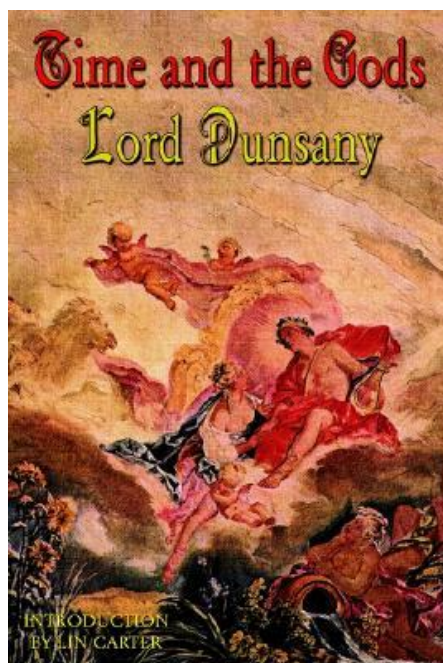




Time and the Gods

Lord Dunsany , Lin Carter (Introduction)

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Most fantasy enthusiasts consider Lord Dunsany one of the most significant forces in modern fantasy; his influences have been observed in the works of H.P. Lovecraft, L. Sprague de Camp, Fritz Leiber, Jack Vance, and many other modern writers. Time and the Gods is Dunsany at his peak of his talent. The stories here are a lush tapestry of language, conjuring images of people, places, and things which cannot possibly exist, yet somehow ring true. Together with Dunsany's other major collections, The Book of Wonder, A Dreamer's Tales and Tales of Three Hemispheres, they are a necessary part of any fantasy collection.

Time and the Gods Details

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From Reader Review Time and the Gods for online ebook

Marts (Thinker) says

Fantastic classic tales by Lord Dunsany... according to the preface:

"These tales are of the things that befel gods and men in Yarnith, Averon, and Zarkandhu, and in the other countries of my dreams."

...for those who love to occasionally drift away from reality...

Available online here: <http://dcc.vu/Media/E-Books/Lord%20Du...>

Jonathan Terrington says

Lord Dunsany is one of the most remarkable authors to have ever lived. If not in the way he wrote his prose, then in the way he lived his life as an adventure. And from this sense of adventure he developed a most remarkable perspective on the universe and fantasy. From this perspective he wrote a new mythology full of childish wonder, simplicity and also beauty. There is an aesthetic of delight to be found in *Time and the Gods* and it is this aesthetic which is so very appealing to read.

"And as a child stares at the bare walls of a narrow hut, so the gods looked listlessly upon the worlds saying: 'Will no new thing be?'"

What makes Dunsany's work so brilliant here is the way he so simply writes about deities and therefore religion while writing a new mythology. He does not mean to make such brilliant observations and yet he does. There is an ignorance that is refreshingly brilliant in his writing, something new and yet something very old.

"It were better to be birds and have no air to fly in, than to be gods having neither prayers no worship."

It is often raised as a theological question: why does God demand obedience of humanity? Or prayers and worship. To me Dunsany in this one simple line breaks down all kinds of intellectual sensibility and shows a distinct reasoning for why God demands obedience. I do not mean to say that it is foolish reasoning, but that merely it is a thoughtful one: God and gods are well godly. And to be godly is to be worthy of worship - not merely to be powerful entities.

"'We be seductive gods, having a particular remembrance for little prayers.' But the baboons leered fiercely at the Yozis and would have none of them for gods."

Again this quote reinforces the idea of what it is to be a god: to be worthy of worship. The Yozis mentioned in the particular section here however seek out this worship and reveal in this mythology that they are not so powerful as gods for they must actively push for people to worship, worship, worship and end up turning to baboons in the end for desperate prayers.

"...because he knew that thrice in every hour in some dark chamber Death and Famine met to speak two words together, 'The End.'"

"...in a narrower world Ord walked round and round, now seeing little, and his soul still wandered searching for some gods and finding none."

"'Curse not the gods.' And I said to him: 'Wherefore should I not curse Those who have stolen my sacred places in the night, and trodden down the gardens of my childhood?'"

Not only is Dunsany someone capable of great insight but also of great poetry as shown in the above quotes. And for this alone he deserves to remain known as a great writer.

Simon says

The one thing I will say to those about to read this book is read "The Gods of Pegana" before "Time and the Gods". It was written and published before and it will make more sense read that way around. I have no idea why the stuck "The Gods of Pegana" at the end in this volume.

