

1925-2025

un an avec Howard Phillips Lovecraft
#230 | 23 août 1925

23 AOÛT. Aujourd'hui, je suis allé faire de l'aviron à Prospect Park, Brooklyn. Trois heures ou plus. Amusant. J'aurais aimé que tu sois avec moi. Beaucoup de gens. J'ai marché. Et mangé deux bons repas : un bon poisson et un steak de flétan. J'ai eu l'impression de ne voir personne que

je connaissais. [...] Beaucoup à faire demain. Le plus important est le téléphone. Je ne peux pas faire de publicité ni d'impression tant que je n'ai pas de numéro. Ce sera Watkins, mais j'aimerais bien que ce soit Chelsea.

25 AOÛT. J'ai travaillé assez dur aujourd'hui, jusqu'à environ cinq heures,

puis sorti et remonté *uptown* pour voir le dernier film de Chaplin, et probablement son meilleur. J'ai hâte de le revoir — en entier, et non pas du milieu à la fin. Je suis redescendu et j'ai mangé dans un petit restaurant du Village. J'avais envie de quelque chose de léger mais de bien servi. Le repas était plus léger que bien servi. Puis je suis rentré à la maison et je me suis demandé ce que j'allais bien pouvoir faire ce soir. Une décision ? Un

bon bain, encore quelques minutes de rangement et pur toit une vraie lettre à l'ancienne. Je suppose que je vais allumer ma vieille pipe que je n'ai pas fumée depuis des mois — elle était à Clinton Street, puis entreposée.

Je suis dans le vieux Chelsea, et je pense m'appeler « The Chelsea Book Shop ». Si seulement la compagnie de téléphone me donnait un numéro à Chelsea. Une chose particulièrement marquante dans mon souvenir de *La ruée vers l'or*, et la chose la plus drôle que j'aie jamais vue : il prend deux pommes de terre, les pique avec des fourchettes et, assis à la table, il s'en sert comme de pieds pour imiter un danseur. Attends de voir ça.

Lovecraft particulièrement sobre dans son carnet aujourd'hui, alors suivons Kirk : ne serait-ce que pour mesurer une fois de plus tout ce qui sépare les deux meilleurs amis du monde ! Noter l'orthographe du nom futur de sa librairie, et l'erreur concernant le célèbre ballet des petits pains !

[1925, dimanche 23 août]

Up noon — write letters — retire late.

Levé à midi. Écrit des lettres. Couché tard.

Rôle régulateur des lettres. Une chaque jour à Sonia ? Aujourd’hui et ces prochains jours, retour de la coquille et enfoncement. En profiter pour lire ce que raconte Kirk, juste revenu de son mois à Cleveland, et qui continue d’écrire à sa fiancé. Tout d’un coup un changement cinématographique de plan : la relation de Kirk à Loveman, son ami de Cleveland, passe peut-être avant celle de Kirk à Lovecraft. La surprise aussi d’un garçon physique : aujourd’hui il va faire de l’aviron pendant trois heures sur le bassin de Prospect Park. La veille il est allé voir *La rue vers l’or*, que Charlie Chaplin vient de sortir. Il avait proposé à Lovecraft de l’accompagner, mais Lovecraft dormait, et Kirk de toute façon n’y est allé que deux jours plus tard. Kirk raconte à sa fiancée le ballet des petits pains (il confond avec des pommes de terre) mais est parfaitement conscient du geste esthétique qu’est le cinéma, ce dont on ne trouvera pas trace chez Lovecraft (le 28, Kirk retourne au cinéma pour voir le *Siegfried* de Fritz Lang, il y va avec Kleiner et n’ont même pas proposé à Lovecraft de les accompagner, lui il déclare de toute façon à sa tante : « Je ne suis pas très cinéma ces temps-ci »). Symétrie dans sa façon de parler de leurs réunions, Kirk : « on a aligné des choses pas très importantes sur des sujets pas inintéressants ». Relation pas forcément simple : *Kleiner disgusted me*, sans qu’il s’en explique, sinon que c’est la raison pour laquelle il n’assistera pas aux prochaines réunions — et dispute symétrique entre Leeds et McNeil et qui alternent leurs venues pour ne pas se trouver ensemble...) Mais lorsque Kirk et Lovecraft redescendent les quatre-vingt-dix blocs évoqués vendredi, passant devant un théâtre dont la décoration extérieure est faite en raphia, sautent en l’air de concert pour se saisir chacun d’un brin et le dérouler derrière eux sur le trottoir jusqu’au bout du possible : vaguement adolescent, non ? (Mais qui se souvient aujourd’hui de ce qu’était le raphia.) Il évoque aussi la bouteille de porto que Lovecraft doit lui remettre — on est toujours sous les lois de la prohibition. Dans les lettres de Kirk pour cette fin août et le début septembre, c’est évidemment l’installation de sa nouvelle librairie en appartement sur quoi on a le plus de détail. Il trouve l’appartement assez vite, juste à la limite de Chelsea et de Greenwich, et l’urgence pour lui c’est le téléphone (Chelsea 10461, ce sera), qui lui est nécessaire pour passer des annonces publicitaires et vendre à domicile ses trésors bibliophiles. C’est chez lui que peu à peu s’établira le Kalem Club dans la période où Lovecraft sera reparti à Providence, les réunions dans la pièce où les étagères de vieux livres

