Weird Tales

NOV. 25c

SHADOWS IN ZAMBOULA
stark horror in the sinister house of Aram Baksh
by ROBERT E. HOWARD

DOCTOR SATAN
spreads icy terror in Detroit

"THE CONSUMING FLAME"

Paul Ernst
Leslie F. Stone
E. Hoffmann Price
"PSYCHIANA"

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eous because it was neither quite revealed nor utterly concealed. Jauhara knew that that was what remained of Ahmad Shah; and as she bound her hair, she turned away from that shadow in the blackness. She was amazed for a moment that that which had borrowed her vital forces had been able to return enough, unexpended, to let her pass the first barred door, and the second... and the sentry at the third, when he saw her disheveled hair, would know well indeed that Ahmad Shah would not care to be disturbed. . . .

"Thus it was in the old days, Sidi, long before the land was infested with British Residents and Russian agents, and other infidel dogs—saving your honor's presence! Zabireddin Mahmud had learned that an amulet shaped like a hand is a symbol of power; and how much more so would his own hand be, that member which most truly divides man from beast. And he knew also, Sidi, that that Tartar girl, bearing his severed hand, would center all the will and the wrath of Zabireddin on whatsoever her own will centered. Then finally, he knew that if once he could cross the Border, he could steal from her strong, young body sufficient of the elemental substance, possessed by all creatures, to form the hand of wrath and reach from the shadows in vengeance. For it made little difference what that old hermit told him in that mountain cave, so that the will were strong and the wrath enduring: and thus spake my grandfather's father, who told me of Zabireddin Mahmud."

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**Ghost of the Lava**

**By KATHARINE BUOH**

Where burnt-out lava forms a deep crevasse
Comes echoing an eery, wailing moan
From blackened crypts of scoriaceous stone.
A keening wind sweeps down the mountain pass,
Up-flinging powdered ashes from a mass
Of gruesome, pulverized and calcined bone—
Bleached human fragments—in the cinders strown
'Midst lava shards like inky isinglass.

A restless ghost patrols the haunted ground
Of scabrous heaps ofadamantine flint
Where ruthless Death stalks like a hungry hound
Whose prowling feet leave never trace, or print—
Naught, save a sinister, despairing sound
That permeates this land's weird monotint.
What say of it? what say of CONSCIENCE grim,  
That specter in my path?  
—Chamberlain's Pharonida.

LET me call myself, for the present,  
William Wilson. The fair page  
now lying before me need not be  
sullied with my real appellation. This  
has been already too much an object for  
the scorn—for the horror—for the  
detestation of my race. To the uttermost  
regions of the globe have not the  
dignant winds bruited its unparalleled  
infirmity? Oh, outcast of all outcasts most  
abandoned!—to the earth art thou not  
for ever dead? to its horrors, to its flow-  
ers, to its golden aspirations?—and a  
cloud, dense, dismal, and limitless, does  
it not hang eternally between thy hopes  
and heaven?

I would not, if I could, here or today,  
embody a record of my later years of  
unspeakable misery and unpardonable  
crime. This epoch—these later years—  
took unto themselves a sudden eleva-  
tion in turpitude, whose origin alone  
it is my present purpose to assign. Men  
usually grow base by degrees. From me,  
in an instant, all virtue dropped bodily  
as a mantle. From comparatively trivial  
wickedness I passed, with the stride of a  
giant, into more than the enormities of  
an Elah-Gabalus. What chance—what  
one event brought this evil thing to pass,  
bear with me while I relate. Death ap-  
proaches; and the shadow which fore-  
runs him has thrown a softening influence  
over my spirit. I long, in passing through  
the dim valley, for the sympathy—I had  
nearly said for the pity—of my fellow  
men. I would fain have them believe  
that I have been, in some measure, the  
slave of circumstances beyond human  
control. I would wish them to seek out  
for me, in the details I am about to give,  
some little oasis of fatality amid a wilder-  
ness of error. I would have them allow  
—what they cannot refrain from allow-  
ing—that, although temptation may have  
erewhile existed as great, man was never  
thus, at least, tempted before—certainly,  
never thus fell. And is it therefore that  
he has never thus suffered? Have I not  
indeed been living in a dream? And am  
I not now dying a victim to the horror  
and the mystery of the wildest of all  
sublunary visions?

I am the descendant of a race whose  
imaginative and easily excitable tempera-
ment has at all times rendered them remarkable; and, in my earliest infancy, I gave evidence of having fully inherited the family character. As I advanced in years it was more strongly developed; becoming, for many reasons, a cause of serious disquietude to my friends, and of positive injury to myself. I grew self-willed, addicted to the wildest caprices, and a prey to the most ungovernable passions. Weak-minded, and beset with constitutional infirmities akin to my own, my parents could do but little to check the evil propensities which distinguished me. Some feeble and ill-directed efforts resulted in complete failure on their part, and, of course, in total triumph on mine. Thenceforward my voice was a household law; and at an age when few children have abandoned their leading-strings, I was left to the guidance of my own will, and became, in all but name, the master of my own actions.

