

1925-2025

UN AN AVEC HOWARD PHILLIPS LOVECRAFT

#72 | 13 MARS 1925

« Je vous remercie de m'avoir prêté le manuscrit (que je vous renvoie par la présente lettre). Je l'ai trouvé fascinant, avec ses horribles allusions à des monstruosités semi-humaines et à des villes de sages situées dans des jungles sombres et sinistres. C'est le genre d'histoire d'horreur que j'aime, avec ses présages étranges et son apogée macabre — et surtout, la nappe d'ombre et les implications sombres qui se cachent derrière l'action visible de l'histoire. [...] Comme vous le dites, les magazines en fascicules se spécialisent à un rythme alarmant — histoires de western, histoires de combat, histoires d'aviation, histoires de gangsters — par exemple — *Wild West Weekly*, *Battle Stories*, *Gangster Stories*, *Two-Gun Stories* (!), *Wall Street Stories*, ne sont que quelques-uns des magazines que l'on trouve aujourd'hui dans les kiosques à journaux. Je n'ai jamais essayé le domaine de la pseudo-science — je suis tellement ignorant de la mécanique et de la science qu'il me serait virtuellement impossible d'écrire de manière convaincante dans ce domaine. Avez-vous déjà essayé *Argosy*? Je crois que vous pourriez leur vendre des histoires bizarres — ils engloutissent les articles de Merritt et vous l'avez battu à plate couture. Non pas que Merritt ne soit pas bon, il l'est. Mais son travail n'a pas l'horreur pure, sombre et gothique de vos récits. Une simple touche de fantastique vient parfois ternir son travail, alors que vos contes d'horreur sont bâtis en fer noir, sans la moindre touche de clinquant — et c'est là que réside leur grandeur. J'ai relu vos contes dans les vieux numéros de magazines — *L'Innommable*, *Le Temple*, *Lui*, *Le Terrible Vieil Homme*, *La Clé d'Argent* — et j'espère que Farnsworth trouvera le moyen de les publier rapidement sous forme de livre — ainsi que *Le Festival* et *La Musique d'Erich Zann* que j'ai manqués, je ne sais comment. Ils ont dû être publiés dans l'ancien *Weird Tales*. À propos, l'ancien magazine a-t-il fait faillite ou était-il en bonne santé lorsque M. Wright l'a repris ? Il me semble avoir entendu de source sûre qu'il était en assez mauvais état lorsqu'il l'a repris. »

Robert Howard, lettre à Howard Phillips Lovecraft, Février 1931. Précieuse en ce qu'elle mentionne l'éventuelle possibilité d'un recueil en volume des récits de HPL : ce qui aurait pu changer la donne pour son histoire.

[1925, vendredi 13 mars]

Up noon — window-fixer — tailor — wrote letters — SH arr. out to Pickwick — Sta. shop — home & write — read Erich Zann aloud — retired.

Levé à midi. Le menuisier. Le tailleur. Écrit des lettres. On va au Pickwick avec Sonia, puis courses au métro. Maison et écrit. Lu La musique d'Erich Zann à haute voix. Couché.

On suppose que *La musique d'Erich Zann* a été écrite en décembre 1921, publiée en mars 1922 par le *National Amateur*. Mais c'est la prochaine publication de Lovecraft dans *Weird Tales*, on dirait aussi bien la première vraie parution publique — quand il échangera plus tard ces fabuleuses et immenses lettres avec le texan Robert Howard, l'inventeur de *Conan le Barbare*, qui se suicidera en 1936, un an avant la mort de Lovecraft, Howard insistera sur la révélation qu'étaient pour lui les récits de Lovecraft, à mesure qu'il les découvre dans *Weird Tales*, et son admiration pour la construction et la phrase. Est-ce que Lovecraft change des expressions, corrige des ponctuations ? Examen à faire. Il lit la nouvelle à voix haute (il faut 23 minutes) : Sonia est-elle présente, est-ce à elle que la lecture est destinée ? Probablement, mais on n'en saura rien. Bizarre histoire : dans la vieille et adolescente fascination de Lovecraft pour *Double crime dans la rue Morgue* d'Edgar Poe, c'est à Paris qu'il situe l'histoire, et invente une *rue d'Auseil* pour l'accueillir. Mais le dispositif spatial, étroite ruelle escaladant une colline, étroite rivière avec pont en contrebas, université sur la colline et le centre-ville de l'autre côté du pont, c'est bien Providence qu'il décrit. Lovecraft lecteur à voix haute de sa propre histoire : dix ans plus tôt, Kafka et ses amis ont inauguré des séances mensuelles de lecture à Prague, et Dickens le faisait à Londres des décennies plus tôt. Kafka lira *Le violoniste* de Grillparzer, que ne connaît probablement pas Lovecraft (il connaît certainement par contre le violoniste Kreisler des récits de E.T.A. Hoffmann, et le nom allemand de Zann pourrait être un lien à cette origine), mais il ne semble pas que les Boys aient jamais pensé, dans les nombreux lieux publics qu'ils fréquentent dans Greenwich Village, à défendre leur littérature par ce biais — pourquoi ? Dans le journal, suicide d'un secrétaire de mairie du Bronx, sur fond de cette révision juridique amorcée sous la pression concernant le mariage des mineurs. Épidémie de grippe à Chicago : 280 morts en douze jours. À Yale dans le Connecticut, quarante camions déménagent les collections de fossiles dans un nouveau bâtiment du Peabody Museum : un million de pièces. Inondation de publicités pour les chapeaux hommes de printemps. Parce que c'est une