Lance says

"Whether the dreams and fancies of Yoharneth-Lai be false and the things that are done by day be real, or the things that are done by day be false and the dreams and fancies of Yoharneth-Lai be real, none knoweth."

This is one of the definitive collection of Lord Dunsany's genre-defining short fiction, including stories from his books *Time and the Gods*, *The Sword of Welleran*, *The Book of Wonder*, *The Last Book of Wonder*, *A Dreamer's Tales*, and *The Gods of Pegana*. I have reviewed the former four books separately, but will give an overview of the stories selected from the latter two for this collection below. Overall, this collection is a romp through the extensive mind of one of the founders of the fantasy genre, and the importance of his work cannot be overstated.

Lord Dunsany combines a fascination with the religions and myths of a broad range of cultures, demonstrating a surprisingly progressive respect for an author of his time period and social class for those cultures he visited. Combined with an acerbic sarcasm which becomes more and more prominent in his later work, and an irreverent attitude towards literary criticism, he has all the eccentric characteristics of a creative paradigm-shifting mind. It's incredibly hard to review the whole collection as the breadth of topic and style across these stories is as plural as the landscapes and cities he describes. But it is an enlightening read that compulsively pulls the reader into a colourful alternate dimension of sensations and parabolic messages. Quite an awesome legacy.

Excerpts from *A Dreamer's Tales*

The stories reviewed below all came from the same initial collection, and document creative and strikingly contemporary fantasy stories, many of which can be described as magical realism. Here Dunsany excels at applying new perspectives to mundane things, offering strange viewpoints or time-spans we don't often think about, or plain inserting the fantastical into the mundane. It's one of the best collections on offer.

Polternees, Beholder of the Ocean ****

This story is an iconic opening to a book about wonder, and the lure of the imagination. In a peaceful inland town, many young men are drawn away in search of the ocean which is mythical as no man who went in search of it has ever returned. Polternees goes to the sea with full intention of returning, in order to win the hand of a princess and prove she is more beautiful than this God-like unknowable ocean. But when he arrives, he is seduced not by the power or the beauty of the sea, but by a strange pathos of it. *"and there were tears in the voice of the tyrannous Sea, for he had loved the galleons that he had overwhelmed, and he called*

men to him and all living things that he might make amends, because he had loved the bones that he had strewn afar." He never comes back. A fun exploration of wanderlust and escapism, and the spiritual properties of the unknown.

*Blagadross ******

This piece of magical realism is whimsy worthy of C.S. Lewis. Set in a landfill site, broken and forgotten things speak their life stories under the descending twilight. One is a cork which once plugged a wine bottle, that cannot understand why it has been punished for its mis-service. "*But they cast me away, me that had been sentinel for twenty years and just as staunch and strong as the day they made me.*" One is a cord that has hanged a depressed man and been thrown away in what it perceived to be an act of great benevolence. Dark. And last is Blagadross, the rocking horse destrier whose human owner became small-minded with age. "*Blagadross in his wooden heart, exalted in the heat of battle*" It's a very thought-provoking story, and one that would have fascinated me as a teenager, especially as a comment on our consumerist society.

*The Madness of Andelspurz ****

The story of a beautiful fictional European city whose soul has gone mad and left the city after many years of occupation. The city's soul is seen wandering across the landscape, her eyes wild and her hair tousled beneath the cathedrals that hold it in place, before she leaves to be with the souls of other soulless cities, lost Athens and Atlantis. A very interesting concept.

*The Tides that Ebb and Flow ****

Lord Dunsany is evidently deeply disturbed by the idea of an eternal soul. Here, in a horrible first person narrative, the remains of a man who has committed an unspecified crime is left in the silt at the side of the Thames where the bones are repeatedly covered and exposed, covered and exposed, and not even the rats or the fungus will decompose them to give him rest. Every time the bones are in danger of drifting out to sea, men come and move them back so that the soul cannot be freed. "*Finally the wild rose stood over mounds that had been wharves and warehouses.*" Eternal punishment, but on earth rather than in less concrete Hell.

*Bethmoora ******

This tale of a mythical oasis city is more than a mystery, but an examination of the experiential loss that comes from being ignorant of other cultures. Here, the idyllic city is completely abandoned by the residents, but the chronicler cannot ever know why. "*Those Europeans who were present and heard the message given were ignorant of the language*" There is frustration at the loss created by language barriers, and comments on the roots of mysticism as a result of being unable to tell the mundane possibilities from the diabolical.