My earliest recollections of a school life are connected with a large, rambling, Elizabethan house, in a misty-looking village of England, where were a vast number of gigantic and gnarled trees, and where all the houses were excessively ancient. In truth, it was a dream-like and spirit-soothing place, that venerable old town. At this moment, in fancy, I feel the refreshing chilliness of its deeply-shadowed avenues, inhale the fragrance of its thousand shrubberies, and thrill anew with undefinable delight at the deep hollow note of the church-bell, breaking, each hour, with sullen and sudden roar, upon the stillness of the dusky atmosphere in which the fretted Gothic steeple lay imbedded and asleep.

It gives me, perhaps, as much of pleasure as I can now in any manner experience, to dwell upon minute recollections of the school and its concerns. Steeped in misery as I am—misery, alas! only too real—I shall be pardoned for seeking relief, however slight and temporary, in the weakness of a few rambling details. These, moreover, utterly trivial, and even ridiculous in themselves, assume, to my fancy, adventitious importance, as connected with a period and a locality when and where I recognize the first ambiguous monitions of the destiny which afterward so fully overshadowed me. Let me then remember.

The house, I have said, was old and irregular. The grounds were extensive, and a high and solid brick wall, topped with a bed of mortar and broken glass, encompassed the whole. This prison-like rampart formed the limit of our domain; beyond it we saw but thrice a week—once every Saturday afternoon, when, attended by two ushers, we were permitted to take brief walks in a body through some of the neighboring fields—and twice during Sunday, when we were paraded in the same formal manner to the morning and evening service in the one church of the village. Of this church the principal of our school was pastor. With how deep a spirit of wonder and perplexity was I wont to regard him from our remote pew in the gallery, as, with step solemn and slow, he ascended the pulpit! This reverend man, with countenance so demurely benign, with robes so glossy and so clerically flowing, with wig so minutely powdered, so rigid and so vast,—could this be he who, of late, with sour visage, and in snuffy habiliments, administered, ferule in hand, the Draconian Laws of the academy? Oh, gigantic paradox, too utterly monstrous for solution!

At an angle of the ponderous wall frowned a more ponderous gate. It was riveted and studded with iron bolts, and surmounted with jagged iron spikes,
What impressions of deep awe did it inspire! It was never opened save for the three periodical egressions and ingressions already mentioned; then, in every creak of its mighty hinges, we found a plenitude of mystery—a world of matter for solemn remark, or for more solemn meditation.

The extensive enclosure was irregular in form, having many capacious recesses. Of these, three or four of the largest constituted the playground. It was level, and covered with fine hard gravel. I well remember it had no trees, nor benches, nor anything similar within it. Of course it was in the rear of the house. In front lay a small parterre, planted with box and other shrubs, but through this sacred division we passed only upon rare occasions indeed—such as a first advent to school or final departure thence, or perhaps, when we joyfully took our way home for the Christmas or midsummer holidays.

But the house!—how quaint an old building was this!—to me how veritable a palace of enchantment! There was really no end to its windings—to its incomprensible subdivisions. It was difficult, at any given time, to say with certainty upon which of its two stories one happened to be. From each room to every other there were sure to be found three or four steps either in ascent or descent. Then the lateral branches were innumerable—inconceivable—and so returning in upon themselves, that our most exact ideas in regard to the whole mansion were not very far different from those with which we pondered upon infinity. During the five years of my residence here, I was never able to ascertain with precision, in what remote locality lay the little sleeping-apartment assigned to myself and some eighteen or twenty other scholars.

The schoolroom was the largest in the house—I could not help thinking, in the world. It was very long, narrow, and dully low, with pointed Gothic windows and a ceiling of oak. In a remote and terror-inspiring angle was a square enclosure of eight or ten feet, comprising the sanctum, “during hours,” of our principal, the Reverend Doctor Bransby. It was a solid structure, with massy door, sooner than open which in the absence of the “Dominie,” we would all have willingly perished by the peine forte et dure. In other angles were two other similar boxes, far less reverenced, indeed, but still greatly matters of awe. One of these was the pulpit of the “classical” usher, one of the “English and mathematical.” Inter-spersed about the room, crossing and re-crossing in endless irregularity, were innumerable benches and desks, black, ancient, and time-worn, piled desperately with much bethumbed books, and so besmeared with initial letters, names at full length, grotesque figures, and other multiplied efforts of the knife, as to have entirely lost what little of original form might have been their portion in days long departed. A huge bucket with water stood at one extremity of the room, and a clock of stupendous dimensions at the other.

Encompassed by the massy walls of this venerable academy, I passed, yet not in tedium or disgust, the years of the third lustrum of my life. The teeming brain of childhood requires no external world of incident to occupy or amuse it; and the apparently dismal monotony of a school was replete with more intense excitement than my riper youth has derived from luxury, or my full manhood from crime. Yet I must believe that my first mental development had in it much of the uncommon—even much of the outré.
Upon mankind at large the events of very early existence rarely leave in mature age any definite impression. All is gray shadow—a weak and irregular remembrance—an indistinct regathering of feeble pleasures and fantasmagoric pains. With me this is not so. In childhood I must have felt with the energy of a man what I now find stamped upon memory in lines as vivid, as deep, and as durable as the exergues of the Carthaginian medals.

