

# The GREATEST FANTASY

by CHARLES RECOUR

**I**F READERS of fantastic fiction were polled to find out what in their estimation is the greatest fantasy story ever written, unquestionably there would be many answers. In the first place, "by greatest fantasy" we have to define what we mean. What would be great by the standards of one person, would be mediocre by the standards of another. Perhaps the question should be rephrased; what is the widest-known fantasy? It is generally conceded that on this basis, probably the answer would be—the legend of Faust. This has been told and retold a thousand times in a thousand different ways. Today it is most familiar in the form of the opera, both Gounod's "Faust" and Berlioz's "The Damnation of Faust," the latter being perhaps more complete. Both are based on Goethe's famous classic "Faust." Goethe in turn, is supposed to have gotten the idea from something of Marlowe's Faust. Regardless of the origin, the stories all follow the familiar pattern of the temptation of a man by the devil. In its way, Faust is one of the most fascinating fantasies ever written, because it involves all the fundamentals of good fantasy, ranging from the beautiful girl to the fascinatingly evil Devil. It is a gem among stories. Faust, Dr. Faustus, or what have you was a renowned metaphysician and philosopher of medieval Germany. The bearded old sage, hoary with age, is pondering the futility of living any longer. He has seen all life has to offer, he has solved his problems and he sees no further reason for living. In his despair he calls on the Devil for aid. In a flare of flame, Mephistopheles appears before him and proceeds to tempt him. "Give me your soul," he says to the aged philosopher, "and I will give you these!" And before Faust's eyes he conjures up visions of wealth, and health and youth, and joy. Faust resists all these, until the devil shows him the prize of all prizes, a lovely girl seated before a spinning wheel. With this Faust breaks down and makes a pact with the Devil. He at once becomes a handsome young man.

The Devil takes him first to a drinking-room, a tavern where university students are singing of the joys of life, introduces him to the crowd and furnishes wine to it by striking an empty cask. They leave the tavern when the students become angry and fearful when one of their number spills some of the magic wine and it flares up into flame when it touches the ground.

Faust meets Marguerite, this lovely golden-haired girl, but he makes little progress with her because she is fundamentally good and virtuous.



In addition she is always guarded by a middle-aged chaperon. Faust calls to the Devil. He gives Faust something that will break Marguerite's resistance—a cask of fabulous jewels. In addition he, the Devil, dallies with the maid, so that Faust can be alone with Marguerite. In spite of herself, Marguerite succumbs to the charm of Faust and the magic of the jewels. She falls madly in love with Faust and they have their tryst.

Valentine, Marguerite's brother, a soldier, learns of her state, and attempts to kill Faust, but he, aided by the magic of the Devil, kills Valentine, instead. Dying, Valentine curses Marguerite and leaves her terrified. Meanwhile Faust goes on to the revels of Walpurgis Night, wherein he further enjoys the pleasures of the world. Marguerite, half-mad with terror, kills her child and is in prison. Faust appears to her and urges her to come with him, but even in her delirium, her innate purity comes to her rescue and she repulses him, to die and to be borne to Heaven. As she dies and is borne heavenward by a chorus of celestial angels Faust is dragged off into the depths of Hell by the Devil. That is the story of Faust, essentially, though there have been numerous variations on this theme.

Simple as it is, it stands out as a masterpiece. Many fantasies have been based on a similar theme, and treated in a like fashion. How often have you read a story wherein the hero is tempted by the devil? Never-the-less, for classic beauty, the legend of Faust probably remains the superior of any that has been written. In the opera, the music that accompanies it—the story—strongly aids in the illusion of the fantasy and it is a difficult thing not to be carried away by it. Faust is the fantasy of all fantasies.

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Felix held the massive blade in his hand and stood alone on top of the bar,

# THE TAVERN KNIGHT

by S. M. TENNESHAW



while the dragon, spouting fire and smoke, roared a thunderous challenge . . .

