquarian guidance. Mortonius, of course, must have his Durfee Hill—for which stiffish jaunt I purpose to keep faithfully in training.

And so it goes. The world is right side up again, and I can once more view the terrestiral scene from my normal angle as a placid and provincial Providentian. Be good boys, all of you, and write the Old Gentleman—and as for you, Chi—I mean Elderly Sir Francis, don't let your new fame get you conceited. Regards to all—including Felis.

Yr. obt. Grandfather  
H P

217. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

10 Barnes St.  
May 14, 1926

Dear C A S:—

I was very glad to hear from you, & agree that poetry & painting are complementary rather than interchangeable. Great accomplishment in both is certainly very rare, & I think you have reason to pride yourself greatly on the dual gift which you so abundantly possess. I am interestedly awaiting word from "the gang" about their reception of your latest paintings—though I know of course that it must have been wildly enthusiastic. Loveman will undoubtedly shew them to De Casseres as be-

fore; & if the latter has any influence at all in the art world, they ought to get a hearing somewhere. . . . . As to Long's notion that your work systematically contains phallic symbolism—he picked that up at second-hand from Loveman, who seems to have done enough delving in that line to see phalli in most things from church steeples to mushrooms. For my part, I have neither studied such things nor do I entertain any belief in the expansive phallic interpretations of modern pseudo-psychologists. Steeples, for instance, are so clearly natural outgrowths of the school of pointed architecture—which itself is infinitely composite & innocuous in origin—that it is nothing short of sheer asininity to give them a Priapean significance. I have no use for transient fads, & sit unmoved whilst many get excited over novelties of speech, thought, or aesthetic method. These things come & go—each perhaps leaving a slight residuum in the background of general knowledge or culture, yet never having the revolutionary significance attributed to it in its heyday of freshness. It's a pretty old world, after all, & we shall never learn much about the inner nature of things. . . . .

Most cordially & sincerely yrs,  
H P L

218. TO JAMES F. MORTON

10 Barnes Street  
Providence, R. I.  
May 16, 1926

O Illimitable Potency:—

. . . . . I kept *Hobhouse* out to read on the train during my journey home; but was so engrossed by the emotions of reawakening life at sight of New England, that I could not, after all, do aught but gaze out the window at stone walls, rolling pastures, and white church steeples—imagining them when none were in sight. . . . .

. . . It is astonishing how much better the old head works since its restoration to those native scenes amidst which it belongs. As my exile progressed, even reading and writing became relatively slow and formidable processes; so that my epistles were exceedingly brief and labour'd efforts. Now I find something of my antique Providence fluency return-

ing by degrees, and have been able to keep my correspondence in manageable shape without more than a fraction of the effort which I was forc'd to expend when ingulph'd in the nightmare of Brooklyn's mongrel slums. That experience has already become the merest vague dream—and it is with difficulty that I can make myself realise, in any really convincing or subjective way—that I have ever been away for any length of time. I am Providence, and Providence is myself—together, indissolubly as one, we stand thro' the ages; a fixt monument set aeternally in the shadow of Durfee's ice-clad peak!

With every distinguisht consideration, I am, Sir,  
ever yr. most obt. etc.

Θεοβαλδος  
Theobaldus

219. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

10 Barnes Street  
Providence, R. I.  
May 20, 1926

My Lord:—

It wou'd surprize you to behold in how useful a capacity I am engag'd, as I give my self the pleasure of perusing your lively epistle. My aunt Mrs. Clark was last Sunday seiz'd with a sharp attack of intercostal neuralgia, from which distemper she is confin'd abed, quite unable to move in any fashion save with exceeding great pain. As is but natural, she requires the constant attendance of some person to dose her with medicaments and fetch materials from the chymist's; and there being no one so available as my self, I have assum'd that function, and am thus turn'd a nurse by day and night—drowzing in an easie-chair when needful, but at no time removing my clothes, or retiring in the complete sense of the word. My other aunt Mrs. Gamwell comes in when she can, and the occasional visits of a real nurse assist in the adjustment of the domestick aeconomy. For some time in the evening the faithful old negress Delilah comes in to supply my place as I go home to collect my mail and eat my dinner. Otherwise I am staying wholly with the patient in Waterman Street, accompany'd by a stock of books and writing materials to divert my leisure moments. There is in my

aunt's case, the doctor says, no particle of danger of any sort; and within a week she is expected to be well along on the road to recovery. But whilst the worst state persists, she is none the less held helpless; so that the presence of a nurse, official or unofficial, remains a prime necessity. As I pen these lines the patient sends you and your family her best regards; a commodity likewise entrusted to me for shipment to the same destination by Mrs. Gamwell upon the occasion of her last visit this morning. . . .

I am honour'd beyond my deserts by the attention pay'd to my late communications, and astonisht to hear that so meagre a subject cou'd furnish grounds for so exhaustive an autopsy as your chronicle. It grieves me to hear of so much sterling wisdom and spicy discussion wasted upon a being of such insignificance; or to reflect that you took the trouble to collect and reassemble the disjecta membra of the corpus delicti; after the process of shredding and microscopical analysis was complete. As to the opinions exprest concerning my parts, I wou'd say that, aside from the general error of attributing any genius whatsoever to a mere whimsical and crotchety old country-gentleman, Mortonius and Samuelus are most profoundly astray when they saddle me with a mythical burthen of intellectual excellence. The truth is, that I am really most emphatically non-intellectual, if not almost positively anti-intellectual. I abhor mathematics, take no interest in feats of mental sprightliness, have no especial quickness of apprehension, and am certainly not at all distinguisht for holding in my head the many simultaneous threads of a complex matter. What liking I have for logick and analysis is purely an aesthetick one—a wish to *arrange* and *classify* things in patterns whose configuration shall possess, in the realm of ideas, that decorative *beauty of form* possesst by tangible objects of art and nature in the realm of matter. It is true that I admire and respect intellect most tremendously, but not true that I possess it. All my profound and instinctive wishes have to do with forms and patterns—that is, effects of line and colour in scenery and architecture, or of dramattick contrast and association in the phaenomena of time and space, etc.—instead of with quantities and causation; and my very love of scientifick clearness is an essentially qualitative or impressionistick one, rather than any sincere and philosophick passion for the truth. For such vague abstractions as "truth", or such local and relative opinions as "right", I have no enthusiasm whatsoever. All that captures my interest and desires is a certain artistic congruity with the fixed backgrounds which heredity, environ-

ment, and individual bias have made mine—a congruity which I demand *for myself* on aesthetick grounds alone, without any futile attempts to rationalise it or to invest it with any absolute or cosmic significance. But god's death! What a surfeit of useless speculation about a simple old man whose only salient qualities are a love of old times, a penchant for ghosts, and a healthy appreciation of his native soil—things to be found in three-quarters of the rural squires of Old England! . . . . .

The sketch of Mr. De la Mare reminded me that I have not yet read his prose lucubrations: a thing which I really ought to do before giving my article a final form. I had been of opinion that Mr. D. shared the somewhat insipid whimsicality of Mr. Barrie, but 'tis easily possible that his fantasies have the sombre suggestiveness of Mr. Blackwood as well. In any event, it will not do for one professing an interest in the weird not to have read them. As I remarkt on a former occasion, the chief advantage of my writing this article, is that the process compels me to read those things which, tho' I always intend to come to them, are usually put off indefinitely. By the way—the irresponsible Henneberger is now belabouring me with requests for authority to submit some of my tales to book publishers. I have let him have some to keep him quiet; tho' warning him that I can assume no financial responsibility, and that I extend no power for him to bind me to any agreement. Wright is an enthusiastick abettor, and has generously waived all book rights on such material as has appear'd in *Weird Tales*. Henneberger thinks he can 'land' the tales not on their own merits, but through guaranteeing 500 purchasers for the book (*W. T.* readers—the great 'literary' public!) and offering free advertising in the magazine. Well—he can't say that I didn't warn him—but I have so little faith or interest that I declined to re-type such unpublished tales as needed it; sending Henny the batch as it stood, and letting him copy the stuff (a process he claims to *enjoy!*) as best he can. As for *Weird Tales*—I did let Wright have *The Terrible Old Man*, and he intends to use it. *He* will appear (I think) in the issue out Aug. 1st, and *The Horror at Red Hook* later. Honest Farnie, with the naive confidence of mid-Western unsophistication, asks me 'not to include in my book' any material accepted but not published by *Weird Tales*. I assured him that I would not!

I continue to enjoy my return to life in full measure, and take as many walks and exploring tours as conditions permit. . . . .

Yesterday afternoon—whilst Delilah presided at 115 Waterman

Street—Mrs. Gamwell and I took a walk thro' a section of the town in which I had *never set foot before*—an antient and now seedy district east of the river and just south of the good residential area. Colonial houses abounded, and I was astonisht at some of the gorgeously antique effects obtainable here and there. One little lane in particular captivated my fancy, and made me think above all else of Marblehead. It is call'd Dove Street, and has neither pavement nor sidewalk, but consists of irregular rows of simple Colonial cottages with rough stone doorsteps, and here and there a flagstone or two. . . . .

After bidding my aunt adieu, I took the car for Roger Williams Park to search out that new classick marble temple which I had never seen but of which I sent you a postcard—the Benedict Monument to Musick. I knew I shou'd have difficulty in finding it, since 'tis on the shoar of a lake in a new part of the park, not previously develop'd; but a good geographical sense gave me confidence in an early discovery. So, indeed, did it turn out—and lo! what chaste Hellenick splendour burst suddenly upon my gaze as I topt a low wooded hill and saw the velvet plain and azure water beyond! There, flusht in the sunset to a pink that spoke of the quarries of Pentelicus, rose a cloudlike dream of Ionick purity and magnificence. The postcard does not even *begin* to portray the charm of the spectacle as I beheld it. All visible objects—the hushed and tenantless greensward, the piercing blue of sky and water, the gleaming and half-erubescient whiteness of the classick marble, and the faultless austerity of the towering temple itself—combin'd with the background of trans-lacustrine forest and the warmth and magick of mid-spring to create an atmosphere of induplicable fascination, and even of a kind of pagan *holiness*. One might pray here, in truth, to that Euterpe whose governance of musick was own'd by the Grecians in their prime. Truly, I have had no such classick thrill before save twice: when seeing the Pantheon model in your local museum and when beholding the marble amphitheatre at Arlington, Va., across the river from Washington.

Yr. obt. Grandfather—  
H P

220. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

10 Barnes Street  
 Providence, R. I.  
 May 25, 1926

My Lord:—

It is my intention to collect—or at least to read—as much R.I. work as I can possibly find. Our library has a *vast* amount, which has been placed together in a special corner of the reference room since I was away. This corner shall henceforward be one of my principal haunts! I'd like some time to compile data on R. I. literature, as Coates is doing for the literature of Vermont. Incidentally, I'm enclosing some more local cards. Try to get around some time and let Grandpa shew you what a real town is like! Had my hair cut yesterday by the same old barber who removed my flowing curls in 1894. He's a good old R. I. Yankee of the 7th generation of North Scituate settlers. God Save the King!

My aunt is decidedly better, but still unable to move. Last night was my last on duty, for we 'ave a nurse reg'lar now, a nice old Cockney lydy 'oose nyme is Mrs. 'Arrison. She stys bowth d'y and night, but 'as three h'hours hoff in the harfternoon, so that I 'ave to come in then and 'old the fort.

Yr. obt. Ancestor  
 H P

221. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

Saturday, June 1926  
 Providence

At least Moderately Youngish Man:—

As for your advancing age—lud, boy! but you can't expect an old man to consider you anything more than fairly grown up! 'Zounds, Sir, but do you know that honest Tryout is exactly *three* times as old as you

are, and that gracious Mr. Hoag is *four* times your age? As for being forty—to be sure you'll be that in fifteen years, at which time you may perhaps look all of twenty and have all the poetick fire of twenty-five. You poets can't age—split me, Sir, if Samuelus isn't a flaming youth still for all his barren pole and uncertain equator! And you'll never get rid of that—er—iron-grey mop of yours, (although I hope you'll keep it shorter and smoother, like a sober citizen, when you mature) and you needn't even get stout if you follow your Grandpa's precept and keep your diet in hand. Why, Sir, I expect to be as lean at forty—and that's only *three* years off, Sir—as I was at sixteen when I got my growth. It's never too late to mend—three years ago I was as fat as a hog, and look at me now—spare, wiry, hard as nails, and as typical a lank, dried-up old Yankee as C. W. Smith himself! This hankering after youth is something I never could grasp. I was a settled, sedate old man before you were born, and when I was your age I wore starched bosom shirts, derby hats, and black string ties. Yes—and round cuffs with great onyx-and-mosaic cuff-buttons that my grandfather brought from Italy in 1878. I'd do the same still if it weren't conspicuous—but as a sober elderly person I do not wish to attract attention. The way to lead a contented life, young man, is to put away childish things at the start and be an old fellow early and long. Mr. Hoag and I got used to our venerable stations in good season, and soon became so accustom'd to them that anything else would have seem'd quite absurd. Thus we have no change ahead to fear, but are free to devote all our energy to the service of the Muse. And here you are dreading *thirty*—when even that sad young dog Orton is all of that and more—a mere boy so young I can't even remember when I was like him! No, Sir, that youthful mania will pass, and you'll come in time to thank gawd that you've arrived at years of balance and discretion! I'm sure I don't wish to be a day younger than my thirty-seven years on Aug. 20th next, and shall hail with equal satisfaction the dawn of FORTY-SEVEN if I survive that long. As I wrote before you were born—"Draw me against the tide of Time's rough sea, and let my spirit rest amidst the past!"

I am saving cash deperately for a series of New England tours in the summer, and it would double the plasure if I could make one of them coincide with your own presence in the affected regions.

As for N. Y.—I have some doubt of my ability to include that remote and widely advertised region in my summer's wanderings, since



the fare is atrociously piratical, and I need every farthing for New-England trips. I shall see nearly everyone worth seeing here—since you and yours, Mortonius, and Samuelus are all pledged for visits—and gawd knows there's nothing in the Manhattan landscape to allure my vision. . . .

Yr. obt. Grandpa  
H P

## 222. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

10 Barnes Street  
Providence, R. I.  
June 11, 1926

Your Ld. Ship:—

De la Mare can be exceedingly powerful when he chooses, and I only wish he'd choose oftener. Don't miss the volume of short stories entitled, *The Return*—especially *Seaton's Aunt*, *The Tree*, and *Out of the Depths*. I'm making space for Walter in my article. As for Poe—you do well to keep refreshed in him. You may recall that I re-read him last January, and that I found his charm and potency undiminished. He is the only author to whom I am allotting an entire chapter in my article. . . .

Yr. obt. Grandfather—  
H P

## 223. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

10 Barnes St  
June 17, 1926

Dear C A S:—

I have not been writing fiction lately—not because the lack of recognition means anything to me one way or the other, but because other affairs have consumed every ounce of my time & energy. I have added

paragraphs here & there to my history of the weird tale, but have mostly been busy with reading—amending many literary deficiencies of which I have been ashamed for years. . . . . I've also been digesting something of vast interest as background or source material—which has belatedly introduced me to a cycle of myth with which I have reason to believe you are particularly familiar—i. e., the Atlantis-Lemuria tales, as developed by modern occultists & the sophical charlatans. Really, some of these hints about the lost "City of the Golden Gates" & the shapeless monsters of archaic Lemuria are ineffably pregnant with fantastic suggestion; & I only wish I could get hold of more of the stuff. What I have read is *The Story of Atlantis & the Lost Lemuria*, by W. Scott Elliott.

Most cordially & fantastically yrs—  
H P L

224. TO WILFRED BLANCH TALMAN

10 Barnes St.  
Providence, R. I.  
June 25, 1926

My dear Talman:—

.....  
Such, then, is the tale as I'd advise simplifying it. Of course, you may feel that I've taken all the "meat" out—in which case pray remember that you're by no means bound to swallow all the advice you get! Certainly, in any possible shape, it's a rousing good plot, and very strong in potent "creeps" of the most convincing sort. I should think it ought to go in 3500 or 4000 words as amended, and believe that *Weird Tales* would be very glad to accept it for publication. By the way—I've just received advance sheets of my *He*, to appear in the issue after *The Terrible Old Man*. The "artist" has perpetrated a discouragingly stiff and wooden-looking pictorial heading. . . .

Glad you liked the postcards—here are some more recent finds. I can get you a whole set of splendid *Pawtuxet* cards if you want them—for Chase's Drug Store at the bridge handles all the best and quaintest scenes. My pedestrian explorations have been quite extensive lately; in-

volving not only many scenes previously unvisited by me, but several long stretches of familiar ground. Last Saturday I "did" Mount Pleasant, Davis Park, and Federal Hill—and was astonished by the great Italian Churches. Sunday I hiked to Warren and rode back on the 'bus. Monday I visited Ft. Independence at Field's Point, and followed Narragansett Boulevard to Pawtuxet. And last night I ascended to the State House to see the Colonial Duncan Mansion across Smith Street—but lo! found only the gaping cellar wher it had been. Confound this criminal vandalism in the name of progress!! Something ought to be done about it!

Abundant thanks for that tip about the Dyer Street Stationer. Neilan in Weybosset Street always charges me fiendish rates for my paper, despite the fact that I bought my machine of him back in 1906 when he was a young clerk in the Remington Co. I'll need some new  $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11$  sheets soon, and you can wager that I won't be backward in inspecting Friend Hammond's stock! The kind you got at \$1.25 per 1000 will do finely for the Mss. I send away—light and postage-saving, and perfectly adequate when one only types on one side. Of course, for letters, I need a coated stock able to take pen script on both sides. This long paper is some which our fellow-amateur George Kirk—whom you'll meet soon—insisted on giving me when he ceased to have a commercial use for it. If my correspondence weren't so devastatingly immense, I'd say that my present stock was enough to last an ordinary lifetime!

Yr. most obt. hble. Servt.  
HPL

225. TO JAMES F. MORTON

10 Barnes Street  
Providence, R. I.  
June 28, 1926

Clarissime:—

*Oscar*—et tu! Gawd, but what is left to me in life! That's the damn trouble of growing old—all one's old pals start croaking one after the other, till the only place a bimbo can feel at home is in the cemetery. This very second I'm dropping a black-border's card to the bereaved

neighbour; asking for the SL and RK Elegies, and adding a less ambitious but equally sincere tribute worded thus:

Damn'd be this harsh mechanick age  
That whirls us fast and faster,  
And swallows with Sabazian rage  
Nine lives in one disaster.

I take my quill with sadden'd thought,  
Tho' falt'ringly I do it;  
And, having curst the Juggernaut,  
Inscribe: OSCARVS FVIT!

Yr. oblig'd obt. Servt.

Θεοβάλδος

Theobaldus

226. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

Friday, July 1926  
Providence

Aging Sir:—

Four grey hairs! What are they—the entire moustache, or part of the cranial mop? Well, well, it certainly makes an old gentleman feel his years when his grandchildren begin to shew wrinkles and silver threads! You have beaten your Grandpa Theobald by about a year—my first visible grey hairs coming at twenty-six. . . . .

The final major—if you call it major—item in this shipment is a typed copy of that weird tale history which you saw your Grandpa so industriously writing a year ago. The sixty pages of text came to seventy-two of "typescript", (to use an abominable neologism) and the job nearly killed me. Now I know I shall *never* type my 110-pages and 147-page novelettes! I only did this because Cook hustled me up—he wants to use it in *The Recluse* by the first of next month. . . . .

Yr. obt.

Grandpa

227. TO WILFRED BLANCH TALMAN

10 Barnes Street  
Providence, R. I.

July 21, 1926.

My dear Talman:—

*Two Black Bottles* begins very promisingly, and I still think it will be all right to let Hoffman tell the story. The amount of matter which he has to transmit rather than tell is of course considerable; but no more, I think, than occurs in many tales of similar kind by the best authors. However—you can use your own judgment about choosing between first and third persons. The really important part of my suggestion was merely that the central scene and climax develop through Hoffman alone rather than through the three later visitors as outlined in your rough synopsis. This simplification and concentration of events upon one central figure in whose place the reader can put himself would seem to me the most essential step in the strengthening of the plot.

As for what I've done to the Ms.—I am sure you'll find nothing to interfere with your sense of creation. My changes are in virtually every case merely verbal, and all in the interest of finish and fluency of style. I have not been very lavish with elaborately sinister words, because my maturer judgment tells me that these things must be used sparingly in order to retain their potency. Only in a definitely prose-poetic composition can they be scattered about at all freely—and your style is straightforward narration rather than atmospheric impressionism. Save your extreme words for the climax—you'll need them then, unvitiated by previous employment. Begin to lay on the colour when Hoffman approaches the church at sunset and sees the graves of Slott and Vanderhoof—making this approach something like the beginning of Poe's *Usher* in repressed menace. Work in a sort of subsidiary climax—or rather, an exceptionally tense moment, when Foster—fuddled with drink and terror—begins his confession by saying in a terrible whisper that the cross over Vanderhoof's grave keeps falling down in the night. That confession calls for adroit work—homely diction—semi-dialect—but necessarily chilling to the core. Use great care when Slott's connexion

with the deviltry begins to appear, and let the collapse and pulverisation of Foster have a very marked "punch". From that point on, you can safely increase the "colour" content of your style. The crash outside—the fallen cross in the moonlight—the sliding earth—the terrified flight—and then, *Ob, Boy!* the *big* sight! The gigantic corpse clambering out of its grave, silhouetted against the moon, and floundering toward the church! After this the sense of a pause must occur, and the aftermath should be told in a lowered key—and as briefly as possible. Again economise on the colour words, and rely on dark and skillful *suggestion* to convey the requisite impression of lurking terror. Make all final explanations as brief as possible—and as inconspicuous. Begrudge every word you have to use after the climax. I'll be glad to see the finished story, and hope that my suggestions may prove a help—at least so far as details of diction are concerned—rather than a hindrance.

I am ever Yr. most obt. Servt.  
HPL

228. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

10 Barnes St.  
Aug. 9, 1926

Dear C A S:—

I haven't read *The Silver Stallion* yet, but may in time. Irony *used* to interest me when I was younger & more impressed by the hollowness of the things it castigates, but nowadays the current hypocrisies do not seem important enough to me to warrant the expenditure of artistic effort against them. Nothing in the universe matters very much, & to laugh habitually at any one set of things seems almost to imply that they are worth laughing at. I infinitely prefer Dunsany to Cabell—he was a genuine magic & freshness which the weary sophisticate seems to lack. . . . .

Most cordially & sincerely,  
H P L

229. TO AUGUST DERLETH

10 Barnes Street  
Aug. 13, 1926

Dear Mr. Derleth:—

... You are right in according *The Hill of Dreams* first place among Machen's works—for I think that it is without doubt the fullest and truest expression of his ethereal genius. It is the least touched with conscious artifice of all his longer productions, and forms an almost characteristic record of the life of the dreamer's soul. Lucian's dream-life as a Roman in old Isca Silurum is something really quite unapproached in literature. *The Three Impostors*, though, is very much worth reading. . . . .

Most cordially and sincerely yrs—  
H. P. Lovecraft

230. TO JAMES F. MORTON

10 Barnes Street  
Providence, R. I.  
August 18, 1926

Sapientissime:—

... Firstly—that house in Newport *was* Solomon Southwick's! I got it from a book whose recency and authenticity are not to be impugned. What is more, there are strange legends about it—in connexion with the hidden gold of Captain Kidd, notwithstanding the fact that it was not built till 35 years after the bozo in question performed his aerial minuet. Antient houses on the water's edge are ever subject to the inventions of a pleasing legendry. . . . .

Yr. oblig'd and obt. Servt.,  
Θεοβάλδος  
Theobaldus

231. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Theobald Manor  
Friday, Aug. 20, 1926

Magister:—

Well—it'll be dawn soon, so that I can tell whether or not I'm going to Newport. This'll be a birthday trip—for it was at nine a. m. of Aug. 20, 1890 that I swooped down like a curse upon this already accursed world. Thirty-six today! My gawd, how the years fly. Stolidly middle-aged—when only yesterday I was young and eager and awed by the mystery of an unfolding world—in the midst of the golden 'nineties, with free silver and Cuba libre and the new state house and the new station and the electrification of the cable-cars stirring up the atmosphere. 'Rah for McKinley and Hobart, (even if the latter has balled up your museum!) and the full dinner-pail! How I recall the old newspaper headlines, and the magazines and comick weeklies! Things aren't so piquant now. 1926! I can't believe it!

Yr. hble. and obt. Servt.

Θεοβαλδος  
Theobaldus

232. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

The Day After my 36th Birthday  
Providence  
Aug. 21, 1926

Young Man:—

..... Whilst I am well aware that a large amount of the race-stock included within the nominal bounds of Jewry is excellent and quite assimilable by a Nordic majority if the proportion be not excessive, I am *not* prepared to admit that the essentially exotic and Oriental culture-stream of the Hebraic tradition has any legitimate place in a Western and Aryan civilisation. We can gradually absorb such Jewish



elements as are dominantly Nordic or even Mediterranean in their biological composition—keen, gray-eyed, white-skinned German Jews like the first August Belmont, or ascetic Portugese-Jewish types like those whose blood has already tintured to a great extent the body of the Spanish people. But this absorption aboslutely postulates a complete cultural surrender on their part—an acceptance of our own Aryan point of view, loyalties, religion, and heritage. In other words, they must throw themselves wholly into the main stream and utterly forget their own individual past; else they will engender unpleasant cross-currents of taste and feeling which will continue to make them socially distasteful. We can't feel at ease—we couldn't if we wanted to—with persons motivated by a series of emotions founded on an utterly antipathetic and (to us) positively contemptible race-history. Nordic and Jew, culturally, can never meet on common ground because each one cordially hates what is sacred to the other. The Jew, to start with, is a humourless and emotionally overdeveloped ethical fanatic; with a leaning to the grandiose and an absolute indifference to that pride and physical courage which with us is really the measure of a man. You can imagine the natural reaction of this alien-minded stock to our essentially playful, power-loving, and indomitably proud fabric of unconquerable freemen. And that is not the worst. Added to this essential cultural alineage of the Jew is his ignominious history for the past two thousand years. Unable to resist his conquerors, he has never made a courageous stand except when his ethical mania prompts the individual to resist spiritual encroachment, but has been content to cringe and fawn and scheme along with sickly smirk and greasily rubbed palms as everybody's public door-mat. Kick him, and he whines an excuse for having been in your way! Now *to him*, this means nothing: because his own tradition has pinned its emotional approval to other things—mostly ethical and spiritual illusions. He can placidly dodge our boot-tips and tin cans with unimpaired self-respect, because his life is modelled upon a pattern which has nothing to do with our standards of value and ideals of manhood. It is the eternal East—you can see it in the Hindoo fakir and Chinese coolie as well. But all this, however satisfying to him, means nothing to us. We are ourselves, and inherit our own Western standards, and cannot in any way help entertaining feelings of the utmost aversion, repugnance, and contempt toward a culture or stock which fails to fulfil our most basic ideal of what men ought to be. We can't help how wise or shrewd some

Rabbi Isaachar ben Levi may be—if he grins when we pull his entomologically populous whiskers, we are moved by a basic impulse to a profound and insuperable disgust. It was thus that the Romans felt toward the cringing philosophers of the fallen Hellenistic world. Nothing is more foolish than the smug platitude of the idealistic social worker who tells us that we ought to excuse the Jew's repulsive psychology because we, by persecuting him, are in a measure responsible for it. This is damned piffle that utterly evades the real issue. We despise the Jew not only because of the stigmata which our persecution has produced, but because of the deficient stamina (from our point of view) on his part which permitted us to persecute him at all! Does anybody fancy for a moment that a Nordic race could be knocked about for two millennia by its neighbours? God! They'd either die fighting to the last man, or rise up and wipe their would-be persecutors off the earth!! It's *because* the Jews have allowed themselves to fill a football's role that we instinctively hate them. Note how much greater is our respect for their fellow-Semites, the Arabs, who *have* the high heart—shewn in courage and a laughing sense of beauty—which we emotionally understand and approve.

Now with this *double* barrier—alienage of primitive impulse, and contempt arising from the historic consequences of this alienage—is it to be supposed for a moment that any communal rapport can exist betwixt elements symbolising or representing the opposed Aryan and Hebraic types? Only a cloud-gazing ass of an idealist could possibly envisage such a circumstance. Aryans, as Aryans, will always feel a deep-seated and uneasy dislike toward Jews, as Jews; and the introduction of a large Jewish element into the social, intellectual, and aesthetic life of a community can only result in the maintenance of two separate streams without contact. People who have heard different songs crooned over their cradles will sing different songs when their time of singing comes. And this, we must note very carefully, applies to the best type of Jews as well as to their hopeless riff-raff. Fine learning—even fine race-stock—there may be; but as long as a cultural group looks back to sources utterly loathsome to our own aesthetic scheme, we will always detest them. So I say that, whilst it is eminently desirable to salvage good Jewish race-stock by *very gradual* absorption into the Aryan and dominating body; it is absolutely necessary that this salvaging be accompanied by a total effacement of the newcomers' traditions. They must suffer a complete intellectual and aesthetic amnesia, and join us *as Aryans* when

they do join. As for the Semitic culture—it is not for us to say one word either for or against it in an absolute sense. We do not feel its impulses, and can never know its essence. Certainly, it has produced a powerful set of ideas and standards, and who are we to say that these are any less important, intrinsically, than our own? As with Chinese culture, whose absolute greatness we freely acknowledge, we may say that Jewish culture is doubtless highly excellent *in its proper place*. But that place is *not among us*, for those points of view which are eminently harmonious when working with other Hebraic ideas, become utterly discordant, hostile, and injurious when brought in contact with points of view whose source and direction are wholly distinct and opposite. Semitism has never done anything save harm us when forced upon us or adopted by accident. It gave us the puling hypocrisies of the Christian doctrine—us, who by every law of Nature are virile, warlike, and beauty-loving pagans and Northern polytheists! We, who should shout our laughter to Odin and Thor, are constrained to bend like Eastern slaves over sickly twilight altars to a crucified consumptive. Faugh! It sickens my blond Teuton soul!! And our last wave of Hebraic imitation—the Puritan movement—produced such uglinesses as a New-England chronicler blushes to record. Good gawd! To think that my own maternal great-grandfather's Christian name was Jeremiah! But fortunately, Christian ritual and practise among the most civilised types have been gradually purged, by sheer racial influence, of their more incongruous and objectionable Eastern features. What, then, shall we do with our Jews? Absorb a few as Aryans—well and good—it has been done to some slight extent without ill effect. But anyone knows this is possible only to a drop-in-the-bucket extent; for most Jews hold like mules to their beliefs, and most are racially unfit for amalgamation anyhow. What of this alien majority? Well—as with the negro, there is only one thing we can do as an immediate expedient to save ourselves; *Keep them out of our national and racial life*. With the negro the fight is wholly biological, whilst with the Jew it is mainly spiritual; but the principle is the same. We are Aryans, and our only future as a self-respecting stock lies in our resistance to anything like an Alexandrian mental hybridisation. Let us preserve and glory in our own inherited Western life and impulses and standards, and let us resist to the death any attempt at fastening to our body of national custom any feeling or feature aside from that which we legitimately derive from the tall, fair Ary-

ans who begat us and who founded our English civilisation and Anglo-American nation. If a certain number of outlanders desire to dwell separately among us, it may be politic to let them—at least, for a time. But let us swear by the living God, as we respect ourselves as free Northern white men, that they shall lay not a hand on our institutions, and inject not an ideal of theirs into the massed inheritance which is ours. To the Jew we must say, "live your own life, here or elsewhere; but remember that you live among Aryans, who are not to be disturbed". When the interloper seeks a voice in our councils, and subtly endeavours to mould the national feeling in accordance with his own standards—among which latter is a cynical disregard of our sentiments and cherished loyalties, visible in bolshevistic Troztkys and iconoclastic Ben Hechts—there is only one possible answer from the unemasculated sons of the honest roast-beef Englishmen and rawboned Yankees who made this nation; and that answer is just this—"You go to Hell." . . . . .

And of course the New York Mongoloid problem is beyond calm mention. The city is befouled and accursed—I come away from it with a sense of having been tainted by contact, and long for some solvent of oblivion to wash it out! . . . . . How in Heaven's name sensitive and self-respecting white men can continue to live in the stew of Asiatic filth which the region has become—with marks and reminders of the locust-plague on every hand—is absolutely beyond me. In fact, I'm jolly well certain that they *won't* continue. New York will become a vast trading-mart for long-distance white commuters—and for the nameless spawn. When, at length, the power of the latter rises to dangerous heights of rivalry, I can see nothing short of war or separation from the union. There is here a grave and mighty problem beside which the negro problem is a jest—for in this case we have to deal not with childlike half-gorillas, but with yellow, soulless enemies whose repulsive carcasses house dangerous mental machines warped culturelessly in the single direction of material gain by stealth at any cost. I hope the end *will* be warfare—but not till such a time as our own minds are fully freed of the humanitarian hindrances of the Syrian superstition imposed upon us by Costantinus. Then let us shew our physical power as men and Aryans, and conduct a scientific wholesale deportation from which there will be neither flinching nor retreating.

So that is that. There are two Jew problems in America—one na-

tional and cultural, and to be met by a firm resistance to all those vitiating ideas which parasitic subject-races engender; and another local and biological—the New York Mongoloid problem, to be met God knows how, but with force rather than with intellect. The dominantly Aryan-blooded Jew of high type is better assimilated. The powerfully intellectual fundamental Hebrew is better socially segregated. . . .

And such a lecture to be started by a mere account of a momentary tiff! Well—that's what having lived in New York for two years does to one! I couldn't have *felt* it that way (even tho' my abstract views were the same) in 1923 or before, and even now it will probably wear off in a year or so more—especially since in New England we have our own local curses (tho' they *don't* clutter up all the landscape so!) in the form of Simian *Portugese*, unspeakable *Southern Italians*, and jabbering *French-Canadians*. Broadly speaking, our curse is *Latin* just as yours is *Semitic-Mongoloid*, the Mississippian's *African*, the Pittsburgher's *Slavonic*, the Arizonian's *Mexican*, and the Californian's *Chino-Japanese*. And so, to quote from a discouragingly Hebraic work of literature—*Amen!!*

Yr. obt. grandfather  
H P


233. TO WILFRED BLANCH TALMAN

10 Barnes Street  
Providence, R. I.  
August 24, 1926

My dear Talman:—

..... As to what is meant by "weird"—and of course weirdness is by no means confined to horror—I should say that the real criterion is *a strong impression of the suspension of natural laws or the presence of unseen worlds or forces close at hand*. Minds of differing perspective or degrees of sensitivity react differently to a given tale. To me, *The Pit and the Pendulum* contains nothing at all of true weirdness except in the introductory atmospheric touches. The horrors are too patently *physical*, and of merely human origin. Poe's supreme tale—and perhaps the supreme weird tale of all the ages—

is to me *The Fall of the House of Usber*. Second comes *Ligeia*, and of course *Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar* is full of breathless anticipation up to the last hideous cataclysm. *Ms. Found in a Bottle* and the later parts of *Arthur Gordon Pym* have a strange and potent aura of mystery and expectancy, and there are touches in *Metzengerstein* which few besides Poe could achieve. In the realm of sheer, sombre prose-poetry, uniting horror and beauty, nothing could excel *The Masque of the Red Death*, *Silence, a Fable*, and *Shadow, a Parable*.

..... Glad you got some good sepulchral paper-weights—I wish the slate off New England churchyards would break up as conveniently as the sandstone of N. Y. and N. J.! My Elizabeth-town fragment reads thus:  You were lucky to get a curved top and star. What I've always wanted is one of the winged cherub faces or skulls so common on the earlier slabs .....

Yr. most oblig'd and obt. Servt.  
HPL

234. TO WILFRED BLANCH TALMAN

10 Barnes St.  
Providence, R. I.  
Sept. 8, 1926

My dear Talman:—

.....

But really, that Dutch cottage of yours is a genuine triumph! Besides the aesthetic, you have managed to work in the practical—which is always a sealed mystery to me. I have not seen any Dutch dormers pedimented like yours; but the use of the cyma curve suggested by the roof line is certainly congruous enough, and in my lowly opinion forms quite a stroke of genius. I have, by the way, a very strong notion that the use of the cyma curve in bold architectural features is originally a Dutch conception. It appears in British architecture toward the end of the seventeenth century and culminates in Queen Anne's time, and may very possibly be among the Dutch ideas brought across by William the Third. A highly interesting example of its belated use in Providence will be found in the Joseph Brown house (1774) in South Main St.—

the house of the old Providence Bank until a few months ago. This, as you possibly recall, has been copied in the new building of the Gas Co. in Weybosset St. Brown was an amateur architect of great ability, and is responsible for the choice of our 1st Baptist Steeple from among three designs by Gibbs. As to those quadrant windows in the attic beside the chimney—I would not be in the least surprised if they *were* Dutch. They are almost never found outside the New Netherland area, yet abound in the colonial houses of that region. Whilst those I have actually seen have been in English houses—both town houses in New York and country houses in various suburbs—it is only natural to assume that an English feature flourishing *only* where Dutch influence is strong, must owe something to the Holland tradition. It is so with the gambrel roofs of English New York—they all have the short upper and long lower pitch characteristic of Dutch design, (though they never adopt the *curve*) whereas the gambrel roofs of New England have nearly equal pitches. . . . .

Yr. most oblig'd and obt. Servt.  
HPL

235. TO JAMES F. MORTON

10 Barnes Street  
Providence, R. I.  
Sept. 27, 1926

O Unsurpassable:—

... Really, the great question in any immigration policy is not so much the effect on the remote future as the maintenance of enough congeniality of population to save the legitimate natives of a place from feeling like strangers on their own hereditary sod. Only a damn fool can expect the people of one tradition to feel at ease when their country is flooded with hordes of foreigners who—whether equal, superior, or inferior biologically—are so antipodal in physical, emotional, and intellectual makeup that harmonious coalescence is virtually impossible. Such an immigration is death to all endurable existence, and pollution and decay to all art and culture. To permit or encourage it is suicide—as you can clearly see in that hell called New York, where a chaos of scum has raised a stench intolerable to any self-respecting white man. Biologi-

cally, the Nordic is probably not superior to the best Mediterranean stock, or the unbroken and now almost extinct Semitic white stock; but just as the Chinese culture ought to be preserved where it is once entrenched, where the Nordic culture is once entrenched, it must be preserved.

Yours for blond Aryanism—

ΘεοΒάλδος

Theobaldus

236. TO WILFRED BLANCH TALMAN

Sunday, October, 1926

Dear WBT:—

I was very glad to see the completed *Black Bottles*. . . . .  
 . . . . .

As to your hesitancy about following revisory suggestions—I can appreciate fully how you must feel in the case of anything intended purely as a piece of original and personal artistic expression, and will be careful not to make disconcerting alterations in later Mss. of yours. This one tale, however, as I said upon first seeing the synopsis last summer: may well be taken as a wholly academic proposition—a typical exercise and object lesson illustrating certain principles of composition which could not be conveniently demonstrated in any other way than this actual, visible and concrete alteration of the outline and text as prepared. But even in this instance I don't think my share is enough to gain me notice as co-author, hence urge you to publish the tale under your name only. If accepted by *Weird Tales*, it will prove a good entering wedge for other work of yours.

Yr. obt. Servt.

HPL







Frank Belknap Long

237. TO *The Providence Sunday Journal*

Providence, R. I.  
October 5, 1926

To the Editor of the *Sunday Journal*:—

The interesting responses in the Evening Bulletin's *Why I Like Providence* column, the recent publication of such popular or juvenile volumes as Miss Gleeson's *Colonial Rhode Island*, the increasing array of historical pamphlets prepared by Dr. Carroll for the State department of education, the illustrated series on "Odd Phases of Rhode Island History" by Mr. Chapin in the *Sunday Journal*, the attention given by the Journal and Bulletin to neglected historic sites, and the widespread following of colonial models in contemporary building operation, would all seem to indicate a wholesome and spontaneous awakening of this city to its unique wealth of antiquarian background.

It is refreshing to watch the emergence of the community at large from an almost un-New Englandish absorption in material gain and quantitative expansion to a mature appreciation of the more thoroughly grounded ancestral values in which other old towns like Philadelphia, Annapolis, Salem and Portsmouth have long taken so just and keen a pride.

In virtually no American city of equal size may one find such vivid and dramatic linkages with sources and developments as here; where the ancient hill still bears its graceful Georgian steeples and pilastered doorways, while bits of walled garden and steep green lane even now keep alive the memory of old home lots stretching back from the Towne Street.

With the 1773 Market House, the 1761 Colony House, the 1770 College Edifice, the intact home of the old Providence Gazette, the 1783 Golden Ball Inn, the 1769 schoolhouse in Meeting street, four Georgian churches, the incomparable colorful row of 1816 warehouses in South Water street, and the notable variety of Colonial mansions and unchanged streets to be found for nearly a dozen squares east of the Great Bridge, Providence has a heritage of cumulative life-deposits and a fountain of deeply genuine beauty, interest, fascination and picturesqueness which most metropolitan districts must envy in vain, and which

can be paralleled only by the mellower corners of such lovely old world towns as travelers haunt.

These things, the very vital spark and soul of a place from any aesthetic or really enlightened standpoint, are gifts not freely granted in our age and nation; and form so rare and so absolutely irreplaceable an endowment that we ought to live up to them by the exercise of a constant and diligent alertness lest they be impaired or swept away through coarser-grained conceptions of progress and urban splendor.

These remarks are impelled by the tidal wave of building replacement in which our city is just now immersed; and which, though in the main undoubtedly a healthy process, might easily reach the proportions of vandalism if encouraged without a due regard for traditional landmarks. No one, it is true, can be sorry to witness or anticipate the end of such Victorian pests as Butler Exchange, Infantry Hall and the unspeakable Superior Court House; but when a well-balanced Georgian structure like the old Butler mansion next the Arcade is removed, it would seem to be time to inquire whether the change be a real civic necessity or a mere expression of crude, restless commercial adventuring.

The Butler mansion is, of course, relatively a minor case; but its passing tends to renew one's apprehensions regarding the future of such really important scenic, historic, artistic or atmospheric relics as the Arcade, the exquisite Joseph Brown mansion recently vacated by the Providence National Bank, the quaint warehouses in South Water street, and the characteristic Colonial homes—austere wooden affairs with finely carved doorways—on the glamorous lanes that climb the hill.

Treasures like these are too precious to lose without a struggle, and deserve all the effort and finance which can be brought to their aid against the encroachments of boom-town "Babbitry." Any mushroom oil centre can have bright lights, skyscrapers and apartment blocks, but only a well-loved seat of centuries of pure taste and gracious living can have the urn-topped, ivied walls, the gabled and steepled vistas, the unexpected twists of cobbled court and alley, and all the manifold touches of elder landscape which mean Providence to those real natives who have grown up in it and cherish its every mood and aspect, summer and winter, sun and rain.

Organized protest saved the Old South Church in Boston and timely organization might do much toward preserving those buildings and

landscape effects which contribute most to the matchless charm of our city. We shall be fortunate if the rising interest in local history and tradition can reach this stage of effectiveness before "modern progress" shall have wrought any further damage.

One might speculate pleasantly on the later evolution of such a movement if once successfully established—an evolution broadening it from antiquarian to general artistic aims, and supplementing a purely defensive programme with one involving the rehabilitation (as successfully practiced in Boston and New York) of venerable neighborhoods like northern Benefit street, whose appealing old houses and romantic topography merit a better fate than the slumdom flow overtaking them.

This critical vigilance might ultimately be extended to the buildings and skyline of the city as a whole, old and new, with a view to the promotion of one harmonious architectural plan, and the discouragement of incongruous or excessively tall structures, which violate the traditional atmosphere of an old Georgian town. Boston has long enjoyed such intelligent zoning laws.

Whether all suggestions of this sort belong to the realm of impracticable visions, only time can tell. But if anyone need an incentive for active efforts in behalf of Old Providence, let him stand in Market Square some late afternoon when the slanting sunlight touches the Market House and the ancient hill roofs and belfries with gold, and throws magic around the dreaming wharves where Providence Indiamen used to ride at anchor. Then let him scale the slope in the dusk past the old white church and up the precipitous ways where yellow gleams begin to appear in small-paned windows and through fanlights set high over double flights of steps with curious wrought-iron railings. That is Old Providence—and any civilized spirit must agree that it is amply worth saving!

H. P. Lovecraft

(Published in *The Providence Sunday Journal*,  
October 10, 1926.)

238. TO WILFRED BLANCH TALMAN

10 Barnes Street  
 Providence, R. I.  
 October 11, 1926

Dear WBT:—

..... This present season I'm as busy as hell with some special revisory work which I've been doing for the well-known conjuror Houdini. I've done stuff for him before; but last week he performed in Providence, and took the opportunity to have me go over a lot of stuff which required constant consultation. It was the raw material for a campaign against *astrology*: and being somewhat in my line, (I had a campaign of my own on this subject in 1914) I rather enjoyed the digging up of data—though it was beastly laborious, and forced me to work continuously till night before last with very little sleep. If it doesn't knock out all the star-gazing charlatans in the country, I shall feel deeply disappointed! My next job for the sprightly wizard is an article on *witchcraft* which makes me lament with redoubled intensity the lack of a peek at the Waite book. ....

Yr. obt. Servt.  
 HPL

239. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Octbr. 12, 1926  
 10 Barnes St.

Dear C A S:—

I was very glad to hear from you, & to receive the critique I have so long been anxious to see. The latter is really very just & acute in its analysis of your work, but as you say may meet editorial opposition because of its tone of youthful effervescence & colourful rhapsody. I imagine that Wandrei must be rather a young chap—though possessed of a fund of imagery & command of language which will serve him well

when he has learnt the lessons of restraint & austerity of form which come with later life. I certainly wish he could get the review into print somewhere, though I know the process is none too easy. What is Wandrei, anyway? That is, what does he write, & what are his general literary bearings? I am interested in anyone as genuinely sensitive to the fantastic as he.

Which reminds me that I have just discovered a boy of seventeen who promises to develop into something of a fantaisiste. He is August W. Derleth, whose name you may have seen as author of some rather immature stories in *Weird Tales*. Finding my address through the magazine, he began corresponding with me; & turns out to be a veritable little prodigy; devoted to Dunsany & Arthur Machen, & ambitious to excel in their chosen field. He is entering the U. of Wis. this fall, & has a room only a few doors from where Galpin roomed where he first corresponded with you—823 West Johnson St., Madison, Wis. I know he'd be glad to hear from you if ever you have time to drop him a line or send him a few of your current poems.

\* \* \* \* \*

I'm sorry the pictures in N. Y. haven't sold better—yet think it is perhaps better that they should not sell at all, than that they should sell at blasphemously inadequate prices. Glad that three have found California homes—though sorry that the rates were so disproportionae. I shall be eager to learn the results of your black sateen experiment, & know it must be gorgeously effective. Black & gold has always been a favourite colour combination of mine. . . . .

\* \* \* \* \*

I've delayed typing my now finished sketch of weird fiction because of some new source material discovered at the Providence Public Library. When I do prepare the final copy I want it as inclusive as I can make it. Meanwhile I've written two new tales, one of which is the sunken-land thing I described in advance last year. I'm sending these under separate cover, & will ask that they be returned at your leisure—though there is not the least hurry. I don't know when I shall write any more, since just now I am virtually driven to death by some extra revisionary work (for the well-known conjuror Houdini) which I don't feel

financially justified in rejecting. As to a history of weird *art*—I only wish someone *would* prepare something of the kind! I myself have not enough knowledge of painting to attempt it, but to one properly equipped, it would offer a splendid opportunity. Why not try it yourself? Of the artists you mention the work of *Redon* & *Ryder* is still unfamiliar to me—as is the Japanese work.

Most cordially & sincerely yrs—  
H P L

240. TO AUGUST DERLETH

10 Barnes Street  
Providence, R. I.  
Oct. 19, 1926

My dear Mr. Derleth:—

I am *not* surprised that you prefer Sauk City to Madison, for I am also fond of the quiet atmosphere of smaller places; in fact, I can't picture anything more delightful in America than one of the quaint colonial seaports on the New England coast, which have been sleeping almost unchanged for a century and more. If I weren't attached to Providence by nativity and lifelong residence, I'd like to live in ancient Marblehead, Mass. . . .

. . . . With every good wish—most cordially and sincerely yrs.—  
H. P. Lovecraft

241. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

10 Barnes Street  
Providence, R. I.  
Oct. 26, 1926

Young Man:—

These occasional outings are, I assure you, most amply earn'd; for I am just now coping with the most hectic reincarnation of David V.



Bushism imaginable. My neo-Bush is our slippery friend Houdini, who was here early in the month, and rushed me to hell preparing an anti-astrological article to be finished before his departure—a matter of five days; for which I received the not wholly despicable remuneration of seventy-five actual dollars. He says he has a devilish lot more for me to do, and has been trying to get me to meet him in Detroit at his own expense to talk things over—but I have maintained that I can do business best within sight of my native town's Georgian steeples. Just now I note in the paper that Houdini has had a breakdown—which must have occurred just after the last letter he sent me—so I fancy there will be a lull in the negotiations. I'll send him a line of sympathy to jolly him along. Poor Eddy, who with my aid has been doing some revision for the nimble wizard, is quite worried about this unexpected intervention of the gods.

..... Speaking of cuttings—here's last year's Christmas lines, as they will appear in Br'er Wright's Family Story Paper . . . At 25¢ per line, this mess ought to come to \$3.75—a sum I shall by no means despise. Congratulations on the acceptance of your new tale—tho' I'm sorry *Ghost Stories* didn't print it at double the remuneration. Little Farnie rejected Grandpa's *Cthulhu* story on the ground that it was too slow and obscure for his zippy morons—but I guess I'll send along his note and let you see for yourself. If I could get plenty of good revision to do, I'd never write another tale for these cheap commercial caterers. It ruins one's style to have a publick of tame-souled half-wits hanging over one's head as one writes. A more congenial thing I have lately been doing is classifying my Rhode Island and other architectural and antiquarian cuttings. You may recall the hopeless mess at the end of my table in Clinton Street. Well, all that, together with what has accumulated since, is now neatly disposed of—either in appropriate portfolios or in a scrap-book. I can now find what I want, and no longer have the fearsome task of assortment looming ahead of me.

About that copy of *Ghost Stories*—I am properly ashamed of my negligence! I have been meaning to send it every day—but never got quite to the point. On receipt of your letter, however, I despatched it at once; so that it ought to reach you in a day or two. You will find it quite hopeless—even worse than *Weird Tales*. Indeed, its chief merit is to me the proof it affords that a magazine can be worse than Brother Farnie's.

..... There isn't anything antagonistic to the utterance of the soul in a decently furnished room or a clean bathtub, and anybody who says there is merely shews himself so unfamiliar with decent rooms and bathtubs that they appear intrusive and extraordinary to him. A well-ordered home can be taken as a matter of course by anyone who has never lived in anything else, and it's utter bunk to claim that it could possibly have any deleterious influence on one's thought and work. Good God, from my own experience it's just the other way around—I couldn't form a single well-defined thought in that damnable Clinton Street pigsty, whereas now that I am at home again in the surroundings befitting a civilised man I can at least do as well as I did before I left them.

..... I can't get interested in it—it doesn't even bore me enough to take my mind off other boredoms. ....

As to Dreiser—I read two of his things as a matter of duty last year when Kirk happened to have them about, and can agree that he is certainly a great artist of a sort. He does understand the undercurrents of certain heavy, mediocre characters; and since such characters are very numerous in life, one may say that he has an eminently sound and workable perspective of life itself. He is a genuine realist who can manage to give a certain dramatic (it is trite reviewers' jargon to say "epic") march to the melange of sordidness in average existence; and such being the case, it is useless to deny him the title of artist even though his use of language is the very nadir of clumsiness.

At the same time, I cannot summon up any real interest in his painful photographs. We know that such things are—we recognise the touch of the comprehending analyst and delineator—but after all, we soon come to ask ourselves, what the hell of it? The amount of real interest in the draggled flounderings of a muddled lower-middle-class mind in the toils of social inhibition would seem to me to be definitely limited. For a while it may symbolise the writhings of man in the clutch of the infinite, but after the novelty of the analogy has worn off one loses patience with the spectacle of sheer, stupid, ox-like misery. The sodden and restricted perspective of the sort of people Dreiser knows and understands, comes to pall on a mind of more extended contacts, to whom the universe has a subtler perspective, and for whom it presents a vastly different and infinitely more etherealised set of problems and situations. This simple peasant sympathy and universal pity stuff will do for adolescents and Slavs—but it simply can't mean a tremendous lot to

a Celt or Teuton who has looked into enchanted forests or heard strange music on the raths in the dark of the moon. . . . .

Yr. reminiscent and agricultural Servt—  
Grandpa

242. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

Octr. 26, 1926

Young Man:—

In replying to your keenly appreciated communication, I must begin in something of my old-time travelogical vein; for the past week has witnessed in a pilgrimage on my part, more impressive than any I can recall taking in years. This excursion, on which I was accompany'd by my youngest daughter Mrs. Gamwell, was to these rural reaches of Rhode-Island from whence our stock is immediately sprung; and is design'd to be the first of several antiquarian and genealogical trips covering the Phillips-Place-Tyler-Rathbone-Howard country, and including inspection of as many of the original colonial homesteads as are yet standing. This devotional survey is naturally a recreation of the keenest interest; covering as it does those forms of landscape whose images are permanently burnt into my pastoral soul, and those actual scenes from which my personality was moulded—scenes whose spirit and atmosphere are ineffaceably stamped on the quintessential germ-plasm bequeathed to me down a long line of rustick progenitors. I had previously been in that region but twice in my life; in 1896, when I spent two weeks at the colonial farmhouse of my great uncle James Phillips, and in 1908, when I took a very casual single day's jaunt with my mother; this infrequent visiting being due to difficulties of transportation only just solved by means of one of those new-fangled motor stage-coach lines.

On this occasion we started at 9 a.m. from the Eddy Street coach terminal over the antient Plainfield Pike, noting in due time the historic Fenner farmhouse (1677)—homestead of one of Rhode-Island's greatest old families—and later on the region devastated to create the new Scituate reservoir. In less than an hour we reach'd the general section associated with our lineage, and were delighted with some of the late Georgian doorways around Clayville. At length we disembarked at

the quaint hilltop village (with a *gorgeous view!*) oddly known as "Rice City", and struck northward along a back road across the town line from Coventry into Foster, and toward the bookside hamlet of Moosup Valley, "metropolis" of our hereditary rural region.

As we followed the antique highway past copse and mead, cottage and stream, gentle slope and shady bend, I was destin'd to be surpris'd by the loveliness of the countryside. I had known before that it was pretty, but having seen it only twice—once thirty and once eighteen years ago—I had never properly appreciated it. Now, in my old age, I was forcibly struck with its incomparable graceful lines of rolling hill and stone-walled meadow, distant vale and hanging woodland, curving roadway and nestling farmstead, and all along the route the crystal convolutions of the upper Moosup River, cross'd here and there by some pleasing rustick bridge. At one bend in the stream I paus'd with proper pensiveness; for there in 1848 my great-grandfather Capt. Jeremiah Phillips met an untimely end in his own mill, (now demolish'd) being dragg'd into the machinery by the skirts of his voluminous frock coat as a malign wind blew tham against some wheel or belt. Whenever we enquir'd the way we found that our names were well known to the inhabitants, and I doubt if any person we saw was not related to us in some more or less distant fashion—such being the universal consanguinity of an antient pastoral community. Finally we beheld across the meadows at our left the distant roofs and white church belfry of Moosup Valley, and were soon descending it to past the idyllick farmhouse at the bend of the road—once the seat of "Aunt 'Rushy"—Jerusha Foster—who used to give candy to my mother and aunt when they came to see her back in the early 'sixties—but now occupy'd by a fashionable Providence man who has married into the old local stock—Arthur Dexter's daughter, who lived a piece up the hill.

Crossing the rushing Moosup by another of those deliciously Arcadian bridges, we were soon in the pine-shaded village cemetery, where for some time the colonial slate slabs kept us busy. There were scores of our kindred there—Tylers, Howards, Fries, Hopkinses, Rathbones, and Places—although our closest relatives all rest in private burying grounds near their respective homesteads. We now walkt through the "civick centre" of the village, noting the church, schoolhouse, grange, and publick library—all of which is family 'property' through association. A distant relative—the Rev. George Kennedy—built the church and was

its first pastor, whilst my grandmother's cousin Casey B. Tyler (a local writer and historian, also notary publick, town clerk, and State Senator 1850-51) left his private library to the village to form the present Tyler Free Library—which has some 5000 volumes and is annually aided by the state. The village formerly contain'd a smithy, two shops, a slaughter-house, and a tannery; but commerce declin'd when the old stage route left, and the omnipresent Ford has driven out all that could support a blacksmith. Beyond the "civick centre" we climbed the hill to the old Casey Tyler house where my aunt Mrs. Clark was born, and here we were literally enchanted with the beauty of the landscape. Across the road a wooded valley dips magnificently to the lower meadows, while to the east and north are incredibly lovely vistas of stone-walled rolling pastures, clumps of forest, bits of stream, and purple ranges of hills beyond hills. The house itself, a large three-story structure, is of early 19th century origin; but beside it is the still intact (though inhabited by a newcomer named Dunbar who has only lived there twenty-five or thirty years) colonial homestead of a story and a half which housed James Tyler (Casey's father) before he built it. The house of Casey was establish'd in the patriarchal Narragansett Country, where large slaveholding was the rule, and was connected with the great Newport house of Wanton, which gave the Province three Royal Governors and some spectacular privateer captains. The marriage of James Tyler to a Casey gives us an interesting link with the Newport Tories—God Save the King! I told my aunt upon reaching home that she had certainly chosen an ideal spot to be born in!

From there we retraced our steps to the village, this time stopping to see a cousin, Mrs. Nabby (Abigail) Tyler Kennedy, whom Mrs. Clark asked us to look up, and who lives in the oldest homestead of all—(according to some, 1728) when William Tyler, Gent., made the region his family seat, and took up most of the land in sight. That land, call'd the "Tyler Purchase", was later divided amongst other colonial proprietors; and a hearteningly large part of it still remains in the hands of blood descendants. The region is the most truly American and wholesomely colonial I have ever seen; for there seems to be no break or alteration in the steady stream of hereditary habits and traditions which dates back to the times when Col. Thomas Parker married 'Squire Tyler's daughter and knocked the local raw recruits for the French and Indian Wars into shape on the training-field back of the old Tavern. The

reigning Tyler of Revolutionary times was a magistrate, and in his day a formidably businesslike whipping-post stood in front of the house. Much of the Tavern, by the way, was blown down in the great gale of 1815; so that the house at which we stopt is really a composite, with its final form dating from 1816. The room in which we sat, however, was part of the original house; and had the immense floor-boards, exposed corner-posts, and panelled overmantel which told authentically of the early Georgian period. Our cousin, tho' only 72 years of age, is now the oldest inhabitant; and I was astonish'd at the amount of family lore she has preserv'd. She has much better genealogical records than ours, and will be a mine of information if ever I start the close research I have long plann'd. She reaches the time of William the Conqueror direct through two lines, Tyler and Foster; and believes she could do so through others with a little additional compiling. Her mother was my grandmother's closest confidante and associate in the 1840's, so that she knows as much about my particular branch as about her own. All in all, I was very glad to run across this manorial family Sibyl, with whom my immediate kindred had been wholly out of touch since the 'seventies, when she attended a seminary with my elder aunt. She was, indeed, able to unlock the present as well as the past; being custodian by right of seniority and ancestral position of all the keys in the village. Kindly enough, she took us through the old church—where her husband's father had preach'd sulphureous damnation—the grange in which she is an active worker, and the Tyler Free Library, which her kinsman founded and of which her daughter (who now lives in my grand-uncle James Phillips' homestead where I visited in 1896) is the present librarian. The latter building is simple, but the collection is astonishingly good. I have a new respect for the taste of my bygone cousin, whose old desk occupies a place of honour at the end of the main room. He used to have historical and antiquarian articles in the papers, "cutely" signed "K.C." Many specimens repose in our old family scrapbooks, but I can't truthfully say that the Gibbonesque style impressed me overpoweringly. The recent library accessions are as well chosen as Casey Tyler's original private stock, and if the natives read many of them, they will be in no danger of retrograding toward a state of yokelry.

Now leaving Moosup Valley, we climb'd another hill past "Aunt 'Rushy's" homestead (which them city folks a-stayin' thar dew keep up in right peart shape!) and enter'd the especial territory of the Places—

encountering on our right the well-beloved homestead whose crayon picture by my mother you may have noticed on my wall. I had given it the appreciation it deserves. Now, in my sunset years, I can accord greater credit to that vanish'd Place who built it—or its predecessor—for truly, I never saw an house so intelligently adjusted to make the most of all the aesthetick features of the landscape. In front, across the road, one sees on the right the ascent of rocky meadow extending to the James Phillips house and later to the Job Place estate atop the hill; this slope balanced by a breathlessly lovely valley panorama on the left. In which the stone-wall'd meadows descend in terraces to the gleaming bends of the river, whilst the white village belfry peeps alluringly thro' embowering verdure (now turn'd to the riotous red and gold of autumn) and sets off the endless undulations of purple hills beyond. Behind the house and its attendant orchard a sparsely wooded ravine winds gently down to lower pastures, and forms a background worthy of any artist's brush. Altogether, I was prodigiously impress'd with the beauty of the whole picture; and wisht ardently that I might buy back the place, which pass'd from the family some half-century ago. The Vale of Tempe here finds its reincarnation, and the very birds pipe Theocritus and the Eclogues and Georgicks of Maro. The house, in which my own mother and her mother and mother's father before her were born, is of the prettiest New-England farm type; and dates from a late colonial period when the larger Georgian homestead on the same site was burn'd down. It is now tenanted by the parvenu newcomers who took it fifty years ago, (anyone around Moosup Valley is a stranger and newcomer unless his family has a good two centuries of settlement there!) and has quite sadly deteriorated since our forbears had it. I can even see a marked falling-off since 1908, when I was last there. We paus'd at length in the family burying-ground, separated by a bank wall and iron gate from the roadside, and admir'd several comely skulls and cheerful cherubs—to say nothing of urns, fountains, and weeping willows—on the many slabs of slate and marble. No fragments, unfortunately, were *conveniently loose*; (I *do* want a paperweight of New-England slate instead of New-Jersey red sandstone!) tho' I was strongly tempted by an entire slab of the 1840 period, remov'd from the grave of Stephen Place Jr. in 1903, when a Western relative erected a finer stone, and now lying against the wall at the rear of the enclosure. Epitaphs were abundant, but I found nothing really quaint or grotesque.

The rural 'squires of that region were too much in town, and too well train'd in taste at the village academies, to blossom forth with the engaging illiteracy found in other parts of New-England. Time has not been kind to the antient slate, and moss has play'd its obscuring part; so that the earliest epitaph I could read was that of my great-great-grandfather Stephen Place, (there were endless Stephens!) who died in 1817. His stone (topt by a willow weeping over an urn) reads thus:

"The dust must to the dust return,  
And dearest friends must part and mourn;  
The gospel faith alone can give  
A cheering hope, the dead shall live."

Inane, but hardly *quaint* in the truest sense. His wife Martha, who departed this life in 1822, revels in equal inanity:

"Hail, sweet repose, now shall I rest,  
No more with sickness be distress'd;  
Here from all sorrows find release,  
My soul shall dwell in endless peace."

We now proceeded to the old James Phillips place, scene of my 1896 visit, and here again I was astonisht by the beauty of the landskip. The antient white house nestles against a side hill whose picturesque rocks and greenery almost overhang the north gable end, while across the road is a delicious combination of hill and vale—hill to the left, with the Job Place estate and its burying ground at the top, (James Phillips, having married Job Place's daughter Jane, lies there) and to the right the exquisite "lower meadow" with its musical winding brook. The only flaw in the picture is a recent social-ethnic one—for FINNS, eternally confound 'em, have bought the old Job Place house! This Finnish plague has afflicted North Foster for a decade, but has hardly secured a real foothold in Moosup Valley, only two families marring the otherwise solid colonialism. They are seldom seen or heard—but it does make me crawl to think of those bovine peasants in the house where my great-uncle's wife was born—and tramping about an antient Place graveyard! Maybe a *hand* will reach up thro' the rocky mould some day . . . Well—after this I fancy people will be careful about how they dispose of their real estate! Entering the James Phillips house—which has not alter'd since 1896—we were welcom'd by its present inhabitants



—a distant kinsman (whose mother was Christopher Place's daughter) named Bennis, and his wife, daughter of a Nabby Tyler Kennedy and librarian of the Tyler Free Library. News of our presence in the region had travelled ahead of us; and I was greeted with two bygone letters of my mother's, which Mrs. Bennis had found among Uncle Jame's old papers in the attick! This pastoral "grapevine telegraph" (or rather, Bell Telephone) is really quite amusing—for we were heralded in advance wherever we went. Even our first casual inquiry at Moosup Valley caused us to be overtaken at the Tyler Tavern by an honest housewife bearing a newspaper cutting of my grandfather's obituary, which the village thought might be of interest! At Uncle James's place I continued some observations on the feline part of the population which I had begun in Moosup Valley, and decided that the prevalence of tailless Manx Cats was mark'd enough to constitute a distinct local feature. Evidently the breed—about which you must tell *Felis*—secur'd a strong foothold at an early date; diffusing its blood throughout the continuously settled territory adjacent, but stopping when the distances became extream. These uncaudal creatures are lively and graceful, and one soon forgets the handicap impos'd upon them by Nature—an handicap indeed, which we poor featherless bipeds are not asham'd to share! (Yet how would *Felis* look without that glorious vulpine brush?). The house pleas'd me as much as it did in 1896, and I envy'd afresh the rag carpets and the wealth of colonial furniture. The Dyckman cottage in New York will illustrate the atmosphere of the place better than anything else in your benighted metropolitan reach—allowing of course for the difference betwixt Dutch and New-England designs. I was permitted to revisit the corner room where I slept thirty years ago, and where I used to see the green side hill thro' the archaick small-paned windows as I awoke in the dewy dawn. Certainly, I was drawn back to the ancestral sources more vividly than at any other time I can recall; and have since thought about little else! I am infus'd and saturated with the vital forces of my inherited being, and rebaptis'd in the mood, atmosphere, and personality of sturdy New-England forbears. A pox on thy taowns and decadent modern notions—one sight of the mossy walls and white gables of true agrestick America, and pure heredity can flout 'em all! An health to His Majesty's Province of Rhode-Island and Providence-Plantations! GOD SAVE THE KING!

Late in the afternoon my good 333d cousin Bennis took us in his car

to another scene of our family history—the village of Greene, across the town line in Coventry, where my grandfather establish'd himself and his enterprises in early manhood, and where his last two children (including Mrs. Gamwell) were born. He found the place a tiny cross-roads hamlet call'd "Coffin's Corner", but at once proceeded to build a mill, a house, an assembly hall, and several cottages for employees—finally renaming the village after Rhode Island's arch-rebel, Genl. Nathanael Greene. All his edifices are still standing, tho' some of them are diverted from their original uses. The house—a capacious Victorian affair of 16 rooms—remains in the hands of those distant kinsfolk (the Tillinghasts, descendants of old Pardon Tillinghast who founded the Providence sea-trade in 1681) to whom it pass'd when my grandfather came to Providence for good in the 'seventies; whilst the mill is broken up into shops and tenements. The hall retains its pristine impressiveness; its lofty rooms forming the present home of Ionick Lodge, the Masonick branch founded by my grandfather, and of which he was the first Grand Master. It did me good to see his picture there, enshrined in proper state. All the population speak of him with affection, and I was especially pleas'd to talk with those who knew him in person—the old folks like 'Squire Gardner Wood, and Col. Brown the local G.A.R. leader, and the antient cracker-box senate in the gen'ral store, many of whose bearded or stubbly patriarchs worked for him some sixty years ago. One old boy named George Scott shed actual tears of sentimental reminiscence at being confronted with Whipple Phillips' darter an' gran'son!

Well, by that time it was night, and we had to take the 6:12 stage-coach home. We had had a great day, but even so had hardly scratched the surface of what we wish to see. The territory cover'd was more Place and Tyler than Phillips or Rathbone country, and a first sight of the antient Phillips burying ground (near the old Asaph Phillips homestead—1750—which my aunt has just learned by telephone was burned down some five years ago) still lies ahead of me. Asaph Phillips the younger, by marrying Esther Whipple of Providence, brought us the blood of that damn'd prophane ruffian Capt. Abraham Wipple, ring-leader in the lawless burning of His Majesty's arm'd schooner *Gaspee* on Nanquit Point in 1772. I hope to take this Phillips pilgrimage before winter—but if I don't, I shall have something to live till next summer for. Anyway, I have definitely adopted the bucolick squirearchical ideal—or confirm'd myself in its adoption—and am already acquiring a

distinctly provincial accent—such as Foster folks ought to use, although they don't seem to. Had I not renounc'd literature, I shou'd compose a pastoral poem in the heroick couplet, intitul'd, *Moosup-Valley; an Eclogue*.

Well—be a reasonably good young man.

Yr. obt. Grandpa Theobald

243. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

10 Barnes St.

Octr. 29, 1926

Dear C A S:—

..... This Wandrei must certainly be an interesting character, having the tastes he does; & I'm greatly interested to learn that it was my reference in the *Weird Tale Eyrie* which set him on your trail. Surely he's welcome to see the two latest, & I shall be glad to hear from him if he returns them directly to me. His share in *Sandalwood* surely attests the depth & sincerity of his appreciation, & I know he will be more than satisfied with the exotic type of currency chosen for his reimbursement! I hope exceedingly that Sterling's influence can "land" his article with the *Overland Monthly*, for that publication has a fame & standing—obvious enough even in the East—which command considerable respect for its contents & dicta. ....

Most cordially yrs—

H P L

244. TO WILFRED BLANCH TALMAN

10 Barnes St.

Providence, R. I.

Octr. 31, 1926

Dear WBT:—

..... At present you're laying more stress on *plot* than on those intangible subtleties of mood and colouring which come from the studied choice (really, a *poetic* choice) of cadenced words and phrases,

and from a minute selective attention to the thousand-and-one almost invisible details which add up collectively into a living background. This primary attention to plot is probably a wise choice on your part, because to the weird writer plot is so much more difficult to achieve than atmosphere. I, for instance, have an absolute minimum of plot in the formal, academic sense, and depend almost entirely upon atmosphere. But in the end, atmosphere repays cultivation; because it is the final criterion of convincingness or unconvincingness in any tale whose major appeal is to the imagination.

Yr. obt. hble. Servt.  
HPL

245. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

10 Barnes St.  
Novr. 16, 1926

Dear C A S:—

As to romanticism & fantasy—I myself dislike the former except in the latter form. To me there is really something "non-vital" about the overcoloured representation of *what purports to be real life*—the sentimentality of Dickens, the heroic bombast of Dumas, or the mawkishness of Victor Hugo. There is to me something puerile in devising a sort of conventionalised variant of life, with spurious & artificial thoughts & feelings, & then getting maudlin & excited & effusive over it. But *fantasy* is something altogether different. Here we have an art based on the imaginative life of the human mind, *frankly recognised as such*; & in its way as natural & scientific—as truly related to natural (even if uncommon & delicate) psychological processes as the starkest of photographic realism. Dunsany writes—and you both write & paint—the authentic epic of an ethereal region as well-founded & well-defined as the world of actual being; & because you do not pretend that it is the real world, but recognise it as a world of fantasy, your art has a truth & dignity & a major place in aesthetics which (in my opinion) sentimental terrestrial romance has not.

Yr. most obt.

H P L

246. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Novr. 17, 1926

Empyrean Apotheosis:—

.....

... The Herm book is all right—but god damn James Joseph Molo-  
ney of the Culinary type force for working his ancentral brogue into the  
word *blasphemies* on page 23. Get this, 'bo—Bow pale-check'd to their  
blashphemies' Sink me, Sir, does he want me to get a light check'd suit  
to perform my genuflections in, or does he refer to the anaemic nature  
of the remittances secured by my toil? And to think I read them  
————— proofs *five* ————— times!  
That line was O.K. in the last set except that the compound epithet was  
given in the good old-fashion'd way—with Elision—which Samuelus  
went back on at the last moment. I mark'd this one thing for alteration—  
and see what they done to the whole ————— line!

As to eyeshades and reversed caps—you can't convince me that either  
or both is or are (a) worth getting indignant or critical about, or (b)  
any more foolish than dozens of other accepted customs. Everything in  
the world outside primitive needs is the chance result of inessential  
causes and random associations, and there's no real or solid criterion by  
which one can condemn any particular manifestation of human restless-  
ness. Only a hyper-rational or hyper-aesthetick standard of classicism  
could demand a direct and absolute use for everything—architects  
frown on needless ornament, yet the triglyphs of the very simplest order  
are merely fake representations of the ends of beams no longer used.  
None of this damn detail is worth bothering about—the only thing in  
the cosmos approaching a value is pleasant traditional association. Asso-  
ciation is the real test—the degree of a thing's absorption into the imag-  
inative life of a given race-stock or cultural stream. But of course there  
are mildly amusing differences in degree in the extravagance or far-  
fetchedness of sundry associative innovations. Taste is the sole criterion,  
and gentlemen don't bother with extreme crudities like the skeleton or  
reversed caps. However—the rabble may all go to hell uniformly  
crowned in such regalia for all it matters to anybody who is anybody!