Yet in fact—in the fact of the world's view—how little was there to remember! The morning's awakening, the nightly summons to bed; the connings, the recitations; the periodical half-holidays, and perambulations; the playground, with its broils, its pastimes, its intrigues;—these, by a mental sorcery long forgotten, were made to involve a wilderness of sensation, a world of rich incident, an universe of varied emotion, of excitement, the most passionate and spirit-stirring. "Oh, le bon temps, que ce siècle de fer!"

In truth, the ardor, the enthusiasm, and the imperiousness of my disposition soon rendered me a marked character among my schoolmates, and by slow but natural gradations gave me an ascendancy over all not greatly older than myself;—over all with a single exception. This exception was found in the person of a scholar, who, although no relation, bore the same Christian and surname as myself;—a circumstance, in fact, little remarkable; for notwithstanding a noble descent, mine was one of those everyday appellations which seem, by prescriptive right, to have been, time out of mind, the common property of the mob. In this narrative I have therefore designated myself as William Wilson,—a fictitious title not very dissimilar to the real. My namesake alone, of those who in school phraseology constituted "our set," presumed to compete with me in the studies of the class—in the sports and broils of the playground—to refuse implicit belief in my assertions, and submission to my will—indeed, to interfere with my arbitrary dictation in any respect whatsoever. If there is on earth a supreme and unqualified despotism, it is the despotism of a master-mind in boyhood over the less energetic spirits of its companions.

Wilson's rebellion was to me a source of the greatest embarrassment; the more so as, in spite of the bravado with which in public I made a point of treating him and his pretensions, I secretly felt that I feared him, and could not help thinking the equality which he maintained so easily with myself, a proof of his true superiority; since not to be overcome cost me a perpetual struggle. Yet this superiority—even this equality—was in truth acknowledged by no one but myself; our associates, by some unaccountable blindness, seemed not even to suspect it. Indeed, his competition, his resistance, and especially his impertinent and dogged interference with my purposes, were not more pointed than private. He appeared to be destitute alike of the ambition which urged, and of the passionate energy of mind which enabled me to excel. In his rivalry he might have been supposed actuated solely by a whimsical desire to thwart, astonish, or mortify myself; although there were times when I could not help observing, with a feeling made up of wonder, abasement, and pique, that he mingled with his injuries, his insults, or his contradictions, a certain most inappropriate, and assuredly most unwelcome, affectionateness of manner. I could only conceive this singular behavior to arise from a consummate self-conceit assuming the vulgar airs of patronage and protection.
Perhaps it was this latter trait in Wilson’s conduct, conjoined with our identity of name, and the mere accident of our having entered the school upon the same day, which set afloat the notion that we were brothers, among the senior classes in the academy. These do not usually inquire with such strictness into the affairs of their juniors. I have before said, or should have said, that Wilson was not, in a most remote degree, connected with my family. But assuredly if we had been brothers we must have been twins; for, after leaving Doctor Bransby’s, I casually learned that my namesake was born on the nineteenth of January, 1813—and this is a somewhat remarkable coincidence; for the day is precisely that of my own nativity.

It may seem strange that in spite of the continual anxiety occasioned me by the rivalry of Wilson, and his intolerable spirit of contradiction, I could not bring myself to hate him altogether. We had, to be sure, nearly every day a quarrel in which, yielding me publicly the palm of victory, he, in some manner, contrived to make me feel that it was he who had deserved it; yet a sense of pride on my part, and a veritable dignity on his own, kept us always upon what are called “speaking terms,” while there were many points of strong congeniality in our tempers, operating to awake in me a sentiment which our position alone, perhaps, prevented from ripening into friendship. It is difficult, indeed, to define, or even to describe, my real feelings toward him. They formed a motley and heterogeneous admixture;—some petulant animosity, which was not yet hatred, some esteem, more respect, much fear, with a world of uneasy curiosity. To the moralist it will be necessary to say, in addition, that Wilson and myself were the most inseparable of companions.

It was no doubt the anomalous state of affairs existing between us which turned all my attacks upon him (and there were many, either open or covert) into the channel of banter or practical joke (giving pain while assuming the aspect of mere fun), rather than into a more serious and determined hostility. But my endeavors on this head were by no means uniformly successful, even when my plans were the most wittily concocted; for my namesake had much about him, in character, of that unassuming and quiet austerity which, while enjoying the poignancy of its own jokes, has no heel of Achilles in itself, and absolutely refuses to be laughed at. I could find, indeed, but one vulnerable point, and that, lying in a personal peculiarity, arising, perhaps, from constitutional disease, would have been spared by any antagonist less at his wit’s end than myself;—my rival had a weakness in the facial or guttural organs, which precluded him from raising his voice at any time above a very low whisper. Of this defect I did not fail to take what poor advantage lay in my power.

Wilson’s retaliations in kind were many; and there was one form of his practical wit that disturbed me beyond measure. How his sagacity first discovered at all that so petty a thing would vex me, is a question I never could solve; but having discovered, he habitually practised the annoyance. I had always felt aversion to my uncourtly patronymic, and its very common, if not plebeian, provenomen. The words were venom in my ears; and when, upon the day of my arrival, a second William Wilson came also to the academy, I felt angry with him for bearing the name, and doubly disgusted with the name because a stranger bore it, who would be the cause of its twofold repetition, who would be con-
stantly in my presence, and whose concerns, in the ordinary routine of the school business, must inevitably, on account of the detestable coincidence, be often confounded with my own.