vont du sol au plafond (sa fiancée a mis de l'argent dans le commerce, un prêt à la banque complète), avec cigare et café, et dans l'autre pièce, où il loge, toujours la possibilité de dormir sur un des canapés, parfois ils y restent à cinq. Les lectures de Kirk ces jours-ci : Joseph Conrad, Anatole France, la biographie de Shelley par André Maurois (la haute réputation de Maurois aux USA à cette époque, y compris pour des nouvelles fantastiques dont on ne trouve plus certaines que via leur traduction US), et Emily Dickinson. Mais les habitudes avec Lovecraft ont la peau dure : le mercredi 2 septembre, après la réunion chez Frank Belknap, ils raccompagnent Arthur Leeds à son hôtel de la 49ème rue vers 1 h 45 du matin, et redescendent à pied jusqu'à Chelsea en s'arrêtant au bord de l'Hudson à London Terrace avant de s'installer chez Kirk où ils parlent jusqu'à 6 heures du matin quoique Lovecraft, dit Kirk, ait parfois piqué du nez dans les livres. « Dans toute la gloire d'un homme heureux », dit Kirk de lui-même. Même resté ces deux jours chez lui, Lovecraft n'a pas dû déroger à la lecture du *NYT* et ses suppléments : avec les soldes d'août et les reventes d'appartement, le journal reprend du tonus et des pages (190...), profitons-en. Comme par exemple les premières photos publiées de l'expédition au Mount Logan, qu'on avait suivie en juin. Ou la réfection de la tombe de Dante, ou une révision des *Mille et une nuits*. Ou bien sûr *La ruée vers l'or* dans la page cinéma. Plus encore les moustiques : le corps médical conseille de ne pas laisser trop piquer les nourrissons.

New York Times, 23 août 1925. Tandis que les édiles des cinq boroughs de la ville se battaient hier contre l'invasion moustique, en nombre plus grand que New York n'a jamais connu tous ces été, une escadre de fieffés piqueurs a envahi la mairie elle-même. La peste grésillait dans les couloirs, et, selon les politiciens naturalistes, avaient leur pays natal dans les bassins au pied de la statue de la Vertu civique, où nagent les plus jeunes. La pluie de mardi soir avait compliqué le travail des combattants antimoustiques en leur fournissant de nombreux autres lieux pour leurs larves. Central Park, selon certains, en serait la capitale, en fournissant de toutes tailles, ronflements et couleurs, et même des insectes à l'aspect effrayant d'espèces que jamais personne n'avait vues auparavant. Des légions d'appartements, certains à plus de 9 blocks du parc, ont dû équiper leurs fenêtres moustiquaires. Les insectes, cependant, ne semblent pas avoir beaucoup de peine à contourner les écrans, se précipitant vers les occupants avec un zèle redoublé. Selon certains habitants à proximité immédiate du parc, les moustiquaires sont une erreur, en ce qu'elles contribuent surtout à mettre les insectes en colère et les renforcer dans leur souhait de vengeance à l'encontre de quiconque souhaite les garder dehors. Le Dr J Allen Patton, directeur de la compagnie d'assurances Prudential, a insisté hier sur la nécessité de protéger les nourrissons des piqûres.

CHIEF ARCTIC FLIER AGREES ON RETURN

Byrd Notifies Navy of Decision Reluctantly Reached in Conference With MacMillan.

PREPARE TO SAIL FOR MAINE

Leaders Are Disappointed, but Courage of Men in Face of Great Obstacles Is Praised.

Special to The New York Times.

WASHINGTON, Aug. 22.—Formal notice that the MacMillan aerial exploration of the Polar Sea had been abandoned, owing to the unseasonable climatic conditions, was received at the Navy Department today direct from Lieut. Commander R. E. Byrd, at Etah. The decision, which was made with reluctance, followed a conference between the aviation chief and Commander MacMillan.

