

RK

RHEINHART KLEINER: A MEMOIR

A new annotated version of a pamphlet
first issued by JAMES GUINANE
in 1951.

My thanks to Dennis Weiler for generously
acquiring a copy of this scarce booklet, and
for emailing me the scans needed to make this
new annotated version.

Annotations by David Haden.

September 2013

RK

RHEINHART KLEINER : A MEMOIR

by

JAMES GUINANE

1951

Wholly produced and bound by
James Guinane at 321 Park Street
New Town, Tasmania, Australia.

James Guinane (1925-2007):

From an obituary printed in *The Fossil* #336:

"He was employed from age 16 at the Australian Broadcasting Commission [the Australian equivalent of the BBC] as a cadet journalist. At eighteen he joined the Royal Australian Air Force and graduated as a pilot with the rank of Flight-Sergeant. The Second World War ended before he was sent overseas and he immediately returned to the A.B.C. In 1947 he was transferred to Tasmania [a large isolated island off the coast of Australia] to work and it was here that he met Norma, who was a typist in the News Department. They were married two years later. Jim remained with the A.B.C. until he retired. He was a man who loved what he did for a living - being a reporter. He rose through the ranks and when he retired was News Editor for the A.B.C. in Tasmania."

I

FAITH IN DIFFERENT ORACLES

THE sad years have been with
in amateur journalism. We have
st many who used once to take
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Ernest Edkins and Tim Thrift cost
dear. It is true they were old
ough to die: Ernest Edkins wrote
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The printing seems a little off register here. The correct opening page reads as follows:

THE sad years have been with us in amateur journalism. We have lost many who used once to take exercise with us. Had we been running a gay dance we should expect pay for the piping, and it may be the price extracted would have been the taking of some of our leaders. But we have been a moribund bunch, little inclined to dance, it seems hard that we should have pay the piper nonetheless. Ernest Edkins and Tim Thrift cost dear. It is true they were old enough to die: Ernest Edkins wrote his final message to amateurdom: "At last I have reached journey's end." So it was futile to bewail, their loss. But more recently we have had to give up one whom we had every right to expect would be with us for many more years, and the feeling is one of despair. Reinhart Kleiner died at the age of 56, and left the amateur fraternity a sore and disappointed group.

Ernest Edkins was an American amateur journalist and Lovecraft correspondent. Lovecraft admired some of his weird verse, and lured him back into amateurdom after a lapse. See his entry in *An H.P. Lovecraft Encyclopedia*.

Tim Thrift was a long-standing amateur journalist from Cleveland, Ohio. *The Fossil* wrote of him... "in 1902 Timothy B. Thrift began the publication of the *Black Book* and the *Lucky Dog*, noted for their unique and beautiful typography".

end." So it was futile to bewail their loss. But more recently we have had to give up one whom we had every right to expect would be with us for many more years, and the feeling is one of despair. Rheinhart Kleiner died at the age of 56, and left the amateur fraternity a sore and disappointed group.

It is impossible for me, who knew Kleiner only in the latter days of his activity, to say all that should be said of this delightful dilettante. I know little of him from personal contact and little more by repute, but still I have a picture of him that is more or less complete. It is a picture drawn perhaps from my senses, for I suspect he was a man who did not become readily known to his acquaintances but whose characteristics could be quickly sensed. Half an hour silently shared in his library would weave a deeper understanding than a weekend of idle gabble.

Rheinhart Kleiner (1892-1949) died while living at 222 Demott Avenue, according to the *New York Times*. H.P. Lovecraft lost touch with Kleiner from the end of Lovecraft's New York period through to 1936-37 (although Lovecraft did encounter him, as part of groups, on some of his New York visits in the 1930s). One reason for this might be that RK appears to have been active in hardline communist circles in New York during at least the later part of that period, a member of "Unit 36-S" of the New Deal's Federal Writers' Project. The New York City FWP was a body set up in 1934/5 and it was swiftly infested with bickering communist and socialist sects (seemingly to the detriment at that time of fellow Kalem member Arthur Leeds - see the chapter on Leeds in my latest book). Perhaps of relevance to this discovery is that fellow Kalem member George Kirk's Chelsea Book Shop in New York was also cited in the official record as having been one of... "the two official book shops of the Communist party of the United States". Possibly the apparent involvement or at least 'fellow travelling' of Kleiner and Kirk in hard-left New York politics meant that their doctrinaire ideas were not palatable to Lovecraft?

By "personal contact" Guinane might be implying that he once met RK face to face, which would imply a trip from Ausatralia to the east coast of America. Guinane was a young Australian amateur journalist (*Churingas*) and reporter on the remote island of Tasmania. There is a mention of "half an hour silently shared in his library" but since Guinane gives no firm details of a meeting we should probably assume that he knew RK by correspondence and from reading his articles and amateur publications.

That is true of a number of people who spend their lives in literary creation. A diffidence or some other constraint may prevent an easy contact with those around them; but if an invisible wall bars the outstretchings of their personality they will seek other ways of communicating with their fellows. In their writings we shall find the smiles and tears, the quirks and wisdoms that less inhibited people would pass so easily across the cafe table to us. As much of Reinhart Kleiner as it is proper for us to know is limned in the essays and poems he wrote for the amateur press.