**Some men are born meek and stay that way the rest of their lives. Felix Murphy was born that way, but something happened that changed him—the dragon, of course . . .**

**H**AD Felix Murphy obeyed his conscience, completely avoided the Dragon's Head Inn, and gone straight home from work that evening, it would never have happened. But for the first time in over twenty years, Felix Murphy did not go straight home.

Felix was a little man. He was not of the heritage who made history, fame and fortune—just a little man. But Felix had great aspirations. He longed to be someone of importance, to give orders instead of take them—just little teeny orders.

He longed to see someone jump to his commands, like he had jumped for the last twenty years in the Manhattan Water Bureau whenever Dagmar Schultz—big, blustering, swearing Dagmar Schultz, had snapped an order at him.

Felix hated the Dutchman. He hated him because of his strength. Felix despised weakness, and because he was the weakest person on Earth, he hated himself. Even at home he was not master. His wife, Dora as big as he was little, continually nagged at him. Home and Dora was almost as nauseating as work and Schultz.

Often at night Felix would dream. He saw himself giving orders at the plant—giving orders to Dagmar Schultz. He saw himself standing before the herculean pumps which distributed water to all of Lower Manhattan—standing there and bellowing at the top of his voice, while men jumped

to do his bidding.

Often he would dream of going home at 5:30 to stop at the Dragon's Head Inn, where he would leisurely place his foot upon the gleaming brass rail, rest his elbows on the slick, mahogany bar, and in a steady voice ask for a straight whisky.

But then Felix would suddenly wake to find that it was all a dream. He would cry and curse alternately, damning his lack of courage and crying because he knew he could do nothing about it.

And so Felix kept going to work at 8:30 every morning except Sunday, when he would have to stay home all day and listen to Dora moan and wail about their ill luck, the price of butter, and about all the nice things that Hinkleman's had for sale the last week which she could have bought if only she had a husband with a backbone, half a brain, and a pocket clogged with bills. And at 5:30 every evening, Felix would trudge homeward, past the Dragon's Head Inn from whence came the rollicking laughter of men who were men, and the soft enchanting clink of glasses on the bar.

That night, Felix, for the first time in twenty years stopped before the tavern to listen to these sounds of merry-making. Sounds that he would have sold his right arm to be making—if only he had the courage.

Felix marveled inwardly that he had the audacity to stop before the tavern, and he almost imagined himself strut-

ting through those swinging doors to park himself importantly before the bar. Almost, that is, because suddenly the scrape of heavy feet came from behind, and before he knew what was happening, a mass of humanity barged against him. A weak protest died in his throat as he was borne headlong through the forbidding portals to find himself standing dumbly amid the noisy interior of the Inn.

From somewhere, Felix heard a gruff voice demanding: "Well, is it in or out! Make up your mind!"

Felix had never been so terrified in all his life. He wanted to run, fly, and congratulate himself all at once. The result was that he did nothing.

The air was choked with tobacco smoke, and though the evening was yet young, the bar was crowded. Laughter, curses, and the profane cry of "BEER!" all smote upon his ears at once. Felix shuddered and glanced about him.

**T**WO massive bartenders were kept busy at the tap. A never ending stream of amber liquid poured into waiting glasses, topped by a rich, creamy lather. Felix marvelled that almost as quickly as they were filled—they came back empty.

Behind the bar stood a massive set of oaken shelves, upon which reposed the largest assortment of whiskies, brandies, and gins, that Felix had ever seen. Above these shelves, on the dull plaster of the wall hung an artificial dragon's head. Beneath it swung a double edged sword.

Turning his attention to the tavern proper, Felix noted that only a few of the many tables and wall booths were occupied. Dimly he became conscious that a cold sweat was forming on his brow.

Felix wanted to run. He was scared,

and he knew it. Inwardly he wished he could walk up to the bar and demand a stein of beer, but he also knew he lacked the necessary courage.