*Idle Days on the Yann ****

This is one of Dunsany's classic tales of voyaging into the depths of the imagination, fabricating landscapes from the known and then embellishing them with paradoxes, extremes and conflicts. The author is being transported to the edge of the known world in a trade ship manned by those of many faiths and cultures naïve of European life. "*I did not like to pray to a jealous God there where the affectionate God of the heathen were being invoked.*" This story is perhaps one of the most typical of Dunsany's work, complete with epic descriptions of vast plains reminiscent of Africa or South America, and dark twists, such as an enormous ivory gate made from a single piece of dropped ivory from a beast unseen but massively destructive. I have a sense that this is where the author is most happy, inventing for the sake of it. "*my fancy is weakening as the years go by, and I go ever more seldom in the Land of Dreams.*"

*The Sword and the Idol ******

A really fun short piece imagining the origins of human civilisation in the Iron Age. "*That afternoon in the little encampment, just as the tribe moved on, the Stone Age passed away. It was not for many generations that another piece of iron ore was melted and the secret slowly guessed.*" There is a Darwinian slowness to developments, an accidental discovery underappreciated at the time, which Dunsany still manages to present as monumental. Even more fascinating is the response of vanished tribesmembers, who have to bow before the first sword-wielder. For one of these finds a tree in the wilderness that looks like a man, and speaks to it, until the villagers treat both man and idol as supernatural. It is a very interesting take on religion, as an outcast's creation which becomes for its very removal from society entoxicating and holy.

*The Idle City ****

A story of a city whose entrance tax is one compelling story. The concept is given some pathos as these stories are depicted as essential for the mental health of the brooding king, whose people have dispensed

with worthless money as a tax.

The Hashish Man ***

Slightly out of place in an otherwise relatively serious collection, this is an incredibly subversive tale. A guest at a dinner party tells Dunsany he has been to the fictional city of Bethmoora from one of Dunsany's other stories in the collection under the power of drugs and knows why it was abandoned. The man is quite mad and there is a strong implication that his hashish induced imaginative leaps come at a cost to his sanity.

Poor Old Bill ****

What I love most about this dark tale of cannibalism at sea is the structure of the narrative. A sailor begins telling a story in the third first person about a mutiny on a ship which the curse-wielding captain refused to allow back to dock. The mutinous mates begin to kill and eat each other. They continue, the sailor amongst these remaining men, until only one is left and the first person narrative immediately takes a dive for the sinister. I am hoping to use a similar structure to resolve the infamous Gallant mystery in *Cadenza IV*.

The Beggars ***

To contrast the rest of Dunsany's scorn against the bleak city of London and all the industrialism he sees it as embodying, in this story noble beggars see beauty and virtue in the grim streets of a city and in ordinary people. It would make for a good set of Instagram quotes, but I am divided as to how tongue in cheek the author meant this.

Carcassonne ****

An interesting and cynical riff on the Grail quest of Arthurian legend. In a knightly court not at all dissimilar from Camelot, a king derisively hears the views of his seer. "*There are certain events upon the will of Fate that are concealed from the diviner's eyes, and many more that are clear to us but better veiled from all. Much that I know is better unfortold. This I will tell, that you will never come to Carcassonne.*" But the prophet, in hoping to reveal something only medial, has shaped the course of the future as the king becomes obsessed with defying Fate and reaching the city of Carcassonne. He and his aging, vagrant men become a byword for listlessness, feared in many places. This was one of my favourites. They never come to Carcassonne.

In Zaccarath **

One of the least memorable stories in the collection. Perhaps because it is so similar to others, the lords of splendid Zaccarath defy the gods by yearning to be an everlasting city. The author finds a few pieces of ruined stone written in their long-dead language.

The Field ***

Another quirky view on a very ordinary experience. The author escapes London for the countryside regularly, but is becoming increasingly creeped out by this certain small field. His poet friend tells him that it was once the site of a slaughter during battle.

The Day of the Poll **

A very sarcastic rebuttal of the importance of voting as all political parties are the same (in the author's eyes), and the populace generally don't understand what the economic issues they are voting on mean. This was well written, but I disagree with the sentiment that voting changes nothing, even if I understand the author's argument.

The Unhappy Body ****

I think this magical realism tale is perhaps the most entertaining and thought-provoking of all in this collection. I doubt this was the author's intention, but by sheer accident of originality he has hit upon a very identifiable dichotomy between mind and body experienced by many transgender people. "*Why do you not dance and rejoice with us? they said to a certain body. And then the body made the confession of its troubles. It said, I have an evil soul.*" I would have loved this work to be explored further, but definitely one I will recommend in future.