The feeling of vexation thus engendered grew stronger with every circumstance tending to show resemblance, moral or physical, between my rival and myself. I had not then discovered the remarkable fact that we were of the same age; but I saw that we were of the same height, and I perceived that we were even singularly alike in general contour of person and outline of feature. I was galled, too, by the rumor touching a relationship, which had grown current in the upper forms. In a word, nothing could more seriously disturb me (although I scrupulously concealed such disturbance) than any allusion to a similarity of mind, person, or condition existing between us. But, in truth, I had no reason to believe that (with the exception of the matter of relationship, and in the case of Wilson himself) this similarity had ever been made a subject of comment, or even observed at all by our schoolfellows. That he observed it in all its bearings, and as fixedly as I, was apparent; but that he could discover in such circumstances so fruitful a field of annoyance, can only be attributed, as I said before, to his more than ordinary penetration.

His cue, which was to perfect an imitation of myself, lay both in words and in actions; and most admirably did he play his part. My dress it was an easy matter to copy; my gait and general manner were without difficulty appropriated; in spite of his constitutional defect, even my voice did not escape him. My louder tones were, of course, unattempted, but then the key,—it was identical; and his singular whisper, it grew the very echo of my own.

How greatly this most exquisite portraiture harassed me (for it could not justly be termed a caricature), I will not now venture to describe. I had but one consolation—in the fact that the imitator, apparently, was noticed by myself alone, and that I had to endure only the knowing and strangely sarcastic smiles of my namesake himself. Satisfied with having produced in my bosom the intended effect, he seemed to chuckle in secret over the sting he had inflicted, and was characteristically disregardful of the public applause which the success of his witty endeavors might have so easily elicited. That the school, indeed, did not feel his design, perceive its accomplishment, and participate in his sneer, was, for many anxious months, a riddle I could not resolve. Perhaps the gradation of his copy rendered it not readily perceptible; or, more possibly, I owed my security to the masterly air of the copyist, who, disdaining the letter (which in a painting is all the obtuse can see), gave but the full spirit of his original for my individual contemplation and chagrin.

I have already more than once spoken of the disgusting air of patronage which he assumed toward me, and of his frequent officious interference with my will. This interference often took the ungracious character of advice; advice not openly given, but hinted or insinuated. I received it with a repugnance which gained strength as I grew in years. Yet, at this distant day, let me do him the simple justice to acknowledge that I can recall no occasion when the suggestions of my rival were on the side of those errors or follies so usual to his immature age and seeming inexperience; that his moral sense, at least, if not his general talents and worldly wisdom, was far keener than my own; and that I might, today, have
been a better and thus a happier man, had I less frequently rejected the counsels embodied in those meaning whispers which I then but too cordially hated and too bitterly despised. 

As it was I at length grew restive in the extreme under his distasteful supervision, and daily resented more and more openly what I considered his intolerable arrogance. I have said that, in the first years of our connection as schoolmates, my feelings in regard to him might have been easily ripened into friendship; but, in the latter months of my residence at the academy, although the intrusion of his ordinary manner had, beyond doubt, in some measure abated, my sentiments, in nearly similar proportion, partook very much of positive hatred. Upon one occasion he saw this, I think, and afterward avoided, or made a show of avoiding me. 

It was about the same period, if I remember aright, that, in an altercation of violence with him, in which he was more than usually thrown off his guard, and spoke and acted with an openness of demeanor rather foreign to his nature, I discovered, or fancied I discovered, in his accent, in his air, and general appearance, a something which first startled, and then deeply interested me, by bringing to mind dim visions of my earliest infancy—wild, confused, and thronging memories of a time when memory herself was yet unborn. I cannot better describe the sensation which oppressed me, than by saying that I could with difficulty shake off the belief of my having been acquainted with the being who stood before me, at some epoch very long ago—some point of the past even infinitely remote. The delusion, however, faded as rapidly as it came; and I mention it at all but to define the day of the last conversation I there held with my singular namesake. 

The huge old house, with its countless subdivisions, had several large chambers communicating with each other, where slept the greater number of the students. There were, however (as must necessarily happen in a building so awkwardly planned), many little noks or recesses, the odds and ends of the structure; and these the economic ingenuity of Doctor Bransby had also fitted up as dormitories; although, being the merest closets, they were capable of accommodating but a single individual. One of these small apartments was occupied by Wilson.

ONE night, about the close of my fifth year at the school, and immediately after the altercation just mentioned, finding everyone wrapped in sleep, I arose from bed, and, lamp in hand, stole through a wilderness of narrow passages, from my own bedroom to that of my rival. I had long been plotting one of those ill-natured pieces of practical wit at his expense in which I had hitherto been so uniformly unsuccessful. It was my intention, now, to put my scheme in operation, and I resolved to make him feel the whole extent of the malice with which I was imbued. Having reached his closet, I noiselessly entered, leaving the lamp, with a shade over it, on the outside. I advanced a step and listened to the sound of his tranquil breathing. Assured of his being asleep, I returned, took the light, and with it again approached the bed. Close curtains were around it, which, in the prosecution of my plan, I slowly and quietly withdrew, when the bright rays fell vividly upon the sleeper, and my eyes at the same moment upon his countenance.