In his message, which bears the date of Aug. 20, and which was forwarded from Seattle, Wash., by F. K. Leberman, Commander Byrd reported that Commander MacMillan had given orders to prepare the ship and planes for departure to Wisconsin, Me.

The decision thus reached meets with the approval of Secretary of the Navy Wilbur, who notified Commander Byrd on Tuesday that it might be well to call off the enterprise in view of the handicaps and hazards.

Following his statement that the explorers were making preparations to return southward, Commander Byrd added:

"I am very much disappointed that we cannot continue to accomplish our mission and I have so expressed myself, but do not presume that I question Commander MacMillan's good judgment, nor do I fail to sympathize with him in his position, and I know that it is with great reluctance that he gives orders to abandon our flight. He has never failed to put the greatest effort into making the aviation program a success.

"The navy personnel with me has put forth superhuman efforts during this undertaking and I am proud of them even if the time has been wanting to accomplish the mission. They have overcome great obstacles and they deserve better success."

In accordance with instructions forwarded earlier in the week, the naval aviation unit accompanying MacMillan will do some exploratory work in Greenland and Labrador on the return journey.

Describes Cruelty of Arctic.

Maynard Owen Williams, a staff correspondent of the National Geographical Society with the expedition, in a dispatch from on board the Bowdoin in Pandora Harbor, Greenland, says:

"The Arctic as I have just seen it from an airplane is the same cruel Arctic only more so."

Derailed Train Ties Up Brooklyn Subway; Crowd Calm in Smoke and Darkness

Traffic on the Lexington Avenue and Broadway-Seventh Avenue lines of the Interborough Subway was suspended in Brooklyn between Atlantic Avenue and Clark Street yesterday between 5:27 P.M. and 6:32 P.M. by the derailing of the forward car of a ten-car northbound express train of the Lexington Avenue line at a switch 100 feet from the Atlantic Avenue terminus.

The train was crowded. The motor-man had headed it through a switch to take him inside the round track, where the first car left the track and carried five cars with it across the four sets of tracks. The feed cable on the six cars scraped the rails, pulling loose and extinguishing the emergency lights in the train and causing clouds of smoke to rise into the cars, but the passengers remained calm. No one was hurt.

The station master at the Atlantic Avenue Station had the power turned off between Atlantic Avenue and Clark Street and called a wrecking crew to lift the derailed car back to the track.

Passengers on the train were helped off by members of the train and platform crews. They walked back on the tracks to Atlantic Avenue, where they completed their journeys by surface cars, elevated and B. M. T. trains.

Persons coming into the Atlantic Avenue Station from Flatbush and East New York also had to get other trains to complete their journeys from this station to the Wall Street and Bowling Green Stations of the Interborough, which, until the derailed car was placed back on the train, formed the terminals of service in downtown Manhattan.

Mouquin's, Once Rendezvous for Epicures, Later Padlocked, Now Is Closed for Good

Mouquin's, a favorite French restaurant in other days, is closed for good. It has gone, sadly admitted Louis C. Mouquin yesterday, to join the memories and a "to lease" sign on the door at Sixth Avenue and Twenty-eighth Street marks its passing.

"We decided about a month ago," said Mouquin, the son of the founder, "that our day in that kind of restaurant was done. So we put up the sign and we await a person to lease it. Prohibition? Maybe. At any rate, what kind of a restaurant does not pay any more. Why? I do not know."

The restaurant was opened in 1897. Henri Mouquin had established a restaurant in Fulton Street which had become a downtown institution. Charles Dana and Horace Greeley in their day were patrons there, and Mrs. Mouquin, known as "Mother Mouquin," had achieved notable success in the culinary art.