Yrs. with purrs—

Theobaldvs Thomafelis

247. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Novr. 23, 1926

O Uneclipsed Right Eye on Māna-Yood-Sushāi:—

... Speaking of household woik and turl—I cleaned the brass of my telescope yesterday for the first time in twenty years. Gehenna, what a green mess! And I couldn't get it very brilliant even in the end. That's what neglect does!

Well—toodle-oo! Yr. feline and obt. Servt.

Θεοβάλδος

Theobaldus

248. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Sunday Night

Nov. 26, 1926

Incomparabilissime:—

... It's the good old Wissahickon, and I'll give yuh a shiny penny (when I get one) if you can pull a scenic stunt in New Jersey to beat it! Spoofing aside, I've never seen its equal during all the weary years of a long and disillusioned life. It's *gorgeous*—stupefying—hypnotising—but why attempt description? You'll have to see it for yourself. I did the whole thing—devoted a whole day to it—and don't think a moment wasted. What precipices—what primaeval forest—what giant monarchs of the grove—what limpid waters, singing cascades, and bubbling tributaries—what rocks and eaves—what ledges and bridges—!!!! In the more southerly portions the very earth sparkles with some shining powder that the fanciful would call star dust—but which I, as a veteran mineralogist, know must come from the oxydising up of the neighbouring rocks—which have mica or something. Being exceedingly charitable where expense is not involved, I herewith enclose a very modest specimen as a nucleus of the Theobald Collection of American Rocks, for which I shall expect a special wing to be built at the museum.

Yr. obt.

Θεοβάλδος

249. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Saturday, December 1926

O Voice Omniscient of Pegana's Central Fountain:—

As to the remarks of Mr. O'Higgins *de catis canibusque*, I may rejoin that they are no more or less beside the point than most remarks based upon such false arts as phrenology, psycho-analysis, palmistry, and the like. As a matter of fact, most attempts to classify cat and dog lovers exactly according to social and philosophick standing must necessarily fail because of the essential complexity of the human mind. All we may say is, that the more purely an aesthete a man is, the more likely he is to prefer cats; since the superior grace, beauty, manners and neatness of the cat cannot but conquer the fancy of any impartial observer emancipated from mundane and ethical illusions. In reality the purely aesthetic factors far outweigh the philosophick; so that although a gentleman *respects* a cat for its independence, aloofness, sufficiency, and coolness, he really *likes* the cat principally because of its peerless beauty and the superior gentleness and cleanness of its habits as compared with those of the noisy, smelly, pawing, slobbering, messy dog. It has a charm and a poise and a classic restraint which dogs totally lack, and its appeal to the imagination is tremendous—all this wholly apart from any question of affection, devotion, dependence, aloofness, superiority or inferiority. Really, no cat-lover of sound sense need appeal at all to the treacherous catch words of psychology. All that is required is to establish a standard of pure beauty without subsidiary encumbrances, and the cats have it in a walk! We love kitties, gawd bless their little whiskers, and we don't give a damn whether they or we are superior or inferior! They're confounded pretty, and that's all we know and all we need to know! . . .

Θεοβάλδος

Theobaldus

250. TO AUGUST DERLETH

Friday (Early December 1926)

My dear Mr. Derleth:—

I was delighted to hear that you like the *Strange High House*, for that is by all odds my own favourite among my recent yarns. The two elements in all existence which are most fascinating to me are *strangeness* and *antiquity*; and when I can combine the two in one tale I always feel that the result is better than as though I had only one of them. It remains to be seen how successful this bizarrerie can be when extended to novel length. I am now on page 72 of my dreamland fantasy, and am very fearful that Randolph Carter's adventures may have reached the point of palling on the reader; or that the very plethora of weird imagery may have destroyed the power of any one image to produce the desired impression of strangeness. This tale is one of picaresque adventure—a quest for the gods through varied and incredible scenes and perils—and is written continuously like *Vathek* without any subdivision into chapters, though it really contains several well-defined episodes. It will probably make about 100 pages—a small book—in all, and has very small likelihood of ever seeing the light of day in print. I dread the task of typing it so badly that I shall not attempt it till I have read it aloud to two or three good judges and obtained a verdict as to whether or not it is worth preserving.

.... With every good wish, Most cordially and sincerely yrs.—

H. P. Lovecraft

251. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

10 Barnes St.

Decr. 11, 1926

Dear C A S:—

Sterling's death was indeed an unfortunate thing for the arts, though I presume he was himself the best judge of what time his life ceased to



be a boon & an opportunity, & became a burden & an anachronism. . . . .

Yr most hble & obt  
H P L

252. TO WILFRED BLANCH TALMAN

10 Barnes St.  
Providence, R. I.  
Dec. 19, 1926

Dear WBT:—

. . . . . As for my novel . . . it is a picaresque chronicle of impossible adventures in dreamland, and is composed under no illusion of professional acceptance. There is certainly nothing of popular or best-seller psychology in it—although, in consonance with the mood in which it was conceived, it contains more of the naive fairy-tale wonder-spirit than of actual Baudelairian decadence. Actually, it isn't much good; but forms useful practice for later and more authentic attempts in the novel form.

Most sincerely yrs.  
HPL

253. TO AUGUST DERLETH

10 Barnes Street  
Providence, R. I.  
Decr. 25, 1926

My dear Mr. Derleth:—

. . . *Polaris* was written in 1918, before I knew anything about Dunsany, and is interesting as a case of unconscious parallelism of manner. *Celephais* dates from after my introduction to Dunsany, and I will leave to the critic the question of just how much of the style is due to Dun-

sany's influence, and how much to my own independently similar cast of imagination.

... With all good holiday wishes, I remain,  
Most cordially and sincerely yrs.—  
H. P. Lovecraft

254. TO AUGUST DERLETH

10 Barnes Street  
Providence, R. I.  
Jany. 2, 1927

My dear Mr. Derleth:—

... You can get a fairly good bird's-eye view of literary modernism by reading Ben Hecht's *Erik Dorn* for prose, and T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* for what purports to be verse. The keynote of the modern doctrine is the dissociation of ideas and the resolving of our cerebral contents into its actual chaotic components, as distinguished from the conventional patterns visible on the outside. This is supposed to form a closer approach to reality, but I cannot see that it forms any sort of art at all. It may be good science—but art deals with beauty rather than fact, and must have the liberty to select and arrange according to the traditional patterns which generations of belief and reverence have marked with the seal of empirical loveliness. Beyond or behind this seeming beauty lies only chaos and weariness, so that art must preserve illusions and artificialities rather than try to sweep them away.

.. Hoping you will have an enjoyable programme of studies ahead of you during the coming college session, I remain Most cordially and sincerely yrs—H. P. Lovecraft

255. TO AUGUST DERLETH

10 Barnes St.  
Providence, R. I.  
Jany. 11, 1927

My dear Mr. Derleth:—

... I read *Anna Karenina* years ago, but can't say I cared greatly for that or for anything of Tolstoi's. To my mind, Tolstoi is sickeningly mawkish and sentimental, with an amusingly disproportionate interest in things social and ethical. Of course, that is typical in a way of all Slav literature, but other Russian authors show far less of this sloppiness in proportion to their genius and insight into character. If you want Russia at its best, try Dostoievsky, whose *Crime and Punishment* is a truly epic achievement. ... Most cordially and sincerely yrs.—HPL

256. TO AUGUST DERLETH

10 Barnes St.  
Providence, R. I.  
Jany. 20, 1927

My dear Mr. Derleth:—

... About Oscar Wilde—it seems to me that he forms a prominent point in the history of literature without having been supremely great himself. He embodied with peculiar thoroughness and assertiveness the general esthetic tendencies of his period.—the reaction of the later XIXth century against Victorian pompousness and tastelessness—and has come to be its symbol; but when one analyses what he actually wrote one finds more of cleverness than of real genius, and more of accomplished mannerism than of truly comprehensive and penetrating vision. The type of paradox of which he was master is really more of a mechanical trick than an artistic form, and even his weirdest and most exotic effects are not without a touch of that mechanical element—the mere calculated cataloguing of things with glamorous names—which must always be distinguished from the genuine wonder and strangeness

of those whose eyes really catch the overtones of marvellous individual worlds of colour and fantasy. He was always too conscious of himself to be really great, though he undeniably did succeed in producing a vast amount of *almost* great material. His comedies rank with the best comedies of manners in our language—he was the last lineal heir of Sheridan—whilst his fairy tales are assuredly most exquisite bits of prismatic marvel and musical prose. I think I like *The Fisherman and His Soul* best of all. *Dorian Gray*, too, is a notable tour de force, though it has about it a studied smartness which detracts from its power as a tale of the unreal. . . . . It is an ironic circumstance that he who succeeded for a time in being the Prince of Dandies, was never in any basic sense what one likes to call a *gentleman*. Of course, Wilde's imprisonment was a mistake, for no good is ever accomplished by arousing dramatic publicity over mere degradation and degeneracy which calls for the alienist rather than the policeman. . . .

With every good wish, and most cordially and sincerely yrs.—  
H. P. Lovecraft

257. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

10 Barnes St.  
Jany. 21, 1927

Dear C.A.S.:—

Your letter arrived yesterday—& meanwhile you no doubt have my postal commenting on Wandrei's work. I was really immensely taken with it, & believe that he has a more *truly cosmic* & fantastic vision than anyone else I know, with the solitary exception of yourself. There is a quality of genuine bizarrerie in his perspective which I miss in most attemptedly weird writing, & I believe that if he keeps on in his development he will certainly create some remarkable pieces of literature. I noticed the tense & convincing atmosphere of nightmare in *The Door of the Room*, but as you say, the *Fragment of a Dream* is a finer performance—as it necessarily is, since it has a broader scene & gives opportunities for varied landscape & other effects which the compressed locale of the other forbids. That piece more than any other made me think of your landscapes. *The Messengers* is indeed very like your *Envoys*, & il-

illustrates the essential parallelism of the fantastic imagination in different individuals—a circumstance strongly arguing the existence of a natural & definite (though rare) mental world of the weird with a common background & fixed laws, out of which there must necessarily spring a literature as authentic in its way as the realistic literature which springs from mundane experience.

My novelette or semi-novel is nearing its conclusion—the current last page being 106. I don't think much of it, & haven't yet given it a name; & I certainly dread the job of retyping it. . . . . As I look it over, I am impressed anew with the truth that the short tale is the best form for fantasy—but I am not sorry to have had the practice in carrying plot threads for a considerable distance, since sometime I wish to write a novel of more naturalistic setting, in which some hideous threads of witchcraft trail down the centuries against the sombre & memory-haunted background of ancient Salem.

Ever yr most obt—  
H P L

*P. S. Later*

Have finished the novel in 110 pages. Am giving it (at least provisionally) the title of *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*. (Jan. 22.)

258. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

Wednesday  
Feb. 1927

Young Man:—

Ω  
Y'AI 'NG'NGAH,  
YOG-SOTHOTH  
H'EE—I'GEB  
F'AI THRODOG  
UAAAHH

Ϸ  
OG THROD AI'F  
GEB'L—EE'H  
YOG-SOTHOTH  
'NGAH'NG AI'Y  
ZHRO

You don't know what these twin formulae mean? Ah, you are fortunate! Dr. Willett would give every hair of his well-trimmed white beard if he could only say the same—but God! *He knows! He has seen!* It all comes out on page 112 of the tale now drawing toward its close, and

which I shall call either *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* or *The Madness out of Time*. Like Midas of old, curs'd by the turning to gold of everything he touch'd, I am this year curs'd by the turning into a young novel of every story I begin. You will in all likelihood see neither this nor *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* till you come hither in your new shiny Essex, for the typing of manuscripts of this length is utterly beyond the powers of a feeble old gentleman who loses interest in a tale the moment he completes it. . . . .

Yr. obt. Servt.  
HPL

259. TO DONALD WANDREI

Providence  
Feby. 10, 1927

Dear Mr. Wandrei:—

. . . . I think an author strongly reflects his surroundings, & that he does best in founding his elements of incident & colour on a life & background to which he has a real & deep-seated relation. This may or may not be his native & childhood environment, but I think it is generally better so unless that setting be more than ordinarily devoid of vividness or dramatic possibilities. If the latter be the case, then I think the author would do well to choose a new setting with great care; keeping in mind both his own psychological tastes & requirements, & the general truth that life has more available literary values in such places as possess a visible & continuous linkage with their own sources & development, & a well-defined relation to some dominant stream of civilisation. This would really exclude any such cosmopolitan chaos as New York—which has no central identity or meaning, & no clean-cut relationship either to its own past or to anything else in particular—but of course I realise that different minds have different requirements, & that there are those who find in the intense surge of artificial life a certain stimulation which brings out what is already in them. But one ought to be warned in advance that all life in New York is purely artificial & affected—values are forced & arbitrary, mental fashions are capricious. pathological, or commercial rather than authentic, & literary activity &

conversation are motivated by a shallow pose, a sophistical concealment of ignorance, & a morbidly charlatanic egotism & cheap assertiveness far removed from the solid aesthetic intensity which ought to underlie a life of art & letters. New York has, by force of sheer wealth & glitter & advertising, captured the *reputation* of a literary capital, but it is not a true one in the sense that Boston once was. The "aesthetes" of New York are less interested in art & beauty than in themselves; & their smart badinage & discussion savour much more of psychological exhibitionism & social gesture than of actual artistic insight, vision, & devotion. It is a case of inferior people trying to be conspicuous somehow, & choosing art as a form of ballyhoo more convenient & inexpensive than business or evangelism or sword-swallowing. Of the genuine flow of life, or the sincere recording of life & dreams which is literature, I can discern scarcely a trace. Whatever of value is produced there is merely the outcropping of things elsewhere nourished—except of course in the case of those few real native New Yorkers who survive in sadness from the dead & lovely old city that was; the gracious, glamorous elder New York of dignity & poise, which lies stark & horrible & ghoul-gnawed today beneath the foul claws of the mongrel & misshapen foreign colossus that gibbers & howls vulgarly & dreamlessly on its site. If you want to know what I think of New York, read *He*. I was living there when I wrote it—and I had to get out of town to the quiet colonial shades of a New Jersey village in order to put it into coherent words. No—New York is dead, & the brilliancy which so impresses one from outside is the phosphorescence of a maggoty corpse. There can be no normal American life or thought in a town full of twisted ratlike vermin from the ghetto & steerage of yesterday—a town where for block on block one can walk without seeing a single face which has any relation to the life & growth of the Nordic, Anglo-American stream of civilisation. It is not America—it is not even Europe—it is Asia & chaos & hell—the sort of stinking, amorphous hybridism which Juvenal noted in Rome when he wrote *Syrus Orontes in Tiberium defluxit*. . . . . As for me—I have found from experience that Providence is the only place where I can be content. Here I was born, & here one-half of my ancestry has had its roots for nearly three centuries. The soil & the air are in my blood & cell-structure, & I have come to recognise myself as of the type that cannot live apart from its sources & background & historic reliquiae—in a word, the essential provincial as opposed to the cosmopolitan. In

Providence are all the elements which appeal most poignantly to my spirit, with its joint love of beauty & antiquity. The old town dreams on seven green hills at the head of its lovely blue bay, crowned by great domes & venerable steeples, & preserving unchanged a vast portion of the narrow, winding hill streets, the peaked colonial gables & gambrel roofs, the exquisitely carved classic doorways with double flights of iron-railed steps, & the stately Georgian mansions in their archaic walled gardens, which made it splendid & colourful at the time of the Revolution. Something of the stately old life lingers, too—for the residence section is on a precipitous hill which shoots up just east of the many-bridged river, & which has stemmed the creeping tide of cosmopolitan decadence. The old families & the old ideals still dominate, & there are little ways & customs on every hand which attest an unbroken evolution from colonial times, & an absolute, vital identity with the Gothic town of Roger Williams & the Georgian town of Stephen Hopkins. Every night at nine, for example, the curfew still rings from the ancient steeple (1775—the finest classic steeple in the United States) of the First Baptist Church, which all my maternal ancestors attended. One comes to love all the old lanes & the old buildings—& what a wealth are still standing! The 1761 Colony House, the 1770 College Edifice, the 1773 Market House, the four old churches dating from betwixt 1775 & 1816, the exquisite private homes with dates between 1770 & 1825, the smaller wooden houses in quaint hilly or labyrinthine rows dating from 1740 onward, & the vivid, glamorous waterfront with its rotting wharves & colonial warehouses & archaic lines of gambrel roofs & dark alleys with romantic names (Doubloon, Sovereign, Guilders, Bullion, etc.) & wondrous ship-chandleries & mysterious marine boarding-houses in ancient, lamplit, cobblestoned courts—that is Old Providence, the town that gave me birth & in which I have lived all but two of my thirty-six years. I am it, & it is I—separation or disentanglement is impossible. . . . .

. . . . I suppose that my own reactions are largely determined by the fact that I am more sensitive to *places* than to *people*. If I depended extensively on congenial discourse my problem would be complicated. Moreover, I am not really *literary* in the purest sense of the word. Books & authors, as such, do not interest me; since I want only what they transmit. It is beauty—the beauty of wonder, of antiquity, of landscape, of architecture, of horror, of light & shadow, line & contour, of



mystic memory & hallowed tradition—that I worship, & I never think of talking about books when I can talk of the stars or the hills or the abbey towers of dim, far lands or the steep roofs that cluster on the slopes of archaic towns. That is why I have read so relatively little, & why *science* with its breathless mysteries & inconceivable vistas has so often crowded mere letters from my sphere of paramount interest. . . .

Most cordially & sincerely yours,  
H. P. Lovecraft

260. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

10 Barnes St.  
Feby. 18, 1927

Dear C A S:—

. . . . . New York is too far removed from the main stream of any one civilisation to be the home of any genuine art. It is a hybrid place, with garishness & squalor in monotonous alternation. Such places—like all cosmopolitanism—may breed the critical spirit, but never art. Art grows out of solitude & communion with one's own past & background, & at bottom is exceedingly nativistic & nationalistic. One's dream-country, be it in Coccagne or on Canopus, is always a vague projection & etherealisation of one's own childhood land; & the farther one's life gets from these authentic sources, the weaker his art will become. New York belongs to no well-defined fabric & has no place in anyone's hereditary or continuous life—wherefore it is a nursery of pose & pretence rather than of depth & sincerity in art. It is delightful to visit on account of its faery pinnacles & wealth of museums & the like—but as a place for a white man to live it simply doesn't exist. The old New York is dead—this one is only a kennel of feverish mongrels. . . . .

. . . . . Sterling was a real poet, & the fact of his not fitting the age is purely the age's fault. It is my belief—& was so long before Spengler put his seal of scholarly proof on it—that our mechanical & industrial age is one of frank decadence; so far removed from normal life & ancestral conditions as to make impossible its expression in artistic

media. Last night I was supported in this belief by a lecture given here by the Irish poet Padraic Colum on *Contemporary Poetry*. Colum started by denying that such a thing as *contemporary* poetry exists, & shewed very clearly that the ideas & life of the present period are as yet artistically unformulated. We live on memories—& I think that is all we can ever live on now, since mechanical invention has so appallingly divorced us from the soil & from those conditions of our forefathers around which the aesthetic feelings of the race are entwined.

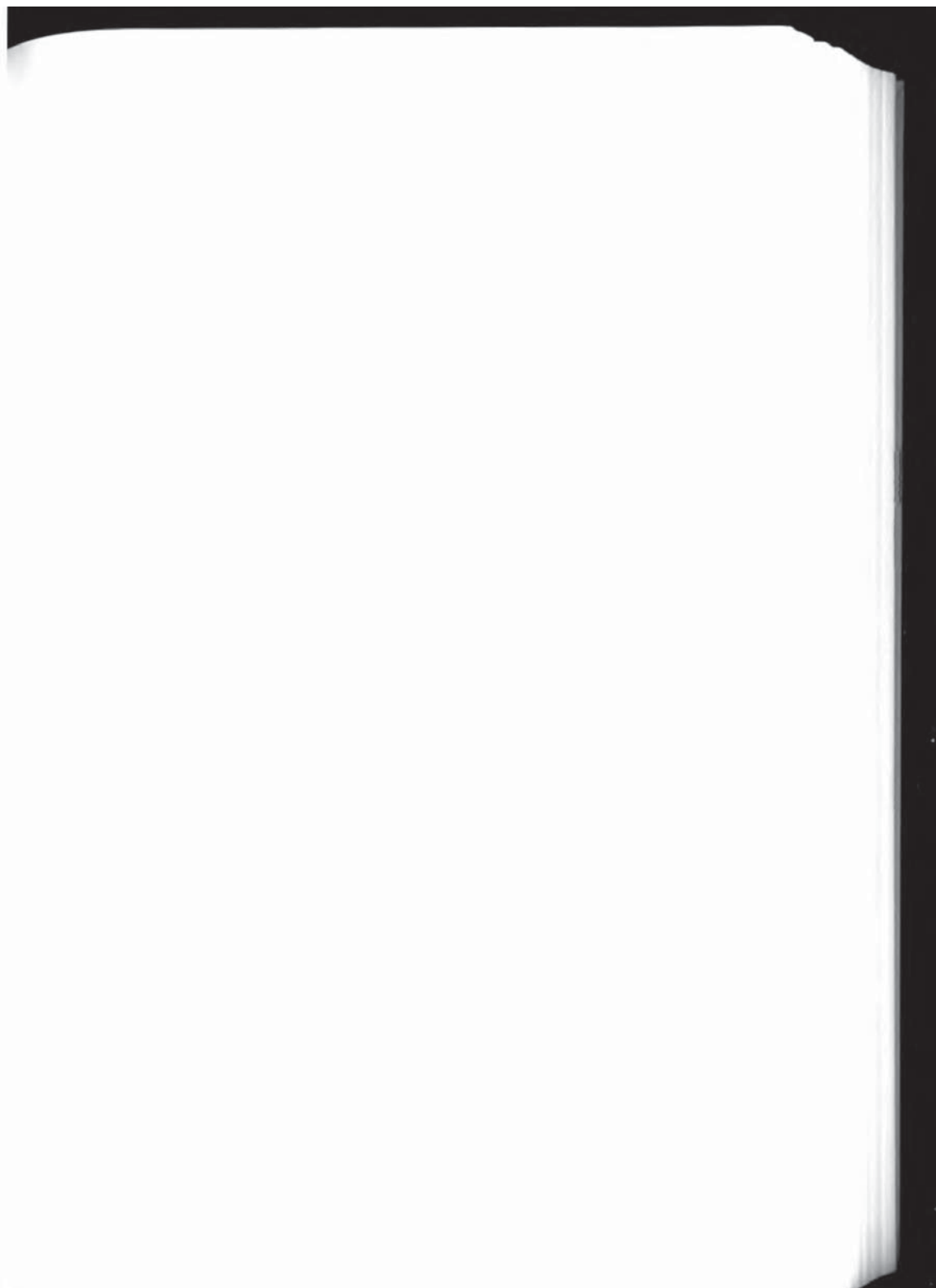
Most cordially & sincerely yrs—  
H P L

261. TO AUGUST DERLETH

10 Barnes St.  
Providence, R. I.  
Feb. 20, 1927

My dear Mr. Derleth:—

..... It seems to me—an atheist of Protestant ancestry—that Catholicism is really an admirable faith for those artists whose taste is wholly gothic and mystical without any mixture of the classic or the intellectual. It is the inheritory of ancient and beautiful rhythms of thought, cadence, and gesture which thousands of years of human feeling have woven symbolically and expressively around the various significant points of mortal experience; and as such it cannot help having a profound and genuine artistic importance and satisfyingness. It is the oldest continuously surviving poem of life that the races of Western Europe possess, and as such has an authority—which no other one system of symbolic expression can claim. It seems to me that if one is to have anything so extra-rational as religion of any sort the Catholic and Episcopal systems are the only two sects with enough roots and anchors in the past to make them worthy of the affiliation of an artist. The life which they express is the natural, simple life of elder times, before the spread of industrialism and scientific discovery began its present transformation and destruction of society. No religion could express more, because all religion is a traditional art form dependent on a simple and continuous heritage. The future civilisation of mechanical invention,





Reinhard Kleiner

urban concentration, and scientific standardisation of life and thought is a monstrous and artificial thing which can never find embodiment either in art or in religion. Even now we find art and religion completely divorced from life and subsisting on retrospection and reminiscence as its vital material. There is no really *contemporary* art which expresses the scene and deeds and feelings of today as the art of other periods expressed the scene and deeds and feelings of those periods. We have entered a definite decadence, and must live our imaginative lives in the past. Life as flowing today has not enough links of gradual development from the simpler life that moulded our race to inherit anything of true aesthetic potentiality. . . . . Most cordially and sincerely yrs.—H. P. Lovecraft

262. TO BERNARD AUSTIN DWYER

10 Barnes St.  
Providence, R. I.  
March 3, 1927

Dear Mr. Dwyer:—

I enjoyed your letter and enclosures very much, and was especially pleased with the glimpse of *Pickman's Model* with its frightful companions at its nefarious feast by the black barn in the accursed wood. I duly note all the details of the terrible scene, including the arachnid horror on the sanguineous stone altar. This thing—which I will duly shield from all the sensitive and impressionable eyes of the household—shall repose broodingly in a wallet of skin taken from a wizard's corpse cut down from the gallows in 1692, in a locked secret cabinet in the vaulted crypt beneath my shunned abode. At Roodmas and All-Hallows' shall I view it, and the Objects squatting on nearby coffins or peering monstrosly over my shoulder shall shudder as they gaze upon its forbidden revelations. . . . Apropos of your unholy feast by the tarn of black blood—I am reminded of what Baudelaire once asked an aspiring decadent poet who copied—and even exceeded his colourful Satanism without reflecting to any dangerous extent his genius. A trifle exasperated by the ostentatious "shockingness" of the young man, Baudelaire "went him one better" by asking very gravely—"Have you ever

tasted young children's brains? They're quite delightful, and taste exactly like walnuts!"

..... Long is one of the star members of an informal "gang" which meets at the houses of the various components to discuss literature, the arts, and kindred topics, and which comprises Samuel Loveman, the poet, James F. Morton, Curator of the Paterson (N.J.) Municipal Museum, Everett McNeil, author of boys' historical novels, George Kirk, bibliophile and dealer in rare editions, Rheinart Kleiner, an urbane town bard and contributor to the various newspaper "colyums" of the F. P. A. type, Wilfred B. Talman, a young writer and genealogical expert still in college (postgraduate journalistic work at Columbia) and Vrest Orton, an amateur aesthete connected with the *American Mercury*. Leaving this congenial circle was the only thing I regretted when I came home—but it could not make up for the quiet atmosphere, visible antiquities, and ancestral associations which only Providence can give me. The gang delights to entertain visitors who have been in touch with any of its members or former members. ....

.... *The White Ship* is the only one of my frankly fantastic things that *Weird Tales* ever accepted. It appeared in last month's issue, and if the readers favour it I presume Wright will be in the mood to take more or perhaps reconsider his rejection of some of the old ones. I have just finished my second young novel of the year—*The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*, in 147 pages. Now—gawd 'elp me—for the typing of it! Meanwhile I must hasten to type a 60-page history of weird fiction which I wrote last year, and which a friend of mine—W. Paul Cook of Athol, who published Belknap's book—wishes for the first issue of an amateur magazine he is founding. .... I'll see that you get Cook's magazine when it's out. Meanwhile Cook has a vague and as yet unformed idea of publishing my longish short story *The Shunned House* as a thin book uniform with Long's poems and Loveman's *Hermaphrodite* and coming *Sphinx*. If that happens, it will constitute my first book; and will inflate me with a pride of authorship likely to lead to unbelievable heights of arrogance! I'm enclosing some more miscellaneous stuff of mine, about whose return there is no hurry at all. The best, perhaps, of these things is *The Statement of Randolph Carter*, which is in essence an actual dream experienced by me in December 1919. ....

Your account of your methods of artistic creation, with the unconscious mind used to the fullest extent of its potentialities, is indeed interesting; and the methods in question seem quite amply sustained by

the results you are achieving. In my own humble and careless effusions, one sees the convergence of two separate tendencies—a liking for well-modelled expression in the traditional manner for its own sake, and a wish to get on paper some of the images and impressions constantly running through my mind. I never dealt much in philosophic abstractions; but had the idea that if I hammered away at the perfection of a good technical medium, the ability of that medium to convey what I wished to say would be one of its intrinsic attributes. As a child I was intensely fond of faery lore, and early graduated from Grimm (which formed at the age of 4 my introduction to the art of reading) to the *Arabian Nights*, which I read at 5 with such effect that I at once assumed the pseudonym of Abdul Alhazred and made my mother fix up an Oriental corner with hangings and incense-vessels in my room. Then in another year I had got hold of the Greek myths in simple form and was discarding Bagdad in favour of Arcadia and Ionia. About that time I started to want to write—in rhyme rather than prose, for I had declaimed doggerel ever since I was 2½, and had always admired the fame of the late poetess Louise Imogen Guiney, whom my parents knew, and at whose home we stayed during the winter of 1892-93, when my father's affairs kept him in Boston. My 6-year-old "verse" was pretty bad, and I had recited enough poetry to know that it was; so I set about to improve matters. I was a nervous half-invalid and could not attend school, but the resources of the family library were at my disposal, and I proceeded to search and browse with an inclusive avidity which not all the tender discouragement of a solicitous family could check. Being highly imaginative, and sensitive to the archaic influences of this old town with its narrow hill streets and glamorous Colonial doorways, I conceived the childish freak of transporting myself altogether into the past; so began to choose only such books as were very old—with the "long s"—(which I found mainly in the banished portion of the library in a great dark storeroom upstairs) and to date all my writings 200 years back—1697 instead of 1897 and so on. For my guidance in correct composition I chose a deliciously quaint and compendious volume which my great-grandfather had used at school, and which I still treasure sacredly minus its covers:

THE READER:

Containing the Art of Delivery—Articulation, Accent, Pronunciation, Emphasis, Pauses, Key or Pitch of the Voice, and Tones; Selection of Lessons in the Various Kinds of Prose; Poetick Numbers, Structure of English Verse,

Feet and Pauses, Measure and Movement, Melody, Harmony, and Expression. Rules for Reading Verse, Selections of Lessons in the Various Kinds of Verse.

By  
Abner Alden, A. M.

Boston  
Printed by J. T. Buckingham for Thomas and Andrews,  
No. 45, Newbury-Street  
1802.

This was so utterly and absolutely the very thing I had been looking for. that I attacked it with almost savage violence. It was in the "long s", and reflected in all its completeness the Georgian rhetorical tradition of Addison, Pope, and Johnson, which had survived unimpaired in America even after the Romantic Movement had begun to modify it in England. This, I felt by instinct, was the key to the speech and manners and mental world of that old periwigged, knee-breeched Providence whose ancient lanes still climbed the hill, and whose old brick and wooden buildings (Colony House 1761, College Edifice 1770, Brick Schoolhouse 1769, Market House 1773, 1st Baptist Church with finest classic spire in America 1775, innumerable private houses and mansions from 1750 onward, St. John's and Round-Top Churches circa 1810, Golden Ball Inn 1783, old warehouses along the Great Salt River 1816, etc., etc., etc.) still survived (and still do survive, thank Heaven!) in such large numbers and in such striking topographical situations. Little by little I hammered every rule and precept and example into my receptive system, till in a month or so I was beginning to write coherent verse in the ancient style—of which the following (from *The Poem of Ulysses, or the New Odyssey*) is a verbatim specimen:

The night was dark, O reader Hark, and see Ulysses' fleet;  
All homeward bound, with Vict'ry crown'd, he hopes his spouse  
to greet;  
Long hath he fought, put Troy to naught, and levell'd down  
its walls,  
But Neptune's wrath obstructs his path, while into snares he falls.

At the same time I was reading the 17th and 18th century poetical translations of the classics and the old Queen Anne essayists as fast as I



could, so that periwigged Georgianism was absorbing me as utterly as if I had been actually born in its midst. For some time I confined my literary effusions to verses wherein I tried to express the fanciful Grecian beauty which altogether engrossed me. In the mythology of Greece I almost believed, and would actually look for fauns and dryads in certain oaken groves at twilight—for the city was not then built up thickly beyond my home, and the woods and fields were as close and familiar to me as if I had been born in the heart of Arcadia. I am predominantly rural in tastes, and would write pastorals if I wrote any poetry at all. Then I struck EDGAR ALLAN POE!! It was my downfall, and at the age of eight I saw the blue firmament of Argos and Sicily darkened by the miasmal exhalations of the tomb! In 1898 I began my prose career, (no—the first was still in 1897, though it was pre-Poe) grinding out such specimens as *The Mysterious Ship* and *The Secret of the Grave* in a Johnsonese that only a pedant of the 1810 period could equal. Candidly, they were *awful*, and I saw that what I had learnt of verse would not serve me in prose. I had a new medium to learn, and must set about it systematically. Then *science* stepped in to sidetrack me. Although I am basically an aesthete with a non-mathematical mind, I became utterly infatuated with the pages of illustrations of "Philosophical and Scientific Instruments" in the back of a Webster's Unabridged of 1864. After that I would give my mother and grandfather (my father being no more) no peace till they had fitted me up a chemical laboratory in the basement of our home, and there I dabbled in reagents and precipitates from March 1899 onwards, ploughing feverishly through such chemical primers as *The Young Chemist*, by Prof. John Howard Appleton, (of Providence) which I still consider the best general introduction to the subject, though it is now virtually forgotten. Literature I spurned altogether as unworthy of a "serious scientist", but my prose practice continued through my repeated attempts to write a chemical treatise. At this period I also made abortive stabs at art and music, failing wholly in the first, and dropping the second in boredom and nervous revulsion after two years of quite successful violin lessons. (I'm a little ahead on dates, though. Those lessons were from '97 to '99) Today I vainly regret my ineptitude in art, but have no taste or desire to excel in music. In 1902 geography displaced chemistry in my affections, and the lure of far places was upon me. The *Antarctic* was my favourite region—wonder and the unknown being my ideal. The next year the world had be-

come too small for me, and I took up *astronomy*, using first an old book my grandmother had studied at the seminary in the 1840's and later some new books and a small telescope which I acquired. The sky moved me to verse again, and I wrote copiously and pointlessly on the wonders of infinite space. I had by this time had little snatches of private tutoring and school, and in 1904 was considered able to enter high school. There I was shunted back to literature and begin writing horror-tales again. But Latin now captivated my fancy, and I became a haughty Roman with scant use for the barbaric darkness of the modern world. The impress of this phase is still upon me, and I still thrill at the Roman name and the fasces and the figure of the Wolf of the Capitol. . . . Then in the later years of high-school science "came back", and I renewed my devotion to astronomy, chemistry, and physics. In 1906 a new local daily was established, and I got a chance to write its monthly astronomical article, a pursuit which I kept up for twelve years, when a change of management produced a demand for a changed style to which I refused to accede. This astronomical stuff was my debut in print. But after all, high-school was a mistake. I liked it, but the strain was too keen for my health, and I suffered a nervous collapse in 1908 immediately after graduating, which prevented altogether my attending college. Just about then I became impressed with the inferiority of my work and my ignorance of the technique of the short story; so that I destroyed the whole mass of my fiction with two exceptions.

Chemical writing—plus a little historical and antiquarian research—filled my years of feebleness till about 1911, when I had a reaction toward literature. I then gave my prose style the greatest overhauling it has ever had; purging it at once of some vile journalese and some absurd Johnsonism. Little by little I felt that I was forging the instrument I ought to have forged a decade before—a decent style capable of expressing what I wished to say. But I still wrote verse and persisted in the delusion that I was a poet. In 1914 I joined the United Amateur Press Association, and in 1917 W. Paul Cook (who saw one of my two saved tales) urged me to try weird fiction again. I did—*The Tomb* and *Dagon* being my first fresh attempts. Cook spoke so highly of these that I kept on—and I've still been keeping ever since. Meanwhile I put my laboriously gained technique to work in revision on a professional basis—a thing still more lucrative to me than original fiction. As I have aged, my scattered interests have more or less coalesced and coördinated

themselves, submitting to the modifications of observation and philosophy. By this time I see pretty well what I'm driving at and how I'm doing it—that I'm a rather one-sided person whose only really burning interests are *the past* and *the unknown* or *the strange*, and whose aestheticism in general is more negative than positive—i.e., a hatred of ugliness rather than an active love of beauty. I see that I am fundamentally a cynic, a sceptic, and an Epicurean—a conservative and quietist without any great breadth of taste or depth of ability, and with a literary ambition confined altogether to the recording of certain images connected with *bizarre* and antiquarianism. With the general atmosphere of books and literature I am bored to death. I had rather visit an ancient and beautiful town or see a marvellous landscape than attend any lecture or bookish discussion in the world. For fame or recognition I have not the smallest wish or expectation, since to my cynical spirit the world is an absolutely negligible and purposeless affair. All intensity or serious purpose rather amuses me, and I regard art not as a fetish or a duty, but as one of many pleasant and elegant diversions proper to a gentleman. I am not satisfied with the stuff I write, but would lose interest in it if I tried to take it seriously enough to improve it. For me it is best to take my prose style as it is—decently correct, at least, through early rhetorical training—and let it tell what I have to say in its own way. I write slowly, correct so extensively that my rough draughts are legible to no one but myself, (and sometimes not to me!) and never hesitate to change the early part of a work when later developments call for different antecedents. Usually, though, I know what is going to happen in a tale—for that is why I write it. I never write except when in the mood, for I have no intrinsic desire to produce written material. Authorship to me is no end in itself, for I respect a gentleman of leisure and an intelligent pagan in pursuit of rational pleasure far more than any Grub-Street hack. To me authorship is only a mechanical means of getting formulated and preserved certain fugitive images which I wish formulated and preserved. If anyone else has presented an idea exactly as I feel it, I let his work serve me. Indeed, if I could find tales or books or poems expressing everything I wish to say, I would not write at all; and would be highly grateful for the relief from a labour which to my cynical soul holds nothing of glamour or merit. Just now my greatest wish is to capture the beauty and mystery of Old Providence more fully than I have hitherto succeeded in doing. I have tried it in the 147-page novel-

ette finished Tuesday morning, but feel that I have failed. Let us hope that somebody else will do it soon and save me the trouble!

But pardon the autobiography, which I didn't premeditate! What I really set out to say was simply this—that to me the only sensible way to compose seems to be to master one's technical medium thoroughly beforehand—before one thinks about the expressive part at all—and then to forget all about the rules, using the polished instrument as freely and unconsciously as a child lisps its pristine rattle. If this method can't be worked, then one isn't an artist by Nature, for as you truly observe, the essence of aesthetic accomplishment lies in the subconscious. You may wonder how I reconcile this precept with my statement that I correct a MS. repeatedly. Well—for one thing, the revision is about as unconscious as the first writing; being largely an automatic response to something in my head which rebels at something my hand has recorded. Secondly, I don't claim to be much of an artist! I merely recognise a principle which better craftsmen would more spectacularly exemplify. The big thing is to avoid conscious mannerism—to shun calculated literary effects as one shuns the plague. That is why I detest romantic writers with their artificial, geometrical glamour. The Stevenson and Kipling traditions—to say nothing of the Dickens cult—make me nauseatedly weary with their theatrical and mathematical artificiality. Pater and Wilde I can tolerate because the element of music and poetic rhythm enters into their jewelled prose, but as a general thing I balk at any man who writes for the sake of writing or for the ingenious twists he can give our poor old language. The only literary man I respect is one who says a thing straightforwardly for no other reason than that he wants that thing said in the most effective possible way. That is what I call art in the practice of literature, and that is why I am of course wholly out of touch with those modernists who make their disjointed ravings nothing more than pretentious experiments in aesthetic theory.

Your *Old Back Trail* delighted me exceedingly, for it truly captures a mood which is almost constantly mine. I abhor broad prosaic highways with their implications of change, modernity, and decadence, and make for the calm, untainted inner countryside whenever I possibly can. I love great stretches of rolling hills and distant steeples and farmhouse roofs in the sunset, and little winding roads that skirt ancient woods and ramble on between stone walls to some marvellous meeting-place of the fauns or some cryptic gate to another world which lies beyond that

crest where pines stand hieratically against a blank, mysterious sky of unknown portent. My ancestry is rural, and last October I visited the western Rhode Island countryside where my immediate forbears dwelt. So gloriously did I enjoy it, that I wrote it up in a travelogue for young Long and kept a carbon to lend others, and I can't resist enclosing a copy for you, although you'll probably find large sections of it dull. Skip the latter, and merely get the general landscape effects—which form the rustic New England that bred me. I rather wish I had been born and reared rurally myself—although the ancient gables and steep winding ways of Old Providence charm me poignantly in another direction. In reading this travelogue, pardon the occasional intentional quaintnesses and archaisms and whimsicalities to which my old correspondents long ago became hardened. The "daughter" I mention is really my aunt—for I am blessed with no descendants of my own.

.....

Sincerely yours,  
H. P. Lovecraft

263. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

10 Barnes St.  
March 15, 1927

Dear C A S:—

.....*Weird Tales* has just accepted his *Twilight of Time*, (which Wright wants to rename *The Red Brain*) which it had once before rejected, & I am almost flattering myself that a letter of mine in praise of Wandrei may have had something to do with the change of attitude. ....

Most sincerely yrs—  
H P L

264. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

March 24, 1927

Dear C A S:—

I've just written a new tale—or atmospheric study—which I'll shew you when I get it typed. It's called *The Colour Out of Space*, & it tells of something that came down into the hills west of Arkham. Cook, by the way, means to publish my *Shunned House* sooner than he thought. He has asked Long to write a preface, though I tell him that a preface to a *short story* is absurd.

Yr most obt

H P L

265. TO BERNARD AUSTIN DWYER

10 Barnes St.  
Providence, R. I.  
March 26, 1927

My dear Mr. Dwyer:—

..... And I do mean to write of one phase of it—weaving a sort of epic of horror about the mouldering brownstone mansion in which I had my rooms. I was utterly inexperienced in room-seeking, and knew nothing of the precise social geography of Old Brooklyn. All my possible informants were old-Brooklynites living in dreams of a Brooklyn that has gone for ever, and their notion of the recent changes was so vague as to argue a sort of merciful blindness to what is going on. Clinton St. was (in 1880 psychology!) thought good, and several old families were still hanging on there. ....

Naturally I would have shunned a lodging which seemed to savour of coarseness, but here again unusual conditions conspired to deceive me. I still think that none but a seer and prophet could have escaped error, and that the house *had* until almost that precise time been of the quality I thought I had found. My guess is that its decay had just set in, owing

to the spread of the Syrian fringe (all unsuspected by me) beyond Atlantic Avenue. The man having my room before me was a N. Y. U. professor, and there was still in the house a splendid young chap who knew people that I knew in Providence. The landlady was a refined-looking woman with two prepossessing youths as sons, and with a British accent of such absolutely authentic caste that there can have been no mistake about her tale of better days—the usual thing—and her claim of being the daughter of a cultivated Anglican vicar in Ireland, educated in a private school in England. Poor old Mrs. Burns! Only later was I to learn of her shrewish tongue, desperate household negligence, miserly watchfulness of lights and unwatchfulness of repairs, and reckless indifference to the class of lodger she admitted! I think her decadence must have been a gradual one—probably she wanted good lodgers, for she seemed naively impressed with the traditions which my books and furniture and effects seemed to imply, and vowed that they gave her wistful memories of her childhood home at the vicarage in Ireland; but she must have stopped asking references when the sinking of the neighbourhood made the house harder and harder to fill with people of the right sort. I was soon disillusioned—and with what a thud! Voices came from the next room—and *what* voices! Of course poor Mrs. Burns apologised for these particular roomers, of whom she said she was very anxious to get rid—but when I began to see some of the other anthropological types in the hallway my cynicism began to mount. Friends who came to see me—better versed in Brooklyn ways than I, for my metropolitan residence had been confined to the quiet section of Flatbush—were quicker than I to see and tell me what a wretched hole I had crawled into; but by that time I was all settled, and with my desperate finances the idea of a removal was quite impossible. I had only moved twice before in all my life, and was encamped amongst all my effects—for such is my ingrained domesticity that I could not live anywhere without my own household objects around me—the furniture my childhood knew, the books my ancestors read, and the pictures my mother and grandmother and aunt painted. The presence of all these things at the edge of Red Hook was really almost humorous, (although Dr. Love across the street was no doubt equally surrounded by his cherished hereditary things) and visitors not infrequently commented on the virtual transition from one world to another implied in the simple act of stepping within my door. Outside—Red Hook. Inside—Providence,

R. I.! For it has always been Providence wherever I have been, and must always remain so. That is the valuable lesson I extracted from my asinine metropolitan experiment—a lesson which will teach me not to separate the spiritual from the geographical Providence again. But at the outset I was deluded. Comically enough, I even persuaded a friend—George Kirk, formerly of Cleveland—to take the room above mine, and for several months we had the mild amusement of telegraphing on the steam-pipes—for one quickly falls into boorish ways in a boorish milieu. . . . Kirk held out uncomplainingly till May; when, having fewer non-portable chattels than I, he betook himself to gay Manhattan. But laden as I was, I stuck; hence came to know that squalid world as few white men have ever known it. The sounds in the hall! The faces glimpsed on the stairs! The mice in the partitions! The fleeting touches of intangible horror from spheres and cycles outside time . . . once a *Syrian* had the room next to mine and played eldritch and whining monotones on a strange bagpipe which made me dream ghoulish and incredible things of crypts under Bagdad and limitless corridors of Eblis beneath the moon-cursed ruins of Istakhar. I never *saw* this man, and my privilege to imagine him in any shape I chose lent glamour to his weird pneumatic cacophonies. In my vision he always wore a turban and long robe of pale figured silk, and had a right eye plucked out . . . because it had looked upon something in a tomb at night which no eye may look upon and live. In truth, I never saw with actual sight the majority of my fellow-lodgers. I only *heard* them loathesomely—and sometimes glimpsed faces of sinister decadence in the hall. There was an old Turk under me, who used to get letters with outré stamps from the Levant. Alexander D. Messayeh—Messayeh—what a name from the *Arabian Nights*! I suppose the prænomen implied a Greek strain—those Near-East spawn are hopelessly mongrelised, and belong for the most part to the Orthodox Greek Church. And what scraps of old papers with Arabic lettering did one find about the house! Sometimes, going out at sunset, I would vow to myself that gold minarets glistened against the flaming skyline where the church-towers were! "We take the Golden Road to Samarcand!" My tailor was a Syrian named Habib, and around the corner in Atlantic Ave. were Syrian shops with strange goods and delicacies. Once Kirk and I visited the Cairo Garden, where subtle incense evoked mirages of clustered bulbous domes and city-gates of alabaster, and fat, swarthy minstrels plucked



meaninglessly at Eastern lutes whilst tenebrous and unpotable "coffee" (I use the nomenclature of faith, not of analysis or proof) was served in small curious cups without handles. It was a queer enough setting, and one which no person of my acquaintance can yet parallel—though our venerable fellow-gangster McNeil (author of boys' books) was at that time living in the roaring slums of Hell's Kitchen, (W. 49th St. Manhattan—a wild but rather colourless slum without mystery or the memories of fallen grandeur) and Vrest Orton is even now experimenting with life at a Settlement-Workers' headquarters in the Italian (but far from Florentinely resplendent) turmoil of East 105th St. The keynote of the whole setting—house, neighbourhood, and shop, was that of loathsome and insidious decay; masked just enough by the reliques of former splendour and beauty to add terror and mystery and the fascination of crawling motion to a deadness and dinginess otherwise static and prosaic. I conceived the idea that the great brownstone house was a malignly sentient thing—a dead, vampire creature which sucked something out of those within it and implanted in them the seeds of some horrible and immaterial psychic growth. Every closed door seemed to hide some brooding crime—or blasphemy too deep to form a crime in the crude and superficial calendar of earth. I never quite learned the exact topography of that rambling and enormous house. How to get to my room, and to Kirk's room when he was there, and to the landlady's quarters to pay my rent or ask in vain for heat until I bought an oil stove of my own—these things I knew, but there were wings and corridors I never traversed; doors to rear and abutting halls and stairways that I never saw opened. I know there were rooms above ground without windows, and was at liberty to guess what might lie below ground. There lay a pall of darkness and secrecy upon that house—it subtly discouraged from first to last one's inclination to speak aloud, and at times one felt a faint miasmal tangibility in the circumambient air. The great high rooms had something of the mausolean in their crumbling stateliness, and in the halls at night one always had to be sure the great, white flamboyant Corinthian pilasters never moved just the least bit. Something unwholesome—something furtive—something vast lying subterrenely in obnoxious slumber—that was the soul of 160 Clinton St. at the edge of Red Hook, and in my great northwest corner room *The Horror at Red Hook* was written. It is nearly a full year ago that I left it without a pang to come home to my own—to the clean, white, and an-

cient New England that bred me, and whose hills and woods and steeples are the food and essence of my soul—and as the year has passed the squalid old Brooklyn setting has become less and less of an active outrage and horror and more and more a grotesque and even fascinating legend. The ruffled dignity of thinking I have dwelt in such a place gives ground to a dreamy doubt of my ever having been actually there—the episode becomes a tale told in the third person, and the realities are decked in a glittering mantle of myth. At this distance I am almost glad the mishap occurred—for it gave a touch of colour to a life otherwise tame, conventional, and uneventful, and made me better able to appreciate the slum chapters in many vital works of literature—high among them Machen's autobiographical volumes, wherein are told that dreamer's struggles with squalor and poverty in late-Victorian London. I shall certainly write about 169 Clinton St. some day—and the tale will be one to chill the reader's blood. And if somewhere in the wide world there light upon it the sinful eyes of the two young men who stole my clothing from the alcove, they will so thank Mercurius (who presides over the craft of thieves) for their timely deliverance from such a peril that they may, as a votive offering, make restitution of what they took—in which case I trust they will add a cash balance to compensate for wear and tear on the apparel since May 1925! . . . . .

Have I read Fitzhugh Ludlow's *Hasbeesh-Eater*? Why, Sir, I possess it upon mine own shelves; and wou'd not part with it for any inducement whatever! I first read a reprint in 1922, but was later honour'd by a gift of the original edition (without author's name) of 1857, and have frequently reread those phantasmagoria of exotic colour, which proved more of a stimulant to my own fancy than any vegetable alkaloid ever grown and distilled. I agree with you in conceding its style a greater freshness than De Quincey's, (a sage young friend of mine once summed up De Q. by saying laconically—"Poor old boy! he knew too much.") and find a positive delight in its very faults of naiveté and early-American floridness. The reeling panoramas out of space and time have an unmistakable tinge of authenticity, and even the metaphysical speculations were far from arid. I seem to know comparatively little of Ludlow's later life, though I have come across scattered references to a short journalistic career terminated by an early death abroad—perhaps due to his collegiate indulgence in the noxious cannabis indica. . . .

I'm glad you found pleasure in *The Hermaphrodite*—which of course

must be read wholly for imagery and not for ideas, as must every other work of art. Great Scott—if Loveman and I judged each other by our ideas, we'd have long ago suffered the fate of the Kilkenny cats. According to my social and political theories he ought to be shot or in gaol, whilst according to his, I ought to be guillotined! But since we deal in art and not in ideas, we get along with the utmost cordiality. Didacticism can never be more, in art, than an inconspicuous excuse for displaying a processional wealth of colour and atmospheric splendour. . . . . We know well, after only a moment of scientific reflection, that any attempt at enforcing the actual fantastic and idealistic precepts of Christ would lead at once to utter anarchy, collapse, and cultural extinction. However—I'm as well aware as anyone else of the enormous extent to which the Christian tradition—whatever be its original lack of appropriateness—is now woven into our lives, art, and literature after thirteen-hundred and more years of continuous profession by our main stream of civilisation. Like it or not, the general forms are fixed upon us, so that only a thoughtless radical or cultural parvenu could for a moment think of doing away with its atmosphere and externals as a social and aesthetic force amongst us. No one loves the memory of old moss-covered abbeys and the sweet chimes of Gothic belfries at evening more than I. No one exceeds me in reverence for the quaint and sonorous rituals of antique devotion—the organised symbolisation of our lives and the formulated expression of our emotions—and the pure strain of poetry that runs alike through the exotic Old Testament, the classically dramatic Christ-mythus, and the quaint legends and beautiful traditions of the church. And nothing pleases me more than a lovely old New-England church with tapering Georgian spire and rambling churchyard of archaic slate or sandstone slabs—hieroglyph of the elder time, and anchor of stability in an age of change, sadness, and decadence. Far be it from me to discourage the naive faith of any believer—so that although I am intellectually a complete and absolutely cynical scientific materialist, I leave the futile business of atheistical propaganda (as futile as all other human effort in an eternally cyclic and purposeless cosmos) to such busy and well-meaning friends of mankind as Percy Ward, Clarence Darrow, H. G. Wells, and other didactic emulators of the honest and messianic Mr. Ingersoll.

As to my style—no danger! I shan't give up those occasional flings in the dreamy and poetic vein! In fact, *The Strange High House* is a prod-

uct of last autumn, long after all my "stick-to-prose" advisers had shot their last bolt in discouragement. When you see my long Randolph Carter novelette you will realise that this fantastic and oneirosopic mood is a darned hard thing to pry me out of! I am glad, however, to have another specific assurance that the style truly fits me; and shall no doubt grind out a few specimens on the strength of that encouragement the next spare time I get. As it is, I have just finished one new tale which I'll send you in my next. This one has little flashes of the quasi-poetic, but is for the most part realistic; with a homely country setting "west of Arkham". Something falls from the sky, and terror broods. The thing is told by an old man forty years after, and the title is *The Colour Out of Space*. It is a long-short affair—exactly as long as *Cthulhu*. Enclosed are two more of my old ones—just returned by Wandrei which you have not previously seen. *Polaris* is rather interesting in that I wrote it in 1918, BEFORE I had ever read a word of Lord Dunsany's. Some find it hard to believe this, but I can give not only assurance but absolute proof that it is so. It is simply a case of similar types of vision facing the unknown, and harbouring similar stores of mythic and historical lore. Hence the parallelism in atmosphere, artificial nomenclature, treatment of the dream theme, etc. *In the Vault* was written in 1925, and rather inexplicably rejected by *Weird Tales* as too horrible for the censors!

I remain Yr. most obt.,  
H. P. Lovecraft

266. TO AUGUST DERLETH

10 Barnes St.  
Providence, R. I.  
March 26, 1927

My dear Mr. Derleth:—

..... Have you read Oswald Spengler's now celebrated work, *The Decline of the West*, whose first volume was lately translated into English? You will find there much sound and bitter sense regarding the slackening of the cultural fibre of the dominant Aryan race during the last century or less. The normal evolution of a human stock presupposes a certain amount of struggle with nature and with enemies in

which the weak and inferior will be unable to survive, and will disappear in sufficient quantities to prevent exhaustion of food supplies and to ensure the perpetuation of the species through its abler and more vigorous specimens. Modern civilisation, however, has developed a sentimental protection of the weak which ensures the survival of the inferior as well as the superior; so that unless something equally artificial (and remember that birth control is no more artificial and contrary to nature than the peace-policies and sentimental coddling of the weak which overpopulates the world and makes it necessary) is done to counteract the tendency, we shall be overrun with the unlimited spawn of the biologically defective and incompetent. For the competent, on the other hand, birth control has become a grim and absolute necessity; since the industrialisation of the social order has made it absolutely impossible to rear a large family in a comfortable and enlightened manner without a far greater fortune than the majority of moderately competent, decently-born, and well-bred people possess. There is no use at all in expecting the tastefully-living but non-wealthy middle-class citizen not to practice birth control. As long as he knows he never can bring up ten children decently, he is going to stick to one or two or three and see that they *are* brought up decently. . . . .

With every good wish Most sincerely yrs.

H. P. Lovecraft

267. TO DONALD WANDREI

Providence

March 27, 1927

Dear Mr. Wandrei:—

. . . . . It certainly is hard work finding anyone interested in the weird. I never encountered one till 1917, when I stumbled simultaneously on Cook & Loveman. Then, through Loveman, I got in touch with Smith; & had meanwhile come across Long. Through *Weird Tales* I encountered young August W. Derleth of Wisconsin (a U. of Wis. freshman, 17 years old) & Bernard Dwyer of New York State—this being the complete list of my Gothic circle to date . . . . I write for my own edification exclusively, since it improves & crystallises my dreams

to get them down on paper; & although I appreciate the kindly comment of the few who like the stuff, am not at all perturbed or disappointed because the majority are indifferent. By what standard could they be expected to be otherwise? It is the frank & cynical recognition of the inevitable limitations of people in general which makes me absolutely indifferent instead of actively hostile toward mankind. It can go to hell for all I care—but I'm not even interested enough to give it a push. It doesn't need me & I don't need it—its only use is to build quaint cities for me to enjoy a century or two later! . . .

Most Cordially & Sincerely Yours,  
H. P. Lovecraft

268. TO JAMES F. MORTON

All-Fool's Day  
April 1, 1927

Fabiane Maxime:—

. . . As to my susceptibility to the Arctic influence—I went to an astronomical lecture last December on an evening that was merely moderate, but whilst I was within, the weather began doing things. I emerged under the full psychological impression that it was *not* cold, but before I'd walked five blocks I was g. d. near knockt out—breath choak'd off, eyes and nose running like Nurmi, headache and nausea, and a sense of *obstruction* impeding all my muscular motions and neural coördinations. I staggered like honest old Mac before he took the pledge, (no—I *hadn't* been consuming any colonial rum made from Martineco molasses at Mr. Abbot's distil-house over against the Great Bridge) and had to plunge against some intangible opposing barrier as if it had been a physical wind—and only *after* these symptoms had for some time plagu'd me, did my slow old head realise what the actual trouble was. . . It took me about an hour to get my balance again after I reeled into the house. . . .

About this weird tale article—I have a sort of vague and nebulous idea of expanding the thing for some mythical second edition—and in preparation for that fabulous event I'm laying by all such hints, tips, and suggestions as conveniently come in this direction without effort on

my part. So shew your stuff, Kid—in 1926 I followed up the reading suggestions you gave me in 1921, hence you may expect action by 1932 or so on anything you may condescend to hand out now. It may interest you to know that in an XIth hour codicil I amplified my F. Marion Crawford paragraph by including some tolerant comments on *For the Blood Is the Life* (which Leeds used to praise) and *The Dead Smile* as well as *The Upper Berth*: this enlarged horizon resulting from the perusal of a collection called *Wandering Ghosts*, lent me by my newest prodigy great-grandchild, Donald Wandrei of St. Paul, Minn. . . .

. . . . . But at that the Elizabethan period wasn't so bad. Fact is, I freely concede that it represents the absolute high-tide of our race and culture. It hurts like hell to say it, but it seems scientifically true beyond dispute. The amount of vital energy—aesthetic, political, and military, intellectual and physical—liberated by the English people in the latter half of the sixteenth century is surely a thing of overawing magnitude—our truest Renaissance—and I doubt if any later increase in diffusive refinement—of decorative taste in the eighteenth century and of life and manners in the middle ninetenth—can make up for the decline in sheer daemonic force of racial and national genius. God Save the Queen! My own Georgian period lacked in poetry and sublimity what it gained in clearer reason and finer sense of form, and the Victorian age lacked in force, sincerity, and decorative perception what it gained in manners and conceptions of life as a fine art. If I could create an ideal world, it would be an England with the fire of the Elizabethans, the correct taste of the Georgians, and the refinement and pure ideals of the Victorians. For the post-Victorian age I see little hope. There is indeed a return to Georgian decorative conceptions, but it is an imitative one based upon a mere pedantick appreciation. The human soul is sterile—we are weary, bored, impatient, and well on the tobaggan. . . .

Yours for the testimony of the rocks and the fruit of the twining legume.

Θεοβάλδος-ἡ Εγσδῆνς  
Theobaldus

269. TO VINCENT STARRETT

10 Barnes St.,  
 Providence, R. I.  
 April 11, 1927

My dear Mr. Starrett:—

... I certainly agree that the lack of a market for spectral material above the penny-dreadful grade is a very unfortunate circumstance. Yet I fear it is an irremediable one, since the actual number of persons to whom such things appeal is apparently small indeed. I have had a fair assortment of stories published in the crowd-cultivating *Weird Tales*, but believe this market is gradually closing to me on account of the editor's deference to a clientele demanding simple, understandable ghostliness with plenty of 'human interest' & a brisk, concrete, cheerful, & non-atmospheric style. I have never had a volume published, & am not at all sure that the merit of my nightmares & fantasies warrants one. When I compare my results with Dunsany, De la Mare, Machen, Bierce, Blackwood, (at his best, as in *The Willows*) M. R. James, or any other recognised master of the macabre, I lose at once whatever tendency toward egotism or complacency I might otherwise acquire. ...

Most cordially & appreciatively yours,  
 H. P. Lovecraft

270. TO DONALD WANDREI

Providence  
 April 21, 1927

Dear Mr. Wandrei:—

... I still have the most profound respect for pure intellect—& am an absolute materialist & mechanist, believing the cosmos to be a purposeless & meaningless affair of endless cycles of alternate electronic condensation & dispersal—a thing without beginning, permanent direction, or ending, & consisting wholly of blind force operating according



to fixed & eternal patterns inherent in entity. It is because I am a complete sceptic & cynic, recognising no such qualities as good or evil, beauty or ugliness, in the ultimate structure of the universe, that I insist on the artificial & traditional values of each particular cultural stream—proximate values which grew out of the special instincts, associations, environment, & experiences of the race in question, & which are the sole available criteria for the members of that race & culture, though of course having no validity outside it. These backgrounds of tradition against which to scale the objects & events of experience are all that lend such objects & events the illusion of meaning, value, or dramatic interest in an ultimately purposeless cosmos—hence I preach & practice an extreme conservatism in art forms, society, & politics, as the only means of averting the ennui, despair, & confusion of a guideless & standardless struggle with unveiled chaos. . . .

I have gradually absorbed considerable data on American colonial design, & can pick out the high spots in classic & Renaissance architecture—though I am still damnably weak on Gothic. My desire to know the principal forms is enhanced by a wish to visualise dramatically the various stages of history—when I *think* 1725 I want to be able to *see* 1725; & to do that, I must know clearly what types of building were then surviving, & what types were then being built. Once I roughly block out my scene—knowing just what to include & what to eliminate—I can drape it in as much mist & mysticism as I choose! As time goes on, my taste for urban panoramic effects increases; till at the present time I am really more sensitive to architecture than to any other art, save only the weird wing of prose literature. The vistas I relish most are those in which the sunset plays a transfiguring & glorifying part. Sometimes I stumble accidentally on rare combinations of slope, curved street-line, roofs & gables & chimneys, & accessory details of verdure & background, which in the magic of late afternoon assume a mystic majesty & exotic significance beyond the power of words to describe. Absolutely nothing else in life now has the power to move me so much; for in these momentary vistas there seem to open before me bewildering avenues to all the wonders & lovelinesses I have ever sought, & to all those gardens of eld whose memory trembles just beyond the rim of conscious recollection, yet close enough to lend to life all the significance it possesses. All that I live for is to capture some fragment of this hidden & just unreachable beauty; this beauty which is all of dream, yet

which I feel I have known closely & revelled in through long aeons before my birth or the birth of this or any world. There is somewhere, my fancy fabulises, a marvellous city of ancient streets & hills & gardens & marble terraces, wherein I once lived happy eternities, & to which I must return if ever I am to have content. Its name & place I know not—save as reason tells me it has neither name nor place nor any existence at all—but every now & then there flashes out some intimation of it in the travelled paths of men. Of this cryptic & glorious city—this primal & archaic place of splendour in Atlantis or Cockaigne or the Hesperides—many towns of earth hold vague & elusive symbols that peep furtively out at certain moments, only to disappear again. . . . It is so perfectly & utterly a life of dream that it leads to an almost Oriental inaction wherein vision is substituted for deed. Spring comes, & I resolve to go out & drench my soul in hyacinthine fields & waking woods & far incredible cities. I resolve—I call up those fields & woods & cities in my fancy—& lo! I have seen & experienced them! So I do not go out in bodily reality after all! It is the same with writing in many instances—though of course the sway of insubstantial dream is by no means so absolute as to keep me from taking many actual trips & penning many actual tales. I know that these trips & tales will never take me to the marvellous city of pre-cosmic memory, & I am probably rather glad of that knowledge, in that it secures for me an eternity of never-tarnished vision & never-sated quest through all the years of my consciousness. As in your case, the skies exert the utmost fascination upon me; nor is the weaving of wild dreams about their unplumbed deeps & suns & worlds in the least hampered by the precise astronomical data which my scientific side demands. Indeed, there is nothing in the baldest truth about the sky which does not enhance rather than enfeeble one's awe at its fathomless & indescribable immensities. . . .

Most Cordially & Sincerely Yrs.,  
H. P. Lovecraft

271. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

May 12, 1927

Dear C A S:—

Enclosed is *The Colour Out of Space*, which you can return at your convenience. It lacks compactness & climax, perhaps, but must be taken as an atmospheric study rather than as a tale. Cook has put all of my weird tale history into type for his magazine, so that you will perhaps see the printed version of at least the first part before you see the typed copy which the gang in N. Y. are about to forward to you. I'm not sure about how he means to arrange the instalments. I made some eleventh-hour inserts in the proofs which you won't find in the carbon—mainly regarding the forgotten early work of *Robert W. Chambers* (can you believe it?) who turned out some powerful bizarre stuff between 1895 & 1904. . . . .

Yr most obt

H P L

272. TO DONALD WANDREI

Providence

May 19, 1927

My Dear Mr. Wandrei;—

. . . . . I have often wished that I had the literary power to call up visions of some vast & remote realm of entity *beyond the universes of matter & energy*; where vivid interplays of unknown & inconceivable influences give vast & fabulous activity to dimensional areas that are not shapes, & to nuclei of complex rearrangement that are not minds. . . .

Sincerely Yrs.,

H. P. Lovecraft

273. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Thursday  
May 19, 1927

O Titan Anatomist of Our Planet's Skeleton:—

. . . One item was amusing to me—directing us as it did to something which is almost my own real estate—the Violet Hill, Manton Ave. quarry, on the land of the Providence Crushed Stone and Sand Co. Well, said Co. is a dago named Mariano de Magistris, on whose land I've had a pathetic drop-in-the-bucket mortgage for the past twenty years! Every Feb. and Aug. the guy sends a small cheque, but never pays up—so I've come to regard him as something of an institution, and feel a very proprietary interest in his rocky freehold. . . . I'd stand a good chance of losing my modest thou. if I ever had to foreclose. But it's good whilst it lasts, and I'm glad that Fate's whirling has enabled the region to be of value to a reg'lar white man and scientist! When I lead the party thither I shall have the assured air of an old squire making the rounds of the tenantry—I've never been near the damn place as yet, and haven't the remotest idea of what it's like except that I know all that region has gone Guinea.

. . . . I might live just as long in Labrador as in Brazil—but hell! what would I get out of it? Give me the mild equator's zone, where ice-fiends ne'er may harrow; better fifty hours of Tampa than a cycle of Point Barrow! . . . And just as a sidelight on *hot* weather conditions—don't lay it onto mere external architecture, 'bo! Where's your memory? But three short years ago I was very emphatically of your build—yet I didn't miss any of my customary July airiness of spirit, for all the un-aërial beef and suet on my bones! Moreover—that eclipse morning occurred whilst I was still a problem for Sheraton chair-makers, yet scant comfort did my proteid integuments afford me! No, 'bo, I've seen the world from every avoidrupois angle, but fat or lean, it's about the same. January doesn't make a hit with my cellular tissue—be it abundant or infrequent—and July does. That's simply that, without sequel, residue, or refutation. . . .

Yours till I get further data—  
 Πυμνη-Θεοβάλδος  
 Theobaldus

274. TO JAMES F. MORTON

May 23, 1927

Fabiane Maxime:—

.. Expect a bowed and broken man to do the honours as municipal claviger—for that damned dentist's BILL has come, and a far less welcome Bill than Bryant it is. 36 BUCKS! O GORD!

And the light diversion wherewith I'm paying it off is the most deodaminate piece of unending Bushwork I've ever tackled since the apogee of the immortal Davidius himself—the sappy, half-baked *Woman's Home Companion* stuff of a female whose pencil has hopelessly outdistanc'd her imagination. Gawd bless the money-orders, but Pete sink the manuscripts!

Ah—but here's the *real* news. In a burst of unaccustomed sportmanship (before I got that 36-fish knockout from Lewis Howe Kalloch, D.D.S.) I put a shilling into a can of Friend's Yaller-Eyes *without* any preliminary assurances from curato-fabal headquarters; the concomitant pork being thus raised to the dignity of a pig in a poke. I took, as I say, this doubtful and delicious hazard, laying down my shilling with almost Brodeian unconcern. And O, BABY! Kid, I'M SOLD! I hereby adopt Friend's Yaller I as my FAVOURITE, my officially favourite bean! Man, they knock to hell anything else short of Peary and Byrd and Scott and Amundsen that ever climbed a pole! . . .

Well—we're all set for Chewsdy. I shan't be in physical training because this Abaddou-stricken revision keeps me tied desperately to my desk, but the very force of bounding away from the damn junk will supply whatever motive enthusiasm my lack of hiking-practice will have tended to subtract. Now, rocks and weather, do you stuff!

Yours for better minerals and shorter manuscripts,

Θεοβάλδος

Theobaldus

275. TO JAMES F. MORTON

May 24, 1927

Sage Soldan of the Sev'n and Seventy Strata:—

De rebus fabalibus—I have lately been conducting an exhaustive three-corner'd test of Friend, Bean Hole, and Hatchet, and believe I shall have, after all, to award the palm to your Malrose staple. The Hatchet—which I had before sampled only in conjunction with its proper (and indisputably superior) brownbread—prov'd a disappointment when consum'd independently, whilst the Van Camp product lacked a certain precision in traditional flavour. This left the field clear for Friend's, a final sampling of which confirm'd the verdict at which I had so conscientiously been arriving. Certainly, no other stannically circumscribed bean so faithfully approximates the hereditary delicacy of these colonies in all its nuances of palatal tone. I am converted. And now—my research having hitherto extended through only the standard variety—I must experiment with the Yellow Eye and Kidney modifications. What are they like? Are they baked in the ordinary fashion like their less voluminous compeers? Behold the depth of my ignorance, which seeks light from the lamp of experienced sophistication before sinking 48¢ in a can apiece of the two eiba incognita. . . .

