

[1925, jeudi 10 décembre]

Stay up — write letters — start for library — LDC////Library — read
Dexter — return & retire at 11:30.

*Pas couché. Écrit des lettres. Parti pour la bibliothèque. Envoyé lettre
Lillian. Bibliothèque. Lu le Dexter. Retour et couché 23 h 30.*

Eh bien, lisons-le nous aussi, ce « Dexter », ou plutôt ce *Timothy Dexter* que John P. Marquand refait paraître cette année 1925 chez Little, Brown and Company à Boston, d'où le fait que Lovecraft ne puisse le lire qu'à la Public Library de la Ve Avenue : il n'est pas encore accessible au prêt. Et merci (L.B., une fois de plus) pour m'avoir signalé cette curiosité de la réédition, le passage ci-dessus où l'auteur propose comme une grille des ponctuations à disposition des imprimeurs « pour les insérer là où nécessaire » (*thay may peper and solt it as they plese*). Exemple de là où nous en sommes dans la méthode, ce PDF de l'édition 1925 sera joint bien sûr à nos ressources numériques, et l'index qui prendra tout bientôt la suite du carnet aura à charge d'y mener, mais aussi, à rebours, d'en retrouver les occurrences ici-même. En attendant, puisque Lovecraft y passe sa journée (pas plus de détails dans la lettre qu'il poste à Lillian sur son chemin, avec encore la mention : « je vais probablement partir pour la bibliothèque », c'est donc ce qu'il fait — avec arrêt à l'Automat de Times Square quand il en sort à la fermeture, ou plutôt lors d'une pause en fin d'après-midi ?), profitons du « Dexter » pour quelques-unes de ses illustrations d'époque...

New York Times, le 10 décembre. Quand. Mlle Consuelo Vanderbilt, deuxième fille de M. et Mme William K. Vanderbilt, se mariera le mois prochain avec Earl E. T. Smith. Elle recevra en cadeau de mariage de son père la résidence située au 24 East Sixty-fourth Street, entre la Cinquième Avenue et Madison Avenue. Il s'agit de l'une des plus belles maisons avec sous-sol à l'anglaise du quartier de la Cinquième Avenue, dont la valeur fiscale était estimée à 110 000 dollars en 1924. Il s'agit d'un bâtiment moderne avec une façade de 21 pieds sur le côté sud de la 64e rue et une profondeur de 100 pieds, comprenant quatre chambres principales, quatre salles de bains et six chambres pour les domestiques. La structure a une façade en pierre blanche et comprend un ascenseur électrique. La propriété a été achetée en juillet dernier à Charles G. Cornell par Emery L. Ferris par l'intermédiaire de Pease & Eillman, agents immobiliers, qui ont annoncé hier que l'achat avait été effectué pour M. Vanderbilt. La maison est actuellement occupée par un gardien et deviendra la résidence du couple après leur mariage le 7 janvier. Deux des maisons de la famille Vanderbilt sur la Cinquième Avenue ont été récemment vendues et seront rasées pour faire place à des immeubles commerciaux. La maison de Mme William K. Vanderbilt, conçue par Morris Hunt, l'un des plus grands architectes américains, et qui a été

pendant quarante-cinq ans un monument emblématique de la Cinquième Avenue et de la 52e rue, a été vendue à Benjamin F. Winter, un agent immobilier. Elle est désormais ouverte au public et des milliers de personnes l'ont visitée pour en inspecter l'intérieur avant que les démolisseurs ne commencent leur travail. Une autre maison récemment vendue est celle de Cornelius Vanderbilt, située sur la Cinquième Avenue, entre la 57e et la 58e rue. En novembre, la Cour suprême a autorisé la veuve à vendre la propriété. L'acheteur, la Braisted Bealty Corporation, qui serait contrôlée par G. Maurice Heckscher, aurait payé 7 100 000 dollars. La maison a été construite en 1891. Un hôtel de cinquante-six étages sera construit sur le site. Au début de cette année, Mme Cornelius Vanderbilt a fait l'acquisition de la maison de feu George Jay Gould, située à l'angle nord-est de la Cinquième Avenue et de la 67e rue. Le prix annoncé était de 800 000 dollars. La maison avait été construite par M. Gould en 1908 pour un coût de 1 250 000 dollars.

Miss Consuelo Vanderbilt to Receive House In Sixty-fourth St. as Father's Wedding Gift

When Miss Consuelo Vanderbilt, second daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William K. Vanderbilt, is married next month to Earl E. T. Smith she will receive as a wedding gift from her father the residence at 24 East Sixty-fourth Street, between Fifth and Madison Avenues. This is one of the finest English basement houses in the Fifth Avenue section and was assessed for taxation purposes in 1924 at \$110,000.