And then Felix received the shock of his life. One of the bartenders had his eye on him. It was a cold stare that made water of Felix's already wobbly knees. It seemed to imply: "Well? What are you standing there for! Speak up or get the hell out of here!"

The room began to swim before Felix's terrified eyes. He felt as if he were going to faint, and almost welcomed the thought; when suddenly a harsh teutonic voice split the air.

"You dare, Felix Murphy! Come here!"

Felix thought he would sink through the floor when he heard that voice call his name. Not because it was his name, but because he knew that voice. It belonged to the one man he hated, feared, and respected above all others—Dagmar Schultz. Felix wheeled and prepared to make a dash for the door, providing his rubbery legs would support him that far.

"Lieber Gott! Pe your ears as empty as your head! You—Murphy!"

Felix knew he was licked before he started. He would obey Schultz—he always did; but he resented the thought bitterly. With a sigh he turned and faced the center of the room.

Dagmar Schultz was seated at a small table off to one side of the tavern, a long necked bottle in one hand, and a half-empty glass in the other. He sat hunched forward, his close-cropped head bobbing up and down like a wallowing hog. He was obviously drunk, or close to it.

"Ach so! You finally heard me." He swung one massive arm towards a vacant chair across from him, "Zit down, ve have pizzness to dizcuss!"

Felix was in no mood to incur the

giant Dutchman's wrath, so he meekly complied and seated himself at the table.

"Tell me, Murphy," Schultz demanded after gazing closely at Felix for a few moments, "your eyes, dey pe goot? You can zee mit dem?"

Felix squinted at Schultz. Why should he care if his eyes were all right? At that moment Felix wasn't at all sure of any of his senses.

"Sure, Mr. Schultz," Felix replied, "sure my eyes are all right—do they look bad?" He raised a fearful hand to his brow and felt around in apprehension.

"Ach, Mein Gott! At a time like zis you ask vor how you feel! Tell me, Murphy," he leaned forward until his alcoholic breath stung Felix's nostrils sharply. "Do you zee anything behind me?"

Felix nearly fell off the chair. Schultz—Dagmar Schultz was actually *asking* him something! Felix felt a sudden glow of importance steal over him. He raised his eyes from the flushed face of the German and glanced over his shoulder. All that met his gaze was the shadowed corner booth in which a man was slowly sipping his beer.

"No, Mr. Schultz," Felix affirmed, "I don't see anything behind you."

"Ah," breathed Schultz in satisfaction, "dat iz goot. Here mine freund, have a trink!" Unsteadily he poured liquid from the long necked bottle into a glass, and handed it to Felix. If there was anything Felix needed at that moment, it was a drink, and he gulped it down greedily. Immediately his throat seemed to burst into flame and he coughed fiercely, reaching for a chaser which wasn't there. Schultz reached over and slapped his back until the coughing subsided. He shook his head in disapproval.

"Teuffel! Put you mos pe a infant!" He reached across the table and refilled Felix's glass. "Trink! It will make a man ov you." But Felix was in no drinking mood at that moment; he was sitting staring over Schultz's shoulder—his eyes popping wildly.

In the dark corner of the room, adjacent to the corner booth, the booth where he had seen a man sipping beer, Felix now saw something move. It was large—too damned large. It had a head like a dragon and was breathing fire and smoke. A long forked tongue flickered out and caressed a vicious looking taloned claw. To Felix it looked like a dragon from some bygone age. Then it dawned on him—it was a dragon! Good Lord! It was a dragon! Something tingled at the base of Felix's spine.

"No—no! It can't be—" whispered Felix, unable to scream as he would have liked to, "it's preposterous—dragons don't exist—it's not there!"

"Tats vat I zay!" rumbled Schultz, banging a huge paw upon the table top, "it iz preposterous—dare iz no dragons I keep zaying—put ten I look pack, und I don't zay anything!"

**FELIX** felt his knees knock together beneath the table. A lump formed in his throat, threatening to choke him. He was afraid and he didn't care who knew it. With a hoarse croak he staggered to his feet.

