

1925-2025

UN AN AVEC HOWARD PHILLIPS LOVECRAFT

#152 | 3 JUIN 1925

Iacobe Maxime,

Thou wert mourn'd night afore last—but hope sustains our desolated residue. Just now I'm keeping up by the artificial excitement of clothes-buying—oh, baby, but yo' orta set yo' ah's awn de volupshus rags dis chile am a-hangin' awn he carcass! In sober fact, I'm indulging in one very sedate creation of the cruelly spoof'd Monroe Clothes system—grand fatherly in conservatism of cut, & dignified in sombreness of fabrick. Happy thought—I'll enclose a sample, since I have all the extra trouser-bottoms for future mending purposes. (After the first fifteen y'ears I may need a patch or so.) It set me back only twenty-five tin soldiers, & I've blown in on a \$2.35 straw lid to set it off. Some village dandy? Boy, dey doan' come no sweller up in Seventh Avenue and 140th Street! Better tustle back from your migrations & attend one of the meetings at which I expect to strut around in naively childlike vanity! I had a hard time picking an outfit, & this one come sudden't like. I was dinin' with the ball-&-chain at John's, in Willoughby Street, when I seen the Monroe sign in a winder opposite. One of the price statements— 21.50—lured me on in & up—& before I reeled out I had fallen for the aforementioned scenery. Since then I have been fussing about alterations, & 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 xxxxxxx thief touches this outfit, why, by xxxxx, I'll smash his xxxxxx for him with one fist whilst I pulverise his xxxxxx with the other, meanwhile kicking him posteriorly with both feet in their most pointed shoes and manner!

I.E. if I catch him!

Theobaldus

*Le cambriolage toujours : il s'agit maintenant de se racheter un costume, mais à pas trop cher... Lovecraft voit Morton ce soir, ça n'a pas empêché de lui écrire : et si on se faisait un petit concours de traduction ? vous essayez ?! On gagne un livre ? On gagne un livre !*

[1925, mercredi 3 juin]

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Stay up — read — wrote — tailor's start for Boy's at 4th Ave.  
AEPG////arrive — all present — excellent meeting — Sonny lv. then  
Morton — all disband midnight — McN lv. U. Sq. rest Automat —  
discuss philos, disband — home & write — retire.

*Debout toute la nuit. Lu. Écrit. Je commence par le tailleur avant  
réunion des Boys à la librairie de Kirk. Lettre tante Annie. Tous  
présents, très bonne réunion. Sonny repart, puis Morton, les autres  
seulement à minuit. McNeil nous quitte Union Square et nous on reste  
à l'Automat, on parle philosophie. Dispersion, retour maison, écrit.  
Couché.*