Yours for a populous safari fo Rhodinoular erudition—

Θεοβάλδος  
Theobaldus

276. TO BERNARD AUSTIN DWYER

June 1927

My dear Dwyer:—

. . . . Yes—my New England is a dream New England—the familiar scene with certain lights and shadows heightened (or meant to be heightened) just enough to merge it with things beyond the world. That, I fancy, is the problem of everyone working in an artistic medium

—to take a known setting and restore to it in vivid freshness all the accumulated wonder and beauty which it has produced in its long continuous history. All genuine art, I think, is local and rooted in the soil; for even when one sings of far incredible twilight lands he is merely singing of his homeland in some gorgeous and exotic mantle. It is this point which I seek to emphasise in my 110-page effort *The Dream Quest of Unknown Kalatb*. Take a man away from the fields and groves which bred him—or which moulded the lives of his forefathers—and you cut off his sources of power altogether. Like Antaeus of old, he needs the touch of his mother earth to preserve his strength. Culture as a whole—sophisticated, critical culture—may be cosmopolitan and international; but creative artistic force is always provincial and nationalistic. That is why I see nothing but unmitigated artistic decadence in modern "civilisation" with its polyglot urban concentration. New York would no more produce art than Carthage or Alexandria. Just as Alexandrian art was affected, superficial, and pedantic, so is that of New York today. The old N. Y. is dead, and this hybrid mass of parvenu and traditionless glitter has no relation whatever to the lives and dreams and aspirations of any one people or stream of culture. Out of this flashy, synthetic spawn of mongrelism nothing but pose and pretence can come. He who would create must return to some scene which is truly his, and which truly possesses roots reaching into the past. But more and more the drift is townward, and more and more the progress of mechanical invention removes life from the natural routine sanctified by the acts and thoughts of uncounted generations of our forbears. Familiar forces and symbols—the hills, the woods, and the seasons—become less and less intertwined with our daily lives as brick and stone horizons and snow-shovelled streets and artificial heating replace them, and the quaintly loveable little ways of small places die of inanition as easy transportation fuses all the surface of a great country into one standardised mould. Craftsmanship and local production are dead—no one man completely makes anything, and no one region subsists to any great extent on its own products either material or intellectual. Quantity and distribution are the watchwords in an age where factories and syndicates reign supreme; and all sectional manners and modes of thought are obliterated in the universal exchange of workers and teachers, luxuries and utilities, books and magazines, which complete industrialism and unimpeded access produce. The result—although an inevitable conse-

quence of the advance of knowledge, which must be lamented impersonally rather than condemned hysterically—is an almost unmitigated loss to artistic life, for beauty comes only when life is closely attuned to its scene, and cannot endure when the spread of standardisation imposes one monotonous set of *mores* upon large and differentiated geographic areas, each of which once fostered and still ought to foster a separate set of manners and institutions as determined by its own especial race and heritage and landscape and climate. The social and political damage of urban industrial life is equally clear. Factory labour and the widespread dissemination of rudimentary knowledge produced an unstable emotional equilibrium wholly destructive of traditional forces of life. The herd becomes unmanageable, and sinks either into the unstimulating and unromantic humdrum of democracy, or into the still deeper slough of socialism and anarchy. Everything gorgeous and golden is dragged in the mud or painted dull grey, and intellectual speculation becomes merely an arena of wild and baseless schemes of life, none of which have any anchors in the past to give them dignity or loveliness. Now in an age like this can art survive? Personally I do not think it can, so far as its original function of the emotional and imaginative expression or its own time is concerned; for the life and thought of this period are wholly without the legacies and overtones which gave artistic possibilities to the life and thought of former periods. They are too ill-founded in tradition, or in the natural conditions and past experiences of the race, to have any deep hold on the vital hereditary memories out of which our sincere aesthetic perceptions and feelings spring. We cannot, then, have a really contemporary art of any appreciable depth so long as we have no materials to build it with save big business, structural steel, universal suffrage, aeroplanes. The League of Nations, Greenwich Village, the radio, Henry Ford, the Rotary club, McCormick harvesters, soviets, the *American Mercury*, H. G. Wells, Dadaism, the A. F. of L., Jules Laforgue, Bruce Barton, the pornographic renaissance, Ben Hecht, real estate, Los Angeles, the farm bloc, etc., etc., etc., etc. ad infinitum. But there does still remain the possibility of a *reminiscent* individual art for those who voluntarily remain outside the theatre of change and decay and cling tenaciously to the land and ways of their ancestors. This clinging can be either material and spiritual both, as in the case of one who still lives bodily amidst the ancient hills and woods and farmsteads; or it can be spiritual alone, as in the case of an urban dweller



who remains true to the lore and memories of the old, simple, rural things, and saturates himself with their spirit and images even when he cannot spend all his days among them. This individual art will not reflect its own age, but it will sometimes reflect former ages almost as well as the artist of those ages once reflected them—depending on the extent to which the artist is able to merge himself and his soul into the background of bygone life. Or else it will sometimes take on the autumnal, sunset colours of a purely decadent art—the melancholy art of a Hardy or a Housman or the glitteringly malevolent art of a Baudelaire, a Rops, a Beardsley, or a Eugene O'Neill. And a third branch, of course, will be the fantastic art and literature of escape—which is the descendant of a type which has always existed either isolated or mixed with other types. This has found utterance in Blackwood, Dunsany, Stephens, de la Mare, Machen, Montague Rhodes James, Cabell, Sime, and so on. But this art will, of course, in all its phases depend upon the past; and will grow weaker and weaker as that past and its conditions recede into the background. It will last longest in such regions as cling most tenaciously to old things and old conditions, or somehow keep more than the average share of the old, fresh, unspoiled point of view. . . . The Southern part of the United States has many healthy qualities which may blossom out in art if the universal Babbity of self-conscious "progress" and expansive standardisation does not produce that cultural rottenness-before-ripeness which has ruined the north and will ruin the west. The South, of course, had a frightful blow in the Civil War; when the established civilisation was dethroned by the dominance of a more upstart element; but the parvenus themselves are not by any means bad material, and they cling to a conservatism (amusingly naive and crude at times, as expressed in Baptist revivals, Dayton trials, freak laws, and the like) which ought to protect them mightily in their coming clash with the decadence of the outside world. So, altogether, I think we'll have to admit that the sound art of the future will be either regional or individual, and that it is likely to diminish with the generations unless some unforeseen mental revolution intervenes to check the growth of an artificial and abnormally proportioned life. The universal "art", such as it will be, will consist both of mediocre and meaningless decorative banalities of ultra-sophisticated design and mannered and overemphasised technique, and of morbid and hectic attempts at expressing whatever of nature is left in life—perforce the barest and most

primitive instincts in a culture where all the natural overtones of traditional life and memory are swept away. This new hectic art will embrace both extravagant theory—as in cubism and its analogues—and sophisticatedly self-conscious selection and treatment, as in the use of analytical and scientific method, purely physiological or pathological themes, philosophical direction of thought with its attendant confusion, and an attempted directness leading to imitations of savage or primitive art traditions—archaic Minoan and Greek, Polynesian, Congo negro, American Indian, etc. The tone of the people of a mechanical age being intellectual rather than imaginative, we shall see the domain of art invaded by the methods and subject-matter of science and philosophy until virtually nothing of the true art impulse is left. . . .

..... The only trouble with New England is that it acquired a premature old age before attaining true maturity. The foundations were magnificent—a lovely land of woods and hills and river valleys and sea coasts, and a population of sturdy yeomen and gentry whose natural and simple life and temperamental stability promised well for continuous growth and permanent achievement. For over two centuries all went well. The age of pioneer crudity and theological obsession was safely outlived, and the 18th century produced an exquisite growth of decorative taste which the Revolution somewhat injured but by no means destroyed. This was the age of the large landowner and prosperous merchant—an age of growing refinement and fastidiousness in life, and of correctness in taste, yet of continued simplicity in personal habits. During the earlier 18th century standards of education gradually rose, until by the Golden Age of Lowell, Holmes, Hawthorne, Emerson, Longfellow, Thoreau, and their fellows, we had a perfectly mature set of literary and artistic forms to watch our precocious decorative development of the century before—a development, by the way, which had itself fallen into decay along with the decorative art of all the rest of the world in the 19th century. At that marvellous period—say the age of 1850 to 1880, when its leading figures were in their prime—New England's culture had attained its full stature in conventional intellectual sophistication and technique, so that no Bostonian or Providence man need feel like a clown or a country squire in London, Paris, or Rome; but it had not acquired the philosophic maturity of an old and mellow civilisation. It was on the road to it. Nothing was amiss, any more than anything is amiss in a bright youngster not yet

able to think quite like a middle-aged man. What it lacked was the breadth and depth and tolerant disillusion of age—the profound, half-secret realisation that nothing ultimately matters in all the universe save beauty, and that the greatest goal of a human mind is to think beautiful things beautifully, for the sake of that beauty alone. There clung to New England art a trace of the schoolroom, as clings to any young fellow just escaped from his tutor—a trace of naive self-consciousness; of adolescent pride in the new set of good artistic manners it had acquired; of complacency at the even flow of life to which its ordered civilisation had given birth. There were still present the childlike acceptance of religion which kept alive an artificial perspective and justified the retention of some grotesque illusions, disproportions, and limitations in thought; and the intellectual novice's adoration of form for form's sake which led to a growth of aesthetic manner at the expense of matter, and repressed the vigorous exuberance of untrammelled art in fear lest the exquisite balance of classic moderation be destroyed. It was a tame, didactic, handicapped art, as we all admit; but *not unhealthily so*. It was merely trying its wings—trying them in spite of the primitive theology which dictated a moralistic and optimistic philosophy, and the cultural inexperience which dictated a safe-and-sure insipidity of subject-matter and style—and all told, was not trying them ignobly. Its hour for perfect self-realisation and utterance had not yet come, but foundations were being laid which would have made that future hour a mighty one when it did finally arrive. The prospects were bright indeed—scene, people, and history all working harmoniously toward a glorious culmination—when suddenly the blight of modernity stepped in and cut short the process.

It was industrialism and modern thought, of course. Factories brought unassimilable population, the old stock concentrated in the towns, and the orderly and continuous growth of the old life was shattered for ever save for isolated regions and individuals. The old stock in the towns, engulfed by different-minded newcomers, were thrown into a posture of resistance and defense, and totally altered in their relation to the entire scene. And what sociological change had not done, intellectual change finished. The old innocent naiveté (which of course was a distinctly reckonable reality despite the natural undercurrents of reaction and furtive corruption which so conveniently motivate some of my horror-tales) was not allowed to mellow gradually into a delicate and intel-

ligent recognition of philosophic truths amidst which the old standards of life might survive for reasons of artistic harmony even after the theological compulsion had melted away. Instead, the weary unmorality and fantastic morbidity of a genuinely decadent Europe were veritably forced down our cerebral gullets, whilst the externals of life—costume, housing, manners, art, reading, scholastic curricula, etc.—were imported wholesale to match. Life and thought lost simplicity—"plain living and high thinking" were dead amongst the majority—and gained glitter and cosmopolitanism instead. Everything native was decried, and all New England seemed devoted to the unholy task of concealing its own ancestral features beneath the powder of Paris, the rouge of Rome, the lipstickery of London. To be an honest Yankee was out of fashion—one must have the airs and vices of the Great World about one. Some people began to cultivate the London drawl, and others the San Francisco rrrrr . . . No poet or painter thought of handling homely local themes any more than of displaying the honest yellow cover of the *Old Farmer's Almanack* in his chimney-corner. In act, word, and dream New England was trying to get rid of the very foundations which would have made her great—trying to de-provincialise and merge herself into that stream of world-culture which Nietzsche would have considered typical of a "good European". Today we can see the grimly bitter humour of that frantic scramble of the 'nineties and the nineteenth-hundreds—a scramble which other parts of simple, ancestral America paralleled with equal folly. It makes one think of a man in a staunch small boat leaping desperately to a vast palatial ship which he deems swift and advantageous—but which is already scuttled and close to foundering. This is irony at its keenest! For the local culture of old New England was sound though young, whilst the modern world's general culture is a thing as feverishly decadent as the culture of Aurelian's Rome. Few were immune from the contagion in some form or other, and in a decade or two New England had indeed achieved the position it so blindly sought—that of a small part of a great and crumbling world-fabric. Its sons were and are scattering rapidly, retaining only vestigial traces of their ancestral milieu; and are producing only the most pitiful fragments of authentic and distinctive art, as compared with a time when fully three-quarters of the nation's intellectual activity centered here—when (1891 according to Henry Cabot Lodge) in Massachusetts one man out of every 84 was a person of recognised ability

and eminence, and in Rhode Island one out of every 118. New England did indeed become sophisticated and urbane and cosmopolitan—but at what a fearful cost! Like Edinburgh when it began to look toward London, it carried its mania for metropolitan maturity to the extreme of cultural and intellectual suicide.

But the land is still here—and despite much replacement the old blood is still here, entrenched amidst its memories in a dying world. And no matter what disasters come, the old combination of land and race is a hard one to extirpate utterly. Fads come and fads go. Men commit mistakes and recognise them. But the sight of an ancient land by the eyes its soil had bred is a fact—a geographic and biologic circumstance—from which there is no escape. New Englanders still inhabit New England; and in this final period of acknowledged decadence, when post-war ennui and a close reading of Spengler and his school unite to shatter the tinsel hopes and quench the cosmopolitan will-o-the-wisps of 1914, we are beginning to behold the dawn of an era of sober retrospection. Robert Frost, New England's last authentic poet, is gaining a wider audience than he used to have; and New England is certainly in the van of the present craving (in many cases followed to grotesque lengths and by grotesquely inappropriate persons) for "early Americana". Out of this there is bound to arise a new and appreciative survey of the old rock-ribbed hills by the repentant sons of the old rock-ribbed Puritans—and this is the sort of thing which will probably give rise to what I call an "individual and reminiscent" art on the part of many New Englanders, whereby the ancient soil will live and glow again, though with the remoteness and melancholy of acknowledged retrospection. In time—since New England still possesses solid cultural centres like the residential part of Providence and Beacon Hill in Boston, where the old social life flows on among the same ancient families—this individual art may consolidate and unify into a true regional art; thus giving the lovely old realm at least a faint adumbration of the cultural and artistic maturity which it missed. We certainly have the beauty—the exquisite stretches of hill and countryside, and the archaic magic of quaint seaports and mossy gambrel roofs—and there is no doubt about the quantity of creative intellect present, if it will only devote itself to native themes, and not leave such things to second-and-third-raters. I only wish I were sufficiently endowed the the artistic faculty to assist in a real New England renaissance like the Irish renaiss-

sance of Yeats and A. E. and Synge and Padraic Colum and James Stephens and Lady Gregory and Dunsany. It will take strong leaders, but I do not altogether despair of their appearance. I myself lean more and more strongly to the past and the old native things as I grow older. I always adored them and regarded them with fascination, being moved almost beyond expression by the ancient hill streets and knocked doorways and Georgian walled gardens of Providence, where all my life has been spent; but in youth I was not wholly unaffected by the same desire for wider horizons which I now deplore so bitterly. I cultivated an universal outlook, and sought the general, the metropolitan, the cosmic in manner and theme; delighting to echo Continental iconoclasm and to experiment in the literary sophistication, ennui, and decadent symbolism which those around me exalted and practiced. This phase, though, was exceedingly brief with me; for the old urge toward antiquarianism was a natural thing which no artificial veneer could long obliterate. And even in its midst my writings constantly betrayed the old New Englandism which I sought to expand into a Baudelairean Continentalism. Then at last the inevitable full reaction came, and I snapped back into my complete and complacent Yankee provincialism with a loud report whose echoes are yet resounding. Today I am a New England antiquarian "and nothing else but"—and my chief interest in life is exploring old towns and hunting out steep archaic lanes and carved colonial doorways. All my spare cash goes into trips to ancient towns like Newport, Concord, Salem, Marblehead, Portsmouth, Plymouth, Bristol, and the like, and whenever I go outside New England it is to some place where the surviving architecture and scenery enables me to revisualise the colourful eighteenth century—Philadelphia and Alexandria, Va. being favourite "foreign" towns of mine. With this archaistic passion joined to a fantastic imagination, you can see how tales like *The Festival* or *The Tomb* come into being. My present abode—although in a Victorian house—is on the crest of Providence's ancient hill, where the steep lanes of the elder town wind picturesquely up to a noble brow from which the westward view of outspread spires and domes and distant countryside is magnificent. Only three doors away is a little white farmhouse two centuries old—long overtaken by the growing city and now inhabited by an artist who still preserves a tiny patch of farmyard—and just around the corner is the old Halsey mansion with its stately Georgian porch and double-bayed facade—built in 1801 and now said to be

*haunted*. Could a more fitting milieu be asked for a retrospective and archaistic fantaisiste?

About *The Unnamable*—you are right in assuming that a very darkly fantastic basis indeed underlies it, although the editor of *Weird Tales* would probably have convulsions if he realised the fact! This worthy editor has been amusingly timid about very bizarre tales ever since had had some trouble with state censors and parent-teacher associations over a story he printed three years ago—a story, as coincidence would have it, by an acquaintance of mine in Providence. The paragraph in Mather's *Magnalia* (of which I possess an ancestral copy) on which the tale is based is a bona-fide one, and represents the extremes of credulity to which this strange character went in considering vague popular rumours. There was such a fantastic horror in the thing he suggested that I felt it simply demanded a story—hence *The Unnamable*, which traced IT to lengths of which the learned divine never dreamed! One thing, though, in your conjecture is wrong. You will see on close reading that a *young man* (according to my text, "a screaming, drunken wretch") *was hanged* for having eyes like IT. Well, that young man was the old man's son—and it was *his* grave whose blank slab the giant tree had partly engulfed. (There is actually an ancient slab half engulfed by a giant willow in the middle of the Charles St. Burying Ground in Salem.) The old man was innocent of all evil—but he felt the responsibility of a Biblical patriarch for all persons—and all THINGS, even when *unnamable*—that bore any trace of his blood. He was ITS grandfather, and could not forget it even when the memory of his hapless son had been systematically obliterated from the community. In supplying details I've worked in one or two genuine old New England superstitions—that one about the faces of past generations becoming fixed on windows was told to me *and believed* by a highly intelligent old lady who has a successful novel and other important literary work to her credit. Living things—usually insane or idiotic members of the family—concealed in the garrets or secret rooms of old houses are or at least have been literal realities in rural New England—I was told by someone of how he stopped at a lone farmhouse on some errand years ago, and was nearly frightened out of his wits by the opening of a sliding panel in the kitchen wall, and the appearance at the aperture of the most horrible, dirt-caked, and matted-bearded face he had ever conceived possible to exist! Certainly, there is a rich element of stark, grotesque terror in

backwoods New England, where the houses are very far apart and people of undeveloped mind and emotions have too many opportunities for brooding alone month in and month out. Mere grotesqueness is very common; sly, malign madness sometimes lurks around the corner; and berserk, revolting murder under peculiarly messy and clumsy conditions is a matter of not infrequent record. It is easy to see how the critic Paul Elmer More traces the horror-element in American literature to the remote New England countryside with its solitude-warped religious fanaticism. The best exponents of New England I can think of are Hawthorne and Mary E. Wilkins. The latter gets the undercurrent of horror remarkably well in *The Shadows on the Wall*. . . . .

Sincerely yours,  
H. P. Lovecraft

277. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

June 3, 1927

Dear C A S:—

Pardon the paper—but I'm writing in the open air, in a park-like embankment overlooking the outspread roofs & antient spires of the town, & am equipped with only such paraphernalia as will fit into my pockets. I am utterly crushed & engulfed by a monster job of professional prose revision—which I can't financially afford to refuse—& have gone so mentally stale at my desk that I'm taking all the non-typing part of the work outdoors when weather permits—thus drawing some modicum of stimulus from the green loveliness of spring & the winding, archaic lanes of old Providence. . . . .

Most cordially & sincerely yrs  
H P L



278. TO ZEALIA BROWN REED (BISHOP)

10 Barnes Street  
Providence, R. I.  
June 5, 1927

My dear Mrs. Reed:—

. . . . Now there are many motives for literary creation, but to my mind only one—and that the one least admitted by commercial-minded people—is of enough validity to warrant a person's going ahead with systematic writing. We may, then, dispose at once of the people who wish merely a source of income. These may succeed if they have a large endowment of natural technical proficiency, but they will always be essentially mechanical. They will never produce anything which—to employ your own words—is "worth while" or "has any depth", and could probably realise their ambitions sooner and more pleasantly in some other field of enterprise. We may likewise dispose of those merely restless souls who write as a relief from boredom or from unsatisfactory living conditions. These people merely want something which they haven't, and think that the easiest way to get it is to make up a simple play-world on paper; in which they, in the person of their heroes, can enjoy all the things that real life doesn't furnish. They care nothing for literature or craftsmanship for its own sake, nor does the world possess for them any golden wonder or glamour which they feel they must record. Their thoughts are limited, commonplace, and twisted in the direction of their own particular source of mundane discontent; and there is little prospect that their writings can have any real power, beauty, grace, or universal symbolism and appeal. They would be far better off if they could find something else to interest or satisfy them—as they occasionally do after authorship has begun to bore them. A third class to be eliminated is the mere pastime scribbler—the languid and unoriginal recreation-seeker who finds amusement and gratified vanity in more or less laboured imitations of books and stories he has read and admired. He takes a childish pleasure in achieving a certain resemblance to his idols—or in accomplishing a certain reflection of their false, simple world (or their true, complex world, in the rare event that his tastes are classic)—which may be compared to the pleasure of the successful

crossword-puzzle solver of 1925, or the high-score questionnaire-answerer of the present year of grace. This sort of person may now and then attain a level which is not half bad—but there is no vital motive force behind his work, and he will eventually veer off to something else. What literature is to him now, baseball or politics or foreign missions may be next year. Another unlikely set is the stern-faced, vociferous legion of People With A Purpose. These good folk write because they want to make others do or believe in something which they believe in, and of course their main purpose is propaganda and persuasion—and not that reflection of real life or exaltation of sheer beauty which is authentic literature. Of course, if these people are by any chance gifted with culture and natural eloquence—as, for example, Plato, Lucretius, and Ralph Waldo Emerson were—they may really produce literature through sheer accident; but this blending is not a common phenomenon, and we may quite safely advise the Burning Band of Idealists and Serious Thinkers to confine their writing to essays and tracts on their own respective subjects. They won't get much of anywhere in any other literary direction—for the very excellent primary reason that they aren't particularly anxious to!

Well, the significance of all this is that any beginner who can identify his motive force with any of the foregoing types ought to think twice before wasting further time and energy on literature.

Now, what is the one real aesthetic impulse which *does* justify an arduous and devoted pursuit of letters—the impulse which every serious author ought to be able to discover in himself? It is monstrously hard to define, for its very essence is vagueness, elusiveness, and intangibility; but I think it has enough definite earmarks to make it distinctly *recognisable*, even if not accurately describable or neatly classifiable in the businesslike filing-cabinet of modern psychology.

The impulse which justifies authorship—the quality which lends dignity and reasonableness to a human being's insatiate wish to spread himself out on paper—is *a kind of heightened vision which lends strange colours to the universe, and which invests the pageant of life with a mystic glamour and veiled significance so poignant and potent that no eye may behold it without a resistless wish to capture and preserve its essence: to hold it for future hours, and to share it with those who can be made to see it with kindred perspective.* No person without this tense feeling of wonder and pageantry as connected with the world of

reality or the world of dreams can ever hope to create real literature. If the events of life—or the fantasies of thought—appear in no mystic colours; if they remain mere earthly effects and illusions without ecstatic and unplaceable suggestions of vast cosmic patterns and boundless gulfs of breathless mystery, then one may as well turn to something more wholesome and normal and practical than hen-tracking good dollar-a-ream paper. One can test oneself in the late afternoon, when the slanting sunlight throws strange mantles of golden enchantment on roofs and spires, groves and gardens, fields and terraces, shaven lawns and the ripples of liliated meres. If such a scene does not produce a quick tightening of the throat—a wild certainty that some strangeness lies just beyond the blazing west, or a singing sureness that some marvel lovely and incredible is about to blossom—then one ought not to feel obliged to write down such thoughts and impressions as may chance to inhabit his cranium. All the common, unadorned things have been thought and said and repeated a thousand times before. The dull, prosaic world of usual feelings and events is so well "written up" that nothing vital remains to be added. The time to begin writing is when the events of the world seem to suggest things larger than the world—strangenesses and patterns and rhythms and unquities of combination which no one ever saw or heard of before, but which are so vast and marvellous and beautiful that they absolutely demand proclamation with a fanfare of silver trumpets. Space and time become vitalised with literary significance when they begin to make us subtly homesick for something 'out of space, out of time.' There is no real author who has not stood in awe and expectancy before some fragment of earthly scene—some gap in quiet hills at dawn, some bit of city pavement glistening with rain and reflecting evening's lamps and lighted windows, some line of distant roofs or balustraded garden terrace—whose glorified contours bring up with sweetly maddening poignancy a haunting, ineluctable sense of cosmic memory; of having known that scene and others akin to it in other lives, other worlds, and other dreamlands. *To find those other lives, other worlds, and other dreamlands, is the true author's task.* That is what literature is; and if any piece of writing is motivated by anything apart from this mystic and never-finished quest, it is a base and unjustified imitation.

Well, so much for motive. Motive alone will never make an author; for thousands of restless souls share these dreams and mystic longings without ever being able to communicate them. The second essential—the

element which, joined to the proper vision, makes literary competence a *certainty*—is a *keen sense of beauty as applied to language*. A natural author thinks of words solely in their aesthetic relations—in their power to grasp delicately and exquisitely his every shade of meaning and emotion, and to sing forth his dreams in music of surpassing loveliness. To him language is no haphazard, utilitarian thing, but the conjoined marble and chisel of a sculptor, wherewith perfect things may be bodied forth afresh in perfect beauty. No one need try authorship unless he feels himself able and inclined to treat language as a fine art—as a thing of complex and delicate laws, of hidden meanings, and of a thousand potent subtleties of sound, rhythm, force, vividness, tone-colour, and associative values. He must be willing and eager to bind himself in a long and toilsome apprenticeship to the gods of speech—and must never be impatient or rebellious. He must come to love language so much that it will form almost an end in itself—he must love it till the mere handling of beautiful words and rhythms becomes an exquisite pleasure. . . . . .

Sincerely yrs.,  
HPLovecraft

279. TO ZEALIA BROWN REED (BISHOP)

10 Barnes Street  
Providence, R. I.  
June 12, 1927

My dear Mrs. Reed:—

. . . . Since art is at bottom a *treatment of life* rather than life itself, we cannot justly take factual reality as an absolute criterion of fictional availability. Paradoxical as it may sound, many real happenings are far too improbable for a story. What fiction demands is a fragment of reality typical and universal enough to arouse myriad associations in the reader and suggest the hovering nearness of things even outside and above reality. . . . .

. . . . What is an aesthetically significant situation, character, or emotion? A hard thing to answer positively, though one may venture a few

broadly inclusive suggestions. We may, for example, say that very simple and obvious things are hard to use effectively; since they are so well-worn, and so destitute of the subtle lights and shades necessary for a richly developed art. The sort of character and emotion one must portray is one in which overtones, confusions, mixtures, and contradictions exist—just as they exist in real life. Actually, human feelings are never straightforward—we are never so fond of a person that we don't sometimes wish he were in hades or Nicaragua, and never so interested in a subject or purpose that we aren't occasionally bored to death by the very mention of it. Single passions that influence whole lives are exceedingly rare—and when these seem to exist, it will often be found on analysis that the permanence is in the effect—as produced through subsidiary causes set in motion by the initial emotion—rather than in the pristine motivating force itself. Now it is the writer's business to untangle all these complexities, divine the element of drama (almost always based on *conflict*) in them, and set forth this bit of cosmic symmetry in perfect language. The conflict may be physical in the lower forms of fiction—the "action" story—but in the higher forms it is mostly mental and emotional. Tales of character rather than of plot are what all the better grade of magazines demand. The romantic writer must take extreme care lest superficial glamour distort for him the actual relative potency of various motive forces as operating in various types of human character—also, lest he acquiesce in the false valuations and partialities affected by older writers of the same type. The most common of these illusions, of course, is that of the paramount importance of "love" (a complex synthesis of dissimilar forces perversely regarded as single and homogeneous) as a permanent factor in life, and of the *culpability* of allowing any other consideration to outweigh it. The best example of this, of course, is the stale situation of stern parents and daughter about to contract a mesalliance with an honest shepherd lad. All cheap novelists write in condemning the "worldly" and "calculating" parents and exalting the silly, transient infatuation of two young fools so fundamentally dissimilar that a lasting union would lead either to joint infidelity or mutual murder; whereas the real artist looks closer and recognises that there are environmental and temperamental considerations far more important than romantic attraction in the adjustment of any sensitive and well-balanced person to the universe. One could make long lists of complex human conditions—social, intellectual, imaginative, geographical,

aesthetic, national, and so on—far more potent and influential than "love" in the life and happiness of any normal person of culture and evolved mentality. And of course, the transience and mutability—the capriciousness and dividedness—of "love" itself do much to subtract from its importance as a unified driving force. Therefore, unless a writer wishes to appear very naive, or to cater wholly to an unsophisticated public, he will beware of the exaltation and apotheosis of the thin, unimaginitive, falsified Romeo-Juliet theme. Instead of gullibly assuming an artificial state of things and monotonously rehashing the milk-and-water triumphs (inevitable triumphs!) of a mythically omnipotent "love" over all obstacles, any solid writer of *real* love-stories will tell of *conflicts* and *compromises* betwixt *various phases* of love in *various stages of completeness or intensity*, and other environing conditions of equal, greater, or lesser importance, as the case may be, or with decreases or contradictions in the fabric of the love itself. He will tell of defeats, hard-headed adjustments, absurdities, disasters, peterings-out, and boredoms, as well as of victories; and he will not try to take sides in a play of cosmic forces which matters but little either way. It is this drama of *life*—not of the cinema imitation—which is the proper groundwork of literature. The romanticist must learn to distinguish, then, between what is vital and significant and what is merely wooden and conventional and meaningless. There is absolutely no art in a tale of how two simple souls conquered all the Fates and lived happily together ever after; but there would be art in a graphic portrayal of how two souls started out with the illusion of perpetual romance, sickened of it eventually, (on one or both sides) and spent the residue of their lives in preserving the outward forms of the passion in order to satisfy their sense of dignity and fitness. Art, too, could enter into a tale of environmental adjustment—a straightforward, Ella-Brent sort of person marrying (for example) a New York "colyumist" of the sophisticated literary set, and having a wearisome conflict betwixt a genuine affection for her husband on the one hand, and on the other hand an absolute inability to endure, comprehend, or participate in his falsetto-keyed world of learned pretence, dramatic pose, and worship of nimble paradox and epigrammatic smartness as supreme values. In moulding such a story the pendulum could swing naturally and uncertainly in either direction—the final victory, compromise, or defeat depending upon the exact conditions and upon the exact balance of feelings in each of the

characters concerned. And one may add, that the birth of a dear little chee-ild would *not* solve all problems in glib nickleodeon fashion! Rather, it would be a complication provocative of even more misery. One of the first essentials of real literary training is the eternal destruction of the puerile illusion that Life (that sort of conception carries its own redundant capitals!) is neatly divided into the Big, Wholesome, Vital Things, and the false, superficial, frivolous things. Actually, the importance and significance of everything is purely relative—all values being matters of transient circumstance and perspective, and nearly always occurring in a state of ridiculous and incongruous mixture. . . . .

I am very truly yours,  
HPLovecraft

280. TO FARNSWORTH WRIGHT

Saturday  
June 15, 1927

My dear Wright:—

Well—here are your 10 hand-picked *Fungi*—and may they adorn with appropriate morbidity the unhallowed gardens which bloom betwixt your covers! Trust I've copied them correctly, and hope the *typothatae Corneliarum* will do likewise.

Best wishes—

Yr. most obt. Servt.  
H. P. L.

281. TO JAMES F. MORTON

June XVIII, 1927

O Cerebral Culmination:—

. . I've been meaning to plead for mercy regarding my non-transmission of the minerals (them trustees will begin to suspect you went on a

lark if you can't produce the goods soon!). . . . Whyfore? *W'ork*—gor-dam it! Labour! Exertion! Toil! Travail! Application! Grinding! Chores! And then some! It all sums itself up in one succinct and despicable word—*revision!* . . . So, Sire, you can appreciate how I haven't had much time to hunt up wooden boxes and express offices and all that sort of rot! I shall get to all that next week—and meanwhile your pretty silicic posies are decaying, rusting, or evaporating. . . .

Yr. obt.

Θεοβαλδου

Theobaldus

282. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

June 24, 1927

Dear C A S:—

Chambers is like Rupert Hughes & a few other fallen Titans—equipped with the right brains & education, but wholly out of the habit of using them. So far as I know, *Carcosa* is purely a creation of Ambrose Bierce—as are *Hastur* & certain other details. Chambers must have been impressed with *An Inhabitant of Carcosa* & *Haita the Shepherd*, which were first published during his youth. But he even improves on Bierce in creating a shuddering background of horror—a vague, disquieting memory which makes one reluctant to use the faculty of recollection too vigorously.

Yr most obt Servt

H P L

283. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

Wednesday

July 1, 1927

Young Horizontal:—

Alas, that this idyllic village, dreaming above its deserted wharves, is not to have the honour of your presence for more than two days! But



surely the Long family itinerary ought to be adapted to the wishes of him who needs the vacation most—hence no sentiment beyond a philosophic sigh at Fate is truly appropriate to the occasion. I hereby heave that sigh—for myself, since I am sensible that your taste for the Georgian is not so acute as to make the limited exploration-period the Great Sorrow of your middle years!

..... Oh, by the way, *Amazing Stories* lived up to its name by amazing me almost into unconsciousness. What the hell d'ya think—*they took The Colour Out of Space!* No spoofing—I enclose their card to prove it. If they pay respectably, I ought to get a decent little cheque out of this, for the manuscript ran to thirty-two pages; but perhaps they're so used to free reprints that they haven't formed the paying habit.

Yr. obt. Servt.  
The PostMaster

284. TO FARNSWORTH WRIGHT

10 Barnes St.  
Providence, R. I.  
July 5, 1927

My dear Mr. Wright:—

In accordance with your suggestion I am re-submitting *The Call of Cthulhu*, though possibly you will still think it a trifle too bizarre for a clientele who demand their weirdness in name only, and who like to keep both feet pretty solidly on the ground of the known and the familiar. As I said some time ago, I doubt if my work—and especially my later products—would "go" very well with the sort of readers whose reactions are represented in the *Eyrie*. The general trend of the yarns which seem to suit the public is that of essential normality of outlook and simplicity of point of view—with thoroughly conventional human values and motives predominating, and with brisk action of the best-seller type as an indispensable attribute. The weird element in such material does not extend far into the fabric—it is the artificial weirdness of the fireside tale and the Victorian ghost story, and remains external camouflage even in the seemingly wildest of the "interplanetary" con-

coctions. You can see this sort of thing at its best in Seabury Quinn, and at its worst in the general run of contributors. It is exactly what the majority want—for if they were to see a really weird tale they wouldn't know what it's all about. This is quite obvious from the way they object to the *reprints*, which in many cases have brought them the genuine article.

Now all my tales are based on the fundamental premise that common human laws and interests and emotions have no validity or significance in the vast cosmos-at-large. To me there is nothing but puerility in a tale in which the human form—and the local human passions and conditions and standards—are depicted as native to other worlds or other universes. To achieve the essence of real externality, whether of time or space or dimension, one must forget that such things as organic life, good and evil, love and hate, and all such local attributes of a negligible and temporary race called mankind, have any existence at all. Only the human scenes and characters must have human qualities. *These* must be handled with unsparing *realism*, (*not* catch-penny *romanticism*) but when we cross the line to the boundless and hideous unknown—the shadow-haunted *Outside*—we must remember to leave our humanity—and terrestrialism at the threshold.

So much for theory. In practice, I presume that few commonplace readers would have any use for a story written on these psychological principles. They want their conventional best-seller values and motives kept paramount throughout the abysses of apocalyptic vision and extra-Einsteinian chaos, and would not deem an "interplanetary" tale in the least interesting if it did not have its Martian (or Jovian or Venerian or Saturnian) heroine fall in love with the young voyager from Earth, and thereby incur the jealousy of the inevitable Prince Kongros (or Zeelar or Hoshgosh or Norkog) who at once proceeds to usurp the throne etc.; or if it did not have its Martian (or etc.) nomenclature follow a closely terrestrial pattern, with an indo-Germanic '—a' name for the Princess, and something disagreeable and Semitic for the villain. Now I couldn't grind out that sort of junk if my life depended on it. If I were writing an "interplanetary" tale it would deal with beings organised very differently from mundane mammalia, and obeying motives wholly alien to anything we know upon Earth—the exact degree of alienage depending, of course, on the scene of the tale; whether laid in the solar system, the visible galactic universe outside the solar system, or the *utterly un-*

plumbed gulfs still farther out—the nameless vortices of never-dreamed-of strangeness, where form and symmetry, light and heat, even matter and energy themselves, may be unthinkably metamorphosed or totally wanting. I have merely got at the edge of this in *Cthulhu*, where I have been careful to avoid terrestrialism in the few linguistic and nomenclatural specimens from Outside which I present. All very well—but will the readers stand for it? That's all they're likely to get from me in the future—except when I deal with definitely terrestrial scenes—and I am the last one to urge the acceptance of material of doubtful value to the magazine's particular purpose. Even when I deal with the mundanely weird, moreover, I shan't be likely to stress the popular artificial values and emotions of cheap fiction.

However—you can best judge this matter from some recent samples of my scribbling; wherefore I'll enclose, purely for your personal perusal, (although gawd knows you can print 'em if you like, since nobody else is likely to do so!) two characteristic neo-Lovecraftian outbursts—*The Silver Key* and *The Strange High House in the Mist*. I fancy you won't find much of professional interest in 'em—so that you may be sure your readers aren't missing much! When I do write any more things with a fairly earthly "slant", I'll certainly send them along, but my winter fiction crop consisted only of two novelettes too long for any but serial use, (and I haven't had the energy to type them yet, either!) whilst this spring and summer I've been too busy with revisory and kindred activities to write more than one tale—which, oddly enough, was accepted at once by *Amazing Stories* despite its full possession of the non-terrestrial qualities so characteristic of my recent work. Toward autumn I hope to arrange for some writing leisure, and shall then 'get off my chest' several plots which have been insistently clamouring for expression lately. Among these are at least two which I shall try on you—though they won't seem much like the recent *Weird Tales* type. . . .

I remain—most sincerely yrs.—

H. P. Lovecraft.

285. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

July 6, 1927

Sir Harbour-Master:—

Well, young man, it is with considerable elation that your Grandpa takes his pen in hand to present the first—and no doubt the final—housing bulletin of the promised series. Good luck is not altogether a vanished attribute of better days, nor are unexpected developments wholly an attribute of cheap fiction. Listen, therefore, to the following:

I have *ground-floor* quarters for you all—large adjoining rooms which were once double-parlours, with a double couch for your parents and a single couch (or a double one if you like plenty of space for nightmare writhing!) for yourself.

The *total* cost for *both* rooms will be only \$2.00 per day.

*And they are at #10 Barnes Street!*

Yes—the unexpected did take a turn in our favour! In conversing with Old Lady Reynolds it developed that she was perfectly willing to devote her own study and reception-room to visitorial accommodation, and she indeed displayed a most commendable zeal in furthering my plans for aestival hospitality. Not only will she accord to the House of Long a pair of rooms whose size, location, and decorative taste leave no ground for objection, but she will likewise provide a third-floor retreat for our 75-inch neo-Galpinus, so that all possible delegations for our festive conclave (except Mortonius, who loves his Crown Tavern) can be assembled under one lowly Victorian roof-tree! Your rooms are just across the hall from my silent and shadow-haunted cell, and are delightfully spacious and sunny. They front on a quiet bye-street—good old Barnes—and reveal exquisite glimpses of fresh village scenery: an old, decaying mansion with wooded yard in picturesque wildness, a trim little yellow cottage, and a well-kept Georgian garden with white fence and urn-topped posts. There is no running water in the rooms, but an excellent washbowl and mirror will be found in an alcove on the same floor—and one has only to light the gas-heater in the kitchen to get hot water in five minutes from the faucet. An excellent bathroom exists on the second floor—reached by a very easy flight of stairs and kept in faultless condition. In quiet and social tone nothing could be superior.

Every lodger without exception is descended from the best Rhode-Island colonial stock, and one—aged Miss Fowler on the 2nd floor—is a retired art-museum curator. Miss Reynolds herself is from England—solid, precise, fastidiously conscientious yeoman stock—a faded, gentlemanly soul whose chief interest is Christian Science and whose quaint, innately well-bred ways cause her to be greatly liked and admitted to equal conversation by all her tenants. Only an infrequent dropped “h” reveals her as born to less than armorial dignity—and I must say that even this plebeianism from one so amiable and instinctively refined is vastly more acceptable than the choicest Mayfair accent of that enigmatical ogress of yesterday—the tart and inimitable Mrs. Burns! I may add, that Miss Reynolds’ sisters have all married into good old Providence families; so that her position amongst gentlefolk is really on the firmest possible basis. Yes—on the whole I feel certain that #10 is in every way suited to the reception of a Lord Belknap’s family! The region of garages and eating-places is not prohibitively far off, and there is a bare possibility of securing accommodations for the repainted Essex in a private garage not many doors away (No orange cars, however, are allowed!) In any event, your household may feel perfectly safe in steaming right up to the door and leaving the rest to the host. I am ineffably glad that this good luck has occurred, for it is so much more festive to have everybody under one roof. Even Wandrei will be domiciled here if I can persuade him to stay that long. . . . .

Oh, by the way—returning to the almost forgotten and detestably tradesmanlike world of scribbling—pipe the accompanying line from Little Farny! Wandrei sure did wake him up! I’m sending *Cthulhu* again—gord give it good luck—and am slipping in the *Silver Key* and *Strange High House* just for his personal perusal. That dope about the *rates* sounds comforting!

Hoping for good weather and favourable aspects of the planets, I am, Sir, ever yr. hble, and obt. Grandsire.

Theobaldus Senex

286. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

10 Barnes St.  
July 15, 1927

Dear C A S:—

Wandrei is a great boy, & you will certainly be glad when he makes that future trip to California which he has in mind. I hope I'm not boring him by giving him heroic doses of the old New England world—for lovely as this region is, it must seem a bit tame to one habituated to the prismatic forests of Yog-Sothoth & the daemon-kindled auroras of the interstellar spaces. I shewed him archaic Newport with its centuried gambrel roofs & titan sea-cliffs the first day, & these hoary groves & Pan-haunted green hills the second & third days. Later we are going to Boston & digest all the scenic & historic sites & sights of the region, & on Tuesday we shall be back to welcome another of our merry crew—that divine old Falstaff among savants, James Ferdinand Morton, who is coming to Providence for five days. Then, on the 21st, the company will be increased by the advent of young Long & both his parents! We've tried to persuade Loveman, but he doesn't think he can make it.

Enormously sincere, even though necessarily trite, is our wish that you could be here for some such conclave as this! Try it some time—Wandrei can tell you all there is to be told about the art of hitch-hiking, whereby the expense of railway fare becomes as obsolete & quaint a memory as the era of good taste in literature! . . . . .

H P L

287. TO FARNSWORTH WRIGHT

10 Barnes St.  
Providence, R. I.  
July 16, 1927

My dear Wright:—

I am very glad to hear that you have found *Cthulhu* available for use, and assure you that \$165.00 is entirely adequate remuneration. I hope

that Price will like *The Strange High House*, and would certainly be surprised and pleased if it found its way to ultimate publication! A third pleasure is given me by the news of *Red Hook's* anthological reprinting; and I'd like to see the book if you can get me a copy later on. I can most emphatically and advantageously use any royalties, be they ever so humble, which may chance to trickle in from Mr. Lovell. . . .

With all good wishes,

Sincerely yrs.—

H. P. L.

288. TO MAURICE W. MOE

10 Barnes St.  
Providence, R. I.  
July 30, 1927

Rhetor Clarissime:—

Young Wandering Wandrei was the first to come and the last to leave. He blew in on July 12; and at once established himself in a delightful poet's garret in this very house, which the landlady let him have for \$3.50 per week. The next day I took him to archaick Newport, where he wander'd through the living past and revelled in his first sight of the wine-dark sea from titan cliffs—his only previous glimpse having been the week before, from the detestably squalid strand of Coney Island. The next couple of days we spent in the exquisite Quinsnicket region north of Providence—you know my pastorals on that idyllick realm—and on Saturday the sixteenth we started out for Boston. That afternoon was spent in the Museum of Fine Arts, and in the evening we explored the colonial byways of the town. We stopped at the Y. M. C. A., (and Wandrei complained the next day of invertebrate inhabitants of his humble couch, although I found neither them nor rodentia in my monastic cubicle) and the next day set out for Salem and Marblehead. Oh, Boy—but maybe I wasn't glad to lamp those archaick realms again! Hadn't seen 'em for a year, when I show'd George Kirk around. We did Salem with extreme thoroughness, including the Essex Institute and House of the Seven Gables; and therefore hopped a car for Marblehead. They have some fine new trolleys on that line now, with soft

leather seats like those of motor coaches. Counter-competition, as it were! Marblehead was . . . . Marblehead! What the hell more could be ask'd? We did most of the old town, and took the ferry across to the Neck, where Wandrei communed with his beloved and newly-discover'd sea from the rugged cliffs. You didn't visit the Neck, for there's nothing colonial there—it having been an open space us'd for fish-drying in the old days. At dusk we returned to Boston via Lynn, and made it a through trip to Providence while we were about it. The next day was spent in writing, but Tuesday the big delegation came. Little Frank Belknap with his papa and mamma in their new Essex horseless carriage, and good old James Ferdinand—needing a haircut, and with a yellowed straw hat two sizes too small for him. They came from opposite directions, Morton having been previously in Green Acre, Me., whilst the Longs motored directly from neo-Babylon. Morton stopped at his favourite local hostelry, the Crown, but Sonny's party had a couple of rooms at #10 Barnes, right across the hall from me—the landlady's study and reception-room, obligingly vacated for the occasion and rented for the astonishing pittance of a dollar a night each. The next day was spent in local sight-seeing, and that evening we had a regular old-time gang meeting—even hunting up the local scribbler C. M. Eddy, Jun. to pad out the personnel. On Thursday all hands took a trip to Newport—the Longs remaining on the cliffs and at the beach whilst Morton, Wandrei, and I took a hike into the Bishop Berkely country (cf. a former travelogue of mine) and wrote verses on the Hanging Rocks. Through all this sightseeing poor philistine Dr. Long was atrociously bored, and I was at my wits' end devising means to palliate his patient misery. At length, in the evening, the Fates intervened in my favour—in the form of an electric-appliance shop from whose broad doorway the Dempsey-Sharkey returns were in process of broadcasting. Doc was happy at last, and I felt that the day had not fallen wholly short of the elements of social success! The next morning the Longs departed on another leg of that protracted motor trip which is not to end till the last of August. They are having all their household mail forwarded in my care, and I am reforwarding whenever they telegraph me a temporary address. They've now done Cape Cod, Salem, Marblehead, Gloucester, Portland, and Belgrade Lakes, and are on their way to the White Mountains. It's a gay life—but they deserve the outing; for Dr. Long works like a slave when he works, whilst both Belknap and



his mamma are in such poor health—cardiac trouble—that they can never take walks or outings in the ordinary way. Transportation is a prime essential. Well—after the Long Essex chugged off, Morton led Wandrei and me on one of his characteristic mineralogical expeditions. (I think I told you of the one last month, when the local curator took us in his car.) This time, through a singular coincidence, the designated territory was a quarry on which I hold a mortgage; so that we were received with ceremonious hospitality by the Dago owner. The good old Roman set all his men to work hunting specimens, and his sportily Americanised son took us all home in his snappy new roadster—to say nothing of chugging back and fetching the geologist's hammer which Mortonius forgot. That's what I call real Latin courtesy! Later in the day we made another expedition to the exquisite scenic region north of Providence—securing no specimens, but getting a swell eye-full of landscape. Saturday morning all three of us went to Colonial Warren—down the east shore of the bay—and staged an ice-cream eating contest at the celebrated emporium of Mrs. Julia A. Maxfield—an aged matron of antient Warren lineage who has won fame by serving more flavours of ice cream than any other purveyor either living or dead. There are *twenty-eight* varieties this season, and we *sampled them all* within the course of an hour. Each would order a double portion—two kinds—and by dividing equally would ensure *six* flavours each round. *Five* rounds took us all through the twenty-eight and two to carry. Mortonius and I each consumed two and one-half quarts, but Wandrei fell down toward the last. Now James Ferdinand and I will have to stage an elimination match to determine the champion! Well—that same afternoon the next delegation arrived: good old W. Paul Cook and his weird-literary protégé H. Warner Munn from Athol. They came in Munn's car, and stopped at #10 in the rooms the Longs had so lately vacated. Munn is a splendid young chap—blond and burly, and just now sporting a gold medal awarded him for saving a man from drowning in the Hudson a couple of months ago. That night we all sat till two-thirty a. m. on a flat-topped tomb in St. John's hidden hillside churchyard which Poe used to love, and the next day we lounged about the Blackstone Park woods beside the Seekouk—agrestick haunt of my earliest infancy, and true genesis of my pastoral soul. Cook brought with him the book of Goodenough's poems which he has just printed, as well as an unfinished copy of his coming *Recluse*—containing my history of weird literature.

In the evening the Atholites had to return home—Cook leaving his raincoat behind, and Munn carrying off the garage key. My guests are apparently very forgetful—for even Little Belknap carried off the house key! Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday Wandrei and I rested and wrote letters and scoured bookshops. Thursday we explored the Athenaeum and art museum, and witnessed a marvellous sunset from Prospect Terrace. Friday morning I saw Wandrei off toward Athol—setting him on the right turnpike for Worcester-ward lifts, since he was to meet Cook in the latter town at two p. m. The balance of that day I spent in the Quinsnicket woods—whither I now take all such work, on pleasant days, as does not require typing. Saturday I repeated the woodland programme, and am now back at my desk as a rainy Sunday sets in. . . . .

Yrs. for better English tests—  
Lo.

289. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

Wednesday  
August 1927

Young Man:—

I was certainly glad in the extreme to meet Goodenough. The town of Brattleboro—once distinguished by the temporary residence of Rudyard Kipling—is a very attractive and hilly place which has just lost its street-car system; and I noted with melancholy interest the solitary car left standing on a residual bit of track just outside the decaying car-barn as a memorial of the days that were. It will be kept in perpetual repair, I am told.

Goodenough's country, west of the city, is the most colourful and unspoiled bit of the elder American which I have ever seen. It is truly our own ancestral land, without the least intrusion of any blood, customs, or devices alien to primal New England. The hills are high and green, the roads narrow and rutted, and the foliage rich and untainted. Everything modern and decadent is left behind as one enters this Arcadian and time-defying elder world, and it is almost possible to imagine a special magical quality in the air, and a deeper, purer blue in the sky. Farm-

steads are few, but now and then they peep out slantingly and picturesquely amidst the boskage of the steep slopes. Most of the houses are peaked and unpainted, but all possess the natural grace and beauty inherent in perfect simplicity, honest construction, and unconscious adaptation to the landscape and the civilisation. It is, in truth, a complete realisation of everything I have ever sought in idyllic life and scenery.

Yr. obt.  
Grandpa

290. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

10 Barnes St.  
August 2, 1927

Dear C A S:—

I was exceedingly pleased to hear of your vivid vacation, & can picture something of the strangeness & fantastic wonder in the scenery you so tantalisingly describe. I would certainly like to behold a landscape of so imaginatively provocative a character, since my experience has so far included nothing of the actually grand or sublime. At the same time I doubt if any scenery could affect me quite as poignantly & permanently as the mild, rich, traditional topography of my native New England. There are really two distinct personalities in me—the cosmic & fantastic on the one hand, & the historical, domestic, & antiquarian on the other hand. In my contacts with written literature the fantastic is paramount, but in all contacts with real life or the visible world the old-fashioned, soil-loving, conservative Yankee has full sway. Few persons have ever been as closely knit to New England's rock-ribbed hills as I. Nothing else on earth has power to thrill me as poignantly as an old Rhode-Island upland at sunset, with straggling lines of stone wall, cool woods in the background, & dappled kine with tinkling bells strolling homeward through the green of the grass & the grey of the out-cropping granite ledges. And the little white gables of archaic farmhouses, windows lighting up one by one to match the twilight fireflies by the still meadow pool, are things without which I could not live very long. . . . .

Ever yr most hble & obt Servt  
H P L

291. TO ZEALIA BROWN REED (BISHOP)

Providence, R. I.  
Aug. 28, 1927

My dear Mrs. Reed:—

When I was seven I encountered *Poe*—which fixed my taste for all time, so far as the subject-matter and approximate mood of fiction are concerned. Somehow I cannot become truly interested in anything which does not suggest incredible marvels just around the corner—glorious and ethereal cities of golden roofs and marble terraces beyond the sunset, or vague, dim cosmic presences clawing ominously at the thin rim where the known universe meets the outer and fathomless abyss. The world and all its inhabitants impress me as immeasurably insignificant, so that I always crave intimations of larger and subtler symmetries than these which concern mankind. All this, however, is purely aesthetic, and not at all intellectual. I have a parallel nature or phase devoted to science and logic, and do not believe in the supernatural at all—my philosophical position being that of a mechanistic materialist of the line of Leucippus, Democritus, Epicurus, and Lucretius—and in modern times, Nietzsche and Haeckel.

..... When I was very small, I was all for fantasy—as I am now. Then came a period of science—chemistry, astronomy, biology, anthropology, etc.—during which I despised all literature and aesthetics, although continuing to write tales. Then at eighteen I turned to poetry and criticism, not returning to weird fiction for nine more years. And now, at thirty-seven, I am gradually headed for pure antiquarianism and architecture, and away from literature altogether! Heaven knows where I'll end up—but it's a safe bet that I'll never be at the top of anything! Nor do I particularly care to be. Thus you may see that I am to be counted out in any calculation of time and concerted effort in literary progress. . . . A youth who began writing only three or four years ago in High school has just placed at least three fantastic yarns with *Weird Tales*, while a friend has recently told me of a boy *still in High School* who has struck sudden success through a novel of High School life. It is all a gamble—depending on a vast number of separate factors such as native ability, natural sense of words and style, ambition, energy, right-

ness of direction, leisure time, state of public taste, coincidence of subject-matter with popular demand, opportunities and influence, and so on. It is virtually impossible to predict the future course of anyone, since only experience tests the real proportion of the various factors. The boy for whom I predicted the quickest success of all—averitable infant marvel whose cerebral gymnastics left me beaten and amazed—has dropped literature altogether and is desperately studying *music* in an effort to be come a composer; meanwhile teaching French in Northwestern University as a bread-and-butter side-line! The vitually important thing is *not to care* about progress as such, but merely to assimilate and express for the pure pleasure of assimilating and expressing. A watched pot, says the old adage, never boils—and the best way to cover ground is not to think about the goal, but to tackle each step for the sheer joy of the immediate process. *Spontaneity* is the greatest of all qualities not only in art but in learning as well. It is to some extent the secret of all aesthetic life.

As for the use of pseudonyms—I don't see either any good or any harm in the practice. It's all a matter of taste. Commercially, of course, one must expect to stick to whatever he adopts—he must do all his deciding beforehand; for when one name gets known, it is folly to use any other. Editors generally insist that a popular contributor continue to use the name under which he gained his recognition—although they don't care whether the name is genuine or assumed. The only objection to a pseudonym is the possibility that one may after a long time regret that he did not bring his own name to celebrity. It is possible for an author to become jealous of the fictitious personality he has built up—resenting the homage which critics accord to "Fitz-John Neville Rockingham," whilst plain Wilbur J. Brown is unknown to fame's eternal beadroll. Perhaps an eighth of the recognized American writers of today—none, however, of the very topmost rank since "Mark Twain"—use pseudonyms or contractions. "Anthony Hope" is Anthony H. Hawkins. "Fulton Oursler" has dropped the praenomen of Charles. "Murray Leinster" 's real name is Jenkins, and Ernest Seton Thompson is now sporting the curiously transposed designation of Ernest Thompson Seton. Theodore Dreiser has always stuck to his real family name, but his elder brother Paul—the song-writing idol of the 'nineties—affected the variant form of Dresser.

No one can advise another regarding the choice of a nom de guerre, since only one's self can fully grasp all the sentimentally associative fac-

tors concerned. When an author especially cherishes and wishes to honour a particular line of his ancestry which his surname does not express, I think he is eminently justified in effecting some transposition or interpolation better fitted to his state of mind. But once he does it, he must stick to it. If I were you I would use the name which subtly seems to you the most natural—the most ingrainedly your own—whether it be Haslett, Brown, or Reed. There is surely no logical basis for disliking the latter—for it is tasteful, euphonious, and by no means undistinguished. In Portland, where I have just been, there is a statue of Speaker Thomas Brackett Reed in one of the principal park-like promenades; and all the guide-books point out his birthplace as a shrine to visit! For my part, I have always used my own name as a matter of course—for sheer lack of any reason to use any other—except for hack work too poor to be acknowledged. When an author produces only one kind of work he can use any one name he likes—though it is sometimes advisable to employ another designation for work conspicuously out of one's own line. Thus the mathematician and text-book writer C. L. Dodgson found it advisable to become "Lewis Carroll" when writing *Alice in Wonderland*. My only general objection to pseudonyms is that they tend to imply a sort of self-consciousness or self-dramatisation on the user's part, which is somewhat foreign to the process of impersonal, disinterested artistic creation. They imply that the user stands off and thinks of himself as an author, instead of being so wrapped up in his aesthetic vision that he never regards himself as a person at all.

With every good wish, I remain  
most cordially and sincerely yrs.,  
HPLovecraft.

292. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

Home Again  
Sept. 6, 1927

Young Man:—

Well, the orgy is over at last, and the Old Gentleman is weakly gasping amidst the prodigious welter of work which piled up during his absence. Shall I ever see daylight again? Only Māna-Yood-Sushāi can

tell! I burrow—I wallow—and still there press spectrally upon me the sinister shadows of imperative agenda. Where did I mislay that cyanide? No matter, a revolver will do. But first I must get those Bullen proofs out of the way!

I think I shall adopt a frock coat . . . . it would accord magnificently with my increasingly provincial and Sabbatarian personality. And of course I shall wear a top hat. Dwyer appears to be a very untrammelled and aesthetic soul—whilst good Dr. Kuntz fits in well with the lofty mountains whereof he hath sang so often and so tunefully. I also send recent Clericash-tonick material, (please return) Wandrei's rhapsody anent the new Smith pictures which you'll see in due course of time, (please return) the cover design prepared by Orton for *The Recluse*, (please return) and a pathetic little note (needn't return) from an honest old friend whom you must visit and cheer up at the very first opportunity.

I think that travelling laurels may be very evenly divided amongst yourself, Melmoth the Wandrei, and your antient Grandpa. The Old Gentleman certainly did cover considerably ground, as sundry cards have doubtless apprised you; and the best part of it was, that all the territory was equally rich in just the sort of antiquities and scenic effects desired. Portland is unmistakably *American*, and therein lies its charm—Victorianism or no Victorianism. Many districts—especially around Danforth, Spring, High, and Park Streets—are still predominantly late-Georgian; and I have discovered a special kind of Portland facade and doorway. I wish I could have seen the place in 1921, with its towering poles and lusty lumberjacks; but even now it is fascinating to one from the more decadent southerly regions. There may be too many people, but at least they are not of the repulsive type found in a modern metropolis. The whole town has a cleaner atmosphere than I have found in any other sizeable city—there is an easy wholesomeness which reminds one of what Providence probably was in 1870, or Boston in 1820. . . . . The only trouble with Portland is the climate. God! They say it gets down to 16 below in midwinter!

Gloucester surely has all the colour you attribute to it, and I spent two full days there—exploring with the aid of an excellent guide book, and studying the interiors of the Ellery (1704) and Sargent-Murray-Gilman (1763) houses. The life and colour of maritime New England have surely made their last stand here, and the waterfront is a thing of

delight even though one wishes the sloops and schooners were varied by an occasional brig or other square-rigger. . . . . After doing the town with a fine-tooth comb, I began on the suburbs. The old Riggs house in Annisquam was well worth a call, whilst the whole village of Rockport—as you must have seen from the panoramick card—is a thing to dream about. I ended up with the titan cliffs of Magnolia—memories of which prompted *The Strange High House in the Mist*—and found their charm undiminished. You can't imagine their majesty unless you've seen them—primal rock and sea and sky . . . . and the bells of the buoys tolling free in the aether of faery! Wandrei would rhapsodise unlimitedly over them. After that I ambled down the coast through colonial Manchester and drearily modern Beverly to witch-haunted Salem, where I took on a goodly cargo of impressions before ending up in incomparable *Marblehead*. God Save the King! After that climax, I had to shut my mind to all external images as I scuttled home through accursed Lynn and mediocre Boston. . . . .

. . . . All told, there is little doubt but that Massachusetts is the really finest and most civilised state in the Union. Boston—as you will see when greater age causes you to cease magnifying quaint special limitations—is really an enormously mature and ripely cultivated city . . . leagues beyond anything New York ever was or could have been, even had it not met its present ruin. There is a mellow, pervasive sense of beauty in the fine details of life—the streets and parks and monuments are planned and named and adorned with a conscious art instinct utterly wanting in most American towns, and the hereditary manners and customs of the real inhabitants shew a graceful linkage with authentic sources which no other social body can parallel—except perhaps the aristocracy of Virginia and the Carolinas.

As for Providence—don't forget that the town I praise is *wholly the hill section east of the bridge*. The rest I have never championed—although it is at least no worse than any other city of the region, and better than most. The old town—the hill alone, with its noble steeples and fanlighted doorways and ivied brick walls—that is my Providence! It's odd how relative all our judgments are. After two years in the scrofulous bastard-city of New York I thought the crowds of Providence looked refreshingly human and Nordic; but now, with N. Y. impressions pretty well erased from my mind and the wholesome faces of Portland and Portsmouth and Newburyport and Marblehead fresh in my



memory, the business section seems discouragingly mongrel and decadent—Latin and out of place. But the old hill is all right, thank god, and probably will be as long as I live. Even Portland can't beat that—solid Yankee blood that grew up with the colony! God Save the King! . . . . .

. . . As to a decorative scheme for your future room—well, tastes differ, but I never liked any other colour combination so well as *black-and-gold*. To my naive and undeveloped aesthetick sense that represents about the apex of dignified beauty—perhaps because that was the scheme in the front hall of my birthplace, 454 Angell Street. I myself would probably choose something more traditionally colonial—pale woodwork and mahogany furniture and hangings of appropriately varied colours—but that would be a decision influenced by historical as well as artistick considerations. Ebony and gold is the aesthetick mixture—although old gold and rose is a great scheme, as the front parlour of my birthplace amply proved. There was an almost Oriental richness in that room, as in the palace of a caliph—I used to read the *Arabian Nights* there with an especial zest.

. . . One may easily sympathise for a time with the rebellious artists who point out the insignificance of human inhibitions, but they begin to fatigue one when they persist in denying equal insignificance to the freakishly extravagant instincts which they so consistently exalt. Where so little sense of proportion exists, it is impossible to feel any sense of serious power—and as art material, this conventional perversity is becoming woefully hackneyed since Huysmans. Anti-humanism, in its extreme phases, becomes exceedingly ridiculous; since it assumes as many values of purely arbitrary unreality as does pro-humanism. Both attitudes are essentially silly and unscientific, since mankind is merely one type of matter among many, and no more to be loved and respected, or hated and repudiated, than any other type of matter. Crystals, colloids, metals, protozoa, men, molecules, ether-waves, baboons—they are all the same, so far as their significance in infinity is concerned, and there is no more reason for men to 'break the mould of humanity' than for starfish to break the mould of starfishery. Let each species amble along from nothing to nothing as it must inevitably do . . . that's Nature . . . why get excited? It amuses me to see a kid like Wandrei nursing such extremes of misanthropy. Why men are any more *essentially* offensive—apart from one's personal taste—than trees, is some-

thing I can't possibly see. Of course, so far as personal taste goes, I'm no lover of humanity. To me cats are in every way more graceful and worthy of respect—but I don't try to raise my personal bias to the spurious dignity of a dogmatic generality. . . .

Yr. obt.  
Grandpa

293. TO ZEALIA BROWN REED (BISHOP)

10 Barnes St.  
Providence, R. I.  
Sept. 8, 1927

My dear Mrs. Reed:—

. . . From Newburyport—after a side-trip to see a friend in Haverhill—I proceeded through ancient Ipswich to Gloucester, the last of the really unchanged New England fishing ports. Here—despite a growing Portuguese and Italian invasion—one may actually get a lingering taste of old New England's maritime past, along a waterfront filled with sail-lofts, ship-chandleries, and seamen's missions, and with an old-fashioned tangle of spars and rigging rising above the blue harbour beyond. The old houses, too, are numerous and fine—I went through two of them, one built in 1704 and the other in 1768. After "doing" Gloucester I visited some of the still quainter suburbs—such as Rockport—and obtained a bit of natural grandeur on the cliffs at Magnolia, where the ocean pounds in supreme splendour at the historic rock of Norman's Woe. Subsequently I worked down the coast through Manchester to Salem and Marblehead—these last two the absolute nuclei and quintessences of the American colonial tradition. Salem—the town of Hawthorne holds many a relic of the 1692 witchcraft; whilst Marblehead is the most unchanged colonial town in the United States—narrow, curving, hilly streets, unpaved and sidewalkless, and brown, crumbling lines of quaint houses which have stood unaltered since the early 1700's. After Marblehead anything else would have been anticlimax, so I hastened unobservantly home through prosaic Lynn and hackneyed Boston—reaching here Friday midnight and subsequently reaping the whirlwind of massed labour caused by previous neglect. But the trip

was worth it. I gathered enough impressions to make another year endurable, whether or not they come out as crystallised images in any tales I may write.

..... As for fumiferous indulgence on my part—let me express a very keen appreciation of your kindness in proffering a nicotinic tribute ere I remark that the odour on that carbon copy must have come from the desk which my genial Athol host placed at my disposal! The fact is, that I've never smoked since donning long trousers; since the fragrant weed is to me no more than a choking nuisance. When I was small, I smoked because it was the grown-up, masculine, and forbidden thing to do; but as soon as I could present a reasonably grown-up appearance without it, I relievedly suffered it to become a none-too-cherished memory. I naturally have to tolerate clouds of mephitic vapour from most of my friends, and I flatter myself that I do it without complaint. But at least I don't have to thicken the cloud of tear-gas by any voluntary exhalations of my own! But again let me thank you for a kindness which I appreciate none the less because of my un-chimney like predilections.

I remain Yrs. very sincerely,  
HPLovecraft

294. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Sept. 13, 1927

Focus and Pivot of the Ultimate Cosmos:—

I'll ask little Farnie what other *Weird Tales* hacks endure the fifth and miasma of the neo-Babylonish area, though I don't fancy he'd answer me any more readily than he would Sonny. Grandpa doesn't stand in very thick with that outfit now that *The Dark Lore* and *The Bride of Osiris* are the kind of stuff they cultivate. . . . .

Yrs. for civick uplift--

Θεοβάλδος  
Theobaldus

295. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

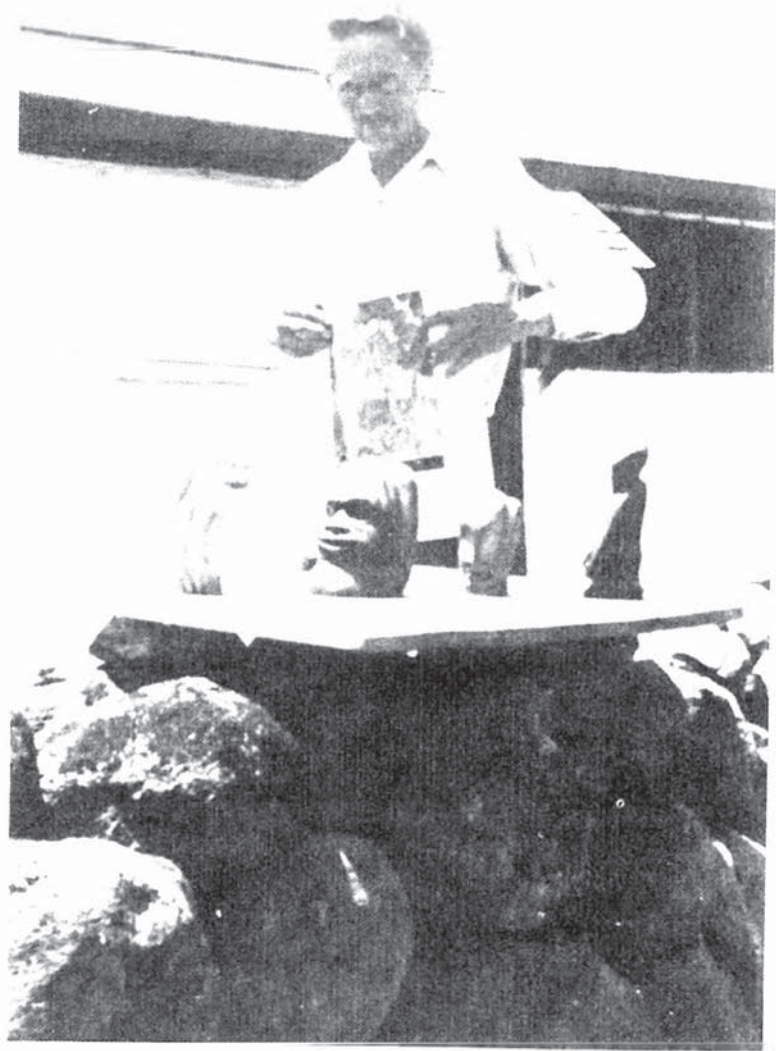
Providence-Plantation  
Sept. 17, 1927

My dear Grandchild:—

I was yesterday much pleas'd to receive your note, & to learn that you are finding agreeable diversion in the archaick & elegantly cultivated town of Newport. . . . . I trust you are not missing any opportunity to bask in the vivid atmosphere of antiquity, & hope that it forms a pleasing prolongation of influences dominant during your Truman Beckwich sojourn. It is indeed unfortunate that so many of the ancient places are in a state of decay, but one may be thankful that they are there at all. At least, they are better than the colourless abodes of unimaginative luxury, in whose mechanical perfections there is little or nothing to stimulate & satisfy the aesthetic consciousness. . . . .

Another outland pilgrimage is to the Bishop Berkeley country, some four miles beyond Newport beach on the road to Middletown. For this also a carriage is needful to such as are not hardy & accomplisht pedestrians. Proceed by any route—Bath Road is the main one—to the beach, continuing up the hill beyond to where the neo-colonial belfry & Gothick church tower of St. George's School peep picturesquely out from the hill-crowning verdure. At the crest of the hill, where the road sweeps down to the left to Second Beach, turn in along the sand road that goes to the right, & get across to the edge of the great rock cliffs on foot. Here will be found the celebrated chasm or tide-washed rift known as "Purgatory"—a majestick formation which compares very favourably with its analogues at Magnolia (Rafe's Chasm) & Marblehead. (The chasm on M'head Neck.) Proceeding onward—down to Second Beach—we see silhouetted above the shore to the north the bold crags known both as "Paradise" & as the "Hanging Rocks". On the first ledge three-quarters of the way up, with the topmost sections overhanging as a canopy, was the favourite afternoon seat of the good Bishop (then Dean of Derry) who adorned this region with the cultivating influence of his presence from 1729 to 1732. It was on this ledge that he composed the greater part of *Alciphron: or, the Minute Philosopher*,





Clark Ashton Smith with some of his sculptures

the fifth book of which opens with a very pretty description of the Newport countryside, & of the fox-hunting of the local 'squires. The whole scene here is exquisitely delightful—blue of sea & sky, white of gleaming beach & fleecy cloud, grey of noble crag & ledge, & deep, restful green of kine-dotted pasture & hillock. Over all, on the inland side, towers the grey Gothick church of St. George's School; giving in that setting a perfect & poignantly lovely facsimile of a gentle English landscape, with hedge, croft, & distant abbey. One cannot resist the inclination to burst into numbers at such a sight:

Where the bright Blue assaults the chalk-white Strand,  
 The beetling, ledge-lin'd Cliffs titanick stand;  
 Here verdant Fields in sunny Calm extend,  
 Whilst the low waves agreeable Echoes lend.  
 On yonder Knoll an Abbey Tow'r is spy'd,  
 And pastur'd Kine survey the rising Tide;  
 O'er all the Hush of rustick Virtue glows,  
 And antient Mem'ry grants the Soul repose.

Where now the Idler scales the craggy Ground,  
 Philosophy in Triumph once was found;  
 For each grey Rock above the Blue upthrown  
 A Berkeley's Feet and Berkeley's Thoughts hath known!  
 Beneath yon hanging Peak's petrifick Shade  
 An Alciphron in all its Parts was made,  
 And ev'ry Path some ling'ring Trace contains  
 Of the great Clerick's wise melodious Strains:  
 Wou'd that my sterile Muse might here ignite  
 With some residual Spark of that vast Light!

Hoping you'll fully appreciate Newport's antiquities—I remain

Yr. aff. Nephew & obt Servt.

H. P. L.

296. TO ZEALIA BROWN REED (BISHOP)

10 Barnes St.  
Providence, R. I.  
Sept. 22, 1927

My dear Mrs. Reed:—

..... No story can be truly potent unless it mirrors or suggests larger segments of entity than its mere characters. There is nothing new or interesting in the pitiful fretting and mating and quarreling and killing and parting of a few commonplace human beings. Cheap newspapers and dime novels have so fed the public up on this sort of thing that nothing of freshness or novelty is left—everything is known or expected, for it has been told a thousand times before in one guise or another. A story becomes arresting and significant only when its elements stand out as well-linked components or symbols of some larger cosmos. either by artistic treatment of the events or by a faithful and scientifically individualised depiction of the various characters. Ordinary characters ordinarily treated do not make a story. If the characters are to possess only the commonplace, unimaginative emotions and motives, then the events must be handled in so poetic a fashion that the very commonplaceness of the folk will form a brilliant symbol of their helplessness in the toils of fate. ....

I thought you'd realise, after reading *Pickman's Model*, (one of my very tamest and mildest effusions) that not much of my own style gets into my revisions. Incidentally, the setting of that tale was very close to fact up to this year, and I was tremendously mortified last July when I tried to show the district to one of my guests (the Donald Wandrei whose *Red Brain* appears in the current *Weird Tales*) and found the whole scene torn down for two blocks around! I imagine the building inspectors must have found those ancient houses as sinister as I did, albeit with a different sort of perception. That is the perennial grief of an architectural antiquarian—in a city as large as Providence or Boston something quaint is always being demolished in the interest of alleged progress. ....

I remain yrs. very sincerely,  
HPLovecraft.



297. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

Theobald Manor

24 September, 1727

Young Man:—

..... When I get other genealogical tables from my aunt I shall look up all the arms at the library—if my enthusiasm for the subject lasts that long. It is an admirably gentlemanly pastime—but takes too much research, I fear, for a feeble and increasingly childish old man. As soon as my visitor is gone I shall probably lapse back into my customary state of incurious quiescence. But Talman is indefatigable in this species of quest. Whilst I was digging up my various hereditary shields and paraphernalia, he was beside me and exhuming about ten of his ancestral escutcheons to every one of mine. Sancta Pegāna, but what a memory and what energy the child has! I made one amazingly gratifying discovery, and that is that the present British representative of my Phillips branch (who spells his name *Philipps*. Our common ancestors used *Philips*, but each sub-branch made a different modification in later years) is a *Baronet*—Sir James Philipps! God Save the King! . . . .

Yes—there is something of yours in *The Recluse*—the St. Anthony poem—tho' I wish there were more. Too bad you recalled the story you had contributed! It's quite a gang affair on the whole, with you, Wandrei, Clericashtonius, Loveman, Cook himself, (editorials) Orton, and your Grandpa all implicated.

I shall presently send you *The Worm Ouroboros*, which like you I passed up at the Chelsea—on the strength of a review which I now perceive to have been illiterately unintelligent, and which hailed the book (of all things!!) as a 'clever piece of social satire!' O ——— ———  
——— O Ottawa! As a matter of fact the story is conceived and executed in the spirit of mediaeval romance, and the language is sheer music and poetry. Not a trace of satire, humour, or allegory—and Pegāna, *what descriptions!* I must read the author's other book as mentioned on the jacket—*Styrbion the Strong*. Never shall I cease to thank Cook for forcing me to read this book despite my hasty preconceived prejudice!

