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COCONUT PALM

A. H. THAYER

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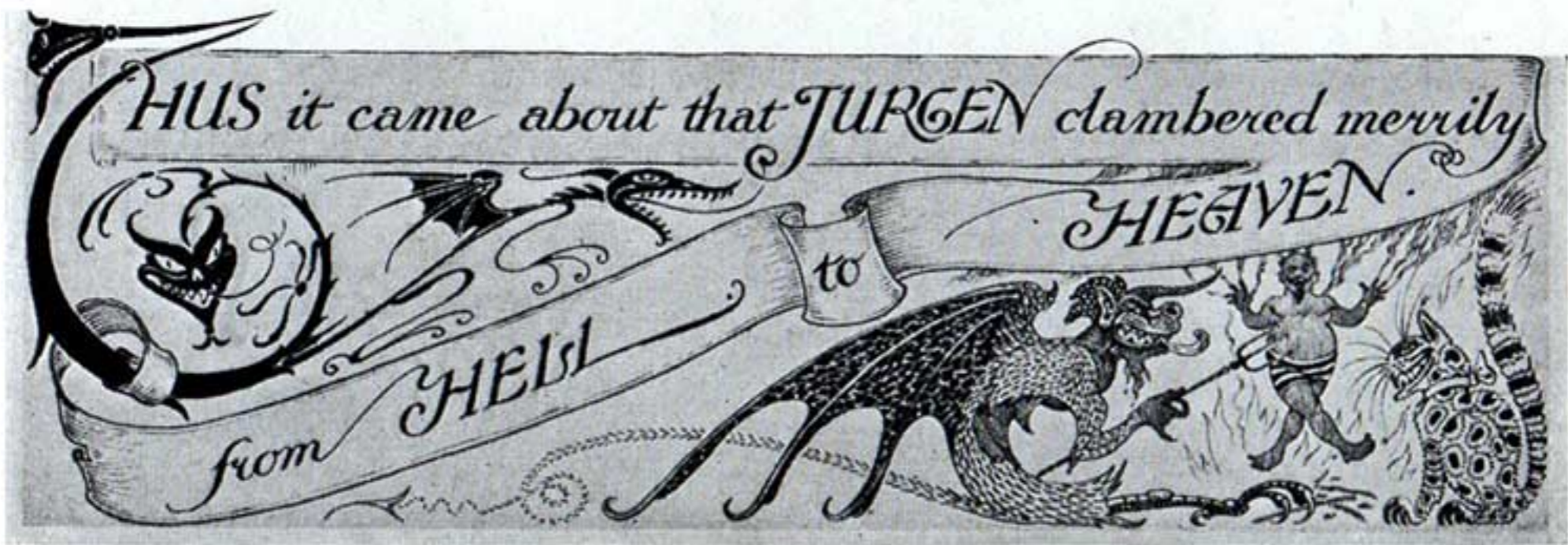
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Papé's Illustrations for Cabell's "Jurgen"



PAPÉ'S ILLUSTRATIONS
FOR CABELL'S "JURGEN"
BY BURTON RASCOE

A LIMITED edition of "Jurgen" by James Branch Cabell has been published in England by Mr. John Lane, with illustrations by Frank C. Papé. The literary significance of this treasure trove of wit and beauty need not here concern us: the curious book has been the occasion for much bandying of many words and now, in the United States, at all events, final pronouncement (in this decade) rests with the courts.

An illustrated edition is preened with advantages a pictureless one cannot boast. We all like pictures and it is a boon to us when an illustrator draws for us scenes and situations which, with mere words as stimuli, our imaginations fail to encompass readily. In Frank C. Papé we have a deft and lively prompter to our halting mental processes. He has caught much of the Cabellian spirit (save only its irony) and if he fails of perfection, it is because the facets of that spirit are too numerous to be delineated in flat design of black and white. Indeed, says Cabell, "this fable of Jurgen is a book wherein each man will find what his nature enables him to see; which gives us back each his own image; and which teaches us each the lesson that each of us desires to learn." That Papé's nature enables him to see jocose burlesque where satire

is, for some, inherent, is certainly not to be quarreled with.

But let us examine the illustrations which are reproduced in this issue of *The International Studio*. The evocation of Dorothy la Desirée, "that first love whom every man must lose, no matter whom he marries," is conventional to dainty prettiness and might easily have been the illustration for one of a hundred Christmas glitter books. But it is perhaps the least satisfactory drawing of the group.

The conception of Jurgen astride the Centaur is excellent and it is brilliantly executed. It has sweep and movement. It was the Centaur whom Jurgen found in the cave beyond Amneran Heath and who gave to Jurgen the Nessus shirt and upon whose back Jurgen was mounted in search for justice. "For a while they went through the woods, which were composed of big trees standing a goodish distance from one another, with the Centaur's gilded hoofs rustling and sinking in a thick carpet of dead leaves, all grey and brown, in level stretches that were unbroken by any undergrowth. And then they came to a white roadway that extended due west, and so were done with the woods. Now happened an incredible thing in which Jurgen would never have believed had he not seen it with his own eyes: for now the Centaur went so fast that he gained a little by little on the sun, thus causing it to rise in the west a little by little;



JURGEN'S PROGRESS
TO HELL

FRANK C.
PAPE

Pape's Illustrations for Cabell's "Jurgen"

and these two sped westward in the glory of a departed sunset. The sun fell full in Jurgen's face as he rode straight toward the west, so that he blinked and closed his eyes, and looked first toward this side, then the other. Thus it was that the country about him, and the persons they were passing, were seen by him in quick bright flashes, like pictures suddenly transmuted into other pictures; and all his memories of this shining highway were, in consequence, always confused and incoherent."

