



MASTERS OF FANTASY

Robert William Chambers—"Maker of Moons"—1865-1933.

Chambers' first ambition was to be an artist, and a painting of his was in fact exhibited by the Paris Salon. Then he discovered he could paint with the pen even more effectively than the brush. "The King in Yellow," his second book, was an instant sensation. Chambers was probably about 28 at the time he created this collectors' classic.

Carcosa was the name he gave to the weird lost world sung of by the lovely Cassilda of his brain's creation. His poignant "Demoiselle d'Ys" and horrifying "Yellow Sign" have been acclaimed in earlier F.F.M.s. Every book collector of the baroque hopes to include on his shelves such compelling Chambers volumes as "Slayer of Souls," "Maker of Moons" and "Tracer of Lost Persons." Fourteen years ago this word weaver of warm charms and fearful visions went at last himself "In Search of Unknown." It is recorded that, when the time drew near for the greatest adventure, his death was encompassed with supreme fortitude.

ATLANTIS' EXILE

"You are fortunate and at peace who have never seen these mermaids flashing like silver javelins through the clear water. . . ."

By Cyril Hume

The isle of strange delight which lives in all men's dreams was his for a while, before he was banished from the silvery gates, forever remembering—forever damned. . . .

"I HAVE been down there," the traveler said, "in the blue dusk of the abyss under the ocean." His flesh was bleached ivory like the flesh of one who has for long been confined away from the sun. "The wise melancholy people of the city put me to work with some other captives hewing the dark sea-growths away from their flaggings and cornices. I tell you it was strange at first to see the fish move by, gay and unafraid in their companies. . . ."

"How did you reach the place?" I asked.

"It was when we came to The Gates of the Sea," he answered. "Suddenly the waters opened, casting up a mist of spray over the masthead. Our ship sank down as though upon a steep slow river until it came to rest at last lightly upon the ocean floor. I remember how we all looked up amazed to see those porticos rising around us. Then the pale people came with chains in their hands and surrounded us. Me they put to hewing the beautiful sea-growths which spring like weeds in the streets."

"I do not understand," I said, "—those gates. . . ."

"Understand? Ah, no. . . . Ah, no," he answered. "One understands only that they are beautiful, The Gates of the Sea. The beauty of them when they opened to receive us made me forget even to be afraid. Their waters are like bronze overwrought with fishes and wonders of the deep. They are like glass," he said.

"But how—"

"I cannot tell you how. I can tell you

only that we sailed into the place unknowing and unsuspecting, and that those marvelous gates swung hugely open to receive us. They were like green bronze in the spume. . . . No, there is no way to come to them. When it is time, they open. That is all. It may happen once in a century. You hear at home that a certain ship has been lost, leaving no clew of oil or wreckage on the water. Perhaps she had been sighted the day before, luffing with slapping tackle through the flaws of a calm. Then—vanished! It is that those happy and melancholy people below have had need of servants in their city." He mused for a long time. Then suddenly he cried out in a voice of pain, "Atlantis! Atlantis!" His face was twisted. I saw that he was old.

"You did not drown!" I said.

He shook his head impatiently. "No, no, no! It is not like that. One breathes still. Not air, no. But there is an element injected into the waters of the city. I have received it into my lungs with ease and delight. Newcomers are made dull and drowsy at first, but after a month even the pleasure of it is ordinary. Respiration becomes very slow. One breathes perhaps once in an hour. It is all because of that element which the people of the city release into the water twice, perhaps three times a year.

"I have frequently watched them do it. They carry out one of the huge shell-crusted jars and break the seal, wearing masks, and employing many rituals. Then that sweet ichor pours abroad like molten