As for your new novelette—look here, young man, you'd better be mighty careful how you treat your aged and dignified Grandpa as here! You mustn't make me do anything cheerful or wholesome, and remem-

ber that only the direst of damnations can befit so inveterate a daemon of the cosmick abysses. And, young man, *don't forget that I am prodigiously lean*. I am *lean*—LEAN, I tell you! *Lean!* And if you're afraid that my leanness will make the horror get you instead, why just reduce like your Grandpa and escape as well! And be sure to depict me in my new Puritan frock coat. I think I shall adopt an umbrella also—as a constant companion like your urbanely sophisticated walking stick. Nothing like dressing the part, as Esry said while adjusting his nose-ring so as not to get tangled in his pink whiskers.

Your map certainly shews a marvellous trip and I must confess myself quite eclipsed as a neo-Manderville. But look here, young man—*what did you tear that map from?* Hasn't your Grandpa told you not to deface all your nice books? For shame, Sir! To think that a grandchild of mine shou'd so little appreciate literature! In Moslem countries people move out of their path to avoid treading on a printed page. That's the sort of reverence one ought to have . . . better imbibe a little of it from that Algerian vista which seems to have moved you so much! I herewith return the chart—now paste it right back where you found it like a good young sophisticate! . . .

I note your household removal with a certain species of gentle melancholy, for to me good old 823 was the one oasis in all the metropolitan desert which really seemed like home. The old West End and rooth corner, with its characteristic topography and distant glimpses of blue river and green hills beyond, still holds a certain touch of the familiar and the pleasant; and I shall hate to think of The Hanover as suffering beneath the wrecker's hands. And how can I ever learn to write another address than the accustomed 823 of eight years' habit? It is no light matter to a settled and patrician feline to have a virtually lifelong set of environmental conditions thus summarily uprooted! Ah, me—but one may still dream of old scenes and the days that were.

Theobaldus Senex.

298. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

10 Barnes St.

Oct. 1, 1927

Dear C A S:—

Your letter arrived very opportunely, amidst the carnival of fantastic enjoyment caused by the paintings which Wandrei forwarded to me. How can I do these marvels justice in mere words, without running into the unclassical realms of the effusive & the ecstatic? Truly, I have never before seen such profoundly soul-moving glimpses of alien worlds with haunted skies & jungles of prismatic madness! It is such a series of forbidden revelations as one might spy through some magic window of the sort described in Dunsany's *Book of Wonder* . . . . . & how one shivers with apprehension on approaching that brooding Saturnian coast—dim & grey & pink with one knows not what petrifying mysteries? At this early stage of appreciative contemplation I can't pick favourites. The Saturnine triumph in oil may be the most ambitious, but the fine & delicate water-colours hold insidious implications of cosmic strangeness which grow upon one as one looks. The cloth panels are magnificent—there is a half-Japanese exoticism about the black ones. Altogether, this is a marvellous riot of wonder & half-concealed terror, & I shall be reluctant to pass the collection on. I shall faithfully do so, however,—either to Long or to Dwyer, so that all may ultimately have a glimpse. Needless to say, I shall caution the gang in N.Y. to be very careful in handling these precious articles. I am enclosing Wandrei's rhapsody on the paintings—which may or may not be identical with that which he penned to you. I agree with you that the capacity for such ecstasy is an attribute of youth which those of maturer years may well envy. . . . .

. . . . . Your own ability to produce creative work in the face of obstacles is really much greater than mine—I haven't done a thing since last spring, whilst you always have a sizeable array of poems or paintings to your credit. I haven't very much energy or perseverance—the uselessness of everything, including even aesthetic effort, overshadows my consciousness & coöperates with my native indolence in defeating all progressive or constructive developments.

As to my recent reading—above all else I'd recommend *The Worm Ouroboros*, by E. R. Eddison, which combines some gloriously imaginative phantasy with an exquisitely lyrical prose style. Next to that in literary worth I'd place the new drama *Goat Song*, by Franz Werfel, in which the element of brooding & imminent terror is magnificently handled. *Atlantideer*, by Pierre Benoit, has excellent style but is more adventurous than fantastic. In *The Three Eyes* Maurice Leblanc ruins a splendid interplanetary theme by puerile popular treatment. Robert W. Chambers' *Slayer of Souls* was a vast disappointment—he can't get back to the *King in Yellow* mood after a quarter-century of best-sellerism! I also skimmed over Charles Fort's *New Lands*, but didn't find it as interesting as *The Book of the Damned*. Now—if I can get the leisure—I mean to read *The World's Desire*, by Haggard & Long. I gave Long a birthday present of de Gourmont's *Virgin Heart* two years ago, but didn't read it myself. I haven't written any stories since *The Colour Out of Space*, but hope to get around to a hell-raiser or two in the later autumn.

With all best wishes—

Yr most obt

H P L

299. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Lud's Day

October 1927

Minaret of Magnificence:—

Why you aren't interested in old almanacks is more than I can fathom. They are fascinating symbols of national continuity, and delicious bits of informal rural folklore. I suppose you know that Prof. Kittredge of Harvard has written a book of old New England lore based on the *Farmer's Almanack*—its contents and history. I have this volume—you really ought to read it! It's as much a part of a New England education as Friends' Beans! It sure did give me a kick to find Dudley Leavitt's *Farmer's Almanack* still going after all these years. The last previous copy I had seen was of the Civil War period. But of course my main standby is Robt. B. Thomas's old reliable.

Well—I suppose you got the card from hereabouts proclaiming the sojourn of that supreme artist and heraldick authority, Wilfred Blanch Talman of Spring Valley, New-Netherlands. He blew in Friday morning, and has since been engaged in the noble task of getting Grandpa interested in heraldry. Never before was I so conscious of my humiliating ignorance of a subject of which every armigerous gentleman ought to possess at least a smattering; and I have now resolved to make a study of the subject, employing the famous and standard treatise of Fox-Davies. Friday afternoon Talman took me to the genealogical department of the publick library and shewed me how to look up the arms of various lines which converge in me; and he also was kind enough to draw several different coats of which I have possessed verbal descriptions only. . . . .

Yr. obt.

ΘΕΟΒΑΛΔΟΣ

Theobaldus

300. TO WALTER J. COATES

October 13, 1927

My dear Coates:—

. . . . . I am collecting all the ancient New England almanacks I can find—having started with my own family file of the Old Farmer's, which we have always had, generation after generation. This file had become rather fragmentary with the passing of the years, so that when it came into my possession it was *continuous* only back to 1877, with anterior scattered numbers going back to 1815. I have, by purchase, filled up many of the gaps, so that my present file goes back continuously to 1839, and has scattering numbers back to 1805. I want eventually to complete it absolutely, from 1773 to the present moment.—but I fear that will be a long and costly task. These old almanacks have a quaint flavour of archaism very alluring to me— . . .

H. P. L.

301. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

10 Barnes St.  
Octr. 15, 1927

Dear C A S:—

As to futility & work—I have come to the comfortably elderly condition of not caring a rap whether I do anything or not! I had really much rather read than write things, & would not write at all if I could find exactly what I want—written by some one else. My environmental requirements are rather unlike yours—although, such as they are, they are very exacting. What I absolutely *must* have—& that is about the *only* thing really essential to me—is a general atmosphere exactly like that of my youth—the same scenes, the same kind of faces & voices & thoughts & opinions around me—the same type of sounds & impressions. I did not realise my dependence on these things till I tried living in New York, but then I was very soon made to see my essential attachment to them. I discovered that the cosmic & cosmopolitan element in me is the thinnest of veneers, & that I am actually—so far as all the deeper emotions & springs of action are concerned—an extremely localised New Englander of the most pronounced type. In New York my mental processes were virtually atrophied for want of contact with the impressions which form their exclusive nourishment—I was an unassimilated alien there, & always would have been. Only the return home liberated & resuscitated my faculties, such as they are. Now all these environmental concerns have nothing to do with people—except as vague & distant decorative elements, to be classified according to what their dress, physiognomy, & voice contribute to the general geographical impression. Intellectual companionship I do not really require—except so far as correspondence is concerned—since my ideal is to be an absolutely passive & non-participating spectator to the pageant of meaningless existence. As a matter of fact, the mental attitude of Providence would probably be decidedly hostile to me if I tried to mingle in it—but I've never tried, so far. I simply don't care whether or not I see & talk to anybody except my family. My family don't care for the weird, but they don't object to my caring for it—hence provide an atmosphere of friendly harmony even though they aren't likely to share my ravings anent Algernon Blackwood or Arthur Machen. And of course, there are

plenty of other topics, antiquarian & otherwise, which we *can* discuss with perfect satisfaction. Thus I really don't feel any need of outside contacts—books give that—& judge my environment by its *massed pictorial effect*. I was born & reared in a certain kind of old town, with certain kinds of antient steeples & doorways around me, certain kinds of faces & voices flitting through the scene, a certain kind of house in a certain kind of quiet neighbourhood containing me, certain articles of furniture, painting, statuary, & bric-a-brac in the rooms through which I walked, certain books on the shelves, & certain staid & conservative New England social & moral & political attitudes floating about in the circumambient conversation. These things, I find, are all that spell *reality* in life to me. As soon as I am apart from them, everything becomes spurious & two-dimensional—vague fragments of a dream in which I have no business to be. It may be that the alien milieu is intrinsically richer in aesthetic & intellectual value—but that means nothing to me. My aesthetic & intellectual life are lived in books anyhow, all exclusive of people & material surroundings, & owe nothing to companionship. What I need is simply *my own* fabric as a matter of cosmic symmetry—be it worse or better than anybody else's fabric. That ethereal sense of identity with my own native & hereditary soil & institutions is the one essential condition of intellectual life—& even of a sense of complete existence & waking reality—which I cannot do without. Like Antaeus of old, my strength depends on repeated contact with the soil of the Mother Earth that bore me.

With all good wishes, & thanking you prodigiously for that nameless head from the black planet, Yadoth, I remain

Yr most obt

H P L

302. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

Thursday

November, 1927

Young Man:—

..... *The Worm Ouroboros* is assuredly a phantastical classic of the first order, and I know not where else in current letters you can find an equal exaltation of the heroick spirit. In regard to the matter of

*humour*, I do not think either Mr. Cabell or myself meant to convey the impression that a subdu'd and legitimate seasoning of it is wanting at such points as will bear it to advantage. I, at least, meant merely that the subject as a whole is neither flippantly nor satirically conceiv'd; that phantasy is not describ'd for the purpose of laughing at phantasy, nor heroick feeling pictur'd for the purpose of shewing how vain and unsophisticated heroick feeling is. I am no enemy to humour in its proper place, tho' I think it is in this age greatly overvalu'd, and that it is not a *leading* characteristick of the greatest and most vigorous ages. You will find no plethora of it in Homer or Virgil, and I believe a close analysis of it would prove that it is not so much a department of beauty, as an ingenious intellectual negation of that quality. This, however, is but the passing opinion of an old country-gentleman without literary interests or pretensions; and I wou'd not have any serious student attach weight or importance to it. . . . .

As for my alleg'd silence—I can conceive of only a suspension of the postal service as the cause of the illusion, insomuch as James Ferdinand and honest Mac have both been known to my outgoing mail-box—yea, and Samuelus Entychides, to whom an epistle, a catalogue-acknowledgment, and a request to shew the Klarkash-Ton drawings to De Casseres were alike despatcht in proper form. No legitimate communications to our offices are ever suffer'd to remain unacknowledg'd; a policy upon whose maintenance our customers may consistently rely. Incidentally, Jacobus Ferdinandus speaks alarmingly of our Hermaphrodite's resignation of his 10-per-week situation, and his embarkation with a partner on the ambiguous seas of independent commerce! For Circē's sake I hope this bulletin is an exaggeration; for the amiable bard has all the business craftiness of an unborn cherub, and wou'd be more dispos'd to give his stock away with a generous gesture than to sell it. If the news be true, however, I trust that the unctuous Baälím of the old stand will not be reluctant to reëstablish relations at the old salary after the glorious ascent of the new venture to the bosom of St. Nicholas.

. . . . It takes more skill than mine to interpret the terms of heraldry; and since the departure of my expert inciter I have found a full score of verbal blazonings in my archives, whose pictorial significance I am not likely to learn unless I call upon his valuable time for aid. I owe Talman a debt for arousing me to ancestral affairs when he did, since he caused me to uncover records I had not touch'd in full twenty years, and



which in great part were crumbling to pieces with such rapidity that another decade of neglect wou'd have seen them hopelessly lost. This was especially true of my paternal data, the Allgood side copied in 1905 from records lent by my now deceased great-aunt Sarah Allgood and joined with the Lovecraft data upon a paper sadly vulnerable to the assaults of time. However—thanks to the unexpected examination at this juncture—all is saved; though at the cost of some execrably assiduous copying and ancestral cartography. Before the Talmanick enthusiasm wore off I also accomplished something toward the codifying of maternal data in better form than the separate charts and notes in my aunt's possession. Now, however, my interest has again lapsed—though my recent copyings are on so good a paper that they are likely to stay with me till the next burst of hereditary curiosity. Some day I may ask Talman to embellish my archives with a full set of heraldick drawings from the written descriptions.

.....

There was a chart—one of those partitioned, compartment affairs with broad spaces for one's parents and little narrow spaces for one's remote forbears. I had copied it from my late great-aunt Sarah Allgood's chart (plus a chart of the Lovecraft side) in 1905, and it had nearly fallen to pieces. Would, ah, would to heaven it had so fallen ere my blighted eyes lit on the hideous truth . . . aletheia phrikodes! It started out innocuously enough. My father's parents—George Lovecraft of the line of Minster-Hall, near Newton-Abbot, Devon, and Helen Allgood, of the line of Nunwick, near Hexham, Northumberland. Very good—I knew all that before! Helen was daughter of William (who came to the U. S. upon his marriage in 1817) who was son of Lancelot who was son of *Sir* Lancelot, of whom I have boasted ever since I could talk, because George III knighted him at his accession for loyalty to the Tory cause through the two preceding Whig reigns. GOD SAVE THE KING! Especially a good Tory King like George the Third. We are all of us, be we Teut or Celt, damn good Tories! The Allgoods were given to cousinly matrimony—as most of my progenitors seem to have been—and both of Sir Lancelot's parents were of the clan. His own ancestral estate was Brandon White House, and he got Nunwick through his mother. Hooray! Arthur may be Good Enough, but we're All Good! His father was Isaac, and Ikey's pa was the Rev. Major Allgood. I was soon to learn—or rather to re-learn, since I had known it all before—

that my total lack of theology is undoubtedly due to the exhaustion of overproduction earlier in my evolution. In passing—the head of the Allgood house in Northumberland seems always to be High-Sheriff of the County, even to this day; a sort of hereditary manorial appurtenance. And gawd knows I ain't even a deputy-sheriff nor police constable nor special prohibition agent! Well—all this is delightful—but *who is this dame that my great-grandfather William Allgood married in 1817?* Rachel Morris—yes, I knew that before. But where did she come from? *Wales!* O Arthur Machen! O Caerleon! O Second Augustan Legion! A ROMAN MATRON of Isac Silurum! *Racilla Mauritia*, daughter of the propraetor *Publius Mauritus Racillus*, attached to the staff of Cnaeus Julius Agricola, father-in-law of Tacitus. Yes, by St. Paul, a brave Teut . . . or *Roman* always makes the best of these things! And that's my great-grandma! Well—at that, the prose of it wasn't so violently bad; for even in the cold light of the crumbling chart granny was not exactly what you'd call one of the Little People. She was the daughter of Thomas Morris, (1777-1817) an Oxford M.A., who in turn was the son (and here we begin to get at the real stuff!) of Sir John Morris, Baronet, of Clasmont, Glamorganshire, Wales. But even that isn't the best of it, for right there I got at the concrete facts of one of the really *big* connexions about which I had formerly been content to dream with snobbish indefiniteness. For who was Sir John's wife and Tom's mother—who, in personal language, was my own great-great-great-grandmother? The answer—none other than Henrietta Musgrave, daughter of Sir Philip Musgrave (6th Baronet) of Eden Hall, in Cumberland! Now this doesn't sound like much of a climax, and I didn't "get" the kick myself till I looked up a supplementary chart to which I was referred. But *then*—O Poor Old Mac, don't never preach your democratick humility to Sir Lewis O' Theobald no more! For the Musgraves "belong"! O gawd—to what don't they! In the first place, they have a *family legend*—the only real one my lineage can boast—and in the second place they go straight back without a break to a companion of William the Conqueror. And thirdly—and best—they *connect up* with all the blood in England worth connecting with. Listen, young Borgia, to the *partial* list of *direct lineal ancestors* your Grandpa can sport; and don't stop to calculate how slight a percentage each one has contributed to his haughty 143 lbs. of ascetic Noridicism. Thomas, Earl of Warwick; Legge, Lord of Dartmouth; Sir William Washington

(haven't been able to figure out his relation to the Virginia line, but the name sounds good. And *this* one wasn't a rebel against his Sovereign!) of Packington; Sir George Villiers of Brooksby; Sir Henry Archbold of Abbot's Bromley; (guess I'll go the whole hog and list all the Sirs) Sir John Blount; Sir Richard Hutton of Goldsborough; Philip, Lord Whar-ton, Thomas, Lord Clifford; Sir Andrew Cogan, Bt; . . . . . oh, hell! Ain't this enough for just one line? One more—Sir John Chardin. Might as well be thorough. Well—this is a pretty good bracer. With such pure-English nobility on one side a man can live down any Celtick taint! So now out with the worst. *Who was Tom Morris's wife—and what?* Who, in other words, was my great-great-grandmother, born in 1774 and died in 1845? Now for it. She was Isabella Purcell, daughter of Owen Purcell of Llanariba, and of his wife Susanna Rees, daughter of David Rees or Rhys. A Welsh gentlewoman of unmixed Celtick blood! Curtain.

And that is not all. Let us inspect once more the baronial—or rather baronetical—line of the ostensibly *Anglo*-Welsh Sir John Morris of Clasemont. Who was his mother—my great-great-great-great-grandmother? This way out. Walk slowly and avoid panic! She was Margaret Jenkins, daughter of David Jenkins of *Machynlleth* (get that, Arthur?) in Merionethshire, and of his wife *Bridget* Parry, (gawd! did I ever think I'd find an *ancestress* of that name? And yet my pen copied it in 1905! Our last serving-wench was named Bridget Mullaney!) daughter of John Parry, who claimed descent from Owen Gwynedd, Prince of North Wales. Full-blooded Celt! It gives me another sprig of royalty to companion the 137th King of Erin, but damn the luck that made it *Celtick* royalty. Mortonius, with his Plantagenets, still has me licked! To bring the matter of Welsh blood to a summary—for this, I swear, is all I've got unless some of those ancient matrons belied the austerity of their British tradition—I may say that my great-grandmother Rachel Morris had a mother wholly Celtic Welsh, and a father one-quarter Celtic Welsh. And may the dead of Rome's legions sleep in peace on the Hill of Dreams.

The terrible chronicle is drawing to its close. Only the wild Cornish wind and the Terror that Walketh by Night along the Celtick cliffs of Polearn remain to round out this shocking revelation of hybridism. As a fitting clinax, let us trace backward the annals of those whose name and shield I represent, and whose glories—if such there be—are most par-

ticularly mine own. Here, as in your aged Grandpa himself, we find a comfortable mediocrity falling considerably short of distinction. The line of *Lovecraft* is not traceable back to the Conquest, but it is pure Anglo-Saxon until a marriage in 1766, of which more anon. Lovecrafts, saith a note on the back of the main chart, are found in Devonshire near the Teign about 1450. God, the parvenus! And the Musgraves hit the Conquest whilst the Carews (see later) antedate it! Yes, Mac—I'll be a democrat now! In 1500, continues the note, a Thomas Lovecraft (note the spelling) bore as arms a chevron *Or* between three towers *or* on a field *vert*. But stop! This is not the *main* line, although it very soon marries into us. Not—and don't tell Mack this—till 1560 do we strike the *direct line* of your poor plebeian Grandpa Theobald! Think of it—I don't know the *unbroken* history of my name till the Tudor age, four years before the birth of Shakespeare. In 1560 we find John Lovecraft (note spelling) bearing the present arms of a chevron *or* between three foxes' heads *or* on a field *vert*, with a tower *or* on a wreath as crest. Well—*John* begat *Richard* who begat *William* who begat *George* who begat *Joseph* who begat *John* who begat *Thomas* who begat *Joseph* who begat *George* who begat *Winfield* who begat your antient Grandpa. The seat at Minster Hall was sold in 1823 by Thomas Lovecraft, poor devil, (he died in 1826) and in 1827 his second surviving son Joseph removed with his own wife and children to northern New York state; founding the line which ends with me unless another great-grandson who dropped out of sight in the west years ago is alive and has founded a posterity. The Lovecraft line is fairly rotten with Reverends. It trickles Theology and radiates rural rectors. God help it . . . . . as He didn't when poor Tom had to sell his estate and become one of the herd. I am the family's revenge against Heaven for the nawsty slap! Well—the early linkages of the line are as tame and undistinguished as the line itself—solid English country-gentry, though, just as your sedate and bucolick Grandpa would wish. I am like them—gawd, how like them! I *swear* that the Celtick taint hath not reached my rural Saxon heart! One interesting thing is the marriage of George Lovecraft in 1649 to Hester Lovecraft, one of the old line with uncorrupted name and the original arms with the three towers instead of foxes' heads. Her father was Richard (d. 1642) but his lineage is no further traced. Other names that enter are Collins; Martin of Lindridge, Devon; Harvey; and Edgecombe . . . . . but here that mystick

Druid nemesis is on my trail again! Fortunately it comes redeemed by one of the 'big finds' of my research, as you will soon see; but there is nathless a hell of a lot of Cymrick Celticism to demand the redemption. In 1766 Thomas Lovecraft (and maybe that's why Heaven's judgment made him lose his estate fifty-seven years later) espoused Letitia Edgecombe of the Cornwall line—good stock, and going Saxonly back to the Conquest or damn near it. But who was her mother? Margaret Carew, (1721-1782) also of Cornwall, but of a Saxon line of still greater antiquity (descended from Walter Fitz-Otho, Castellan of Windsor, who was a son of the SAXON Otho in the time of EDWARD THE CONFESSOR—before the Conquest!). Ah, yes, very well so far. Excellent, in fact. But who was *her* mother—my great-great-great-grandmother? Let us be dramatically brief. Her name was *Mary Trefusis*, and she was a full-blooded Cornish Celt! I have two doses of her, for Thomas Lovecraft's son Joseph followed the favourite family pastime of cousin-marrying and espoused Mary Fulford, daughter of his mother's sister Ellen Edgecombe and of her husband the Reverend (again—the woods are full of 'em!) Francis Fulford, Vicar of Dunsford. But here we have something cheerful again, for the Fulfords of Great-Fulford, Devon, are an enormously ancient line, going back to the Crusades and the time of Richard Coeur de Lion, and being connected with the houses of Fitzurse and de Belston. Among their progenitors are the Earls of Bath and Bridgewater—whose blood I feel at this moment coursing with particular force through my wintry veins. I say this because I get 'em both through still another line—the last of my three really first-class hookups, and perhaps equal in interest and importance to the Musgrave line previously described. I have spoken of my beloved great-great-grandfather, the Reverend Francis Fulford, (b. 1735, death date missing) Vicar of Dunsford and husband of the quarter-Celtic Ellen Edgecombe. His fathers, naturally, were the Fulfords just mentioned; but what was his maternity? Ah, honest Mac, here is where I must give thine equalitarian soul another vicious wallop! For our Vicar's mamma was not a nobody. Nay, she was amusingly far from the idyllick Nirvana nobodyism, since her name is one which (as you have noted with your own Belknap) popular novelists love to cite as the very symbol and essence of aristocracy. Dear soul, she has been in her grave since 1748, but I trust her urn or stele is of appropriate taste and exclusiveness. For her name was Anne Chichester, and her father was

Sir Arthur Chichester—third Baronet of the line, and descendant of an ancestor duly recorded in the Domesday Book! Her immediate contributing lines—Drewe (this line drags me in some fine remote—though lineally direct enough—ancestral names—PRIDEAUX, HORNFORD, WYNARD, HUCKMORE, FOTHERAY, DE BARONIA, CHAMPERNON. Swell sounding! of the Grange, Devon; Colley; Hill of Shilston, Devon, and so on—are by no means bad, but it is when one gets back farther that the impressiveness gets thicker. Our friends the Earls of Bath and Bridgewater appear again—as well as Sir William Courtenay of Powderham Castle, Devon, whom I forgot to mention as a Fulford ancestor also . . . . . one really can't keep track of these mere baronets—they're as thick as bally flies! Also Sir John Raleigh of Raleigh, Devon; Sir William Paulett of Sampford-Peverell; Sir Hugh Beaumont of Youlston, Devon; Sir Robert Dennis, Kt.; . . . . . and so on, and so on. Bless me, I yawn with highly-bred ennui! Well—that's about all in the way of sensation—either as regards nobleman to flaunt, or Celts to conceal. Other names are just so-so—good gentry, but nothing to effuse about. Samways of Dorset; Leech of Cadleigh; Turton of Orgreave; Poole, Durnford, Wood, Swete, etc. etc. . . . . and so to bed.

Oh—another Fulford hookup is MORETON! Shades of Edward John *Moreton* Drax Plunkett! I don't know what—if any—the relationship is, but I'm now calling Dunsany "Cousin Ned". We MORETONS always did take to phantasy! But for the E, I'd be able to annex James Ferdinand and his Plantagenets—but I suppose Plunketts ought to be good enough for me. I appreciate my brother MORETON even if others don't! Other Fulford ancestors—St. George, Challous, St. Allyn, Bilston, Cautilupe, Bozorn.

It remains only to trot out my one small *family legend* as a fitting act of filial piety and a gesture of particular appropriateness in a lover of the weird. It has gained the dignity of print, and is usually known as *The Luck of Eden Hall*. It seems that an early Musgrave once stole a drinking-cup from the fairies, and that for some time they tried in vain to recover their property. At length they desisted from their attempts, but not till they had pronounced the following prophecy over their stolen possession:

"If the glass either break or fall,  
Farewell to the luck of Eden Hall."

The elfin vessel is said to have been preserved with the utmost care, and I doubt not but that I might behold it were I to visit my somewhat distant cousins at their ancient seat.

So your multiplexly great uncle Mansfield owned all the Yale real-estate! Aha, it sounds good to get back home to old New England from Eden Hall and all that! Well—pass me out an extension course or two when you confirm your title to the property. I could use one in mediaeval and modern history right now—for that's a weak point I've just been reading up on—and before long I'd be glad of something nifty in Gothick architecture and intraatomic chemistry. But call off your Calvinists—Pegāna knows I've vicars and curates enough of my own! They're almost as bad as Celts . . . damn that young rascal Talman! But one thing I did before the wave of interest died down was to figure out my exact relation to the celebrated Esek and Stephen Hopkins, whose houses are preserved by the city. Esek was first commodore of the rebel Yankee navy, and Steve was repeatedly a colonial governor of R. I. Yes—damn him, and a signer of the seditious Declaration of Independence! They are related to me as follows: Their great-grandfather was Capt. John Whipple (1619-1685)—through his eldest son John. Well—Capt. Whipple had another son *Benjamin* who has a son also named *Benjamin* who had a son *Benedict* who had a daughter *Esther*. Esther Whipple married Asaph Phillips (1764-1829) and had a son *Jeremiah Phillips*, who had a son *Whipple Phillips*, who had a daughter *Sarah Phillips*, whose son your aged Grandpa in the course of time became. Capt. John Whipple is thus my great-great-great-great-great-great-grandfather in direct line. He is also the great-grandfather of Esek and Stephen Hopkins. Notice the family resemblance the next time you see these boys' pictures! Yes—after all, there's a lot of the good old Saxon left in Grandpa Theobald, and I defy any young whipper-snapper to philosophise it away! . . .

Cook has been down twice this autumn—once on the 15th and 16th of October, and again last Sunday. On each occasion we have made trips to Eddy's (Arthur E. Eddy, uncle of the celebrated theatrical man and weird author whom you had the inestimable honour of meeting) Book Store—Cook nearly buying the old fellow out, and I purchasing a good deal more heavily than my purse and recent custom would ordinarily justify. I am now trying to complete my family file of the *Old Farmer's Almanack*, and have got Cook doing the same thing. Mine formerly

went back solidly only to 1877, with scattering copies back to 1815; but with my new copies it goes back solidly to 1839 and scatteringly to 1805. . . . My other purchases of last Sunday (Eddy evades the Sabbath closing law by keeping his shop door locked and admitting customers individually as they knock) would probably interest you more—being as follows: Morey's *Outlines of Greek Art*, Mahaffy's *Survey of Greek Civilisation*, Tarbell's *History of Greek Art*, Pellison's *Roman Life in Pliny's Time*, and Goodyear's *Roman and Mediaeval Art*. I didn't want the mediaeval stuff, but the book was too good to tear in half.

My reading of late has been mainly classical and historical—including James Rhoades's *Aeneid*, which is the most faithful, yet Englishly poetick, version I have ever seen. It is in perfectly idiomatick pentameter blank verse, but mirrors the precise Virgilian spirit and language with marvellous understanding and literalism. I have also gone through several weird books lent me by Cook—the best of which are Eino Railo's *Haunted Castle*, ( a history of the Gothick novel by an Anglicised Finn professor) Pemberton's *The W'eird O' It*, (mediocre horror tales) and Vernon Knowles's *Street of Strange Houses* and *Here and Otherwhere*. This Knowles stuff is mostly effeminate and affected, though one or two surprisingly vivid episodes occur. I have also waded through—or skimmed through—Michael Arlen's *Ghost Stories*—which are unbelievably lacking in every possible element of the truly weird. . . . I never want to do a bit of *proof-reading again*—although I shall, as a matter of fact, read Wandrei's page proofs, which Cook will soon have ready. This reminds me to exclaim anent the excellence of Wandrei's recent poetry. The child is certainly making astonishing strides—as the *Sonnets of the Midnight Hours* shew in particular. . .

Popular writers go to every extreme of credulity in swallowing tales of absolutely impossible violations of the natural order, while refusing to understand the truly natural mental laws which bias the fact-perceiving and truth-telling faculties of emotionally influenced groups and individuals of every quality from time to time, and which ought to be very obvious from a study not only of the history of human thought and delusion, but of the perfect capacity for unfathomable delusion inherent in adroit professional legerdemain and fakir-magic. In sticking to this unscientific attitude they are themselves furnishing a fresh argument for the unbiased rationalist. Close students of popular miracles well know



how humorously they fade when pinned down to first-hand investigation, and how prodigiously easy it is for a trained mysteriarch to set in motion the most plausible and circumstantially confirmed accounts of events and marvels which never had any existence at all. Poor old Houdini—who actually had a tremendous amount of penetrative skill and workable erudition in this field despite his general lack of culture, and who was incredibly honest in his researches despite the fact that publicity was his primary goal—had a long talk on this subject with Eddy and me less than a month before his death, and no one could fail to appreciate from his descriptions the way all great Hindoo fakir feats evaporate when one buckles down to get first-hand or photographic data. At the cost of much delving and evidential sifting Houdini arrived at the very reasonable conclusion that India's fakirs obtain their fame through a very shrewd mixture of publicity with a moderate amount of sleight-of-hand skill. Two classes of feats represent actual performances—(a) relatively simple feats, or feats due to abnormal physiological powers, performed in the open; (b) highly elaborate and ingenious miracles performed with apparatus under special conditions. Added to these two are the deftly circulated *reports* of amazing miracles performed in the open—*not one of which has ever been seen at first hand by any reputable European or person who has set out to be a witness*. It is only when one makes a realistic and sympathetic study of the power of controlled publicity to influence human belief and sentiment, that one can fully appreciate what is undoubtedly the chief of all factors in the circumstantial propagation of miracle reports. One of the greatest auxiliaries of the magic hierophant is the natural sympathy of the ordinary mind—the heir of thousands of years of myth and darkness as opposed to only a century or so of mechanical understanding of natural principles—with the indefinite and the marvellous; a sympathy subtly strengthened by the natural impatience of sensitive people against the prosaic limitations of the usual, and by the intellectual indolence which causes rebellion against the patient scientific subtleties whose difficulty of comprehension makes them seem far more improbable, despite their firm basis, than the flimsy hereditary myths which they have displaced, but which they may externally resemble. This sympathy enables the occultist to accomplish a highly sophisticated *shifting of the burden of proof*; whereby he imputes to myth and folklore a weight of authority which no rational consideration could ever accord it, and brushes arbitrarily out of sight the care-

fully accumulated knowledge of natural law which enables the cautious investigator to say with a very close approach to finality *that certain things are absolutely impossible*. The unbiassed observer knows the difference between *weighed evidence*—which never fails when tested in all its relations to the universe, and against which no contrary evidence can ever be brought consistently into the open—and *hearsay evidence*; which is rare, capricious, and intangible, never obtainable at first hand by any reputable person of impartial scientific habits, and never more remarkable than any spectator of a clever vaudeville magician's act could carry away from the theatre in perfect good faith. It is the trick of the occultist to demand the consideration of weighed and hearsay evidence on equal terms—so that he may magnify the latter at will to overbalance the non-magnifiable former, and so that he may be viewed in the light of a martyr to dogmatism when the truth-seeker rules out of court that which has no justification for being in court. . . . .

Yr. obt.  
Grandpa

303. TO BERNARD AUSTIN DWYER

Friday  
November, 1927

My Dear Pickman:—

. . . . . Rome, as I think I have said, has always exercised the most peculiarly potent effect upon my imagination—forming a second fatherland to which all my sense of loyalty, perspective, affection, pride, and personal identity reverts whenever I think myself back into the ancient world. As far back as 450 A. D. my retrospective sense adheres altogether to Britain; but behind that point—when the scene of my memory becomes Roman—the chain abruptly snaps. Instead of following the various elements of Teutonic and Celtic Ancestry into their northern forests and druid groves, my sense of personal identity and locale shifts abruptly to the banks of the Tiber—mourning in the downfall of the Empire and of the old gods, and slipping back to the virile, warlike days of the republic, when the conquering eagles of our consuls were carrying the name and dominion of the Roman people to the uttermost

confines of the known world. S. P. Q. R.! It is as a Roman that I view and judge all antiquity—as a Roman that I feel toward all the various nations and peoples of the elder world. Thus I *admire* the superior art and intellect of the Greeks—but with the *outside* sense of one who knows Greece only as a conquered province of our republic, whose sculpture is beginning to appear in our temples and villas, and whose crafty, glib natives are beginning to invade our Roman streets with their suave, outlandish jargon. Like De Quincey, I derive a profound and inexplicable thrill from such phrases as *Consul Romanus, non esse consuetudinem populi Romani, senatus populusque Romanus*, etc.—as if from some intimate, unbreakable and personal link, hard to account for in a man without a single drop of blood from any source save the British Isles. Behind the Roman world my sense of personal identity cannot be projected; so that the dimmer, vaster, and more terrible dawn-world of Gnossus and Nineveh, Ur and Babylon, Memphis and Thebes, Ophir and Meroë, must remain to me for ever a thing existing only on paper as objective historical fact. Whenever my *antique* soul beholds the mysterious East, it is as a centurion, legatus, or tribunus militum of the republic's legions; with the great vallum of the castra Romana close beside me, and the Latin songs and oaths of my fellow-soldiers in a faint chorus that punctuates the thoughts evoked by the decaying palaces and crumbling pylons of the elder, conquered land. But my real dreams are less often filled with the decadent East than with the barbaric West; and it is with the legions in Spain and Gaul and Britain, and on the Rhine and Danube frontiers, that my spirit has most frequently seen service. I am also quite often a private citizen or civil official, either in Rome or some Italian municipium, or in one of the towns of the western provinces. These dreams were most numerous in 1905 and 1906, but have recurred off and on since then. The recent one was undoubtedly the joint product of (a) my re-reading of the *Aeneid*, with my usual thrill at Anchises' prophecy of future Roman glory, and (b) the Halloween season, as impressed upon me by the echoes of festivities held elsewhere in the neighbourhood.

As for the dream itself—all antecedent visions slowly dissolved into a conversation I was holding with one whom I felt it very necessary to convert to my point of view. The beginning was very definitely an effort to shake off irrelevant thoughts and concentrate my mind on the scene and matter in hand. The sound of the fountain in the atrium where we were sitting distracted me, but instead of having it turned off I led my

guest into the library beyond a nearby portiere. It was my own library, and there lay on the table the copy of *Lucretius De Rerum Natura* that I had been reading, rolled about three-quarters toward the end to the astronomical part in Book V which I had reached when Cnaeus Balbutius had been announced. I can still see the line where I left off—

LUNAQVE. SIVE. NOTHO. FERTUR.  
LOCA. LUMINE. LUSTRANS.

Balbutius was legatus of the XIIth Legion, stationed here at Calagurris, on the south bank of the Iberus in Hispania Citerior. He was a stoutish man of about 35, and wore the crested helmet, corselet, and greaves proper to his military capacity. I, on the other hand, was a civil official—a provincial quaestor—and wore only a plain toga with the two purple stripes of the equestrian order. My name appeared to be Lucius Caecilius Rufus. Well—Balbutius and I sat down and continued our dispute. It was very grave and determined, for the subject was one of *nameless, hovering horror*; and our respective opinions were very strong and diametrically opposite despite our long and cordial personal friendship.

The whole situation was this. Many miles to the north of us, near the little town of Pompelo at the foot of the Pyrenees, a monstrous doom was brewing in the hills. This territory was inhabited by the restless Vascones, only a part of whom were thoroughly Romanised, but in the hills a still wilder and infinitely more terrible people dwelt—the Strange Dark Folk (in the dream the frequently repeated phrase was *Miri nigri*) who held the monstrous Sabbaths on the Kalends of Maius and November. They had always dwelt somewhere up there, their land unseen by anyone from outside, and twice a year their fires were seen at night on the peaks, and their hellish drums and howlings heard. Just before these semi-annual orgies certain of the townsfolk would queerly vanish—never to return—and it was held probable that these persons had been captured by the Strange Folk for sacrifice to their unknown, unnamable deity. (In the dream, *Magnum innominandum*, a neuter gerundive form of sound Latin etymology, though not found in the classics.) Each summer parties of the *Miri nigri* would appear in the plains and trade with the Vascones and Roman *coloni*. They were hated and feared, and spoke amongst themselves a language that neither Roman, Celtiberian, nor Gaul could understand—no, nor Greek traders, nor Carthaginian sailors nor Etruscan legionaries nor Illyrian and Thracian

slaves—whilst most of their transactions were performed by signs. I seemed never to have *seen* one of them, though I had *read* and *heard* much; being indeed a close student of such forbidden mysteries.

Now this year something unusual had occurred. The strange traders—five of them—had indeed come down from the hills, but they had at last precipitated a riot in the streets of Pompelo—because of certain gloating and inhuman cruelties perpetrated upon a dog—and two of them had been slain. The surviving three had gone back to the hills with terrible looks, and now the people of Pompelo were trembling with fear of the doom which they felt about to fall upon their town. They feared this awful thing *because none of their number had vanished as the Kalends of November drew nigh*. It was *not natural* for the Strange Dark Folk to spare them like that. *Something worse* must be brewing. Finally they had persuaded their aedile (Tiberius Annaeus Mala, of half Roman and half Celtiberian blood) to visit Calagurris and ask Balbutius to send a cohort to their aid—a cohort to invade the hills on the momentous night, and to stamp out for ever whatever monstrous worship might be found there . . . a perfectly safe and feasible proceeding if undertaken in the evening, before the evocation of the *Magnum Innominandum* produced those developments about which the natives dared only to whisper. The aedile had made his journey, but Balbutius had refused his request. He thereupon had come to me; and because of what I had read about The Strange Dark Folk I sympathised at once, sending him home with the assurance that I would do all in my power to get the cohort to Pompelo. I had then prepared to visit the camp and talk with Balbutius, when I recollected that he was away on a boar-hunt. Accordingly I sent a slave to leave word at the camp asking him to call on me whenever he might return. Now he was here, and I was trying my best to bring him to my point of view.

His contention was that these local disturbances were never of any seriousness, nor worthy of any special military movement on the part of the authorities. Moreover, he believed that the bulk of the tribal population—far outnumbering the Romanised town-dwellers—were not only in sympathy with the *Miri nigri*, but were actual participants in many phases of their revolting worship. Any suppression on our part, he argued, would, while of course appeasing the oppidani, be equally sure to antagonise the far more numerous wild natives; so that the net result would be to complicate rather than clarify our administrative problems.

To which I made reply, that it was not the custom of the Roman people to fear the displeasure of barbarians, nor to be deterred from doing that which is in consonance with Roman principles of government. That the good-will of the colonists and townsfolk was of far great value in facilitating our administration than the good-will of the tribesmen; since the loyalty of these latter was never certain, while the coöperation of the Romanised element was absolutely essential to the establishment of a sound executive and legislative fabric. Moreover, that the hideous and monstrous nature of the Dark Folk's rites was not unknown to me, and that the sufferance of such malign practices would ill become the descendants of those who, Sp. Postumino Albinus and Q. Marcius Philippus being consuls, had broken up the widespread orgies of Bacchus in Italy, putting to death great numbers of Roman citizens and graving upon a bronze tablet the *Senatus Consultum de Bacchanalibus*.

I now took down from the racks along the walls many books on terrible and forbidden subjects, both in Latin and in Greek; unrolling them to significant passages and shewing the latter to Balbutius. The very sight of some of these books frightened me—especially a Greek text, on Pergamene parchment, titled *Hieron Aigypton*—and I would give much for a glimpse of them now! But upon my guest they had no effect. His mind was made up not to send the cohort, and nothing could make him see the need of it. He agreed, however, not to be offended if I put the matter before the proconsul, Publius Scribonius Libo; so as soon as he left I prepared a long and explicit letter to Libo, and had a slave (a sturdy, undersized Greek named Antipater) set off for Tarraco with it. It was now evening, but my dream continued. I bathed and proceeded to the triclinium, where my household ( my mother Helvia, advanced in years, and a somewhat younger maternal uncle, Lucius Helvius Cinna) joined me at dinner. During the evening I discussed the matter with them, and was glad to note their agreement—although my mother vainly sought to make me promise not to accompany the cohort if it was sent. I then retired in a room with finely frescoed walls, and awaked (still within the dream) to the singing of birds. A breakfast with the family and a session of reading in the garden ensued. I seemed to reside in a suburban villa on a hill, for below me I could see the red-tiled roofs and pillared forum of Calagurris, and the sparkling bends of the Therus just beyond. Later Balbutius came again, and more futile argument ensued. Then another dinner and conversation with the family—

the subject being Lucretius and the Epicurean philosophy. From what was said, we appeared to regard Lucretius as still living though not personally known to us. My uncle, however, spoke of having once known Memmius, to whom *De Rerum Natura* is dedicated. Then bed again, and another bird-awaking after a dream within the dream. This was a nightmare, and involved some stupendous Eastern ruin of which I had read in that frightful *Hieron Aegypton*. During this day I read and wrote in the garden, (for the weather was warm) till just after siesta-time Antipater returned with a letter from the proconsul. I broke the seal and began—P. SCRIBONIUS. L. CAELIO. S. D. SI. TV. VALES. BENE. EST. EGO. QUOQUE. VALEO. AVDIVI. QUAE. SCRIP-SISTI. NEQUE, ALIAS. PUTO . . . . . and so on . . . . . To be explicit, Libo agreed with me fully; knowing apparently as much as myself about the rites of the Dark Folk, and seeing a need of instant action at Mela's request. Not only did he enclose an order to Balbutius for the despatch of a cohort to Pompelo before the coming Kalends, but he expressed his intention of going thither himself, in order to investigate a horror of such import not only to the wards of the Roman people, but to the peace of mankind as a whole. Me he authorised to accompany the cohort, and expressed a hope of meeting me in Pompelo two days from the time of his letter's probable receipt. My joy was extreme, and I rushed down the hill and through the town on foot, seeking Balbutius at his camp. The town was fairly sizeable, with one or two streets paved (there were high sidewalks, and stepping stones at crossings) and considerable crowds of soldiers, colonists, Romanised natives of Iberian physiognomy, and wild tribesmen from the plains surging past the white-washed deadwalls of houses and gardens. The camp was near the river, where there was a landing place for supplies, and I hailed a sentry at the Porta Praetoria. The man took me through the gate (the wall was easily ten feet high and nearly as thick) along the Via Principalis to the Praetorium, (the soldiers dwelt in wooden houses on account of the permanence of the camp) where I found Balbutius reading a shabby copy of Cato's *De Re Rustica*. He took the sealed packet from the proconsul that I brought, and finally gave in when he saw its indisputable authority. He now pondered as to which cohort he could best spare, deciding finally on the 5th. Sending an orderly for the legatus of that cohort, he soon had before him a young dandy named Sextus Asellius, with foppishly polished equipment, frizzed hair, and a 'sporty' little

cloud of beard-growth on his under jaw. Asellius was violently against the sending of the cohort, but did not balk under orders. We saw that it would be hard work getting to Pompelo in two days as Libo had ordered, so resolved to march both day and night with only short naps. I now went home and prepared for travel—ordering a litter with eight Illyrian bearers. In this I went down to the bridge and waited for the cohort, which arrived after a tedious interval. It was infantry—for we had no cavalry at Calagurris—but there were a couple of horses for Asellius and Balbutius—the latter being determined to go along in person and see the thing through. Then came a whole night of dozing and jouncing, and a whole day of the same—through wild, flat country. The meals were frugal and infrequent, and only reading and conversation enlivened the tedium. Balbutius would occasionally ride by the side of my litter and discuss the terrors ahead of us. Night again, and another morning. At last we saw the dim, menacing line of the awful hills ahead. This was the final day of October. At noon we would be in Pompelo, and at night we would go into the horrible hills where witch-fires flamed and drums and howlings echoed.

Pompelo was a small neat village with a paved forum and a wooden amphitheatre east of the compact area. Libo and his train had arrived ahead of us, and greeted us with genuine cordiality. He was slightly known to me—a fine old man with a hawklike Roman face, seamed and tight-lipped, and an almost completely bald head. He wore a toga praetexta befitting his consular dignity. As the afternoon wore on, we all talked earnestly, the aedile Annaeus Mela joining our deliberations. Of the two opposed to Libo, Mela, and me, Balbutius bore his overruling better than Asellius. This talk occurred in the curia just off the forum. Meanwhile the 300 soldiers had been mingling with the townsfolk, and had caught something of the undercurrent of fright. For there was indeed an air of monstrous doom upon that town, and even I felt disposed to tremble as I saw the menacing bulk of the mountains toward the north . . . brooding and waiting. We could scarcely find a native to guide us toward the usual scene of the orgies, but at length secured a youth—largely of Roman blood though born in Pompelo—named Marcus Accius, who agreed to take us through the foothills and to the head of a certain ravine, but no farther. Only an enormous offer of money moved him, and his lips and fingers twitched nervously as he waited for evening.

Then sunset came with a terrible, apocalyptic weirdness, Asellius



gathered and drew up his cohort, and provided horses for Libo, Annaeus Mela, and me—yes, and also for Q. Minncius Laena, the intelligent and well-born secretary accompanying Libo. The villagers flocked around us as we stood in formation west of the town, and we could not help catching the horror of their whispering. At last we set out in the twilight—torches ready to use when necessary, and the guide trembling as he walked beside Libo's horse. And it was worse when the dusk thickened *and the drumming began*. It was an eldritch sound—muffled and monotonous, and hideously deliberate and persistent. It put an idea into my head which frightened me. Surely, I reflected, these alert and furtive Dark Folk must have known of our expedition by this time. Half the tribesmen round about were their secret allies and informers, and gossip had been rife in Pompelo all day. *Why, then, were they going ahead with their rites just the same . . . . .* as if the authority of the Roman people were not moving against them? *I did not like what that notion implied.* Then night fell, and one by one the distant peaks blazed with pale flame. Still the drumming pounded damnably on. We were in the foothills now, and with every mile our apprehensions increased. Despite the absence of a moon, Balbutius thought it inadvisable to use torches, fearing lest our course be noticed from afar; so we stumbled on clumsily over black trails which grew constantly steeper as the wooded slopes at our side grew higher and closer. In those wooded depths, now so narrowly pressing on our flanks, we fancied we heard inexplicable sounds and imagined an infinity of loathsome watching presences. And still the drumming and the flames persisted. As the defile narrowed to the proportions of a mere flume or canyon, its steepness became almost precipitous; and the six of us who were mounted were forced to leave our horses. By the aid of shaded torch we tethered them to some spectrally twisted scrub oaks, leaving a squad of ten men to guard them from possible theft—though chance thieves were unlikely enough in such a place on such a night! Then the rest of us scrambled on and on, up and up, toward the peaks where the fires blazed, and the narrow patch of sky where the Milky Way glimmered between the lofty enclosing slopes. It was a frightful climb—fear in the darkness, and the whispers and muffled curses of three hundred frightened legionaries who lurched, slipped, and stumbled; jostling one another constantly, and treading incessantly on one another's toes—or even hands, where the ascent was quite vertical.

Then, amidst that hellish pounding of distant drums, there came a

very terrible sound *from behind us*. It was the horses we had left—just the horses, and not the soldiers guarding them. It was not *neighing*, but *screaming*—the frenzied *screaming* of panic-struck beasts face to face with horrors not of this world. We all stopped, half-paralysed with fright. And the screaming continued, and the drums pounded on, and the hilltop flames danced.

Then a brief stir and maddening cry from our vanguard made Balbutius order a torch, voice quavering as he did so. In the faint glimmer we saw the body of the guide Accius weltering in blood and with eyes half started from their sockets with cosmic, ultimate fright. He, who had been born at the foot of these hills and who knew all that men whispered about them, had not been able to face what he knew had made those horses scream. He had seized the short sword from the scabbard of the nearest centurion—the primipilus Publius Vibulanus—and had stabbed himself to the heart.

And now, suddenly, the sky itself was snuffed out. Stars and Milky Way vanished in an instant, and only the hilltop flames remained—now silhouetting, for the first time, the blasphemous shapes of the not quite human things that leaped and danced titanicly around them. And the drums still sounded, and the horses screamed and screamed in the gulfs below.

Flight was impossible, but a sort of local stampede set in, amidst which many men trampled their comrades to death as all sought vainly to rush away. The screams of the soldiers now rivalled those of the horses, and the single torch which the proconsul had snatched from a fainting bearer and kept alight shewed a sea of faces convulsed with every last extreme of frenzy. Of our immediate party Annaeus Mela was trodden down out of sight, whilst the secretary Laena seemed to have disappeared sometime before. Balbutius went quite mad, and began to grin and sing an old Fescennine verse from his native Italian countryside. Asellius tried to cut his own throat, but could only struggle with a sudden cold wind which coiled down from the heights and wrapped him Laocoön-like in its folds. My own condition was one of absolutely statue-like paralysis and speechlessness. Only the aged Scribonius Libo, veteran of the Jugurthine and Mithidatic Wars, retained to the last a perfect poise and fortitude. I can yet see his calm Roman face in the fading light of the torch he held—see his face and hear the clear, measured words with which he met his doom like a true patrician and con-

sul of the republic. From the slopes and peaks above us a crackling chorus of daemonic laughter burst, and winds of ice swept down to engulf us all. My spirit could endure the strain no longer, and I awaked—bounding down the centuries to Providence and the present. But still there ring in my ears those last calm words of the old proconsul—“*Malitia vetus—malitia vetus est—venit—tandem venit . . .*”

It was the most vivid dream I have had in a decade, and involved subconscious use of odd scraps of boyhood reading long forgotten by my waking mind. Calagurris and Pompelo are real towns of Roman Spain, now known as Calabarra and Pompelona, respectively; as I learned upon consulting the classical dictionary. Pompelo, apparently, escaped its threatened doom, and it would interest me to visit its neighbourhood some time. I would like to dig among the passes in the hills for the crumbling bones and rusted silver eagles of a forgotten cohort!

Yr. obt. Grandsire—  
Theobald

304. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Thursday  
Nov. 13, 1927

Lightning-Rod of Lucretian Luminescence:—

..... As for the proud and beautifully modulated intellectual indolence of Rhode-Island persons of quality—why, Sir, you put me at a disadvantage of raising absurd objections to my dogma; since to refute them would require a greater amount of intellectual subtlety than it is becoming for a high-spirited and beauty-loving flavour to exhibit! Sir, I refuse to fall into your adroit trap! I simply say—with a delicate wave of a perfectly manicured and correctly gloved hand—that you are wrong and I am right. Why? Because I say so! And that is all a gentleman can add to the matter!

Yrs. for fewer and better words—  
Θεοβάλδος  
Theobaldus

305. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Monday  
Nov. 17, 1927

Cupola of Caelestial Cerebration:—

Glad that Manhattan still offers you so many attractions. I suppose it would seem more important to me if I continued to take interest in dramattick representations; but somehow with the years I've lost all power of imbibing illusion from the stage or from oral sources generally. . .

In a way, crosswords do harm by cluttering up the mind with an aimless heap of unusual words selected purely for mechanical exigencies and having no well-proportioned relation to the needs of graceful discourse. Words ought to represent ideas, images, moods, and impressions with all their associations and overtones—growing naturally out of a study of the best speech and writing, and never being considered in an isolated, geometrical way. One ought to be on familiar using terms with only such as are truly expressive of his thoughts—and thoughts can't be enlarged by dictionary-scouring. Effective language springs spontaneously from one's inmost mental life and habits of perspective and expression, and ought to be a supremely unconscious phenomenon. That is why I can't bear a professed *man of letters*, who employs language as something artificial and external, apart from his daily relation to enjoyment of the universe. It's all right to know what one is about in speaking or writing—to exercise a rational censorship over one's vocabulary, syntax, and rhythm—but this oversight must be purely negative, superficial, and disciplinary; never striking at the foundations of natural association which mould one's basic vocabulary and prose manner. . . . .

Yrs. for Evangelical optimism—

Θεοβάλδος

Theobaldus

306. TO DONALD WANDREI

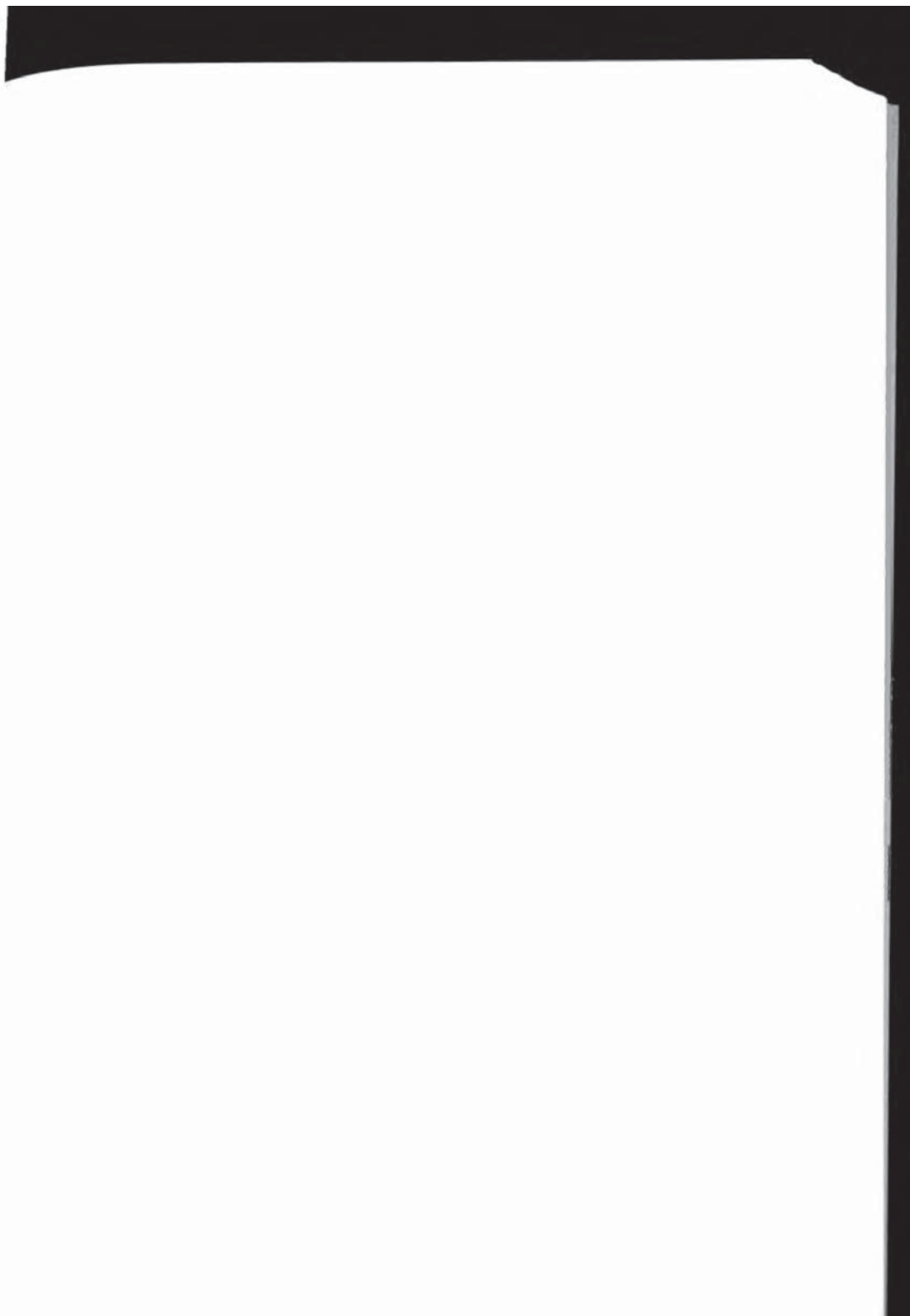
Providence

Nov. 24, 1927

Dear Melmoth:—

... To parallel your Morphean achievement of last Sunday, I can cite my own performance of last night—when, gorged with a Thanksgiving feast of the utmost peril to my 140-lb. standard. I was overcome by drowsiness at 5 p.m., & continued in a somnolent state till ten this morning! My dreams occasionally approach'd the phantastical in character, tho' falling somewhat short of coherence. One scene is especially stamp'd upon my recollection—that of a dank, foetid, reed-choak'd marsh under a grey autumn sky, with a rugged cliff of lichen-crust'd stone rising to the north. Impell'd by some obscure quest, I ascended a rift or cleft in this beetling precipice, noting as I did so the black mouths of many fearsome burrows extending from both walls into the depths of the stony plateau. At several points the passage was roof'd over by the choaking of the upper parts of the narrow fissure; these places being exceedingly dark, & forbidding the perception of such burrows as may have existed there. In one such dark space I felt conscious of a singular accession of fright, as if some subtile & bodiless emanation from the abyss were ingulphing my spirit; but the blackness was too great for me to perceive the source of my alarm. At length I emerg'd upon a table-land of moss-grown rock & scanty soil, lit up by a faint moonlight which had replac'd the expiring orb of day. Casting my eyes about, I beheld no living object; but was sensible of a very peculiar stirring far below me, amongst the whispering rushes of the pestilential swamp I had lately quitted. After walking for some distance, I encounter'd the rusty tracks of a street-railway, & the worm-eaten poles which still held the limp & sagging trolley wire. Following this line, I soon came upon a yellow, vestibuled car numbered 1852—of a plain, double-trucked type common from 1900 to 1910. It was untenanted, but evidently ready to start; the trolley being on the wire & the air-brake pump now & then throbbing beneath the floor. I boarded it & looked vainly about for the light switch—noting as I did so the absence of con-

troller handle which implied the brief absence of the motorman. Then I sat down in one of the cross seats toward the middle, awaiting the arrival of the crew & the starting of the vehicle. Presently I heard a swishing in the sparse grass toward the left, & saw the dark forms of two men looming up in the moonlight. They had the regulation caps of a railway company, & I could not doubt but that they were the conductor & motorman. Then one of them *sniffed* with singular sharpness, & raised his face to howl to the moon. The other dropped on all fours to run toward the car. I leaped up at once & raced madly out of that car & away across endless leagues of plateau till exhaustion waked me—doing this not because the conductor had dropped on all fours, but because the face of the motorman was a mere white cone tapering to one blood-red tentacle. . . . The Roman dream, of course, was exceptional in its scope, vividness, & mnemonick persistence; though in my youth I dreamed nearly every night of Rome or the flash of the republick's aquilae & vexilla against the barbarick sunsets of far frontiers. Rome & its power have always exercised the most phenomenal sway over my imagination & personality, notwithstanding my willing concession of aesthetick & intellectual superiority to the Grecian world. It is absolutely impossible for me to envisage the ancient world except from a Roman point of view; & I feel as fierce & natural a patriotism for the conquering republick of the Tiber, in its own age, as I do for the English civilisation in this age. The decadence of the Empire fills me with as great a melancholy as the present decay of the western world, & I am forced into the paradox of resenting, in the antique time, the incursions & achievements of my own Northern ancestors; whose present heritage I am so avidly eager to see defended against all rivals! In other words, when I think myself back to a point antedating the organised national existence of my own blood-ancestors, I instinctively gravitate to Rome as *my country*, instead of following the Saxon tribes into their original northern woods. My admiration for the warlike virtue & glorious virility of the blond tribesmen does not diminish; but somehow my immediate *sense of personal identity* seems transferred to the Seven Hills—which acquire for me, prior to 450 A.D., that atmosphere of centrlicity & quality of a fundamental seat of vision which for later ages belong to London & Providence. *Behind Rome* I find it impossible to project my personality. The primordially archaick world of Gnossus, Memphis, Thebes, Nineveh, &





Some sculptures by Clark Ashton Smith



Babylon exists only on paper for me. Psychologically I am either a Roman or an Englishman, with no possibility of imaginative expansion. . . .

Yr. obt. Grandsire—  
Nekrophilos

307. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

10 Barnes St.  
Novr. 27, 1927

Dear C A S:—

I have had no chance to produce new material this autumn, but have been classifying notes & synopses in preparation for some monstrous tales later on. In particular I have drawn up some data on the celebrated & unmentionable *Necronomicon* of the mad Arab Abdul Alhazred! It seems that this shocking blasphemy was produced by a native of Sanaá, in Yemen, who flourished about 700 A. D. & made many mysterious pilgrimages to Babylon's ruins, Memphis's catacombs, & the devil-haunted & untrodden wastes of the great southern deserts of Arabia—the Raba el Khaliyeh, where he claimed to have found records of things older than mankind, & to have learnt the worship of Yog-Sothoth & Cthulhu. The book was a product of Abdul's old age, which was spent in Damascus, & the original title was *Al Azif—azif* (cf. Henley's notes to *Vathek*) being the name applied to those strange night noises (of insects) which the Arabs attribute to the howling of daemons. Alhazred died—or disappeared—under terrible circumstances in the year 738. In 950 *Al Azif* was translated into Greek by the Byzantine Theodorus Philetas under the title *Necronomicon*, & a century later it was burnt at the order of Michael, Patriarch of Constantinople. It was translated into Latin by Olaus in 1228, but placed on the *Index Expurgatorius* by Pope Gregory IX in 1232. The original Arabic was lost before Olaus' time, & the last *known* Greek copy perished in Salem in 1692. The work was printed in the 15th, 16th, & 17th centuries, but few copies are extant. Wherever existing, it is carefully guarded for the sake of the world's welfare & sanity. Once a man read through the copy in the library of

Miskatonic University at Arkham—read it through & fled wild-eyed into the hills . . . . . but that is another story!

With best wishes from all the local afreets & djinns—

Yr obt  
H P L

308. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

Thursday  
December 1927

Young Man:—

. . . . . In all prosaick seriousness—an examination of earlier numbers of O'Brien's annual has made it very clear to me that the "Colour" is *not* to be reprinted. Only a few stories are reproduced, but the "biographical roll of honour" is so long as to lack all essential distinction. . . . . In furnishing my Irish colleague with an account of my vivid and active career I did not think it necessary to mention trifles so tame as Satanism and neogonophagy—nay, nor my voyage up the Oxus, nor my visit to Samarcand, nor how *and why* I slew the yellow-veiled priest at Lhasa—that priest whose yellow silken veil stood out *too far* in front of where his face ought to be, and moved in a manner that *I did not like*. These nugae I have pass'd over altogether as unworthy of the career of a man of genius; but I *did* hint of certain travels through the aether in the dark of the moon, and give broad suggestions regarding certain queerly-dimensioned cities of windowless onyx towers on a planet circling about Antares, which the initiated cannot well read without forming their own conjectures about the first-handedness of my information. . . . .

As to my Roman dream—well, young man, I hate to be naïve, but the fact is that most of it really *was* a dream, just as *Randolph Carter* and certain parts of *Celephais* were! And I certainly do intend to surround it with a motivating framework and sequel (which I have already described in an epistle to Dwyer) calculated to increase its vividness and significance. . . . . My story idea is to have a traveller find a rusted fragment of a silver Roman aquila in a small museum in northern

Spain. It haunts him and excites his dreaming faculty, and the curator—Don Jaime Hernandez Morteño—tells him it was washed down from the foothills of the Pyrenees, which have a rather unsavoury reputation amongst the country folk. Finally, his dreams lead him to explore, and with the aid of some Spanish archaeologists—Miguel Longo y Santayana and Francisco Belnapio Dotina—he uncovers a new Herculaneum in the form of a buried Roman city. It is a *very queer* place. An avalanche must have engulf'd it all at once, but there are *no recognisable human remains*. Only heaps of greyish dust in those interiors where the burying earth did not enter. Otherwise the place looks as suddenly abandoned as the *Marie Celeste*: loaves in the bake shops, half written manuscripts of parchment in one well-preserved household library, and a papyrus codex of the terrible *Hieron Aigypton* which causes the learned Spaniards—even the intrepid Francisco Belapio Dotina—to tremble. And on the walls of the houses are the most peculiar graffiti—MAMERS · SERVA · IUPPITER · NOS · TUTA · DIANA · NOBIS · PRAESIDUM · FAUNUS · MONTES · TENE · OPPIDUM · TUTA · CONTRA · MAGNUM · INNOMINANDUM · MUNITE · NOS · DII · IMMORTALES · CONTRA · MIROS · NIGROS —prayers to the gods to save the town and people from some vague menace. Spurred by dream and curiosity, the traveller goes alone into the antient hills and feels a strange sense of familiarity. On a far, lonely peak he finds a terrible stone altar within a circle of monoliths. And he sees a strange, dark man who makes a terrible sign at him and vanishes. That night he falls sick of fever and is taken to the hospital at Pamplona. (As you see, I'm shifting the dramatic action from this *known* place to a *wholly forgotten* town). Here he dreams his dream—substantially as written to you. Awakening from the nightmare he finds that a week of delirium has passed, and that it is the first of November. He is well, but vaguely uneasy. That afternoon he is still further disturbed by sad news from the hills. There has been a terrible avalanche in the night, and poor Miguel Longo y Santayana and Francisco Belnapio Dotina are no more. And all trace of the newly-excavated city has been obliterated by a fresh downpour of evil earth. The Magnum Innominandum does not forget.

As for my genealogical data—no doubt excessive theology, consanguinity, and Celticity are jointly responsible for my morbidity and decadence. . . . No—I haven't found any Jews yet, though you'll surely hear of 'em if I do. After admitting all these Celts I'm willing to

admit anything north of the Sahara. Did I mention the Egyptian priest Ra-ankh-Khamses, who voyaged to the Cassiterides on a Phoenician ship in the time of Psammeticus and was cast on the green shores of Quernas near the site of the modern Queenstown? It is known to every schoolboy that he wed Cathlin, daughter of Fian the Bold, and if it is true that their son Fian the Terrible was the ancestor of the Ui Nialls, then of course I am an AEgyptian of the old priestly line! Then, of course, there is the Cro-Magnon Glwkhlgx, whose triumphs over the Little People on the plains of Dardogne are frescoed in a thousand caves. He settled near the mouth of the Seine in the territory later held by the Gallick-Aryan Lexovii, mingling his posterity with the newcomers, and transmitting it in turn to the Frankish invaders of the later empire. Some of this blood, absorbed by the Norman conquerors, was carried to England in 1066 by Thomas de Musgrave, companion of William the Conqueror, from whom I derive it in direct line through the fairy-cup-stealing Musgraves of Eden Hall. I will not speak of the Byzantine-Greek strain which one of the noble Chichesters picked up during the First Crusade, nor of the Saracenic drop of blood acquired during the Third Crusade, when Sir Nevil de Fulford married Amina, daughter of the haughty Nasr-el-Melik and descendant of Abdul Alhazred, author of the terrible and forbidden *Al Azif* which was translated at Constantinople in A.D. 950 as the *Necronomicon*. No, I will not speak of these things—nor even *hint* that an Arcadian ancestress of that Byzantine progenitress was once held for nearly three days in the clutches of the dreaded *Kallikanzari* in the dreadful season betwixt Christmas and Epiphany. I will pass over these things, and rest content to be a wholesome Moreton. I am glad that James Ferdinand and the Plantagenets belong to the same clan as me and Dunsany—but sorry that they allowed their noble heritage to fall into corruption. It took me and Edward John to sustain the tradition of this day in unimpaired splendour. I'm going to look up Ed's heraldry in Burke's *Peerage* and see if his Moreton coat is like the one described in my notes. Oh, yes—and I nearly forgot! I must claim *Ambrose Bierce* also as a cousin! Owen *Gwynedd* is obviously the source of the modern name *Gwinnett*—and Amby's full name was Ambrose *Gwinnett* Bierce. Yes—all our family take to weird literature!

..... This "de Castro" according to the preface to Bierce's *Monk and the Hangman's Daughter*, was originally a German pundit entitled

Dr. Gustave Adolph Danziger. . . I assume the Latin pseudonym is either a wartime coinage or a concession to a Mediterranean passion much like your own. . . . He translated *The Monk and the Hangman's Daughter* from the German of Richard Voss, and had Bierce work it into shape. . . .

Well, Sir, after all this library securing of *The Monk and the Hangman's Daughter* I now find myself the *owner* of a fine new copy, received yesterday from the genial and loquacious co-author as a much-appreciated gift! I also find myself the recipient of much argumentative matter designed to prove our friend Gustavus Adolphus the "real author" of the work in question. . . . I cannot refrain from enclosing the current data designed to dethrone Bierce from his pinnacle as main author of the book. This geaser is apparently an old Hun who would do anything to slip Adolphus a good turn—you see he claims to have given the manuscript a revision before Amby had it, and therefore to know what it was like in the first place. Thus you see that 'Dolphy has wholly changed the basis of his claim since the time when Bierce spoke of him in the *Monk's* preface (1906). *Then*, his claim was at the expense of the *original German work* and not at that of Bierce, (who was living and far from inarticulate!). *Now* it is *Bierce's* laurels which he seeks to diminish . . . and Villa's orders have forestalled certain possible complications!

De Castro's main argument is contained in a printed sheet which he has pasted into the *Monk* in lieu of the *carefully torn out* preface by Bierce; and is based on a letter written by him by Bierce himself. He begins by speaking of the book as his own—"founded on (note how differently this sounds—instead of "*translated from*"!) a German tale"—and as slightly revised by Bierce—who advocated the retention of the German tragic ending despite Danziger-de Castro's insertion of a happy one. The original publication, failure of the firm, and loss of the first edition are suffered to stand as in Bierce's account.

Now comes the best part, hitherto unknown, but backed up by what Addy claims is a genuine letter from Amby. Probably the letter *is* genuine, for it has caused the publisher (A. & C. Boni) to acknowledge the de Castro claim, and to promise to base future editions upon it. The Bantu in the kindling-stack must reside in the *precise interpretation* of Amby's words. The situation was, that in 1900 a publisher offered to bring out the book on condition that de Castro restore the happy ending

of his first manuscript. He referred the matter to Bierce, and the latter violently vetoed any such puerile concession in the letter in question: dated Aug. 21, 1900. As a result, the publisher refused the book, and de C. gave B. a power of attorney to place it at his discretion. Then, in 1906, Bierce included the story in his collected works under his own name—with the statement that he had changed it enormously, and with Danziger's name subordinated as that of collaborator. . . .

And what of this letter from Bierce that forms the bulk of the evidence and has caused the publisher to acknowledge 'Dolphy's predominant authorship? Well—the crucial passage is as follows—underscoring being Bierce's own:

"The book is almost perfect as you wrote it; the part of the work that pleases me least is *my* part."

All very well—yet just how much does this prove? In the first place, it does not touch the original Voss Question at all—Bierce having elsewhere stated that he had not read the German tale. Secondly, aside from all question of what 'pleased' Bierce, it is expressly stated that Bierce *did* have a part. Furthermore—the whole letter is a discussion of a *plot*, (undoubtedly Voss's) which naturally Bierce would consider of superior importance to his own mainly mechanical and linguistick labours. To my mind this passage does not in any way challenge my original conviction that the *story and colouring* are mainly Voss's, and that the *phraseology* is mainly Bierce's. Danziger I would dismiss as mainly a translator. The one device which is—or which he told Bierce is—his own, is the final O. Henry twist which makes Benedicta the half-sister instead of sweetheart of Rochus. I almost believe this claim, since the trick is undeniably a cheap one. Voss probably had Benedicta really guilty; a condition giving to the tale, through the Monk's pathetic faith in her virtue, a quality of *really tragick* instead of *fictionally clever* irony. Bierce, in his letter, speaks of his misgivings in allowing the retention of this flashy device. He finally consented, though he remained firm against the happy ending. Bierce ends his letter thus:

"Let *The Monk and the Hangman's Daughter* alone. It is great work, and *you* should live to see the world confess it. Let me know if my faith in your faith in me is an error. You once believed in my judgment; I think it is not yet impaired by age.

Sincerely yours,  
Ambrose Bierce."