"Dondervetter! You pe a vool!" hissed Schultz, grabbing Felix by the arm. "You mos not let him zee you pe a schiken!" But he was too late, for the dragon stopped licking its claws and let out a thundering roar, which oddly enough, nobody seemed to hear except Felix and Schultz. A spear of flame shot from the dilated nostrils, and had not Schultz suddenly pulled Felix down onto his chair, Felix would have been minus a head. As it was, the blast

merely singed his hair.

"You zee," remonstrated the German, "you mos pe calm—like me." He glanced around contemptuously at the snorting reptile and took a long pull at his bottle.

"Tose vools over dare," he pointed to the loungers at the bar who were smiling amusedly in their direction, "tey zay I pe zeeing pink elevants! Tey zay I pe dronk—Lieber Gott! Dronk!" He smashed a bulging fist upon the table, setting the glasses trembling. "Put I pe not dronk! Iz it not so—you zee it too!"

Felix wet his lips, shook his head, and passed a hand over his eyes. He even tried closing them for a minute. But the result was always the same. The dragon was still there—jaws slavering, and nostrils spouting fire.

"Oh why did I ever come here," groaned Felix. "I knew something terrible would happen to me—it always does." He looked as if he were about to burst into tears.

"Here," thundered Schultz, poking a glass under Felix's nose. "Trink dis, it vill make a man ov you!" Felix groaned again but took the proffered glass. This time he did not cough.

"I've got to go," muttered Felix, suddenly coming to a decision, "my wife is waiting for me. I'm late for supper—she'll be furious."

"Gott im Himmel!" wheezed Schultz, "mit a dragon vaiting vor to zample his beef, he worries about a vife und zupper!" He leaned across the table. "Dare pe only vun way out ov here alive," he whispered thickly, "ve mos pretent ve pe dronk und dat ve iz not avraid. Dondervetter! I pe not vrightened!" He leaned back in his chair and tilted the bottle. "Now ve go!"

Grabbing Felix by the arm, Schultz staggered to his feet and beat an unsteady path towards the door, singing

as loud as he could.

"Ach, du Lieber Augustine, Augustine, Augustine. . . ."

He glanced aside at Felix who was as pale as a ghost.

"Zing you vool! Pehave like you iz dronk!"

Felix, hardly aware of anything, but that there was a very hungry looking dragon following at his heels, began to sing with Schultz in as courageous a voice as he could muster.

Out of the Inn and down the street they staggered, half running, half walking, while behind them, oblivious to passing pedestrians, the dragon clumped after.

A block from home and safety, Felix spied his dog, Pretzels, running towards them. Schultz swore and tried to kick it back, to no avail. Up to, and around Felix ran the dog, straight into the dragon's path. Felix shut his eyes as he saw the gaping jaws close on his unsuspecting pet. Amid the sound of crunching bones, Felix fainted.

"Tamn dis pizzness!" swore Schultz as the limp form of Felix swayed against him. "Tese papies have no liver!" He gathered the senseless Felix in his arms and staggered down the block to stop before Felix's house, a low, rambling bungalow.

"Open te door!" thundered Schultz, kicking savagely at the wooden portal, "mos I stand here all night." The latch flew back and a ponderous figure came into view. It was Dora. Her mouth dropped when she saw the unconscious Felix.

"Oh! Felix! — He's dead — Felix, speak to me!" She began to wring her hands and sob alternately.

"He iz not dead," rumbled Schultz in annoyance, "he iz just dronk. Keep te infant to ome after tis—too many dragons around." He dropped Felix unceremoniously upon the threshold,

and muttering to himself, staggered off down the street, the dragon close behind him.

**D**ORA picked up her husband and carried him into a bedroom where she dumped him on a bed. Felix stirred slightly and opened his eyes. For a moment he stared wildly about him, and then, recognizing his surroundings, suddenly began to tremble.

"Quick, Dora," he panted, "bar the door and lock the windows—a dragon is after me!"