It has been a very satisfactory experience for me to read them again as his collected work, though the amount of Reinhart Kleiner in my files—a score of verses and a couple of dozen essays—must represent but a small fraction of his output.

Here Guinane does not mention letters from RK, perhaps suggesting that he was not actually a correspondent?

It was not by chance that I turned first to his rendering of the amateur account of Ernest Edkins, which was published in Edward Cole's Edkins Memoir. All the skill that Kleiner could command by beck and beguile was put into this piece. He was writing not merely a dutiful tribute to a friend but in telling the story of Edkins he was telling partly the story of his own literary tastes and adventures, for the two men were of an ilk. I drew from it many inklings of Kleiner's character and the impression that he would prefer to see the bad counted with the good when his own counting-time had come. Though Kleiner attained a competence far beyond the average amateur's ability, he showed no conceits in his writings. He would not be pleased with any appraisal that tacked a veneer of genius over a core of what was really no more and no less than great talent.

Edward Harold Cole (1892-1966) of Boston, a long-time amateur journalism friend of Lovecraft, who... "frequently visited Cole in the Boston area in the 1920s and 1930s" (*An H.P. Lovecraft Encyclopedia*). Cole and Lovecraft corresponded from 1914 onwards.

Ernest A. Edkins: A memoir, by Rheinhard Kleiner and Edward H. Cole. Oakwood Press, Newtonville, Mass., 1947. 28 pages. Reprinted in *The Fossil* #328.

Rheinart Kleiner's finest qualification in amateur journalism was the rare one — he was a sincere amateur. He was of the few for whom the discovery of organised amateur journalism was tremendously important, a discovery looked back upon with fond gratitude, never to be casually obscured in the memory among a thousand insignificant occurrences. It is a rare gift, the ability to derive supreme pleasure from an activity that we tend to belittle with the title of hobby. In our hard-headed world one judges a man according to the way he makes his living, and though it may be interesting to chat awhile about his avocation it is not to be thought that his avocation is an important part of his life. It is much more important apparently to know whether he is a bricklayer or a horsedocter.

This is really an extraordinary view to take of life. To be told

The sentiment that RK was a "sincere amateur" was one echoed by Lovecraft and the Kalem when they knew him in New York. On this see Lovecraft's *Letters from New York* and Kirk's diary in *Lovecraft's New York Circle*.

Guinane here perhaps echoes Lovecraft's own distain for learning the profession of a man, preferring to learn something of the man's interior life instead.

that Rheinart Kleiner was Recorder for Chester township in New Jersey means little to me; I get no picture of his character nor any indication of whether he is likely to spend his Saturday afternoons jitterbugging or delving in the public library. But if I am told that Rheinart Kleiner in his leisure hours is an amateur writer and bibliomaniac then I have a far better conception of the clay he was made from.

Wise men, knowing with Ben Franklin that a life of leisure is not a life of laziness, count their leisure-time interests first. Rheinart Kleiner quite obviously valued his avocations above any occupation that earned him the necessities of life. And among his treasured pastimes amateur journalism must have come first, even ahead of his book collecting and his joyous hours of reading. In amateur journalism, Kleiner found the companionship for

"Recorder for Chester township in New Jersey".
This is Chester Township, Morris, NJ. RK was
living there, single, on the 1940 Census. Recorder
perhaps meant a court of justice recorder?

Jitterbugging: a type of 20th century popular dance.

which a confirmed bookworm often starves: there were fellow spirits with whom to talk of the wanderings and the wonderings at the wayside of letters.

So I say that amateur journalism was the most important thing in Reinhart Kleiner's life. While most of us worship the resurrected golden idol that Moses was once commanded to smash, Kleiner had different values and sought different oracles. Being apart from the mob in this he suffered some disparagement. There were those who were shocked when Kleiner stated that if the National Amateur Press Association raised its dues to five dollars he would not be able to afford membership. In the eyes of some this was the admission of a man who had failed to make much of a success of his living. I don't see it that way. Rather was it a statement of unimportant fact by a man who had found more worthwhile things in life than making money.

I have been unable to discover when National Amateur Press Association (NAPA) proposed raising its dues to \$5. \$5 in 1940 would be the equivalent of about \$85 today. From the perspective of today's recession, one can see how a sum of \$85 a year might have caused a pause for thought in someone who had struggled through the great depression.

II

THE BOOKISH MAKING OF KLEINER

THE predominant characteristic of Rheinhart Kleiner, the amateur journalist, was his knowing of books. Such a background of learning has been one quality shared by all the great figures of amateur journalism. Many have been prominent without this backing but, in recent decades at least, none has been great, as Ernest Edkins and Howard Lovecraft and James Morton were great.