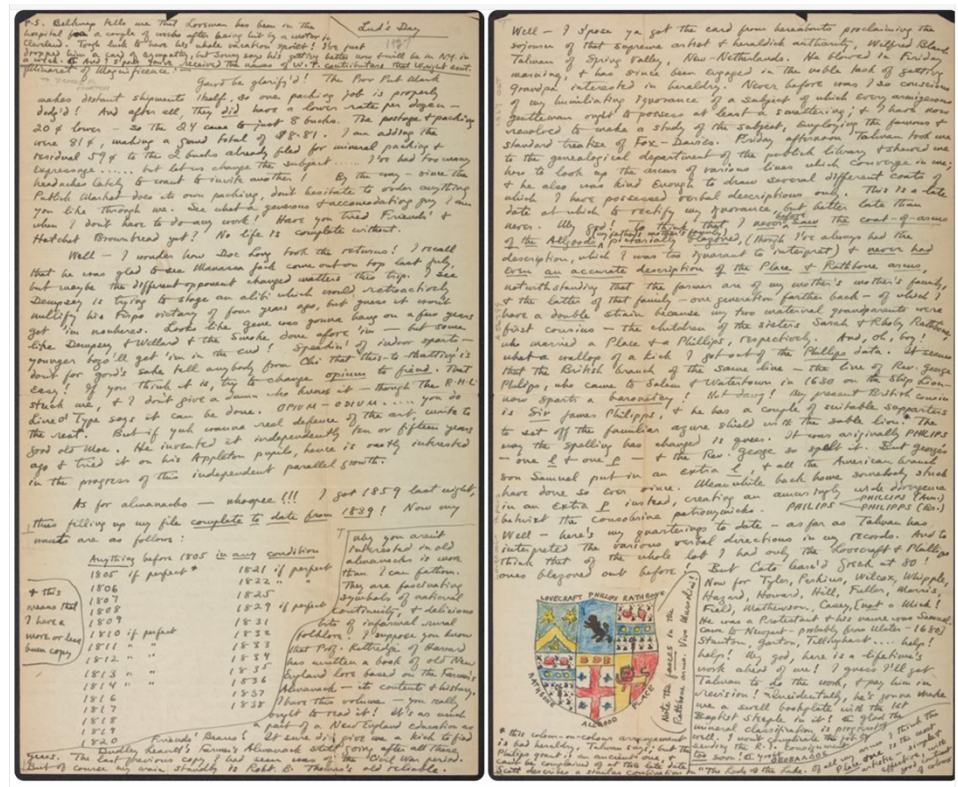
Ce soir à la réunion du Kalem Club c'est le tour de McNeil : est-ce que Lovecraft et Belknap ont dû rester silencieux concernant leur collaboration future avec Leeds ? Et parler philosophie, d'accord, mais quoi, concernant la philosophie : Nietzsche, par exemple ? Il raconte probablement tout cela à Annie Gamwell, mais les lettres à Annie Gamwell sont presque toutes perdues. De combien de lettres ainsi écrites par Lovecraft ne saurons-nous rien ? Gloire au cambriolage, qui nous vaut cette suite de relations de plus en plus épiques comme à Morton (ci-dessus), ou celle qu'il écrit (sur plusieurs jours probablement, parce que très longue) à Maurice W Moe, là-bas dans le Wisconsin. Une lettre à part, parce qu'il établit pour lui un bilan de toute cette première moitié de son séjour à New York, de la formation et des étapes du Kalem Club, et surtout aussi des différentes phases de la maladie dont se guérit Sonia à Saratoga. Moe enseigne la langue anglaise dans un lycée à Appleton, Wisconsin, a connu Lovecraft par l'Association de journalisme amateur, et ils correspondent depuis 1914, échangeront jusqu'au décès de Lovecraft. Et Moe lui a rendu visite à Providence en 1923, Lovecraft l'a emmené visiter Marblehead, il peut tout lui dire. On se retiendra de sourire à l'exact parallèle des lettres de Kirk à sa fiancée et de Lovecraft à Moe, se plaignant de comment l'autre lui mange tout son temps, et que maintenant c'est fini. Dans cette lettre, où il s'ouvre comme semble-t-il à personne d'autre de la santé de Sonia, rien qui sous-entend une quelconque distension du couple : un gentleman marié ne revient pas comme ça en arrière. « Pendant plusieurs mois, notre attelage, à la fois informel et formel, a pris la plus grande partie de mon temps ; jusqu'à trouver à la fin ma chambre occupée en permanence par des paires et trios du club, ou s'en déambulant artistiquement dans les cafétérias et restaurants du