"Dragon, my eye — you — you — you're drunk!" She turned away sobbing. "What did I ever do to deserve such a miserable whelp of a husband. While I stay home and work my fingers to the bone, he's out getting himself drunk—and seeing dragons. . . . I'm going home to Mother!" She threw herself into a chair and sobbed. Felix lay quietly on his back and groaned to himself. What was the use! No one would believe him anyway. He almost wished she would go home to her mother—but he knew that mother lived in Ireland. So Felix just lay against his pillow, groaned again, and fell asleep. . . .

The next morning the whole affair seemed like a nightmare. Dragons!—Preposterous! Indeed he must have been drunk. Felix was elated with the thought. It offered him an explanation, and an explanation was what he most desired. He even took his wife's complaints with a mild indifference, and when he left the house for work, he was almost jubilant.

His high spirits faded somewhat when he drew near the water works. A new fear took hold of him. How would Schultz greet him? Would he blame him for the illusion they both had suffered? Would he be fired? Felix felt cold suddenly.

When he checked in and prepared

to meet the Dutchman, he was his old self—weak, fearful, and entirely miserable. As he expected, he met Schultz coming around one of the huge vacuum pumps on the east side of the first tier.

"So!" thundered the Dutchman, above the muffled roar of whirring machinery, "it pe you! Und I suppose you expect to faint on dare job like you do on me last night?"

"I-I-I'm sorry about that, Mr. Schultz," Felix stammered, "it must have been the wine—I thought I saw something chasing me." Perspiration was running freely down Felix's neck.

"Oh!" roared Schultz, "So it pe dare vine, eh? Vell look you over dare!" He raised a ham-like fist and pointed to a shadowy corner of the room.

Felix followed the direction with his eyes, and suddenly felt sick. There, in the shadow of a huge dynamo, calmly licking a taloned claw with its forked tongue, was the dragon, fire and smoke curling lazily from its nostrils. Had Felix needed any other incentive to faint, that would have been it. But he did not faint. He couldn't find the courage to.

"Please, Mr. Schultz," Felix whined, "my wife is terribly sick—I—I can't work today—I've got to stay home with her."

"Ome iz it! Dondervetter! Put you von't go ome. You vill stay und like it —jus like I do all last night! He pe yours vor today!" He clinched the argument with one of his massive fists, shaking it threateningly beneath Felix's nose. It was argument enough for Felix, who readily agreed.

"Goot!" snapped Schultz, "You vill keep it company now vile I go about my pizzness." He stomped away and disappeared in the shadows of the pumps.

Felix went to work in a daze, checking dials, gauges, and vacuum pres-



tures. He could not think straight, and he didn't want to anyway. All he knew, and cared about was that a dragon—a huge, ugly, and fearsome dragon, was watching him covertly from the shadows behind him.

At lunch time Felix began to feel genuinely frightened. The dragon was getting restless—and undoubtedly hungry. Its jaws slavored when it caught scent of Felix's meagre meal, and it crept forward steadily. Felix lost what little appetite he had possessed.

**A**LL afternoon the dragon kept moving closer to Felix, and Felix kept watching those jaws—imagining what would happen if they ever closed about him. An hour before quitting time the dragon was little more than ten feet from Felix, and the heat of its fiery breath made him sweat. For once Felix wished that Dagmar Schultz would show up—but not once did the Dutchman make his appearance.

When the whistle blew at 5:30, Felix was ready for a straight-jacket. His teeth chattered so hard he lost a gold inlay. His tongue was dry as a bone, and he could not breath. Something thumped in his throat. Felix felt for his heart—where it should have been, but felt nothing. He was afraid to feel around his neck.

As he moved down the street towards the Dragon's Head Inn, which he had to pass before he could reach home, Felix felt the incinerating breath of the monster grow close upon his back. He walked faster, but the blast grew hotter. Then he ran.