For Kleiner, books were not only the pathways to wisdom and experience but they gave him as well, I think, the very impulse to write. The writing urge comes to a man in various ways. Some are born with

James Ferdinand Morton, Jr. (1870-1941). See his Wikipedia page and entry in *An H.P. Lovecraft Encyclopedia*.

it and start to scribble childish adventure yarns as soon as they learn to spell; some, like Kleiner and Robert Holman, find the interest to write only after they have been charmed and persuaded by other men's writings.

Kleiner's early love of books and his associations during his Brooklyn days with fellow spirits who loved books were the influences that shaped his life. His writings succeed no better than when they describe the bookshops where he spent his first-won pennies or tell of the gathering of his acquaintances in small cafes to talk about books and the men who wrote them. In these essays Kleiner has given us some of the most romantic writing in amateur journalism. Penniless poets and authors who can save their lunch allowance and car fares for a week to buy a volume from the shelf of a secondhand bookshop are always romantic figures. Such a

Robert Holman, official editor of *The National Amateur* in the early 1940s.

Guinane here refers to RK's memoirs of life with the Kalems in New York. So far as I know he left no memoirs of his time with the communists in "Unit 36-S" of the New Deal's Federal Writers' Project in New York in the late 1930s.

picture Kleiner gives us when he reminisces upon his early life. He draws a youth real to our imagination—the youth who a few of us were, who some of us would like to think we were, whom nearly all of us in amateur journalism can understand and sympathise with. It is romance in the classic tradition as Robert Louis Stevenson or Charles Lamb would have written it; and told in the simple, honest style that Kleiner was blessed with it makes direct appeal to a part of our imagination that remains forever young and apart from the rest of our senses as they grow to sophistication.

For a man who was to have an uncynical, romantic view of life, Kleiner's choice of books of influence was fortunate from childhood onwards. Such books as "The Old Curiosity Shop," "She," "Le Morte D'Arthur," "Poems, Ballads and Songs of Robin Hood," and all of Sherlock

Charles Lamb: late 18th century British essayist and writer for children.

Robert Louis Stevenson: Scottish writer of adventure novels and travel books.

Here Guinane presumably draws on RK's memoirs of his early reading matter in *Burrowings of An Old Bookworm*. This c.1946 volume is one of the curious mysteries of Kleiner's later years. It is not currently on any bibliographic databases. *Imprimatur* (Vol.1, 1-3, p.31) noted of Paul W. Cook's Vermont little magazine *The Ghost*..

"The fourth number (July 1946) is entirely devoted to *Burrowings of an Old Bookworm* by Reinhart Kleiner."

Burrowings was apparently... "a long bookish memoir largely devoted to popular fiction he read during his boyhood" (from L.W. Currey's description of *The Ghost*). *Burrowings* is also mentioned in Reinhart Kleiner's death notice in *Wilson Library Bulletin*, 1949...

"Reinhart Kleiner, trade writer; at Clifton, New Jersey; after a long illness; fifty-six. Well known in his field in England and Australia as well as in the United States, his latest book was *Burrowings of an Old Bookworm*."

My suspicion would be that *Burrowings* may have been a circulated typescript memoir in carbon, rather than an actual book? Or perhaps printed in part in *The Ghost*? I guess an inspection of *The Ghost*, currently available from L.W. Currey for \$150, could yield more precise details.

Typical boys books of the time are cited by Guinane: by Dickens; Rider Haggard; re-told tales from Arthurian and early medieval British folklore; Conan Doyle's *Holmes* series; and E. W. Hornung (Doyle's brother-in-law, creator of *Raffles* series).

Holmes and Raffles shaped the romantic soul within him. Others, like "The Love Affairs of a Bibliomaniac," "My Literary Friends and Acquaintances," "Memoirs of My Dead Life," and of course Elia, provided him with the atmosphere in which to do his living as happily as could be. The story of Kleiner's reading and of his books of influence is told in "Burrowings of an Old Bookworm," a lengthy essay, too short by volumes, published in *The Ghost*. With such a man one feels that the story of his reading is the story of the greater part of his life.

Amateur journalism gained much from the bookish making of Reinhart Kleiner. Not only did he find tales of interest to tell from the very real adventure of living most of his life between the covers of books, but he brought the scholarly air of literature with him into the amateur press. Many people have been famous because of their influence

The Love Affairs of a Bibliomaniac: The Writings in Prose and Verse of Eugene Field.

Literary Friends and Acquaintances, by William Dean Howells.

Memoirs of My Dead Life, by George Moore.

Essays of Elia, by Charles Lamb.

See previous page for details of *The Ghost*.

upon our hobby, but of them all the man who influences us in a literary direction deserves most acclamation. Such men are rare and are doubly valuable, for if we have no ambition somewhere among us to create good work we shall find we tire of being always engaged in the trivial, and amateur journalism then would die.

III

THE SPRY LITTLE BUS

NEXT to the bookman comes the writer of light verse in Kleiner's self-affections. Modern amateur journalism knows little of this side of the Kleiner character, for it was an activity neglected in his later years. Without the efforts of The Ghost to preserve some of his verses we younger amateurs would know practically nothing of them. Most appeared beyond a couple of decades back when light verse was an important vogue both in the amateur and the professional worlds, and men whose names are now meaningless were living symbols of modern literature. When those men passed to

The artistic use of mid 20th century mimeographing on show here earned plaudits from American amateurs...