And that's all I know (and really a damn sight more than I *care*, save as a transient dispeller of ennui!) about the matter. Old 'Dolphie, as you can see from the accompanying table of contents of his memoirs, will undoubtedly have more to say in time. If you ask me, Ill say that all this scrambling for crumbs of literary credit is no procedure worthy of a gentleman. It isn't worth becoming undignified about. . . .

As for the *Monk* itself—you are right in praising it. It is an atmospheric triumph, and makes the wild Bavarian hills and deep woods and hellish lakes quiver with a malign and poignant vitality. I differ from you in attributing this magick to Bierce, for it is too definitely *geographick*. The man who dreamed this scene *knew Bavaria from the bottom up*, and we know that Ambrosius did not. Whoever drew such a picture must have been a German and an artist both. Danziger is a German but not an artist. Bierce was an artist but not a German. That throws the decision to Prof. Voss—and I'll stand by that verdict till ousted by real proof. I'll wager Danziger-de Castro wouldn't dare to haul out the Voss original and have it printed today! . . . Bierce mentions knowing and admiring Voss's other works, which shews he was a first rate artist.

As for revision—I haven't yet advertised, though I've been several times on the point of doing so. I'm so damn *slow* in doing good work that I am not able to handle all I'd like—from a financial standpoint—and the fact that a very few persons have submitted continuous streams, has made it unnecessary of late for me to look about for a greater number of clients. If I ever did advertise, I might get more than my slow-moving head could battle with; in which case I'd have to call in your aid.

And I *am* calling in your aid right now in the case of old 'Dolph! He's too gordam fussy to make his work a paying proposition for me—for his fiction is *unspeakable*, his paying ability meagre, and his demands for revision—after his first version—extensive. I about exploded over the dragging monotony of a silly thing which I renamed *Clarendon's Last Test*; and after I wearily sent in the result of a whole month's brain-fog, (incurred for a deplorable pittance!) the old reprobate shot it back with requests for extensive changes (based wholly on the new ideas I had injected!) which would have involved just as much work again, and without any additional fee. That was too much. I hurled the whole Hastur-hateful thing back at him—together with his

measly cheque and a dollar bill to cover the postage he'd expended—but he took it all in good part, and returned the cheque and dollar with a laudably generous gesture! Now—after thinking it over—he decided to use the tale just as I fixed it up. Vaya con Dios, Don Adolfo—here's one reviser who won't raise any controversy by claiming authorship of the beastly mess! But I can't tackle any more of his fiction. It raises a choking kind of mental "complex" preclusive of effort. I'll consider his straight prose memoirs, but nothing where constructive art is concern'd.

Yr. obt.  
Grandpa

309. TO AUGUST DERLETH

Friday  
(Early December 1927)

My dear A.W.:—

... As for affectation—I'm not fond of any kind, but hate literary affectation the worst, because it is more permanent and subversive in its essence. We can get rid of our personal affectations when we begin to see their absurdity, but our literary affectations are embalmed in cold print, and have perhaps ruined or at least vitiated what might have been our best work. When we go back to correct them, we sometimes find it's too late—youth and the creative fire have gone, after having been wasted in artificial triviality—and impossible media. The only really perfect undoing of a piece of youthful affectation which I've ever seen is M. P. Shiel's revision of his own florid tale of the 'nineties into the incomparable *House of Sounds*, in the 1900's. . . . . I also had my affectations at your age—mainly a sedulous cultivation of premature elderliness and sartorial antiquarianism manifesting itself in stiff bosom shirt, round cuffs, black coat and vest and grey striped trousers, standing collar and black string tie, &C—with austere and reticent mannerisms and speech to match. Now that is all over with, and I am the plainest of citizens. I don't consider the rabble worth shocking, and don't care to be annoyed by their notice. . . . Cordially—HPL



310. TO VINCENT STARRETT

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.  
Decr. 6, 1927

My dear Mr. Starrett:—

I am glad that you found my article in *The Recluse* not devoid of interest. Recalling the interest you had expressed in the subject of fantastic fiction, I asked Mr. Cook to include your name in his mailing list some time ago. . . .

The article itself attempted only an exceedingly cursory touching of high spots—being based on a criminally desultory reading programme & containing some woefully regrettable omissions—& inclusions. It is really meant to be only a general introduction to a series of articles by various hands, in the course of which nearly all aspects of weird literature & near-literature will be mentioned in one way or another. The next in the series will be a very informal paper on *popular* fantastic tales (of the *All-Story*, *Argosy*, or *Weird Tales* grade) by H. Warner Munn, who has had the patience to search out endless & arid realms of that sort of thing; & subsequently the less-known corners of the more standard field will be explored & recorded by Donald Wandrei—a remarkable youth of nineteen, himself gifted with much bizarre genius, now a senior at the Univ. of Minnesota. The concluding item will be an encyclopaedic bibliography of all sorts of weird writing, good & bad, on which this same Wandrei has been working since infancy, & which he expects to carry to a phenomenal degree of completeness. A certain taint of amateurishness & heterogeneity will naturally hover over the whole enterprise, yet when it is all done & assembled it will certainly be fairly unique—& perhaps even worthy of book form if there were enough devotees of the subject to warrant its publication. So far there is no general account of weird literature which I know of. The early Gothic novel has been adequately treated by Railo, Birkhead, & Killen, but the later fortunes of fictional fantasy remain without a chronicler unless the treatise of Dorothy Scarborough (which I haven't seen) is better than it is reported to be by those who have seen it.

I am exceedingly grateful for the additional weird material which you mention—in fact, I always solicit such suggestions from everyone, being acutely conscious of the narrow & capricious one-sidedness of my own fictional explorations. I have heard of the Jacobs weird tales aside from *The Monkey's Paw*, but have never been able to place my hands on them. Indeed, I only found the tale in question in a queer sort of anthology of parallel English & Italian texts in the N. Y. Public Library, evidently designed for the aesthetic edification & linguistic improvement of the Mediterranean stranger in our midst. A collected volume of Jacobean horror would meet with no more appreciative reader than I! H. G. Wells is a ticklish question on my literary scales. I *can't* derive a really *supernatural* thrill from matter which keeps my *mental* wheels turning so briskly; & yet when I think of some of his things *in retrospect*, supplying my own filter of imaginative colour, I am reduced to doubt again. W. C. Morrow fell flat with me, though I've seen only one volume of his tales—*The Ape, the Idiot, &c.* all fatally artificial cleverness of the 1900 era—though of course my opinion represents no real critical authority whatsoever. The Norris, Dawson, & Quiller-Couch material will be new to me when I find it—as I shall certainly try to do. I wish that I might have an opportunity of seeing your own work in macabre vein, concerning which a survey of your published critical appreciations leads me to entertain high expectations. If you ever have a MS. or old magazine copy of some typical tale in loanable form I would be infinitely grateful for a glimpse of it—prompt & safe return being of course solemnly guaranteed.

I read neither Stevenson's *Body Snatchers* nor Crawford's *Upper Berth* till ludicrously late in life, but received a very profound & authentic "kick" from both. *The Upper Berth*, in particular, belongs in the very highest circle of weird triumphs. Poe I knew from incredibly early times—from my tenth year, at the latest—and I believe he has affected me more than any other writer. *Amontillado* moved me strongly, but not so much perhaps as those in which the *implications* were more deliciously vague & terrifyingly monstrous. *Usher*, *Metzengerstein*, *Arthur Gordon Pym*, *Ms. Found in a Bottle*, & some of the *poems*, were the things which "got" me & opened up for my impressionable mind the most awesomely adventurous vistas it has ever enjoyed. Aside from Poe, I think Algernon Blackwood touches me most closely—and this in spite of the oceans of unrelieved puerility which he so frequently pours

forth. I am dogmatic enough to call *The Willows* the finest weird story I have ever read, & I find in the *Incredible Adventures* & *John Silence* material a serious & sympathetic understanding of the human illusion-weaving process which makes Blackwood rate far higher as a creative artist than many another craftsman of mountainously superior word-mastery & general technical ability. . . .

Most sincerely yrs—  
H P Lovecraft

311. TO DONALD WANDREI

Providence  
Dec. 19, 1927

Dear Melmoth:—

. . . . I've just received the 3d of the Selwyn & Blount *Not At Night* series with my *Horror at Red Hook* as the last story in the book. This is my first—if not my last—appearance between cloth covers. Wright still talks of that collection of my tales, but I don't take much stock in expansive discourse. He's just rejected *The Quest of Iranon* with high disdain—& to think you put in good labour typing that thing! . . . . For the ensuing Kalends of Iannuarius, pray accept my best wishes & blessings.

Páppos Nekrophilos

312. TO FARNSWORTH WRIGHT

10 Barnes St.  
Providence, R. I.  
Dec. 22, 1927

My dear Wright:—

I may have some more tales to send you before spring—but just now revision has me in a daemon clutch. An old fellow once associated with Ambrose Bierce is having me do over a whole book full of execrable

short stories—published and forgotten twenty-five years ago—for a second edition which he wants to float on the strength of some publicity gained in connection with a new Bierce death report. And if this thing goes through, he may want me to help him on a book of Bierce reminiscences. Poor old Ambrosius—how the ghouls feed! This especial old bird, according to an anecdote recorded by George Sterling, parted from Bierce under the dramatic circumstance of having a can broken over his head! When I saw his fiction I wondered why Ambrosius didn't use a crowbar.

As to that problematical volume of my tales—I'm really not very particular about the contents, since of course it would have to be formulated with the *Weird Tales* clientele in view and couldn't represent any real choice of mine. . . . .

By the way—I was flattered last Monday by receiving a letter from the anthologist Edward J. O'Brien, asking for an autobiographical note for *The Best Short Stories of 1927*. It was addressed to *Amazing Stories* and forwarded, so I suppose his mention of me will be based on *The Colour Out of Space*. I don't fancy he'll go so far as to reprint it—but even a favourable allusion from so Olympian a source will be encouraging. . .

With best wishes for a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year,  
I remain most cordially and sincerely yrs.—  
H. P. L.

P. S. I duly received the Selwyn and Blount anthology which you forwarded. Not half bad! My first appearance between cloth covers, save for prefaces to two books of other people's poetry which I've edited. . . .

313. TO WILFRED BLANCH TALMAN

10 Barnes St.  
Providence, R. I.  
Decr. 28, 1927

Sir Wilfred Blank-Blank Taelman-Taleman,  
Breuckelen, Nieuw-Nederland.

Dear WBT:—

..... You gain, alas, an erroneous impression of my genealogical industry from my recent bulletins on ancestral matters to you and Belknap. My researches have so far been confined wholly to pre-digested data dug up and formulated by earlier and better family archivists than myself, and have not indeed included any outside delvings whatsoever. All I have done is to collate certain maternal papers possessed by my aunt, and to exhume from storage some paternal charts and notes not seen by me for twenty years. These two sources are the only reservoirs I have tapped—but they were enough to yield monotonous reams of heraldic blazonings—so many that I would never have the nerve to ask you to translate even an eighth of them into visual form—and a pedigree containing the Celtic revelations of which I have already made mention. Such, in fine, is the modest extent of my recent investigations—though I do deserve credit for recopying a vast amount of data which I had copied in 1905 on that rotten yellow paper, and which was fast assuming the state of pulverisation which we noted in connexion with the separate Allgood notes!..... I fear my enthusiasm flags when real work is demanded of me. It's all right to look over what other genealogists have prepared—but when it comes to duplicating their industry and extending their results, I am of less than Talmanic persistence! My researches since Oct. 19 have been nil—for what I wrote Belknap was only a résumé of what I had found before.

As to my attitude toward ancestral Celts—well, I fancy it's still a bit ambiguous. I like 'em when they're kings, yet after all mere Druid-hounds can't compare in solidity and majesty with golden-bearded Vikings and conquerors. I'm for the Teuton in the last analysis—although of course a Celt or two on the loftier branches doesn't poison a whole

family tree! My *Machen* query wasn't *quite* as far-fetched as you think, for you didn't get the spelling right from my scrawl. The name of the seat of this David Jenkins was MACHYNLLETH—*Machen-lleth*, as it were—unless I myself made a mistake in originally copying the name from my late great-aunt's data in '05. However—I shan't be addressing Arthur M. as "Cousin Arthur" quite yet! Another pleasant suggestion of literary relationship came from the Fulford (my father's paternal grandmother) coat-of-arms, which is nothing but a veritable checker-board of quarterings. (Some of these Fulfords must have been as keen on genealogy as you!) One of the tiny compartments represents the *Moreton* shield—which of course implies descent, though the actual connexion is not given on any paper I have—thus giving me an actual though infinitesimal link with Edward John *Moreton* Drax Plunkett, 18th Baron Dunsany! Another still farther-fetched literary link only just occurred to me. As I think I said, one of my Celtic streams—Parry—claims descent from Owen GWYNEDD, Prince of North Wales. Now GWYNEDD is obviously the source of the modern name *Guinnett*—you know that Button Gwinnett was a Georgia signer of the Dec. of Ind.—and thus I am very clearly a second or third or three-thousandth cousin of my fellow-fantaisiste *Ambrose Guinnett Bierce!* Yeah—we're all one great family, me and Art Machen and Dunsany and Amby Bierce! Well—shew me proof to the contrary ef ya don't believe it! No use talking—all us Machyns and Moretons and Gwynetts jes' nachelly take to imaginative writing. It's in the blood—ya can't stop us!

Yr. obt.,

O'Howard McPhillips ap Lovecraft

314. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Chewsdy  
January 1928

Lord of Heaven, Lord of the Earth, Sun, Life of the World, Lord of Time, Creator of the Harvest, Dispenser of Breath to All Men, Animator of the Gods, Pillar of Heaven, Threshold of the Earth, Weigher of the Balance of the Two Worlds.

Greeting:—

Hallelujah! Whoopee! 'Rah! Rah! Siss, Boom, Bah!

They're off—they're off, Kid, they're off.

Two husky guys from Adams' Express have just stagger'd outen the house with the coffin, and it's comin' *collect* to your learned precincts. I done this to save bother all around. Your advance remittances have totalled \$2.59 in all, whereof 75¢ hath been spent on the casket. The rest of the tariff you'll pay at the Paterson end, so that makes me owe you \$1.84 at the present writing. BUT—I'm not the kind of a guy as will bother with small change, and I'm damned if I'll go down town and get a money-order. So—not havin' no chequin' account nowheres—the best thing to do is to call it two bucks even—a bill for which same amount I hereby slips in alongside of the usual reticulated narcotick. Keep the change, 'bo—youse has earned it a-waitin—and either tip the expressman or get yourself a cigar and a coupla beers. Ouf! I grow light-headed with relief to hev them damn stones on their way!

Well—play with your pretty marbles and thank gawd (= zeus) you got 'em at last!

Relievedly thine

Θεοβάλδος

Theobaldus

315. TO BERNARD AUSTIN DWYER

Saturday

January 1928

Sr. Bernardo de Viero

Oeste Socano

Nuevo-York

Muy Señor mío y amigo:—

. . . . I rather thought you might find my Roman dream of interest. Sooner or later I may work it up as a story, but there are several points which must be checked up as to accuracy before it sees final formulation. Chief of all is, of course, the matter of the calendar. As you know, the astronomically erroneous Roman year played hell with the months

and seasons before the divine Julius called in Sosigenes of Alexandria and set matters straight—so that a Witch-Sabbath, staged by wild tribes who reckoned by Nature and the stars, would (in the later ages of the republic) fall somewhere in the early January of the uncorrected Roman year instead of at the Kalends of November. Roman data and wild Sabbath would coincide only at a very early Republican age, or in the Imperial period after the reform of the calendar. As for the Dark Folk—I saw none of them in the dream, but do not think I understood them to be *little* from what I read and from what Annaeus Mela and the Pomponii told me. They had *strange features*, but could not have conspicuously impressed the villagers as undersized else the aedile would have mentioned it. Nor was their language a *bissing*. It was normal human speech, and Mela even tried to imitate some of it to me. Its nature and affiliations were totally unknown. Its source, as a feature of the dream, must have been my memory of the fact that the *Basques* of the Pyrenees speak a language absolutely unclassifiable by human erudition. It was probably left by the little Mongoloids, although the Basques themselves have none of their blood—just as the Finns speak a Mongoloid language despite an ascendancy of Aryan blood in their actual veins. The dream gave no clue to what was to happen after the point where waking removed me, but as I call it repeatedly to mind and memory I seem to find one more impression which I don't think I wrote you. It is that the steep wooded slopes on either side of the defile were slowly and stealthily creeping together with a morbid vitality and motion—closing in upon the doomed cohort, perhaps to crush and bury it forever in an altered landscape. But the doom could not have reached Pompelo—for the town still lives! How to handle the tale will be quite a problem. I don't think Rufus or anybody else ought to survive—and it ought somehow to be made clear that the sacrifice of the cohort saved the town. Or better still—for of course it would be foolish to follow the dream when it isn't convenient to do so—*the town had better be destroyed*; its identity being of course changed from Pompelo. The best beginning would be an archaeological one. A rusted Roman signum washed down from the Pyrenees in the spring rains and placed in the museum of some surviving town—a sensitive and contemplative traveller inexplicably and continually attracted to it—his fear of the hills, but his visit to them after having been told where the aquila was found. His camp at the base of the foothills and his discovery of ruins. Perfect preservation of the



buried town uncovered by the Spanish archaeologists whom he summons. Conclusion that town was overwhelmed instantaneously by an avalanche—households apparently interrupted in the midst of work—but *no human remains found*. Only small heaps of grey dust. Graffiti of very puzzling sort on walls—prayers scrawled everywhere, as if in fear of a terrible doom—

NOS. SERVA. IVPPITER. OPPIDUM. SERVA. EX. PERICULO.  
 MAVORS. NOBISCUM. ESTO. CONTRA. MIROS. NIGROS. PUGNA.  
 FAVNE. MONTES. TENE. SILVANE. SILVANE. NECA.  
 MECA. MAGNUM. INNOMINANDUM. NECA. AC. SERVA.  
 MALITIAM. VETEREM. NECA. APOLLO. NOS. SERVA.

(The phrase *Magnum Innominandum* must of course excite the keenest awe and speculation.)

Spanish archaeologists tell of fear which natives possess for the Basques of the hills, amongst whom the Evil Sabbath is still said to be celebrated—traveller determines to wait for Sabbath night and go into hills to witness horrors—interests archaeologists and persuades them to accompany him. Makes a preliminary survey of the hills alone, and finds an exceedingly strange altar and circle of monoliths on a distant peak. Meets a strange dark man, who makes an evil sign in the air and flees. Returns to camp and falls ill with fever. Taken to hospital in Pompelona—too ill to go into the hills Hallowe'en night. But the Spanish archaeologists go just the same. That night the dream ensues—exactly as previously related except for identity of town. Horrible waking—but still more horrible news that afternoon. *The party of Spanish archaeologists has disappeared, and the unknown excavated village has been buried again, precisely as it had remained for two thousand years.* The *Magnum Innominandum* does not forget. By Jove! That doesn't sound half bad! But it'll take a helluva lot of care in handling. This sort of thing has to be damned adroit, or it doesn't convince. Wright has just sent me advance sheets of *Cthulhu* from next month's *W. T.*, and I am horribly disappointed with it upon a re-reading after a year and a quarter. It is *cumbrous*—undeniably *cumbrous*. Well—let's see if I do better this time! By the way—Wright has accepted that tale of Belknap's of which I am "hero". Yes—nocturnal *bowling* has an element of fearfulness for me. I always associate it with lean, dog-faced beings that walk sometimes on two legs and sometimes on four, and that lope

abroad in the night's small hours. Wolves and other animals are of course the ultimate basis of the hereditary folk-fear on which my impression is founded. . . . Coming back to the possible dream-tale—the irregularities of the calendar would require some explaining rather foreign to the directness and simplicity of good fiction—or at least to the taste of Brother Wright's untutored clientele—so I guess I'll push the date ahead to the early Imperial age, after the calendar's reform. The province will then be called *Hispania Terraconensis*, and the brave old man will be *Legatus propraetore* instead of proconsul. He'd better have a less ancient name. Let's see . . . . . Caius Pomponius Falco; Titus Sosius Caecinus; Marcus Cornelius Balbus . . . . . any of the middle-grade equestrian houses that weathered the decadence of the late republic and the slaughter of the civil wars and the proscription of the second triumvirate. . . . .

Su segura servidor q.s.m.b.

Luis Randolpho Cartero y Teobaldo.

316. TO VINCENT STARRETT

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.  
Jany. 10, 1928

Dear Mr. Starrett:—

I am glad to be able to furnish at least a slight idea of who John Martin was—a thing I could not have done prior to 1922, when our mutual friend Mr. Loveman took very kindly pains to introduce him to me. Under Lovemanic guidance I looked up engravings of his work in the N. Y. Public Library, & was enthralled by the darkly thunderous, apocalyptically majestic, & cataclysmically unearthly power of one who, to me, seemed to hold the essence of cosmic mystery; notwithstanding the blandly low estimate placed upon his work by the tamely & urbanely correct artists & critics of his own period. The library engravings—of relatively small size & not from his own pencil—really failed to do him full justice, impressive though they were; & I was very much gratified by a chance, three years later, to see some really good & original plates of the best subjects in the stock of a bookselling acquaintance. I have

mentioned him several times in stories, for he is almost a stock fixture of my fantastic imagination, though I have never engaged in any real research concerning him. The little I know comes from the sketch of him in my old (9th edition) *Encyclopaedia Britannica*—which is indeed worth looking up in the absence of fuller sources.

John Martin (1789-1854) was of humble Northumberland origin, & was apprenticed by his father to a coachmaker—to learn heraldic painting—in view of his boyish artistic talent. Later he was placed under an Italian artist named Bonifacio Musso, & with him went to London in 1806. He studied, especially, perspective & architecture, which were to prove of significant importance to him later on. He seems to have been a person of Calvinistic intensity, like many rural yeomen; & was certainly influenced enormously by the spirit of Hebraic grandioseness in the Old Testament. He was, in a sense, a Milton among painters. I have somewhere heard that he was an opium-eater, though I am always sceptical of a stock rumour so frequently raised by the vulgar against an artist of fantastic attainments. In 1812 he first appeared as a painter, his subject being *Sadok in Search of the Waters of Oblivion*. The picture was hung in the Royal Academy & sold for 50 guineas. It was (as I can judge from having seen an engraving of it) very fairly typical of what he was to paint & draw all the rest of his life—Biblical & other archaic conceptions in a spirit of awful and tenebrous sublimity; with wild & rugged scenery, objects of solemn & decaying grandeur, & strange nocturnal lighting-effects predominating in nearly every case. Basically Martin was not at all inclined to the fantastic or grotesque. He had none of the subjective primitiveness & spiritual symbolism of Blake, or of the weird decorative grotesquerie of the living artist Sime. It is more fitting to compare him with Gustave Doré, since his scenes were always conceived in the external spirit of classic naturalism, the element of terror, mystery, or sublimity being infused by a process much subtler than mere distortion. His greatest weakness was the rendering of the human figure, but this was no major defect because with him figures were only slight & subsidiary parts of great landscape & architectural conceptions. Night; great desolate pillared halls; unholy abysses & blasphemous torrents; terraced titan cities in far, half-celestial backgrounds whereon shines the light of no familiar sky of men's knowing; shrieking mortal hordes borne doomward over vast wastes & down cyclopean gulfs where Phlegethon & Archeron flow; these are the dominant impressions

one (i.e., myself, at least!) carries away from the study of a set of Martin engravings. Of the paintings as paintings, of course, I can say nothing—except to quote the encyclopaedist's smug Victorian judgment—"his colouring is hot & unpleasant." As a summary, I would say that Martin's characteristic qualities were the use of vast space-suggestions, colossal effects of ancient architecture, & a daemon-dowered mastery of subtle & unearthly lighting effects amidst an all-engulfing gloom—the ravenous gloom of the outer void, whose *fluctus decumanus* beats so perilously on the frail dykes of our little world of light. The most typical Martin effect is that of a distant Babylon-like city or vision of a city bathed in some terrible supernal light—a form of aesthetic appeal so especially potent to my individual imagination that I may be inclined to give the artist too high a proportionate rating. To me, assuredly, he is one of the few preëminent giants of pictorial fantasy. In addition, I find in him great elements of pure landscape beauty; some of his milder conceptions giving me sensations not remote from those supplied by Constable or Claude Lorraine. My ignorance of art & its principles, however, makes my judgment of little value in this particular. Martin's real fame must rest on his febrile & oneiroscopic glimpses of other worlds—or atmospheric emanations of other worlds. In his day he was an idol of the Radcliffe-revering & Lewis-loving herd, but a doubtful question to the sedate & well-bred academicians. Today his favour amongst a microscopic minority of fantaisistes, & his absolute disappearance from the general view, (for he has in truth found what his Sadok sought!) constitutes a reversal of the most ironic sort. After his first picture came *The Expulsion from Paradise* (1813) *Paradise*, (1813) *Clytie* (1814), & *Joshua* (1815). In 1821 (I cull dates from the Britannica) appeared the very famous *Belshazzar's Feast*, which precipitated acute controversy. This took a £200 prize at the British Institution, *Joshua* having taken one of £100. In 1822 came *The Destruction of Herculaneum*, in 1824 *The Creation*, & thereafter a vast number of paintings well-known in their day, of which *The Fall of Nineveh* (1829) & *The Eve of the Deluge* (1841) perhaps excited the greatest notice. They were widely circulated as engravings, some of which were wrought by Martin's own hand. In 1832-33 Martin illustrated Milton—much better than did Doré later on, in my opinion—and somewhat later he collaborated with the celebrated Westall in producing a set of Bible illustrations. During the last four years of his life he completed some large & highly impressive canvases

—*The Last Judgment, The Day of Wrath, & The Plains of Heaven.* He was finally seized by paralysis whilst at work, & died on the Isle of Man on Feby. 17, 1854, at the age of sixty-four. I do not know where, apart from the N. Y. Public Library, one might find an easily accessible set of Martin engravings; though the art departments of other libraries would be logical foci of inquiry. Chicago, if anywhere, ought to have some specimens; & I would certainly advise your conducting a search there. Loveman once owned some fine Martin engravings, but I do not think he has them now. They would, indeed, be packed away in Cleveland if he had. It is my impression that he gave them to a book-selling friend, & that the ones I saw were these selfsame copies. This friend has probably sold them long ago, but you might at least ask him—his name & habitat being George W. Kirk, Chelsea Book Shop, 58 West 8th St., New York, N. Y. It is certainly atrocious that Martin's work is nowhere popularly accessible, but that is the fate of many another strange & beautiful creation. If ever a selection of plates were made up for sale at a rational price, I would be among the first to indulge. As to published references—like you I have come across the name elusively, yet like you I have never found any connected comment, critique, or biography. There is much work for a gifted & energetic archaeologist here—& I wish indeed that you might ultimately add this splendid specimen to your already notable catalogue of Caesarean exhumations!

It remains only to add—as postscriptive afterthoughts—(a) that Martin had an odd streak of civic-mindedness running parallel with his art interests, so that he published many plans & pamphlets dealing with the improvement of London through water, sewer, dock & railway facilities, and (b) that bad copies or adaptations of some of his work may now & then be found in 19th century family Bibles—that which my own parents procured when setting up their own household in '89 having a clumsily 'elegant' imitative engraving of *Belshazzar's Feast*, which I recognized upon seeing a proper plate of the subject for the first time.

And now permit me to thank you for the poem which you so kindly enclosed, & which impresses me as marvellously poignant & authentic in its fantastic visual value & its cumulative & climactic horror-appeal. It has the music of true poetry, & at the same time the stealthy atmospheric convincingness of first-rate Gothic horror; a combination not

often found in such felicitous completeness. I must look up your volume *Ebony Flame*—& I am glad of such an interesting excuse to dispel a little more of my criminally abysmal ignorance of contemporary letters. With my characteristic lack of energy & initiative, I never read anything till supplied with some such external impulsion! Incidentally, this verse comes very opportunely, considering the fact that it is scarce two weeks since I read, *for the first time*, that delightfully sombre adaptation of Ambrose Bierce's from the German—*The Monk & the Hangman's Daughter*. I had been told it was not weird—that being my reason for postponing its reading so long after my discovery of Bierce (which I owe to Loveman, by the way, as completely as I owe my discovery of Martin!) in 1919—but in truth it has a pervasive air of the imminence of spectral horrors, which is none the less because the supernatural does not actually appear. I shall not soon forget the general picture afforded of the wild Bavarian mountains, the sombre, ancient life of the salt mines, & the whispered, fearsome lore of the crag-fringed tarns & black hanging woods. . . .

Most cordially & sincerely yours,  
H P Lovecraft

317. TO DONALD WANDREI

Providence  
Jan. 19, 1928

Prospihla Melmoth:—

. . . There's no doubt but that a sensitiveness to the fantastic is a rare special sense—a mental excrescence approaching positive abnormality—so that one can't blame the honest souls who remain stolid in the face of poignant strangeness & cryptic beauty. Their attainments in the general intellectual & aesthetic field are often brilliant, so that they are highly congenial when one can meet them on their own ground—minerals with Morton, *vers de société* with Kleiner, genealogy with Talman, boys' books & Victorian uprightness with honest old Mac, & so on. . .

Yrs. for churchyards & Witches' Sabbaths—  
Páppos Nekrophilos

318. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

10 Barnes St.  
Jany. 31, 1928

Dear C A S:—

O'Brien isn't going to *reprint* *The Colour Out of Space*, but merely wants to mention me in his list of the year's writers—a list so crowded that inclusion isn't any vast distinction. I liked that tale myself about as well as any I've written. . . . .

Yr most obt Servt  
H P L

319. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

Feby. 10, 1928

Young Man:—

West Shokan is probably just about opposite—or slightly beyond—Poughkeepsie, on the other side of the river. It is not on *any* map that I know of, but its nearest real town—somewhat to the northeast of it,—is the river part of Kingston. The scenery of the place is of the greatest wildness and picturesqueness, and I have been infinitely fascinated by some of the Machen-like descriptions of rural walks which Dwyer has written me. . . . . Dwyer is quite a chap, beyond a doubt; with a lot more points in his favour than against him. He has an imagination of the utmost sensitiveness, delicacy, and picturesqueness; and the way he assimilates the many books I lend him (for he has no way of getting books himself in his absolute backwoods isolation) is a proof of his thorough intelligence, sound aesthetic sense, and deep-seated literary sincerity. Cook is becoming quite impressed with his possibilities, and is going to share my paternal interest in his development. As Wandrei has probably told you, he is a handsome, youngish near-giant—a mighty woodcutter and athlete, and a modest, well-bred, and generally unspoiled personality as a whole.

Beard? Thou little rascal. If you want to do anything toward looking half-respectable—as respectable, at any rate, as a Bohemian decadent can look—you'll delete that infamously Neronic upper-lip down and be a decent, clean-shaven Roman nobleman of equestrian rank and consular dignity. How I hate these little Greek barbatuli with their tufts and fringes of sickly fur! Domitius Ahenobarbus's son appeared in the curia yesterday tricked out that way, and I think I noted something of the sort sprouting on Quintus Corbulo's youngest boy when I met his litter on the Via Appia last night just beyond the aqueduct. AEdopol, these young bloods! I vow to Hercules, I hate their fads worse than the populous chin-forests of your musty philosophers from Syracuse and Torentum, who claim to spring from the Cephissian grove! And that weight card! For shame, Sir! But then—your Grandpa will *not* believe that you didn't have a heavy overcoat on! I weighed 145 *in a six-pound overcoat* Monday night—which makes my actual tonnage just 139. There's asceticism for you!

I yesterday receiv'd a letter from Farnsworth Wright, Esq., requesting permission to reprint *The Lurking Fear* from *Home Brew* and to pay me \$78.00 therefor. Naturally, I am somewhat pleas'd, but I am asking Bro. Farnie to take care regarding the legal and professional ethicks of the case. He knows his business, I suppose, and if there is any trouble I presume I may permit him and Houtain to conduct their hostilities without personal interference. Meanwhile *Tales of Magick and Mystery* has accepted *Cool Air*. Let the good work go on!

Yr. obt. Grandsire

Caelius Alhazred Moreton O'Casey.

P.S. Had a discouraging delay not long ago, when a whole day's batch of my outgoing mail got lost at the P. O. I'm filing "tracer" forms—among the missing items was a Derleth manuscript of which no duplicate exists! The one consolation is that such things happen very seldom indeed.



320. TO ZEALIA BROWN REED (BISHOP)

10 Barnes St.  
Providence, R. I.  
Feb. 13, 1928

My dear Mrs. Reed:—

..... Meanwhile I am greatly interested to hear that you met Mr. Loveman. . . . Although his modesty probably prevented his mentioning it, he is one of the finest and subtlest lyric poets alive, with a curious dual mixture of the Hellenic and the Elizabethan in his aesthetic makeup. His long poem *The Hermaphrodite*, recently issued as a thin book, is perhaps the most authentically Greek in spirit of any sustained utterance of recent years. . . . I have not seen his shop, either; since he was a rarebook expert and cataloguer with the large firm of Dauber and Pine in lower 5th Ave. when I was last in New York. In the matter of valuable books he is a connoisseur of the very first water.

.... What Loveman was probably referring to was my circle of "adopted grandchildren"—young prodigies whom I have occasionally come across in various parts of the country through correspondence, and whose growth into men of genuine artistic and intellectual ability I have watched (rather than aided) with the indulgently complacent eye of a theoretical grandsire. These, however, have been boys of a little older growth—in high-school or college—who have happened to possess literary, philosophical, historical, scientific or aesthetic interests more or less akin to my own. My epistolary discourse with these hopeful scions has not been that of a guardianly adviser or self-conscious "good influence", but has adhered usually to the topics of common interest; in which I have tried to avoid the atmosphere of patronage or pedagogy, and to live over my own remote youth by viewing the field of thought and art once more through young eyes and along your perspectives. There is thus in my correspondence a sort of free and easy equality preclusive of the really didactic—I don't pretend to be much wiser than the boys, and offer such opinions as I do offer on a 'take-'em-or-leave-'em-alone' basis. With my basic cynicism and essential indifference to mankind and all human institutions I couldn't very well pose as Helpful Person with a Mission. The most I can say is that my influence is at least not a bad

one. . . . I let them enjoy themselves in their own way, while I enjoy myself in mine; and when I express an opinion it is optional with them to accept or reject it. Their own natures and the age as a whole will mould them far more than any one person's preaching could—and perhaps it is just as well that it is so. Certainly, I don't worry about it! I have taken quite a grandfatherly pride in seeing some of the children blossom forth as authors and men of brains; for there is satisfaction in having recognised genius in youth. It has also gratified me that none of my "adoptive descendants" has become a very notorious reprobate or popular hold-up man. . . . . As a cynic, I don't consider truth of sufficient importance to warrant the shattering of a beautiful illusion for its sake—my general attitude being much like that of George Santayana in this respect. I really wish this generation did know less, so that it might return to the unperplexed tranquility of former times—the tranquility of simple loyalty to King and Church, amidst which those idyllic figures, the country 'squire and the parish vicar, could regain something of their olden significance. Certainly, the acquiescent, dogmatic, and well-ordered life of simpler ages had, with all its glaring defects, a fundamental harmony and good taste that we seek in vain amidst the excesses of that "jazz period" to which the invention of complex machinery and the spread of democratic fallacies have jointly given birth. Thus I am, whilst utterly radical in such departments of sheer intellect as science and philosophy, thoroughly and cynically conservative—even reactionary—in social and political matters; a Tory, Czarist, Junker, patrician, Fascist, oligarchist, nationalist, militarist, and whatever else of the sort you can find in Webster's *Dictionary* or Roget's *Thesaurus*! My idea of modern democratic and humanitarian ideas simply can't be printed. I'm for old cultural standards, and ruthless, aristocratic efficiency in government—as sadly out of tune with our modern sociological Messiahs as with our modern hip-flask hounds! So much, then, for my philosophic position. . . . .

Incidentally—don't let me convey the idea that I disapprove of—or look down upon—commercial writing. Far from it! It's a legitimate business, just like insurance or banking or engineering, which somebody has got to do; and it takes absolutely first-rate brains to do it. My hat is off to the person who succeeds at it! The case with me is simply that this industry doesn't happen to be my natural specialty; I lack—much to my own material detriment—the commercial type of mind;

hence cannot put my real fund of energy or purpose into anything with a commercial object. I am truly interested only in the creation of strangeness and beauty for their own sake, and in the recording of truth through new and poignant harmonies.

As to my theological views—or absence of such things—I don't see that my position is a particularly humble one; since if it makes an aimless atom out of *me*, it likewise does the same for everyone else, from Caesar and Shakespeare down! However—scientific questions aren't to be decided by considerations of egotism and emotion; wishes or aspirations. Such things furnish absolutely no evidence one way or the other. All we can do is to look at nature—the earth, the universe, and the phenomena thereof—and study its workings in the light of such tests of truth and pointers of probability as we know how to apply. When we do this—setting aside all traditional preconceptions and misleading emotions—we cannot help seeing that there is not a spark of genuine evidence or even likelihood of the universe's being anything but a perpetual cycle of mutually interacting forces, whose regular rearrangements always have been going on and always will be going on. There is no reason to assume any central consciousness, purpose, or direction; but a great deal of presumptive reason to assume the contrary. In this infinite welter of alternate building-up and breaking down our earth and the organic life upon it—including the human species—form only the most transient and trivial incident. A second ago—as eternity is measured—they did not exist. A second hence their existence will have been forgotten. Any other assumption involves extravagant improbability and sheer fiction of the most flagrant sort. This realistic facing of the purposeless void is not new, but has come down through a long line of Graeco-Roman thought including Leucippus, Democritus, Epicurus, and Lucretius. Its widespread diffusion, however, is distinctly a feature of the present age; since it is only the enormous strides of contemporary science which have rendered it such an utterly inescapable attitude for any dispassionately analytical thinker. The younger generation cannot regard the old theistic teaching as anything but out-and-out mythology—and the more thoughtful wing of oldsters had been forming the same estimate during the last seventy-five years. Haeckel and Huxley are practically unanswerable, despite all the obscurantist mysticism brought to bear on them by desperate adherents of the dying faith. And yet the popular mythology has had an excellent sociological value in its day—so

that I cannot sympathise with the violent anti-Christian agitators and "debunkers" of the *Truth-Seeker* and *Haldeman-Julius Weekly* type. It was a perfectly natural and inevitable phase of uninformed man's reaction to the scenes around him, and will always have a retrospective beauty which no impersonal aesthete can fail to respect. I think the organised church will last for many generations to come—as a social pose and artistic gesture on the part of the educated, and as a focus of ignorant faith—as always—on the part of the emotional herd. The greatest changes will come within the next quarter-century, when the world's positions of influence and thought-moulding begin to be filled by men whose intellectual life was developed in the scientific enlightenment of the period we now dub "post-war". In some ways the coming change is to be deplored, for it will probably dry up many of the well-springs of art and culture at the same time that it augments our grasp of truth and improves our intellectual understanding of the universe. Spengler is right, I feel sure, in classifying the present phase of Western civilisation as a decadent one; for racial-cultural stamina shines more brightly in art, war, and prideful magnificence than in the arid intellectualism, engulfing commercialism, and pointless material luxury of an age of standardisation and mechanical invention like the one now well on its course. It would be better if we could still be naive, beauty-loving, and ignorant—yet we cannot turn the clock back. Memphis and Nineveh, Babylon and Persepolis, Carthage and Ctesiphon, Athens and Lacedaemon, Rome and Alexandria, Antioch and Tyre—all these have had their day and their sunset; their grandeur and their fall. In the face of such a pageant of history it would be folly to expect anything else of the existing civilisation. This age in America corresponds quite startlingly to the luxurious and disillusioned age of the Antonines in the Roman Empire—when Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, Athens, and New Carthage blazed in the sunset that was to mark the death of the ancient world. A gradual death, of course, which took many centuries in dragging itself out. If I were at all a mundane person—at all disposed to identify myself with one age any more than with any other—I would probably be greatly depressed by the existing phase of European culture; since I have no respect whatever for the hectic mechanical world which is supplanting the simpler, tradition-anchored world into which I was born. Fortunately for me, though, I am not greatly engrossed in external reality; so that my imagination is as free to live in another age as in this. It is only

these broad, historic sweeps of life which interest me. I prefer to think in terms of centuries and dynasties than in terms of years and individuals. The proud, austere Roman republic of the Punic War period,—the Rome of Scipio Africanus, Lutatius Catullus, and Fabius Maximus—and the periwigged eighteenth century in England and America, are my two favourite periods. Mentally I live in either one or the other—or both!

As for being interested in forms of life 'not beautiful'—I am only so far as their gruesomeness or tragedy contains rhythms of picturesqueness equivalent to beauty. What I call beauty includes the *strange* in almost any form—and of course the quaint and grotesque. . . . I am above all else *scenic and architectural* in my tastes—it might quite justly be said that the only genuine motivating element in my existence is a quest for novel adventures in landscape, panorama, and lighting-effects: new combinations of hill and river-bend and wooded valley, new juxtapositions of winding road, stone wall, and half-embowered farmhouse roof, or new effects of slanting late-afternoon sunlight over the spires, roofs, and terraced gardens of some marvellous city I have never seen before—these things, and the constant recalling of the picturesque past in glimpses of archaic country-side and vistas of ancient urban quaintness. I ought to have been a pictorial artist instead of a would-be writer—but unfortunately I have even less talent with pencil and brush than with pen, ink, and paper. My theory of aesthetics is a compound one. To me beauty as we know it, consists of two elements; one absolute and objective, and based on rhythm and symmetry: and one relative and subjective, based on traditional associations with the hereditary culture-stream of the beholder. The second element is probably strongest with me, since my notions of enjoyment are invariably bound up with strange recollections of the past. It may be this out-reaching toward earlier ages which has given me my general taste for the literary overleaping of the bounds of the material universe—or it may with equal probability be exactly the other way around. I don't know yet whether I'm a *fantaisiste* because I'm an antiquarian, or an antiquarian because I'm a *fantaisiste*! Nor do I fancy that it matters extensively.

As for the matter of drinking—I have never tasted intoxicating liquor, and never intend to: having a strong aesthetic disgust at anything which blunts or coarsens the delicate natural equipoise of the evolved human intellect and imagination. . . . I am rather in favour of prohibition—the prohibition of any one anti-social force as well as of any

other. Prohibition of murder can't be enforced—see any day's news as evidence—yet I haven't heard of any movement for the repeal of laws against homicide. Of course this parallel is an overdrawn one, but I think it is at least theoretically true. The existence of intoxicating drink is certainly an almost unrelieved evil from the point of view of an orderly and delicately cultivated civilisation; for I can't see that it does much save coarsen, animalise, and degrade. Any step to get rid of it is to be welcomed—just as any step to get rid of murder, robbery, and forgery is to be welcomed—and the only criticisms one can make of prohibitory legislation is that which pertains to its effectiveness and enforcement. Here, of course, the "wets" have the best of it; for obviously the application of the present law has not even begun to approach the expectations of its proponents. Apparently the alcohol-sponges craved their 'hard likker' far more desperately than less habit-chained persons could realise—or else alcohol-dispensers craved their financial profits more desperately than less commercial souls could understand. At any rate, be the motive force, thirst, or lucre, it is clear that legislation has been resisted far more stubbornly than one could have foreseen. This, to a cynical soul, brings up the question of whether or not the law is worth the trouble of enforcing. Granting that alcohol is an anti-social force, is it anti-social *enough* (as compared with murder, robbery, etc.) to warrant the expenditure of infinite money and energy without securing any better results than have so far appeared? This I am beginning to doubt. In 1919 I was a whole-hearted prohibitionist, but in 1928 I am more or less of a neutral. . . . In a matter of alternative evils like that of legalised liquor versus futile and troublesome prohibition, one may merely choose the lesser—after deciding which is the lesser. . . . With so many other destroying agencies at work, liquor may well be classed as a minor evil—and after all, it does not greatly matter whether or not civilisation decays—or at what speed it decays. I am no longer interested in the question except through reminiscences of my own former interest. It is an aesthetic matter with me. I think drink is ugly, and therefore I have nothing to do with it. This aesthetic position, by the way, may sound odd for one who professes to be a conservative; since of course all our respected forbears indulged in the flowing bowl to such an extent as to make fishes seem land animals by comparison. I think my own paternal great-great grandfather could have drunk any

'young modern' cake-eater under the table without shaking a bit of powder from his Albemarle tie-wig; nor do I think any the less of him for it, though it did no good to his fortune. But conservatism admits of a slow aesthetic growth and subtilisation along with the retention of time-honoured essentials; and I cannot but feel that the finer-grained life of the nineteenth century represented in many ways a normal and wholesome advance over the bluff coarseness of my beloved eighteenth, despite the dullnesses and hypocritical extravagances of Victorianism in its extremest form. One phase of that refinement was a radical *moderation* in the consumption of strong drink; and while many persons and households were content to let the evolution stop at that point, my own aesthetic theory cannot help carrying it onward to the ideal of total extinction. Let the graces of wine live in literature—its function in the life of a delicate and fastidious civilisation would seem to me definitely outmoded. In my own family, wine has been banished for three generations; and only about a quarter of the conservative homes of this section retain any regular use of it. . . .

Yr. most obt. Servt.,  
HPLovecraft

321. TO BERNARD AUSTIN DWYER

February 14, 1928

Querido Don Bernardo:—

. . . . I thought you'd find the Railo book of interest, for it really goes into the matter of Gothic fiction far better than any other work extant, including the Birkhead treatise, hitherto the standard. Have you read *The Castle of Otranto* itself? If not, *don't!* Let the summary in Railo continue to give you a "kick", for the original certainly won't! Walpole was too steeped in the classical tradition of the early 18th century to catch the Gothic spirit of the latter half. His choice of words and rhythms is the brisk, cheerful Addisonian one; and his nonchalant and atmosphereless way of describing the most prodigious horrors is enough to empty them of all their potency. Thanks to the second-hand way in

which you received it, you have become the first reader to get a genuine shiver from *Otranto* since the days of Sir Walter Scott! . . . . .

Trusting to hear from you when events permit—  
con mil besas de mano—  
Teobaldo

322. TO ZEALIA BROWN REED (BISHOP)

10 Barnes Street  
Providence, R. I.  
March 9, 1928

My dear Mrs. Reed:—

Enclosed—as you may see—is the completed snake-tale, which I have decided to call *The Curse of Yig*. The deity in question is entirely a product of my own imaginative theogony—for like Dunsany, I love to invent gods and devils and kindred marvellous things. However, the Indians certainly had a snake-god; for as everyone knows, the great fabulous teacher and civiliser of the prehistoric Mexican cultures (called Quetzalcoatl by the Incan-Aztec groups and Kukulcan by the Mayas) was a feathered serpent. In working up the plot you will notice that I have added another "twist"—which I think increases the effectiveness of the impression. I took a great deal of care with this tale, and was especially anxious to get the beginning smoothly adjusted. This accounts for the frightful condition of the manuscript—a condition which I hope will not make it utterly undecipherable to you. For geographical atmosphere and colour I had of course to rely wholly on your answers to my questionnaire, plus such printed descriptions of Oklahoma as I could find. I hope very much that I have avoided grave errors, and that I have not altogether failed to catch something of the general aspect of the region. In typing this manuscript be on the lookout for geographical blunders, (almost inevitable in the case of an absentee chronicler) and let me know when you find them. I will correct any which may be pointed out to me. Certain points were rather obscure—such as the source of lumber used in building cabins, etc. I think I am right in deducing from various descriptions that Oklahoma is quite hilly in the







August Derleth

east, and not wholly devoid of rich forest areas; the vast dusty plains being mostly characteristic of the western half.

As for the price—on account of the congeniality of the theme I said I would make a cut rate and promise not to exceed \$20.00 typed. By the same arithmetical process the untyped job ought to cost \$17.50, at which figure it may be considered to stand. This, plus the \$25.00 on previous work, brings the total bill up to \$42.50, payable at any time. Needless to say, the existing rate provides for as many further changes and re-revisions as you may think desirable in order to make the story thoroughly convincing and true to its geographical locale.

I remain most cordially and sincerely yrs.—  
HPLovecraft

323. TO DONALD WANDREI

Providence  
March XVI, 1928

Dear Melmoth:—

. . . . Of late revision has absolutely annihilated me, but I got one job (writing a weird tale from synoptic notes) which gave me quite an opportunity to practice up on my old creative processes. As a result, if you see a story in *W.T.* called *The Curse of Yig*, you will know that all of the writing & most of the plot are mine. . . .

Hopefully yrs.—  
Grandpa Necro.

324. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

Thursday, April 1928

Young Man:—

Stop! . . . . Keep them off! . . . . . Those EYES in the Under Pits! . . . Why does the sun shine *just so far* within that black abyss, and *no farther*? And that hellish seething ocean of clouds that the sun-

set cannot light up with golden fire . . . *what* broods therein, and with its writhing spreads nightmare over the spires and domes and mountains of the world below? I return the monstrous Thing, as requested, and trust that it may bear fiendish fruit within the macabre deeps of your fictional or poetick imagination.

Coleridge represented a fine balance betwixt mind and fancy, and I like him all the better for not having an excess of sloppy emotion. The fact that his experience came through books rather than life does not militate against him, because he had the rare faculty of accepting the contents of books in an abstract way, as if the material came directly from life without literary filtration. Bookishness becomes tepid and artificial only when one looks *at* the books instead of *through* them. So long as they are utilised only as telescopes, and not worshipped for their mechanical selves, they form very acceptable substitutes for vital experience. . . . A work of art has no significance apart from the social or cultural fabric out of which it grew. Only the very flabbiest of idealists can fail to see that all our notions and perspectives and standards are formed from a compound of our inherited instincts and early environmental associations; so that our feelings toward any given object or type of expression depend largely on the blood we bear and the legacy of traditions and habits and sentiments and points of view which has been bequeathed to us. What, indeed, can be the significance of *anything* apart from its relation to some connected and consistent fabric which organic heritage and intimate association have made proximately real and vital to us amidst an absolutely aimless and valueless cosmos? To me it seems glaringly clear that there is no intrinsic value or meaning in anything which stands by itself. Value is wholly relative, and the very idea of such a thing as meaning postulates a symmetrical relation to something else. No one thing, cosmically speaking, can be either good or evil, beautiful and unbeautiful; for entity is simply entity. The qualities of goodness and beauty are altogether local and temporary things, measurable only as the mental-physical-imaginative responses of organic beings of a given type and training to certain forms of relationship with given backgrounds made familiar through structure and experience. . . . Given a sound Puritan ancestry—whether we like it or not—and a childhood amidst the civilisation which those ancestors wrought, we simply cannot help having a more vital relationship to matter created from the deep, instinctive feelings of that Puritan blood

and fabric than to exotic matter based on patterns with which our contact has been purely objective and academic. There is nothing real or organically congruous in exotic themes and points of view and traditions, and if we follow them in youth we are pretty likely to react against them in middle or advanced life. As for the oft-asserted birth of a neo-American cosmopolitan tradition—that would be sheer nonsense if it were not dismal tragedy. There is no culture without roots, and out of a mongrel kennel of iconoclasts only bastard chaos can issue. If we have any cultural stream at all, it is our own hereditary Anglo-Colonial stream. . .

Yrs. for conservatism and the Main Stream—  
Grandpa

325. TO WILFRED BLANCH TALMAN

Friday  
April, 1928

H. R. H. Wilfred I, Duc de Blauvelt & Prince of Orange

Excellency:—

. . . . . The Visitor is finely drawn—and if there's anything in that scene I'd suggest changing, it's the Voice from Below. Literal statements somehow make one pause. Why not suggest, indirectly, the substance of the message, and have the Voice utter something in an unknown and wholly extra-terrestrial language? The second climax is good, and I don't know whether or not I ought to suggest a subtler treatment—or a more surprising treatment. I was wondering if a vivid study in *degrees* of fear couldn't be made by having only Blackmoor discovered first, and by having him give his story before the searchers know where his wife's body is. He shews fear as he tells of the dragonfly, but when they ask him where the woman is he displays a *fresh* fear so great that the other fright—at the Visitor—is dwarfed. The men search—fancying perhaps that he has killed his wife—and there, in another room, they find . . . The Thing That May Once have been Paula Blackmoor. Here somebody ought to faint, or something—and the more *indefinite* the description can be made, the greater the potentiality of

utter, ultimate panic fright. To me it's a tossup whether this oughtn't to be the end. Of course, the vacant grave is a big asset—perhaps it had better be retained—with the whirring, and with a faint voice from below, speaking *unknown* words in an unknown tongue. *Vagueness* is the chief asset of horror, and the plot elements are really definite enough without the spirit voice in careful English-language explanation. But don't let my remarks give you the idea that I don't think it's a splendid tale. It is—and I'm sure it'll land big with Wright. If not, try it on the new *Tales of Magic and Mystery*—they've just accepted my *Cool Air* . . .

Speaking of stories—after a look at an older O'Brien annual I can say pretty positively that my fellow-Celt is only going to give me an also-ran's consolation prize. The "Biographical Roll of Honour" is so long as to form no real distinction, whilst very few tales are reprinted. And the letter—or note—made no mention of anything save wishing a short biographical paragraph. So that's that—nothing to get excited about. What *is* of greater import is Wright's determination—despite my warning about technical consequences—to reprint *The Lurking Fear* from Houtain's defunct *Home Brew* and give me 78 iron men therefor! Thus at last I'm really cashing in on your Nieuw Nederland atmosphere—and the frightful House of Morteuse. . . .

As for Hibernian fortunes—our whole family had a Thanksgiving dinner with the Brennans this year, and I wish we'd then known of their coming luck. Sure, 'tis on the right side av thim I must be afther gettin', and manny's the foine dinner they'll shlip me in their Campus Shop or Ristyrant—or maybe fix up me plumbin' chape the nixt toime it lakes! That is, unless the McGranes win. I'll match that offer of a million rakeoff if you'll shift the legacy to the Caseys of County Tyrone—you're afther knowin' us—us wid the rid hand—the sinisther rid hand—fer our thrade-marrk! Speaking of elusive fortunes—did you know our fellow W. T. contrib Eddy of Providence is a descendant of Dukes of Marlborough and Heir to untold millions of the try-and-get-it sort? I had a press cutting all about that, but can't find it now. My grandfather once looked up a Rathbone fortune—when in London for other reasons—just long enough to see how impossible it is to land any of these vaguely floating hereditaments, and I have seen the name Lovecraft in lists of Missing heirs-at-law without having any unsophisticated impulses to take the next boat over and besiege chancery with a dramatic

"I-am-the-Man!" act. But I'll tell you what. I'm a sport—and when you can shew legal proof of having raked in your Annetje Jans legacy and turned them Trinity rascals out, I'll start a campaign for both Rathbone and Lovecraft fortunes! I'll let you be my genealogical adviser—and I'll get you honest Eddy as a client, too.

..... Maternally, I'm simply a tangle of Phillippses, Rathbones, Caseys, Hazards, and Matthewsons—they get monstrously mixed toward the top of the chart. In all truth, the old R. I. stock is perhaps more thoroughly intermarried than that of any other region outside the decadent Tennessee hills. R. I. was more a *family* than a *colony*. I don't think *any* old Rhode Islander can claim to be absolutely free from a strain of common blood with *any other* old Rhode Islander. For example—your ghostly neighbour of the 256 district, Steve Hopkins, was the great-grandson of that some Capt. John Whipple who is my 6-times-great grandfather. (His house, by the way, is now safely on its new foundations at Hopkins and Benefit. O shades of Adams' store!)

Ancestrally and heraldicistically thine,  
Theobald O'Casey.

326. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

10 Barnes St.

April 19, 1928

Dear C A S:—

Just now I'm feeling rather like a Californian, because I have old de Castro's memoirs of Bierce in my hands for possible revision. It is full of anecdotes of the San Francisco literati; but is so rambling, & so stuffed with material which scarcely touches on Bierce, that it will require a tremendous amount of re-casting. . . . . I shan't accept the job unless I can make pretty decent arrangements, for it's going to be a very hell of a grind.

With all best wishes.

Yr most oblig'd & obt Servt.  
H P L

327. TO ZEALIA BROWN REED (BISHOP)

395 East 16th Street  
Brooklyn, N. Y.

May 1, 1928

My dear Mrs. Reed:—

When you perceive the foregoing temporary address, and correlate it with what I have quite frequently expressed as my unvarnished sentiments toward the New York region, you will probably appreciate the extent of the combined burdens and nerve-taxes which have, through malign coincidence, utterly disrupted my programs this spring, and brought me to the verge of what would be a complete breakdown if I did not have a staunch and brilliant colleague—my young "adopted grandchild" Frank B. Long—on whom to lean for coöperation and assistance in getting my tasks in shape.

..... Nothing but strong domestic pressure could ever have induced me to waste a spring in this accursed metropolitan pest-zone. What occurred was the unexpected commercial need of my wife's wish that I join her for a time. Her business affiliations usually take her to different sections of the country for indefinite periods; and when these sections are far away, there is of course no thought of my interrupting my quiet Providence life (I room on the lower floor of a sedate Victorian backwater, with my elder aunt rooming on the second floor and furnishing a reminiscent touch of old-home family atmosphere) in order to follow. New York, however, is so fatally *near* to Providence in a geographical way—'so near and yet so far', as it were—that this time my wife really thought it only right for me to transfer a little of the domestic background to her present scene of action. Impartially reflecting, I could not help conceding the essential justice of the opinion; hence decided that the least I could do would be to conquer my anti-metropolitan repugnance for a season and avoid that depressing household inharmony which forms the theme of so many works of fiction! Fortunately the present quarters are in the very *least offensive* part of the whole greater New York area—a part so homelike, village-like, and old-American, indeed, that there is really very little in the immediate



environment to complain of. This benign oasis is the southwestern section of the ancient village of Flatbush, Long Island, now overtaken by and incorporated in the Borough of Brooklyn. The particular district in question, protected by real-estate restrictions and by mutual agreements among the old-time property-owners, has resisted the encroachments of decadence and modernity to an astonishing degree; so that it is even now a place of separate wooden houses, green lawns and back yards, quiet streets with generous shade-trees, and sleepy churches whose chimes weave music and magic on Sunday mornings. One of the enclosed postcards gives a fair idea of it—as you will see, the terrain could very well be mistaken for a fairly modern residence section in almost any small American city. From this unique vantage-point, New York seems remote and incredible indeed—and it is difficult to believe that the howling bedlam of 42nd St. is only a half-hour away on the subway. That is the one mitigating thing which makes it possible for me to remain here for any continuous time. I have not yet—during this visit—been above ground in the crowded mid-town district, save for one trip to the public library. I fluctuate altogether between the somnolent oasis of Flatbush and the far uptown section of Manhattan where my youthful colleague Belknap holds forth. . . . .

I remain most cordially and sincerely yrs.,  
HPLovecraft

328. TO JAMES F. MORTON

May 10, 1928

Fabiane Maxime:—

Well, Sir, domestick Pressure hath wrought what nothing else cou'd—and I am again in the ———— metropolitan region for a brief space! The wife had to camp out here for quite a spell on account of business, and thought it only fair that I drop around for a while. Not having any snappy comeback, and wishing to avoid any domestick civil war, I played the pacifist . . . . and here I am. The g. d. burg looks about the same to me—no novelty or kick to it. I can stand it better now that I have a real home back in the States.

Hope to see you—but of course I shall get out to Paterson (probably by 'bus) before I got back. How's the U-23 and the minerals?

See you later.

Yr. obt. servt.

Θεοβάλδος

Theobaldus

329. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Nones of Sextilis

June 1928

Cloud-Cleaving Citadel of Caelestial Competence:—

... I certainly don't care for the process of walking, per se. What I am out for is *a series of visual impressions*, and the more mechanicks of locomotion is a matter of the utmost indifference to me. So far as physical sensation goes, hiking gives me none, whilst climbing produces only fatigue, eunni, and occasional dizziness. I like a trip which leaves me free for imaginative activity, and which permits me to preserve my attire in a state of approximate neatness. But gordamighty, how I envy you that fly!! How much did they soak you? I've never seen a chance for ascent less than five bucks, but have always been waiting for the price to come down. When I can get a decent ride as low as \$2.50 I shall certainly go to it. They charge *ten* fish at the nearest flying field to Providence,—but then, it's *worth* twice as much as to fly over gawd's country as it is to fly over N. Y. and vicinity. . . .

Oh, yes—and I'm at work on the first new story I've written in a year and a half. It is to be called *The Dunwich Horror*, and is so fiendish that Wright may not dare to print it. The scene is in the upper Miskatonic Valley—far, far West of Arkham.

Well—good luck, and don't deface the scenery

Yr. obt.

Θεοβάλδος

Theobaldus

330. TO WILFRED BLANCH TALMAN

Thursday  
June 1, 1928

Dear WBT:—

. . . . Thanks for the heraldry—I do feel damn guilty making you look up so much stuff, when I can't afford to come across with the 0.75 to 1.00 per horam! As for that Fulford checkerboard—I suppose different bearers varied it to suit their taste, as was probably more or less permissible so long as they didn't tamper with their own quartering—i. e., *Fulford*. Glad to hear the Fulfords go back to Coeur de Lion's time. But say—you have that *Moreton* quartering spelled *Morton*! However, I've lately heard that the two are identical in origin; so that instead of giving up Dunsany as a cousin I'll merely annex our friend James Ferdinand! What you get for *Carew* is not quite so ambitious as the arrangement recorded in the data I have. As I told you, this outfit has *supporters* 'n' everything—though I know not on how good authority. Do you suppose the supporters are an error due to the fact that some lone member of the family once gained them through a now-extinct peerage or baronetcy, and that other branches informally but unauthorisedly swiped the critters? Gawd, if that's so I could tack 'em onto *Phillips*, since as you'll recall from a book we saw at the pub, there is now a baronet of the collateral line. Here's what I had for *Carew*:

*Arms*: Or, 3 lioncels (not *lions*) passant in pale sable armed and langued gules.

*Crest*: A mainmast, the round top set off with palisadoes, or, a lion issuing thereout sable.

*Supporters*: Dexter, a lion sable; sinister, an antelope gules.

*Motto*: J 'espere bien.

These damn things seem to *vary* so much that a guy can never be sure of what's right. Suppose one had one's coach-panels and silver plate all fixed up one way, and then along came some evidence that it ought to be t'other way! It's a tense and exacting game, kid! My sainted grand-sire's notes on this line gave the Saxon ancestor as *Otho*, not *Othens*, and *didn't say a bally word about that Celtick marriage*. My gawd, how

them Celtic princes pursue me! Princes of North Wales—Princes of South Wales—Hell! I ought to own all of Wales! I shall certainly fall off the very next horse I mount! Well, well . . . if one must have Celts it's a good thing to have 'em royal and knightly ones. And Otho was a good Teuton anyway, I'm sure! As for that *Morris*--it is of Clasmont, Glamorganshire, Wales, if that means anything. Come to think of it, I sent you the blazoning as I found it. So Gorton had a goat . . . if you've read anything of R. I. history you'll see how often some of the other colonists got it! Glad my records were OK on *Whipple Hazard*, if you ask me, is anybody's guess; since according to the book we saw at the libe nobody has ever succeeded in conclusively placing the old Tom from whom all the R. I. Hazards--really eminent line, in the direct descent--are sprung. The only standard of choice is whatever the main branch choose through caprice to sport. There has been dispute as to whether the first ancestor was really a *Hazard* or *Hassard*, though the two are nearly related, as extreme similarity of arms proves. Both are in our notes--the one you cite being *Hazard*, whilst *Hassard* is gules, two bars argent; on a chief, or, 3 escallops of the first--crest, an escallop or. Glad to know which is considered OK. I note your Perkins correction. Your version is about like mine, though the chart I have doesn't connect conclusively with other lines. I have a Wood coat in the papers I dug up, and guess it's the right one. It's supposed to be of Tawton, Devon. Hope it's the ancient one you mention. The blazoning I've got is *Argent, a tree vert; on a chief azure 3 trefoils slipped or*. No crest given. I don't know from what Morris William sprang, but I guess I'll claim him even if he was a socialist. I enjoy sitting in his chairs, though they're damn ugly. Glad to claim Mark Twain--all I know about my Clemences is that the first in R. I. was Thomas (d. 1688) son of Richard and Sarah. He was also known as *Clement*. (not *Clemons*) Arms as given in my notes--*gules, 3 garks, argent, no crest*. As for "wheel charts"--bless me, *that's just what I want!* I saw some of 'em in the possession of that old Foster lady--Nabby Tyler Kennedy--whom I told you I must consult for Place-Phillips data, when I called on her in 1926; and admired them almost as much as I admired her 3 naturally tailless cats. I didn't know their technical name, but they were circular-looking affairs, and must surely have been the sort of thing you mention. I'll be glad to get some from your friend--let me know the price and I'll fork over. I'd better have an extra if you want a copy of my dark past--

I'm damned if I feel like drawing another home-made affair, which would probably turn out as bad as the existing specimen toward the top! I'll be delighted with the drawing of the Lovecraft arms you tentatively promise—and as for the bookplate—well, if you follow your high-handed design you'll at least have saved me the agonies of decision! I guess heraldick design is easier to do than Georgian steeples of cyma-curve pediments at that!

..... If you think you can get a review, I'll do more than send full details about the Bullen book. I'll send de tail and body and head all together and compleat—alteris verbis, the damn book itself! I'm authorised by the financial sponsor to distribute review copies at my discretion. Bullen was a Canadian amateur of such fine old family that you'd have loved to get at his heraldick wake. He was a royal good fellow and a poet of the mild, cheerful Victorian sort—to say nothing of being a life-long invalid who bore his affliction with more than ordinary fortitude and cheerfulness. He died last February, and a wealthy friend in Chicago—one Archibald Freer, who speaks of Bullen as "the most ideal man I ever knew"—decided to launch a tribute to his memory in the form of a posthumous book of his poetry, to be financed by him as a gift to the Bullen family. Looking about for an editor, Bullen's mother decided that I knew about as much as anybody what he had been doing in the poetic line, hence asked me to prepare the book. It was no easy job, for all the revision and classifying had to be done by me; but I tackled it out of regard for Bullen's memory—for he was really a delightfully appealing and profoundly admirable chap. He had meant to have me help in preparing a book of his poems, and had chosen an essay of mine in the U. A. about his work as a preface for the future volume—which he wished to call *White Fire*. So, seeing that I was really the logical editor, I pitched in last August and reduced the bulk of rough, unclassified poems to standard book form, technique, and arrangement. Mrs. Bullen insisted on having the volume dedicated to me—saying that that had been her son's intention had he lived to issue a book. In seeking a publisher I of course turned to our good old friend W. Paul Cook of the Recluse Press—and boy! how he did back me up! In the face of all sorts of troubles and delays and blunders on the part of his office force he turned out what is undoubtedly the finest piece of bookmaking ever produced in amateur journalism; so that he really ought to have had an equal share in the dedication. Above all, he was

ineffably patient with my hyper-critical proofreading, so that we have produced that rarest of literary marvels—a volume absolutely without typographical errors. The sale edition is bound in cloth, soft grey in colour, with grey paper labels, and will sell for \$2.00 retail and \$1.50 wholesale. Besides this, however, there was a special presentation edition of 24 copies in dark green leather stamped with gold—one of the richest and most austerely sumptuous bibliophilic items I have ever seen in my life. So exquisitely impressive is this edition that I am going to send one in Belknap's care for the gang's inspection. The book is of 86 pages, 6 × 9, on finest quality art paper, with genuine photographic frontispiece in sepia on an impressed panel. Cook, at Freer's urgent request, is handling the marketing and distribution; and I am helping by sending out complimentary and review copies, and trying to place it in one or two bookstalls. I shall also ask Kirk and Loveman to list it in the next catalogues they issue. Yes—if you think you can get it a good review, I'll feel amply empowered to shoot you a free copy. It's really quite intoxicating to have this power of flinging about two-berry items with lavish hand, just as judgment or caprice may dictate.

Yr. obt. Servt.  
HPL

331. TO ZEALIA BROWN REED (BISHOP)

10 Barnes St.  
Providence, R. I.  
July 28, 1928

My dear Mrs. Reed:—

My trip—which at the time I saw you was to include only a jaunt southward to Washington and intermediate points—finally expanded into a Grand Tour of unprecedented length, extent, and variety. The change of plan began when a friend of mine—now resident in New York but spending the summer in his ancestral Vermont—fairly kidnapped me into a two weeks' visit at a lonely farm he had hired in the exquisite countryside near Brattleboro. In this half-fabulous paradise of endless green hills and wild, brook-haunted glens, it is needless to say

that my nerves recovered very substantially from the strain of New York. My first glimpse of Vermont, obtained last August, had whetted my appetite for more; and I now drank in to its fullest extent the miraculously preserved early-American life of the region. Literary companionship, too, was not absent; for the gentle rustic poet Arthur Goodenough (who wears a rusty frock coat and inhabits an unpainted farmhouse built in 1783) dwelt close by, and one week-end the indefatigable Walter J. Coates of Montpelier (editor of *Driftwind*) came down nearly a hundred miles to mingle in the throng. W. Paul Cook (publisher and critic) also came up from Athol twice. On Sunday, June 17, a whole crowd of literati (both actual and would-be) assembled at the ancient Goodenough farm for a session of general discussion and fraternising—the event being written up quite extensively in the local Brattleboro press. I think I will enclose a clip full of Vermont matter . . . The newspaper stuff is from the *Brattleboro Reformer*—the puff of myself being by my host, Vrest Orton of the *Saturday Review*. . . .

But Vermont did not form the end of my visiting; since W. Paul Cook, on his second trip up, repeated the process of kidnapping a helpless old gentleman and bore me away for a week's visit to Athol, where I had the honour of seeing him send to press, with his own hands, the sheets of my story *The Shunned House*, which when published will form my first cloth-bound book, (albeit only a thin affair of sixty pages, with a brief preface by my Belknap-grandchild). My sojourn in this sightly village was exceedingly pleasant, for I had as an associate not only Cook himself, but the young weird writer H. Warner Munn, who was one of my guests in Providence last summer. Nor was *this* the end of my visiting programme! Whilst in Athol I received an invitation, too cordial to resist, to spend a week at the home of a delightful old lady authoress some distance south of there, in the town of North Wilbraham, near Springfield, (home of the Home Correspondence School). This veteran of the art (Mrs. Edith Miniter, author of the successful novel *Our Nantucket Neighbours*) was a Bostonian during her more active years, but has now retired to her ancestral region for a tranquil sunset period; residing with an equally elderly cousin in an ancient house of considerable size (a tavern in colonial days) whose capacious rooms are absolutely stuffed with antiques of the most valuable sort—none for sale, but all destined for the museum in Springfield upon their veneration.

ble owner's demise. Other objects of interest on this delightful estate are seven cats, two dogs, two horses, two kine, and one hired boy. Far to the west, across marshy meadows where at evening the fire-flies dance in incredibly fantastic profusion, the benign bulk of Wilbraham Mountain rises purple and mystical. The region, being very old and remote, is full of the most extraordinary folklore; some of which will certainly find lodgment in my future stories if I ever live to write any more. The scenery thereabouts is magnificent—as I can testify after a walk around the mountain and almost over its crest.

..... But the climax of the whole Odyssey was my excursion, by train, to the *Endless Caverns* in the exquisite Shenandoah Valley. Despite all the fantasy I have written concerning the nether world, I had never beheld a real cave before in all my life—and my sensations upon plunging into one of the finest specimens in the country may be better imagined than described. For over an hour I was led spellbound through illimitable gulfs and chasms of elfin beauty and daemonic mystery—here and there lighted with wondrous effect by concealed lamps, and in other places displaying awesome grottoes and abysses of unconquered night; black bottomless shafts and galleries where hidden winds and waters course eternally out of this world and all possible worlds of mankind, down, down to the sunless secrets of the gnomes and night-gaunts, and the worlds where web-winged monsters and fabulous gargoyles reign in undisputed horror. . . .

I remain, Yrs. Sincerely,  
HPLovecraft

332. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

August 31, 1928

To Klarkash-Ton, High-Priest of Atlantis, All Hail!

I have managed to snatch the time to write one new tale—which is now in Dwyer's possession & which I shall ask him to forward to you for ultimate return to me. It covers 48 pages, so that Wright would probably classify it as a "novelette". I haven't yet submitted it to him. The title is *The Dumwich Horror*, & it belongs to the Arkham cycle.





334. TO AUGUST DERLETH

Lincoln Woods, Friday  
October 1928

My dear A. W.:—

Once again I am penning my day's correspondence in my beloved woodlands—now unbelievably gorgeous with the colours of autumn, yet today blessed with the genuine burning heat of summer. . . . Just this moment the sun came out from beneath a fleecy cumulus cloud and struck such sparks of gold from the iridescent foliage that I was almost moved to gasp aloud in an aesthetic ecstasy. If you want to know what beauty is—sheer abstract loveliness raised to the nth power—just ramble through a rural New England landscape in October! . . .