Ahead loomed the tavern, and Felix, not aware why he did it, plunged through the swinging doors. A momentary survey of the room revealed Schultz, standing at the far end of the crowded bar, a glass in one hand, and

a long necked bottle in the other. Felix let out a screech and rushed over to him.

"Mr. Schultz! Help me!—Its after me—do something!" Felix practically threw himself upon the Dutchman as he reached the bar.

"Mein Gott!" thundered Schultz, "vot bees wrong? Ach, it pe tat dragon. Teuffel! Vat you need iz a trink." With unsteady hands he poured liquid into a glass and shoved it before Felix. "Ah," purred the German as he saw the wine disappear into the eager mouth of Felix. "Now, you veel better?" Felix nodded, but kept one eye on the dragon which sat near the tavern door.

Snickers arose from the far portion of the bar, and eyes glanced amusedly in the direction of Felix and Schultz. The Dutchman grew furious.

"Te pigs! Tey tink I pe dronk! Gott!—put I haff idea!" He leaned towards Felix and whispered in his ear. "Tomorrow ve will show dem—ve will put zom vine into te vasser pumps! Hah! ve vill zee den who iz dronk!" He leaned back and roared. Felix stood apalled.

"No! No—we can't do that," gasped Felix, "it would be murder—the whole city would be overrun with hungry monsters!"

"So!" echoed Schultz, "Dat iz goot! Te pigs vill be all eaten up!—Put I haff a goot idea vor zeze pigs here," he glanced meaningly at the bar customers. "Hah! Tey vill make a goot meal—now!" Felix was too stunned to fathom the meaning of his words. Schultz suddenly smashed a huge fist upon the bar and bellowed:

"Te trinks iz on te ouse! Vill op!" He slid the long necked bottle along the bar and eager hands grabbed for it. Within a minute the contents were drained and glasses were clinking

merrily. Someone offered a toast. "Heres (hic) to the Duschman, an his blasted monsters!"

Schultz threw back his head and roared. "Yah! To my monsters! Hah—pigs! Look around—vat do you zee?"

The crash of breaking glass broke the sudden silence following Schultz's outburst. Then a gasp went up from the men grouped at the bar. Some crossed themselves, some fainted; while others began to edge towards the door.

"Now who iz zober!" Schultz belted; and then Felix suddenly grabbed his arm.

"Look out, Mr. Schultz—it's coming at you! Run!" Felix dove behind the bar.

"Dondervetter! Vat iz!" But he got no further. With a rafter shaking roar the dragon came at him, nostrils spouting fire and smoke. Men scattered like leaves in the path of a rushing wind. Some reached the door, but most of them fainted where they stood. Schultz didn't have time to faint. He ducked, but a sweeping slash of the dragon's mighty tail caught him around the neck, and he fell like a stunned ox. The epraged monster then proceeded to tear the Inn apart. Chairs, tables, booths, — even walls, fell beneath its fury.

Felix, trembling behind the bar, decided that something must be done. He wished he knew exactly what. That he would be the next victim, he assured himself, revolting as the thought was. He knew—that unless the monster could be somehow stopped—he would be dead within two minutes.

**FELIX** loved life—even though he had found few of its joys. He loved life even more than he feared the dragon. He considered both of them evils, but he chose the weaker of the two.

Glancing upwards, he suddenly spotted the gleaming, double-edged sword hanging from the wall above the bar. An idea sprouted in his mind.

In a single leap, Felix gained the top of the bar, and grabbed the massive blade from its moorings. It was heavy—almost too heavy, but Felix had little time to consider its weight; for, the dragon, suddenly spying him from across the length of the shattered room, let out a tremendous roar and thundered at the bar.

Felix felt exhilarated. He welcomed the charge of the monster with as spirited a war-hoop as he could muster, and swung the weapon in a huge circle over his head.

The wide-open jaws were less than three feet away when Felix acted. In a silver streak, the whirling blade rushed to meet the dragon's head. The keen edge bit deep, carried on by its own momentum. It came away dripping red.