It is a modern building with a frontage on the south side of Sixty-fourth Street of 21 feet and a depth of 100 feet, containing four master bedrooms, four baths and six rooms for servants. The structure has a white stone front and contains an electric elevator.

The property was purchased last July from Charles G. Cornell by Emery L. Ferris through Pease & Elliman, real estate brokers, who announced yesterday that the purchase had been made for Mr. Vanderbilt. The house is occupied at present by a caretaker, and will become the home of the couple after their marriage on Jan. 7.

Two of the homes of the Vanderbilt

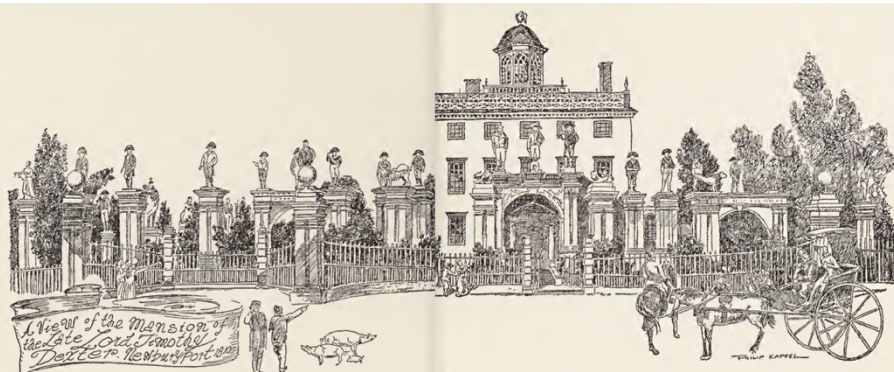
family in Fifth Avenue were recently sold and are to be razed to give way to commercial buildings. The home of Mrs. William K. Vanderbilt, designed by Morris Hunt, one of America's foremost architects, and for forty-five years a landmark at Fifth Avenue and Fifty-second Street, has been sold to Benjamin F. Winter, a realtor. It is now open as a show place and thousands have visited it to inspect the interior before the housewreckers begin work.

Another house recently sold is the Cornelius Vanderbilt home in Fifth Avenue, between Fifty-seventh and Fifty-eighth Streets. The Supreme Court in November authorized the widow to sell the property. The buyer, the Braisted Realty Corporation, said to be controlled by G. Maurice Heckscher, is reported to have paid \$1,100,000. The house was built in 1891. A fifty-six-story hotel will be erected upon the site.

Early this year Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt obtained the home of the late George Jay Gould at the northeast corner of Fifth Avenue and Sixty-seventh Street. The reported price was \$800,000. The house was erected by Mr. Gould in 1908 at a cost of \$1,250,000.

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that have been attempted hitherto in this book. For, commencing with the year 1801, Timothy Dexter translated his estate from a residential property into a great outdoor museum, fraught with confused symbolic significance. This all becomes apparent from an examination of the print, and here a magnifying glass is helpful, for a close scrutiny is rewarding. One can see that the formal picket fence of the Jackson era has been altered so that it sweeps in a wide arc of welcome almost to the mansion's front door. A high arch has been erected before this door, on which stand the three figures of the Presidents of the United States: General Washington in the center, flanked by Messrs. Adams and Jefferson. There are other arches to

right and left, that support figures of lions and soldiers. Then among these main decorations, rising above small trees and shrubbery, appear a profusion of tall columns, each one a base for some other figure, here an Indian, there a goddess or a famous statesman. These figures, you will notice, are grouped more or less symmetrically about the house and cover the spacious grounds to its rear, until they are lost in the dimness of perspective. The house itself looks much as we have already described it, with its cupola and its eagle and ornamental balustrade and spheres. The windows of its first and second stories, though in the print, look higher and narrower than the windows extant in the house today. Mr. Howells, in *The Architectural Heritage*



place at any hour and stay as long as she pleased. She could handle Samuel when attacked by the horrors, and if Nancy wandered off the grounds she was the one who could find her and lead her home. All the family, including Lord Dexter, respected her orders; and when Lucy was on duty she ran the establishment as efficiently as her grandfather had managed his African principality. Her judgment of Lord Dexter, as passed down to us, is the most sensible and unprejudiced estimate extant. Though temperamental, he was not at all a bad man, she said. In many respects he was intelligent, and he was also very honest,

The Unkind Nymph of Chester

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always scrupulously careful that workmen on the place were paid according to contract. His fits of temper and his more peculiar acts, she declared, were caused by lack of occupation. When he became nervous and restless, it was wise at all costs to keep him away from liquor, or trouble would ensue. Instead of drink, she advised that efforts should be made to interest him in some new project on the grounds, the garden, the outhouses or the fences. As soon as he could see his workmen improving the place, he would watch them happily in his large tasseled hat, with his cane, accompanied by his pig-like dog.