thématique si forte dans son travail de fiction, Lovecraft a sans doute lu ce nouvel article transmis depuis l'Arcturus : tempête sur les Sargasses, et découverte d'un poisson transparent. Publicité des ciments Portland à propos de l'aqueduc qui fournit New York en eau potable : les 148 kilomètres du tunnel commencé en 1907 et raccordé à Yonkers en 1924, pour 2 millions de m³ d'eau par jour.

New York Times, 13 mars 1925. Thomas J McCabe, secrétaire général de la municipalité du Bronx, qui devait comparaître ce matin devant le Grand Jury du Bronx dans le cadre d'une enquête sur les licences de mariage attribuées aux mineurs, s'est suicidé hier après-midi en se jetant sur les rails au passage du métro aérien, branche sud de la 3ème Avenue, au niveau de Clairmont Parkway Station. Le conducteur James McDonald a vu l'homme se jeter. Il a bloqué ses freins, mais ne put arrêter le train avant d'avoir traîné l'homme sur une dizaine de mètres. Le corps a été emmené à la morgue de Fordham, où on trouva sur lui des papiers au nom de McCabe. L'identification fut confirmée peu après par les inspecteurs qui le connaissaient. M McCabe était âgé de 38 ans et vivait avec ses trois sœurs au 787 Cauldwell Avenue, dans le Bronx. Le secrétaire général n'était aucunement accusé ou suspecté dans l'enquête sur les « mariées-enfant » diligentée pour établir que les lois actuelles sur le mariage n'étaient pas suffisantes. Mais selon ses employés, il broyait du noir depuis le début de l'enquête et ne pouvait se défaire de l'idée qu'elle le visait personnellement. « Ce matin il semblait perturbé, a déclaré Stewart Harris, chef du bureau des licences de mariage. Il lisait les témoignages concernant cette affaire, disant que les parents ayant signé les autorisations il ne pouvait voir en quoi il était coupable. — Bien sûr vous ne l'êtes pas, j'ai répondu. Pourquoi prenez-vous cette affaire aussi personnellement ? Ce n'est pas après vous qu'ils en ont, il s'agit seulement de démontrer que les lois en vigueur ne sont pas suffisantes. » Et M Harris a ajouté que si des erreurs avaient été commises, elles seraient de sa responsabilité, et non de celle de son chef. L'attorney du district, John E McGeehan, en charge de l'enquête sur les licences de mariage accordées aux mineurs, a fait cette déclaration : « La mort de Thomas J McCabe est une vraie tragédie. Il vient d'une des familles les mieux connues et respectées. L'enquête diligentée par Cour Suprême auprès des services du secrétaire général était une enquête sur les conditions légales d'autorisation de mariage. Les faits concernés n'impliquaient en aucun cas l'honneur ou la personnalité de M McCabe. La Cour tente de résoudre les insuffisances dans l'application de la loi, et enquête dans le cadre légal plus large de l'État, sur les conditions dans lesquelles on peut accorder une licence de mariage lorsqu'un des requérants est un enfant sous l'âge légal de mariage. Le secrétariat général de la ville est une sorte de charge héréditaire, puisqu'il a été tenu pendant des années par Matthew McCabe, père de l'homme qui s'est suicidé hier. À la mort de Matthew McCabe, elle a été tenue par son frère, qui l'a laissée il y a cinq ans à son propre neveu. Avant de remplir cette charge, celui-ci était chauffeur de taxi dans le Bronx. McCabe avait été marié mais était séparé de sa femme. Il a vécu pendant de nombreuses années avec sa mère et la mort de celle-ci, il y a six semaines, l'avait profondément affecté. Il vivait depuis avec ses trois sœurs. Il était membre du Samoset Club, l'organe démocrate du Deuxième District, mais n'avait jamais été vraiment actif en politique.



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M'CABE SUICIDE OVER CHILD BRIDE INQUIRY

Deputy City Clerk in Bronx, Who Was to Testify Today, Dies Under a Train.

FELT HE WAS UNDER CLOUD

Officials Investigating Marriage Law Procedure Declare His Record Was Clear.