"American amateurs receiving it can recall nothing to equal it in the artistic use of mimeographing ... Forty-six pages of Guinane's polished prose are divided into nine chapters on various phases of Kleiner's personality and literary output."

the dust and the vogue ended, Kleiner apparently decided it was time for him too to give up writing light verse. This was a pity, for whatever is good artistically needs the excuse of no passing popularity. His easy rhymings and fanciful anecdotes in verse would have done much to improve the bad flavor of our present-day doggerel.

I have had cause before to call Kleiner an "athletic poet" who could perform prodigious feats with words. The verse patterns he set himself were as hazardous as an obstacle course but he negotiated them skillfully without losing pace or upsetting his graceful movements. Hurdles of versecraft like the following he took in his stride:

"View the smocks that quite
imbue the

Girls who serve with Attic grace;
Sip of coffee mid the drip of
All the candles in the place;
So the hours of night will go the

Kleiner famously engaged in "duels" with Lovecraft in the form of light verse. This was verse on subjects such as silent movie stars and skyscraper char-ladies that captured some of the mood and details of early 20th century modernity. These are collected toward the end of the book *Letters to Reinhart Kleiner* (2005).

Fleeting way that dollars do;
Thus the cover charge is plus the
Tax and tip and hat check, too."

Those two stanzas from "Idyll, Circa 1921" show how Kleiner could bend the vine of his meaning to fit his trellis of pattern. First and third lines that rhyme within themselves, and second and fourth lines that are coupled in rhyme, were a scheme Kleiner often followed with felicity in his light verse.

Recently a correspondent demanded of us, "When, in God's name, were there any set rules for doggerel?" We replied that this question could better be asked of true poetry than of doggerel. Poetry may break every petty "law" and be supreme, but doggerel or light verse gets its chief effect from a strict observance of metre, rhyme and word play. This is a notion certainly shared by Reinhart Kleiner. In the two stanzas quoted below, from Kleiner's "To a Certain Bus," the whole delight

lies in the workmanship, the measured tread of accent and the careful flagging of his pavement of words:

"Swing along, sway along,

Spry little bus!

Why, as you play along,

Care about us?

Others walk wide of you—

We are inside of you;

We cannot fuss!

Gayly you mix us with

Some who complain;

Some who transfix us with

Glares of disdain;

Some who but giggle and

Blush when we wiggle and

Wobble in vain!"

But the spry little bus will carry Kleiner to no hall of fame. Posterity will have to turn the mustypages of oblivion if it wants to recall his light verses; they will not survive beyond the turn of a decade, if, indeed, they are now remembered by any but a few oldtimers. The masters who taught

RK's poetry appears to have remained uncollected in a single volume to date, other than the poems relating to H.P. Lovecraft. Selections can be found in *Letters to Reinhart Kleiner* (2005) and *Lovecraft's New York Circle: The Kalem Club, 1924-1927* (2006). RK's poems can also be found in his small press editions from the 1930s and 40s, such as *Pegasus in Pasture*.

him—Austin Dobson, Andrew Lang, Frederick Locker-Lampson—are forgotten, and the pupil, though he was apt, can expect no kinder treatment by fate. His work in the light verse field was good, but the verses of their very nature were inconsequential and not worth the time to commit them to memory.

Austin Dobson: British poet and essayist.

Andrew Lang, Scottish poet, novelist, and anthropologist.

Frederick Locker-Lampson: British poet and book collector.

These names, and those of RK's boyhood reading, appear to indicate a strong preference for British authors and culture, something that would have endeared RK to an arch Anglophile like Lovecraft.

IV

PEGS FOR THE LOOP OF MEMORY

RHEINHART KLEINER, however, has an assured claim to recognition in the future because of his work in another sphere. As a thing apart from his verse-making he engaged occasionally in the writing of true poetry. The poems that stand above his name on our printed page may be few but they are indestructible pegs upon which to hang the loop of memory. They were written as poetry should be written, with broad view and delicate definition, with a soul big enough to apprehend the slightest figurings of beauty, both material and spiritual. His verse-craft was a sauntering in literary

ways; but his poetry was a purposeful striding where most amateurs cannot go without stumbling.

There was no tempestuous spirit in Kleiner's poetry to suggest it was written in the sweat of a moment's ecstasy, but rather the calm rapture of one who has been married long to his Muse. His poetry was the product of long winter night and flickering hearth:

"Light the old pipe! With
 strains of music blended,
Rise mystic sounds that
 mingle in my dream,
And tell of one more fleeting
 season ended
In song and revel where the
 windows gleam;
Of peace and joy that long
 ago descended
From one bright star's
 remote and radiant beam."

The phrase and the mood of these lines were not created in the vigor of a moment like the often impulsive

RK's fondness for his tobacco was commented on by the Kalems - at the time of the Kalem Club he appears to have used tobacco snuff liberally.

poetry of Edna Hyde McDonald. They grew from the musings of a man who has just put down a book and from the thought-provoking depths of an armchair contemplates a smokering drifting lazily towards the ceiling and bearing aloft his soul.