Excerpts from

This book is one of the first collections of short fiction Lord Dunsany ever published. It outlines the same fictional gods and creation myths explored in *Time and the Gods*, but with some inconsistencies. Although there is less gentleness and splendour of sensory imagers here than in *Time and the Gods*, this entirely fictional set of creation myths are of great value as a ground-breaking new type of fiction. The book is

structured like the Book of Genesis, told with statements in short passages resembling verses from the Old Testament. I love this use of real religious language in a fantasy setting.

*The Gods of Pegana ****

Even gods have creators, and an end. "*But at the Last Mana-Yood-Sushai will forger to rest, and will make new Gods and new worlds, and those that were will cease to exist.*"

*Of Skarl the Drummer ****

But who keeps the God-maker asleep and inactive? A god drummer who will one day walk into oblivion, his work done.

*Of the Making of the Worlds ****

There are many habitable planets, and Dunsany has allowed them to exist uninhabited for a billion years in line with evolution.

*Of the Game of the Gods ****

But uninhabited worlds are boring. "*And Kib said, 'This is life.' And the Gods said, 'If Kib has thus made beasts, he will in time make Men, and thus will endanger the secrets of the Gods.'*" Even if humanity will coarsen the gods which grow to resemble their human creations. "*making the sign of the Gods and speaking with their hands lest the silence of Pegana should blush*"

*The Saying of Kib ****

Kib created life, but he's not happy for it to do its own thing. His prayer is like a sales pitch.

*Concerning Sish ***

The wielder of the hound Time, not as interesting as anthropomorphised Time.

*The Deeds of Mung ****

Death is very close on the heels of newly created life.

*The Chaunt of the Priest ***

They fear death, so they worship Mung.

*The Sayings of Limpang-Tung ****

The little god of music, with little self-esteem despite the greatness of his work upon improving the quality of the lives of men.

*Of Yoharneth-Lai ****

A God just for the creation of dreams? Only Lord Dunsany could have written this.

*Of Roon, the God of Going ****

Equally Dunsany, a god of wonderlust.

*The revolt of the home gods ******

There are lots of small immortal being on earth, in every hearth, in every river, on every doorstep. This is a very little interpretation of the plurality of the Greek gods. Three rivers grow vast and exert their godhood by drowning men and cities. "*We now play the game of gods and slay men for our pleasure, and we be greater than the gods of Pegana.*" Humanity appeals to the vanity of the Old Gods, and the rivers are quelled.

*Of Dhorozand ****

There is a God of destiny, who knows more than the other gods. "*And then shall the Gods be afraid when they see that Mana-Yood-Sushai knows they have made worlds while he rested. And the Gods shall say, 'Nay, the worlds came into existence by themselves.' Then Mana-Yood-Sushai, as one who would have done with an irksome matter, will wave his hand, and there will be Gods no more.*"

*The Eye in the Waste ****

The gods exert their superiority over humanity by placing physical markers in inaccessible places on earth. They hide knowledge in real places.

*Of the Thing that is neither God Nor Beast ******

In the emptiness of space is a book with all the future of the universe written on it. The pages are turned by a create which cannot read. Why couldn't it have been me? Read! "*When it turneth a white page it is day and when it turneth a black page, it is night. And because the book says that there are gods - there are gods.*"

*Yonath the Prophet ****

Part of an interesting series examining the requirements for being a religious and spiritual figure of power. "*The Gods have set a brightness upon the farther side of Things to Come that they may appear more felicitous to men than the Things that Are.*" This man is revealed of the existence of the gods, the first and

perhaps only true prophet.

*Yug the Prophet ******

Once there is a prophet he must have successors. Yug tells the people what they want to hear.

*Alhireth-Hotep the Propet ****

Alhireth-Hotep tells the people what they want to hear.

*Kabok the Prophet ****

Kabok tells the people what they want to hear, and grows rich.

*The Calamity that befell Yunn-Ilara ******

Men fear Mung and the death he brings, so they install a bold man to curse him. "*Shall a man curse a god?*"

Mung does not intervene and allows the man to live under the pitiless shadow of age until he begs for death.

*Of how the Gods whelmed Sideth ***

Not particularly memorable. Humans are not permitted to worship the god-creator.