It is regrettable that the kind and efficient Lucy was not always at the Dexter house to control Dexter and his companions and to keep the "ghost," as he now customarily referred to Madam Dexter, in a happy frame of mind. "My old head," Dexter tells us, "has wore out three boddeys." If it is biologically true that all the cells in a human being are replaced by new ones each seven years, he was less than right. But if his body was failing and covered with scars, the gray cells in his cranium were functioning more fantastically than ever, and his restiveness often contrived to destroy his self-control. It was such a condition that caused him to write the following communication to the *Impartial Herald* on July 3, 1798:

Take Notice, I inform Men, Women, and Children not to trouble me with their pretended friendship in coming to beg my earnings in no shape whatever — nor to get my Fruit, for I have none to give away, and if they steal it they must suffer by the Law. Furthermore I mean to sift all Rogues and Vagabonds in and about Newburyport, for it is not a time to let lazy people live in their idleness: — if

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Lord Dexter's Odd Volume

WHILE MR. WILSON's mallet and chisel made the chips fly from the emerging forms of the palace figures, life in the Dexter ménage moved on with the same totterings and gyrations that have characterized it throughout our history. The death of Madam Hooper caused him to take up with a more famous seeress, Moll Pitcher—a difficult matter, since she lived twenty-eight miles away and was averse to making house calls. On Dexter's first visit to her, in spite of his disguising himself, she astounded him by retailing all his past history. Madam Hooper had helped solve the theft of the Dexter melons, and Moll Pitcher continued the good work. Because of charms and night watchmen, Newburyport boys became afraid to steal the plums and apples.

Dexter, during his more peaceful moments in the palace, was developing so great an interest in clocks and watches that all the rooms became filled with them to an extent that made it necessary to employ a clockmaker to wind and set them. It delighted His Lordship to follow this expert as he went the rounds, and once Lord Dexter surprised him by making a philosophical remark. He said that he wished mankind could be wound up and controlled as readily as



clocks. Mr. Dexter also brought a further projection of this thought into a conversation with a caller. When one of his favorite subjects came up—that of local ministers—he wished that these men would cease their quarreling. If they could only be handled like clocks, he could arrange it so that they did not tick so loudly.

His fits of temper grew more uncontrolled. On some days he was delighted at the public interest in his wooden figures, whereas on others he violently resented curiosity. Finally he flew into a rage at a pedestrian who peered through the picket fence and fired at him with a pistol.

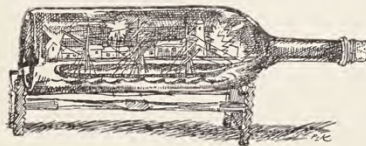
X V I I I

Gateway to Fantasy

AT THE SEASON of year when the crickets begin chirping, a time itself often gives the impression of stopping in Newburyport, reminding one of a pause in the brisk unrolling of a film. This phenomenon, allowing everyone to see everything very clearly, without distraction, existed in the last years of Dexter more markedly than in ours. From the cupola of the palace, a spot now visited seldom, if ever, by the lord of the manor, the Merrimack was blue and silver in the sun, and the dunes of Plum Island, that shifting bulwark that protected the town from the ocean, were as gold as ever when the sun's rays were at a proper angle. The light of late summer had an autumnal clarity that occasionally made everything as peaceful as the surface of a millpond. The shipping in the harbor was more intricate and beautiful than it had been earlier. The hulls of the ships, the brigs, the hermaphrodites and the schooners, now to be seen only in the shop of a local maker of ship's models, had a variety of color not to be equaled by the later clipper ships. New dwellings were rising on High Street. The spire of the church of the First Religious Society on Pleasant Street had appeared when Dexter's museum was in the making. The museum itself was in excellent condition, with

Gateway to Fantasy

every figure painted, crowding the grounds more thickly than the statues in the acres of an elaborate French château. The lawns and gardens, tended and improved under Lord Dexter's supervision, had never looked better, and the orchards seldom more tempting to the covetous eyes of youth on High or Low Streets. They were still protected by watchmen and by mystical incantation. The green and



white house itself rose in a miragelike lack of realism above its lawns, its images and its exotic trees and shrubbery. The whole place had never looked better, but the word was passing through Newburyport that the creator of this Federalist Disneyland was not all he used to be.

