

The Dweller on the Threshold

NOT LONG AGO an article appeared in another magazine under the above title. The writer used the expressions “the Dweller” and “the Threshold” in two ways. First he defined the Threshold as a ceremonial, ritual initiation and its Dweller as one of the participants in this rite. In the second half of the article he represented the Threshold as any opportunity and the Dweller as any obstacle which stood in the way and which must be faced by the person wishing to take advantage of the opportunity.

While we do not question the right of anyone to use and interpret these terms in any way he sees fit, still it might be well in order to avoid confusion in the minds of general readers to make clear just what is meant by these expressions when they are used in the literature of the Rosicrucians.

The Dweller on the Threshold is an elemental being who appears before the one seeking admittance to the superphysical worlds and who must be conquered before the aspirant can enter these realms. Sometimes it comes in one form and sometimes in another. Most often it takes the form of a member of the opposite sex of a particularly horrible appearance. This was the case in the experience of the fictional character in *Zanoni*. The Dweller in that instance is described as follows:

It was as that of a human head, covered with a dark veil, through which glared with livid and demoniac fire eyes that froze the marrow of his bones. Nothing else of the face was distinguishable—nothing but those intolerable eyes; but his terror, that even at first seemed beyond



Johann Hofmann (1824-1911)

The Temptation

The temptation of Christ Jesus in the wilderness of the Desire World involved a meeting with the Dweller on the Threshold, but not one of His own making. Rather did He encounter the Tempter himself, who prompts all human's to sin and thus create their individual sin bodies, or Dwellers, to be vanquished.

nature to endure, was increased a thousandfold when, after a pause, the Phantom glided slowly into the chamber. Its form was veiled as the face, but the outline was that of a female; yet it moved not as move even the ghosts that simulate the living. It seemed rather to crawl as some vast, misshapen reptile. All fancies, the most grotesque, of monk or painter in the early north, would have failed to give to the visage of imp or fiend that aspect of deadly malignity which spoke to the shuddering nature in those eyes alone. All else so dark-shrouded—veiled and

larvalike. But that burning glare, so intense, so livid, yet so living, had in it something almost human in its passion of hate and mockery.

The Dweller in this particular case was the result of sensuality and disobedience.

Max Heindel gives us a description of another Dweller, as well as the history of the previous life of the man it haunted. This man in a former incarnation had been a Jesuit, very ardent, almost to the point of fanaticism, for the advancement of his order. He had subjected others to death, torture, loss of property, and other abuses in order that the Jesuit Brotherhood might be served. He had shut out of his heart both love and hate. He had not, however, succeeded in shutting out lust. Thus lust and cruelty would have made him a monster had they not been redeemed in part by his absolute sincerity in his devotion to his order, for which he would have sacrificed himself just as quickly as he sacrificed others, and by the noble effort he made to prevent sex from entirely mastering him. His vices produced a Dweller of particularly horrible aspect. The following is the description given of it by Mr. Heindel:

This dreadful shape had drawn its being from acts of cruelty committed by the man in a bygone life; it had fed on the curses of his tortured victims, and gorged itself upon the odor of their blood and their perspiration as is the wont of elementals; it was a monster in every sense of the word. Death of its progenitor rendered it latent, but in a new birth figure time was marked for retribution upon the clock of destiny....The hate, anger, and malice stored in the monster radiated back upon him pang for pang. When we saw the thing, it appeared as a shapeless jellylike mass with many large greenish eyes imbedded at different parts of its body. Every few seconds a sharp-pointed, swordlike projection shot out from the most unexpected places in its body and pierced the poor lad who lay cringing upon his bed. Then, although the monster had no mouth wherewith to laugh, it seemed convulsed with fiendish glee at the fear and pain it had given. At other times one or another of the eyes seemed to dart from the

monster, projected upon what resembled an elephant's trunk, and it would halt within an inch of the victim's eyes, gazing into them with a compelling power of awesome intensity (Message of the Stars, pages 586-587).

Here we have the real nature of the Dweller explained. Whatever may be the shape it takes, the nature of the Dweller on the Threshold is the simplest and most easily understood thing in the world. For its nature is nothing more nor less than *sin*.

It has often been said by ministers in the churches that the first year following conversion is apt to be the hardest year of one's life, that immediately following conversion all the evil in a person's inmost soul, even evil whose presence he never before suspected, will come forward to tempt and try him. It is stated in *Gleanings of a Mystic* that "conversion is to the exoteric religionist exactly what Initiation is to the higher mysticism." That being true, what would we naturally expect to find in the experience of the one who chooses "the shorter, harder road of Initiation"? That he will meet sin, blocking his way, but sin in a more intensified, concentrated form. And this is exactly what happens. The candidate for Initiation must meet and conquer not only all the evil that is in his nature at present, but also all the unexpiated evil of which he has been guilty in previous lives. At the time of Initiation all our wrongdoing in past incarnations which has not been liquidated takes concrete form before us in an elemental being which we call the Dweller on the Threshold. There is only one way in which it can be vanquished. That is to face it squarely, admit that it is of our own making, and resolve to make restitution for the evil acts which it represents.