The artist's depiction of Mother Sereda is, perhaps, his masterpiece in this collection. Here the pattern and detail, the apparent stark economy of line, are all of a piece in this presentation of the bleak symbol of common-sense. "This was a depressing apartment, in its chill neat emptiness, for it was unfurnished save for a bare deal table, upon which lay a yardstick and a pair of scales. Above this table hung in a wicker cage a bluebird, and another wicker cage containing three white pigeons. And in this hall a woman, no longer young, dressed all in blue, and wearing a white towel by way of head-dress, was assorting curiously coloured cloths.

"She had very bright eyes, with wrinkled lids; and now as she looked up at Jurgen her shrunk jaw quivered.

"'Ah,' says she, 'I have a visitor. Good day to you, in your glittering shirt. It is a garment I seem to recognise.'

"'Good day, grandmother! I am looking for my wife, whom I suspect to have been carried off by a devil, poor fellow! Now, having lost my way, I have come to pass the night under your roof.'

"'Very good: but few come seeking Mother Sereda of their own accord.'

"'. . . 'And what do you do here, grandmother?'

"'I bleach. In time I shall bleach that garment you are wearing. For I take the colour out of all things. Thus you see these stuffs here, as they are now. Clotho spun the glowing threads, and Lachesis wove them, as you observe, in curious patterns, very marvellous to see: but when I am done with these stuffs there will be no more colour or beauty or

strangeness anywhere apparent than in so many dishclouts.'

The duel between Jurgen and Heitman Michael, whereafter Jurgen resorted to an expedient not countenanced in the *code duello* to gain that which his heart was set on, does passably, if only because of the sardonic tail-piece with its shattered Cupid.

In depicting Jurgen attended by his shadow, the artist has achieved a sinister, nightmarish effect with cloudy witches astride nebulous mounts and with a phosphorous eyed, inky bat posed against two tones of grey. Here is a technical achievement in colour gradations from pure white to jet black, and the fancy behind it is daily stygian. The tail-piece, too, has a motive that is appropriately unorthodox.

The scene from "The Orthodox Rescue of Guenevere" shows Guenevere seated at the feet of Troll king. Here, as always, Papé has packed his drawing with details in an unobtrusive manner, even if they fail to conform with the text. "Here suspended from the roof of the vault was a kettle of quivering red flames. These lighted a very old and villainous looking man in full armour, girded with a sword, and crowned royally: he sat upon a throne, motionless, with staring eyes that saw nothing. . . . Then Jurgen saw that at this unengaging monarch's feet were three chests. The lids had been ripped from two of them, and these were filled with silver coins. Upon the middle chest sat a woman, with her face resting against the knees of the glaring, withered, motionless old rascal."

The depiction of the ghosts King Smoit and Queen Sylvia Tereu haunting Jurgen's bed-chamber is full of merry minutiae and is waggish satire, carried out even unto the motto from the king's armorial bearings, "Armure et Diligentia." "Now it befell that for three nights in succession the Princess Guenevere was unable to converse with Jurgen in the Hall of Judgment. So upon one of these disengaged evenings Duke Jurgen held a carouse with Aribert and Olwen, two of Gogyrvan's barons, who had just returned from Pengwaed-Gir, and had queer tales to narrate of the Trooping Fairies who garrisoned that place.

Pape's Illustrations for Cabell's "Jurgen"

"All three were seasoned toppers, so Jurgen went to bed prepared for anything. Later he sat up in bed, and found it much as he had suspected. The room was haunted, and at the foot of his couch were two ghosts: one an impudent-looking leering phantom, in a suit of old-fashioned armour, and the other a beautiful pale lady, in the customary flowing white draperies.

"'Good morning to you both,' says Jurgen, 'and sorry am I that I cannot truthfully observe I am glad to see you. Though you are welcome enough, if you can manage to haunt the room quietly.' Then, seeing that both phantoms looked puzzled, Jurgen proceeded to explain, 'Last year, when I was travelling upon business in Westphalia, it was my grief to spend a night in the haunted castle of Neuedesberg, for I could not get any sleep at all in that place. There was a ghost in charge who persisted in rattling very large iron chains and in groaning dismally throughout the night. Then toward morning he took the form of a monstrous cat, and climbed upon the foot of my bed: and there he squatted yowling until daybreak. And as I am ignorant of German, I was not able to convey to him any idea of my disapproval of his conduct. Now I trust that as compatriots, or as I might say with more exactness, as former compatriots, you will appreciate that such behaviour is out of all reason.'