I looked;—and a numbness, an iciness of feeling instantly pervaded my frame. My breast heaved, my knees tottered, my whole spirit became possessed with an objectless yet intolerable horror. Gasping

W. T.—7
for breath, I lowered the lamp in still
—these the lineaments of William Wil-
but I shook as if with a fit of the ague, in
about them to confound me in this man-
with a multitude of incoherent thoughts.
Not thus he appeared, assuredly not thus
—in the vivacity of his waking hours.
The same name! the same contour of per-
son! the same day of arrival at the acad-
mless imitation of my gait, my voice, my
habits, and my manner! Was it, in truth,
within the bounds of human possibility,
that what I now saw was the result, mere-
ly, of the habitual practise of this sar-
castic imitation? Awe-stricken, and with
a creeping shudder, I extinguished the
lamp, passed silently from the chamber,
and left, at once, the halls of that old
academy, never to enter them again.

After a lapse of some months, spent at
home in mere idleness, I found myself a
student at Eton. The brief interval had
been sufficient to enfeeble my remem-
brance of the events at Doctor Bransby’s,
or at least to effect a material change in
the nature of the feelings with which I
remembered them. The truth—the trag-
y—of the drama was no more. I could
now find room to doubt the evidence of
my senses; and seldom called up the sub-
ject at all but with wonder at the extent
of human credulity, and a smile at the
vivid force of the imagination which I
hereditarily possessed. Neither was this
species of skepticism likely to be dimin-
ished by the character of the life I led at
Eton. The vortex of thoughtless folly
into which I there so immediately and so
recklessly plunged, washed away all but
the froth of my past hours, ingulphed at
once every solid or serious impression,
and left to memory only the veriest levi-
ties of a former existence.

I do not wish, however, to trace the
course of my miserable profligacy here—
a profligacy which set at defiance the
laws, while it eluded the vigilance, of the
institution. Three years of folly, passed
without profit, had but given me rooted
habits of vice, and added, in a somewhat
unusual degree, to my bodily stature,
when, after a week of soulless dissipa-
tion, I invited a small party of the most
dissolute students to a secret carousel in
my chambers. We met at a late hour of
the night; for our debaucheries were to
be faithfully protracted until morning.
The wine flowed freely, and there were
not wanting other and perhaps more dan-
gerous seductions; so that the gray dawn
had already faintly appeared in the east
while our delirious extravagance was at
its height. Madly flushed with cards and
intoxication, I was in the act of insisting
upon a toast of more than wonted pro-
fanity, when my attention was suddenly
diverted by the violent, although partial,
unclosing of the door of the apartment,
and by the eager voice of a servant from
without. He said that some person, ap-
parently in great haste, demanded to
speak with me in the hall.

Wildly excited with wine, the unex-
pected interruption rather delighted than
surprised me. I staggered forward at
once, and a few steps brought me to the
vestibule of the building. In this low and
small room there hung no lamp; and
now no light at all was admitted, save
that of the exceedingly feeble dawn
which made its way through the semi-
circular window. As I put my foot over
the threshold, I became aware of the fig-
ure of a youth about my own height, and
habited in a white kersyemere morning
frock, cut in the novel fashion of the one
I myself wore at the moment. This the
faint light enabled me to perceive; but the features of his face I could not distinguish. Upon my entering, he strode hurriedly up to me, and, seizing me by the arm with a gesture of petulant impatience, whispered the words "William Wilson" in my ear.

I grew perfectly sober in an instant.

There was that in the manner of the stranger, and in the tremulous shake of his uplifted finger, as he held it between my eyes and the light, which filled me with unqualified amazement; but it was not this which had so violently moved me. It was the pregnancy of solemn admonition in the singular, low, hissing utterance; and, above all, it was the character, the tone, the key, of those few, simple, and familiar, yet whispered syllables, which came with a thousand thronging memories of bygone days, and struck upon my soul with the shock of a galvanic battery, ere I could recover the use of my senses he was gone.

Although this event failed not of a vivid effect upon my disordered imagination, yet it was evanescent as vivid. For some weeks, indeed, I busied myself in earnest enquiry, or was wrapped in a cloud of morbid speculation. I did not pretend to disguise from my perception the identity of the singular individual who thus perseveringly interfered with my affairs, and harassed me with his insinuated counsel. But who and what was this Wilson? — and whence came he? — and what were his purposes? Upon neither of these points could I be satisfied—merely ascertaining, in regard to him, that a sudden accident in his family had caused his removal from Doctor Bransby's academy on the afternoon of the day in which I myself had eloped. But in a brief period I ceased to think upon the subject, my attention being all absorbed in a contemplated departure for Oxford. Thither I soon went, the uncalculating vanity of my parents furnishing me with an outfit and annual establishment, which would enable me to indulge at will in the luxury already so dear to my heart—to vie in profuseness of expenditure with the haughtiest heirs of the wealthiest earldoms in Great Britain.

Excited by such appliances to vice, my constitutional temperament broke forth with redoubled ardor, and I spurned even the common restraints of decency in the mad infatuation of my revels. But it were absurd to pause in the detail of my extravagance. Let it suffice, that among spendthrifts I out-Heroded Herod, and that, giving name to a multitude of novel follies, I added no brief appendix to the long catalogue of vices then usual in the most dissolute university of Europe.

