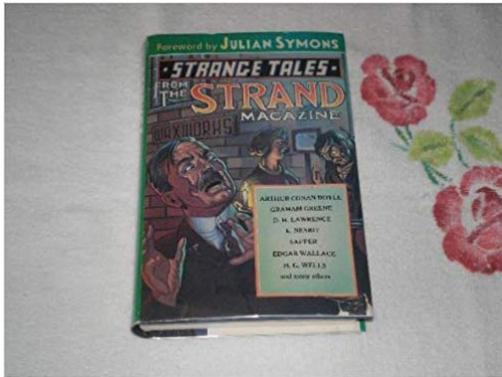


Strange Tales from the Strand Magazine *by* Jack Adrian, Julian Symons



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Containing twenty-nine stories of the weird and uncanny, all originally published in the Strand, this collection is an enthralling mix of horror and the supernatural, unnatural disasters, madness, and revenge. We read of a germ that turned the world blind in Edgar Wallace's "The Black Grippe." In "A Sense of the Future," the world supply of oil gives out, cars become obsolete, and after three months we have returned to the days of horse-drawn carriages. In other tales, a camera takes pictures of the future, and a 1971 newspaper is pushed through a mail slot forty years earlier. With spine-tingling stories from the likes of Sapper, Graham Greene, D.H. Lawrence, and Arthur Conan Doyle, and a comic fantasy by H.G. Wells, as well as two tales from the children's writer E. Nesbit, Strange Tales from the Strand provides a rich collection for all lovers of the macabre.



Reviews of the **Strange Tales from the Strand Magazine** by Jack Adrian, Julian Symons

Huston

Before I read this anthology, "The Strand Magazine" brought to mind only Sherlock Holmes. My actual rating is three-and-one-half stars, but that is only an average. Judging by the stories here, Mr. Adrian is correct about their writers knowing how to entertain. The stories I gave only three stars I would probably have rated higher if I hadn't been reading strange fiction since the fifth grade, very close to five decades ago.

When I buy an anthology of weird fiction, I like to check the table of contents to see if at least half of them are unfamiliar. Of the stories here, I'd read only 'A Torture of Hope' before, and I'm pretty sure that was for some class. That makes this collection a particularly happy find.

Here's my rating for and a short description of each story:

'All But Empty' by Graham Greene ***

Sitting next to a chatty stranger in a cinema shouldn't be a big problem when the movie is silent.

'Lord Beden's Motor' by Mr. J. B. Harris-Burland ***1/2

Lord Beden is determined to catch up with that strange vehicle no matter how fast he has to drive or how bad the road -- and seat belts and air bags haven't been invented yet.

'The Tarn' by Hugh Walpole *****

A man who blames the bitter failures of his life on another finally has the object of his hatred in his power.

'Resurgam' by Rina Ramsay ***

A parson from a London slum can't imagine what could possibly be making the parson of a peaceful country town a nervous wreck.

'The Railway Carriage' by Ms. F. Tennyson Jesse***

There's something rather creepy about the other passengers in Solange's railway car.

'The Bell' by Mr. Beverley Nichols ***

A middle-aged man with a weak heart contemplates the freedom he'll have now that his control freak manservant is dead.

'His Brother's Keeper' by Mr. W. W. Jacobs*****

Can't a poor, honest murderer get a bit of peace?

'Touch and Go' by Sapper [Herman Cyril McNeile]*****

If you knowingly rent a house where a brutal murder once took place, you have to expect difficulties keeping servants.

'Waxworks' by Mr. W. L. George ***1/2

We have our cover story and the look of fear on the visitors is deserved.

'White Spectre' by Mr. B. L. Jacot***1/2

Six plane crash survivors holed up in a cave in the mountains, then there were five...

'Tickets, Please' by D. H. Lawrence**** [uncut version]

A handsome young ladies' man may have been dating a few too many of his co-workers, heh-heh...

'A Torture by Hope' by Villiers de l'Isle-Adam [Philippe-Auguste. Compte de Villiers de l'Isle-Adam]****

A very nasty story set in the bad old days of the Spanish Inquisition.

'A Horrible Fright' by Mrs. L. T. Meade***

A foolhardy girl soon wishes she'd stayed in a ladies' railway carriage as her father had advised.