quartier ou de Greenwich Village. Kirk, Loveman & Kleiner en particulier ont semblé s'enfoncer dans une grégarité morbide ; comme si les propres ressources de leurs personnalités s'étaient si amoindries qu'ils dussent fuir une effrayante solitude à tout prix, dans leur compagnie réciproque, qu'ils aient quelque chose à dire, ou pas. Quand mon propre temps eut ainsi été dévasté au-delà de toute endurance, jusqu'à il y a un mois environ, je dus y mettre un terme, et limiter ma participation aux réunions du mercredi soir, puis restaurer mon programme quotidien de concentration littéraire dégagée de tout événement, et que la réclusion soit constitutionnellement profitable. La compagnie dont je bénéficie hors de chez moi, désormais, en dehors de nos conclaves hebdomadaires, est restreinte à Frank Belknap Long & aux siens. Belknap est mon congénère le plus semblable de tout le petit groupe d'ici. Il a mes goûts & un arrière-fond familial remarquablement proche du mien — aussi nos excursions dans les musées, les bouquinistes, les échappées à la campagne, ou les visites que ma femme et moi lui rendons (sa mère est une personne vraiment délicieuse) forme maintenant le principal élément non-officiel de l'agenda de Theobald. » À demain la suite de cette lettre extraordinaire, où la santé de Sonia sera mise sur le même plan que son propre programme (réussi, voir les passages réguliers chez le tailleur) d'amaigrissement volontaire. Dans le journal : tout du coupable fabriqué d'hier semble être oublié, maintenant qu'on tient semble-t-il le vrai, les voilà immédiatement relaxés — oublié, alors, l'article d'hier ?

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*New York Times*, 3 juin 1925. William Brassfield, un Noir (*negro*) de 43 ans, concierge d'un immeuble d'appartements au 65, rue Osborn, Brooklyn, a été arrêté hier et inculpé du meurtre de Mlle Florence Kane, vendredi soir, dans un terrain vague proche de son domicile, au 1020 de l'avenue de New York Est, Brooklyn. L'inculpation a été signifiée par l'inspecteur Seckinger après que le Noir (*negro*), placé en garde-à-vue plus tôt dans la soirée pour interrogatoire, avait été interrogé au commissariat de Brownsville par le District Attorney Charles J Dodd, le capitaine John McCloskey et les autres inspecteurs. Walter Johnson et Calvin Wood, deux autres Noirs (*negroes*) mis en garde-à-vue dans l'enquête sur le meurtre, étaient soumis à interrogatoire dans les bureaux de M Dodd quand la nouvelle de l'arrestation de Brassfield lui parvint. La mise en examen de Johnson et de Wood fut suspendue immédiatement. Les enquêteurs avaient été mis sur la bonne piste hier matin par un témoignage de M et Mme James O'Neill, domiciliés 1360 place St John, à Brooklyn. Les O'Neill ont déclaré qu'ils revenaient chez eux un peu après minuit, jeudi soir, quand ils avaient croisé Mlle Kane marchant rapidement rue Montgomery. À 30 mètres derrière elle, ils remarquèrent un Noir (*negro*) marchant lui aussi très vite, et Mme O'Neill fit remarquer à son mari le danger o était cette jeune fille, de marcher seule à cette heure-ci. Le couple décrivit le Noir comme un homme d'environ 1m80 ou 1m85, plutôt fortement bâti, avec des bras inhabituellement longs et de grosses mains. C'était la même description qu'avait faite Mlle Augusta Cooperberg, la jeune fille de Brooklyn brutalement battue le 17 mai alors qu'elle revenait de Manhattan. Brassfield

a été détenu à Sing Sing pour avoir agressé et volé une femme en 1912. À cause de ce fait, et parce qu'il avait été vu près de la scène du meurtre le jeudi soir, la police était sur sa piste et lui a demandé un alibi plus précis pour la nuit du jeudi au vendredi. Une des preuves retenues contre lui pourrait venir du gant de cuir et de coton retrouvé près de corps de Mlle Kane, et qui porte des traces de sang humain. Brassfield a été hier identifié parmi six hommes par Mlle Irene Coyne comme l'homme qui l'a suivie jeudi soir, à deux blocs du terrain vague où fut tuée Mlle Kane. Brassfield avait été libéré de Sing Sing en 1920, et inculpé le 15 novembre 1924 pour avoir battu à mort un Noir (negro), Herbert Stevens, domicilié 380 rue Osborne, près de l'immeuble où il était concierge, mais libéré faute de preuves. Brassfield a déclaré à la police qu'il n'avait pas quitté son domicile jeudi soir, ce qui est confirmé par sa femme, Mme Tixie Brassfield. Elle dit que son mari est allé se coucher de bonne heure (*he went to bed early*). Brassfield sera confronté aujourd'hui à deux jeunes garçons, Frank et John Cardello, domiciliés près de Prospect Park à Brooklyn, au niveau de l'avenue de Buffalo, et qui, après la publication de la photographie de Brassfield dans les journaux, disent qu'ils l'ont vu guetter des femmes près du parc Lincoln, sur l'avenue de Buffalo, environ 2 heures avant le meurtre.