Regards—Sincerely yrs.—HPL

335. TO ZEALIA BROWN REED (BISHOP)

10 Barnes St.  
Providence, R. I.  
Oct. 2, 1928

My dear Mrs. Reed:—

One application of modern psychological knowledge which you may have noticed is the new "*stream-of-consciousness*" school of literature, which has undoubtedly gained surprisingly within the last decade. This school recognises as a fundamental principle the newly discovered fact that our minds are really full at all times of a thousand irrelevant and dissociated threads of imagery and ideation; and that our acts are in truth determined by the sum total of all these heterogeneous, unconscious scraps, rather than by the one thin line of connected ideas which we outwardly recognise by virtue of its position at the top level of our consciousness. Accepting the implications of the newer psychology to the utmost extent, the new school of literature strives to mirror life accurately and logically by laying bare the whole subconscious and con-

scious hodge-podge of impressions, feelings, and memories which flows irresponsibly through the mind from moment to moment; and by tracing the obscure connections between these random sources and the *seemingly unrelated* results in the domain of action and outward expression which are in truth their direct and inevitable *outcome*. The principal exponents of this advanced school are James Joyce in prose and T. S. Eliot in poetry. Naturally its products strike the uninitiated as mere jumbles of senseless incoherence, so that Joyce, Eliot, etc. have had to meet a devastating amount of ridicule. Actually, it seems to me still an open question whether stream-of-consciousness literature may be classed for it; but against it we may argue that art concerns only *results* and harmonic impression-patterns—a definition which would classify stream-of-consciousness writing as mere prosaic *science* or *philosophy* rather than genuine aesthetic creation. I myself think that the extreme methods of Joyce, Eliot, and their congeners (E. E. Cummings, Hart Crane, Aldous Huxley, Wyndham Lewis, Dorothy Richardson, The Sitwells, D. H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, Gertrude Stein, Kenneth Burke, Ezra Pound, Marcel Proust, etc., etc.) do indeed transcend the limits of real art; though I believe they are destined to exert a strong influence upon art itself. Literary art, I think, must continue to adhere to the practice of recording outward happenings in consecutive order; but it must from now onward realise the complex and irrational motivation of all these happenings, and must refrain from attributing them to simple, obvious, and artificially rationalised causes. Just how much of the subconscious hodge-podge behind any outward event ought to be recorded by a literary artist is still a very perplexing question. It must be decided independently in each particular case by the author's own judgment and aesthetic sense—and I for one believe that it can be done in such a manner as to leave the main current of Western-European literary tradition undisturbed in its aesthetic essentials. . . . .

. . . . . My friend—Maurice Winter Moe—has been collaborating with Profs. Moffett and Leonard of the University of Wisconsin on a new series of Macmillan readers—the ninth grade book being wholly under Moe's editorship. When he received my letter he thought so favourably of it that he showed it to his colleagues; and among them they hit on the idea of using my description of Sleepy Hollow and Tarrytown as a note to Irving's *Sleepy Hollow* in the seventh grade book. It will there appear, Moe tells me, with due credit given to the lowly au-

thor. Of course it's nothing but a small-type appendix note, yet it is rather amusing in a mild way to think of oneself as a real "classic" permanently represented in a standard school reader! My name, as it were, will live upon the tender lips of infant generations yet *unborn* . . . *exegi monumentum aere perennius*, and all that sort of thing!

I remain yrs. sincerely,  
HPLovecraft

336. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
Octr. 16, 1928

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

My memories of the entries in the contest are very indistinct, but I remember that I liked *In the Woods* & spoke of it at some length. It is certainly very gratifying to know that you found my remarks encouraging, & I regret that my report was mislaid before you could re-read it. If you would care to let me see the sonnet again, I would be glad to comment on it once more—the intervening 4½ years, & my forgetting of my own former words, giving my new report something of the nature of a fresh opinion. I am sorry that a lack of literal conformity to any of the conventional sonnet forms deprived the poem of a first award. At the time, I might have been more prone to side with the technical stickler; but latterly I have been paying less & less attention to form, & more & more to imaginative content—so much so that my published criticisms in the old magazines of the United Amateur Press Association now strike me as somewhat absurd & pedantic.

Regarding the nature & publication possibilities of your work in general, I would not be inclined to consider its lack of "modernism" a barrier to success. So far as I can see, the importance of the radical forms has been greatly exaggerated—indeed, it seems to me that there is already a tendency to return to modes closer to the main stream of tradition. Of course, the details of poetry must always change slightly from

generation to generation, as a culture's philosophic outlook & sense of emotional values change, & as specific words, forms, ideas, & images gain & lose certain associational overtones through the added experience & changing environment of the race. But these details need not involve any such spectacular structural innovations as are found in the chaotic products of the "advanced moderns"—T. S. Eliot, E. E. Cummings, Gertrude Stein, & so on. When all anchors of inheritance & all traditional feelings & associations are eliminated, a great part of the finest essence of beauty is destroyed; so that the result is more a concoction of impressionistic philosophy & scientific psychology than a work of art. Authentic poetry, I feel certain, will continue to represent the major patterns bequeathed by Chaucer & the Elizabethans & the classicists & the romantic revivalists, & others who have kept to a certain progressive homogeneity of attitude & manner. It will be coloured & modified by the changes of the time, as it has been by earlier changes; but I do not believe it will dissolve into the grotesque chaos represented by *The Waste Land & Tender Buttons*. . . . .

Yrs very sincerely,  
HP Lovecraft

337. TO FARNSWORTH WRIGHT

10 Barnes St.  
Providence, R. I.  
Nov. 8, 1928

My dear Wright: —

I hate to bother you, but I thought I'd ask what you think of the enclosed—which came in the envelope you have just forwarded to me. I don't believe I would ever be likely to achieve a more profitable re-sale of *Cthulhu*, so would be inclined to accept Mr. Harre's offer but for the fact that I recall your mentioning *Cthulhu* as one of the things you might like to reprint yourself some time in a collection of my stuff. Of course, that plan may have long been abandoned—it must have been a year or more ago that it was broached—but I thought I ought to ask you nevertheless before disposing of *Cthulhu* otherwise. It you *do* want it

eventually. I think I'll suggest to Harre' that he use my *Colour Out of Space*—which, by the way, got a three-star or Roll of Honour classification in O'Brien's annual *Transcript* article last month.

I'm rather interested in the idea of a new anthology, and hope that some of my popularly unknown favourites will be included. In answering Mr. Harre' I am suggesting that he use Shiel's *House of Sounds*, and Robert W. Chambers' *Yellow Sign* and *Harbour-Master*.

With best wishes, and hoping to hear soon about *Cthulhu*, I remain Yr. most oblig'd and obt.

H. P. L.

338. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
Novr. 20, 1928

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

..... Concerning professional markets—I presume you already realise that the *remunerative* disposal of poetry is, & always has been, a matter of the vastest difficulty; in which it would seem that chance & influence are not entirely absent. I think it would do no harm to try the standard magazines—*Harper's Century*, *Scribner's* &c—once in a while, even though many rejections might precede an acceptance. But a more fruitful field—albeit a slightly humbler one—can be found in certain *newspapers* of high grade, which use verse on their editorial pages or literary pages, or in their Sunday supplements. Some of these papers pay, (though not munificently) & some do not; but in any case they maintain decently high standards, so that one may feel it a genuine honour & pleasure to be represented in one of them. When the regular editorial department does not accept verse, it is often acceptable with the special "columnists" who provide a daily variety of wit, wisdom, & beauty. None of these columnar acceptances, however, involve cash. For work of a definitely *pious* cast, such as I note amongst your recent assortment, I think the *religious press*, would be the most hospitable &

appropriate haven. These magazines pay relatively little—and more often nothing—but many of them have gratifyingly high literary standards. . . . .

. . . . . Altogether, I think you have reason to take a genuine satisfaction in your work as a whole. It is unmistakably the fruit of an authentic poetic gift, & to me the demands of expression seem to be met with encouraging adequacy. To recommend elementary manuals of technique at this stage would be like carrying coals to Newcastle, though I might suggest that no one could peruse Brander Matthews' *Study of Versification*, Gummere's *Handbook of Poetics*, or Prof. Raymond's *Poetry as a Representative Art* without enlightenment & profit. A friend of mine in Wisconsin has written a book which I would like to recommend beside these—but alas! it is not quite finished, although accepted (from a survey of the uncompleted ms.) by the Macmillan Co. This will be *The Gateway to Poetry* by Maurice Winter Moe. . . . .

. . . . . I am glad that you did not find *Deagon* hopelessly boring. As I re-read it, it sounded rather stilted & artificial to me—I think my style has improved in the eleven years since I wrote it. Tales based on the old Atlantis & Lemuria legends are not new, but I relied on atmosphere to provide the equivalent of novelty. Yes—I saw that newspaper item about the medallion found off the coast of France, but don't take much stock in it. I fancy the thing was either Phoenician or Greek—if not early Gallic under Greek or Punic influences. These "resemblances" to Central American styles are easy to imagine, but not many of them will bear analysis. Extravagant theorists like Lewis Spence try to prove that both Europe & America were peopled by migrations from a sunken Atlantis, but I greatly doubt if any mid-Atlantic continent has existed since ages vastly anterior to man. If any vast inhabited land areas have sunk, it has been in the *Pacific*. I have used the sunken-land motif often in fiction—it fascinates me prodigiously. As for sending another tale—since you're not fond of horrors, the range of choice is relatively scant; but I will slip an item or two in this epistle. *The Silver Key* is one of those non-popular fantasies which I can get the editor to print only by "holding out on him"—not sending any of the tales he likes until he prints one of my favourites! I will also send another typical horror—*The Call of Cthulhu*—which is about to be reprinted in a new anthology of unusual tales. This will be my second

appearance between cloth covers, one other anthology having used a tale of mine a year ago.

Yrs. Most Sincerely  
HPLovecraft

339. TO JAMES FERDINAND MORTON

The Morning After—  
Dec. 26, 1928

Apotheosised Aërial of All-Amazing Astuteness:—

... Did you ever find out what that *extra-heavy* substance was that you got off the quarry of my vassal, goodman Mariano de Magistris? You'll recall that I promised the excellent fellow to tell him what it was when you found out, and I'd hate to fail in the duties of an indulgent country 'squire. Intelligent curiosity is so rare a virtue in the peasantry, that it ought to be encouraged whenever it does not lend to insurrection. It is one's duty to bring one's honest tenantry closer to the great heart of Nature. You must certainly—after the perfection of your shipping system—pay the quarries of Rhode Island another visit, for I know they teem with treasure which would enrapture your increasingly expert eye. Remember there's a nice new mineralogist's hammer awaiting you here, and that the Theobald Guide Service is always on deck where places of scenick interest are concern'd. . .

... Of course it's in *January* that I really dig down into the nethermost recesses of my burrow. Yesterday, for example, was the mildest and most genial Christmas I can recall since 1903, when I wore a summer weight coat (and short trousers!) as I rode my bicycle from home (454 Angell street) over to see my aunt, (Mrs. Clark) who then lived not far from where I am—and she is—now. Good old days! But as I say, yesterday was all right, and I went outdoors quite willingly, accompanying my aunt Mrs. Gamwell (the donor of this paper) down to that sterling Nordic Chin Lee's for a Christmas dinner in the antient English manner. Afterward we took quite a walk through quaint colonial byways, discovering several fine new "and-WHERES". . . .

Happy New Year!

Θεοβάλδος  
Theobaldus



340. TO MAURICE W. MOE

January 1929

..... I'll be delighted to see the whole manuscript of *Doorways* on the special carbon you mention—and don't believe I ought to charge any vulgar fee for giving it the once-over. I can't imagine that anything from your pen would need a reviser's services. If it were a profess job, I fancy the charge wouldn't be very formidable—I always go by the magnitude of the task, and never quote figures till I've seen what sort of a manuscript I'm handling. . . . Just to show you that Grandpa's heroick-couplet will isn't quite obsolescent even at this advanced stage of senility, I think I'll repeat for you the lines which I wrote last month to my modern and sophisticated young grandchild Francis, Lord Belknap—otherwise Frank Belknap Long, Jun.—to accompany an appropriately sophisticated Christmas present—a copy of Proust's *Swann's Way*:

An Epistle  
to

Francis, Ld. Belknap,

With a Volume of Proust, presented to him by his aged  
Grandsire, Lewis Theobald, Jun.  
Christmas, MDCCCXVIII

\* \* \* \* \*

Ingenuous Age once more essays to find  
A proper Gift for Youth's sophistic Mind,  
Well tho' he know how bootless 'tis to send  
Aught that his own old Head can comprehend.  
Perplext, the Grandsire scowrs the Stalls to chuse  
Some Spawn of Chaos and the bedlam Muse;  
Some complex Fruit of multiple Dimensions,  
With modern Outlines and remote Pretensions,  
Which, scorning *Euclid* and the pedant Race,  
Revolts from Time, and flings a Sneer at Space;  
Of Wit and Beauty keeps discreetly chary,  
And forfeits Sense to be contemporary.  
What best can suit so deep a Disillusion,

And cater to such civiliz'd Confusion?  
 Whose Pen indeed the wrought-steel Crown deserves  
 As Cham of Cubes, and Arbiter of Curves?  
 For sure, 'twere vain on normal Art to lean  
 In Youth's jazz'd World of Concrete and Machine!  
 Gods of the Waste-Land! say what Monster new  
 Shou'd grace a Shelf by Benda or Leleu?  
 What best befits a Book-Case carv'd to ape  
 An Air-Plane's Angles, or a Subway's Shape?  
 Subtile the Stile that fits our motor Nation,  
 Smooth as a Ford, prim as a Filling-Station,  
 Mass'd and severe as yonder office Tower,  
 Short in its Wave-Length, statick in its Power;  
 High as the Crown of *Mencken's* scornful Hat,  
 Objective as a *Times-Square* Automat;  
 Devoid of Pomp as *Woolworth's* or *McCrorry's*,  
 And cerebral as *Vogue* or *Snappy-Stories*;  
 Mature as moonshine Booze, and free from Bunk  
 As the frank Perfume of the candid Skunk;  
 Gay as a Billboard, ardent as the *Graphick*,  
 And muddled as a Stream of *Broadway* Traffick;  
 Firm as a Gangster or a stick-up Man,  
 Ironick as an old tomato Can,  
 As Radio loud, as Movies democratick,  
 Symbolick as a *Greenwich-Village* Attick:  
 Bright as the Tungstens of a *Wrigley* "Ad",  
 And settled as the latest side-burn Fad—  
 Thus the deep Lines that may alone express  
 Our whirling Epoch in its rightful Dress!

But who, midst our Embarrassment of Riches,  
 Wears the true Laureate's four-plus flannel Breeches?  
 Sec in what Throngs th' ambitious Candidate  
 Crashes and storms—and sometimes gets—the Gate!  
 Here Joyce appears with Odysseys demure,  
 His Prose a Sunk-Pile, and his Mind a Sewer;  
 Hard on his heels the Hecht-ick Hero hurtles,  
 With rose-tipt Beak, and twin'd with Paphian Myrtles.

While Eliot stalks in State—no Friend of Cant he —  
 And stores a Cosmos in a triple "Shantih";  
 Cursing all caps, the comely cummings comes,  
 And Lindsay pounds his syncopated Drums;  
 With Fun and Folklore struts romantick Cabell,  
 Chalking his half-hid Smut behind the Stable;  
 Stein formless foams, and chants the tender Button,  
 Whilst Arlen's Wise-Cracks knowing Saps may glut on.  
 Cubist and Futurist combine to shew  
 Sublimier Heights in *Kreymborg* and *Cocteau*;  
 The Shade of *Huysmans* reddens Prose and Rhyme,  
 And Fiction soars in *Burke* and *Bodenheim*.  
 Assist, ye brazen Nymphs of *Mont-parnassus*,  
 To chuse a Chief from the bold Hordes that gas us:  
 Say what pied Knight of these assorted Lots  
 Outshines with broken Lines or Rows of Dots?  
 Tell aged Ignorance what Seer to pick  
 As Symbol of a World gone lunatick.  
 Count them allo'er, and find a Name to lead  
 A dizzy Universe of aimless Speed.  
 How shall we do it? Simple as the Day!—  
 Listen intent whilst modern Criticks bray.  
 Weigh the wild Clamour, and proclaim as proudest  
 The jumbled Scribe whose Name is heard the loudest.  
 Him we elect, and to the Heights promote  
 As King Sophisticate by true straw Vote.  
 His Words alone we hold supremely fit  
 To feast a flaming Youth of modern Wit.  
 Hark! One-two-three!—the long-ear'd Herd decide  
 On a vague Ghost to be their AEsthete-Guide:  
 Hail to the Chief their phrensy'd Plaudits boost—  
 And take, young Man, a Tome by Marcel Proust!

\* \* \* \* \*

. . . . . As for language—I fancy that general taste is the best  
 guide for it. A certain amount of the emphasis naively classified as pro-  
 fanity is normal under many conditions, and has always characterized

the speech of virile men in every class of society except during the brief force of Victorian repression. I am for it—for its attempted total deletion was a mere grotesque gesture unwarranted by the history of our language and culture. Nothing is more cursedly sissified than a magazine which prints "d—n" with blanks, or a six-foot milk-sucker who is afraid to say "oh, hell" in stag company. But that's not saying that all times and companies are equally suitable for the airing of a hairy-chested vocabulary—or that all the current extremes of racy diction are of equal aesthetick value. However—you can't pick and choose by censor. Better leave up the lid and let good breeding muddle slowly through in its efforts to reformulate a rational code of conversational standards. There are more important things for legislation to control. . . . . What a man *does for pay* is of little significance. What he *is*, as a sensitive instrument responsive to the world's beauty, is everything! That is his true measure; and whatever contributes toward its refinement is of intrinsic value to him, no matter how little it may affect his material or industrial status. A poor but cultivated man is, absolutely, the superior of a *rich* boor whose responses to the cosmos are limited to a few stereotyped physical and emotional reactions. I never ask a man what his business is, for it never interests me. What I ask him about are his thoughts and dreams. . . . .

With every assurance of distinguisht consideration, I am, Sir,  
Ever yr. most oblig'd and obt. Servt.,  
Lo.

341. TO WILFRED BLANCH TALMAN

January 15, 1929

Mynheer:—

Welcome back to the land of the living! I wasn't quite sure whether your body would be found floating in a hidden Red Hook canal, or whether there would be tales of your footprints leading up to some ancient Dutch tomb, *and not leading away again!* Glad you still find the old Hook habitable—you must have a mercifully selective vision . . . . and audition! I think the Tahoma was there during my

exile, though I never paid much attention to any of the beastly slum mess beyond 169—except the tailor in the same block, the grocer on the corner of Atlantic, and the laundryman around the corner. As for the Tiffany—the rose-garlands and chandeliers may be new, but the mirrors were there in the old days. Indeed, the reason I chose the damn place as main eatery was that—while offering the low rates of a one-arm—it was free from the cursed white tiling that rubbed the idea of cheapness into the patron of most such joints. Dark woodwork, with mirror panels arranged like arched Georgian windows—that's what won me to the Tiffany! And the food was decent and ample, too. But soon enough did this tasteful haven begin to sicken me, for the clientele was past enduring. Young toughs and gangsters, cheap sports, foul-mouthed gutter-scum . . . ugh! Picturesque enough at first—but no place for a quiet old gentleman to dine regularly. Once a pair of plain-clothes men dropped in and went through the pockets of one of the characteristic groups of noisy young bums. Fine home atmosphere! Well—I got all my stomach could stand in three or four months, and thereafter switched to Bickford's—near Borough Hall. White tiles were better than Red Hook decadence! Of course, when I felt able to afford something better than a one-arm, I had a greater choice of acceptable filling-stations. I know McCann's though I ate more often at Joe's, at Peter's in Joralemon St., and at John's—the Italian joint around the corner in Willoughby St. For quality and variety, you can't beat Joe's—or at least, you couldn't in 1925. Once Kirk and I tried Johnson's Coffee Pot in Court St., and overheard a bunch of gaolbirds discussing the food and cells of Blackwell's Island. Believe me, the social and moral tone of Red Hook's modestly priced bean-bureaus is pretty nifty!

. . . . . Loveman made a business trip to New England a couple of weeks ago, so I had a chance to shew him a few of my favourite antiquities. He couldn't stop long in Providence, but I accompanied him to Boston (I had been planning to go anyway and see the new decorative art and colonial wing at the Museum of Fine Arts) and took him over the historic grounds there. We also worked in a trip to Salem and Marblehead—the latter of which is absolutely the best preserved colonial town in America. At the Museum Loveman was so enraptured by the Greek stuff that we couldn't see the colonial wing—but I stayed over another day after the early departure which commercial necessity forced upon him. Then I did see the new wing—and *how!* Believe me, it's the

most important thing of its kind in the country—far outclassing the American Wing at the Metropolitan! Not only American rooms, but rooms from France and England illustrating sources—away back to a genuine Tudor room of 1490 and a stained glass chapel window older than that. You must make a New England trip in the real antiquarian spirit some day!

Yours for more and better Saints' Days  
—HPL

342. TO FARNSWORTH WRIGHT

Feb. 15, 1929

My dear Wright:—

I am indeed interested to hear of the proposed action regarding *Not at Night*, and certainly hope the matter can be properly straightened out. It seems rather a tangle—I never heard of this Jeffries before; but was told last September by the agent Lovell that a certain Hutchinson and Co. had bought the edition of the book containing *Red Hook*, and that I would receive from them such royalties as would have been due me from the late lamented Selwyn and Blount. At that time nothing was said of any other sale of rights, British or American. I fancied that Macy-Masius might have later bought the rights from Hutchinson—and bought the rights to the earlier books from the receiver of the deceased corporation—but in any case it seemed to me that something was due the various authors represented.

As to including me on the list of plaintiffs—I suppose it's all right so long as there is positively no obligation for expense on my part in case of defeat. My financial stress is such that I am absolutely unable to incur any possible outgo or assessment beyond the barest necessities; so that, unsportsmanlike though it may seem, I cannot afford to gamble on any but a "sure thing"—sure, that is, not to involve loss. If, however, the guarantee of non-assessment on your part is to be taken literally as covering all possible expenses both principal and incidental, I suppose it would be foolish not to stand behind the action and reap whatever royalties might be due me in case of victory. I certainly need all such things that human ingenuity can collect.

Therefore—it being understood that I am in no position to share in the burthens of defeat—you may act for me if you wish; though I doubt if my profits will amount to very much in case of victory. I will pass on your letter to Little Belknap, and facy he will extend similar authorisation.

With best wishes both literary and litigational, I am, Sir,  
Ever yr. most oblig'd obt. Servt.

H. P. L.

343. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

Feby. 20, 1929

Young Man:—

Glad you found the commonplace-book and cuttings of interest. Have you started your novel, or any short tales? Another thing you could use is that Hispano-Roman dream I described a year ago October. I probably shan't ever get around to writing it up, so if you can find the letter containing it, you're welcome to the thing.

. . . . The actual cosmos of pattern'd energy, including what we know as matter, is of a contour and nature absolutely impossible of realisation by the human brain; and the more we learn of it the more we perceive this circumstance. All we can say of it, is that it contains no visible central principle so like the physical brains of terrestrial mammals that we may reasonably attribute to it the purely terrestrial and biological phenomenon call'd *conscious purpose*; and that we form, even allowing for the most radical conceptions of the relativist, so insignificant and temporary a part of it (whether all space be infinite or curved, and transgalactic distances constant or variable, we know that within the bounds of our stellar universe no relativistic circumstance can banish the approximate dimensions we recognise. The relative place of our solar system among the stars is as much a proximate reality as the relative positions of Providence, N.Y., and Chicago) that all notions of special relationships and names and destinies expressed in human conduct must necessarily be vestigial myths. Moreover, we know that a cosmos which is eternal (and any other kind would be a paradoxical impossibility) can have no such thing as a permanent direction or goal; since such

would imply a beginning and ending, thus postulating a larger creating and managing cosmos outside this one—and so on ad infinitum like a nest of Chinese boxes. This point remains the same whether we consider eternity as a measure of regular pattern-movements (time) or as a fourth dimension. The latter merely makes all these intimations of a cosmos which our senses and calculations present to us. We must admit at the outset that the spectacle gives us no indications of a central consciousness or purpose, and suggests no reason why a cosmos should possess such; that it renders the notion of special human standards and destinies absurd; and that it makes the idea of a permanent direction or goal improbable to the point of impossibility. *Theoretically* it can be almost anything—but when we have not the faintest shadow of reason for believing certain specific things exactly contrary to all the principles of probability and experience in our limited part of space, it becomes a piece of hallucination or affectation to try to believe such things. Here are we—and yonder yawns the universe. If there be indeed any central governor, any set of standards, or any final goal, we can never hope to get even the faintest inkling of any of these things; since the ultimate reality of space is clearly a complex churning of energy of which the human mind can never form any even approximate picture, and which can touch us only through the veil of local apparent manifestations which we call the visible and material universe. So far as analogy and probability go, there is strong presumptive evidence on the negative side—evidence based on the observation of small material systems like the electrons of an atom or the planets circling the sun. This evidence tells us that all small units of mass-energy are (that is, all humanly visible and conceivable presentations of such units are) rotating systems organised in a certain way and preserving a balance and dovetailing of functions, absolute regularity and the exclusion of chance, (and hence of volition or conscious action) and the infinite uniformity of this system of interlocking rotations and forms of regularity, seem to confront us wherever we delve beneath the surface; so that these circumstances actually form the sum total of all our knowledge of the composition and administration of infinity. To say that such an array of evidence suggests a central will, a one-way direction, and a special concern for any one of the infinitesimal temporary force-combinations which form incidents of the eternal cycles within cycles of constant rearrangement, is to utter simple and unadulterated damn foolishness. It is like saying that the de-



scent of the thermometer on the 7th of January suggests a hot summer day on the morrow. It is simply self-hallucination to which no sane adult need feel obliged to listen without laughing. And there is scarcely less idiocy in the pitiful whine of the modern supernatural-dupe, that the discovery of the identity of matter and energy breaks down 18th century materialism and reopens the way for mystical myth-making. Nothing could be more contrary to fact. The collapse of cosmic dimensions supplies no iota of evidence or suggestion either for or against materialistic reason, whilst the elimination of matter as a separate entity is simply a step *toward the unification of all being and the consequent destruction of the myth of worker separate from work or goal separate from present position*. What these feeble-minded theists are howling about as a sudden victory for themselves is *really the materialist's trump card*. The poor fools think they have beaten him because they have seen the disappearance of that for which his *name* stood. It is characteristic of a tribe who have always dealt in words and myths alone to fancy their opponent is bound to the externals of an empty *word*. *Matter* indeed has been shewn to be a passing phase of *energy*—or the raw stuff of sheer entity as envisaged from our terrestrial and physical observation-point—but *what is this save a perfect confirmation of the basic essentials of Haeckelian monism?* Thus the *materialist*, now using that title in an historical sense only, emerges strengthened in his position as *an atheistical (or agnostic) monist*. He has sounded space a little deeper, and found what he always finds on further penetration—*simply a profounder disintegration, and a profounder mechanistic impersonality*. Hitherto he has felt forced to *describe* entity somewhat; now he feels more and more able to swear to the absence of any purposeful *riddle* in creation, and to sum up all there is of cosmic existence and apparent purpose in one final sentence—*entity is, always has been, and always will be*. Of its detailed design and minute operative secrets he will never know. Of his relation to it he may guess very shrewdly *because his extreme insignificance makes him so small a part even of the infinitesimal fraction of infinity he can envisage*. He knows he is minute and temporary, because the local laws of his immediate milieu and mode of entity can be *tested conclusively for their small positive radius*; and in consonance with their unfailing applicability to time and space units which *even for human perception are small*, (that is, the earth's seasons, effect of heat and cold on organic life, etc.) can be extended over a

slightly larger area in which the same conditions hold good (that is, the galactic universe, and time-reaches involving the birth and death of suns) and in which they shew with *absolute* accuracy the very brief span capable of being occupied by the history of terrestrial life past and present. Here is where the theist makes an ass of himself trying to catch the atheist by using the jargon of relativity. He tries to erase all our physical knowledge by pointing to the subjective nature of our relation to infinite time and space—forgetting that *the history of terrestrial life is not being reckoned against the background of infinity*. He is knocking over, for the purpose of crowing over a fake victory, a man of straw which he himself has set up. Nobody is trying to envisage infinity, for it very clearly can't be done. The atheist is merely shewing that man cannot reasonably occupy any considerable place in the scheme of things—relative or otherwise—and he is doing it *by working outward from the physically known*. He doesn't have to get mixed up in the impossible problem of what relation the apparent universe has to infinite reality, because his business is all within a small fraction of the apparent universe. *He aims to show that, no matter what the visible universe is or what mankind is, mankind is only a transient incident in any one part of the visible universe*. Note that he is not risking any confusion of terms. He is working with *like quantities*. He doesn't seek to learn the relation of either man or the visible universe to infinity, but simply to learn the relation of the apparent entity man to the apparent entity called the visible universe. Only indirectly does this give him a hint of anything larger—the hint being that if man can be proved temporary and insignificant *in his universe*, he cannot very well be otherwise in infinity! As for the mode of proof—it is simply to apply the local laws whose infallible working *on earth* prove them *absolutely correct for that part of space immediately around us*. We know these laws work *here*, because we have applied them in countless ways and have *never* found them to fail. Birth and death, heat and cold, weight and pulley, acid and alkali. Our whole life and civilisation and engineering are a proof of the *perfect certainty and dependability* of these laws. Now the line between earth and sky is only an arbitrary one—which aeroplanes are indeed pushing outward every day—and the application of suitable optical devices to the sky proves that for many trillion and quadrillion miles outward from us the conditions of space are sufficiently like our own to be comparatively unaffected by relativity. This is, these surround-

ing stellar regions may be taken as part of our illusion-island in infinity, since the laws that work on earth work scarcely less well some distance beyond it. Despite *minor* illusions caused by unknown factors in light transmission, it can be checked up, tested, and *proved* by the parallel application of *different* mensurational methods that the region of nearer stars is, practically speaking, *as much what it seems to us as the surface of the earth is*.

Don't let the Einstein-twisters catch you here! It may be illusion all right, but it's the same batch of illusion which makes you think New York exists and that you move when you walk. Distances among the planets and nearer stars are, allowing for all possible variations, constant enough to make our picture of them as roughly true as our picture of the distances among the various cities of America. You can no more conceive of a vastly varied distance between Sirius and the sun as a result of place and motion, than you can conceive of a practically varied distance between your house and honest old Mac's joint as a result of the direction and speed of the Interborough train you're riding in. The given area *isn't big enough* to let relativity get in its major effects—*hence we can rely on the never-failing laws of earth to give absolutely reliable results in the nearer heavens*. There's no getting around this. If we can study the relation of a race of ants to a coral atoll or a volcanic islet which has risen and will sink again—and nobody dares deny that we can—then it will be *equally possible* for us, if we have suitable instruments and methods, to study the relation of man and the earth to the solar system and the nearer stars. The result will, when obtained, be just as conclusive as that of a study in terrestrial zoölogy or geology. The radius is too small to give relativity or mysticism a chance. The universe may be a dream, but it cannot be considered a *human* dream if we can shew that it must antedate and outlast all human dreamers just as surely as an ocean must antedate and outlast the denizens of one of his alternately rising and submerging volcanic islands. The laws that work on earth work in the nearer sky; and if we can trace man's beginning and finish, we can say *absolutely* (a) that what corresponds to our universe is *not humanly subjective in essence*, (although our sensory picture of it is wholly so) and (b) that man and organic life, or at least man and organic life on this globe (or any like it, if we find the law of temporary worlds common to the visible universe), cannot be a central concern of infinity. This positively obtainable knowledge will knock the

bottom out of any ideas of cosmic human destiny save those based on the self-evident insanity of immortality and spiritualism. Now what *do* we find? Well—read what Harlow Shapley, A. S. Eddington, J. H. Jeans, or any contemporary astrophysicist has to say. We find a cycle of constantly shifting energy, marked by the birth of nebulae from stars, the condensation of nebulae into stars, the loss of energy as radiant heat and the radio-active breakdown of matter into energy, and the possible (cf. Millikan's "cosmic ray") building up of matter from free energy. Outstanding are the facts that *all stars are temporary in the long run*, that the birth of planets from them is comparatively rare, (induced by tidal action of other stars that pass by them under rare conditions) and that life on a planet can hardly survive the death of the star whose radiations made it possible in the first place. All this belongs to *positive physical knowledge*—as positive as the knowledge that an inkstand will fall if you drop it from the window to the ground, or that a rat will die if you keep it under water fifteen minutes.

It took a long time to work up to this simple statement—just as the mountain in labour took a long time to bring forth a mouse—but the primer stuff was necessary as a counteractive to the popular theological misuse of relativity. The point is, that we *know* organic life to be a rare, short, and negligible phenomenon. Know it beyond the reach of any trick metaphysics. If the cosmos be a momentary illusion, *then mankind is a still briefer one!*

One word on the silly attempt of spiritualists to argue that the non-solid and non-separate nature of matter, as newly proved, indicates the reality of their mythical "soul matter" or "ectoplasm", and makes immortality any less absurd a notion than it was before. Here, as in the case of their comment on the word materialist, they are merely evading facts in a cheap game of verbalism. Matter, we learn, is a definite phenomenon instituted by certain modifications of energy; *but does this circumstance make it less distinctive in itself, or permit us to imagine the presence of another kind of modified energy in places where no sign or result of energy can be discovered?* It is to laugh! The truth is, that the discovery of matter's identity with energy—and of its consequent lack of vital intrinsic difference from empty space—is *an absolute coup de grace to the primitive and irresponsible myth of "spirit"*. For matter, it appears, really is exactly what "spirit" was always supposed to be. Thus it is proved that *wandering energy always has a detectable form*—that

if it doesn't take the form of waves or electron-streams, *it becomes matter itself*; and that the absence of matter or any other detectable energy-form indicates *not the presence of spirit, but the absence of anything whatever*. The new discovery *doesn't abolish matter*, or make it any closer to the occult world than it's ever been. If any mystic thinks that matter has lost its known properties because it's been found made of invisible energy, just let him read Einstein and try to apply his new conception by butting his head into a stone wall. He will quickly discover that matter is still the same old stuff, and that knowing more about it doesn't have much effect on its disconcerting solidity. It may be made up of something which is itself non-solid and non-material, just as heavy, harmless water is made up of airy, intoxicating oxygen and ethereal, explosive, and inflammable hydrogen—but it's pretty damn definite on its own hook, and there's no more use comparing it to thin mythical ectoplasm than there is in trying to breathe water for oxygen or burn water for hydrogen. The hard fact of the whole business is—and this is what the mystics close their eyes to—that *matter is a definite condition involving fixed and certain laws; the laws being known and invariable, applicable to no other phenomenon, and having nothing to do with any other hypothetical relationship between an invisible entity and actual effects*. We've known the laws of matter for a long time—does a new explanation of them enlarge their field of application? Because we have found that the body of a human being is composed of certain energy-streams which gradually undergo transformations (though retaining the form of matter in various decomposition-products) after the withdrawal of the chemical and physical process called life, are we any more justified in believing that these demonstrable streams are during life accompanied by another set which gives no evidence of its presence, and which at the cessation of the life-reactions retains its specialised grouping, contrary to all laws of energy, and at a time when even the solid streams of matter-energy—whose existence is really capable of proof—are unable to retain a similar grouping? Passing over for the moment the utterly puerile unjustifiedness of such a supposition in the first place, let us consider the only sane analogy the mystic could possibly draw—that is, the analogy of the bony shell or skeleton, which remains undestroyed and undissociated after the death of the organism. This ought not to stand up a moment when we consider *what it is* that spiritualists claim as surviving. That surviving ele-

ment, they say, is *the personality*—a particularly unfortunate choice in view of the fact that we happen to know just what bodily parts involve the personality; modifying and guiding it in health, and unerringly impairing their respective sections of it when they are themselves injured. If we were really anxious for tangible suggestions that the dead still live, we would believe that they survive in the indestructible parts of their bodies, and would pray to and converse with their dried bones—as indeed many primitive peoples do. Or we would mummify their whole corpses—as indeed do many somewhat less primitive peoples. Either of these courses would be less flagrantly ridiculous than inventing out of whole cloth the notion of an airy near-matter which hovers around the real matter and acquires and retains complex configurations which we know are produced only through long aeons of evolution in the one specific substance known as the protoplasmic form of energy-acting-as-matter. Personality, we know, is a mode of motion in the neural tissue of highly evolved vertebrate animals; centring in the brain and spine, and governed largely by glandular hormones conveyed by the blood. It suffers when its material medium suffers, and visibly changes as that medium alters with age. It has no demonstrable existence—and there is every reason why it couldn't have—after the cessation of the life-reactions in the matter on which it depends; nor could we conceive of it rationally as anything apart from the complex and slowly evolved biological mechanism which typifies so well its own rarity, delicacy, and subtlety, and complexity. And yet there are adults at large who associate this involvedly physiological-mechanical peak of bodily development with the thin air of a loosely unorganised ghost-substance which never gave any evidence of existence—and who perversely fancy that the existence of such a mythical spook-gas is less absurdly unlikely because matter itself—with all its certain evidences of existence—has been found to have a basis in phenomena not themselves solid or ponderable. Surely a triumph of fallacy and inverse reasoning! It is no more sensible to assume that personality exists and survives as a shadow beside the material human body, than to assume that every manifestation of matter has a parallel shadow of more tenuous substance to accompany and survive it. The frank animism of the savage fetish-worshipper is much more consistent and less anachronistic than the smug, fact-shy soul-belief of educated quibblers like the bland and pious William Herbert Perry Faunce, D. D., LL.D. Retiring President of Brown University.

But what, after all, really is behind the persistent myth-hugging of the incurable theist and mystic—a phenomenon too numerous to be set down as isolated freakishness, ignorance, or disease? We know that his beliefs could not possibly arise from a close and impartial survey of nature and the cosmos today, because there's nothing in reality as now understood to suggest such notions. The answer must obviously be historic, psychological, and pedagogical. Let us see if the extravert can understand the introvert better than friend Aldous can understand the introvert.

Primarily, of course, men began to be religious and mystical because at intellect's dawn they knew no other way to explain the phenomena they saw around them, or to work off such residues of excess emotional energy as war and eroticism did not take care of. They could not understand any phenomenon without a cause as personal and purposeful as that which made the axe and club move in their own hands, or account for their vague emotions and dual life in dreams on any basis except that of a spirit-world paralleling theirs. That they attributed to nature a set of human personalities with definite sentiments for or against themselves was only to be expected; and this formed of course an imperative reason for the gesture of worship—hortatory, propitiatory, laudatory, grateful, ecstatic, symbolic, or simply orgiastic. Believing themselves in the absolute sway of their nature-gods, primitive men of course quickly connected them with the systems of tribal polity which their stumbling experience had evolved—thus bringing into being the myth of morals and the legend of good and evil. Confusing wishes with hopes, and hopes with realities, coined the idea of an immortality for the dream-bodies of themselves, their dogs and cattle, their spears and clubs, their wives, and their food, clothing, and armaments. All the foundations of religion were laid, and in a perfectly natural and inevitable way. At that stage of existence, no other result of the contact of the human mind with nature was possible. And it is equally plain why, in the absence of the analytical and scientific spirit, the system hung on even after the advancing race began to find out things for itself, and to understand the natural and impersonal character of many phenomena once thought personal. The system was still the only explanation for many things; and it was all the while working itself closer and closer into the affections and traditions of every struggling race-stock, taking a different form in each separate case as it became the mirror and outward expression of that

race's individual perspective and emotions as determined by its particular experience. Just as it grew from every race, so every race grew into it, reciprocally. It permeated all dawning art and thought and feeling, and became a rallying-point for all the vague sentiments and instinctive loyalties of the race. As national life developed, it became synonymous with the state, so that the tribal chief always had the three fold function of King, Priest, and War-Leader. By historic times it was so imbedded in tradition as to be a permanent part of the emotional heritage of all mankind—a crutch on which the race had leaned too long to be able to walk alone save through a pure intellectualism never attainable by the masses. The very processes of thought had become so chained to the traditional myths and formulae that only generations of a scientific knowledge never dreamed of then could ever hope to liberate man's mind, in the mass, for the calm pursuit of impersonal information and the unbiased investigation of the earth's place in the cosmos of time and space. The myths were fixed in every child's mind at the most impressionable age, and those emotions which bolstered up the physical and ecstatic side of religious feeling were cultivated and whipped into activity. The cosmic connections of good conduct and good taste were dinned into everyone's ears till everyone believed in them—and to all this positive stimulus was added the negative circumstance that science, advancing much more slowly than general culture, consistently failed to advance explanations of the universe capable of competing with the made-to-order myths. Only the superlative mind of philosophic Greece was capable, in the absence of scientific instruments and methods, of breaking through the mists a trifle and producing the line of atomic philosophers of whom Leucippus, Democritus, Epicurus, and (in Rome) Lucretius are the chief examples. After Rome, darkness—and after the Renaissance, slow growth. Then the dawn of science and the awakening of speculation—and the imperfect, half-diffident, half-belligerent rationalism of the 18th century—the age of French Encyclopaedists and English Deists—of Gibbon, Hume, Swift, Lord Bolingbroke, Thomas Jefferson, and Thomas Paine.

The 19th century—as mighty in sheer scientific intellect as it was ridiculous in decoration and social philosophy—nearly finished the business. After Darwin and *my* friend Huxley the residue of unexplained things in nature had begun to shrink so much that, in conjunction with the astronomical discoveries of Herschel in the previous century, the



current scientific field was making a new view of religious myths inevitable. Schopenhauer and Nietzsche said their say, and Ernst Haeckel was not mute. Scholarship was shewing the Judaeo-Christian Bible to be just another Oriental melange of myth, history, poetry, and ethics, and psychology was commencing to explain the pathological character of religious zealots, and the physical-emotional basis of most ordinary worship. By 1900 there was not much intellectual reason to believe in the supernatural; for though the precise mechanism of the cosmos was not then, is not now, and never will be understood, enough facts were known to prove the absolute gratuitousness of all celestial personification, and the primitive mythological nature of the attitude, acts, and rites of extra-human and superphysical worship. More powerfully disillusioning than the actual discovery of the hollowness of the myths was the perfect psychological, anthropological, and historical *accounting* for the religious attitude and temperament on a basis of observant materialism. The synonymy of faith and folklore, and the similarity of Jehovah and Santa Claus, became clearly apparent to the coolly discerning. But of course the majority kept on believing naturally enough. Why shouldn't they, with an overwhelming pressure of tradition and inherited and acquired feeling behind them, and with no especial urge to follow up and correlate all the separate scientific threads whose combined grasping could alone present the stern and unwelcome facts of the case with full force?

Now another generation has passed—and how are we? Oddly muddled! About half the new generation of thinkers has thrown the supernatural over-board, whilst the other half clings on in varying degrees of incompleteness, doubt, and insincerity. One very cultivated element stands pat and refuses to think at all in purely scientific fields—but this is represented less and less in each new college class. A large group retains the myth of absolute ethics whilst professing to repudiate the non-physical; turning to abstract illusions like "justice", "equality", and "democracy" instead of to the ancient gods or saints. The herd, of course, is as densely superstitious as ever, from Dago and Canuck papists to Tennessee Baptists, and from Georgia Methodists to Pennsylvania witch-fearers. But even this herd has felt an emotional letdown—*more* of an *emotional* letdown than the most open of *intellectual* atheists, so that they are increasingly vulgar, swinish, and unmanageable. They don't figure in an intellectual-emotional problem (nor do *con-*

*sciously insincere* persons of any grade)—but how about the residual believers of taste, information, and cultivation?

I think the causes of their beliefs are about as follows:

- (a) Habit of tradition rather than thought. Oversensitiveness to abstract principle of authority.
- (b) Wish-thinking—dread of emotional-intellectual consequences of truth.
- (c) Lack of specific information, causing apprehensive belief that good morals and civilisation depend on religion.
- (d) Emotional bias—intense devotion to past cuts off mental processes of investigation.
- (e) Literal rather than inclusively imaginative mind which accepts religious statistics and casuistry before investigating other side, and thus has mind-closing first impression.
- (f) Emotional overdevelopment requiring ritually orgiastic outlet.
- (g) Aesthetic bias—conception of life in terms of art rather than thought. This is the great Catholic-breeder.
- (h) Metaphysical temperament—constitutional addition to formal scholasticism which induces insensitiveness to facts presented in the spirit of experiment and inductive science. Over-emphasis of the possible import of modern discoveries like relativity and quantum theory.
- (i) Subconscious fear of loss of social position through departure from tradition.
- (j) Idiosyncrasies of temperament, largely hereditary, which help out one's natural wish for order and conservatism by subtly responding to all arguments based on the past and the usual, and subtly remaining insensitive to the opposite side.
- (k) Passionate group-feelings—altruism, brother-saving, justice-enforcing, liquor-banishing, etc., etc., which exaggerate ethics to a point where poetic personification automatically takes place and reason goes by the board.
- (l) Overdeveloped *reverence*—conscious or subconscious—for once potent symbols or for the massed opinions of the believing generations of yesterday and the eminent surviving believers of today. Also—excessive sense of *awe* at magnitude and complexity of the cosmos.
- (m) Extreme introversion, with its solemnly proportionless exaltation of intuition and subjective experience at the expense of realistic observation, comparison, and experiment. Naive belief in realities apart from those sensorily apprehended.
- (n) *And most potent of all*—an out-and-out infantile fixation developed by early childhood influences and absolutely shutting off the current of brain-power from areas of religious and philosophical speculation.

But I won't attempt any more cataloguing. These points also serve to explain the messianic altruist or Aldine semi-introvert in many ways. I'm not yet quite sure, though, just what the exact *intellectual* position

of the typical introvert is. Does he realise as a scientific fact that nothing exists except in objective reality and as a more or less disguised derivative of something therein, or does he try to give his subjective illusions a grounding in alleged philosophy? If the latter, I can never understand him—that is, unless he partakes more or less of the religious mind. All reason unites to prove that we can apprehend the cosmos only through our five senses as guided by our intellect and intellectually tinged *imagination*, (not *fancy*) and that there is nothing in any living being's head which he did not get through those channels, either directly, unifiedly, and consciously, or indirectly, subconsciously, and fragmentarily. The inner mind can rearrange, select, combine, dissociate and recombine, re-proportion, re-stress, and so on, till the "subjective" idea loses all resemblance to its unconscious sources; but it cannot create anything wholly new because the human mind is a blank apart from what sensory intake gives it. Extroverts imagine realistically—the pictures they conjure up are life-size scenes with the aspect of real life, and in which they might walk if the scenes were objective. Fantastic forms, if present, will tend to follow natural laws; and the proportions of visible objects will adhere to the normal laws of perspective. Introverts, I think, must tend to imagine more or less distortedly—in the William Blake or semi-cubist manner. It must be from extreme and exaggerated introversion that the bulk of affected ultra-modern aestheticism comes—the brass foundry-slag of "sculptors" like Brancusi, the woodcut hash of Masereel and Rockwell Kent, and the remarkable shantihs of T. S. Eliot and his ilk. Extroversion means sanity at its best prosaic commonplaceness at its worst. Introversion means originality at its best and affectation or madness at its worst. I have much admiration for the best type of introvert if he is only emotionally such, and does not try to read non-existent meanings into the meaningless sensations and images which form the whole of life, and produce the whole of thought and illusion by punching at the various emotional nerve-centres with the bland and mischievous impersonality of a small boy punching strangers' doorbells at random. The only introverts I can't stand are those who "feel a deep meaning in it all", and take their emotions as seriously as a man of sense takes his Gothick windows and Shelleyan odes and Constable landscapes. Not that a man of sense lacks emotions—indeed, I can't abide a man who isn't a patriot for England or art or facts or morals or something of the sort—but that he preserves a sense of propor-

tion regarding them, and recognises their place in a futile and meaningless cosmos. . . . .

. . . . . The other day I heard from the author of *The Chemical Brain*—an excellent tale in the January issue—who wrote me on the strength of knowing my excellent Vermont friend and correspondent Walter J. Coates, editor of *Driftwind*. He used his pseudonym of "Francis Flagg", although he signs his verse in *Driftwind* by his real name, Henry G. Weiss. . . This bird appears to be a sort of socialist, and clutters his verse up with altruistic ethica! junk, but his story certainly wasn't bad. I've also heard from another new correspondent—one of Loveman's new prodigies whose name is Paul Homer Kitchen, (he and Cook ought to go into partnership) whose age is nineteen, and whose habitat is Bayonne, N. J. This youth is an avid weird tale consumer, and is said to write also. He has a rather engaging Galpinian impertinence, and has had the uncanny luck to pick up Shiel's *Pale Ape* for fifty cents! . . . . .

Yr. obt.,  
Grandpa

344. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
Feby 21, 1929.

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

The three envelopes safely arrived, & I have since been reading the poems with keen appreciation—jotting down notes about them from time to time as before. I enclose these notes herewith, though urging you to consider them merely as *suggestions* rather than as the authoritative pronouncements of an olympian authority. You surely have no reason to feel hesitant about the merit of this assortment, & I trust that many of the verses will ultimately find permanence between cloth covers. As for your reluctance to "claim credit" for passages which are altered—bless my soul! but if authors applied that theory a vast number of the world's classics would wear a woefully different aspect. Accep-

tance of suggestions for various lines & passages is universal throughout the writing world. Pope supplied innumerable lines for Thomson's *Seasons*, including one notable passage in *Autumn*, whilst some of the most striking passages in Goldsmith's *Traveller & Deserted Village* were interpolated by Dr. Johnson. One could extend such a list ad infinitum—at any rate, it is clear that no one need demur at profiting by critical advice when such advice seems sound. As for certain passages you mention in the preceding assortment of poems—let me again urge you not to accept my opinions as inflexible judgments when they tend to run counter to your own artistic sense. In truth, no one critic is competent to put a poem into ideal form, so great is the element of latitude in personal taste. A poet really desiring the most thorough critical judgment of his work can do nothing better than place it in many diverse hands, obtaining in the end a symposium of opinions amidst which his own aesthetic faculty will generally be able to strike a golden mean. That is what one poet actually did with our gang when he wished to issue a smaller & better selected second edition of his collection. He gave five or six of us copies of the bulky first edition, & we all picked a list of what we thought worthy of preservation—supplying revisions where necessary. We refrained from comparing notes in order to preserve the impartiality of our respective judgments. . . .

. . . . . Speaking of these specimens—they form  $\frac{2}{3}$  of a trio of "gang" products which I thought might be of poetic interest. I am sorry that these small volumes—my only copies—can be only a loan; but at least there is no hurry whatever about their return. The Long & Loveman books are of Cook's printing, & would seem to me to illustrate very much the style of volume which would best suit your work. Long is my favourite "adopted grandson"—a brilliant, bookish small boy of nearly 27 who will never grow up if he lives to be 127. He has the pure aesthete temperament to a phenomenal degree, & shews a freshness & vitality of the most delightful sort; even though—like others of our circle—he tends to have a wider experience in literature than in life, Loveman is a remarkable lyrist whose short poems have never seen book publication; but this longish *Hermaphrodite* reveals his astonishing spiritual kinship with the ancient world, & his spontaneous mastery of a wistful, Hellenistic sort of beauty, better than anything else except his hymns to Dionysus & Apollo—which I have somewhere in ms. & will send you if this specimen interests you. I have already mentioned Smith

as a singular poet-painter. *The Star-Treader* is his first book, published years ago before he was out of his 'teens. His work is still much the same—indeed, so cosmic a soul seems quite independent of the time-spirit. Smith records in verse much of the weirdness & extra-terrestrial atmosphere which I cumbrously & laboriously strive to capture in prose. Don't bother to read all this material if it seems to promise boredom rather than interest. Actually, I suppose the gang represents an aesthetic tradition very different from that in which you chiefly work. We belong to the wholly aesthete-pagan tradition of Keats, Poe, Swinburne, Walter Pater, Oscar Wilde, Baudelaire, & so on, hence may seem a trifle bizarre from the standpoint of the milder Tennyson-Browning-Matthew Arnold &c. tradition to which your own poetry seems to adhere in a majority of cases. Art for art's sake only is our motto—yet we appreciate whatever *is* art, no matter which its source & mood & purpose may be. If this stuff is of interest, I can send more of it later on—especially Clark Ashton Smith material, & Loveman odes & lyrics in ms. form. We are certainly a gallery of anachronisms. Long as a poet obviously belongs to the aesthetic nineties, whilst Loveman really forms part of the romantic movement of a century ago—being akin to Keats & Walter Savage Landor. Smith is, in all but race & language, a French symbolist or Parnasian of the middle 19th century—closer to Baudelaire than any other American I know. He has translated Baudelaire into English prose, & also writes poems in French which have been substantially praised even by French critics. One Paris editor told him he could scarcely believe that French was not his mother-tongue. Smith's drawings & paintings range from realistic subjects with an aura of strangeness about them to the very peaks & depths of livid nightmare, hashish-ecstasy, & polychromatic madness. I'll show you 2 or 3 of his small sketches when I can find them. I am glad you found my own horrors—*Red Hook & Rats*—moderately endurable, despite the places where wading through seemed difficult. Doubtless I am the sort of shock-purveyor condemned by critics of the accepted urbane tradition as decadent or culturally immature; but I can't resist the fascination of the *outside's* mythical shadowland, & I really have a fairly respectable line of literary predecessors to back me up. The history of horror fiction is scarcely less interesting to me than the product itself, & I have prepared a sketch of some of the salient points which I will send as soon as Cook lets me have an extra copy—it being included in his privately printed magazine *The Recluse*. No—I

have not read the novels you mention. Indeed, my laxity in absorbing latter-day fiction is quite reprehensible—I never seem to keep up with much except the weird & the bizarre. It was only a couple of weeks ago that I got around to the wildly acclaimed *Bridge of San Luis Rey*, which everyone was supposed to know by heart at least a year & a half ago! I respect honest realism in fiction, but don't seem to get wholly fascinated till phantasy enters in. My favourite living authors are Arthur Machen, Algernon Blackwood, Walter de la Mare, & Lord Dunsany, all of whom you would probably find highly interesting in various ways. Dunsany does not deal much in horror, but weaves a strangely potent fantastic beauty which has its roots in primitive myth & folklore. I know of no other writer who so magically opens up the enchanted sunset gates of secret & ethereal worlds. He influenced me overwhelmingly about a decade ago—my *White Ship* period—and if you liked that, you would like Dunsany himself still better. I'd be inclined to advise you to read his *Gods of Pegana*, *A Dreamer's Tales*, *The Sword of Welleran*, *The Book of Wonder*, & *Time & the Gods*. It is sheer music, colour, ecstasy, & dream. The Modern Library has very economical editions—*Dreamer's Tales* & *Sword of Welleran* bound in one under the former title, & *Book of Wonder* containing also *Time & the Gods*. But one ought to see the standard edition also on account of S. H. Sime's marvellous fantastic illustrations. All in all, I think Dunsany represents about the high-water mark in verbal magic. With me, at least, it doesn't wear thin with the years; & I can enjoy his early work as much today as when I first stumbled on it in 1919. His one-act plays are quite famous, but the tales come first in my personal estimation. His recent work—novel-length phantasies—seems less closely packed with breathless unreality than the early products; yet there is surely no dearth. The latest thing of his is *The Blessing of Pan*, which appeared about a year ago. *Chronicles of Rodriguez*, in the picaresque manner, is also worth a leisurely perusal.

And now I must gratefully mention how much I enjoyed *The House of the Isles*, which swept my imagination along with a kind of feudal pageantry all the more potent because it was real family history, & written by one of the characters of the pageant itself, as it were. There was the joy of literary old acquaintance, too, for I so well recalled the descriptions of Sir Alexander Macdonald & his seat at Arundale in Skye, contained in Johnson's & Boswell's books on the Hebrides. "Bozzy's"

account of the visit is most amusing, for it so naively reveals the cockneyish impertinence of both guests—leviathan & satellite alike—in their conversations with one who disappointed them by being a scholar & gentleman instead of a barbarian chieftain. With ideas of the Scots gained wholly from ballad & legend, Dr. Johnson could not envisage any Highland or Hebridean chief as other than a black-browed warrior amidst his men-at-arms. "Sir," he rumbled, "the Highland chiefs should not be allowed to go farther south than Aberdeen. A strong-minded man, like Sir James Macdonald, may be improved by an English education; but in general, they will be tamed into insignificance." Two days later the Great Bear could not resist reopening the attack—though not without the incitement of his boulderish little fellow-traveller. "Were I in your place, Sir," he thundered to the polite, though no doubt inwardly amused lord of the manor, "in seven years I could make this an independent island. I would roast oxen whole, & hang out a flag as a signal to the Macdonalds to come & get beef & whiskey!" Warming to his attack, he bore down all of the host's mild remonstrances in his typical roughshod way. "Nay, Sir!" he exploded, "if you are born to object, I have done with you! Sir, I would have a magazine of arms." When Sir Alexander thoughtfully suggested that such a ponderous arsenal might rust, the Great Cham of Letters detonated violently & climactically—"Let there be men to keep them clean. Your ancestors did not use to let their arms rust!" Boswell's closing remarks on this episode sum up a delicious study in comparative good-breeding. "We attempted in vain to communicate to him (Sir A.) a portion of our enthusiasm. He bore with so polite a good-nature our warm, & what some might call Gothick, expostulations, on this subject, that I should not forgive myself, were I to record all that Dr. Johnson's ardour led him to say. This day was little better than a blank." Much as this incident always amused me, I did not until reading this book realise that the modern Macdonald baronets were actually the dominant heirs & representatives of the mediaeval Lords of the Isles; whose state was little short of royal, & who must have been second only to the Kings of Scotland as self-sufficient powers (for Norway's overlordship was doubtless very shadowy even at its strongest (north of the Solway, the Cheviots, & the Tweed). It is certainly a vivid & dramatic chronicle, & gripped my imagination strongly enough to send me more than once to histories & reference works for parallel background-material & scenic colour. Certainly, it is



especially felicitous to have this stirring tale unfolded by one of the line itself—& I am sure that Lady Macdonald's second volume must be an equally absorbing document. In spite of the prime importance of the early sections, there is particular interest in the dramatic loss & regaining of the title by the direct line, as here related. All the material for a novel is in an episode like that—& aside from the spectacular interest one must really admire the present baronet prodigiously for the courage with which he has rectified a woeful legal wrong & secured for his posterity their true ancient heritage. He could prove to Dr. Johnson that a Scottish chief can still be relied on to assert his rights, even without a "magazine of arms" in his stronghold! The long pedigree is certainly a matter of the keenest interest—both the actually historic portion, which may be taken as extending back to the generations just preceding Somerled, & the earlier parts in which legendary & oral tradition blend gracefully into an increasing twilight of poetic narrative. It is certainly phenomenally ancient & brilliant, & much longer in its authentic record than the average pedigree among even the oldest group of landed & noble houses. I surely regret that not even the most liberal stretching & myth-making process will enable me to find a personal ancestor among this brilliant company—at least, with any date in my own library—& shall have to see some time whether my 137th King of Ireland, Bandoin Ui Niall, connects up in any way with the posterity of Japhet, Scota, & the other epic figures. Probably he does, since I fancy nearly all Celtic lines claim the picturesque roots of this tree in common; but in my present hazy ignorance of early Gaelic legend I shall have to push the linkage back a few generations to the Garden of Eden. That is always a safe plan—& has the illustrious precedent set by Lord Chesterfield, who in gentle satire on the inflation of ancestral scrolls placed among his family portraits the faithful likenesses of those first progenitors—*Adam de Stanhope* & *Eve de Stanhope*. Analogously, many a retrospective citizen of imperial Rome, not content with linking himself to the Caludii, Corneli, Valerii, & Fabii of the early republic, started off the array of niche-enshrined masques in his atrium with the likenesses of Anchises, Venus, Aeneas, & Iulus. But anyway, as I have said, I am very grateful for the loan of *The House of the Isles*, & would be glad to see the subsequent volume some time if it be of convenient mailing proportions. I am sure the authoress must be a correspondent of infinite graciousness & charm, & am glad you are favoured with such a

living & tangible bond with the concrete reality of the heroic age & its heritage. I imagine that the position of Sir Alexander among his tenants must be that of the old-time Squire at his best—a noble relationship which seems all too inevitably on the decline, & destined to fall before the stultifying levelling processes of the machine age. The picture of Thorpe House shews a delightful edifice—of early 18th century date. I should say at a guess—and I fancy the Macdonalds take an even greater pride in the ivied remnants of Duntulm. I can well understand the fascination which this stately elder life & its monuments possesses for you; for truly, there is nothing more provocative to the imagination than the solid foundations—both material & imponderable—upon which a great civilisation is built. In actual detail, the period of romantic mediaevalism contained repellent amounts of crudeness. There is little doubt but that neither Somerled nor Bandoin Ui Niall could write his own name, & both probably ate half-cooked meat with unassisted hands, wiping their greasy fingers on their garments. But taken in its entirety, with all its proud, violent feelings & ruthlessly energetic deeds, it has the inestimable quality of typifying concretely & dramatically those basic thoughts, feelings, attitudes, & motive-patterns from which the whole fabric of Aryan life has flowered, & which have characterised the experience of the race during the longest part of its history. It is a symbol of the utmost potency, & has a natural hold on the deepest hidden psychological processes of the European personality. The ending of a stream of experience based upon the approximately similar conditions which have always surrounded us hitherto, & have thus become the indispensable background & reference-points of our habitual thoughts & feelings, is tremendously to be regretted. It is a tragedy because it deprives us of that reservoir of precedent which has so much to do with our sense of the value & significance of things—throwing us back to the beginning, as it were, & placing before us the task of founding a whole new tradition based on the newer conditions of living. And yet it cannot be avoided. Mechanical invention has, for better or for worse, permanently altered mankind's relationship to his setting & to the forces of nature generally; & has just as inevitably begun to produce a new type of organisation among his own numbers as a result of changed modes of housing, transportation, manufacture, agriculture, commerce, & economic adjustment. Our familiar bases of intellectual & emotional reliance are suddenly removed from the sphere of actual life & relegated to

the domain of the traditional & the aesthetic only. Lucky is he whose temperament & opportunities permit him to live largely in historic imagination—as is likewise he who happens to be placed where the processes of change are most gradual & least noticeable. Fortunately a good deal of the traditional still survives in isolated instances—Europe has its feudal oases both material & mental, just as America has its vestigial fragments of the colonial past. Old Providence's restful hill & Georgian lanes & doorways form a typical specimen of such a material survival—just as Annapolis does in your part of the world. But of course the far older survivals in Europe pale all cisatlantic cases to insignificance. I imagine with envy the charm of dwelling amongst reliques extending back a thousand years & more, & representing every separate blood & culture stream in one's composite heritage—even the stream of classic civilisation as lingering in Hadrian's Wall, the ruins at Caerleon, Bath, & elsewhere, the rutted lengths of Watling-street, Ermine-street, Icknald-street, & the Fosseway, the great Roman north gate of Lincoln, & the Roman lighthouse now fused into the bulk of Dover Castle. Roman Britain has always particularly enthralled me because I am a devoted enthusiast on the subject of Rome. The Roman dominion of the consuls & the Caesars is my second country—as I go back through history I find my sympathies, loyalties, sense of placement & point of view transferred instinctively to the banks of the Tiber as soon as I reach a point where Anglo-Saxon England does not exist. This being so, it is easy to imagine the peculiar fascination I experience when considering the one point where the two great streams—Roman & British—actually & concretely met & became one for a time. Some day I am going to construct myself a fictitious genealogy linking one of my Welsh lines with the Roman colonists of that region. It is perfectly possible that I do actually derive a drop of genuine Roman blood from such a source—just as any descendant of any Welsh ancestor has a chance of doing—& that my love of Rome comes from a true fragment of the imperious germ-plasm of the eagle-nosed, broad-browed, tight-lipped followers of the conquering eagles, as represented by A. Plautius, P. Ostarius Scapula, T. Flavius Vespasianus, Cu. Julius Agricola, Suetonius Paullinus, Lollius Urbicus, Cladius Albinus, & the clanking legions that clustered around their glistening standards. S.P.Q.R.! Alala! And shall I disown the possibility of harbouring such blood merely because I possess no objective record of it? *Mehercule! Non esse consuetudinem Romanarum sic fato adverso*

*victim esse!* Rather shall a reality be made certain by a symbol, & truth live in the aether of a dream. So I shall some day certainly mould for myself an authentic pedigree from some haughty patrician praefectus of the Second Augustan Legion whose marble villa may have stood on the vine-clad slopes above the Usk, near the imperial camp & the civil capital of Britannia Secunda—proud Isca Silurum, with its baths, amphitheatre, tessellated pavements, & Tuscan-columned Temple of Diana—that noble, forgotten city (now sunk to a small village, & threatening to be engulfed as a suburb of the grimy industrial metropolis of Newport, Wales) whose “splendid palaces”, according to Geoffrey of Monmouth & Giraldus Cambrensis, “with their gilded roofs once rivalled the grandeur of Rome.” Arthur Machen, whose fantastic tales I have mentioned as forming one of my chief literary admirations, is a native of this once-Roman Gwent region, & has woven its archaic magic & classical heritage into his work with poignant & haunting skill. You really must read his *Hill of Dreams*—which includes a magnificent dream-life episode in which the hero transports himself back through the centuries & dwells in spirit among the marble walls & columns of Roman Isca Silurum. The latter name of this town is a Caerleon-on-Usk, (it is often held to be the seat of King Arthur), & Machen in most of his novels changes it to “Caermaen”—I know not why. Incidentally—it is now held by certain ethnologists like Sir Arthur Keith & Arthur Weigall that we inherit a greater proportion of the blood of Roman Britain than was formerly thought probable. This, however, does not really help out my wish to be descended from the Julii & Marcelli & Pompeii & Lucretii; since by the time extensive Roman colonisation took place, the Roman stock itself had become as vitiated & mongrelised as the American people now threaten to be. The legions of the later generals & praefects who clustered around Eboracum (York) & its imperial palace, & witnessed the death of Constantius, & the accession of Constantinus the Great, were not Italic Romans in any true sense; but merely foreigners from every part of the empire, covered with a varying veneer of the Latin language & institutions. Beside the altars to Apollo & Diana, & to the Romanised-Celtic Silvanus Cocidius (a sort of British Pan) which are often excavated near the Roman camp-hillocks & town-sites, we find cryptic altars to Mithra & the strange eastern gods brought in by the exotic legionaries who may have been recruited in Asia Minor, Egypt,

or the decaying realms beyond the Tigris. Sadly enough, it was a far from Roman race-stock which settled "Roman" Britain. We are reminded of Juvenal's fling at the composition of the Roman urban mob of his day—*Jam pridem Syrus in Tiberium defluxit Orontes, et linguam et mores et cum latrinae chordas obliquas nec non gentilia tympana secum vexit* . . . . Or as Gifford translates it—or rather paraphrases it—

"Long since, the stream that wanton Syria loves  
Has disembogued its filth in Tiber's waves;  
Its language, arts; o'erwhelm'd us with the scum  
Of Antioch's streets, its minstrel, harp, & drum."

Therefore I shall go back to the earlier Roman conquerors for my ancestor, choosing or inventing somebody about 60 or 70 A. D. (coins as far back as Otho—soon after Nero—are found at Caerleon) & giving him a good ancient name derived from the equestrian order of the original Roman people. I think a sturdy provincial house from the Sabine hills or the plains of Etruria would serve me very well—something like L. Caelius Rufus, M. Helvius Murena, Q. Opsitius Tanno, P. Vargunteius Minor, or Cu. Pomponius Falco. There's a wealth of material for such adaptation & adoption amongst the consular fasti in Dio Cassius; & once I get my ancestor, I can trace his line through a delectable series of absorptive steps—half-Celtic Roman provincials & early Cambrian bards & scholars—until I arrive at a fullfledged Welshman. As you see, I am by no means insensible to that fondness for distant times & scenes which you yourself harbour—indeed, I design to compose a tale some day based upon Roman Britain & the dark Druid secrets preceding Roman Britain; a tale in which both are glimpsed against a background of stark cosmic *outsideness*. This reminds me—I shall be glad to look over the tale you mention, *A Psychological Accident*, especially if it deals with unexplained singularities of time & space.

Your ancestral notes proved highly interesting—especially the link with Lord Saye & Sele, since an early baron of that line is glimpsed in New England's history. In 1634, apprehensive of the spread of the New-Netherland Dutch into New England & wishing to preserve the latter region for Puritan theocracy, the Presbyterian & pro-Puritan Lords Saye & Sele, & Brooke, became the patentees of a new colonial outpost in Connecticut, & sent settlers to found the town which has ever since

borne their joined names in the form of *Saybrook*. They would have emigrated themselves, had they been able to induce the General Court & Assembly of the Massachusetts-Bay to grant their posterity hereditary seats based on their titles. Lacking this privilege, they stayed in England; though assisting their colony in every possible way. Behold how the affairs of mankind are linked! Had the stiff-necked group of peak-hatted Puritans in Boston been a little less democratic in their legislation, the Barons of Saye & Sele would have become typical nasal-voiced Yankees & Harvard or Yale men, & your ancestor the Colonel would have had to look elsewhere for a bride! Saybrook lies at the mouth of the Connecticut River, about half way between Providence & New York. In early days it possessed a fort for defence against the Dutch & the Pequot Indians, & it was to this spot that Cromwell, Hampden, & other Puritan leaders once thought of emigrating—before they decided to precipitate the Civil Wars & stain their hands with regicide. The college of Yale was here founded in 1701, remaining for 15 years in a one-story building 80 feet long & producing 60 graduates before its removal to New Haven, farther west. In 1708 a band of clergymen here prepared a special "confession of faith" which received the name of the *Saybrook Platform*. I have never been off the train at Saybrook, but have always intended to explore it some day; since it is said to be very quaint & typical of early New England, & to contain a striking sepulchral antiquity in the form of an historic tomb. This tomb, a heavy affair of a pattern unique in New England & compared by one writer to a Druidic monument, is of the Lady Anne Butler, wife of Col. George Fenwick—who was a co-patentee of Lord Saye & Sele in the colonising venture, & who superintended the settlement from 1639 till 1644, when the patentees sold their grant to the Connecticut Colony. Upon Lady Fenwick's death in 1648, her husband reared his striking tomb in the village burial-ground; leaving financial provisions for its perpetual care (later artisans, in re-tracing the inscription, reverently added a *Cross*—which, ironically enough, would have horrified the austere Puritan & his lady, since their sect held the Cross to be a wicked Popish device!) when he returned to England. He was later one of the regicide judges, & was the officer who besieged Hume Castle for Cromwell in 1650—the occasion on which the governor of the fortress bravely defied him (though soon compelled to surrender) with the stout Caledonian couplets:

"I, William of the Wastle,  
Am now in my Castle:  
And aw the dogs in the town  
Shanna gar me gang down."

Col. Fenwick died before Dunkirk—killed in action—in 1658, his last request being to be buried therein. He lies there today, in that strange old French seaport which has known the sway of England, Spain & France; whilst his wife still sleeps in the old burying-ground beside the Connecticut, an hundred miles from Providence. She has not, however, rested undisturbed; for when the railway was put through Saybrook in the 19th century it carved off a corner of the ancient necropolis & necessitated the removal of the tomb to another site nearby. When this was done, the skeleton of Lady Fenwick was found almost intact, with a heavy braid of auburn hair still resisting the two centuries of interment. With typical peasant irreverence, the villagers of Saybrook annexed the gruesome relique & parcelled it out amongst themselves as souvenirs—some local families being said to retain their charnel allotment to this very day! The removed tomb—which I certainly mean to see before long—is situated near the entrance of the old cemetery, surrounded by the gaunt & time-ravaged headstones of worthies dating townward from Col. Fenwick's own time. I shall not find many inscriptions, though, for the years & the storms have worn them away; & all the leaden coats-of-arms attached to the grey slate slabs were wrenched off during the revolution to be melted into billets. Time & change . . . . . time & change . . . . . but such, anyway, is the Saybrook which your noble kinsman's will & patent brought into being!

It is interesting to hear that your friend Miss Radcliffe is among the numerous posterity of Cambria's native monarchs! Yes—Llewellyn is the last of them. Poor soul! Edward the First was determined to provoke him into a fight wherein he might be conquered, & the rising came at last. Llewellyn had his victories, but was slain in battle at last—slain by surprise, unarmed & defenceless—and subsequently his head was set for public derision on the Tower of London, circled by a wreath to imitate a coin in reference to the legendary prophecy of Merlin, which had precipitated the final rising, 'That when English money should become round, (and Edward had just abolished cut pence, therefore making all English money round) a Prince of Wales could be crowned in London.'

That was in 1282. Later (a tradition saith) King Edward promised to give the Welsh a Prince born in their country & speaking no other language—then presenting his own infant son, just born in the castle of Carnarvon, in Wales, & certainly *speaking* the language of no other country. I haven't kept track of all my own Welsh princes, because the various alleged lines of linkage are so conveniently & comfortably left to oral tradition except in one case—the very case where the written record strikes me as weakest! They include Owen Gwynedd, Prince of North Wales, who is claimed as a forbear by the Parry line, Rywallon ap Iorwedd, Prince of North Wales, 11th in descent from Cadwallader, last King of Britain, & another Prince—this time of South Wales—who is supposed to hook up somewhere on the same line—a Carew branch. Incidentally, I trust that Miss Radcliffe will persevere in her idea of having a book, & that she will entrust its publishing to the able & conscientious W. Paul Cook. You might shew her the two Recluse Press products sent under separate cover—fair specimens (except for one hideous misprint in the Loveman book, due to an 11th hour text change & not really Cook's fault) of Athol typography & workmanship. As to my 'not being interested in her poetry'—I'm sure there's nothing in the two printed specimens I have seen to warrant such a prophecy. I would be glad to see more, if you have any easily transmissible copies; though as I have previously pointed out, I am no authority whose verdict can be considered of any ultimate value. There are scores of points of merit in verse which my relatively mediocre taste might fail altogether to grasp—so that I always prefer to be one of many in offering suggestions; one of a jury rather than a sole magistrate.

I remain your most obt. Servt.  
HPLovecraft



345. TO MR. HARRIS

10 Barnes Street  
 Providence, R. I.  
 (Begun) Feby. 25, 1929  
 (Ended) March 1, 1929  
 (Thank god for a vernal-sounding  
 date to write!)