*Of how Imbaum became high prophet ******

One of my favourite stories here. A new prophet, Imbaum is chosen because he is the only one who admits that he is ignorant and that he cannot see the ceiling of the temple for the smoke and fumes. He is a humanist, and many of his reported teachings are progressive and moving. "*And ever beside the way did men slaying men. And the sum of their slaying was far greater than the slaying of pestilence or of any of the evils of the gods.*" He is more a humanitarian than a prophet, but in his highly religious world, that is what he is cast as.

Of how Imbaun met Zodrak

Imbaum is granted a vision of a human shepherd who served the gods in Pegana as a fool. They allowed him spay over the human population below, and his own human errors brought greed and strife to humanity, not the gods. "*I will make men rich.*" And the Gods said, "*What is rich?*" An interesting argument on culpability.

*On Ood ****

Somewhere at the end of the world, men rest and worship the God-creator. The end is coming.

*The River ***

The Gods will mount a great galleon and sail away at the end of the universe. Inconsistent with the rest of the book, as the early stories state that the Gods will cease to exist which I find more satisfying somehow.

*The Bird of Doom and the End ****

Like all creation stories across cultures, the world is charted until its very end. Death and Time will kill one another at the end. The bird sadly does not feature as more than a trumpeter.

Joseph says

Basically like The Gods of Pegana only moreso. Again, these are primarily vignettes or prose poems or fables rather than anything resembling more traditional stories -- those will start appearing in his next book, The Sword of Welleran and Other Stories. Again, filled with lovely King James prose and beautiful, evocative names and again not a great jumping-in place if you've never read Dunsany before.

Paulo "paper books always" Carvalho says

Well... Why give 3 stars and make it Favorite. Well, because not all stories within are excelent. Some are quite weak. But others... ulálá... They are masterpieces. They are the foundation of Fantasy. If Tolkien is considered as the father of Fantasy then Lord Dunsany is the Grandfather of it all.

There are some great tales within this short story collection like **The Men of Yarnith; Time and the Gods; The coming of the Sea** and probably my second favourite **In the Land of Time**. In this story you've got

them all... I can imagine an epic fantasy writer writing a ten book 1000 pages long each one and still come short to this one...

My favourite was this one... **The South Wind** Since this story is public domain and is not so big I am going to put here... Don't know if I can but

(you can read them all here http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Time_an...)

The South Wind

Two players sat down to play a game together to while eternity away, and they chose the gods as pieces wherewith to play their game, and for their board of playing they chose the sky from rim to rim, whereon lay a little dust; and every speck of dust was a world upon the board of playing. And the players were robed and their faces veiled, and the robes and veils were alike, and their names were Fate and Chance. And as they played their game and moved the gods hither and thither about the board, the dust arose, and shone in the light from the players' eyes that gleamed behind the veils. Then said the gods: "See how We stir the dust." It chanced, or was ordained (who knoweth which?) that Ord, a prophet, one night saw the gods as They strode knee deep among the stars. But as he gave Them worship, he saw the hand of a player, enormous over Their heads, stretched out to make his move. Then Ord, the prophet, knew. Had he been silent it might have still been well with Ord, but Ord went about the world crying out to all men, "There is a power over the gods."

This the gods heard. Then said They, "Ord hath seen."

Terrible is the vengeance of the gods, and fierce were Their eyes when They looked on the head of Ord and snatched out of his mind all knowledge of Themselves. And that man's soul went wandering afield to find for itself gods, for ever finding them not. Then out of Ord's Dream of Life the gods plucked the moon and the stars, and in the night-time he only saw black sky and saw the lights no more. Next the gods took from him, for Their vengeance resteth not, the birds and butterflies, flowers and leaves and insects and all small things, and the prophet looked on the world that was strangely altered, yet knew not of the anger of the gods. Then the gods sent away his familiar hills, to be seen no more by him, and all the pleasant woodlands on their summits and the further fields; and in a narrower world Ord walked round and round, now seeing little, and his soul still wandered searching for some gods and finding none.