In a faraway den between the tenements of Brooklyn or among the hills of New Jersey Kleiner must often have known such moments of complete detachment from mortality when he enjoyed rich visitations from his Muse. Few are the poets of today who can pause long enough in their lives as Kleiner did to consult the spirit within themselves and allow inspiration to come in full. No impatient poet can experience the benefit of being alone with book and pipe and wandering thought. These were among the fondest moments in Kleiner's life:

"The winter wind comes howling
down the hill;

But here the fire is warm, the

Edna Hyde McDonald (Vondy), said to be one of
"amateur journalism's all-time greats".

lamp-light's glow
Shines back from crowded
shelves whereon, I know,
My heart may find forgetfulness
of ill."

Or again:

"Musing on Elia's page when
winter night
And cold and silence close
on circling hills,
When frosty moonbeams fall
on snowy sills,
I find my lamp-lit solitude
grown bright!"

The above extracts are from two of Kleiner's sonnets. The Aonian called Rheinhart Kleiner a 'sonneteer par excellence' and paid him no more than merited tribute. It is to be expected that one so deft in fulfilling the exactions of light verse should choose a technically difficult form when he turned to true poetry. To Kleiner the sonnet form was sublime for it satisfied the mechanic in him that must be

"Elia's page": *Essays of Elia*, by Charles Lamb.

The Aonian: "THE AONIAN of Tim Thrift and E. A. Edkins". The Winter 1943 issue ran Lovecraft's "The Cats of Ulthar".

always concerned with the intricacies
of structure, yet did not yoke his
poet-soul with harness so tight
that his flights of imagination
were in any way restricted. He is
ever happiest when working within
this medium for then he sings his
sweetest lyrics. Stray lines like,
"These hills that drowse the
summer noons away"

and

"Where dreamy lamp-light
streams on London's pave,"
or an evocative picture of Elia
and the chaste lingerings of his
spirit:

"Dim deep'ning decades long
have overlain
His grave in Edmonton; but
he survives
Their dust and darkness; he
remains to cheer
The passing doubts, at once
both sad and vain,
Of these obscurities we call
our lives,

Elia: *Essays of Elia*, by Charles Lamb.

Edmonton, north of London, England. Burial place
of Charles Lamb.

These groping interludes of
hope and fear!"

Kleiner, for his work as a writer
of sonnets, was given the supreme
accolade by Ernest Edkins, who
said: "Disinclined as I am to
indulge in hyperbole, I must record
my opinion that no finer sonnet
was ever penned by an amateur poet
than Kleiner's splendid lines
'To H.P.L.'."

Ernest Edkins was an American amateur journalist and Lovecraft correspondent. Lovecraft admired some of his weird verse, and lured him back into amateurdom after a lapse. See his entry in *An H.P. Lovecraft Encyclopedia*.

H. P. L.

You sit among us when we pour the wine
And read the lyric or intone the song,
When melody and mirth the hours prolong
And talk is fervent and our faces shine;
Shedding a glory or a spell benign
Among the fancies that about us throng,
Your presence seems as certain and as strong
As if your voice had called, or you had made a sign!
We speak of you and what you felt or thought;
We quote you as we might some friend away,
And chuckle at some foible all your own;
So vividly and variously you wrought
Your magic in our pliant hearts, that they
Hold warm a name now chiseled on a stone!

V

FAILURE OF A LEGEND

RHEINHART KLEINER could have had a legend for the making, equal to the legend of Lovecraft or of Edkins himself. His poetry could have shone like an imperishable candle-flame to light his shrine while other poets could strike no more than occasional sparks in the forgetful darkness. With only a little more volume to his serious work we could have said of Kleiner as Kleiner said of Lovecraft:

"So vividly and variously
you wrought
Your magic in our pliant
hearts, that they
Hold warm a name now chiseled

on a stone!"

For Kleiner too had the magic to take our fancies in his spell. But unfortunately the magic was not in enough of his work for legend to take the keeping of his name.

The last few years of his life may have been among Kleiner's most active but they were also his least noteworthy for they saw a gradual dissipation of his literary energies. There was a prolific outpouring of light prose, prompted, I suspect, not by any inner impelling but by the solicitations of amateur editors. Shortly before, Kleiner's name had been restored to familiarity in the amateur press by returning oldtimers, and young editors, newly become aware of his past achievements, secured frequent articles from him to enliven their pages. The prose he wrote at this time outshone the general run of other stuff being published but little of it could be classed among his

In the "last few years of his life", RK married fellow amateur Ruth Pietchman (b. 1893).

His "frequent articles" in the amateur press appear to have so far been uncollected. One wonders if some of them may have had memories of Lovecraft and his circle in the 1920s?

really serious works. The attractive notion of beauty, as Kleiner revealed it in his sonnets, and the enthusiasm of his earlier articles had gone. The fault may have been ours in calling on him too often, for Kleiner was a conscientious amateur journalist and, knowing how much we needed the contributions of a competent writer, he gave as often as amateur editors asked of him.