My dear Harris:—

I am certainly glad to hear that my preceding letter and its enclosures helped to relieve your gnawing ennui, and only wish it had arrived a day earlier, so that you might have been spared the dull evening you describe. I share your lack of interest in radio—in fact, I have never owned one of these devices. Barring plumbing and electric lights, I fancy I shun the new-fangled contraptions of the machine age fairly well! Speaking of boredom—why don't you try to accumulate a library which will furnish you with a solid reserve of intellectual and aesthetic pabulum? The expense—unless you are particular about the appearance of the books—is truly next to nothing; for one can obtain astonishing bargains on the 10¢ and 25¢ counters of second-hand book shops. I believe that a discriminating book-buyer could, in less than a year's time, assemble a really splendid library nucleus for not over fifty dollars, by making (or having made for him) careful selections from among the musty shops of any good-sized city. Any time that you especially want some standard work, you might let me know—for I could probably find you a marvellously low-priced copy either here or in Boston. I couldn't live a week without a private library—indeed, I'd part with all my furniture and squat and sleep on the floor before I'd let go of the 1500 or so books I possess. My collection isn't a notable one, but it represents my dominant interests pretty fairly; so that by piecing out with library books and private loans I manage to have something interesting on hand most of the time.

..... Personally, I feel more irritated by a challenge to an accepted scientific theory than I do by an act of so-called "evil" or "injustice" amongst mankind; although I never allow my irritation to hamper

my acceptance of the new theory as soon as positive evidence warrants it. Thus I have reluctantly exchanged the old nebular for the planetesimal hypothesis, and am beginning to accept the main points of relativity despite a profound intellectual distaste. What is, is—and our emotions regarding the cosmos and its phenomena are of no significance whatever, being wholly subjective matters dependent on individual accidents of neural and glandular physiology and of experience and environment. About my own attitude toward ethics—I thought I made it plain that I object only to (a) grotesquely disproportionate indignations and enthusiasms, (b) illogical extremes involving a *reductio ad absurdum*, and (c) the nonsensical notion that "right" and "wrong" involve any principles more mystical and universal than those of immediate expediency (with the individual's comfort as a criterion) on the one hand, and those of aesthetic harmony and symmetry (with the individual's emotional-imaginative pleasure as a criterion) on the other hand. I believe I was careful to specify that I do not advocate vice and crime, but that on the other hand I have a marked distaste for immoral and unlawful acts which contravene the harmonious traditions and standards of beautiful living developed by a culture during its long history. This, however, is not *ethics but aesthetics*—a distinction which you are almost alone in considering negligible. The mental and emotional forces behind this attitude, and behind the attitude of the religionist or abstract moralist, are leagues apart: as is clearly recognised by virtually all arguers on both sides. Before I get through I shall quote a very good description of my type of person, from the pen of a man very much on the other side. You can't gauge differences like this by one's daily personal conduct, because personal conduct is largely a matter of response to instinctive stimuli wholly dissociated from intellectual belief. We do what we do automatically, and then try either to rationalise it according to some theory, or to conceal it if it clashes too much with the particular theory which happens to be fastened upon us. We are mostly puppets—automata—though of course the theories we happen to hold may sometimes turn the scales one way or the other in determining a course of action, when all the other factors are evenly divided between two alternatives. So far as I am concerned—I am an aesthete devoted to harmony, and to the extraction of the maximum possible pleasure from life. I find by experience that my chief pleasure is in symbolic identification with the landscape and tradition-stream to which I belong—hence I follow the

ancient, simple New England ways of living, and observe the principles of honour expected of a descendant of English gentlemen. It is pride and beauty-sense, plus the automatic instincts of generations trained in certain conduct-patterns, which determine my conduct from day to day. But this is *not ethics*, because the same compulsions and preferences apply, with me, to things wholly outside the ethical zone. For example, I never cheat or steal. Also, I never wear a top-hat with a sack coat or munch bananas in public on the streets, because a gentleman does not do those things either. I would as soon do the one as the other sort of thing—it is all a matter of harmony and good taste—whereas the ethical or "righteous" man would be horrified by dishonesty yet tolerant of coarse personal ways. If I were farming in your district I certainly would assist my neighbours—both as a means of promoting my standing in the community, and because it is good taste to be generous and accommodating. Likewise with the matter of treating the pupils in a school class. But this would not be through any sense of inner compulsion based on principles dissociated from my personal welfare and from the principle of beauty. It would be for the same reason that I would not dress eccentrically or use vulgar language. *Pure aesthetics*, aside from the personal-benefit element; and concerned with emotions of *pleasure versus disgust* rather than of *approval versus indignation*. This is a highly important distinction. Advancing to the question of *collective* conduct as involved in problems of government, social organisation, etc.—I fully see your side of the matter, and would be the last person in the world to advocate any course of civic or economic policy which might tend toward the destruction of the existing culture. In accordance with this attitude, I am distinctly opposed to visibly arrogant and arbitrary extremes of government—but this is simply because I wish the safety of an artistic and intellectual civilisation to be secure, not because I have any sympathy with the coarse-grained herd who would menace the civilisation if not placated by sops. Surely you can see the profound and abysmal difference between this emotional attitude and the emotional attitude of the democratic reformer who becomes wildly excited over the "wrongs of the masses". This reformer has uppermost in his mind the welfare of those masses themselves—he feels with them, takes up a mental-emotional point of view as one of them, regards their advancement as his prime objective independently of anything else, and would willingly sacrifice the finest fruits of the civilisation for the sake

of stuffing their bellies and giving them two cinema shows instead of one per day. I, on the other hand, don't give a hang about the masses except so far as I think deliberate cruelty is coarse and unaesthetic—be it toward horses, oxen, undeveloped men, dogs, negroes, or poultry. All that I care about is *the civilisation*—the state of development and organisation which is capable of gratifying the complex mental-emotional-aesthetic needs of highly evolved and acutely sensitive men. Any *indignation* I may feel in the whole matter is not for the woes of the down-trodden, but for the threat of social unrest to the traditional institutions of the civilisation. The reformer cares only for the masses, but may make concessions to the civilisation. I care only for the civilisation, but may make concessions to the masses. Do you not see the antipodal difference between the two positions? Both the reformer and I may unite in opposing an unworkably arrogant piece of legislation, but the motivating reasons will be absolutely antithetical. He wants to give the crowd as *much* as can be given them without wrecking all semblance of civilisation, whereas I want to give them only as much as can be given them without even slightly impairing the level of the national culture. When it's an actual question of masses versus culture, I'm for giving the masses as little as can be given without bringing on a danger of collapse. Thus you see that the reformer and I are very different after all. He has a *spontaneous enthusiasm* for reform and democracy, thinking it imperative to *urge* these things. I, on the other hand, have no enthusiasm at all in this direction; thinking it the best policy not to *urge* concessions, but merely to grant such things when the safety of the civilisation demands it. He is a democrat at all times, and because he *wants* to be. I am one only occasionally, and when I *have* to be. . . . I would frankly prefer a landholding aristocracy with a cultivated leisure class and a return to the historic authority of the British crown, of which I shall always be spiritually a subject. But as men of more or less rudimentary sense, both the reformer and I know that we can neither of us get what we respectively want—hence last autumn he compromised on Smith whilst I compromised on Hoover. And that's the way of it. We want different things, but have enough sense of reality to take what we can get. He works for as democratic a government *as possible*; I for as aristocratic a one *as possible*. But both recognise the limitations of possibility. Incidentally, the developments of the machine age may conceivably make inevitable a third and altogether different sort of organi-

sation equally dissatisfying to democrat and oligarch! As for the relative value or authority of the democratic and aristocratic ideals—there is not, cosmically speaking, a bit of preference to be given either side. It is all a matter of personal emotion. I happen to favour the system which permits the free exercise of the most complex and evolved vital forces, but I freely concede that there is just as much logic in advocating a system which keeps everything down to the animal level. I would, indeed, freely concede an equal cosmic standing to any design of the insect race to extirpate the mammalian world and bring to dominance the ideals and institutions of the disciplined and efficiently organised articulata. But I couldn't get exactly enthusiastic about it!

All this will shew you that I am not insensible of the various concessions which have to be made now and then to certain elements in order to ensure practical safety—so that in reality one phase of your argument was unnecessary. In the matter of disfranchising certain classes—I simply said *that it would do no harm if it would work*. The country was governed just as well as it is now when certain classes *were* disfranchised—women everywhere, Catholics and Jews here and there, and men below a certain property level in places. All that has happened is that such cases of disfranchisement *have not been found possible* as matters of direct legislation. There is nothing to crow about—nothing to get excited or complacent about. The change hasn't done anybody any good, and we are no better because we *do* grant universal franchise, than were our ancestors because they *didn't*. Each of us—ancestors and contemporaries—has really done exactly the same thing: 'gotten away with' as much as possible. If anything, our ancestors deserve the more credit, because they 'got away with' more. Certainly, we could make government a neater and more effective thing, and more of a preservative of our best culture, if we could apply the same restrictions that our forefathers did. Apparently we can't—but that's nothing to brag about. No need of spilling slush and sentimentality because we have to retrench. Our modes of life and feeling are very distinctly a product of the English Protestant culture—taken as a culture apart from matters of actual belief. It would be of infinite benefit to the tone of our national life and the growth of our legitimately hereditary arts and letters if none but the English-descended Protestant element were given a share in the government—and only the best and best-chosen part of that element. That we can't establish such a restriction at this date, after our

abysmal folly in admitting all sorts of immigrant elements, I am willing to concede as a practical fact; but I am *not* willing to pretend that this condition is a *benefit* to the nation. I'm damned sorry that it's so, and would do almost anything to get rid of the non-English hordes whose heritages and deepest instincts clash so disastrously with ours, and do so much to frustrate the fruition of our 300-year-old cultural stream. Therefore I'm for *any workable policy* which will throw power toward the old-American stock and take power away from the immigrant stock. The longer we can keep the strangers from tangibly tampering with our culture, the better our chance of finally assimilating those which are here (provided we have the sanity to keep others out) and of making them conform to our standards of civilisation. I don't say I'm for any more circuitous measure which will accomplish something of the same thing. My reason is plain and concrete—that it's oppressively unpleasant to live in a country where the customs, folk-ways, literary and artistic tone, and governmental forms are markedly unlike those natural to one's own race and civilisation. English civilisation was here first, and established itself by virtue of its strength. If we beat off Indian influences, we ought to be able to beat off other alien influences. Constant strength and resolution are the price of racial-cultural integrity. Do I make myself plain? You say that the idea of Catholic-Jew-atheist disfranchisement is "monstrous". I say that it is merely *impracticable at this date*. The parallel of red-haired and cross-eyed massacres is not quite valid, because red hair and cross eyes have no symbolic significance in the composition of the civilisation—but so far as abstract principles go, I had as lief as not see carrot-topped and strabismic folk quietly put out of the way. I'd merely think it was *more impracticable* than Papist-Jew-infidel disfranchisement, and would languidly question the aesthetic status of such a violent measure—inquiring whether or not the incident had an artistically adequate object. Another thing—in the past, men *have* been disfranchised because of blood, heritage or belief, whereas adults have never been slaughtered en masse because of individual physical peculiarities. This would argue that the instinctive make-up of mankind does not necessarily protest against blood-culture-creed distinctions, whereas it does seem to discourage less clear-cut discriminations in matters of selection for survival. And so it goes. Nothing is "monstrous"—but some things will work while some things won't, and some things are aesthetic according to our cultural canon

while some things aren't. There's really nothing in the whole matter to get excited about. Grant outsiders as little influence and privilege as we safely can, and let it go at that. If we *can't* make disfranchisement work, all right; but don't let's pretend to be glad about it, or egg the foreigners on toward still further demands. . . . .

. . . . . There is no Latin art or literature or feeling worth the name after the age of Pliny and Tacitus. The most cultivated Romans—including Marcus Aurelius—composed their literature in Greek, and Alexandria continued to be the intellectual centre of the world. The conquered Hellenistic culture had become a peaceful conqueror—so that, as we see, the Greek part of the Empire outlasted the Latin part by a thousand years. In the later stages of decay Christianity undoubtedly did harm through its exaltation of softness, justice, and universal brotherhood, and its demand for the renunciation of earthly ties and loyalties; but it is a mistake to consider this the principal cause of decline, as some do. Rome would never have adopted this mawkish slave-religion if it had not begun to acquire the soft slave-mind and the subtle slave-religion of human equality. The nation, through other causes, had become psychologically unfitted for the traditional classic polytheism and the virile schools of philosophy. Itself decadent, it had begun to demand something like the slave-faiths and mystically consolatory cults of the long-decadent East; hence by the time of the Antonines was groping frantically for something new and soft and mystic. It was a gamble which of many faiths would win—Persian Mithraism (altars to Mithras have been dug up in parts of the Empire as remote as Hadrian's Wall in Britain) Jewish Christianity, Perso-Syrian Menichaeism, and Oriental-Alexandrian Neoplatonism being the main contenders apart from the Apollonian, Pythagorean, and Dionysiac mystery—cults whose appeal was too complex and aesthetic for the majority. It was pure accident that Christianity won—but once it did win, it undeniably did harm through its weakening effect on patriotism. It sapped at the vigorously nationalistic cast of the Roman mind, and made the people feel that the identity—or even the nature—of their earthly government was comparatively inessential. What it did was to *accelerate*, though not to *cause*, the ruin of the classical world. But in my opinion—as well as in that of a majority of modern students—the *prime source* of Roman decline was something wholly apart from any of the circumstances enumerated above. It was, indeed, *exactly the same thing which is now menacing*

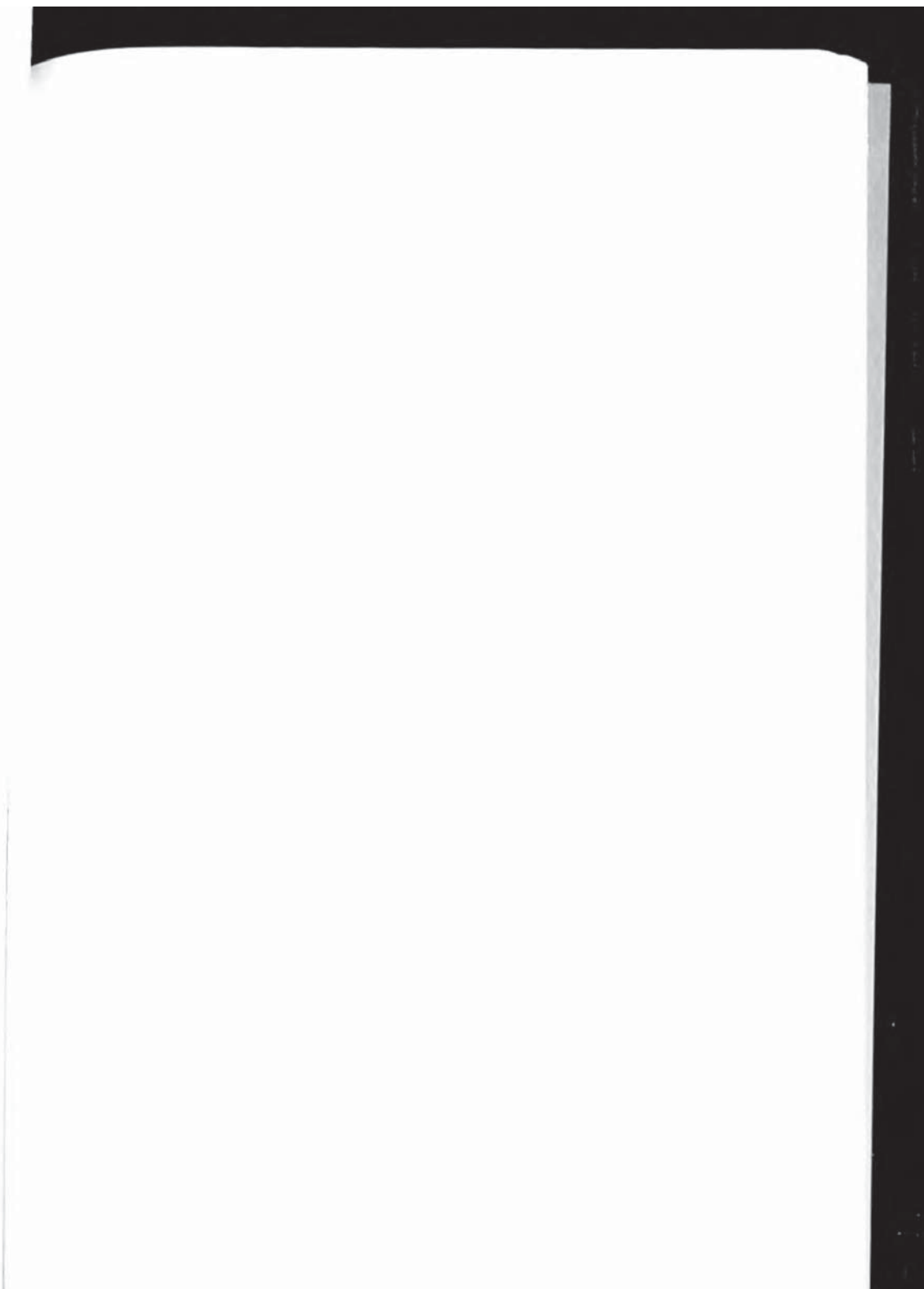
our Western civilisation—namely, a growth in magnitude and complex administrative needs beyond the capability of the age's scientific, psychological, and economic knowledge to cope with. The unwieldy imperial fabric, with its cumbrous finances, declining national spirit, heterogeneous peoples, and wide dissimilarity of conditions in different regions, had become unmanageable through sheer size and diversity. It was almost impossible to find any effective way to get necessary things done. . . . . Charlemagne made short work of the Lombards—reminding them of their vassalage, deposing their ruling dynasty, and placing upon his own head the famous Iron crown—and finally went to Rome to pray and receive the papal blessing . . . and something more. All this time the Western World had recognised the *shadow-authority* of the Eastern Emperor to an extent we can scarcely realise except when we look closely at mediaeval literature. *Rome had never fallen* in any outward sense, and the popular imagination still looked to it as the focus of all mystical splendour and authority, even though its customs had become changed, its language debased, and its *actual* sway limited to the narrow belt of Papal power. Now just at this juncture the imperial dynasty at Constantinople had become rather jazzed-up. With characteristic Oriental subtlety the fond Empress-Dowager Irene had put out the eyes of her young son Constantius VI and seized the power for herself—an act which went well enough with the Orientalised Greek court by the Golden Horn, but which didn't 'go over big' at all with the unsophisticated Teuton chiefs who swayed the Western World. There were those who declared the imperial throne forfeited and vacant, and ready for a new dynasty of Caesars and Augusti, and among these was Pope Leo VI. Accordingly, on Christmas Day, A. D. 800, as the visiting Charlemagne knelt in prayer at Rome, the Pope placed upon his head a golden crown and saluted him as the true successor in world-empire of the blinded boy at Byzantium. Vivat Carolus Augustus, Imperator Romanorum! Ave, Carole Auguste! The surrounding multitude took up the acclaim, and the great King of the Franks became the legal heir to the glories of the Julii, the Flavii, and the Antonines. Roma Immortalis, Caput Mundi! But of course it was all a very splendid bit of theory. Charlemagne remained a great Frankish king only—albeit, with a title which helped him sway his domains far more effectively than he otherwise could. You will note that, throughout the west, all the mystical emotional allegiance hitherto given to the "Roman" Emperor at



Constantinople was transferred en masse to the "Holy Roman" Emperor of the Frankish dynasty. This new empire was not, in theory, a western empire acting in concert with the Eastern; but a restored world-empire including both east and west, and forming the unbroken heritage of the Caesars. In cold fact, it did not try to meddle with the Byzantine empire which really was the de facto and de jure prolongation of the Roman fabric. It merely assumed *theoretical* supremacy and encured a transfer of emotional allegiance from the east to the west—a healthy thing for Europe, since it centred all loyalties within the dawning Nordic civilisation. The eastern empire half-faded out of men's imaginations as a part of Europe, and we only hear of it now and then in connexion with the Crusades and with the temporary Latin occupation of Constantinople, until in 1453 we witness its collapse before the Turks. The "Holy Roman" Empire, which soon becomes a German Empire with the overlordship of most of Italy, shrinks into an Austrian dukedom and evaporates into legalistic-emotional theory; technically lasting until 1806, when it receives its coup de grace from Napoleon. But the important thing to consider is the prodigious vitality of the Roman idea. Rome was so mighty that it *could not fall*. It had to vanish in a cloud, like so many of the mythical heros of antiquity, and to receive its apotheosis among the stars before men became fully aware that it had vanished from the earth! . . . Rome has always been one of my special interests. It is my second country—and just as soon as I pass back of the existence of England in my survey of history, I find myself unconsciously and involuntarily a Roman in perspective and feelings. I have always hoped that there may be drop of old Roman blood in me—left in Britain by the legions of Agricola, Ostarius Scapula, or Paullinus, and trickling down through the one or two Welsh lines in my ancestry. . . . . In a sense Rome has never died, for all the Western World is heir to its culture. We use its alphabet, most of its word-roots, and most of its modes of thought—and now America is duplicating its specific conditions and problems! . . . Had there been no barbarian invasions, the culture of Rome would have petered out just the same—indeed, it *had* petered out, for the thought and life of the later Empire are substantially mediaeval. This is the more manifest because, as we see, a full half of the Empire *did not* collapse under the 5th century inroads. The Greek half lived on in slow decadence, and from that decadence in the once-Hellenic lands we may pretty well measure what the decadence within

the Latin area would have been. The case was simply one of cultural old age—like that of the Western World today, or rather, in the generations just ahead. The old impulse to civilisation had worn itself out, and an hiatus was needed before the rise of the next and probably last Aryan culture—the Nordic. Meanwhile we have to look to the Saracens, fresh from the emotional stimulus of new-born Islam, to find a really vital culture amongst the Caucasian race. The glorious mediaeval world of the Caliphs of Bagdad and Emirs of Cordova was the true dominant civilisation of the Dark Ages, and we are damned lucky to have escaped being swallowed up in it and thus deprived of our normal racial culture of the future. All honour to Charles Martel! That Arabic Empire was the last of the great Semitic cultures, just as our Teutonic western civilisation is the last of the Great Aryan cultures. Both branches of the white race are getting toward the final sunset, and in another thousand or two years I fancy the Mongol will have his chance.

..... As for the *Saturday Evening Post*—don't let me be thought of as condemning it so far as its current information function is concerned. I suppose it is adequate enough in its transcript of daily facts and figures, though I myself prefer to get these through the *N. Y. Sunday Times* and the sanely balanced and disillusioned news-weekly *Time*. When I call it *superficial* I refer to its *analysis and exploitation* of these facts and figures, and to some extent to the policy of selection, proportioning, and emphasis followed in recording them. It looks at the world with the eyes of the shrewd, insensitive, hard-headed, unimaginative, well-fed, half-educated, materialistic Babbitt, catering to his interests, and interpreting the phenomena of the day in terms of his restricted and artificial philosophy. .... I am disillusioned enough to know that no man's opinion on any subject is worth a damn unless backed up with enough genuine information to make him really know what he's talking about. I am not so free with opinions as I used to be, having outgrown the stage of the cracker-barrel senate. When I want to say something, I take darned good care to glance over my back-ground-knowledge and see whether or not my opinion has any valid reason for existing. If it hasn't, I try to look up the "straight dope" on the subject—and if the subject happens to be modern, I want the most solid, thoughtful, and reliable possible periodical to furnish the information. That's why I turn to things of the Harper-Century-Scribners grade. I know from experience that these are the places where really thorough





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and intelligent presentations of the really vital topics are made. One can, of course, read of "the world's great figures" elsewhere—but I want to be sure that these figures are chosen rightly and emphasised rightly, and that their reasons for greatness are correctly, thoughtfully, and analytically stated. In other words, I want my view of the world to be as scientifically impartial, comprehensive, realistic, and objective a view as can be obtained. One never obtains such from the sketchy, emotion-tinctured, and quasi-sensational columns of the frankly popular press, for these columns reflect an artificial world, sentimentalised and oversimplified. However, as I have said, the *Saturday Evening Post* is by no means flagrantly bad in any respect; and really has much of excellence in it now and then.

..... The truth is, that from 1830 to 1900 American architecture and decoration—like the costume of the period—represents a lapse of taste which still mystifies the student. *How could they do such things?* is all one can say as he stands aghast at the grotesque jumble of Victorian hybridism and caprice embalmed in wood, brick, and stone. ....

..... The basis of aesthetics is still so deeply wrapped in mystery that no final definition of art's primary function and appeal can be formulated. We have clues, but only clues—and all these point toward a somewhat bewildering complexity. At least three separate factors seem to be involved—physical-sensory pleasure, mental-emotional association, and mathematical symmetry or rhythm; the last-named of these being most purely and characteristically aesthetic and differentiated from general sensations and emotions. . . . Besides these three static factors there seems to be a vague dynamic factor involving emotional intensity, whereby most art fails to be poignant unless it reflects a certain degree of concentrated ecstasy in the creator. .... The background of individual mental and emotional experience which each of us brings to bear as association-material upon any impression of the external world, of necessity gives every separate person a *thoroughly separate set of emotional and imaginative overtones* when he looks at a given scene in common with others; so that no two persons could possibly carry away the same net result from a contemplation of the same material. What means cheerfulness to one (through associative memory) means melancholy to someone else; what calls up a picture of one set of scenes to Mr. A, calls up a wholly different picture to Mr. B. This associative differen-

tiation is even more pronounced and important than the physiological sensory differentiation, and strikingly confirms the truth of the general axiom that *there is no Nature, as known to us; but only an infinite number of fairly closely related Natures, each one peculiar to him who experiences it.* Practically speaking, you and I would not experience the same picture if we were to stand side by side and look at any given landscape or street scene. . . . No human mind, of course, can ever consciously take in the *whole detail* of a scene presented to the senses. Any mind that could would be a god's mind. . . . What you and I would select as material for a hasty and truthful sketch of the scene's "high spots" would be markedly different—for you would tend to register impressions overlooked by me whilst I would tend to register impressions overlooked by you. And beyond all this, our widely different streams of past experience and memories would give every detail of the scene such a widely different aura of associative glamour, feeling, and imagery in our respective minds, that we cannot for a moment suppose ourselves to receive identical pictures. Reality being beyond human vision, each of us receives a vague shadow of reality—wholly subjective on our part, and only roughly similar in the two cases. The resemblances will result from our membership in the same organic species, in the same race-stock, in the same civilisation, and in the same New England fabric. The differences will result from our differences in physique, tastes, environment, and experience. What you see will be nearer like what I see than what a Chinaman or an ancient Assyrian would see, but not so near as what a Providence man with tastes and experiences more like mine would see. From this principle arise the differences in style among different individual artists of the same age and group, the wider differences among groups which are in the same civilisation but which represent different ages or different mental and geographical milieux, and the still wider differences among different national and racial art-traditions. Diverse vision is everywhere—and beyond it all the absolute lies hidden. . . . I'd say that good art means *the ability of any one man to pin down in some permanent and intelligible medium a sort of idea of what he sees in Nature that nobody else sees.* In other words, *to make the other fellow grasp, through skilled selective care in interpretive reproduction or symbolism, some inkling of what only the artist himself could possibly see in the actual objective scene itself.* . . . The picture can, if it be good art, give you something in the real scene

which you couldn't have gathered for yourself—which only the particular artist who painted the picture could ever have gathered and preserved for other people to see. Of course, there is just the same inevitable diversity of vision when we look at a work of art—i.e., no two spectators see quite the same thing. But in this case the artist, through his knowledge of the difference between his especial vision and the average of mass vision, (as tested by a comparison of many artists' results) has been able to supply guideposts to a very great extent; so that we cannot fail to recognise his emphasis on those features of the scene which he alone has beheld in the proportions represented. *That is what self-expression is, and self-expression is art.* A man is a true artist according to his ability to make other people see the visible or emotional or imaginative world *as he sees it*, without departing from the true basic outlines of the world he is delineating. . . . Just as I would not for a moment pretend to despise music because I cannot enjoy and understand it, so would I never think of pretending to enjoy or understand music when I can't. . . . Colour means nothing to a colour-blind man, nor art to a calloused undernourished, or insensitive spirit. In order to see, one must first possess eyes. So, having defined the type of person concerned, let us see where he gets his art-pleasure—his pleasure at seeing the crystallised revelation of another man's purely personal vision. Well—for one thing, the sight of the other man's vision, with its emphasis on the personally selective element, *tends to bring out his own subconscious memories of kindred aspects of vision*—that is, to drag up to consciousness impressions received and retained in the subconscious, but never before realised. This means the discovery of something new and unexpected in oneself—always a highly pleasurable phenomenon, and possessing a kind of dramatic vividness akin to that of some glimpse from an hypothetical previous incarnation. The new-found memory was always at the back of the mind, hence has the elusive charm of vague familiarity. Yet because it was never before consciously registered, it has all the striking fascination of absolute newness as well. The work of art has enlarged our supply of conscious memory-wealth—has shewn us to be richer than we thought we were. It has, in all truth, enriched and *developed* us. This enrichment is permanent, because the raising to consciousness of a new type of vision enables the spectator to exercise this new type in his subsequent contacts with Nature. *We see and feel more in Nature from having assimilated works of authentic art.* There is no question but that

an artistically untrained or insensitive man is really groping half-blinded through life. . . . Art is the gateway of life—and in the opinion of many, myself included, the only reason that any highly developed man of sense has for remaining alive. Life without art (by this, of course, I mean not only formal art but the instinctive beauty-perceptions of the sensitive though untutored person as well.) is simply an animal or mechanical process, even when dully diversified by sterile thought. We only live as human beings in proportion to our receptiveness to impressions of beauty—thus I regretfully admit myself only partly alive, since the magic kingdom of musical exaltation, as well as substantial provinces of various other arts, is closed to my limited sensibilities. No one person, of course, is 100% developed. Most of us lead 25% or 50% lives, though some get as high as 75% or 80%. I don't know where I rank—about 50%, I guess. I'm dead to music, and I fear my response to large sections of prose literature is intellectual rather than aesthetic. . . . Besides the joy of discovering untapped wells in ourselves, there is *the joy of capturing another's vision*—the sense of expansion and adventure inherent in viewing Nature through a larger proportion of the total eyes of mankind. We derive from this process a feeling of magnification in the cosmos—of having approached the universal a trifle more closely, and banished a little of our inevitable insignificance. Instead of being merely one person, we have become two persons—and as we assimilate more and more of art we become, in effect, more and more people all in one; till at length we have the sensation of a sort of identification with our whole civilisation. This alone would make art worth our while. But the list of pleasure-phases is not yet exhausted. Another thing which art does is *to intensify and clarify our own personal and conscious reaction toward Nature*, by setting our minds definitely into the pattern of creative selection. This is a concrete way of stating the familiar abstract maxim that the spectacle of self-expression on anyone's part is a tonic and pleasant experience for us. By watching someone else 'be himself' intensively and skilfully, we ourselves are impelled to 'be ourselves' more thoroughly and poignantly than might otherwise be possible. Specifically, the presentation of a view with only high spots or symbols stressed brings up to our mind the high spots and symbols which we would stress if we could paint what we saw—the high spots and symbols which for us represent the visible scene. This phase of pleasure is additionally acute when the type of art



happens to be really very close to our own type of aesthetic vision. In such cases the work of art recapitulates with startling vividness what we actually did see—and recapitulates it more effectively than the scene itself would, since it does not contain any of those suppressed details which in the actual scene tugged at the subconscious and insidiously weakened the dominant image. Paradoxically, the work of art shews us more of the scene we saw than would that scene itself! . . . . The constant discovery of different peoples' subjective impressions of things, as contained in genuine art, forms a slow, gradual approach, or faint approximation of an approach, to *the mystic substance of absolute reality itself*—the stark, cosmic reality which lurks behind our varying subjective perceptions. I don't need to tell you what a tremendous force this conception necessarily is, in any maturely developed and fully civilised mind. The search for ultimate reality is the most ineradicable urge in the human personality—the basis of every real religion, and the foundation of all that nobly poetic body of philosophy which has its fount in Plato. Anything which enhances our sense of success in this quest, be it art or religion, is the source of a pricelessly rich emotional experience—and the more we lose this experience in religion, the more we need to get it in something else. In stark intellectual truth, this experience is an illusion; since it is absurd to fancy that the narrow range of visions afforded by different artists within the human species could give even the merest hint of an ultimate reality known to us only from the restricted point of view (or closely related points of view) of mankind with its local and limited range of sense-equipment. Absolute reality is for ever beyond us—we cannot form even the vaguest conception of what such a thing could be like, for we have no terms to envisage entity apart from those subjective aspects which reside wholly inside our own physiology and psychology. Solid, liquid, gas; size, dimensions, matter, energy, ether; time and space; eternity, infinity, finiteness, relativity; all are, in the last analysis only shadows whose substance and nature we can never hope even to approximate. We have only extremely fragmentary and illusorily specialised projections to go by, and can form no idea of any principle of reference by which to define or envisage such a thing as absolute entity or reality apart from its few sensory manifestations. All we can do is to judge the relationships which those manifestations bear toward one another, and accept our fractional vision as having some fixed proportion or relationship to whatever the inconceivable whole

may be. The mind of man can *never*—this is *the one absolute certainty in our knowledge*—get any futher than this, since the limits of the five senses are a fixed and insurmountable barrier beyond which we have no possible avenue of access. Religion pretends to satisfy by assuming man's possession of mystic information-channels apart from the senses, but we are outgrowing the possibilities of this benign delusion. Only the subtler illusion of art is left—the illusion that our ability to command slightly different points of view within the human radius gives us a triangulation-base large enough to permit of mensurational guesses regarding absolute reality. This illusion we must keep as long as we can, for life without it would be sterile indeed for most of us; yet I do not think we can keep it always. Science is the great destroyer of beauty, and this phase will have to go in time. But that does not lessen its preciousness now, and we may still feel an emotional surge of approximation to the divine comprehension when a new artistic experience suddenly enlarges our horizon and shews us a familiar thing in the fresh, strange, and seemingly significant light of another man's vision. . . . . While for purposes of plain argument I have taken visual or pictorial art as a type of all aesthetics, you must realise that the principle as a whole includes every other branch of art-endeavour as well. One is just as impoverished through a dulness toward fine poetry and good literature, as through a blindness toward art. . . . . You speak of your perception of a motor-car as a beautiful object as if you expected a confessed art-lover to deny the contention at once. How so? In truth, the aesthete is the very first to praise grace of line wherever he finds it; and there is no one who wishes to deny beauty to the more recent types of automobile-body. They are designed by persons familiar with aesthetic principles, and involve proportionings and adaptations to their function which bring them truly within the canon of art. They can, and often do, form high types of decorative beauty—lacking only the overtones of associative tradition in order to compete successfully in appeal with the finest specimens of old-time coach-making. I have not contended that the machine age cannot produce certain standardised types of decorative beauty, but have said that its net effect is imaginatively impoverishing. A beautiful motor-car calls up relatively few basic hereditary memories as compared with a fine coach of Georgian times; and one must remember, too, that the men who fashioned it had no part in the joy and feeling of creation. They carved no panels with the per-

sonal affection and distinctiveness of the old-time coach-maker, and had no subjectively clear vision of their task as a whole. They merely watched machines of infinite ugliness, and helped those machines give birth to a grotesque and heterogeneous progeny of parts equally ugly and even more meaningless in themselves. Beautiful objects may still be produced, but the processes of beauty are removed farther from life, and the sum total of beauty in life is infinitely diminished. What you say of the motor-car is equally true of the tobacco-tin. Surely you realise that small objects of utility—even the cheapest—have throughout history been sometimes so well made and happily conceived as to win a place in the field of art. Humble Greek and Roman lamps, the lowly commercial pottery of Corinth, every-day bits of Chinese and Japanese lacquer-ware—all sorts of things like this have always been highly esteemed as true, even if unpretentious, art, and have kept to this day an honoured place in museums. Your tobacco-tin undoubtedly belongs in greater or lesser degree to this solid tradition, and all one can say against it is that its wide-spread duplication is likely to lessen its hold on our aesthetic sense through sheer accustomedness. Being taken for granted, it may acquire something of the staleness of a hackneyed piece of music; though it will never be less beautiful, or less abstractly appreciated by the analysts of beauty. . . . .

. . . . . Linkage with the long continuous history of the race is a thing with a genuine poetic value in itself, and the joy we take in even the ugliest and most grotesque of traditional objects is *not* a false one. It is not *directly* aesthetic—that is, it does not proceed from the decorative beauty of line in the objects themselves—but it is none the less truly aesthetic in an indirect way; through the flood of unspoken poetic imagery and epic race-memory released in our minds by the historic and cultural symbolism of the objects. Such objects even when intrinsically unbeautiful, form an invaluable sort of springboard for the imagination. I can dream a whole cycle of colonial life from merely gazing on a tattered old book or almanack with the long *f*. Naturally enough, many surviving objects of the early days are commonplacely homely or even positively ugly. Puritan furniture—17th century—is heavy and stiff, and scores of household objects of every age have no actual beauty in themselves. Many colonial houses are drably plain or even poorly proportioned, whilst certain public buildings of the period are cumbrous and undistinguished. Yet this does not lessen their associational or symbolic

value, or impair their capability of producing, in sensitive persons, a genuine ecstasy of secondary aestheticism. Moreover, though certain isolated objects may lack intrinsic beauty, their typical combination may contain that very quality to a marked degree. This is especially the case with an old town. The houses, each taken by itself, may be ugly enough; yet their arrangements in curving hill lanes and alleys, and the massed silhouette made by their blended roofs and chimneys against the sky, may possess a charm, poignancy, and absolute art value of the highest sort. Marblehead affords a striking instance of this. Few of the ancient houses are aesthetically distinctive, but their collective effect is truly overpoweringly lovely. Another similar case is the tiny hamlet of Guilford Centre in your own Vermont. Standing in its midst, I saw nothing extraordinary—yet what a vision of charm did I behold when I had walked far up the gradual slope behind it, and looked back at the huddle of spreading treetops, half-glimpsed gables, and the square, white church-tower rising above all! . . . . .

. . . . . I find existence tolerable—because I keep aloof from the rising machine-culture and remain a part of the old New England civilisation which preceded it. But nothing good can be said of that cancerous machine-culture itself. It is not a true civilisation, and has nothing in it to satisfy a mature and fully-developed human mind. It is attuned to the mentality and imagination of the galley-slave and the moron, and crushes relentlessly with disapproval, ridicule, and economic annihilation, any sign of actually independent thought and civilised feeling which chances to rise above its sodden level. It is a treadmill, squirrel-trap culture—drugged and frenzied with the hasheesh of industrial servitude and material luxury. It is wholly a material body-culture, and its symbol is the tiled bathroom and steam radiator rather than the Doric portico and the temple of philosophy. Its denizens do not live or know how to live. They spend all their time devising ways of safeguarding life and making it physically comfortable, but once they get it as they want it, they don't know what to do with it. They have developed an elaborate technique for preserving and enshrining something which gives them no pleasure, and for which they can find no use. They mean well enough, but the effect of their ignorant blundering is a malignant one. Like the Indians, they occupy a highly desirable land and prevent civilisation from enjoying its benefits. And on account of their material wealth and physical strength, they may yet constitute a genuine

menace to the civilised world. Children are always up to mischief, and matches, edged tools, and firearms are dangerous in their hands. . . . . Real America had the start of a splendid civilisation—the British stream, enriched by a geographical setting well-calculated to develop a vital, adventurous, and imaginatively fertile existence. . . . . What destroyed it as the dominant culture of this continent? Well—first came the poison of social democracy, which gradually introduced the notion of diffused rather than intensive development. Idealists wanted to raise the level of the ground by tearing down all the towers and strewing them over the surface—and when it was done they wondered why the ground didn't seem much higher, after all. And they had lost their towers! Then came the premature shifting of the economic centre of gravity to the relatively immature west; which brought western crudeness, "push", and quantity-feeling to the fore, and accelerated the evils of democracy. Sudden financial over-turns and the rise of a loathsome parvenu class—natural things in a rapidly expanding nation—helped on the disaster; whilst worst of all was the rashly and idealistically admitted flood of alien, degenerate, and unassimilable immigrants—the supreme calamity of the western world. On this dangerous and unstable cultural chaos finally fell the curse of the machine age—a condition peculiarly adapted to favour the crude and imaginationless and to operate against the sensitive and the civilised. Its first results we behold today, though the depths of its cultural darkness are reserved for the torture of later generations. Whether an intelligent minority can still escape it, and keep alive real American civilisation as a parallel stream, is at this date an open question. I am not pessimist enough to say that it cannot be done; indeed, I think that persons of retiring tendencies (like myself) can always manage to eke along in a quiet antiquarian way—living imaginative inner lives based on the true hereditary civilisation. It is the man who is at once civilised and highly social or gregarious who has the worst time. He will have to live abroad unless the prevailing darkness can be modified. . . . . Naturally, in casual conversation one doesn't use the precise and elaborate language of a book. The proper thing is a plain simplicity; and so far as I can see one seldom incurs the charge of affectation when he practices it, no matter who his audience may be. Would you say "Nice-a day, Beppo! Breeng-a me one plate spaghet' weeth meat-a sauce, pleece!" when ordering food of an Italian waiter, or "Yeah, Misteh Johnson, dis am de

way down cellar!" when admitting a Negro ash-collector to the house? As for Yankee farmers—oddly enough, I haven't noticed that the majority talk any differently from myself; so that I've never regarded them as a separate class to whom one must use a special dialect. If I were to say "Mornin', Zeke, haow be ye?" to anybody along the road during my numerous summer walks, I fancy I'd receive an icy stare in return—or perhaps a puzzled inquiry as to what theatrical troupe I had wandered out of! . . . . . When I lived two years in New York I saw no reason for aping the ugly accents of the native proletariat and saying "mornunt", "woild", "kerosene eri", etc. (a vulgar New Yorker would pronounce "Ernest Boyd" as "Oinest Bird"), or for adopting the local habit (probably of German origin) of adding the word "already" to sentences where it doesn't belong. Nor did I say "Oi, Isidor, eh vunt yeh shood feegs id up deece suit—a'ready!" when getting repairs done at the Jew Tailor's. Yet there also I did not find myself stared at as a curiosity. Altogether, I think it's safe to say that plain, simple, correct, and inconspicuous language will "get by" almost anywhere without friction if the speaker will preserve a sense of proportion and refrain from putting on airs. Certainly, it is very bad taste to *emphasise* one's differences from one's audience, but *being natural* somehow doesn't seem to do that. . . . A man of sense does not try to "horn into" company where he obviously doesn't fit; but if circumstances force him to talk to incongruous people—or if special interests bring him into contact with people whose general interests are different from his—he will usually know how to steer clear of subjects which can only confuse and repel his confreres of the moment. I trust you don't think I burden grocery-clerks and street-car conductors with the kind of harangues, or the kind of expository language, which occur in these controversial letters of mine! . . . What you say of kindness as an essential of good-breeding is undoubtedly true. I try never to get rough unless the other fellow starts it—and even then my controversial fulminations have no hostility or ill-will or desire to offend in them. . . .

. . . Most of my correspondents are of the younger generation, since my own crop of minds has begun to get too fossilised to suit my cynical point of view. I am, you see, a sort of hybrid betwixt the past and the future—archaic in my personal tastes, emotions, and interests, but so much of a scientific realist in philosophy that I cannot abide any intellectual point of view short of the most advanced. Only the younger fel-

lows seem to me to give proper treatment to my eternal question—"What is anything?" . . . But I myself am not much of a youngster in looks or point of view. All of my 38½ years show in me, I guess; and so far as my temperament is concerned, I was born an old man. I call my young friends my "grandsons", and lecture them sagely on the superior ways of the years before they were born. However—I am not quite such a solemn prig as you probably assume from my letters. It is part of the cynic's creed to unbend when he feels like it, and anti-democratic theory as applied to governmental policy does not prevent me from being as informal and free-and-easy as I choose. . . . I am, in truth, as offence-proof as the average cynic. I have no stiff-necked dignity at all. Just to prove the latter I will enclose a snap-shot taken on your own Vermont soil, and shewing me in a state of the most extreme informality. As Orton's guest last summer I got right down to Mother Earth, and the picture shews me (as well as my genial host) garbed in all the odds and ends which the combined resources of attic and barn could yield forth, and ready for the most arduous duties of the rural kind. I am the sour, cynical, lantern-jawed cuss on the right—yoked up to carry the milk or cider or bootleg whiskey to taown. . . .

. . . . Nobody really gives a hang about existing aristocratic families *as such*. All that is desired is to *maintain the existing standards of thought, aesthetics, and manners*, and not to allow them to sink to low levels through the dominance of coarsely-organised, sordid-minded, and aesthetically insensitive people who are satisfied with less and who would establish a national atmosphere intolerable to those civilised persons who require more. . . . It is perfectly sensible to give everyone like opportunities for mounting the ladder—although it would be far from sensible to raise the cry of meaningless abstract idealism and try to destroy the natural advantage of the man who happens to be born on the top. The latter is more fortunate, it is true; but it would be a waste of energy to raise theoretical objections to the accidental fact that he does not have to work for what someone else does have to work for. Since he happens to be born ready to participate in the cultural leadership, let him participate and be done with it. To thrust him aside would be to throw away the material needed for the maintenance of the cultural level. When the other fellow does work his way up, he will be glad enough to claim similar advantages for his own sons born at the top. The great idea is to keep the cultivated class in power, and see that

its new recruits measure up to the requisite cultural level before they are allowed to exercise its privileges. *The maintenace of that high cultural standard is the only social or political enthusiasm I possess, aside from my constant wish to see the Anglo-Saxon race and psychology remain dominant in America. In effect, I venerate the principle of aristocracy without being especially interested in aristocrats as persons. I don't care who has the dominance, so long as that dominance remains a certain kind of dominance, intellectually and aesthetically considered.* . . . . Granted that the machine-victim has leisure. What is he going to do with it? What memories and experiences has he to form a background to give significance to anything he can do? What can he see or do that will mean anything to him? If he takes an aeroplane trip to the country, what will such a glimpse mean to one whose natural connexion with the rural scene is hopelessly shattered? The few vigorous and original minds among the machine-slaves (and they may not be many, for in a machine culture most brain-power is shunted into technological channels; so that the brains of the country will be among the masters of the machines—industrial magnates on estates like Ford and Rockefeller. These people may enjoy themselves mildly, but their minds will be too technology-warped to allow them to live fully.) will no doubt become scholars, aesthetes, and antiquarians; cultivating the art and literature of imaginative escape and feigning the atmosphere of a vital and natural type of life which has passed away. But even to them the whole thing will be hollow, artificial, and unreal. All their scholarship and art (for this modernistic decorative craze has obviously narrow limits) will have to draw upon past phases of environment and experience for its inspiration—they will be living in a world that is dead, just as Arthur Machen's hero in *The Hill of Dreams* lived in a dream life in the Roman Britain of 1500 years before his time. Yet even this small respite from reality will be denied to the majority, since there are relatively few persons of sufficient stamina, originality, and imagination to carve out for themselves an independent mental life apart from the dominant currents of their age. What has heretofore made life tolerable for the majority is the fact that their *natural workaday routine and milieu* have never been *quite* devoid of the excitement, nature-contact, uncertainty, non-repetition, and free and easy irregularity which build up a background of associations calculated to foster the illusion of significance and make possible the real enjoyment of art and leisure. Without



this help from their environment, the majority could never manage to keep contented. Now that it is fading, they are in a bad plight indeed; for they cannot hope to breast the tide of ennui as the stronger-minded minority can. There will be, of course, high-sounding and flabbily idealistic attempts to help the poor devils. We shall hear of all sorts of futile reforms and reformers—standardised culture-outlines, synthetic sports and spectacles, professional play-leaders and study-guides, and kindred examples of machine-made uplift and brotherly spirit. And it will amount to just about as much as most reforms do! Meanwhile the tension of boredom and unsatisfied imagination will increase—breaking out with increasing frequency in crimes of morbid perversity and explosive violence. . . . . There will always be a *few* persons less monotonously occupied than others—especially those connected with *transportation* by land, sea, and air. Research scientists, artists, (such as there can be) antiquarians, archaeologists, and other intellectual workers will get a trifle of the old sense of variety and adventure, but it is easy to see that such an infinitesimal minority can never give its stamp to the age as a whole, or determine the prevailing emotional milieu of civilisation. The kind of work whose decline is so universally lamented, is that which we may class as *creative*—the work in which a definitely individualised person bends his faculties to the shaping of surrounding materials and forces to some concrete and visualisable end, and into which he puts a substantial proportion of personal feeling and original and independent choice of design. Every genuine craftsman of the non-machine type has a distinctive personal touch in his work which corresponds to *style* in the artist. It may be the making of shoes or the building of the furniture or the planting and harvesting of crops—but the feeling of creation and the joy of adequate technique and completion are the same as those experienced by the poet in moulding a sonnet or the prose-writer in sculpturing a paragraph of exquisite imagery, rhetoric, cadence, and tone-colour. What really counts is the vital relationship of the creator's mind and feelings to the pattern and process of creation. As long as freedom of choice, opportunity for subtle variation, (I suppose you know that the real inner magic of the best Gothic architecture involves a kind of inspired and insidious asymmetry) and personal control over a gradual growth toward a foreseen end are present, the process remains an adequate form of emotional expression. When, however, authority and design are removed from the fashioner; when math-

ematical adherence to a standard is substituted for the adventurous independence of possible variation; when demands for speed and inordinate quantity destroy the old balance of emotion toward perfection of accomplishment and substitute new and alien ideals of procedure; and when even the sight and conception of any definite goal are denied the quasi-blind-folded worker; it is easy to see that nothing of true creative feeling and emotional satisfaction can remain. The process of making things ceases to be an art and becomes an applied science. Creation gives place to technology. And the artisan finds at last that he has ceased to be a personal craftsman, but has been made the discharger of a mere *routine and care* function; a slave of repetition and monotony, and a sharer of the plight of the window-washer, street-cleaner, and floor sweeper whose sterile bondage he once so acutely pitied!

..... My contention is that religion is still useful amongst the herd—that it helps their orderly conduct as nothing else could, and that it gives them an emotional satisfaction they could not get elsewhere. I don't say that it does either of these things as well as it used to do, but I do say that I believe nothing else could do them so well even now. The crude human animal is ineradicably superstitious, and there is every biological and historical reason why he should be. An irreligious barbarian is a scientific impossibility. Rationalistic conceptions of the universe involve a type of mental victory over hereditary emotion quite impossible to the undeveloped and uneducated intellect. Agnosticism and atheism mean nothing to a peasant or workman. Mystic and teleological personification of natural forces is in his bone and blood—he cannot envisage the cosmos (i.e., the earth, the only cosmos he grasps) apart from them. Take away his Christian god and saints, and he will worship something else. Many a crude man has been talked into thinking himself an atheist, so that he loudly denies Jehovah and the Virgin and carries a load of Haldeman-Julius blue books in one pocket—yet in his other pocket he is likely to have a rabbit's foot, and the chances are 9 out of 10 that he wouldn't walk under a ladder or stop in an hotel room numbered 13! Where the Father, Son and Holy Ghost don't flourish, voodoo and witch-whispers stand ready to engross primitive emotions Spiritualism, magic, luck-charms—all this stuff shews how irrevocably the crude human mind is chained to its hereditary illusions. "Life as an end in itself" doesn't form much of a substitute for supernatural illusion, because it isn't what the primitive mind

is reaching after when it turns to prayer and mumbo-jumbo. Not but what primitives want all the life they can get; but after they have drained the cup, as they understand it, they are still looking for more. What that "more" is, as I have intimated in an earlier part of this encyclopaedic document, is undoubtedly *an approach to the mystic substance of reality itself*—the hidden reality which our senses only imperfectly apprehend. Naturally the herd do not understand what it is they are looking for. Indeed, they have not the faintest notion of any difference between phenomena and noumena. But the troublesome feeling that the senses are imperfect informers continues to lie at the back of their brains, and without knowing it they are just as restless in their search for ultimate reality as in the highly evolved theologian, philosopher, artist, or scientist. This motion *must* be satisfied in some way—either by the crude illusion of religion, by the highly refined illusions of philosophy and art, or by the hard certainty of science that the question is absolutely settled by being absolutely unanswerable. Now it is plain to see that the satisfactions of philosophy, art, and science are hopelessly and abysmally beyond the capacity of the herd mind. Only supernaturalism is left. And since the gnawing urge of the primitive personality absolutely demands supernaturalism of some sort, it is better to let that sort be the traditional Christianity than to shift the avid emotions to snake-worship or spirit seances. As for the more intelligent classes—they *are indeed* adopting your recommended attitude of "life as an end in itself." When they cling to the outward forms of religion it is merely as a refined and traditional decoration or social custom. They don't waste much of their serious thought and emotion on the graceful rituals they chant through, and it will be found that their hereditary observances don't constitute much of a motivating force in their lives. Religion doesn't do much harm today, although one must admit that there are cases where it becomes a trifle ridiculous and annoying. What really satisfies the reality-seeking impulse in modern civilised folk is either philosophy, science, or art. Incidentally, though, one can't truthfully say that these diverse media of satisfaction are all antagonistic. Art and religion, in particular, are certainly the very reverse of enemies—so much so that there are whole schools and movements in art which depend altogether upon religious fervour for their inspiration. Religion would be gloriously justified if it had never done more than evoke the Gothic cathedral and the painting of Renaissance Italy. . . . .

I read with interest your explanation of your attitude toward my atheism and its clear-cut negations, and can well understand how you feel. Aesthetically I feel the same way; indeed, it is my chief delight to weave verbal images of unreality, in which I can flout, rearrange, and triumph over the impersonal cosmic pattern at will. I am no less impressed than you by the magnitude, complexity, and essential beauty of the cosmos; nor am I less sensible to the veil which separates us from the grasping of ultimate reality. The great difference between us in these matters is that you like to colour your philosophic-scientific speculations with your aesthetic feeling; whilst I feel a great cleavage betwixt emotion and perceptive analysis, and never try to mix the two. *Emotionally* I stand breathless at the awe and loveliness and mystery of space with its ordered suns and worlds. In that mood I endorse religion, and people the fields and streams and groves with the Grecian deities and local spirits of old—for at heart I am a pantheistic pagan of the old tradition which Christianity has never reached. But when I start *thinking* I throw off emotion as excess baggage, and settle down to the prosaic and exact task of seeing simply what is, or probably is, and what isn't, or probably isn't. I love to dream, but I never try to dream and think at the same time. Like the boy in your argument, I would pause a moment in awe and admiration before great whirring wheels—but I fancy neither the boy nor I would stand there gaping for ever. Sooner or later we'd "snap out of it" and try to understand the impressive spectacle before us. The same goes for natural beauty. The morning frost scene which you describe takes hold of my imagination tremendously, (with the room temperature at  $+76^{\circ}$ ) and creates a genuine thrill of aesthetic mysticism. I can grasp the wonder and perfection of those complex and delicate crystals; for I have seen many, and seen pictures of many more. If confronted by such a sense, I would (in my dying fancy, as the  $10^{\circ}$  below drew me up toward the gates of heaven) surely harbour no thought of scientific laws or philosophic deductions; but would instead feel poignantly the mystic beauty, and would commence to weave dreams of faery workmanship or inter-planetary magic around the exquisite objects before me. Not until I got back to the library or the laboratory (assuming that the temperature let me get back at all) would I employ the things I had seen as data in intellectual research or speculation. It is the same with the sky. I am, as I may have told you, rather an astronomical devotee; yet these evenings when I tread the nar-

row ancient streets on the brow of the hill and look westward over the outspread roofs and spires and domes of the lower town to where the distant hills of the countryside stand out against the fading sky, I do not scan that sky as a measurer or an analyst. Resplendent Venus and Jupiter shine close together, hanging over the great beacon-tower of the terraced Industrial Trust Building as they used to hang 2000 years ago over the towering Pharos in Alexandria's crowded harbour; and as I watch them and compare them with the great red beacon and the mystic twinkling lights of the dusk-shadowed city below, I surely hold no thoughts of their objective nature and position. I do not say to myself that Jupiter is a cloudy belted sphere 1300 times larger than the earth and situate some 480,000,000 miles from the sun, or that Venus is a globe slightly smaller than the earth, perpetually veiled by a cloudy atmosphere, and about 66,000,000 miles from the sun. I do not reflect that Jupiter's orbit is outside the earth's while Venus's is inside, and that this circumstance determines the vastly different apparent motions they display in the terrestrial sky. The fact is, I do not say or reflect anything—I merely watch and dream. I dream of the evenings when these orbs did indeed hang over cryptic and seething Alexandria—and over Carthage before it, and over Thebes and Memphis and Babylon and Ur of the Chaldees before that. I dream of the hidden messages they bring down the aeons from those distant and half-forgotten places, and from those darker, obscurer, places in the still older world, whereof only whispered rumour dares to speak. As I watch them, I feel that they watch me, and that the beauty they cast upon the thickening night and the candle-pierced, crepuscular town is a symbol of primal glories older than man, older than earth, older than Nature, older even than the gods, and designed for my mystic soul alone. This, indeed, is *feeling*—but when I approach the same objects as an astronomical student I do so very differently. Then I leave my dreams behind and take along my telescope; and instead of glancing at the lighted town below, I curse it for the smoke and heat-vapours it sends up to obscure telescopic definition. I note the phase of Venus and the curve of the terminator, and reflect how far past greatest elongation it is; and when I turn the glass on Jupiter I regret its long distance past opposition. I don't couple the two planets at all now—the pattern vanishes with the aesthetic mood—and would much rather have Jupiter over in the east, where it is on the evenings when it is nearest the earth. . . . .

..... Well—I *think* I've answered your appreciated letter! It is now March 1st, for I've been writing a little each day, diary-fashion. Pardon the length—but how else can one deal with topics of the greatest magnitude and most infinite subtlety and complexity?

With compassion and best wishes—

Yr. Obt. Servt.  
HPL

346. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
March 8, 1929

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

..... My fiction can't be compared with Poe's or Machen's, but I take no less pleasure in writing it on that account. The masters of art are not to 'bow down before', but to enjoy rationally & with a proper appreciation. They influence one best when he tries *least* to be influenced—& the best kind of stimulus they give is a subtle & imperceptible sort which makes the novice do better *in his own way* rather than reflect *their* moods, subject-matter, & mannerisms. There is no need of indulging in the emotional attitude of *humility* merely because one does not attain the standard of the eminent. Far wiser it is to regard one's relative insignificance as simply an *impersonal* fact—which has no bearing on one's modest & spontaneous efforts at self-expression. Just as it is unwise on the one hand to fancy that one can even approximate the abnormal genius of Keats or Milton or Chaucer, so is it equally unwise to let the fact of the existence of such geniuses cow one into silence or imitativeness. Each person has his own niche, & does best by staying in it & ignoring what is going on outside. Or rather, by ignoring the outside *consciously*, though subtly & unconsciously imbibing that mellowing & maturing influence which familiarity with good literature always gives. I can give this advice with especial sincerity because my own poetic possibilities were wrecked by following the opposite course. In my metrical novitiate I was, alas, a chronic & inveterate mimic; allowing my antiquarian tendencies to get the better of my abstract poetic feeling.

As a result, the whole purpose of my writing soon became distorted—till at length I wrote only as a means of re-creating around me the atmosphere of my 18th century favourites. Self-expression as such sank out of sight, & my sole test of excellence was the degree with which I approached the style of Mr. Pope, Dr. Young, Mr. Thomson, Mr. Addison, Mr. Tickell, Mr. Parnell, Dr. Goldsmith, Dr. Johnson, & so on. My verse lost every vestige of originality & sincerity, its only core being to reproduce the typical forms & sentiments of the Georgian scene amidst which it was supposed to be produced. Language, vocabulary, ideas, imagery—everything succumbed to my one intense purpose of thinking & dreaming myself back into that world of periwigs & long s's which for some odd reason seemed to me the normal world. Thus was formed a habit of imitativeness which I can never wholly shake off. Even when I break away, it is generally only through imitating something else! There are my "Poe" pieces & my "Dunsany" pieces—but alas—where are my *Lovecraft* pieces? Only in some of my more realistic fictional *prose* do I shew any signs of developing, at this late date, a style of my own—though some have been so good as to say that my epistles have a certain originality within the limits of the 18th century tradition; as Cowper's differ from Walpole's, or Gray's from Swift's. In verse, I have cheated myself of a style of copying the styles of others. Now of course I am an extreme case, but what has harmed me greatly might easily harm everyone a little, in proportion to the extent they practiced the imitative principle. Therefore I invariably warn all bards—in the slang of the day—to *be themselves*; saying what they wish to say as they wish to say it, & allowing the masters to influence them only indirectly—broadening their sensitivenesses & capacities for imaginative experience rather than affecting their habits of utterance. Walter Pater writes in prose, but much of what he says is equivalent to poetry. *Marius the Epicurean, The Renaissance, & Greek Studies* will give the cream of his genius—especially the first named. Of Swinburne the earlier work is the best. Wilde's poems are exquisite, but somewhat impaired by imitativeness. I think he is at his best—aside from his wit-&-comedy side—in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* & the delicate fairy tales, especially *The Fisherman & His Soul*. Baudelaire is best absorbed through the selection of translations in one of the inexpensive Modern Library volumes. About the semi-amateur poetry magazines—I suppose one might become bored with them, but they surely contain a great deal of excellent matter & no doubt open up many fruitful avenues of com-

ment & criticism. Professional periodicals are, of course, a more rigorous test of merit; & I trust you will in time get a few more pieces in shape to submit to some of them. But a book is naturally the most satisfying of all, & this is what your best work really deserves as a definitive embodiment. Incidentally—don't for a moment regret that your natural medium is poetry instead of prose! Rather ought you to congratulate yourself on this point; for there is no question but that poetry, with its tightly-packed symbolism, inclusive imagery, & union of sound with language, is a far more concentrated & undiluted essence of the beauty & wonder of things than any form of prose could possibly be. Almost no one would be a prose-writer if he could write poetry. We wielders of ponderous periods & rhymeless rhetoric are frankly dealers in the second-best! Still—don't let this deter you from writing occasional tales in addition to your verse. . . . .

What you say of my stories pleases me greatly—especially as regards that air of *realism* which I am making increasing efforts to achieve in such specimens as are not pure phantasy. It delights me even more, though, to hear that my nameless cosmic monsters have an air of originality about them! Shapeless, unheard-of creatures are not original with me; for although Poe did not use them, they figure quite widely in minor horror-writing since his time. Usually they tend to be exaggerations of certain known life-forms such as insects, poisonous plants, protozoa, & the like, although a few writers break wholly away from terrestrial analogy & depict things as abstractly cosmic as luminous protoplasmic globes. If I have gone beyond these, it is only subtly & atmospherically—in details, & in occasional imputations of geometrical, biological, & physico-chemical properties definitely outside the realm of matter as understood by us. Most of my monsters fail altogether to satisfy my sense of the cosmic—the abnormally chromatic entity in *The Colour Out of Space* being the only one of the lot which I take any pride in. As for sketches with sheer beauty rather than horror as a nucleus—I used to write many, but seemed to find them less distinctive than the horror specimens. They tended to become mere imitations of Dunsany, or to have that suspicion of mawkishness & namby-pambyness which is the death of all art. In my actual imaginative contact with life, I am vastly more responsive to beauty than to horror—indeed, I never experience real cosmic horror except in infrequent nightmares. However, when I come to record my various imaginative experiences, I gen-



erally find that only the horror items have any uniqueness or originality. Others have seen the same beautiful things that I have seen, & have sung them more nobly. Dunsany, indeed, has said exquisitely almost everything I could possibly wish to say; so that when I indulge in sheer phantasy I can do no more than imitate him. Thus horror alone is left as my peculiar kingdom, & in it I must hold my lowly reproduction of a Plutonian court. I shall, though, no doubt make further experiments in the non-macabre—seeing what I can do without copying Dunsany on the one hand, & without falling into insipid sentimentality & affectation on the other hand. This latter pitfall is hard to avoid—in fact, Dunsany is the only fantasiste I know who consistently succeeds in keeping clear of it. Algernon Blackwood, fine as he is in horror, becomes insufferably puerile & twaddlesome when he tries to spin whimsical phantasies about nice, pretty things! Roman Britain has been a favourite theme with weird writers—especially Machen—so that I shall have to exercise discrimination when I treat of it. It would be more convincingly realistic to abstain from all prophetic symbolism, & to enter thoroughly into the actual life & feelings of the time & place so far as history & anthropology can indicate them. The Druids are indeed a fascinating subject—meriting indeed a story all their own, & extending back *before* Roman times. They were, as you doubtless know, inexorably opposed to Roman rule; & the instigating influence in all Celtic revolts against Rome. On this account the Emperor Claudius ordered them all suppressed—especially in Britain, which was, rather than Gaul, their headquarters—whilst the general Suetonius Paullinus destroyed their most sacred oaken grove on the island of Mona, (Anglesea). The Druids were far more mystical & cosmic than the adherents of either the Graeco-Roman or Teutonic religion, & were compared to the disciples of Pythagoras by the Roman & Greek writers who first knew them. Their menhirs & rocking-stones have a curious analogy to the hieratic monuments of many primitive races—including, by the way, the earliest Indian tribes in Rhode Island, many of whose sun-&-moon boulders still remain hereabouts in lonely countrysides with an eastern vista. In point of cruelty the Druids were about the average—their sacrifices being mostly bullocks, but occasionally a human being, usually a condemned criminal. Prior to the Druids, & to the Aryan races which evolved them, Western Europe was undoubtedly inhabited by a squat Mongoloid race whose last living vestiges are the Lapps. This is the race which bequeathed the

hideous witch-cult to posterity, & which lingers in popular folklore in the form of gnomes & kobolds, evil fairies & the "little people". There is no archaeological evidence to prove that this stock ever crossed into the British Isles, but writers like Arthur Machen love to imagine that they did, & to base fantastic & horrible tales upon certain influences emanating from them. . . . .

*March 9*

. . . . . Simplicity is the greatest virtue poetry can have—& the atmosphere of scholarship ought to be sedulously shunned. Poetry is not academic & intellectual, & when it becomes so it ceases to be poetry. What it really is, in essence, is song & symbolism—& an atmosphere of complex erudition is antagonistic to both of these things. Yes—I think the word *avatar* isn't at all bad as a poetic ingredient. About *gyre*—oddly enough, I don't recall using the word in your poetry, although I may perhaps have done so once or twice. What it means, is a *circular motion*; or in particular, *an orbit*, or *circular* (or rotary—or elliptical—or anything like reeling, spinning, curving, or whirling) path described by a moving object. You can find it in Shermouth's Dictionary. If the word occurs in this sense in my revisions, it is all right. If not, look again & see if my nefarious chirography is not responsible for some misreading. It is curious that I can't recall using it. I wouldn't recommend so unfamiliar a word for frequent use, but there are places (especially where cosmic things & celestial vortices are concerned) where it would be very felicitous & appropriate. . . . .

It was very interesting to learn of your ancestral connexion with New Hampshire—though I am less acquainted with its history than with that of Southern New England, hence did not know of Provost-Marshall Broadbent, 1681 was surely a turbulent time up there, for the colony had but lately (July 1679) been separated from the Massachusetts-Bay & made into a separate royal province—the first royal province, with Governor appointed by the Crown, in America. There was great dispute regarding land titles, since much land was claimed by irregular Massachusetts settlers against the lawful title of John Mason, the patentee whose complaints at length secured the new province government. The Governor, Edward Cranfield, had a hard time indeed, & in Jany. 1683 was forced to dissolve a session of the provincial assembly—an act which certain colonists disputed as illegal, & which one recalcitrant soul, Ed-

ward Gove, opposed so violently that he was arrested, taken to England, & confined for a time in the Tower of London. I can well imagine the position of a choleric litigious gentleman—whatever side he may have been on—in the midst of these doings, & doubt not but that Provost Joshua was abundantly glad to see Old England's great oaks & misty green hedges again. New Hampshire afterward proposed, & enjoy'd a line of royal governors—the Wentworths—whose direct line remain'd loyal to His Majesty's lawful authority during the troubles of 1775-83. Sir John Wentworth, Bart., last of these governors, went to Nova Scotia after the loss of his province & later became governor there. His predecessor Benning Wentworth, whose rambling mansion at Little Harbour, near Portsmouth, I have seen, is the hero of Longfellow's poem *Lady Wentworth*, (one of the *Tales of a Wayside Inn*) wherein his second marriage to one of his serving-maids (albeit a girl of good ancestry) is picturesquely described. My publisher-friend W. Paul Cook is a lineal descendant of Gov. Benning Wentworth by his first wife; whilst another friend of mine—the novelist Mrs. Minter of Wilbraham, Mass.—is descended from Benning & wife #2. It is after this gentleman that the town of Bennington, in Vermont (then known as the New-Hampshire grants) was named. One wonders what connexion these N. H. Wentworths may have with the Bosvilles' Wentworth relations. By the way—I presume you noted that the Bosvilles have a link with the *other half* of Saybrook, Conn., insomuch as the second Godfrey—the Roundhead Colonel—was a stepson of one of the Grevilles, the husband of another, & a recipient of the influence of Fulke Greville, *Lord Brooke*. Thus you & Lady Macdonald, between you, manage to have a shadowy symbolic linkage in a sleepy old New England town by the banks of the Connecticut!

Apropos of this—I did indeed enjoy *The House of the Isles*, & surely have no objection to your telling its gifted authoress so, although such commendation cannot mean much from an obscure person without literary standing. As for Maurice MacNeill—even if I would have hard work claiming him through Ireland's 137th monarch, I have a friend who ought to hail him as a kinsman; for the naive & beloved dean of our gang, a justly appreciated writer of historical fiction for boys, is none other than one *Everett McNeil*, scion of stern Caledonia by way of New York State & Wisconsin, & now a denizen of Brooklyn, N. Y. In one of the accompanying envelopes I will enclose an account of

"Mac's" latest book—which you can insert in *The House of the Isles* as a supplement if you wish! Another interesting albeit remote Scottish connexion is provided by the home town of the faithful Cook—*Athol*, in the Province of the Massachusetts-Bay. This settlement, made in 1735 under the name of *Pequoig*, soon had amongst its proprietors a certain Col. John Murray, cousin of the Duke of Atholl in Scotland; who became highly influential, & in 1762 caused the town (after a brief trial of the name *Paxton*) to adopt the designation of his titled relatives, albeit in a slightly misspelled form. He claimed that the region reminded him of the family seat in Perthshire—Blair Atholl, with the Blair Castle—near fateful Kiliiekraukie, where Clovershouse fell in 1689 in his hour of victory. Blair Atholl is said to be very beautiful, & the poet James Hogg—*The Ettrick Shepherd*—has celebrated the stirring sound of the Atholl pipes in a passage of much vividness & merit. When the unfortunate revolt of 1775-83 came, Col. Murray remained loyal to our rightful Sovereign & transferred his residence to St. John's, in New-Brunswick. The town of Athol, however, always retained an affectionate regard for its Scottish godmother; & has frequently exchanged courtesies with the Dukes at Blair Castle. During the celebration of an anniversary some years ago, the town made a prominent display of the Murray plaid—indeed, one of the view cards in my possession has a border formed of this picturesquely traditional design. What an appropriate place for the publication of a book of poems by a descendant & admirer of the Scottish Chiefs! As for "Bozzy"—I knew that his line was descended from the ancient de Bosvilles, though of course the amount of blood which he had in common with his contemporaries, the Bosvilles of Gunthwaite, was really quite negligible. Biology does not stress remote connexion as visibly & significantly as does heraldic romance! What I quoted of his conversation with Sir Alexander Macdonald at Armidale comes from his book on his town of the Hebrides with Dr. Johnson—a volume I should think you would enjoy reading. "Bozzy" was a queer combination—not the utter fool & intellectual parasite that Macaulay makes him out to be, but a man of really sound scholarship & keen & versatile intellect; handicapped by an unfortunate amorphousness of temperament, or emotional immaturity, which removed from his thought & conduct that element of taste, balance, & proportion which prevents most men of equal birth & education from making fools, boors, nuisances, & coxcombs of themselves. He was, & will re-

main in history, an essentially ridiculous figure; but for all that he had a sharp, active mind, & a set of talents in one direction approaching sheer genius. Poor Bozzy! I hope he duly secured his loan from the fourth Godfrey Bosville.

Yr oblig'd obt Servt  
HPLovecraft

347. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
March 15, 1929

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

..... I never base my lighter fantasies on anything solid enough to write down in advance—for I have too much of the scientifically disillusioned realist in me to treat life or human events in a romantic or sentimental spirit. When I deal in ethereal dream, it is *all* dream—all a matter of grotesque pictorial patterns & non-human & non-terrestrial scenes & laws. ....

I am glad you enjoyed the Long-Loveman-Smith volumes. Yes indeed, Long surely is a member of the gang, & one of the most important of all! I was sure that I had mentioned him, though possibly I took him so much for granted that I fancied he didn't need verbal mention. He is, though nearly twelve years my junior, probably the closest of all my friends—a disillusioned cynic with a contempt for life & its conventions & commonplaces much like my own, & with a love of phantasy & art for art's sake which still further enhances the resemblance. Though we have no actual blood in common, it was because of a very genuine mental family resemblance that I "adopted" the little imp as an aesthetic grandson & heir a decade ago, when I first noted the nature of his work & saw my own youth repeated in him. We are very different on the surface, however; for "Sonny" pretends to like modern ways & professes a vast boredom anent his old "Grandpa Theobald's" perennial Georgian antiquarianism. At other times, though, he claims to be a greater antiquarian than the old gentleman; & to hark back to the Renaissance for his intellectual & emotional sources. He likes to link him-

self up with the Mediterranean tradition, & to consider himself the reincarnation of some cinquecent Florentine nobleman or Castillian Hidalgo. A great boy—& he'll never grow up!