Lastly, the gods took away the fields and stream and left to the prophet only his house and the larger things that were in it. Day by day They crept about him drawing films of mist between him and familiar things, till at last he beheld nought at all and was quite blind and unaware of the anger of the gods. Then Ord's world became only a world of sound, and only by hearing he kept his hold upon Things. All the profit that he had out of his days was here some song from the hills or there the voice of the birds, and sound of the stream, or the drip of the falling rain. But the anger of the gods ceases not with the closing of flowers, nor is it assuaged by all the winter's snows, nor doth it rest in the full glare of summer, and They snatched away from Ord one night his world of sound and he awoke deaf. But as a man may smite away the hive of the bee, and the bee with all his fellows builds again, knowing not what hath smitten his hive or that it shall smite again, so Ord built for himself a world out of old memories and set it in the past. There he builded himself cities out of former joys, and therein built palaces of mighty things achieved, and with his memory as a key he opened golden locks and had still a world to live in, though the gods had taken from him the world of sound and all the world of sight. But the gods tire not from pursuing, and They seized his world of former things and took his memory away and covered up the paths that led into the past, and left him blind and deaf and forgetful among men, and caused all men to know that this was he who once had said that the gods were little things. And lastly the gods took his soul, and out of it They fashioned the South Wind to roam the seas for ever and not have rest; and well the South Wind knows that he hath once understood somewhere and long ago, and so he moans to the islands and cries along southern shores, "I have known," and "I have known."

But all things sleep when the South Wind speaks to them and none heed his cry that he hath known, but are rather content to sleep. But still the South Wind, knowing that there is something that he hath forgot, goes on crying, "I have known," seeking to urge men to arise and to discover it. But none heed the sorrows of the South Wind even when he driveth his tears out of the South, so that though the South Wind cries on and on and never findeth rest none heed that there is aught that may be known, and the Secret of the gods is safe. But the business of the South Wind is with the North, and it is said that the time will one day come when he shall overcome the bergs and sink the seas of ice and come where the Secret of the gods is graven upon the pole. And the game of Fate and Chance shall suddenly cease and He that loses shall cease to be or ever to have been, and from the board of playing Fate or Chance (who knoweth which shall win?) shall sweep the gods away.

Colin says

A dreamy, meandering tale of time and the gods . . .

Not Lord Dunsany's best work, in my opinion, but the dreamlike quality of his prose imagery and his gorgeous, purple language is worth reading, even if the story itself does meander quite a bit. One can definitely see the influence he had on Lovecraft's dream cycle!

Ian Casey says

Decent print editions of Lord Dunsany are sadly hard to come by (albeit Delphi Classics has, as of late 2017, released a comprehensive ebook collection). Thankfully, there is at least this, only the second ever release in the now-venerable Fantasy Masterworks range. 'Time and the Gods' is something of a misnomer, as it's actually an omnibus of six of Dunsany's collections of short fantasy fiction originally published from 1905 to 1916 (comprising all his early work other than 'Fifty-One Tales' a.k.a. 'The Food of Death', which I also own).

The first and titular collection could be off-putting to new readers, as it is written in an especially archaic style of Biblical-influenced parables with a mythopoeic quality. The second collection, *The Sword of Welleran*, would be the better starting point for general readers as, whilst not wholly dissimilar, it mixes in more modern writing with a diversity of fully-formed and self-contained stories compared to the vignette-like quality of the first.

The story 'The Fortress Unvanquishable, Save for Sacnoth' in particular reads as a precursor to pulp sword and sorcery, with the style and tone being an evolutionary midway point between his parabolic material and the more action-packed descriptiveness of Conan and Jirel.

It should not be imagined though that this is all straightforward, if stylistically dated, fantasy. At times Dunsany crafted some surprisingly odd stories with absurd and/or abstract ideas. Several of them involve ghosts or pirates, but not in any traditional or expected manner.

The *Bureau d'Echange de Maux* is the strangest of all, and were it released today would undoubtedly be embraced as 'weird fiction', being about a shop wherein people can trade each other's 'evils' (such as a vice or fear) by mutual agreement and by paying the fees of the proprietor. In fact 'The Last Book of Wonder' (a.k.a. 'Tales of Wonder') has a high concentration of such weird stories.

Then there's the amusing oddity of 'The Loot of Bombasharna' and its sequel 'A Story of Land and Sea', unconventional swashbucklers about a pirate captain who turns an island into a sailing ship, and puts wheels on a sailing ship to cross Africa. In these and other tales, Dunsany's ability to imagine something I genuinely haven't seen before (however preposterous) is a commendable tonic for jadedness.

It's difficult at times to comprehend the broader world in which the stories are set, but this is something to which a modern reader ascribes importance that Dunsany did not. Often he'll use a heap of fantasy names and elements (yes, even dragons) and yet reference real-world locations as well as God, Satan, and sin within the same narrative. This is understandable within the dream settings of 'A Dreamer's Tale' (which proved influential on HPL's 'Dream Cycle') but rather muddier elsewhere. Hence one must simply 'go with it' as they say.