It could hardly be credited, however, that I had, even here, so utterly fallen from the gentlemanly estate as to seek acquaintance with the vilest arts of the gambler by profession, and, having become an adept in his despicable science, to practise it habitually as a means of increasing my already enormous income at the expense of the weak-minded among my fellow-collegians. Such, nevertheless, was the fact. And the very enormity of this offense against all manly and honorable sentiment proved, beyond doubt, the main if not the sole reason of the impunity with which it was committed. Who, indeed, among my most abandoned associates, would not rather have disputed the clearest evidence of his senses, than have suspected of such courses, the gay, the frank, the generous William Wilson—the noblest and most liberal commoner at Oxford—him whose follies (said his parasites) were but the follies of youth and unbridled fancy—whose

(Please turn to page 644)
to drink deeply, now shuffled, dealt, or played, with a wild nervousness of manner for which his intoxication, I thought, might partially, but could not altogether, account. In a very short period he had become my debtor to a large amount, when, having taken a long draft of port, he did precisely what I had been coolly anticipating—he proposed to double our already extravagant stakes. With a well-feigned show of reluctance, and not until after my repeated refusal had seduced him into some angry words which gave a color of pique to my compliance, did I finally comply. The result, of course, did but prove how entirely the prey was in my toils: in less than an hour he had quadrupled his debt.

For some time his countenance had been losing the florid tinge lent it by the wine; but now, to my astonishment, I perceived that it had grown to a pallor truly fearful. I say, to my astonishment. Glendenning had been represented to my eager inquiries as immeasurably wealthy; and the sums which he had as yet lost, although in themselves vast, could not, I supposed, very seriously annoy, much less so violently affect him. That he was overcome by the wine just swallowed was the idea which most readily presented itself; and, rather with a view to the preservation of my own character in the eyes of my associates, than from any less interested motive, I was about to insist, peremptorily, upon a discontinuance of the play, when some expressions at my elbow from among the company, and an ejaculation evincing utter despair on the part of Glendenning, gave me to understand that I had effected his total ruin under circumstances which, rendering him an object for the pity of all, should have protected him from the ill offices even of a fiend.
What now might have been my cont-
duct it is difficult to say. The pit-
ian air of embarrassed gloom over all;
silence was maintained, during which I
with the many burning glances of scorn
abandoned of the party. I will even own
that an intolerable weight of anxiety was
for a brief instant lifted from my bosom
by the sudden and extraordinary inter-
ruption which ensued. The wide, heavy
folding-doors of the apartment were all
at once thrown open, to their full extent,
with a vigorous and rushing impetuosity
that extinguished, as if by magic, every
chandelier in the room. Their light, in dying,
enabled us just to perceive that a stran-
ger had entered, about my own height,
and closely muffled in a cloak. The dark-
ness, however, was not total; and we
could only feel that he was standing in
our midst. Before any one of us could
recover from the extreme astonishment
into which this rudeness had thrown all,
we heard the voice of the intruder.

"Gentlemen," he said, in a low, dis-
tinct, and never-to-be-forgotten whisper
which thrilled to the very marrow of my
bones, "gentlemen, I make no apology
for this behavior, because in thus behav-
ing, I am fulfilling a duty. You are,
beyond doubt, uninformed of the true
character of the person who has tonight
won at écarté a large sum of money from
Lord Glendenning. I will therefore put
you upon an expeditious and decisive
plan of obtaining this very necessary in-
formation. Please to examine, at your
leisure, the inner linings of the cuff of
his left sleeve, and the several little pack-
ages which may be found in the some-
what capacious pockets of his emboid-
ered morning wrapper."

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While he spoke, so profound was the stillness that one might have heard a pin drop upon the floor. In ceasing, he departed at once, and as abruptly as he had entered. Can I—shall I describe my sensations? Must I say that I felt all the horrors of the damned? Most assuredly I had little time for reflection. Many hands roughly seized me upon the spot, and lights were immediately reproduced. A search ensued. In the lining of my sleeve were found all the court cards essential in écarté, and, in the pockets of my wrapper, a number of packs, facsimiles of those used at our sittings, with the single exception that mine were of the species called, technically, arrondées; the honors being slightly convex at the sides. In this disposition, the dupe who cuts, as customary, at the length of the pack, will invariably find that he cuts his antagonist an honor; while the gambler, cutting at the breadth, will, as certainly, cut nothing for his victim which may count in the records of the game.

Any burst of indignation upon this discovery would have affected me less than the silent contempt, or the sarcastic composure, with which it was received.

"Mr. Wilson," said our host, stooping to remove from beneath his feet an exceedingly luxurious cloak of rare furs, "Mr. Wilson, this is your property." (The weather was cold; and, upon quitting my own room, I had thrown a cloak over my dressing-wrapper, putting it off upon reaching the scene of play.) "I presume it is supererogatory to seek here (eyeing the folds of the garment with a bitter smile) for any farther evidence of your skill. Indeed, we have had enough. You will see the necessity, I hope, of quitting Oxford—at all events, of quitting instantly my chambers."