A somewhat similar experience accompanies or precedes every advancement. Evil in some form always stands at the portal. At every forward step we must prove our ability to "be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

Even the Master who is about to become one of the Saviors of the world has to meet such a test, differing only in degree, not in kind. We are all familiar with the story of Christ's temptation. Buddha was also tempted by the Ten Chief Sins. First came Selfishness, which urged the Buddha to

keep the new-found truth for himself alone and not give it out to help the world. Then came Doubt, telling him to give up the search as it was hopeless. Superstition reminded him of the harm he might do by overthrowing the worship of the established gods. Passion came and first tempted him with pleasure and beauty, then took the form of his beloved wife, Yasodhara; but even this failed to draw him away from his chosen path. Then, in order, came Hate, Lust of life, Lust of fame, Pride, Self-righteousness, and Ignorance. All these negative energies had to be vanquished before the Buddha could enter upon his life work.

It has often been remarked that many classic writers have an insight into occult truth. In no case is this more evi-

dent than in Tennyson's tales of the Quest of the Holy Grail, which are most instructive. They are stories of the Quest undertaken by men of several different types in search of spiritual sight. But it is with the story of Lancelot that we are particularly concerned, as it deals especially with the Dweller on the Threshold and with Initiation. His experience reminds us again of the verse of Scripture so often quoted by Max Heindel with reference to Initiation: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

Tennyson begins by telling us in Lancelot's own words that,

*In me lived a sin
So strange, of such a kind, that all of pure,
Noble and knightly in me twined and clung
Round that one sin, until the wholesome flower
And poisonous grew together, each as each,
Not to be plucked asunder...*

...Then I spake

*To one most holy saint, who wept and said
That, save they could be plucked asunder,
All my quest was but in vain.*

Following this saint's advice Lancelot vowed to tear out this evil from his heart, and so great was his struggle that it brought on a return of a tempo-



Planet Art

As the aspirant (knight) ventures toward his goal, reining in and directing the energies of his desire nature to his purpose, his circumstances are even more controlled by the three Fates (Recording Angels), who give to each and all "exactly what they need for their development." Here the Fates are shown holding the threads of human destiny. In early quest narratives, the knight's nemesis was a dragon, which represented his undisciplined lower nature.

rary madness which had afflicted him once before. It was while in this condition that he met his kinsman, Sir Bors. Seeing him riding so furiously, Sir Bors realized that he was "mad, and maddening what he rode." Sir Bors stopped him to inquire why he "rode so hotly on a quest so holy." To this Lancelot replied,

Stay me not!

*I have been sluggard in the race, and I ride apace,
For now there is a lion in the path.*

Sir Bors rode on, much troubled about Lancelot, of whom he was very fond. While still tormented by his madness Lancelot was set upon and overcome by lesser knights, small men who when Lancelot was at his best would have feared even the shadow of his sword.

At last he came to the shore of a dark sea which was being threshed by a great storm. A ship was being tossed about by the storm and was half buried in the raging waters. In his despair Lancelot resolved to embark upon it and lose his life, "And in the great sea wash away my sin."

However, the wind fell. The moon and the stars appeared. Lancelot's life was preserved. After drifting in the boat for seven days he felt the prow touch land. He had reached the enchanted Castle of Carbonek, which rose sheer out of the water:

*A castle like a rock upon a rock,
With chasmlike portals open to the sea,
And steps that met the breaker.*

Here after his long probation Lancelot at last came face to face with the Dweller on the Threshold, and passed through the experience of Initiation. As he had thought of his sin as a lion, it now appeared to him in the form of a lion. There was no human keeper at the door of the castle. (An interesting point. No human being can really initiate another.) Only a lion stood on each side of the portal.

Lancelot leaped from the boat and rushed up the steps. At the top he drew his sword. Instantly both beasts "with sudden-flaring manes" rose upright, and each seized one of his shoulders. Lancelot would have slain them with his sword, but the voice of his Teacher came to him warning him not to strike:

*Doubt not, go forward; if thou doubt, the beasts
Will tear thee piecemeal.*

At the same time the sword was dashed from his

hand. No material weapon can be used against the Dweller. Having passed the lions, Lancelot was free to cross the Threshold and follow the voice which called him upward.

*Clear as a lark, high o'er me as a lark,
A sweet voice singing in the topmost tower
To the eastward; up I climbed a thousand steps.*

At the top of these was a door through which he passed, and here at last he beheld the Holy Grail:

*All palled in crimson samite, and around
Great angels, awful shapes, and wings, and eyes.*

Here he also heard holy voices singing:

*Glory and joy and honour to our Lord,
And to the Holy Vessel of the Grail.*

It will be seen from all this how far more important than any mere participant in a rite is the real Dweller on the Threshold. "Let not man deceive you with vain words." The Dweller on the Threshold is the embodiment of your own past sins. □

—Sylva B. Baker

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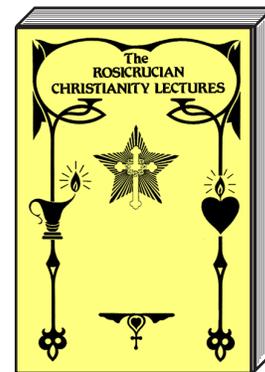
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