Lettre à James Morton, 1927. Fonds numérique John Hay Library.

# KANE MURDER LAID TO NEGRO ARRESTED LATE LAST NIGHT

Brooklyn Janitor, Said to Be  
Ex-Convict, Put in Cell  
After Questioning.

## CITY REGIME DENOUNCED

Priest at Girl's Funeral Says  
Crepe Belongs on City Hall—  
Blames Poor Protection.

## HYLAN ISSUES A REPLY

Declares the Pastor Is Overwrought  
and Ill—New Clues Found in  
Hunt for Strangler.

William Brassfield, a negro, 43 years old, janitor of an apartment house at 663 Osborn Street, Brooklyn, was placed under arrest late last night charged with the murder of Miss Florence Kane on Friday morning in a vacant lot near her home at 1,020 East New York Avenue, Brooklyn.

The arrest was made by Detective Seckinger after the negro, who had been taken into custody for questioning early in the evening, had been examined at the Brownsville Police Station by District Attorney Charles J. Dodd, Captain of Detectives John McCloskey and other detectives.

Walter Johnson and Calvin Wood, two other negroes who were held by the police for questioning in regard to the murder, were being questioned at Mr. Dodd's office at 62 Court Street, Brooklyn, when word came of the arrest of Brassfield. The examination of Johnson and Wood was abandoned immediately, and shortly after the arrival of the authorities the charge of murder against Brassfield was made.

### Thousands at Bier.

The funeral of Miss Kane was held yesterday, and in his oration over the casket the Rev. Father William J. Costello indicted the city Administration as responsible for her death.

Standing at the head of the flower covered bier, an impressive figure in his flowing black cassock and white surplice, the priest said in ringing tones that the undertaker should "take the crepe from the Kane home and hang it over the door of the City Hall."

More than 1,500 persons in St. Matthew's Roman Catholic Church, only a few blocks from the lot where the girl met death at the hands of a stranger, heard the priest's unusual utterance and heightened its effect with the stifled sounds of grief. Outside 2,000 others stood in Eastern Parkway, silent while the Gregorian music requiem came out to them.

Mayor Hylan last night took note of the priest's charges. In a statement he expressed his profound sympathy with the family, pledged every resource of the Police Department to the hunt for her slayer, and attributed Father Costello's sermon to ill-health and the emotional strain of the service.

# POLICE HOLD NEGRO IN KANE MURDER

Continued from Page 1, Column 6.

the cortege were three barouches heaped with flowers.

### The Mother Near Collapse.

When Mrs. Elizabeth Kane, mother of the slain girl, appeared on the porch she seemed on the verge of collapse. A son, John, supported her with difficulty. She was heavily veiled and was sobbing out "My poor girl, my poor girl." Comforting her as best he could the son placed her in the first coach and got in with her. Miss May Kane, a younger sister, rode alone in the second coach. The sister and widowed mother sat at a window on the night of the murder, waiting in vain for Florence's return.

Detective James F. Kane, the victim's brother, and other relatives occupied the third coach, relatives and friends filling the remainder of the procession.

The cortege slowly moved off for the church. It went down Montgomery Street to Utica Avenue and thence along that street to the church at the corner of Eastern Parkway. It was on this same route that the girl had walked alone to her death, returning from an evening at Manhattan theatre with seven girl friends. At the church two sergeants and twenty men from the Brownsville Station, in company with Captain Thomas F. Wynne, and two sergeants and twenty-five men from the Empire Boulevard Station, led by Captain Joseph D. Martin, were on duty.