Putting 'The Gods of Pegana' at the end is a strange choice by the publishers, as it was the earliest of these collections and shares much of its setting and style with Time and the Gods. My perception is it was a simpler and lighter read than its sequel, though I could be biased through the increased familiarity with his style I'd gained by that point.

Star ratings and summarising comments are necessarily too reductive for such a wide-ranging omnibus as this. Nonetheless, be it for its imagination, its influence, its beautiful prose, its uncommonly skilled use of metaphor and embodiment of the abstract, its economically-crafted short stories or the ambition and success of its attempt to build a mythological pantheon of Gods for a fictional world, I cannot but consider this a five-star favourite.

Nickmizer says

Dunsany's writing is beautiful. This is a collection of short stories and vignettes tied together by a (roughly) shared world. Reading this and his other work, one could be forgiven for thinking that all of the future of fantastic literature is contained in miniature herein.

behemothing says

Time and the Gods is probably one of the most metal things I have ever read. If I make a prog rock concept album, I have my source material:

"Then Slid went backward growing and summoned together the waves of a whole sea and sent them singing full in Tintaggon's face. Then from Tintaggon's marble front the sea fell backwards crying on to a broken shore, and ripple by ripple straggled back to Slid saying: "Tintaggon stands."

-The Coming of the Sea.

"And far away Trogool upon the utter Rim turned a page that was numbered six in a cipher that none might read. And as the golden ball went through the sky to gleam on lands and cities, there came the Fog towards it, stooping as he walked with his dark brown cloak about him, and behind him slunk the night."

-The Legend of the Dawn

"There in Pegana lay the gods asleep, and in a corner lay the Power of the gods alone on the floor, a thing wrought of black rock and four words graven upon it, whereof I might not give thee any clue, if even I should find it - four words of which none knoweth. Some say they tell of the opening of a flower towards

dawn, and others say they concern earthquakes among hills, and others that they tell of the death of fishes, and others that the words be these: Power, Knowledge, Forgetting, and another word that not the gods themselves may ever guess."

-When the Gods Slept

Miriam Cihodariu says

Well, I can definitely see how Lord Dunsany influenced the future world of fantasy lit. His stories are very beautiful, but in a style that makes you dream and drift away into sleep.

There isn't much consistency of characters, names of places and so on, and no background explanations are given, so when you see a lot of name-dropping (with very specific, fantasy-style names) in a text, it can be confusing. I would have loved to see past or future references to those names, but instead they make a one-time brief appearance in a paragraph, without any occasion to understand how it all fits together into a perhaps coherent world. :)

Still, even if this downside makes Lord Dunsany's stories not be the kind of prose to give way to a massive, GoT-style fandom, I still appreciate his work a lot. Ok, so you can't fall in love with characters, but it's all so dreamy and beautiful that you can definitely fall in love with the atmosphere. That's good enough for me, considering when he wrote and the pioneer status of his prose for the genre.

Jon says

I'm giving two stars for the literary value, but I did not enjoy this story at all. It's a similar idea to *The Gods of Pegana* where the book consists of loosely connected short stories. However, if you asked me for a summary of what I just read, I wouldn't be able to do it. I'm not afraid to admit that most of the author's writing went over my head. Often times my eyes glazed over and my brain wandered elsewhere even as I forced myself to keep reading the words on the page. I'd recommend this for those that enjoy classic literature, but it's definitely not for your average everyday fantasy reader.

Georgia Susurkova says

These are the tales of the hubris of gods and men - and of Time, that servant with no master, who evermore looms, and lurks, and waits, his hands red with blood.

Edward John Moreton Drax (daaamn, I want these middle names) Plunkett, Baron of Dunsany, proves himself not a writer, but a wright of made up mythology (ignore paradoxicality of statements)... His stories really have the weight, that not quite describable gravitas of actual myth - only with the thematic coherence providable only by a single author.

Or maybe I'm exaggerating because archaic-sounding, well-constructed, myth-like pretentious prose happens to touch in a good way most of my buttons.

Also, Time and the Gods could be existential dread fuel. My kind of fantasy stories, basically.

Christina says

Definitely read "The Gods Of Pegana" first. Then if you enjoy the mythology there, know that you can pick this one up for more stories set in that universe. Lord Dunsany's not for everybody, but personally I found that, like with Shakespeare, once I got into the rhythm of the language it no longer became a difficulty. And the names! Oh my goodness, the *names* in this book. I had to stop and savor a few of them out loud.