There may have been a physical reason as well for the decline of his artistic mettle. Perhaps the cause of the cerebral haemorrhage which finally brought about his death was even then exerting a hurtful influence upon his intellectual power. Certainly it was not age creeping on because he was still too young and too keenly aware of the softnesses and savageries of life to surrender to decrepitude. But as a man who had known sincere aesthetic stimulation in

"cerebral haemorrhage": a stroke.

amateur journalism around the 1920s he probably found the amateur scene today devoid of any literary compulsion and without its old power of probing the deeper layers of thought.

Kleiner may not have believed there was any lessening of his talent, but he showed a thin awareness that previous facilities were dropping away from him in a couple of comments that he made towards the end. The first was in the March 1946 *National Amateur*: "If I had the enthusiasm and crusading zeal which once made it a pleasure for me to tell poets just what was wrong with their works, I should be happy to write an article in the way of a text...but the cogs of the brain no longer revolve for the sheer joy of revolving." Another, two years later in *The Feather Duster*, showed that his zeal was further diminished: "Most amateurs of celebrity who have been with us

The Feather Duster was an amateur magazine published by Charles R. King, M.D. *The Fossil* calls it an "outstanding publication" and elsewhere it was called "an ideal little amateur paper".

for any considerable time, must be aware that they have had to make their names anew every ten years or so—a task which becomes more difficult with every passing decade!" And I should say Kleiner found it very hard to try to re-capture in our day the spirit that had once lit his poems and prose and had compelled attention in the past.

Was there, too, the hint that Kleiner was haunted by a premonition of his untimely end? A paragraph, which was given conspicuous place at the very end of his tale, "Burrowings of an Old Bookworm," always seemed an odd whimsy of Kleiner's. It struck me that, while he was yet a young man as physical age is counted, he was nevertheless too mature intellectually to be concerned with the synthetic foreboding of adolescence: "The descending road near my door (he wrote) comes to an abrupt end at the woods. Is it symbolic of other terminations

Guinane here implies that he has read right through the mysterious *Burrowings of An Old Bookworm*. His placing it in quote marks seems to suggest an essay rather than a book?

as final? If so, these latter are not unattended by beauty and peace." Now that Kleiner's death has followed so closely upon the writing of this paragraph, the words take on greater signification. Had Kleiner sensed that life for him was running out? If not, it was an abrupt bit of fatalism at the end of so lively an account of doings among books.

VI

FAILURE OF A CRITIC

A MISTAKE Kleiner made in his last years with us was to accept some commissions from the Bureau of Critics. He was then not able to control his thought along properly critical lines and the commentaries he wrote for The National Amateur in 1947-48 were lifeless. Although, like the rest of the amateur fraternity at the time, I made excuses for him, I see now that these commentaries were a definite indication of his growing enfeeblement. They were among the first writings by Kleiner that I was really disappointed in but on contemporary standards they still stood high.

"Bureau of Critics": regular section in the official publication of the National Amateur Press Association. The Bureau has an entry in *An H.P. Lovecraft Encyclopedia*.

Earlier I had urged his recruitment for the Bureau of Critics believing that his guardianship of our amateur letters would be a valuable service; and I called him "the sort of Saint Peter we hope shall greet us at the gates of heaven." This had been written as a compliment, and there was more truth than flattery in it. Kleiner in his critical works became a great deal too saintly to be of much use to us. The emery wheel of the years will spin and wear away the harshness of a man's first opinions; sturdier, more tolerant considerations will grow in their place. But the new tolerance must not be more abundant than the original intolerance, for one in the extreme is as bad as the other. A man weak in criticising and impotent in justly condemning fails in an important responsibility to the society that sustains him. Reinhart Kleiner rather than spank the rascally,

"emery wheel": wheel covered with fine abrasive emery particles, used for polishing.

would retreat behind such phrases as, "They will go unrebuked; their derelictions are so conspicuous as to be self-condemned." This may be a kindly attitude, but from the point of view of our development it was carrying leniency into laziness, and it robbed his criticisms of vitality. What he wrote had not the bark, much less the bite, of conscientious reviewage.

Our disappointment at this critic's fall from excellence was all the keener because in toppling he had toppled from a niche high up among the leaders. Formerly his word, particularly when it had been on poetry, had been listened to with respect as it had been an accurate and a cunning word. It is easy to relinquish one who has been of no value to us but always difficult to give up a leader. Kleiner had had a gift for deep literary understanding, and, where many critics would lead a writer

in the dark ways of literature with only the flare of a match to guide, Kleiner lit the way with a brightly burning torch. In the good days of his association with us he had known where a critic's first duty lay, to prod our literary energies and inspire a seeking after perfection. Beyond that—he had been of such calibre that he could well nigh achieve perfection himself in his poetry and prose and so we were the more willing listeners because he taught not merely by advice and urgings but by his own splendid examples.