The white casket was borne from the hearse down the centre aisle of the church and placed on a bier even with the first pews and in front of the altar, where the casket, in company with the coffin was carried down the aisle the organ sounded, the solemn measures of the "Miserere." The solemn led by Father Costello, with the Rev. Father William Rattigan as deacon and the Rev. Father Edward Mullane as sub-deacon.

At appropriate passages in the service the church quire, composed of Miss Genevieve McKenna, soprano; Miss Adelaide de Loca, contralto; Ogden King, tenor, and Joseph Timmer, basso, sang "Ave Maria." "Lead Kindly Light, and at the end Miss de Loca sang "O Rest in the Lord." At the end of the mass Father Costello went into the sacristy and discarded the vestments of his office. He returned to deliver the sermon.

### Assails City Administration.

"You may have read a story like this in books," he said, "or seen it on the screen. But here we are presented in reality with the murder of this beautiful girl. There are two things I am going to dwell upon in my sermon: the cause and the responsibility.

"The cause is the murderer skulking in a darkened corner, away from the light of detection, or he may possibly be within range of my voice. If he does hear my voice, let him hear this: The blood which stains his hands will be a nightmare and a ghost to him as long as this dastardly crime cries to heaven for vengeance. Let him behold this coffin and think of the innocent blood shed by this young girl.

"All have been filled with a feeling of sympathy for this old mother who, with another daughter, sat by a window looking for her daughter, who was lying dead 200 or 300 feet away and who dying in defense of honor, had gone down with the martyr.

"Responsibility for this crime can be traced back to the Administration of the City of New York. The City Government refused to accede to the wishes of the Police Commissioner for an appropriation giving a larger police force in order to protect our mothers, sisters and wives and also to protect life, limb and property. We need more police protection. The Police Department of New York City in comparison to the population is the smallest one in the world. Our suburbs are not properly policed. Instead of increasing our police force there seems to be a tendency on the part of the City Government to decrease it, thus making our people a prey to degenerates and bandits of the city.

### Abolished a Precinct.

"The administration abolished the Atlantic Avenue Precinct and combined two precincts into one to make the new Flatbush precinct. It has taken away police booths which acted as a symbol of safety for our people. The new station house with its increased territory has less men to do actual police work than any one precinct should have.

"What we want is more police and more police booths. I can say here that the undertaker should have taken the crepe from the door of the Kane home and pinned it on the door of the City Hall, to act as a reminder of the inefficiency of the police force, due to its small dimensions. I do not blame Police Commissioner Enright or his police men because the City Government has failed to give him appropriations for more men.

"We hear so much of the 'people' and the 'people's interests.' Let them come

over here and see our neighborhood and the protection we are getting from the police. In this coffin is a martyr and I hope that her sacrifice may result in giving every mother, wife, daughter, sister and sweetheart the right to walk our streets unmolested.

"This beautiful girl has been made a martyr to the cause of our mothers, wives and sisters. But why should she have been made a martyr? I say tear the mask of hypocrisy off the people, the political demagogues who are responsible for these conditions, and use the right of franchise in doing away with them. Put in their places men of the right kind and you will give us the right kind of police protection.

"A large measure of the city's money, which is the people's money, should be given over for the protection of their lives and their homes. Is it any wonder that we rise up in indignation? It is an every day comment and can be seen in the headlines of the newspapers, that another murder has been committed.

"I am not blaming the individual policeman; the men of the force are a brave body of men, ever ready to face all dangers, but it is physically impossible for them to cover some posts because they are too extensive. In this district, I am told, it frequently happens that one police officer is required to cover four, five and even six posts."