Evgeny says

Another classic fantasy book which had a lot of influence on J.R.R. Tolkien thus on the whole fantasy genre. The dated style makes it quite hard to read (thus only 2 stars instead of 3). It is a collection of short stories related to early days of gods and their creation and later, relationship between people and gods (mostly done with prophets being the interpreters of gods' will. The book is curious for historical value, if nothing else.

Nikki says

I haven't read any Dunsany before, but I'm glad I finally got round to it. Having a whole collection of these stories was maybe a bit much to read in one go (ah, train journeys), but I did enjoy the world Dunsany created, and the mythic language he used to tell it. I should read more by and about Dunsany, I think: I don't actually know anything about him.

Yasiru (reviews will soon be removed and linked to blog) says

I can scarcely say how much I admire the way Lord Dunsany distills the seizing (and subsequent paralysis) of the mind by an idea, then assaults that hold with some stark realisation. But the characters are never aware of the ironies, they simply play out in the narrative, which is what so successfully imbues these stories with the flavour of true myth (while it may be something less than that, in certain ways it is also almost assuredly something more).

Along with The Gods of Pegana, the present work is an indispensable masterpiece of fantasy and should be read by any serious fan of the genre or aspiring author, and even by those with interest in mythology and folklore.

J. Boo says

Short stories, set in the same world as Dunsany's (better) "Gods of Pegana", and many of his other writings.

Dunsany's prose tends to the florid, as befits someone whose full appellation was Edward John Moreton Drax Plunkett, 18th Baron of Dunsany. Shoot-the-moon sentences abound, and I suspect that few readers will be neutral -- you'll either enjoy or despise his style.

Some of the stories are quite good. Here, for example, is a taste of Dunsany's prose from "In the Land of Time", where a king goes to war with Time itself.

"There shall be neither fading nor forgetting, nor ever dying nor sorrow, when we shall have freed the people and pleasant fields of the earth from inexorable Time."

And the armies swore that they would follow the King to save the world and the gods.

So the next day the King set forth with his three armies and crossed many rivers and marched through many lands, and wherever they went they asked for news of Time.

And the first day they met a woman with her face furrowed and lined, who told them that she had been beautiful and that Time had smitten her in the face with his five claws.

Many an old man they met as they marched in search of Time. All had seen him but none could tell them more, except that some said he went that way and pointed to a ruined tower or to an old and broken tree.

And day after day and month by month the King pushed on with his armies, hoping to come at last on Time. Sometimes they encamped at night near palaces of beautiful design or beside gardens of flowers, hoping to find their enemy when he came to desecrate in the dark. Sometimes they came on cobwebs, sometimes on rusted chains and houses with broken roofs or crumbling walls. Then the armies would push on apace thinking that they were closer upon the track of Time..."

An enjoyable read, but not so much as some of his other works -- the tales are more uneven, and perhaps a bit too bitterly atheist for my taste.

3.4 / 5. Available on Gutenberg (though alas, not in an illustrated version, which I believe exists).

Stephen Brooke says

The stories in 'Time and the Gods' follow those Dunsany wrote for 'The Gods of Pegana' and have at once more ambition and less charm than those tales. One can more readily see Dunsany's influence on Tolkien's myths in 'The Silmarillion' and elsewhere here, as well.

But unlike Tolkien, there is an underlying humor that is both skeptical and tolerant of mankind's (and the gods'?) shortcomings. There is also a wistfulness that foreshadows Dunsany's novels, the sense that there are things on the other side of the hill or beyond the desert that we may never see — yet we must seek.

I give it a 'four' because it is not quite the equal of its near-perfect predecessor nor of his masterpiece, the novel 'The King of Elfland's Daughter,' which followed.

R.M.F Brown says

An intriguing blend of speculative fiction and fantastical imagination.

Dunsany has long been cited as an influence on numerous fantasy writers. This Victorian adventurer had an interesting and remarkable life, and this collection of fiction is reflective of that world view.

It is unfortunate that the weakest stories of this collections are the first a reader encounters, because if you do not persevere, you are in danger of missing out on some great fiction. For every thirteen at table, there are five stories in the mould of Carcassonne. And there in lies the crux of this book - at times it can be a frustrating read, at others, you stumble across a hidden gem like the highwayman, inspiring you to want to write your own collections of short stories.

If the mark of a great short story collection is to inspire the reader to pen their own, then Time and the Gods is a roar away success, its strengths, which are legion, more than compensates for any weaker stories.