..... It will be interesting to see how the Free State will really affect Irish letters. I hope the Gaelic fad won't be carried too far; for English is really the natural tongue of the Hibernian writers, & any reversion to another would snap the main line of a tradition which has produced the greatest poet alive today—Yeats. The Irish have a peculiar charm in the use of English, which could never be duplicated in another language. Moreover, a change would lose them most of their present audience. Authors with obscure native tongues—Icelandic, Polish, &c.—often voluntarily turn to French or English in order to secure a better hearing.

With best wishes,  
Yr Most obt Servt  
HP Lovecraft

348. TO WILFRED BLANCH TALMAN

March 19, 1929  
Somewhere in County Tyrone  
2nd day after St. Patrick's

Jonckheer O'Talman:—

Sure, now, an' 'twas rale kind of yez to be afther sendin' an ould man that chaart av ancestrhal sates and hiraldris so prompt-like! Arrah, but it did make me homesick for a soight av the good ould sod, and the shamrock blossoms (if shamrocks have blossoms) Oi used to pluck by the soides of Lough Neah phwin a bye! I did not foind anny mintion av a *Casey* sate; but sure is it not possible that the *O'Neill* dominions cover all av that? 'Tis in O'Hart, ye'll be moindin', that the *Caseys* are in rayallity *O'Neills*; their especial name comin' from one Cathasach (mainin' "the brave") who was an O'Neill. If iver Oi foind anny av thim other graat houses in me lineage, Oi'll be askin' yez fer a copy av the arrums and such other information as ye kin give. Sure Oi'm half-moinded now to copy the O'Dwyer coat for the beneit av me frind and

correspondent Bernard Dwyer av Kingston—in the New World county av Ulster—who was me host last year at the toime we came so nigh to meetin'. But incidentally—my Celtic blood got almost jolted out of me the other day when (after reading the fairly new book about my great-great-granduncle, the silver-smith and counterfeiter Samuel Casey of Kingston, R. I.) I looked up the R. I. Casey line in J. O. Austin's Genealogical Dictionary of R. I. at the R. I. Historical Society. I hadn't done any looking since over a year ago, and had never tackled this book before—but bless me, what a point Austin raises! He *disputes O'Hart* on the origin of the R. I. Caseys, and says that they are *English Caseys of Gloucestershire* who had settled in Tyrone not more than a generation or two behind the 1641 massacre! I suppose he argues that the abundance of really Celtic Caseys in Ulster caused O'Hart to follow a false lead . . . . . but then again, who ought to know best, a real Mick on the spot, like O'Hart, or a mere Yankee provincial like Austin? Who shall decide, when heraldicists disagree!? What a bunch of deludherin' fellers ye all arre, annyways. Sure, betwixt the lot av yez, a mon can't tell phwither his grandfather's raley his grandfaather or ownly his grandson in disguise! Now Oi don't know phwither a brogue comes nacheral-loike to me or not! Shall the Casey side av me sing "The Wearin' av the Grane" or "God Save the King"? Ochone! Ochone! Phy didn't Oi hav the since to lit that felly Austhin alone? However—the book I spoke of—*The Silversmiths of Little Rest*, by William Davis Miller—surely did re-interest me in the Caseys; for it cleared up my exact relationship to the artist-counterfeiter whose tankard masterpiece adorns the silver cases of your Metropolitan Museum. (I think I told you about the curious career of Sam the Silversmith—how his house burned down in 1764, and how in his subsequent poverty he turned to counterfeiting and was sentenced to be hanged. How, thereafter, his neighbours blacked their faces and stormed the gaol in a body to liberate him, and how he finally vanished toward the west on horseback, nevermore to be seen by his old friends.) . . .

Well—the whole story is told in detail in this Miller book. We behold extracts from the papers recounting the burning of the house, and later on read reports of the arrest, trial, conviction, and liberation of the hapless hero. The coining plot was a piece of the same lawlessness which made the best Rhode Islanders natural-born smugglers, harbourers of pirates, and rebels against their lawful sovereign. Half the plant-

ers of the South County were in it or winked at it—bringing all sorts of silver to Casey for purposes he took no special pains to explain! No wonder they felt it their duty to liberate him. The judges who condemned him in 1774 included Stephen Hopkins, Metcalf Bowler, (a room from whose Portsmouth country-seat is in the Met. American Wing) and James Helme—the latter the father of Casey's own pupil Nathaniel Helme! Great old times! And now whom shall we credit for Sam Casey's art and lawlessness . . . . the English Caseys of Gloucestershire, or the Celtic Caseys of Tyrone? Austin or O'Hart? Well, I guess we'll split the difference. Give the art to the English Caseys, and trace the crime to the wild Micks! If this Miller book would interest you, you might find it in the NY libe—either Room 328 or the art department. By the way—it's a good idea of yours to square us criminal Caseys with society by making an Howard Phillips a reg'lar deteekatiff—an austere upholder of that legal majesty which Sam the Silversmith so rudely affronted! No—if the verbally prolific Mr. Oppenheim is one of our Phillipses, he has neglected to prove his place on the line! Which reminds me that as soon as the weather gets decent, or as soon as I get back from a southerly tour I plan, I must look up that chap in Foster about whom I told you last fall—Frank Phillipps of Clayville, who can possibly tell me where to find the graves of two lineal forbears!

.....

Yrs. for the Ould Sod—  
Pathrick O'Casey of Tyrone.

349. TO ZEALIA BROWN REED (BISHOP)

10 Barnes St.  
Providence, R. I.  
March 20, 1929

My dear Mrs. Reed:—

..... Both hack-work (whether original or revision) in literature and business outside literature are equally remote from the type of vision-seeing and vision-recording which means life and creation and serious self-expression. With me the chance of producing anything profitable in the course of serious artistic work is so slim as to be almost



negligible; whereas you, on the other hand appear to resemble that more fortunate group (like Booth Tarkington or Sinclair Lewis) whose serious interests happen to come closer to the popular (and therefore remunerative) field. Not, of course, that any writer's future can be predicted with certainty—for chance plays a tremendous part in commercial success, and thousands of diverse and intangible factors determine which of many equally qualified (or unqualified) authors shall come to the surface as a "hit" or best-seller. Merit has something, but not a great deal, to do with it; the crucial essence of popularity being rather some subtle and unconscious mental sympathy or understanding between the author and the type of public for whom he writes. A superlatively great artist—that is, one of a caliber far beyond anything which our "gang" is likely to develop—can always get a hearing, a little appreciation, and possibly a little money, even if he does not suit the general public; but he cannot reasonably expect more. On the other hand, the veriest idiot and ignoramus can sometimes bring down fame on a luck-shot, as the cases of Edgar A. Guest, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Harold Bell Wright, and many others show. Usually, though, the successful commercial writer (outside the dime-novel class) stands somewhere midway in merit—with a moderate cleverness of thought and a fairly glib technical assurance; the technical skill being perhaps the more necessary of these two qualities. What really determines his success in a third and wholly different thing—an unexplainable and imponderable rapport with the mental and emotional processes of the larger reading public—which has no relation to literary skill and which is found equally among the greatest geniuses and the dullest dolts. Of the three major factors—literary inspiration, literary technique, and popular sympathy—none can be wholly absent in a successful author; although many do "get by" on a very small medium of the first-named, whilst the use of revision and collaboration enables others to succeed without the factor of technique. But when popular sympathy is slight or nonexistent—as it is with me—there is no use expecting more than the meagrest material profit except through rare accident. . . . .

. . . . . Personally, I would jump with almost indecent avidity at any really steady job short of the absolutely ridiculous, artistically destructive, or conspicuously humiliating—for I know that if given the chance I could earn a far more dependable wage in that manner than by putting the same amount of time and energy (or rather, a *greater* amount

of both!) into the nerve-draining and ill-paying ordeal of revision. . . . .

. . . . My advice today would be the same as in the past—to put all energies into the *twin* fields of *accurate life-knowledge* and *subtle language-mastery*; substituting for a romantic interest in a limited field of outward human actions a profound curiosity to get at the roots of conduct and events and to detect hidden rhythms, ironies, and inclusive truths behind the external mask—this, and a carefully cultivated love of *the art of written expression for its own sake*, involving a passionate interest in words and phrases and cadences at least three-quarters as great as your interest in what you write about. Cultivate *accuracy*, *profoundity*, and *scholarship*—remembering that the popular tastes and perspectives are all false things of the surface unworthy of a sober thinker's attention, and that the proportionate importance of the different factors in life is never even approximated by romantic popular literature with its artificial, catchpenny standards based on the dull comprehension of the brainless majority. Learn to lose interest in the tawdry and tinsel things exalted by cheap novelists, and to gain interest in the only two things worthy of a high-grade adult mind—*truth and beauty*, as exemplified by a searching and unbiassed glance into the real nature and proportions of life, and a single-minded devotion to the processes, harmonies, and niceties of art as practiced only for its own sake. Substitute the specific for the general, the scholarly for the careless, the accurate for the inexact, the true for the pleasant or conventional, the analytical for the empirical, the serious for the trivial, the painstaking for the casual, the conscientious for the dashing, the objective for the subjective, the impersonal for the personal, the gradual for the sudden, the profound for the swift, the effacing for the ambitious, the unworldly for the worldly, the settled for the restless, the relentless for the ennuied, the patient for the impatient, the sceptical for the credulous, the ironic for the romantic, the calm for the excitable, the deliberate for the random, the sharp for the blurred, the conscious (in *craftsmanship only*, however) for the unconscious and haphazard, the well-planned for the vague. . . . Choose as the only suitable aim in life the feat of spying out truth so far as it can be spied, and of pinning it down to paper in the most vivid and beautiful of all possible forms. . . . Let all your interest and enthusiasm go into the process of selecting the true and significant from the false and irrelevant, and of crystallising your selection

in the most perfect language and imagery which art can provide. There is a goal worthy of an indomitable driving-power. . . . .

Best wishes, Yrs. Sincerely,  
HPLovecraft

350. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

March 22, 1929

Dear C A S:—

I was exceedingly glad to receive yours of the 10th, with the sheaf of delectable poetry enclosed. There isn't one which failed to charm me—*Lichens & Cumuli* being perhaps the most magical from the standpoint of my imagination. Your never-ending genius & fertility are both marvellous & enviable. I can't write except when blessed with reposeful leisure—haven't produced a thing since *The Dunwich Horror*. By the way—that tale has just earned me a highly interesting letter from a curious old lady in Boston, a direct lineal descendant of the Salem witch Mary Easty, who was hanged on Gallows Hill Aug. 19, 1692. She hints at strange gifts & traditions handed down in her family, & asks me if I have access to any antient secret witch-lore of New England. Also, she wants to know if Dunwich & Arkham are real places! I shall answer the letter, & see if I can get the good old soul to relate some of the whispered witch-traditions! A story of Salem horror based on actual "inside dope" from a witch-blooded crone would surely be a striking novelty!

\* \* \* \* \*

I envy you the springtime which has visited your region so much sooner than it visits New England. We are still viewing brown earth, matted leaves, & bare boughs, though for the past week & a half it has been astonishingly mild for the season. The other day I took the first woodland outing of the season; carrying my reading & writing along as I do in summer, & spending the afternoon atop the great lakeside rock in the Quinsnicket region—a favourite haunt of mine. There were still patches of snow on the shady slopes, & the ice of the ponds was still unmelted; but brooks were running genially & noisily, & a haze of awakening lay upon all the hills & upland meadows. There is a curious

magic in a New England spring even before the visual scene takes on beauty. It always makes me regret my lack of poetic powers.

With every good wish,

Yr most obt hble Servt  
H P L

351. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

April 14, 1929

My dear Klarkash-Ton:—

Yes—that letter from a witch-descendant was rather unusual, & I am still hoping for dark data when she gets ready to unfold some real family history. It appears that her forbears were well acquainted with the Marblehead witches Edward Dimond & his daughter Moll Pitcher, (whose home, "The Old Brig," still stands on Burying Hill) & that she herself, through the Easty or Este line, is a scion of the D'Estes of Ferrara, Italy, & a descendant of no less a malign character than Lucrezia Borgia! Some ancestry! The wildest progenitors on my own family charts seem pretty tame beside this array of glittering sinistrality.

\* \* \* \* \*

It interests me to hear of your first perusal of *A Dreamer's Tales*. Mine was in the fall of 1919, when I had never read anything of Dunsany's, though knowing of him by reputation. The book had been recommended to me by one whose judgment I did not highly esteem, & it was with some dubiousness that I began reading *Poltarnees-Beholder of Ocean*. The first paragraph arrested me as with an electric shock, & I had not read two pages before I became a Dunsany devotee for life. It was such a discovery as I shall never experience again, for I am too old for such emotional effects now. Thank Pegana I came across Dunsany when I did!

Yr obt Servt  
H P L





Donald Wandrei, H. P. Lovecraft, and Frank Belknap Long

352. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

c/o Vrest Orton  
 Odell Farm  
 283 Odell Avenue  
 Yonkers, New York  
 April 15, 1929

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

..... It is a curiously ironic circumstance that the numerical majority of my friends live in & near New York—a town I detest so heartily! This place, however, is on the very rim of the metropolitan zone; hence is exempt from all the Manhattanese characteristics I hate. The countryside is picturesque & hilly, & as yet but little impaired by real-estate "developments". Vrest Orton's house is an early 19th century farmstead; white & rambling, & with the small-paned windows, steps up & down from room to room, low ceilings, broad floor-boards, & mantled fireplaces which bespeak the genuine old-American home. The grounds are ample & lovely; with great elms, numerous peach trees now in pink blossom, a rambling brook, a sunken garden, & a series of grape-arbours, flower-beds, & climbing rose vines which will give an even greater exquisiteness to the scene later in the season. Activities are of a sort congruous with the setting—yesterday we changed the course of a tributary to the brook, built two stone footbridges, pruned the fruit trees, & trained the vines on a new homemade trellis. New York, though a whole hemisphere away in atmosphere & spirit, is only 40 minutes distant by elevated which I generally employ. I have seen a good part of the old "gang", & expect to see the rest before my return. Wednesday night there will be a regular meeting of the bygone kind of George Kirk's—& next Friday-Saturday-Sunday Orton & I expect to take a motor trip to Athol to see Cook. Truly a dizzy round for an ancient Georgian recluse! Naturally I have revisited most of my favourite museums & antiquarian haunts—noting with regret that the quaintness of Greenwich-Village is rapidly passing. Whole blocks of colonial houses have come down since I knew the place; & now the more placid but less ancient Chelsea-Village to the north of it is menaced. Famous

"London Terrace" in West 23d St.—where a friend of mine has lived all his life—is to come down shortly to make room for a wretched apartment skyscraper. But of course a good deal of the old material is still left—especially such houses as are preserved as museums. Very soon I intend to take a couple of young fellows over my principal antiquarian route, shewing them a side of NY which they never saw despite birth & lifelong residence there.

Glad you found *The Outsider* worth reading. It is this which will probably be chosen as a title-story for a book of mine if *Weird Tales* ever decides to issue that long-contemplated collection. I am not overfond of the thing myself—its "punch" is too obviously mechanical. . . .

As for my philosophic attitude—yes, it is indeed as completely pagan & cynical as I have stated; although of course it requires interpretation, as all philosophic attitudes do. I believe in nothing— am a mechanistic materialist—but enjoy practicing ancestral attitudes & gestures, & increasing my slender sense of importance by occasionally encouraging other literary amateurs. My position is the result of a most careful consideration of just what man's knowledge of the universe is, & involves a very searching analysis of the ultimate basis of commonly accepted standards & values. I have argued endlessly over this position, though it is really quite an immaterial matter what anybody believes. Unlike you, I do not believe that *anything* has any meaning, & therefore consider the assumption of such a thing bad science & defective art.

About poetic technique—when I say that the language of ordinary conversation ought to be used, I do not mean that the usual banalities & transient colloquialisms are to be included. I merely mean that forms obviously different from common speech are to be excluded. When the subject-matter is unusual, unusual words & forms are less obtrusive; but in familiar lyrics & conventional sonnets it is fatal to be *recherche'* & high-flown. . . . .

The cuttings were very interesting—those lines on cherry blossoms remind me of the peach-blossoms right here where I am visiting! I must see the cherry-blossom display in Washington some time. The only spring trip thither I ever made was in 1925, just too late for the phenomenon. The lines of William Sharp (who, by the way, has written some remarkable weird material under the pseudonym of "Fiona MacLeod") are highly potent despite their simplicity. I have followed the



draining of Lacus Nemorensis with great interest, though without much hope that anything valuable will be discovered on Caligula's galleys. Too many divers have explored the sunken ships to leave any probability that detachable material remains. However, the draining of the lake will be almost certainly worth-while, because the floor is undoubtedly covered with articles thrown in as votive offerings to Diana, to whom the spot was sacred. This lake & its temple form a highly peculiar shrine—dating from immemorial antiquity, & during classic times being notable for the singular conditions attaching to its priesthood. The priest of this temple was required by custom to be a *runaway slave*, & to gain his office by challenging the existing incumbent & killing him in single combat. Thus he was always compelled to meet challengers whenever they might appear—& in the end to fall at the hands of a younger or stronger man. Macaulay, in his *Lays of Ancient Rome*, speaks of him as

"The priest who slew the slayer,  
And shall himself be slain."

Very interesting details about this shrine & lake can be obtained from Frazer's monumental anthropological work, *The Golden Bough*. The programme of the Society of Women Geographers is indeed ambitious—especially that of Mrs. Adams, whose courage after so dire an accident is surely miraculous. I'd like to see that Delphic festival. Greece is the third in order of European nations which I would enjoy visiting—England & Italy being the other two. Greece contains some remarkable survivals of classic myth among the peasantry—I heard a highly illuminating lecture on the subject a year ago by Sir Rennell Rodd, a lifelong student of neo-Hellenic folklore. Much remains to be excavated in Greece—indeed, it is possible that art will receive a new stimulus from what archaeology will unearth during the next 10 or 20 years. . . . .

Yr most obt hble Servt  
HPLovecraft

353. TO WILFRED BLANCH TALMAN

Tin Barrnes Sthrate,  
Province, Rowd-Oiland  
Aapril fiftaneth, 1929

Jonckheer:—

Sure, 'twas just about to be writin' yez Oi was, phwin yer racent lither was afther' comin'. 'Tis meself will be arroivin' in Manhattan (the Saints willin' and barrin' changes) wan wake from the day afther tomorry—manin' Thursday the 24th—and shtayin' about a wake or a day or two more thin thot. Me quarthers will be that silfsame cell at the Benedictine Monastery in Wist 97th Sthrate phwere you and Fr .Wandrei helped me to brighten the shmall hours one year gone. Just after Roodmas Fr. Belnapius will head a pilgrimage of holy folk to a priory at Atlantic City, N. J., where the bones and other reliques of a very potent saint, Marinus of Atlantaea, are held to be of great efficacy in dispelling melancholic humours. With this pious cavalcade I shall set out; accompanying it as far south as it goes, and thereafter continuing southward alone—even unto the Thebaid, where holy hermits are wont to congregate, and where the 2nd upper wisdom tooth of St. Carolinus is preserved in a miraculous shrine. At Charleston I shall pause as long as my holy wafers (with the green of Ould Oireland on one side) will hold out—duly allowing, of course, for return fare—and thereafter I shall edge reluctantly northward again, pausing for meditation and prayer at suitable antiquarian shrines and abbeys along the way . . . Norfolk, Williamsburg, Richmond, Fredericksburg, Washington, Philadelphia, and so on. If all goes well, it ought to be a great trip—well worth the effort even if the O'Theobald parish stays bankrupt for the balance of the summer! Needless to say, I shall be delighted to participate in the Red Hook meeting which you so thoughtfully plan . . . old home ties, and all that! You and Fr. Belknapius can decide on matters of date. I dare say the old Hook will shew changes, even since last year. What's this about the Tiffany—has the old joint moved, or is this dive in your street a branch of the main works?

An' about me ancestrhal sate—sure, now, 'tis no Caseys av moine can be down at the bottom of the map nixt the O'Dwycers, for doesn't

O'Hart say plain in his book that the Rhowd-Oisland line comes from the *County Tyrone*? There may be all sorts of Caseys shprinkled over the Ould Sod, (for a name derived from an abstract adjective can be duplicated as independently and unrelatedly as Smith, Jones, or Tall-Man!) but the only ones that consarn me are the shtock in good ould Tyrone—and aiven they *may* not consarn me if Austin instead of O'Hart is right! . . . .

Appreciatively and expectantly—  
The O'Casey

354. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

Beach in Libby Hill Pa.  
Richmond, Va., C.S.A.  
May 4, 1929

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

If my Yonkers epistle was a surprise, I fancy a note from the sun-swept bluffs of stately *Richmond* will be still more of one—yet to such an aestival clime has my antiquarian zeal led me! I meant to visit Old Philadelphia only; but a timely cheque empowered me to go farther, so I decided to pay my long-intended visit to the cradle of American civilisation—the banks of the York & James. Nor have I been disappointed in my expectations, for I have found here a wealth of colonial material rivalling that in my own New England—& in the Annapolis & Alexandria which give me my first tantalising taste of Southernism. Fredericksburg is a treasure-house—Richmond seems like a second home-town—Williamsburg is an ecstasy of architecture rivalling even my favourite Marblehead—Yorktown is almost equal to Fredericksburg—& Jamestown is one of the most powerful imaginative stimuli I have ever received. To stand upon the soil where Elizabethan gentlemen-adventurers first broke ground for the settlement of the western world is to experience a thrill that nothing else can give. Here has been a continuous civilisation since 1607—thirteen years before the landing of the Pilgrims on Plymouth Rock—& here developed a stately & mellow culture which at its ante bellum apex may fairly be said to have eclipsed any other in the nation. The lone church tower, the Gothic walls of the ruined Am-

bler house, (once attached to a modern reproduction of the old church), the various foundation stones visible here & there, & the tree-grown churchyard with its crumbling walls, all combine to produce an atmosphere which induces conversation in awed whispers. I have never seen anything like it before.

Williamsburg—now under careful restoration to its colonial state—was of course the architectural high spot. I spent much time in the Wythe house & Old Bruton Church & churchyard & duly examined all the other notable buildings & sites—the goal where Blackbeard's men were kept before their trial & hanging, the college hall designed in person by Sir Christopher Wren, the 1769 Courthouse, the foundations of the vanished colony house, & so on. All told, I came to know Williamsburg rather well in a single afternoon & am now anxious to visit it 3 or 4 years hence, when the restoration will be complete.

In Richmond the chief object of interest for me is the Poe Shrine—an old stone house with two adjoining houses connected as wings & used as a storehouse of Poe reliques. Here I have spent much time examining the objects associated with my supreme literary favourite—to say nothing of the marvellous model of Richmond in 1820, housed in one of the wings. On my final days in the town I am riding about the parks & getting my accumulated revision & correspondence done. Tomorrow or the next day—my cash being nearly exhausted—I shall fare northward again; picking up accumulated mail at Long's in N. Y., & making one final side-trip up the Hudson to see Bernard Dwyer if I find any revision-cheques awaiting me. If I don't, I shall have to head directly for home! If I have a chance to stop in Washington I shall probably greet you over the telephone—though I am not yet sure whether my financial-transportational programme will permit of a stop. I would, if I did stop, also call up my old friend Edward L. Sechrist of the government bookkeeping dept.—a delightful aesthete & poet with a predilection for primitive life, who has spent much time in Africa & the South Sea Islands.

My Yonkers idyll was succeeded by a week of Manhattanising as the guest of my little grandson Frank B. Long, Jun., during which I saw much of the gang & did considerable colonial exploring. But I can't like New York—& am incredibly glad to be out of it again & on the road amidst traditional scenes. Too bad I must re-cross through it—but Long is still receiving my mail, & I've left my overcoat & one valise with

him! None of us hears anything from Cook, & we are beginning to get somewhat worried about him—though inexplicable silences are not altogether novel phenomena on his part. If I am able to go home via the Mohawk Trail route I shall probably stop off in Athol & see what the trouble is—I have already asked a friend there for information.

As for my philosophy—it does not argue youth, for I shall be 39 next August; but it does argue impersonal scientific observation—free from emotions such as hope or will—of the evidence presented to our perceptive apparatus by such portions of the external world as impinge upon it. I believed—or disbelieved—as I do, long before there was any such thing as a "younger generation" or "post-war disillusion"—indeed, I can be regarded as a product of the old line of sceptics beginning with the Greek atomists & Epicureans & linked to the present by such figures as Hobbes, Voltaire, Diderot, Hume, & the later groups centring in Schopenhauer & Nietzsche, Huxley & Haeckel. But I don't bother much about philosophy in my old age—I merely let it slide as a matter which at best must deal only with fragments or probabilities. It is simply one probability among others that the cosmos is a blind, impersonal vortex eternally seething from nowhere to nowhere—simply that such an assumption is the least improbable of many, & that there is not a shred of evidence or likelihood of any other state of things. It really means nothing to anybody—all one can do is to go about his business as custom & nature direct, obeying the rules imposed by common sense, habit, & aesthetics. Nothing really matters. Imagination is an amusement which one may draw from many sources—from all the reservoir of images & illusions deposited by the massed fancies of the race & the dreams & experiences of the individual. It is a pleasant sort of psychological rearrangement, but has no relation to truth or to the actual structure & motivation of the universe.

I am glad you enjoyed *The Hill of Dreams*—which is a striking work of art. It reflects the possible fate of many a sensitive dreamer under unfortunate environmental influences. In *The House of Souls* the best tale is probably *The White People* & the worst without question *The Inmost Light*. *The Great God Pan* is perhaps the most famous & superficially brilliant, but it depends too much on coincidences to be art of the first quality. I can't agree that my style is favourably comparable to Machen's. He has a rhythm & music which I could never achieve—& which I could not even imitate without the aura of affectation.

..... For the soul & substance of poetry, there is no richer source than Keats. Join his spirit & fire to the simple language of straightforward conversation, & you have the utter apex of poetic possibility! As for modern writers—the reading of whom would form a good introduction to contemporary modes of thought—I don't recall that I mentioned any to you; all my own favourites being fantasistes who are of course wholly outside the modern tradition. The best way to bridge the gap between the Victorian age & the present is to begin with the earlier works which represented the first revolt against artificial convention & falsity—works written by vigorous individual minds in the midst of the prevailing delusion. Meredith & Hardy are the best to start off with, & Pater & Wilde ought not to be overlooked. Then one simply must grit one's teeth & plough through Samuel Butler's *Way of All Flesh*, despite the violence it does to many of one's possibly cherished sentimentalities. Another important thing is to know the foreign streams which have coloured our own increasingly since 1900. Of course everyone must read Balzac—and to this I'd add a good bit of Gautier, Flaubert, de Maupassant, & Zola. Baudelaire, Mallarmé, & Verlaine are poets which one absolutely must know in translation. I don't think it would pay to study other languages unless one had the most elaborate possible ambitions. Even Latin literature can be known pretty well through good English renderings of Caesar, Cicero, Lucretius, Catullus, Propertius, Tibullus, Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Seneca, Livy, Martial, Juvenal, Tacitus, the Plinies, &c—not all of them complete, of course, but in balanced rations as recommended by university extension courses. The same is true of Greek—which ought to begin with Homer in the magnificent prose version prepared by the late Andrew Lang & his colleagues. Another great modern thought source is Russian literature, of which Dostoevsky's *Crime & Punishment* & *Brothers Karamazov* will give the most representative glimpse. And finally come the approaches to modernity itself. John Galsworthy, H. G. Wells, Edith Wharton, Joseph Conrad, &c. are eminent old-schoolers getting close to the brink. Theodore Dreiser is of the new order, as is Sherwood Anderson. Don't miss James Branch Cabell either. And a very good critical perspective can be obtained by reading the various *Prejudices* (with due allowance for certain violent habits of expression) of your brilliant & mordant fellow-Marylander H. L. Mencken, of 1524 Hollins St., Baltimore. This background is a desirable thing for anyone living today to know, & an es-

*sential* thing for any prose-writer dealing directly with life. It is not, however, so rigidly indispensable for a poet or for a fantaisiste. My own interest in it is purely intellectual, not aesthetic-emotional. For imaginative enjoyment I turn to that narrow group of special writers (all of them representatives of an ancient rather than modern tradition) of which I have often spoken—Machen, Dunsany, de la Mare, Blackwood, &c. I shall very shortly send along the two Machen books I spoke of. By the way, though—don't fancy that I even dream of competing with these titans myself. My work has very grave limitations visible both to myself & to others, whilst my scholarship is the merest drop in the bucket as compared with that of a real scholar. I have reason to know this from direct & disillusioning comparison—for an uncle of mine who died nearly 15 years ago was the real thing!

..... *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* is a fine & brilliantly written novel, though I have a feeling that it has been somewhat overpraised. Its dramatic vividness & mechanical facility seem almost *too* clever for realistic vitality, whilst I think the author strains unduly after elemental universality & cosmic significance: But for all that it's a great novel which no one ought to miss. ....

With best wishes—  
Yr most obt Servt  
HPLovecraft

355. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
May 29, 1929

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

..... Lectures & speeches of every kind seem to me the sheerest nonsense, since one can never declaim a set of facts half so adequately & comprehensively as it can be written. I never attend a lecture except when I absolutely can't obtain the equivalent text in printed form. ....

My trip after leaving Washington proved as interesting as the preceding southerly portion, & spun itself out to an unforeseen length. I first

paused in Philadelphia, always a favourite town with me, & went over my customary colonial haunts—besides inspecting the magnificent new art museum near the edge of Fairmount Park. This majestic Hellenic Acropolis, crowning an elevation & forming the apex of a long parkway vista, is positively the most impressive piece of contemporary architecture I have ever seen—a vast cononnaded temple of tinted marble, set high above broad flights of steps flanked by waterfalls & enclosing a tessellated courtyard at whose centre a many-jetted fountain plays. Silhouetted against the western sky it is one of the most stupendous & dream-exciting structures that the fancy can picture—a veritable gateway out of reality & into a timeless region of myth & beauty. The interior is not yet finished, but the one habitable wing houses a highly remarkable series of English Georgian & Colonial panelled rooms—including the only Pennsylvania-German specimens I have ever seen. Some of the rooms from England are from houses of the same style & period as Thorpe Hall.

From Philadelphia I proceeded to New York, where my young grandchild Frank B. Long & his parents gave me a motor lift up the Hudson shore to Kingston—the ancient town harbouring my artist-fantasiste friend Bernard Austin Dwyer, whom neither Long nor I had ever met in person before, despite long & interesting correspondence. Dwyer turned out to be as genial & pleasant in person as on paper, & I stayed at his house several days—though Long had to move on & collaborate with his father in a trout-fishing excursion (which turned out absolutely fruitless!). Kingston itself interested me prodigiously. for it is a highly venerable & historic place full of reliques of the past. The present city is a fusion of two once separate villages—*Kingston* proper, where my host lives & which is about a mile inland from the Hudson's west bank, & the river-port of *Rondout* on the hilly bank itself, where the ferry from Rhinebeck lands & which is now a somewhat picturesque slum. The two were fused about 50 years ago when a municipal form of government was adopted.

The history of the region goes back to the decade of 1620-30, when the Dutch built a fort (*ronduit*) at the mouth of a creek on land called by the Indians *Pouckhockie*. The fort became the centre of a settlement called *Rondout*. & the creek received the name of Rondout Creek. About 1652 Kingston proper—the land then called Atkarkton, north-west of Rondout & inland along Esopus Creek—was settled by Dutch-



men & Englishmen from Reusselaerwyck, farther up the river, after disputes regarding land titles had driven them from the latter place. In 1655 serious Indian Wars convulsed the locality, & in 1658 the Atkarkton settlers appealed to the Dutch governor Petrus Stuyvesant for aid. He granted their petition on condition that they form their holdings into a palisaded village, & this requirement was at once complied with. The resulting stockaded town, which was chartered by Gov. Stuyvesant in 1661 under the name of *Wiltwyck*, corresponds quite closely to the present west end & main business district of Kingston; even the original street-lines being largely preserved. Solid stone houses were built, some of which remain to this day, & which formed the characteristic architecture of the region. After the transfer of New-Netherland to the British crown as the Province of New-York, the name of Wiltwyck was changed to Kingston; & the village prospered exceedingly. In 1695 the Rev. John Miller, Chaplain of His Majesty's forces & aid to the Governor of New-York, published a book with maps descriptive of the province, & therein spoke of Kingston as a town of the same area as Albany, but with half as many houses—i. e., 6 furlongs in circumference, & with 100 buildings. Many of those buildings are still standing today. Severe Indian warfare harassed the town throughout its early history—incidents not unprovoked by the high-handed seizure of lands & arbitrary & cruel treatment of Indians by the Dutch settlers. By the time of the Revolution Kingston had 200 houses, a market & brew house, a church, an academy (still standing) a court-house, and two schools. As a storehouse & source of supplies for the rebel armies operating in its vicinity, it was a highly dangerous menace to His Majesty's forces; so that in the autumn of 1777 its destruction by fire was found needful. Most of the rebel inhabitants, being forewarned, fled to the village of Hurley & other points, & the regular troops entered without opposition; setting fire to all the edifices save those belonging to loyal subjects of our rightful sovereign. This process consumed only the wooden dwellings, leaving the walls & beams of the great stone houses scarcely damaged. Accordingly the returning rebels later rebuilt their houses, so that large numbers of the early structures still stand despite the holocaust. At this time, Oct. 16, 1777, the rebel senate of New-York was meeting at the Ten Broeck house in Kingston, (now pointed out as the "Senate House" & forming a public museum—see accompanying postcard) & adjourned its sessions to the Van Deusen house in

Hurley when the former was burnt. The city of New York was then the legal capital of the province, but it was not at that time in the hands of the rebels—hence their sessions at Kingston, which was the third town in importance in the colony, Albany being second. In the compact part of Kingston not more than one or two houses were left undamaged by flame. Today the Van Steenbough house (hardly in the village according to the boundaries of 1777) is pointed out as the only one which was not touched. For this exemption various reasons are assigned—the political loyalty of the owner being the most probable one. The tenure of Kingston by His Majesty's forces was not of long duration, since powerful rebel armies under Genl. George Clinton (a native of the region, & later governor of NY State for 21 years) were observed to be advancing toward the town. Having destroyed all possible rebel supplies, the army evacuated without pursuit of the fleeing villagers; & did not again enter. The rebel army soon arrived, & with its aid the townsfolk quickly reestablished themselves in their accustomed haunts. Local progress was by no means retarded, & in 1783 Kingston (being used to harbouring a legislative body) offered itself as a possible capital for the United States—which offer was declined, since your own Federal City of Washington was planned for the purpose. After the Revolution Kingston remained a very important town, though it did not grow as rapidly as many—Albany & NY City monopolising the activity along the Hudson. At the Bogardus Tavern many persons of the first importance were entertained; & it was there that Aaron Burr, observing the clever chalk drawings of a stable-boy on a barn door, resolved to send the lad to Europe for an art education, & thus produced the eminent painter John Vanderlyn. As the 19th century wore on, Kingston was more & more rivalled by the river settlement of *Rondout*, on the Hudson at the mouth of the creek, which naturally obtained a great share of the region's trade. By the 1840's Rondout was greater than Kingston in population, & was heavily built up along its narrow hilly streets, in contrast to Kingston's straggling houses, broad streets, & level terrain. At the same time it was less select in population & less rich in traditions—a hive of traders & bargemen rather than a settled domain of hereditary agricultural magnates. In the 'fifties Rondout applied for a city charter, & seemed for a while about to get it—but vested & dignified Kingston subtly intervened with legislative influence, & finally succeeded in disposing of its rival by engulfing it—i.e., securing a combined city charter

for the villages of Kingston & Rondout *under the name of Kingston*. Thus Kingston became, by one sudden act, a city & a river port, with two distinct settled areas separated by a sparsely populated zone. So it has remained to this day; save that the sparse zone is gradually filling up with public & private buildings including the railway station, P. O., public library, city hall, hospital, & YMCA. Kingston proper (or "up-town") has retained its social supremacy, & there may be found all the leading dwellings & shops. Hilly Rondout on the river has become a sort of *declassé* section largely given over to foreigners, from whom Kingston proper is almost wholly free. The city is distinguished by a reposefulness highly pleasant to observe, & scarcely changes in population from decade to decade—lingering for the past twenty years around 25,000 or 30,000. It has a single street-car line from the steamboat wharf through Rondout to Kingston proper—which still remains wholly two-man, still uses small single-truck cars, & still has *open cars* in season. Motor coach service also exists—both local, & to other towns including NY City. It must be a delightful place to live, save for its coldness in winter—for it has all the freshness, charm, & simplicity of a small village.

Other places in the Kingston region which I visited were the famous Colonial villages of Hurley (abt. 3 m. NW of Kingston) & New Paltz (16 m. S.). The road to Hurley lies through an extremely fine rolling countryside; with green cultivated fields in a very unspoiled & un-modern state, & the foothills of the Catskills as an eternal dominating background. (These hills also form part of certain vistas in Kingston itself.) In general, this territory is unchanged since the colonial period; being still owned & farmed by the descendants of the original Dutch & Huguenot settlers. Hurley was not in any way a disappointment. It is a straggling hamlet of ancient stone houses stretched along the highroad, with plenty of trees & diverging lanes, & the green fields & blossoming orchards stretching off on either side to where the purple mountains loom mystically. The houses are of Dutch masonry construction, some of them with wooden attics & lean-to's, & a few with projecting porches. All have the horizontally divided Dutch door with iron knocker & hinges to match, & the average date is from about 1700 to 1730. (Kingston's houses extend from abt. 1670 to 1720 or 1730). It is noteworthy that none of these Ulster Co. Dutch houses ever developed the gracefully curving roof-line or the gambrel arrangement so charac-

teristic of the Dutch Colonial architecture of *Southern New York*. In this up-river region the plain peaked-roofed tradition always persisted; so that the architectural atmosphere is absolutely distinct from the architectural atmosphere of Manhattan, Long Island, State Island, & Rockland County. The houses of Hurley have seen very little change in the more than two centuries of their existence, for the place is delectably slow & sleepy, with true Catskill conservatism. All the dwellings are tenanted by the same old families who built them—an Elmendorf still runs the single village store & postoffice—and the ancient Dutch Reformed Church still ends the vista at the bend of the road. The town is very famous among antiquarians—models of the houses being in the N.Y. Hist. Soc., & a large space being devoted to them in H. D. Eberlein's volume *The Architecture of Colonial America*. Hurley, at first called merely the "New Village", was founded about 1660 by the overflow population of Wiltwyck, (Kingston) who desired to expand in the fertile untimbered lowlands. A large proportion of the settlers were French Huguenots, though the Dutch element was very numerous. Land grants were made by Gov. Petrus Stuyvesant without consent of the Indians who formed the original population; a circumstance which paved the way for considerable warfare & general harassment. On June 7, 1663, Hurley was burned to the ground by savages, & all the women & children were carried away into captivity. It was not until September that the pursuing forces of the Dutch succeeded in locating the prisoners—who had not been ill-treated, although they were later to have been burned alive in revenge for certain Indians who had been captured by the whites & sold as slaves to traders from Curaçao. In the years that followed, Hurley prospered exceedingly, perhaps occupying a more important position in the life of the region than it does today. Its cheeses, milk, cakes, & other products were famous throughout the New-Netherland region, & formed the subject of more than one bit of Dutch doggerel folklore—of which the following translation is typical:

"What shall we with the wheat bread do?

Eat it with the cheese from Hurley.

"What shall we with the pancakes do?

Dip them in the syrup of Hurley.\*

\* The original of this couplet, illustrating the Dutch of the district, runs:

*Wat zullen wij met die pannekoeken do en?  
Doop het met die stroop van Horley.*

What shall we with the corn-meal do  
That comes from round about Hurley?

Johnnycake bake, both sweet & brown,  
With green cream cheese from Hurley."

It was from Hurley that the settlement of New Paltz was made by Huguenots in 1677; & to Hurley that the fleeing people of Kingston repaired just a century later, when the torches of the royal forces menaced their homes. On that latter occasion the state senate also fled to Hurley, conducting its deliberations in the old Van Deusen house (built 1723) which is still standing & colonially furnished with a view to antique-selling. I entered & thoroughly explored the Van Deusen house, & found little change since the 18th century. The graceful panelling & staircase strike the eye at once, & all the quaint old hardware remains. The oldest house in the village is the Elmendorf store, dating from about 1700. All told, it is hard to find a better living specimen of old New-Netherland than sleepy Hurley. A Dutch diplomat, visiting the place not long ago, declared that as a whole it is more typically & historically Dutch than anything now left in Holland!

My other sub-pilgrimage was to New Paltz—which lies about 16 miles south of Kingston, by the Wallkill & Shawangunk Creeks, & in the eternal shadow of the lordly & lovely Shawangunk Hills. It is a thriving village with shops, hotels, banks, a normal-school, & a newspaper, quite in contrast to the scattered & somnolent Hurley; but the modern (i.e., post-Revolutionary) town lies some distance from the heart of the ancient settlement. This has tended to preserve the original area in the pristine, Hurley-like state; so that we may still see the place as it was in the early 18th century. To reach the old town from the modern town one has to walk a considerable distance, descending a steep hill & crossing the railway track. The countryside between Kingston & New Paltz is as spendidly unspoiled as that between Kingston & Hurley—a typical sample of the quiet Dutch milieu so well exploited by Washington Irving. Any one of these drowsy old villages might well have been the abode of Rip Van Winkle. On this particular route lovely valleys abounded, & bends of streams in the lee of mountains produced a scenic effect hard to surpass. I saw at least one old-fashioned *covered bridge*, a type of survival usually associated nowadays with Vermont or western Massachusetts. At length the coach ascended a hill & delivered me at the principal tavern of New Paltz—the "modern" part, although even

that is as quaint as Georgetown or Annapolis, & far more untainted as to original population. There are virtually no foreigners in this idyllic backwater, nearly all the inhabitants being descended from the first Huguenot settlers. Making judicious inquiries, I soon found my way down to the ancient section—Huguenot St.—& there revelled in the sparse line of old stone dwellings which has given the town so great an historical & architectural fame. There are not many—perhaps a half-dozen at best—but their fine preservation & isolation from modern influences given them a magnified charm. One of them (see accompanying post-card) is fitted as a museum & open to the public; others remain private dwellings, mostly in the hands of the families that built them more than two centuries ago. The museum—which is the old Jean Hasbrouck house built in 1712—is a large stone house of one full story & two attic stories under the immense sloping roof—an ideal storehouse for grain or other rural commodities. It is a fine type of early colonial construction under Dutch influence, (though Frenchmen built it) & I examined it with the utmost thoroughness & interest; visiting the attic & noting the massive exposed beams. It is called the "Memorial House", & a boulder monument to the town's founders stands on the small triangular green opposite it. Nearby is the quaint burying ground housing those 'rude forefathers of the hamlet'. The other houses—of varied types, & having features as unique as transoms with double rows of lights—stretch southward along a broad shady street reminiscent of the main street of Deerfield, Mass., or Duke of Gloucester St. in Williamsburg, Virginia. All of these—the DuBois, Elting, Abraham Hasbrouck, Freer, &c. houses—are of about the 1700 period, as can be well seen from every detail of their construction. The interior of the "Memorial House" has some highly primitive features such as the great plank doors—some unpanelled & some single-panelled. Oddly enough, there is just one of the ancient stone houses in the "modern" village—now used as a public library. In the old times it must have been an isolated farmhouse on a lonely hill.

New Paltz was settled by French Huguenots who had undergone a long & singular course of persecution & migration. Emigrating originally from France, they had settled at Pfalz or Paltz in the Protestant Rhineland; but had eventually been so harassed by French troops from across the border in their Catholic homeland that they reëmigrated to Holland. There, affected by that longing for a new world which sent so

many religious refugees overseas, they took part in the general Dutch migration to New-Netherland—though sedulously retaining their French language & customs, a Gallic trait which we see even today exemplified in the French-Canadian communities of Rhode-Island. Preferring the rural reaches of the upper Hudson to the crowded & cosmopolitan New-Amsterdam, this band of Huguenots (led by one Louis DuBois, a pioneer of the utmost solidity & ability) selected Wiltwyck (Kingston) as an abiding place; but later transferred themselves to the "Nieuw Dorp" (Hurley), which they considered more favourable to their retention of French speech & ways than the rather congenial Dutch trading-post within the palisade. After the burning of Hurley in 1663, Louis DuBois was much impressed by the lovely countryside south of Rondout Creek, which was made familiar to him during his participation in the search for the Indian captives—amongst whom were his own wife & three sons. Especially did he relish the idyllic valley of the Wallkill, nestling amidst the Shawangunks & cut off from the bustling world which had treated him & his band so ill. During the next fourteen years—a span marked by the transfer of the colony from the Holland States-general to the authority of His Britannic Majesty—DuBois interested many of his fellow-Frenchmen in a project for securing land-patents & founding a new Huguenot village in the Shawangunk country; a project finally carried through with the aid of Abraham Hasbrouck, a young Huguenot having influence with the governor Sir Edmond Andros—the same official who was so much hated in New England because of his arbitrary exercise of power. Arrangements were also made to purchase the land lawfully from the Indians—a step which would have delighted Roger Williams, Rhode-Island's founder—for the patentees were not insensible of the hostility created by the high-handed seizures of the Dutch. In May 1677 the Indians formally ceded the land in exchange for much assorted merchandise, & four months later His Majesty's government granted the legal patent to the settlers—Lorais, Abraham, & Isaac DuBois, Jean & Abraham Hasbrouck, Andries & Simon Le Fevre, Pierre Dayo, Louis Bevier, Antoine Crispell, & Hugo Frere, ancestor of the Freer family whose taste & generosity have given your city one of its finest art galleries. Homes were built the following spring—rude cabins on the site of the stone houses built during the next generation—& a few other settlers were admitted, including at least one Dutch family. A little stone Huguenot church, with services in

French, soon adorned the village green—& the village was named *New Paltz* in honour of that place in Germany which had first given the wanderers a haven. With the years *New Paltz* attained a very comfortable agricultural prosperity, though remaining in that unspoiled state which best suited its founders' wishes. Every effort was made to preserve the traditional piety & French ways of the forefathers, yet in the course of time the influence of the surrounding Dutch population could not help being felt. It became harder & harder to secure French-speaking schoolmasters & clergymen, & in the end the younger generation fell into the habit of speaking Dutch. Naturally the elders protested, & there is a well-known tale of a child sent to a relative's house to borrow some kitchen utility, & refused it because she could not speak its name in French. This transition period was likewise marked by ecclesiastical schisms—some church-members wishing to adhere to the Reformed Dutch Church fabric whilst others clung to a French Huguenot independence. Between 1730 & 1750 Dutch definitely displaced French as the daily language of *New Paltz*, & in 1752 the church commenced the official use of that tongue. The village was now predominantly a part of the Dutch Hudson Valley, (whose language & manners the British government did not interfere with) though still remembering its different traditions. Some of the pathos of the linguistic change is reflected in the will of Monsieur Jean Tebeuin, the local schoolmaster who flourished in the early 18th century. He saw the gathering clouds; & when he left his French Bible to the church, provided for its sale for the benefit of the poor if the French language should ever cease to be used thereabouts. *New Paltz* in its Dutch-speaking period enjoyed a steady growth, & that happy immunity from striking events which marks a peaceful community. Branches of its Huguenot stock were represented in the Revolution, yet that war itself left the town serene & unravaged. As the 18th century drew to its close, time took its revenge upon the once conquering Dutch language by pressing it to extinction as French had formerly been pressed—the latest conqueror being the all-engulfing English. Signs of Yankee progress became manifest as an Anglo-Saxon population filtered in, but the newer element built on the hill above old Huguenot St.; shifting the village's centre of gravity & leaving the ancient port undisturbed to this day. In 1833 an academy was founded, which survives at present as a state normal school. I was forced to survey *New Paltz* in somewhat drizzly weather, yet the sightseeing was extremely en-



joyable. After the study of three such representative places as Kingston, Hurley, & New Paltz I feel that I have some knowledge of the upper Hudson milieu—at least, an amount comparable to my knowledge of the southerly New-Netherland. An ascent to Albany completed my present canvass of the Dutch terrain—for after a brief glance at that none-too-interesting town I proceeded to still uglier Troy & took the Boston & Maine train for the Hoosac Tunnel & my native New England. This ride was not at all dull, for the landscape of northern NY State is very fine & includes many mountain vistas. Then the hills grew wilder & greener & more beautiful—yet less luxuriant in foliage as the course ran northward into an earlier & earlier spring. I was at last concluding my foreign travel & approaching the sacred & familiar soil of rock-bound New England! No more would I encounter strange tongues, histories, & heritages—the scene was about to shift in an instant from the exotic to the accustomed. The pillared doorways of Manhattan, the marble steps & keynotes of Philadelphia, the steep roofs & dormers of the South, & the old stone dwellings of the Esopus Valley—all these, & the centuried echoes of those who have known them, were about to vanish as if snapped off by an electric switch. In an instant my eyes were to be filled with known & neighbouring things—the eternal hills & stone walls of my native land, the oft-rehearsed legends of familiar tribes & settlements, the homely accents of Puritan speech, the white steeples & farmhouse gables of New-England's countryside, the loved, ancient names of known places which look back only to English dreams & memories—Pounal, Williamstown, North-Adams, Zoar, Shelburne Falls, Greenfield, Orange, & Athol—for it was to this Massachusetts town that I was proceeding for a visit with my friend Cook before making my final descent on Providence. Near North-Adams (the west end of the Mohawk Trail, over which I had planned to go by coach, but which I found was closed to traffic) the Berkshire Hills loomed up in monstrous impressiveness, & I regretted bitterly that I was to go under them instead of over them. Then came the Hoosac Tunnel, — after that occasional exquisite glimpses of mountain & valley—Charlemont, Shelburne Falls, & so on. The landscape grew best near the end of the Berkshire region, when the lovely valley of the Deerfield River opened up in full sunny expansiveness. Then came Greenfield & the picturesque run along Miller's River through Orange to Athol—where I once more set foot upon my native Novanglian sod. *Home!* . . . for the first thing I

saw upon quitting the station was a motor-truck with a Rhode Island license-plate—belonging to the Tar Products Corporation of *Providence*!

Cook was a good host—my anxiety about his silence having been unfounded. Mere pressure of business was responsible, as I learned from a letter whilst re-crossing through NY City. He took me out at once to his new farm near the town—a place which most unfortunately he must soon sell because his wife's health requires the comforts of urban life. The countryside proved exquisite—the very quintessence of ancient New England—rolling, stony hills, narrow, winding, rutted roads, stone walls, archaic apple-orchards in white bloom, & sparsely scattered white farmhouses. Cook's place is one of the latter—set on high ground with one of the most magnificent rural landscape effects conceivable—both foreground & far horizon of hills beyond hills. At one point a blue lakelet glistens among tall pines. No other house is in sight—just stone walls, green fields, distant hills, & the scattered buildings of the venerable farm. Here I stayed for some time; occasionally taken on motor trips by Cook or by our young friend H. Warner Munn, whose weird stories have been so well received of late. Once we went up to Vermont to see the poet Arthur Goodenough in that rapturously beautiful Brattleboro region which so enthralled me on my first sight of it in 1927. (I think I sent you my printed rhapsody on that region—entitled *Vermont—a First Impression*—did I not?) Another time we visited Westminster, where I spent the summer of 1899 with my mother, & which I remembered in all its details though I had not seen it in all the intervening thirty years. Finally I decided to conclude my two months of varied wandering, & had Cook bring me down to Providence in his car—traversing the territory described in my *Dunwich Horror*. It was surely good to see old Rhode Island again—& Providence never looked lovelier than when I glimpsed its sun-sparkling spires & domes from a high point on the Lonisquisset Pike as we sped southward through my favourite Quinsnickett or Lincoln Woods country. At last we entered the well-remembered streets, & turned into the shady & village-like neighbourhood I am fortunate enough to inhabit. 10 Barnes was still there, & my aunt was on hand to give us a royal welcome. Here have I tarried ever since—immersed in back-numbers of papers & magazines & swamped by piled-up mail! But at last my schedule is getting readjusted, & I shall soon be at my regular work. It was a great trip—from early in April to the last of May—yet I am glad to be home again.

Providence is exquisite in the late spring, & nearby are the woods & fields of my childhood; still unchanged, & welcoming me on every warm, pleasant afternoon when I take my work out to the open. There is no place like it—at least, for the native into whose fancy its image has sunk deeply. God Save His Majesty's Colony of Rhode-Island & Providence-Plantations!

I remain Yrmost obt Serv t  
HPLovecraft

## 356. TO WILFRED BLANCH TALMAN

Three days before St. Barnabas  
June 8, 1929

Jonckheer:—

For the love of St. Nicholas! So you were up around old Wiltwyck too when I was writing you cards! Well, at 3. a. m. after the evening of Saturday May 11, I was finishing an aesthetick-historical discourse with my genial host Bernaardt Van Duiet (or however you Nederlandise spell a straight Irish Bernard Dwyer) and preparing to hit the hay in view of the fact that we were scheduled to meet Mynheer Franz Belnaap Van Long at 9 a. m. sharp. Knowing how you Dutchmen all cluster together, I ought to have known enough to ask some of the pipe-smoking burghers on their stoeps whether you were around the place—for of course all the villagers are posted on the whereabouts of the young patroon. . . . .

. . . . . But I think I appris'd you by card what a good time I had in and around Athol with Cook. . . . Finally we came down here, and Cook stocked up with books at Eddy's whilst I renew'd my acquaintance with hearth and home. Here have I tarried ever since, trying to catch up with back numbers of papers and magazines and get my correspondence in working order again. On Sunday the 16th I shall welcome as a distinguish'd guest the amiable James Ferdinand Morton, who in the next four days will probably do to our local mineral quarries what Cook did to Eddy's bookshop and what you did to Jake's. Why not beg off from news-gleaning and come along with him? Make it an old home week!

..... Now as for that bookplate design . . . . . lud, Sir, but I must hand it to you!! You've got it this time!!! Hold it!!!!. . . . . This thing conveys the whole message of Providence colonialism in a minimum of lines. All complete and adequate, yet no cumbering detail. I haven't a single suggestion to make. Never mind about the *number* of panes in the fanlight—Providence has all varieties. Merely be careful to have them *equal* in size. In drawing the fanlight as a whole, remember that this middle-and-early-18th-century type tends toward the semicircular rather than flattened form—the latter being the late Georgian design associated with side-lights. The theory of the *old* fanlight aperture is a cutting off of the top of a round arch. But of course use your artist's discretion to the full. If a too close approach to a semicircle offers less potentialities of grace than a slightly more elliptical form, go ahead and flatten! What you now have will do admirably if you can hit it again with ink and cardboard. Good luck and congratulations—not to forget abundant thanks as well! . . .

Yr. obt. Servt.  
HPL

357. TO JAMES FERDINAND MORTON

June 9, 1929

Multi-Metred Mainmast of Muse-Mother'd Meliorism:—

..... The *Condens'd* milk is a very thick yellowish fluid with sugar in it, (so much that my aunt adds no other sweetening to her coffee, tho I add  $2\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoons of  $C_{12}H_{22}O_{11}$ ) prepared by a process very different from that used in making the *Evaporated*, and *keeping almost indefinitely when open*. I've kept it almost *a month* without any deterioration. It *can't* sour, and it can't even decompose like *Evap*. All that ever happens to it—after long ages in the hottest weather—is the appearance of a little *mould* on the top; and even this can be skimmed off without affecting the lower portions. Nor could this form in less than three weeks or so if the can is properly cover'd. I cover my can by inverting over it in bell-glass fashion a large tin—one which formerly contain'd Hatchet Brown Bread, and which because of a patent opening-key retains a perfectly smooth edge. The appended diagram

illustrates my eminently scientific method—or I will show you the actual apparatus next week. If you wish, I'll give you a brown-bread tin to use in this fashion, since I have a constantly increasing supply of duplicates. With this device, you need have no hesitancy about keeping Borden's Challenge Brand Condens'd Milk as long as you like after opening the can. One 15¢ can would probably last you about two weeks if you use it only for breakfast, (I assume you dine at Roback's successor to Westerman's) since with me a can goes about a week, used for both meals and sometimes for extra cocoa. . . . There used to be a milk powder call'd "Klim", (reverse orthography) which may or may not be sold nowadays—but I dare say Dryco is purer and more palatable. However, these dessicated substitutes are too modern and sophisticated in atmosphere to suit my blunt rural tastes. Borden's Challenge is the stuff for a rugged county 'squire of the ancient Puritan temperament—for with its conservative stannic envelope and comfortably viscous fluidity it is almost as naive and pastoral as a cow and a quart measure. The lowing herd . . . . tinkle of bells and call of the neatherd at evening . . . . rolling, stone-wall'd pastures . . . . orchard-embower'd white farmhouse gables . . . . distant steeple in the vale . . . . God Save His Majesty's New-England plantations—and Borden's Challenge Milk! . . .

Yrs. for efficient coffee and conservative milk,  
 Πάππος Θεοβάλδου  
 Pappus Theobaldus

358. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

10 Barnes St.,  
 Providence, R. I.,  
 June 10, 1929

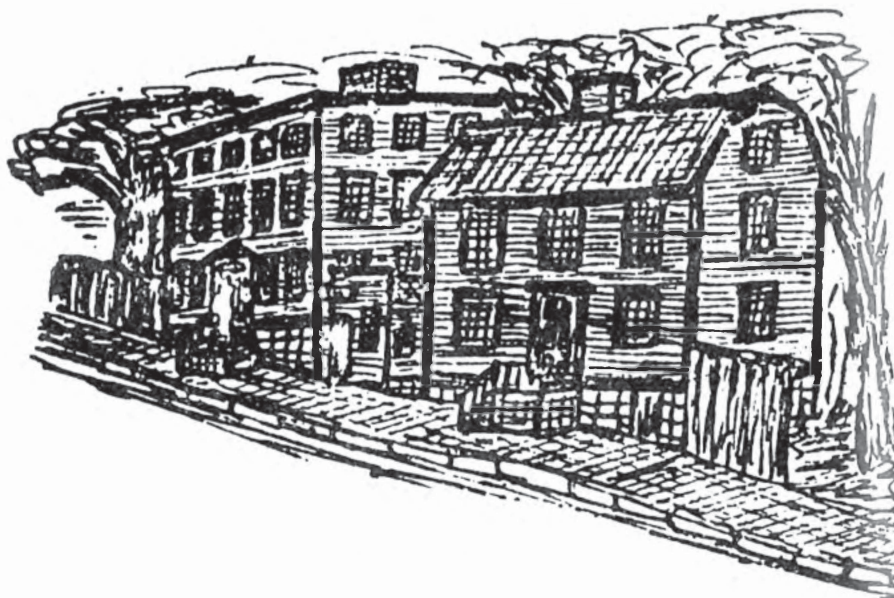
Dear Miss Toldridge:—

..... Considering how a line multiplies in the course of a few centuries, it can be seen that there is virtually no limit to the proper territory of a family history, provided information is available. I have just been looking over an old New England genealogy with some curious linkages in the past & present—that of the line which produced

John Carter, Providence's colonial printer, & publisher of the *Providence Gazette & Country-Journal* before, during, & after the revolution. His old shop & office, the Sign of Shakespeare's Head, in Gaol-Lane, is still standing in good condition notwithstanding the sinking of the neighbourhood to slumdom. It is a large square house on a steep hill, with fanlighted doorway & the double flight of railed steps so typical of colonial Providence. Carter was a son of a younger son of the Virginia Carters, & was born in Philadelphia in 1745. In youth he served as an apprentice in the printing shop of Benjamin Franklin, & in 1767 he came to Providence as an assistant to the publisher Wm. Goddard, whose business & whose newspaper he purchased for himself in 1768. From that time till his death in 1814 he was the leading printer & publisher of Providence, & the manner in which his descendants reached the highest places of aristocracy is worthy of a novel—or of treatment in some such work as *Lady Macdonald's*. John Carter himself married Amey Crawford of Providence, a descendant of the Earls of Crawford in Lanarkshire, Scotland, & more immediately of the ship-owning Crawfords of Rhode Island. Their daughter Ann, born in 1770, married Nicholas Brown of the great Providence line of marine merchant princes for whom Brown University is named: & her descendants in turn represent the present dominant patrician caste of Providence. One of these descendants in 1911 married Ralph Francis Julian Stonor, Baron Camoys, holder of a title created in 1383—whose young son, the Hon. Ralph Robert Watts Sherman Stonor, born in 1913, thus represents a completion of the circle from nobility through Yankeedom back to nobility. Another daughter of John Carter—the youngest child, as Ann was the eldest—was Elizabeth Ann, born in 1790, who married a Danforth (later a Mayor of Providence) & inherited the old house in Gaol Lane (renamed "Meeting St." from the Quaker Meeting House at the bottom of the hill) which had been the Sign of Shakespeare's Head. This Walter Raleigh Danforth was own cousin to the father of my elder aunt's husband, & I now have his copy of Johnson's *Dictionary*. Their daughter Sophia married Richard Bowen Allen of Newport & became the mother of Crawford Carter Allen, born in 1861 & a close friend of my uncle & aunt. He, in 1909, married Maude D'Arc Carsi, daughter of Count Carsi of Rome, Italy by an English mother—a Caulcott of Chester & Kensington—thus linking the Carter line once more to a noble house. Unfortunately he died in 1917 without issue, so that the actual

blood blending did not occur. His widow—who was educated in England & does not strongly reflect the Italian strain—still lives in Newport, albeit in reduced circumstances, & sometimes comes to see my aunt. I am not yet certain whether Carter's Virginia forbears, whose provenance was upper Norfolk, were related to the famous Carters of Shirley. This transposition of a Virginia line to New England always affected my fancy strongly—hence my frequently recurrent fictional character "Randolph Carter". No one has yet written a book on the Carter line, though a great-great-grandson, John Carter Brown Woods, has prepared an interesting & accurate illustrated brochure for private circulation. Efforts of descendants to obtain a presumable likeness of John Carter, who had no portrait painted in his lifetime, are somewhat amusing in their circuitousness. In 1853 Mr. Danforth—a son-in-law—sought a memory-sketch from the Providence artist Thomas F. Hoppin, who had known Carter in the latter's last days; & this sketch being made, it was elaborated into an oil portrait by a collateral descendant—Samuel Brown, then an art student in Rome. My aunt's friend Mrs. Carsi-Allen now owns this portrait, but it is universally admitted to be idealised out of all true resemblance. The real clue to Carter's aspect probably lies in a very different direction; through a case of *striking resemblance* which was widely remarked during his lifetime. In those days Carter was hailed as the exact double of a Unitarian clergyman of Boston—one John Murray, who attained a considerable degree of eminence. Now Dr. Murray *did* have a portrait painted from life, hence present Carter descendants feel that an important guide to their ancestor's features is still in existence. The author of the brochure—J. C. B. Woods, has arranged for a copy of this portrait—checked up by comparison with the Hoppin memory-sketch of 1853—& in all human probability this will be the closest possible record of the old publisher's features. I pass in sight of the ancient Carter house every time I walk down town—& the neighbourhood is still much as he knew it in 1770 & thereabouts. Across the street an old brick schoolhouse built in 1769 is still serving its original purpose, whilst at the foot of the hill the old Quaker Meeting House (1745) still broods beside its deserted wagon-sheds. Up the hill from the house is the venerable arsenal; & still higher the street becomes so precipitous that it has to change to a quaintly arched-over flight of stone steps. A little to the left is the ancient Gold Ball Inn where Washington, Lafayette, & Jefferson have

stopped; whilst beyond the 1769 schoolhouse one can see the ancient brick colony-house (1760) through the trees. There is another very strange old house nearby which houses some distant relatives of mine, & which I have made the scene of a sombre horror-tale. This tale is to be issued as a small book by W. Paul Cook, & you will later see a copy. It is called *The Shunned House*. As I have intimated, the neighbourhood is now sadly declining; & very recently there have been signs of a ruthless demolition of landmarks which will sweep away all the old-time atmosphere. It began, indeed, a full decade ago, when the old Updike house below Shakespeare's Head was torn down. This place was in colonial times owned by Capt. John Updike, (The origin of this Rhode Island name is curious. It is of remote Dutch derivation—Op Dyck—the family having filtered into western R. I. from Long Island & the New Netherlands.) Carter's brother-in-law, but not inhabited by him. A curious situation once arose when a tenant of this house opened a rival printing office—next door to the established Shakespeare's Head! Capt. Updike did not care to harbour his brother-in-law's business enemy as a tenant, yet what was he to do as an honourable landlord bound by lease? Much friction ensued, & I do not know how the matter even-





tuated! In this rough sketch, the left-hand house higher up the hill is Shakespeare's Head, whilst the right-hand one is the ancient Updike place, now demolished. This represents their aspect in my youth. The tiny low building between—now a stone mason's shop—used to harbour physicians' offices—my own uncle-in-law Dr. Clark (the cousin of Allen, Carter's descendant) having practiced there for a time. But now the old days & ways are going slowly & insidiously. The Updike house is down, & the old Quaker meeting-house is for sale. And just now—I heard the news only yesterday, a thing which caused me to get out the Carter booklet again, & which therefore precipitated this bit of reminiscent rambling—a still further change is to befall the ancient neighbourhood. At the corner of Benefit St., across from the Arsenal & just below the point where Gaol-Lane breaks into a flight of steps, there has hitherto been a bit of *actual country* remaining—field, *gardens, cottages, orchards, & an old stone greenhouse*—a bit of real colonial village days, & saved from encroachment by the extreme steepness of the hill. Now, however, I am told that *all this is to go within a fortnight*; a wretched ultra-modern *apartment-house* with all urban sophistications being on the brink of erection there! Imagine my sensations! A modern brick apartment-house in ancient Gaol-Lane beneath the flight of steps & above the 1769 Schoolhouse, the 1760 colony-house, the Golden Ball, the Quaker Meeting House, & the Sign of Shakespeare's Head! It is enough to send an Old Gentleman to his archives to read over data on the days & ways & faces that were—the days & ways of 1770, when John Carter each Wednesday issued (with the Royal Arms at the head) the *Providence Gazette & Country-Journal, Containing the Freshest Advices, both Foreign & Domestick*. By the way—I shall have a chance in a few days to give one of the appreciative members of "the gang" a last look at the doomed neighbourhood, for I expect the genial James F. Morton (curator of the Paterson Museum—I've mentioned him before, I think) to spend half a week in Providence before his Harvard Commencement. He will mourn with me.

..... The reference to electrons is not erroneous, but on the other hand quite apt. As an argument, the lines surely have a gracefulness beyond dispute, & a generous panegyric quality which no mundane opponent is likely to merit. Yet I doubt if they shake very heavily the stern probabilities of science. There is nothing to take real exception to in the statement that a given group of human tendencies

springs from the natural collocation of material particles operating automatically without the intervention of an external consciousness. Such a statement does not imply in any way the action of *chance* (for a cosmos of mutually interacting parts is *all law & no chance*, albeit the law is not *conscious*) or the creation of something out of nothing. Nothing is created from nothing, because there can be no nothingness. The whole cosmos is, always has been, & always will be a limitless field of force composed of alternately combining & dispersing electrons. They work in fixed ways, none of which need explanation by any hypothetical "spiritual" world apart from that whose laws they obey. Our subjective notions of these forces—i. e., our arbitrary & artificial classification of them into "wonderful" & "common", "good" & "evil", "beautiful" & "ugly", &c. &c.—are based wholly on local perspectives & relative personal standards due to our own perceptive & emotional apparatus, & having no relation to absolute truth, absolute values, or the actual motive-power of infinite entity. These local human feelings, perspectives, preferences, wishes, & aspirations are quite clearly & adequately accounted for by modern psychology—materially accounted for in a way which proves them absolutely valueless & supremely irrelevant in the task of interpreting the phenomena around us. Everything that exists or happens, exists or happens because the balance of forces in the cosmic pattern makes it inevitable. Whatever ethical or preferential qualities we seem to see in anything are sheer fictions of our minds & emotions—fictions based on a body of race-legendry originated when mankind was unable to conceive of external nature as apart from the anthropomorphic & the anthropocentric.

However—all this means nothing in the organisation of society & government. In a cosmos without absolute values we have to rely on the relative values affecting our daily sense of comfort, pleasure, & emotional satisfaction. What gives us relative painlessness & contentment we may arbitrarily call "good", & vice versa. This local nomenclature is necessary to give us that benign illusion of placement, direction, & stable background on which the still more important illusions of "worthwhileness", dramatic significance in events, & interest in life depend. Now what gives one person or race or age relative painlessness & contentment often disagrees sharply on the psychological side from what gives these same boons to another person or race or age. Therefore

"good" is a relative & variable quality, depending on ancestry, chronology, geography, nationality, & individual temperament. Amidst this variability there is *only one anchor of fixity* which we can seize upon as the working pseudo-standard of "values" which we need in order to feel settled & contented—& that anchor is *tradition*, the potent emotional legacy bequeathed to us by the massed experience of our ancestors, individual or national biological or cultural. Tradition means nothing cosmically, but it means everything locally & pragmatically because we have nothing else to shield us from a devastating sense of "lostness" in endless time & space. Nowadays we can't believe as our forefathers did, but we can share some of their instinctive feelings toward the daily scenes around them, so that a sort of comfortable placement in the invisible cosmic pattern will seem (falsely—but what of it?) to be provided for us. Those who can feel tradition most strongly are the luckiest just now, for amidst the jumbled impressions & radically changing experiences of a machine age there is but little sense of fixity or satisfaction to be gained from an adjustment to immediate reality. It will take generations for the machine age to build up enough stable illusions to found a new fabric of satisfying tradition. Yet the change must come—& we don't yet know just how much comfortable illusion & perspective we can carry over from the now dying age into the nascent age ahead. All this is dubitably discussed in an article in the June *Current History* magazine—*Forces That Are Destroying Traditional Beliefs* by Prof. John Herman Randall, Jr., of Columbia. Randall—a Baptist clergyman's son—is an old family friend of my young "grandchild" Frank Belknap Long Jr. He is only 28 years old, but was an "infant prodigy" & has been a recognised philosophical author & teacher for years. However—don't let me drag all this discussion to a boresome length. It really doesn't matter, except to himself, what anybody believes; & if anyone can get more contentment out of the old faith than out of the new facts, I'd be the last to wish so useless a thing as his actual emotional disillusionment. All I ever do is to state my own position clearly, in order that I may not hypocritically seem to be other than I am; giving only enough argument to shew that my attitude is a maturely thought-out one & not a mere accident or freak of irresponsible caprice. . . .

As for the Labour Party's victory—it is of course depressing to contemplate the enthronement of a group pledged to work against the social

order which produced our characteristic civilisation with its gentle, leisurely folk-ways; yet after all there is no great reason for alarm. British labour is more moderate in act than in speech, & has a healthy unconscious reverence for stable institutions which offers pretty good assurance against anything like Bolshevism. If the Labourites ever influence England deeply, it will not be without a reciprocal influence which old English ways & heritages will exert over them. They will level themselves up as they level the country down—not that such a levelling is as pleasant & poetically satisfying as the old order, but that it is about the best thing we can expect in the course of historic evolution. Oddly enough, it is really *not* socialist politics which is chiefly abolishing the beloved old semi-feudal order. It is doing its share, of course, as its economic system makes the large tenure of land more & more costly & difficult; but there are stronger & subtler influences at work—a cultural old age of the nation, & an insidiously novel set of satisfaction-standards introduced by machine-bred luxuries, whereby the descendants of the old families themselves are finding former adjustments to society inadequate, & are demanding a more urbanised life—on a smaller & more intimate scale—with less dignity & ceremony & more purely physical luxury. The motives for maintaining traditional country life on a manorial scale are operating more feebly with the younger generation than with their elders. Only the other day I learned that Eden Hall in Cumberland—the Musgrave seat whose fairy-cup legend I described to you—has been sold, & that the magic cup is now in the S. Kensington Museum! Of course the change from a feudal rustic society to a half-socialised system of urban luxury & economic-mindedness will be very gradual at most—& perhaps never complete. The old tradition is strong & beautiful, & will die hard—as with The Dukes of Norfolk mentioned in your cutting. But mutation is in the air, & there is certain to be a vast shifting of the political & social balance. England can never be *governed* by its squires again. One thing I'll say for labour; & that is, that it isn't as offensive as the corresponding mutatory force which now threatens culture in America. I refer to the force of *business* as a dominating motive in life, & a persistent absorber of the strongest creative energies of the American people. This intensive commercialism is a force more basically dangerous & anti-cultural than labour ever has been, & threatens to build up an arrogant fabric which it will be very hard to overthrow or modify with civilised ideas. Yet like socialism, it

is one of the inevitable results of the equally inevitable discovery of machinery. There's nothing to do but grin & bear it!

With best wishes—Yrs. Sincerely,

HPLovecraft

359. TO AUGUST DERLETH

June 16, 1929

My dear A. W.:—

I fancy that in this pleasant weather you are glad to be back in Sauk City again. I take my work outdoors nearly every day—sitting on the same lovely wooded river-bank which has been my favourite haunt since infancy, and which has changed not at all in all those long years. The way to defeat the sense of time is to cling close to unaltered early haunts. Amongst those forest paths I know so well the gap between the present and the days of 1899 or 1900 vanishes utterly—so that sometimes I almost tend to be astonished upon emergence to find the city grown out of its *fin de siecle* semblance! . . .

Best wishes,  
HPL

# **BERSERKER**

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## **BOOKS**

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