

The Man Who Evolved

by Edmond Hamilton

Introduction

I've always found it fascinating how many of the early pulp authors crossed genres during their careers. Not in terms of writing individual stories that fall neatly into a certain genre, as that was simply a matter of survival. After all, word rates were not that high and if one could write a horror story and a detective story, and sell both, it meant added income. No, the type of cross genre writing I find of interest is the type that occurs within the body of a single story or serial novel. For example, some of the Jules de Grandin stories of Seabury Quinn cross genres. Although de Grandin battles the occult and supernatural, he often must piece together a series of clues to find the solution to his problem; much like the classic detective story. Similarly, one has only to look at the output of Lovecraft or C.A. Smith to see that some of their works are not **just** horror stories, but also contain elements of fantasy and science fiction alongside the supernatural. And then, of course, there is the story presented here, "The Man Who Evolved."

Wonder Stories April, 1931
Cover by Frank R. Paul

By 1931, Edmond Hamilton had been a full-time writer for five years and had proven himself in both the fields of science fiction and horror (for a full biography of Hamilton, please see [The Monster-God of Mamurth](#)). It is fascinating, however, that upon reading a bibliography of Hamilton's writings, to discover that some of his horror stories appeared in what we would assume to be science fiction publications and that some of his early science fiction even made its way into *Weird Tales*. And, in amongst all these stories (there is speculation there may be over 100, some under different pseudonyms) are some that subtly combine both genres to create stories that are science fiction, but with undertones of horror.

"The Man Who Evolved." originally appeared in the April, 1931 issue of *Wonder Stories*, which was a Hugo Gernsback publication. My guess would be that Hamilton may have targeted the story for Gernsback, since it has the trappings that would appeal to Gernsback's concept of "scientifiction." The story is based around protoplasm and evolution: two concepts that Darwin and his contemporaries had supported in the 19th century and were fairly well accepted as scientific fact at the time the story was written. There is also the addition of pseudo-science, another Gernsback device, in that cosmic rays are the catalyst for the events of the story. It is the undercurrent of horror, however, which makes the story stand out from the usual Gernsback fare. From the opening paragraph to the final events of the tale and the afterword, it is obvious that this is a story that crosses the genres smoothly and effortlessly, proving again that Hamilton was an accomplished author, regardless of what he was writing.

Bob Gay

August, 2006

Introduction © 2006 by Bob Gay

Story

There were three of us in Pollard's house on that night that I try vainly to forget. Dr. John Pollard himself, Hugh Dutton and I, Arthur Wright—we were the three. Pollard met that night a fate whose horror none could dream; Dutton has since that night inhabited a state institution reserved for the insane, and I alone am left to tell what happened.

It was on Pollard's invitation that Dutton and I went up to his isolated cottage. We three had been friends and room-mates at the New York Technical University. Our friendship was perhaps a little