The beast howled in pain and retreated in surprise. But not for long. Uttering a savage scream of mad fury, the dragon again hurled itself upon Felix. But Felix was ready. Again the massive blade arced downwards, and this time it was not to be denied. Through scaly hide, muscle, bone and flesh it tore, and when it met no further resistance, the dragon's head rolled upon the floor, and the steel was dyed a deep crimson.

Felix looked upon his work and shuddered. Then he straightened up in pride. He! He—Felix Murphy—weak, fearful, miserable Felix Murphy, had done that! A wave of exultation swept over him. Weak? Fearful? Heck no! He was a dragon killer! A modern St. George!

Felix leapt from the bar and surveyed the shambles about him. A group of men lay huddled together near the

door in a dead faint. There was not a single piece of furniture left whole in the entire room. The body of the dragon still twitched.

Felix glanced at Dagmar Schultz, lying unconscious by the bar. Dagmar Schultz! Important, commanding, domineering—Dagmar Schultz! Felix had an idea that all that would be changed from now on.

A warm feeling spread over him, and he expanded his chest proudly. From now on he would give the orders! Stepping lightly to the bar, placing a foot upon the prone body of Schultz, and thumping the red blade loudly upon the slick surface; Felix, in as commanding a voice as he could summon, roared: "Bartender! BARTENDER!"

THE END

## ARAUCANIAN MYTH

by H. R. STANTON

THE Araucanians believed that their dead went to a country called Gulcheman, "the dwelling of the men beyond the mountains." The relatives of the deceased person wept for some time around the body which was placed on a raised bier overnight. They watched over it, and ate and drank with all those who came to console them. The ceremony was called "curicahuin" which meant black entertainment. After three days, the body was taken to the family burying grounds. The procession to the eltum, "cemetery," was led by two young men on horseback riding at top speed. The bier was carried by the relatives who wept loudly. The corpse

was laid on the ground, surrounded by weapons, if it was a man, or supplied with feminine apparel if it was a woman. Food and even horses were supplied the deceased for use in the Otherworld. The Pebuenches warmed the corpse with fire for they believed the Otherworld was cold. After they warmed the body, they tied it to a horse, and placed the reins in his hands. Then they killed the horse and buried them both in the same grave. They covered them with stones and poured chicha over them. After they all went home, they believed that an old woman named Tempuleague came to the grave as a whale to take the spirit away to the Otherworld.

## THE GIFT OF THE NILE

by CARTER T. WAINWRIGHT

THE NILE River has its source in Lake Victoria Nyanza, near the equator in Africa, and flows from one end of Egypt to the other. It flows north for 4,000 miles and into the Mediterranean Sea. When the early Egyptians wanted to travel they usually went by boat. The river was always crowded with boats from every country of the ancient world. There were enormous barges carrying huge building blocks for the temples. There were passenger boats, freight and cattle boats, fishing boats and warships, and pleasure craft for the wealthy noblemen. The travel boats were made of the best wood and were elaborately decorated. They had large brilliant sails and lovely cabins and musicians on board to entertain the owner. A pilot stood in the front of the boat with a testing pole to determine the depth of the water. This was necessary because the river was full of constantly shifting sandbanks. He signaled directions to the

steersman in the back of the boat. When there was no wind, rowers took over. Luggage was kept on top of the cabin and cooking was done in the kitchen boat that was towed along behind.

As the Nile flows through Egypt it is flanked by the most fertile fields in the world, and beyond them are mountains and then desert. As it seldom rains in Egypt, these fields would be useless if it were not for the Nile. That is why they are called "the gift of the Nile." Every year there are heavy rains at the source of the Nile which swells the river higher and higher till it finally overflows its banks flooding the land on each side. When the water recedes, it leaves behind a layer of rich mud brought all the way from Abyssinia. This is such fertile earth that crops grow easily. The very ancient Egyptians worshipped the Nile, and placed statues of the Nile god, Hapi, in little shrines along the river.

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