VII

OF HIS NATURE SIMPLE

UNTIL the end, however, Kleiner retained a popularity in the amateur press that no decline in literary energy or shrinkage of zeal could wholly lose for him. He had the knack of writing his personality into the essays and causeries that appeared so often in *The Feather Duster* and elsewhere. Interest warmed in the most piddling paragraphs because, just beneath the surface of his words, he laid the shadowings of a most likable character. There was nothing flamboyant in its appeal, just the quiet pull of a mind set in genial thoughts. No doubt the abundant tolerance, which

I thought detracted from the quality of his criticism, made him the more likable. It's a disagreeable truth that to be well-loved one cannot be a good critic. Amateur writers could turn to Kleiner's commentaries, sure of being safe from any wounding attacks, and, in his later pieces, safe even from the slight pain of a pricked conscience. Even where he dealt outside the stage of individuals and could hurt no one's personal feelings, Kleiner still wrote in good-natured, tolerant vein. He was always sane, never fired by any unreasonable compulsions, so that his essays rarely beruffled anyone's pinfeathers.

What was so easy to like in Kleiner's personality was his blessed simplicity which survived through all his later writings. Simplicity was a forceful quality clinging to his every paragraph and welcome refreshment to the reader in the sweaty business of toiling through

amateur literature. It had something to do with the words he selected for his use and the way he shaped them into phrases; and it had much to do with his outlook. Although Kleiner lived in the busy village of amateur journalism and had a hundred friends among the amateur journalists, he remained something of a spiritual hermit. He preserved his attitudes and his philosophy in an abstract fastness aloof from worldly affectation. No contagion of modern complexes could touch his essential simplicity to strangle its sweet appeal.

So his moments of sadness, which occur like the splashes of occasional tears in his poetry, were always simple and sincere and a gale of sincere sympathy sweeps us as we read his pieces.

"Who could not wish his heart
were as the hills,
Untroubled when the shadows
close around,

Lovecraft had a liking for writers who had a genuine simplicity which had the strength to stand apart from "wordly affectation". For example, Everett McNeil, Arthur Goodenough, and a number of others.

Unshaken by the sudden storms
that blow;
Safe from the bleak uncertainty
that chills —
The secret dread that every
day has found,
The pain and care these
passing moments know."

As recently as 1943 Kleiner wrote these lines entitled "Mendham Hills." No one can deny that there is sorrow in the poet's heart; nor can it be denied that there is more of simple fortitude than gloom in his brand of sorrow.

Again in a moment of sadness he speaks some wistful lines farewell "An Old Hiking Stick" and blends brave hope into his feeling:

"...who knows but you may be
A branch again, upon some tree,
In ages hence; and I, no less
Reborn to youth and happiness.
Then I, who wrote your epitaph,
Again may cut you for my staff."
Kleiner was completely natural,

"Mendham Hills": Hathi indicates that this may have appeared in *The Smith alumnae quarterly*, v.32-34 1940-1943. However, Hathi access to this is not full-text. If the poem *did* appear there, it might indicate that RK had once attended Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts.

The Mendham Hills are at Chester, NJ. They now form a cluster of wooded nature reserves, and are located some 10 miles NW of Elizabethtown, New Jersey. The Mendham Hills looks like a delightful walking area.

RK was once the editor of The Paterson Rambling Club official journal, and seems to have taken to hiking toward the end of his period with the Kalems. Lovecraft, Morton, Dench, and occasionally Kirk, were known to have rambled with The Paterson Rambling Club. For more on the Club see: *Country Walks in Many Fields; Being Certain Choice Annals of The Paterson Rambling Club* (1934).

feeling as we feel the winds that topple our flimsy moods of happiness. He did not fall into dark despair though, but remained imbued with high courage. Far from being a morbid wallowing, Kleiner's sadness was a tremulous movement in profound caverns with the sob of eternity in it. His sadness was no petty personal thing but the vast sadness of all living kind, experienced through an individual set of feelings, but universal as it has haunted the race from our beginnings. So told, sadness is a dignified spectacle in men's eyes. Only when there is a lesser depth to the emotion does it ring false; and then it shrivels our delicacies and is embarrassing.

But sadness was only a facet of the Kleiner personality. Like any normal person he had his contrasting moods of merriment:

"My Chloe, now that care
besets

"Chloe": Ancient Greek - Demeter, goddess of fertility.

The bard on whom you once
could smile —
Whom doubt, despondency and
debts,
Conspire to hold in durance
vile,
Will all the warmth he once
enjoyed,
Continue, now he's unemployed?"
A rake could be no more carelessly
gay in dealing with his loves. Nor
could an "Invitation" (to a maid
so fair!) be put in jollier verse:
"So, then, be reasonable,
Say that you'll go;
Don't let unseasonable
Coldness say "no"!
Hasten your powdering,
Dear, for our chowdering,
Then—to a show!"

These two snippets of light verse
are aptly defined by the sub-title
of the collection they appeared
in, "Some Callow Cavortings from
Coltish Days." For in these pieces
to be sure he frisks through youthful

"Rake": a somewhat amoral, upper-class gentleman given to fine clothes and dalliances.

"Chowdering": chowder is a seafood stew.