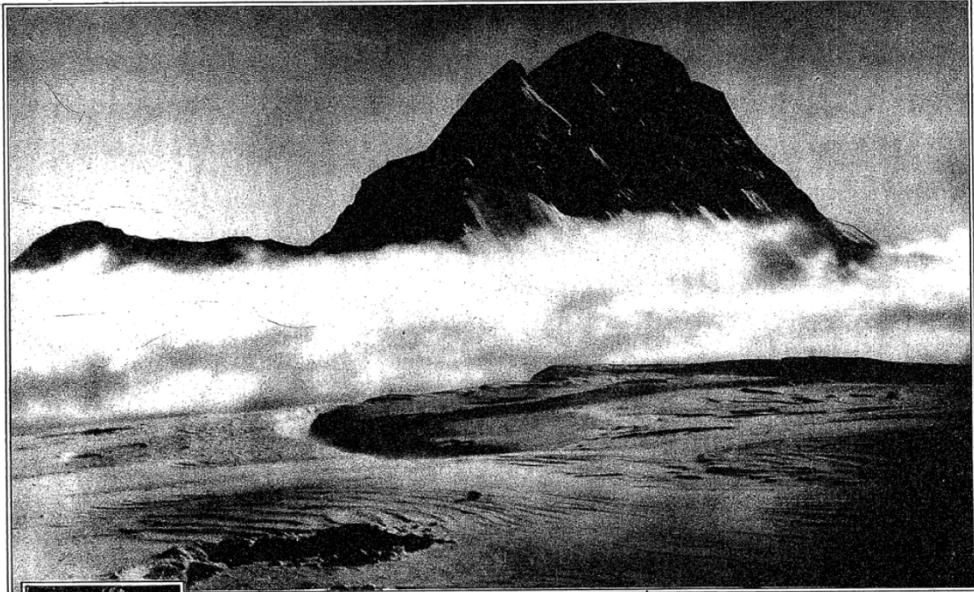
The uptown restaurant was then decided upon. It was located in the two-story wooden structure which had occupied the ground floor of the building, one of Manhattan's oldest landmarks. It was built by Henry Varian, brother of Isaac Varian, who was Mayor of New York in 1839-40, and was known as "Knickerbocker Cottage." There in 1866 was organized the New York Athletic Club, the first amateur athletic organization in America.

When Henri Mouquin took over the

cottage it was housing Jacquin's Restaurant, credited with originating the "red ink" table d'hôte. Mouquin discarded the table d'hôte and served his meals à la carte. Many of his dishes attained a vogue, and his wines, especially the sparkling ones, were considered excellent.

With the advent of prohibition the luster of the restaurant began to fade. Early in March last a padlock was put on the front door by order of the Federal Court. The management was charged with permitting the sale of intoxicating liquors. Two waiters, Alexander Chapat and Armand Francot de Lysle, subsequently committed suicide by inhaling gas. The man had worked at Mouquin's for twenty years and their despondency was attributed to the closing of the restaurant and their inability to find employment.

Another episode of the padlocking was the plight of the "Mouquin" cats. Mice were frequent tenants of the old frame structure, and an army of rats was maintained to prey on them. When the Federal officers closed the restaurant they shooed cat after cat out of the door. Two cats, however, remained behind. Their cries finally caused neighbors to send for the police. The policemen reported the job beyond them, owing to the padlock. Federal officers and an expert cat-catcher from the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals finally rescued the cats.



ADA: THE WHITE RIM OF KING COI, a Sheer Drop of 2,500 Feet, With King Peak Behind the Cloud, at the Summit of Mount Logan, the Highest Peak in Canada, Which Has Been Sealed by an Expedition Headed by Captain McCarthy. (Photos © 1925, Vancouver (B.C.) Daily Province.)



THE LATEST VERSION OF "DINAH" IS SEEN HERE, AND SELLS ON HER TOURS OF CANADA. Ada Arrives From Europe on the "Dinah," a Sled Which She Painted With Her Own and Her Husband's Names and a Sweet Embroidery With a "Robert" of Her Name.



BLOWING HIS OWN HORN IN SWITZERLAND: HOMER CROW, the Novelist, Who Is on a Journey of America in Europe, With His Little Daughter Carol, Makes the Weikin Ring Resonate With World Stories.



THE PORTAL TO THE HEIGHTS OF MOUNT LOGAN: CAMP AT KING COI, Where the Party Spent Five Nights in Bitter Weather and Long Exposure, Before Moving Up to Higher Altitudes.



HIGH UP IN THE AMERICAN ALPS: WINDY GAP, on the Side of Mount Logan, Where Camp Was Pitched at an Elevation of 16,500 Feet During the Ascent of the Mountain, While the Temperature Registered a Minimum of 22 Below Zero.



WITHIN SIGHT OF THE GOAL: THE EXPEDITION LEAVING CASCADE CAMP, Where the Party Spent Two Days, on the Last Lap to the Summit of Mount Logan. Each Man of the Party Carried Seventy Pounds Over 200 Miles of Ridge and Glacier and 30 Steep Slopes.



CLAIRE LUCE, Formerly "The Girl in the Revue," Now With the Summer Revue at the Casino de Paris, Wears She Wears Mistinguett's Famous Hat, Given to Her by Her Husband, His Mephisto, to Show His Wife. (Photos Wire Photo Bureau.)

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