This gossip was carried by workmen and servants and by the faithful group that still attended the palace. But passers-by looking through the fence could still see the master, inspecting his domain, gazing at his own effigy and saluting that of Napoleon, whose star was not yet on the wane. In spite of such reassuring glimpses, word was circulating that Timothy Dexter, whose life since he had made his fortune had been one long flight from reality, was now retreating further. He had traveled a great way from his Malden boyhood and thence down the old shore road to

There is no way of telling exactly what made him want to write a book, but the result is still phenomenal. With a limited education and with no fixed idea of what he wished to say, between the autumn of 1801 and before the year 1802 had expired Lord Dexter succeeded in producing a printed work. Judging from the beginning, he may have planned it as an informative explanation of the museum and the figures that might be sold or given to the general public, but if this was his intention, it soon got out of hand. This book of Timothy Dexter's, exceptional by any unit of measure, was published in Salem in the year 1802, and not in Newburyport. Its title seems too witty to have been the author's, but it expresses perfectly the spirit and the contents: *A Pickle for the Knowing Ones; or, Plain Truths in a Homespun Dress*. The contents discuss so many aspects of its author's career that we have quoted from it freely throughout this text. Thus we are familiar with its character; yet it is still hard to describe the general nature of the Dexter opus.

Roughly it may be placed in the category of anthology, in that parts of it are a collection of previous statements to the press, and the rest is in general an assortment of announcements intended for public consumption which end nowhere in particular; but this is not a complete definition. There is something as elusive in *A Pickle for the Knowing Ones* as in the whole Dexter libido. It might be better to say that the *Pickle* is a mirror, held before the contradictions of its author's febrile mind. This does not imply that it is a human document in the dearest sense of the phrase, because it is much more. Its unselfconsciousness makes it one of the most astonishing exhibitions of character achieved in the world of letters.



Exactly as its contents indicate, it is a pickle of words, misspelled, miscapitalized, and put together without punctuation; but a careful perusal will show that it is not meaningless. On the contrary, each page is crammed with bits of extraneous information that are scrambled to fit its author's mood. If it takes broken eggs to make an omelet, it is almost impossible to count the eggs of thought that Lord Dexter broke in composing his masterpiece. His sentences tumble over themselves in his eagerness for self-expression. Seldom have so many extraneous ideas been included in so little space. For example in its pages are Dexter's full plans for his museum, including its metaphysical significance. The *Pickle*, besides, contains his views on world politics (including a brief outline for a parliament of nations), a dissertation on his becoming a lord, a first-person revelation of how he made his money, some thoughts on the folly of

This seems to be the only time that our friend ever came in full-dress contact with the law. He drove to the Ipswich jail in his own coach, delighted with the idea that he was the first man to go to jail behind his own horses, but he was allowed to go home again after payment of a fine.

While all these things transpired, Lord Dexter was indoors more than usual. He was finding a growing solace in what may be termed creative writing, and his increased interest displays itself in the number and length of his contributions to the *Herald*. His longest one, published about this time, was a detailed letter to the General Court of Massachusetts on the subject of building bridges across the Merrimack River. From it one can gather that Dexter was averse to having any other bridges across the Merrimack except the Essex-Merrimack Bridge. He was alarmed that the General Court was planning another. The communication comprised a column of fine type, consisting of one- and two-syllable words, all of them misspelled, each usually in a different manner from the other. With the exception of three numbered paragraphs, there was not a single punctuation mark or capital.

The most noteworthy result of the effort is that it elicited a poem by a Newburyport writer, under the pen name of "Rusticus," purporting to be the answer of the General Court of Massachusetts.

My Lord, of royal, silken Robe,
We hear that you own half the globe
And though your suit to us preferred
Is outrée, here and there a word
May such a Lord have all that's good
And lambs and Lions when of wood;

Give him coaches, give him horses,
Fortune make up Samuel's losses,
Young flesh give him — every pleasure,
Stone rings, pictures without measure;
Brandy, give good punch and cider,
Gold-lac'd waistcoats stretched still wider,
Nectar'd oceans let him drink
But, Gods withhold — a pen and ink!

The world would have been a sadder place, and the Dexter memory more ephemeral than it is today, had the prayer of Rusticus been answered. Instead, Timothy Dexter, while figure after figure appeared on his grounds, was working on his *Pickle for the Knowing Ones*. We have seen, beginning with his formal advertisement of moosehide and blubber, how this malady of composition so prevalent among other nervous and unfulfilled types grew on him through his most fruitful years. Once he had exhibited diffidence when he had approached the local printers and had been apologetic for his untutored style. As early as the year 1798 he called publicly for the help of "Coleage Lant" people to assist in putting his ideas in order, because, as he confided, he knew, in spite of his limited powers of self-expression, that he did possess a lot of good ideas. Although we know from the way his sentences were brushed and furnished on various occasions that there were a few in town who did heed his plea, the main part of the work on which he was now embarking was wholly his own. His grammar and his spelling were already part of a tradition, with which printers may have taken liberties in order to increase its comicality, but still the Dexter product has a hallmark that is not susceptible of parody.