Pegasus in Pasture: Latter-day Limpings of a Light Versifier, with Some Callow Cavortings from More Coltish Days (date?). Reprinted from *The Ghost* (Spring 1948) by W. Paul Cook, at the Driftwind Press, Montpelier, Vermont. 16 pages. One of several small-press collections of RK's poetry during the 1930s and 40s.

pastures. But it's not to be thought that Kleiner's jollity was confined to his youth. It survived into maturity when youth had shrunken away and left him a wizened figure in sloppy garments and outsize collars. The several causeries in *The Feather Duster*, which were among his last writings, were bright with his quiet merriment.

"Sloppy garments": one wonders if Guinane has seen a late photo of RK, now lost?

"Causeries": refers to "a literary style of short informal essays mostly unknown in the English-speaking world."

The Feather Duster was an amateur magazine published by Charles R. King, M.D. *The Fossil* calls it an "outstanding publication" and elsewhere it was called "an ideal little amateur paper".

VIII

A LEAVENING OF CALMNESS

KLEINER'S simplicity gave him the natural poise to balance his elation against his moods of deflation. He did not allow any one influence to hold him too much, as Alexander Zimmerman was continually held by the desolation he saw in life until we became bored with his dreary themes. Kleiner was a creature of sorrow only when the uncanny winds of temperament blew from the bleaker acres of man's spiritual plane; quickly the winds would shift and blow away the depression and Kleiner would be as cheerful as he had previously been sad. This is how man was meant to be, a creature

"Alexander Zimmermann": appears to be unknown to the historical record, although I found just one mention of an Austrian composer of that name.

deriving various experience from various mental and emotional as well as physical adventures. It's a dull being whose structure of moods has but one storey, no cellar to descend into, no roofgarden to rise to; a writer of such limited sensations is impossible.

What were the limits then to Kleiner's emotional experience? Of course he had limits the same as everyone else has, but they were not narrowly imposed. Most of us live within a fairly broad band of mental and emotional influences something like a climatic zone. Moods pass across our mental surface, generated by obscure impulses, like a series of weather changes. They range from storm to calm, from hot to cold, but in the general experience our moods remain within the wide latitudes of our particular type of mental climate. Alexander Zimmerman, for instance, had a succession of moods that always lay

in a frigid extremity and his climatic zone might be symbolised by the arctic. Burton Crane on the other hand would be of the tropics. Rheinhart Kleiner then, who was assailed by cold but not by blizzards, who had periods of warmth without being torrid, lay somewhere between the two: he is characterised by a temperate climate.

And his restrictions were the restrictions of a temperate being. He owned eccentricities, had a capacity for indignation and knew occasional moments of wrath; but there was never anything startling about his attitudes. He never galvanised our senses with shock. It was not that his dramatic powers were incomplete, but through all his moments there was a leavening of calmness. This gave his writings a pervasive charm born of the end of the day when the fire and mind have settled into glowing embers.

"Burton Crane": He published the little journal *Masaka*, and appears to have been a playwright in the 1920s. "In recent years Burton Crane has sent forth *Masaka* from Elizabeth [New Jersey]" said *The History of Amateur Journalism* (1957), but it appears to have been produced from the early 1940s if not earlier. Since some issues of the *Masaka* are recorded as being issued from Tokyo he was very probably the same Burton Crane who was a financial staff writer for the *New York Times* after 1937, then *New York Times* and Mutual Network radio network correspondent in Tokyo during the occupation. He bravely spoke out against socialist purges of businessmen in post-war Japan (see: *Unfinished Business*, Harvard University, p.194) which he saw as a key factor crippling the economic reconstruction there. On his experiences of Japan see: Burton Crane, "The Reminiscences of Burton Crane", New York: Oral History Research Office, Columbia University, 1961. Crane died in 1963.

IX

NO TEARS FOR HIM

So much of the story of Rheinhart Kleiner have I sensed. In parts it may seem far-fetched because it is drawn a good deal from the imagination and the imagination may reach a long way sometimes to fetch improbabilities to the surface. But then the real knowing of a literary man always lies in the imagination for it is there that he makes his contacts with our own spirit, there that reader and writer are linked. So, where material facts may tell a dull incomplete tale, imagination will paint the truer, more glittering story of the man.

The future well-being of amateur journalism requires that the story of Reinhart Kleiner shall not be soon forgotten. He is one who came among us with the hallmark of great talent upon him. And, as tradition feeds the present and the future, so must we see to it that the making of tradition in our day is not neglected. Kleiner is now a part of our tradition that we can recount with pride and that in future generations will strengthen the power of amateur journalism.

Kleiner's death is to be regretted, but it is not to be bewailed; he did not like to hear extravagant moaning. In one of the several letters we had from Kleiner were these words, following the death of Ernest Edkins: "When one of our great figures leaves us, we dry our tears and stifle our sobs and get to work to issue something that will express our grief and at the same time do suitable honor to the

person whose death has stirred us." Kleiner's death stirred all those who hold the habits of amateur journalism high and who have tried to bring serious purpose to the hobby. Their greater efforts are needed to do the honor his memory so rightly deserves.