Thomas J. McCabe, Deputy City Clerk for the Bronx, who had been asked to appear today before the Bronx Grand Jury in connection with the investigation into the issuance of marriage licenses to minors, committed suicide yesterday afternoon by throwing himself on the rails in front of a southbound Third Avenue local elevated train at the Claremont Parkway Station.

Motorman James McDonald saw the man strike the tracks. He applied the brakes, but could not stop until the body had been dragged twenty feet. The body was taken to the Fordham Morgue, where papers belonging to McCabe were found. The identification was definitely settled later by detectives who knew him. Mr. McCabe was 38 years old and lived with three sisters at 787 Cauldwell Avenue, the Bronx. The Deputy Clerk was in no way under accusation or suspicion in connection with the "child-bride" investigation, which was intended to establish that the present marriage laws were working badly. But, according to subordinates of his office, he had been brooding over the investigation and could not rid himself of the idea that it was aimed at him personally.

Ignored Others' Assurances.

"This morning he was acting very much disturbed," said Stewart Harris, clerk in the Marriage License Bureau. "He was reading the record of some of these cases and saying that the parents had consented to the licenses and that he could not see where he had wronged anybody."

"Of course you haven't," I said. "Why do you take this personally? They aren't after you. They only want to show that the State marriage laws are in need of reform."

"But he would not see it that way. I noticed that he was acting peculiarly."

Mr. Harris said that if mistakes had been made in issuing licenses they were his mistakes, not those of his chief.

"I have personally issued all the licenses in the bureau since it was opened," he said.

District Attorney John E. McGeehan, who has been in charge of the marriage license investigation, made this statement:

"The death of Thomas J. McCabe is a great tragedy. He came from one of our best known and highly respected families.

"The investigation ordered by the Supreme Court of the Deputy City Clerk's office was an investigation into the law authorizing marriages. The facts developed in no way involved Mr. McCabe's honor or character.

YALE MOVES FOSSILS TO PEABODY MUSEUM

More Than 1,000,000 Specimens Will Be Regrouped in New Structure.

TO SHOW MAN'S HISTORY

Scientists From All Over Country to Attend the Opening Next December.

Special to The New York Times.

NEW HAVEN, Conn., March 12.—Richard S. Lull, Professor of Paleontology at Yale University and director of the Peabody Museum, said today that more than forty truckloads of specimens in the museum's large collection had been moved into the new building and that the work of rearranging the exhibits was proceeding satisfactorily. More than 2,000 scientists from throughout the country are to attend the formal opening in December.

A new method is to be followed in displaying the specimens, estimated to number more than 1,000,000. Step by step from the dawn of history the genetic evolution of man will be portrayed. Incidentally, in the portrayal of man's origin the Garden of Eden will be absent, although figures disclose that about 70 per cent of the students at the Yale School of Divinity take the paleontological course at some time in their collegiate years.

Man's origin and progress in the new arrangement of the specimens is set forth merely as a part of the general evolution of the animal kingdom from the dim days when the world was young down to periods when concrete evidence is available.

The collection of fossils is especially complete, containing many prehistoric specimens, such as the several-toned dinosaures, the brontosaurus, slabs of rock showing about 23,000 footprints made by prehistoric animals and the extinct toothed bird, the Ichthyornis, or fish bird, found in Rocks County, Kas.

When the museum is opened an innovation will be noted. This will be to make available the rich stores it contains to the public school children of the State. Selected by school trustees, by the selection of the State educational authorities, the children will be brought here for visual instruction.

A special room is being set aside for the pupils on one of the floors of the new building. Benches are already piled there and special exhibits are being placed.

Following the method employed in the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, the bird life of Connecticut and other States will be exhibited in natural surroundings. Glass cases with backgrounds painted to represent the natural environment sought by different birds, animals and snakes, have been set in place and in many of them the exhibits are already on view. The children with the exhibits before them, will hear lectures on the ways of animal and bird life.

The evolution of the animal kingdom will be followed by more mature students through five floors of the ground floor, the hallways showing historically the phases of the progress of animals from mud to man. In the first of the halls will be exhibits showing the various forms of invertebrates.

Among the highly prized specimens is the stegosaurus, an armored dinosaur. The large fossils are to have a large hall to themselves, and are to be grouped around the brontosaurus. The Museum's collection of fossil animals and birds found in this country, especially in the West, is the largest of its kind.

A section has been set aside for study of a reproduction of the sea bottom. Specimens are to be shown revealing the growth at various depths and at various places. Colored corals, such as are found in the countries on the Galapagos Islands are already in place. When all the specimens are in position a student will be able to visualize the bottom of virtually every sea.

SARGASSO STORMS FOLLOW EXPLORERS

Arcturus Moves to Echo Bank, but the Scientists Still Work in Heavy Seas.