"'Messire,' says the male ghost, and he oozed to his full height, 'you are guilty of impertinence in harbouring such a suspicion. I can only hope that it proceeds from your ignorance.'

"'For I am sure,' put in the lady, 'that I always disliked cats, and we never had them about the castle.'

"'And you will pardon my frankness, messire,' continued the male ghost, 'but you cannot have moved widely in noble company if you are indeed unable to distinguish between members of the feline species and of the reigning family of Glathion.'

"'Well, I have seen dowager queens who justified some confusion,' observed Jurgen, 'Still, I entreat the forgiveness of you both, for I had no idea that I was addressing royalty.'

"'I was King Smoit,' explained the male phantom, 'and this was my ninth wife, Queen Sylvia Tereu.'

"Jurgen bowed as gracefully, he flattered himself, as was possible in his circumstances. It is not easy to bow gracefully while sitting erect in bed.

"'Often and over again have I heard of you, King Smoit,' says Jurgen. 'You were the grandfather of Gogyrvan Gawr, and you murdered your ninth wife, and your eighth wife, and your fifth wife, and your third wife, too: and you went under the title of the Black King, for you were reputed the wickedest monarch that ever reigned in Glathion and the Red Islands.'

"It seemed to Jurgen that King Smoit evinced embarrassment, but it was hard to be quite certain when a ghost was blushing."

There is a charm of a dainty, trim tapestry in the illustration showing Jurgen with King Anaïtis, and the design is relevantly Egyptian. "So Jurgen sat with Anaïtis in the two tall chairs that were in the prow of the vessel, under a canopy of crimson stuff embroidered with gold dragons, and just back of the ship's figurehead, which was a dragon painted with thirty colours: and the ship moved out of the harbour, and so into the open sea."

There is a pre-Raphaelite hint in the illustration for the idyll of Jurgen and the Hamadryad. "So they talked nonsense, in utter darkness, while the locusts, and presently a score of locusts, disputed obstinately. Now Chloris and Jurgen were invisible, even to each other, as they talked under their oak-tree: but before them the fields shone mistily under a gold-dusted dome, for this night seemed builded of stars. And the white towers of Pseudopolis also could Jurgen see, as he laughed there and took his pleasure with Chloris. He reflected that very probably Achilles and Helen were laughing thus, and were not dissimilarly occupied, out yonder, in this night of wonder.

"He sighed. But in a while Jurgen and the Hamadryad were speaking again, just as inconsequently, and the locusts were whirring just as obstinately. Later the moon rose, and they all slept."

Jurgen's descent in the wheelbarrow trun-



Then JURGEN knew with whom he talked



MOTHER
SEREDA

FRANK C.
PAPE

Pape's Illustrations for Cabell's "Jurgen"

dled by Cannagosta to the Hell of his father is gorgeously conceived and intricately worked out. "Cannagosta was something like an ox, but rather more like a cat, and his hair was curly. And as they came through Chorama, a very uncomfortable place where the damned abide in torment, whom should Jurgen see but his own father, Coth, the son of Smoit and Steinvor, standing there chewing his long moustaches in the midst of an especially tall flame.

"'Do you stop now for a moment!' says Jurgen, to his escort.

"'Oh, but this is the most vexatious person in all Hell!' cried Cannagosta; 'and a person whom there is absolutely no pleasing!'"

The halo of industrious imps bestowing upon Coth the punishments he believes to be his due because of the fancied enormity of his peccadilloes is a happy conceit. There is a nimble imagination displayed in the whole design. The reptilian character of the denizens of the lower regions, the barbed and lanciform accessories, and the imperial accoutrements and insignia of Jurgen are in key and character with this delightful episode.

The scene between Jurgen and Satan's wife in the Black House of Barathum is treated in a manner which it is inconvenient to describe. The passage reads: "Now Grandfather Satan's wife was called Phyllis: and apart from having wings like a bat's, she was the loveliest little ship of devilishness that Jurgen had seen in a long while. Jurgen spent this night

at the Black House of Barathum and had more nights, or it might be three nights: and the details of what Jurgen used to do there, after supper, when he would walk alone in the Black House Gardens, among the artfully coloured cast-iron flowers and shrubbery, and so would come to the grated windows of Phyllis's room, and would stand there joking with her in the dark, are not requisite to this story."

The visualising of the ascension of Pope Jurgen, by means of Jacob's ladder, is joyous though derivative and is as replete with symbols.

We come at last to the apostrophe to Helen which is, as would all attempts be, an inadequate attempt to capture the quality of beauty in that perfect symbol of all men's desire.

"And so farewell to you, Queen Helen! Your beauty has been to me as a robber that stripped my life of joy and sorrow, and I desire not ever to dream of your beauty any more. For I have been able to love nobody. And I know that it is you who have prevented this, Queen Helen, at every moment of my life since the disastrous moment when I first seemed to find your loveliness in the face of Madame Dorothy. It is the memory of your beauty, as I then saw it mirrored in the face of a jill-flirt, which has enfeebled me for such honest love as other men give women; and I envy these other men. For Jurgen has loved nothing—not even you, not even Jurgen!—quite whole-heartedly."