Father Costello criticized the lighting facilities provided for the territory, characterizing them as wholly inadequate. He recalled that a single arc light was used to illuminate the vicinity of the murder scene and that this light had gone out at 4 o'clock, long before the crime. He said that he had thought the lights near the church itself were insufficient to see a person for more. He said, "they put a little jet on an old lamp post" and in his opinion, the city Administration is pursuing "a penny-wise and pound-foolish policy." by Cap.

Mayor Hylan's reply, in full, was as follows:

"I am very sorry to hear of what was said at the funeral of Florence Kane. I am unwilling to believe that anything but the ill health of the speaker and the great emotional strain of the funeral could have prompted such utterances.

"The city Administration has constantly tried to protect the people of this city from the criminal element of all kinds. Some tragedies take place, and we have no power of the police to foresee or to prevent. The brutal attack upon the sister of a policeman points to the work of a degenerate as far as it is humanly possible the whole strength of the Police Department will be used to bring down the murderer.

"I do not believe that it was any comfort to the sorrowful mother and brother of this slain girl to hear denounced the city Administration of which that brother is a member and is loyally upholding. Nor do I believe that the widespread publicity which the newspapers, for political purposes, have given to this denunciation was helpful in so tragic a situation when a daughter and sister was being borne to her last resting place.

"My heartfelt sympathy and that of the people of the City of New York go out to the bereaved family; but I deeply regret if the unseemly remarks purporting to have been uttered by a clergyman above the dead girl's casket have added to their burden of affliction.

"I have no feeling of resentment against this rector, and my sincere wish is that he may be restored to the good health which I understand he has not had for some time."

The pastor accompanied the cortege to the grave, intoning the prayer of committal.

What detectives regarded as the first definite clue of their investigation came to them early yesterday in a story told by Mr. and Mrs. James O'Neill of 1,380 St. John's Place, Brooklyn. Mr. O'Neill said that they were returning to their home some time after midnight Thursday and they passed Miss Kane as she was hurrying along Montgomery Street. About ninety feet behind her, they said, a negro was walking rapidly. Mrs. O'Neill said that she remarked to her husband on the danger of the girl being out alone at that hour. The couple, devoted the negro as about 6 feet 9 or 10 inches in height, rather heavily built and with unusually long arms and large hands. This is the description of a negro being sought for an attack on Miss Augusta Cooperberg, young Brooklyn woman, who was brutally beaten on May 17 as she, too, returned from a Manhattan theatre.

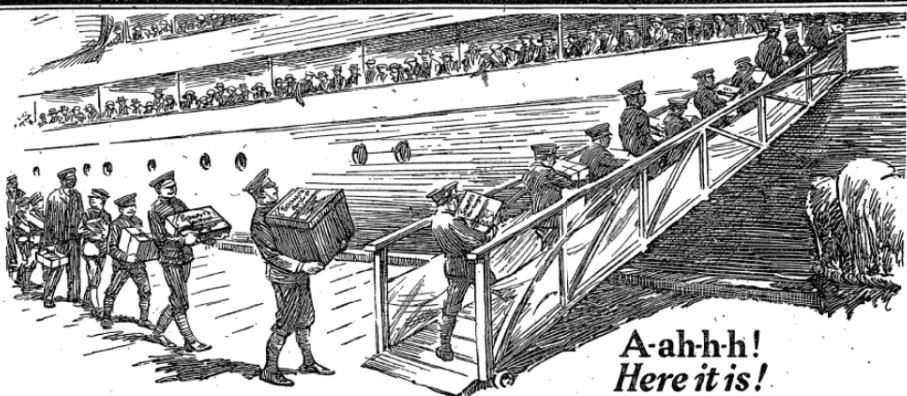
Herbert Adams, a negro, 35 years old, of 472 Rockaway Avenue, who was arrested in connection with the attack on Miss Cooperberg, was arraigned yesterday in Flatbush Court yesterday. The case was adjourned until June 17, because Miss Cooperberg is still under the care of a physician. Detectives admitted that there was no evidence against Adams, who had been arrested merely on suspicion.

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