Abased, humbled to the dust as I then was, it is probable that I should have represented this gallant language by immediate personal violence, had not my whole attention been at the moment arrested by a fact of the most startling character. The cloak which I had worn was of a rare description of fur; how rare, how extravagantly costly, I shall not venture to say. Its fashion, too, was of my own fantastic invention; for I was fastidious to an absurd degree of coxcombr: in matters of this frivolous nature. When, therefore, Mr. Preston reached me that which he had picked up upon the floor, and near the folding-doors of the apartment, it was with an astonishment nearly bordering upon terror, that I perceived my own already hanging on my arm (where I had no doubt unwittingly placed it), and that the one presented me was but its exact counterpart in even the minutest possible particular. The singular being who had so disastrously exposed me had been muffled, I remembered, in a cloak; and none had been worn at all by any of the members of our party, with the exception of myself. Retaining some presence of mind, I took the one offered me by Preston; placed it, unnoticed, over my own; left the apartment with a resolute scowl of defiance; and, next morning ere dawn of day, commenced a hurried journey from Oxford to the continent, in a perfect agony of horror and of shame.

I fled in vain. My evil destiny pursued me as if in exultation, and proved, indeed, that the exercise of its mysterious dominion had as yet only begun. Scarcely had I set foot in Paris, ere I had fresh evidence of the detestable interest taken by this Wilson in my concerns. Years flew, while I experienced no relief. Villain!—at Rome, with how untimely, yet with how spectral an officiousness, stepped he in between me and my am-
bition! at Vienna, too—at Berlin—and at Moscow! Where, in truth, had I not bitter cause to curse him within my heart? From his inscrutable tyranny did I at length flee, panic-stricken, as from a pestilence; and to the very ends of the earth I fled in vain.

And again, and again, in secret communion with my own spirit, would I demand the questions, "Who is he?—whence came he?—and what are his objects?"

But no answer was there found. And now I scrutinized, with a minute scrutiny, the forms, and the methods, and the leading traits of his impertinent supervision. But even here there was very little upon which to base a conjecture. It was noticeable, indeed, that, in no one of the multiplied instances in which he had of late crossed my path, had he so crossed it except to frustrate those schemes, or to disturb those actions, which, if fully carried out, might have resulted in bitter mischief. Poor justification this, in truth, for an authority so imperiously assumed! Poor indemnity for natural rights of self-agency so pertinaciously, so insultingly denied!

I had also been forced to notice that my tormenter, for a very long period of time (while scrupulously and with miraculous dexterity maintaining his whim of an identity of apparel with myself), had so contrived it, in the execution of his varied interference with my will, that I saw not, at any moment, the features of his face. Be Wilson what he might, this, at least, was but the veriest of affectation, or of folly. Could he, for an instant, have supposed that, in my admonisher at Eton,—in the destroyer of my honor at Oxford,—in him who thwarted my ambition at Rome, my revenge at Paris, my passionate love at Naples, or what he falsely termed my avarice in Egypt,—that in this, my arch-enemy and evil genius, I could

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fail to recognize the William Wilson of my schoolboy days,—the namesake, the companion, the rival,—the hated and dreaded rival at Doctor Bransby’s? Impossible!—But let me hasten to the last eventful scene of the drama.

Thus far I had succumbed supinely to this imperious domination. The sentiment of deep awe with which I habitually regarded the elevated character, the majestic wisdom, the apparent omnipresence and omnipotence of Wilson, added to a feeling of even terror with which certain other traits in his nature and assumptions inspired me, had operated, hitherto, to impress me with an idea of my own utter weakness and helplessness, and to suggest an implicit, although bitterly reluctant submission to his arbitrary will. But, of late days, I had given myself up entirely to wine; and its maddening influence upon my hereditary temper rendered me more and more impatient of control. I began to murmur,—to hesitate, —to resist. And was it only fancy which induced me to believe that, with the increase of my own firmness, that of my tormenter underwent a proportional diminution? Be this as it may, I now began to feel the inspiration of a burning hope, and at length nurtured in my secret thoughts a stern and desperate resolution that I would submit no longer to be enslaved.

It was at Rome, during the Carnival of 18—, that I attended a masquerade in the palazzo of the Neapolitan Duke Di Broglio. I had indulged more freely than usual in the excesses of the wine-table; and now the suffocating atmosphere of the crowded rooms irritated me beyond endurance. The difficulty, too, of forcing my way through the mazes of the company contributed not a little to the ruffling of my temper; for I was anxious-ly seeking (let me not say with what unworthy motive) the young, the gay, the beautiful wife of the aged and doting Di Broglio. With a too unscrupulous confidence she had previously communicated to me the secret of the costume in which she would be habited, and now, having caught a glimpse of her person, I was hurrying to make my way into her presence. At this moment I felt a light hand placed upon my shoulder, and that ever-remembered, low, damnable whisper within my ear.

In an absolute frenzy of wrath, I turned at once upon him who had thus interrupted me, and seized him violently by the collar. He was attired, as I had expected, in a costume altogether similar to my own; wearing a Spanish cloak of blue velvet, begirt about the waist with a crimson belt sustaining a rapier. A mask of black silk entirely covered his face.

"Scoundrel!" I said, in a voice husky with rage, while every syllable I uttered seemed as new fuel to my fury; "scoundrel! impostor! accused villain! you shall not—you shall not dog me unto death! Follow me, or I stab you where you stand!"—and I broke my way from the ballroom into a small ante-chamber adjoining, dragging him unresistingly with me as I went.