'The Case of Roger Carboyne' by Mr. H. Greenhough Smith***1/2

It's the late 19th century and there are no helicopters, so how could the marks of a body being dragged suddenly stop, leaving only unbroken snow? (From my copy of The Annotated Tales of Edgar Allen Poe, I believe that when the Coroner asks if the police are entirely at fault, he is using 'fault' in the hunting jargon sense of being at a loss or puzzled.)

'The Orchestra of Death' by Ianthe Jerrold***1/2

A dancer fears she will be murdered, but the show must go on.

'The Lizard' by C. J. Cutcliffe-Hyne***1/2

A hunter and cave enthusiast finds something special during a new exploration.

'Inexplicable' by Ms. L. G. Moberly****

The couple are so pleased with their new house, especially that beautiful carved crocodile or alligator-legged table that the last tenant left behind for some reason. (Both terms are used.)

'The Prophetic Camera' by L. de Giberne Sieveking [L = 'Lancelot,' also known as 'Lance Sieveking']***1/2

Yes, the camera takes pictures of the future. My favorite reaction was the wife's.

'Cavalanci's Curse' by Henry A. Hering ***1/2

The curse involves magic violins. The dialogue of the non-English characters was so ridiculously stereotyped that it made me snicker.

'The Queer Story of Brownlow's Newspaper' by H. G. Wells [Herbert George]***

1930s Wells' idea of what the world would be like in 1971 is good for some chuckles. Note: 'queer' is being used in its old sense of being strange, odd, weird, etc. Also, when Brownlow's state is described as having been on the gayer side of sobriety, it means he was happy, cheerful, blithe, etc.

'The Black Grippe' by Edgar Wallace***1/2

A London doctor's animal testing shows that what seemed to be a minor pandemic will make people blind for days, and he tries to warn the world.

'The Fog' by Morley Roberts****

London is choked by a fog we'd probably call 'smog' that's so dark and thick that the people can't see. A blind veteran is trying to keep a small group alive. The descriptions of mob behavior are very believable.

'The Thames Valley Catastrophe' by Grant Allen****

A man tries to warn others of the terrible danger they're in while he races to rescue his family.

'A Sense of the Future' by Martin Swayne***

If a canny financier is correct, the world's oil will soon run out. There'll be no more petrol (gasoline)!
What's a car lover to do?

'The Silver Mirror' by Arthur Conan Doyle***1/2

An accountant's antique mirror starts showing him a dramatic scene from the past.

'The Haunted House' by E. Nesbit****

A young man answers an advertisement to investigate a haunting. Is it ghost or a vampire that infests the place?

'How It Happened' by Arthur Conan Doyle***

We get the story through a writing medium [a medium who practices automatic writing?]. It's rather like one of those mystery shows where the audience is shown the murderer before the first commercial, so the rest of the show is spent wondering how or when the hero/ine will figure it out.

'The Power of Darkness' by E. Nesbit****

Two friends, both in love with the same woman, have bet each other that neither could bear to spend a night alone in a wax museum.

'The Horror of the Heights' by Arthur Conan Doyle****

In a story published the year before World War I started, a pilot is determined to take his little monoplane more than 40,000 feet into the air -- even though he suspects he'll encounter something deadly. I don't know if the descriptions of the plane's workings are accurate, but the even the thought of going that high in a plane of that era certainly scared me.

I recommend this collection to weird fiction fans who enjoy late 19th through the first half of 20th century writing.

Djang

This book reprints "strange" tales by both famous and forgotten authors as appeared originally in The Strand magazine, which published from 1891 to 1950. The stories were written by writers (eg F. Tennyson Jesse) now familiar only to aficionados of the occult; those still recognized but now little read (Hugh Walpole, Edgar Wallace) and those still popular (H.G. Wells, Conan Doyle, Graham Greene). There are some gems here ("Waxworks" by W.L. George), along with highly prophetic, even futuristic stories (H.G. Wells's "The Queer Story of Brownlow's Newspaper"; Martin Swayne's "A Sense of the Future," written in 1924 but predicting a world in which automobiles, then a novelty, become obsolete due to rising petrol prices). A. Conan Doyle's "The Horror of the Heights", written in 1913 but dealing with horrible monsters met above the clouds by a daring pilot, is excellent and gives a sense of airplanes (mono and bi-planes) and flying of that era. This is overall a good collection, though some of the stories don't date well, and should be read at least by those with "strange" tastes.

salivan

An interesting collection by well-known and lesser authors complete with insight into the periods written and their writers. A well-produced book with none of the irritating typos so prevalent now. I have my favorite stories and so will you.

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