FIND TRANSPARENT FISH

Ship Will Soon Steam for Panama and the Galapagos Islands Unless Weather Should Improve.

By WILLIAM BEEBE.

By Wireless from the S. S. Arcturus via East Moriches, L. I.

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S. S. ARCTURUS, Sargasso Sea. March 11.—My last radio dispatch told of our getting under way for Echo Bank, in the southern half of the Sargasso Sea, in the hope of finding easier weather.

During the last four days the noon position of the Arcturus has been as follows: March 7, latitude 23.43 north, longitude 55.09 west; March 8, 22.23 north, 57.13 west; March 9, 21.17 north, 58.13 west; March 10, 21.12 north, 58.53 west.

It will be seen that our position the last two days has scarcely varied and that we are off our objective, Echo Bank; yet wind, rain and heavy seas continue, with little moderation.

This ill luck in weather has in no wise affected the zeal of the expeditionary staff of the New York Zoological Society. During the past three weeks we have undergone a training and installation period that has shaken down our personnel machine to a perfect working basis.

The captain, officers and crew of the Arcturus are working in splendid unison with our staff. Our laboratory and oceanographic equipment have now been thoroughly tested and found entirely practicable. There is nothing we would have changed from our plans excepting the small boat.

During our two day cruise here we have taken stock of our hauls and we find much invaluable material not previously reported.

We have collected a Sargassum group of plankton and deep sea fauna that shows the parallel protective coloration of many fishes and invertebrates, all supported by the specimens themselves and many color drawings and photographs contributed by our experts. Our account of plankton field is very rich. We have collected many transparent organisms, even though our small boat work has been prevented by heavy seas.

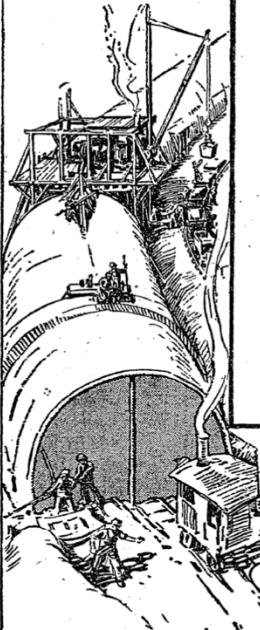
The difficulty of trawling in such waves as have beset us will be understood, yet we have reached down into two-mile depths and brought up transparent, silvery, red, black and luminescent deep sea fishes. These have all been well set forth, but we include some amazing stalk-eyed, telescopic-eye, snake-jawed, black and brilliantly luminous species, several of them wholly new.

In one thing we have been entirely disappointed. At no time have we encountered a large mass of Sargassum weed. This is torn apart by the heavy seas and it will be necessary for us to return here in July for more favorable conditions.

This most fortunate of scientific expeditions having two fields of study will shortly get up steam for Panama, where we shall coal about March 27 and then proceed through the canal for submarine dredging and netting work and reinvestigation of the Galapagos Islands. Such is our plan at this moment. Should we be blessed by fairer weather we may tarry in the Sargasso for a short time longer, in which case I shall report the results of our hauls or of our laboratory work or it should be understood that along with our netting, trawling and dredging the entire staff is prosecuting constant research.

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279 Die in 12 Days in Chicago Grip Epidemic; 90 New Cases, 28 Deaths Yesterday's Toll

Special to The New York Times.

CHICAGO, March 12.—Twenty-eight deaths in the thirteen hours ending at 9:30 P. M. today were credited to the scourge of respiratory disease which is sweeping over Chicago. Including today's toll, influenza and pneumonia have claimed 279 lives since the first of March.

During the same hours more than ninety new cases of the disease, most of them traceable to symptoms not common in Chicago since a deadly grip epidemic of 1892, were reported to the Health Department—more than twice the number noted on the same day a year ago.

Yesterday there were ninety-five new cases and twenty-seven deaths.

The daily death average for the first nine days in March, according to Health Department records, was 22.3, and during January and February it hovered around 12.6.

The outbreak, which Health Commissioner Bundesen declares is sweeping entire families in Chicago, is reported pre-

valent in a number of large cities throughout the country and all are trying to stem its course. Cultures taken from afflicted persons, Dr. Bundesen says, indicate the presence of the familiar influenza bacilli, but because of the severity of the cases under observation and the rapidity with which the disease develops into the more serious pneumonia, he is unwilling to classify it as a recurrence of the war-time influenza.

The disease is characterized by aching pains throughout the body, burning sensations in the eyes, high temperatures, pronounced prostration and frequently nose bleeding.

Special to The New York Times.

MANCHESTER, N. H., March 12.—Physicians of this city estimate that there are more than 1,400 cases of grip and influenza in Manchester at present. The epidemic of scarlet fever, which prevailed a good part of the winter, has substantially subsided.

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