Upon entering, I thrust him furiously from me. He staggered against the wall, while I closed the door with an oath, and commanded him to draw. He hesitated but for an instant; then, with a slight sigh, drew in silence, and put himself upon his defense.

The contest was brief indeed. I was frantic with every species of wild excitement, and felt within my single arm the energy and power of a multitude. In a few seconds I forced him by sheer strength against the wainscotting, and
YOU, the readers of WEIRD TALES, have stamped the seal of your approval on Paul Ernst's series of stories about Doctor Satan, the world's weirdest criminal. A few of you do not like the series, but the bulk of your letters voices hearty commendation of the tales about the weird malefactor, and many of you are enthusiastic about him. Some of you, while praising the series, adjure us to keep the Doctor Satan stories weird, and caution us against letting them deteriorate into ordinary detective stories. Mr. Ernst promises to keep the series weird, weirder, and weirdest. The following letters give a fair cross-section of the comments on Doctor Satan's exploits.

**Kind Words for Doctor Satan**

Henry Kuttner writes from Beverly Hills, California: "The August issue is a good one. I was glad to see that old war-horse, Edgar Daniel Kramer, in it. Also the reprint was well chosen. Best story, L. M. Montgomery's _The House Party at Smoky Island_. Very clever yarn. Doctor Satan, too, was engaging; I hope the series will continue. The worthy Doctor, I was glad to see, doesn't go in for turgid melodrama and juvenile Fu Manchu stuff; moreover, Keane is as interesting as his antagonist, and not the usual damn fool detective. C. A. Smith managed to inject the right note of nightmare realism into his yarn about Quachil Utraus, . . . In the September issue, Robert Bloch gets my vote for the best story. The chap has a masterly control of adjectives."

**Against Doctor Satan**

Carl E. Woolard, of Flint, Michigan, writes: "Nothing else to do, so I’ll sit down and whack out a letter to good old WT. Probably by now you are receiving many a protest about Doctor Satan, and I hereby add mine. Now I’m not objecting to it because it is a detective story, although many will, but because it is _punk_. Any series of stories in which a master crook and a master detective match wits is bound to be poor. No matter what happens, the readers always know that in the next story the crook (or the detective) will have escaped. When one finishes reading such a story, he merely says to himself, 'So what?' I think that you will soon realize your mistake in inaugurating this series of stories. What has become of that master of fantasy, H. P. Lovecraft? There has been nothing new from him in WEIRD TALES for over a year. Let's have a long novelette from him, or several short stories."

**That Satanic Doctor Again**

J. J. O'Donnell, of New York City, writes: "Bearing in mind all the ballyhoo and press-agentry that preceded the publication of the series of stories about Doctor Satan, it was with many misgivings that I started to read the first story about this much-heralded character, 'the world's weirdest criminal.' It seemed to me that any series of stories must be pretty weak if it required so much advance publicity to put it across. My misgivings were increased by the fact that the tales were to be 'detective' stories—odious word! But I had not read two pages before I was under the spell of the story, and when I finished reading it, it left me 'panting for more,' as you phrased it so delicately in your ballyhoo in the Eyrie. This may sound like sarcasm, but I assure you it is not meant as such (except my use of the word 'delicately'). Honestly and frankly, I have not enjoyed any story so much in a long time as I enjoyed reading Doctor Satan."
even admitting that it is sheer melodrama, but what melodrama! Paul Ernst, its author, is to be congratulated. He wisely placed the emphasis on the criminal rather than on the detective; and by endowing both antagonists with powers and knowledge beyond the reach of any but the most highly developed mystics, he has succeeded in obtaining weird effects that would otherwise be impossible. The stories—if I may judge by the first two—are intrinsically weird, which other detective stories are not. Really, Ascott Keane is far above all other detectives of fiction (including Sherlock Holmes and Monsieur Lecoq) in his mastery of weird powers and his knowledge of occult forces, that he should not even be called a ‘detective,’ but a ‘criminologist.’ And, just as Ascott Keane excels all other detectives of fiction, Doctor Satan himself surpasses Fu Manchu and all the other fictitious villains that I have ever encountered in my reading. I wish a long career to this pernicious criminal and his remarkable adversary.”

Death of a Poet

Once again it becomes our sad duty to record the death of a valued contributor. Robert Nelson died at his home in St. Charles, Illinois, after a two-weeks’ illness. Though he was a young man in his early twenties, he had developed a deep poetic feeling and a keen sensitivity to the overtones and undertones of words, which made his verse stand out boldly from among the average magazine poetry. He received his first encouragement from no less a poet than Clark Ashton Smith himself. His work gave clear promise that he would some day occupy an important place among the great poets; a promise that now— alas!—can never be fulfilled.

Jack Writes a Letter

Jack Darrow, of Chicago, writes: “Once in a Thousand Years” by Frances Bragg Middleton is my favorite in the August issue. I enjoyed it immensely. Good plot and nicely written. . . . Yes, the Doctor Satan stories are weird (at least the first). I am eagerly looking forward to the next. The House Party at Smoky Island was an enjoyable short. Well written, too. Napoli and Binder did well in illustrating this issue. If only you would have a variety of artists on the cover as you do inside.”