



JULES VERNE'S TOMBSTONE AT AMIENS
PORTRAYING HIS IMMORTALITY

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AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY, YOUR BODY

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Our Cover

this month depicts a scene from the story entitled "Super-Radio," by Charles Cloukey, in which "M. W.," the super-criminal scientist, by manipulating a peculiar-looking instrument, brings forth from the tube at the top, a small, brilliant object, which floats through the air. It is an artificial ball of lightning, with which the criminal very nearly succeeds in destroying the intruder.

In Our Next Issue:

THE SKYLARK OF SPACE, by Edward Elmer Smith, in collaboration with Lee Hawkins Garby. (A Serial in Three Parts) Part I. Much conjecturing has been done on the far-reaching effects and possibilities of the energy contained in an atom, if it ever could be released. If some method for liberation of intra-atomic energy is discovered, the discovery very probably will be accidental. The first instalment is chock-full of intense moments and thrilling detail.

ARMEGEDDON—2419 A. D., by Philip Francis Nowlan. While enormous strides were made during the World War, both in the type of mechanical warfare and in the uses of poisonous gases, the limit has not been reached by a far stretch. In this story, the author tells about some amazing things, which are scientifically correct. It certainly contains a number of interesting prophecies, many of which are sure to come true.

THE PERAMBULATING HOME, by Henry Hugh Simmons. This is the fourth of the series of "Hicks' Inventions with a Kick." It is funnier and more thrilling than the preceding amazing inventions of this inventive genius, and gives us some very startling new ideas.

THE HEAD, by Joe Kleier. Recent experiments in Germany have proved that it is possible to decapitate insects and transplant the heads from one insect to another, with no obvious harm to the insects, after the wounds are healed. If it can be done with insects, why not with animals, and perhaps with humans, sometime in the future?

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JUST AROUND the CORNER

By Raymond Knight

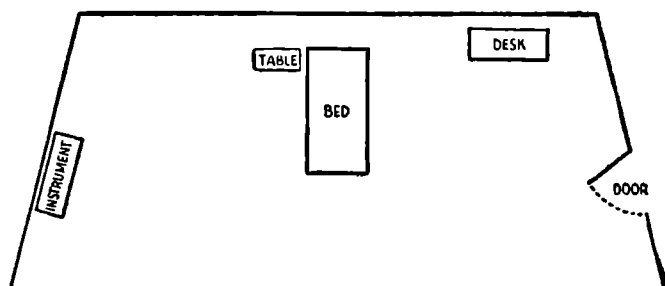
The Characters

THE PROFESSOR
HIS ASSISTANT

THE DOCTOR
THE STUDENT

The curtain rises on the bedroom of a sick man. The bed is center stage. It is slightly raised at the back so that we can see its occupant plainly. There is a door in the left wall and a desk at the left of the bed against the rear wall. At the right of the bed is a small table with a glass of water and two or three books. Against the right wall is a queer, cabinet-like instrument with wires and bits of mechanism and polished pieces of metal visible here and there. Surmounting it is a horn similar to a loud speaker, which is a part of the instrument. The instrument itself stands on a small four-legged table.

The room is severely furnished and decorated, and the only notes of color are provided by two rich oriental hangings on the rear wall at either side of the bed and an orchid on the table. Two or three chairs complete the furnishings.



The owner of the room lies in the bed, clad in night clothes and beneath the covers. He is a tall, spare man of 55. Above his waxen, emaciated cheeks are dark, intense eyes. An iron-grey beard and hair of the same color almost completely frame his features. He is holding his left wrist with his right hand and is eagerly scanning his wrist watch.

A young man is at the right making some sort of an adjustment on the unusual instrument. He is carefully but not distinctively dressed and wears a turn-down collar with a four-in-hand necktie. He has an unemotional face, topped by light yellow hair, and his general impression is a pale watery blue, like the color of his eyes.

The man in bed is the first to speak:

THE PROFESSOR (after a moment's silent stare at the watch): Kraussner—I believe—at last—it's coming! (The young man turns.)

THE ASSISTANT: You mean, Professor—

THE PROFESSOR (eagerly): I mean that I believe this time I really am dying. After so many false alarms—I hope it's true this time.

THE ASSISTANT: How do you know?

THE PROFESSOR: Fool! I've been taking my pulse. I can feel that I'm weaker—it's getting in—getting in! Is the instrument ready?

THE ASSISTANT: Yes, sir. I was just making sure.

THE PROFESSOR: Then leave it alone. Get the envelope.

THE ASSISTANT: Yes, sir.

(He hurries to the desk and takes out a large sealed envelope which he brings to the sick man, who raises himself slightly to examine it, then drops back as if exhausted.)

THE PROFESSOR: Call the Doctor—wait a minute—Has Meyer been around here this morning?

THE ASSISTANT: I saw him outside when I came back from breakfast.

THE PROFESSOR: Little fool! If he interferes this time—I should have let him go sooner. He knows too much. Don't let him in whatever happens.

THE ASSISTANT: No, sir.

THE PROFESSOR: Good—now get the Doctor.

(The Assistant goes to the door and leaves. The sick man reaches out a hand without looking and takes the orchid, which he holds before him for a moment. The Assistant returns, followed by the Doctor, a young, carefully groomed man in formal morning clothes. He carries a small professional bag.)

THE DOCTOR (heartily): Good morning, Professor. I thought they told me you were sick! I certainly didn't expect to find you looking so well.

THE PROFESSOR: Don't be an ass, Johnson. I'm not one of your patients. I'm my own doctor. I just called you in for consultation. How's business? Making lots of money these days?

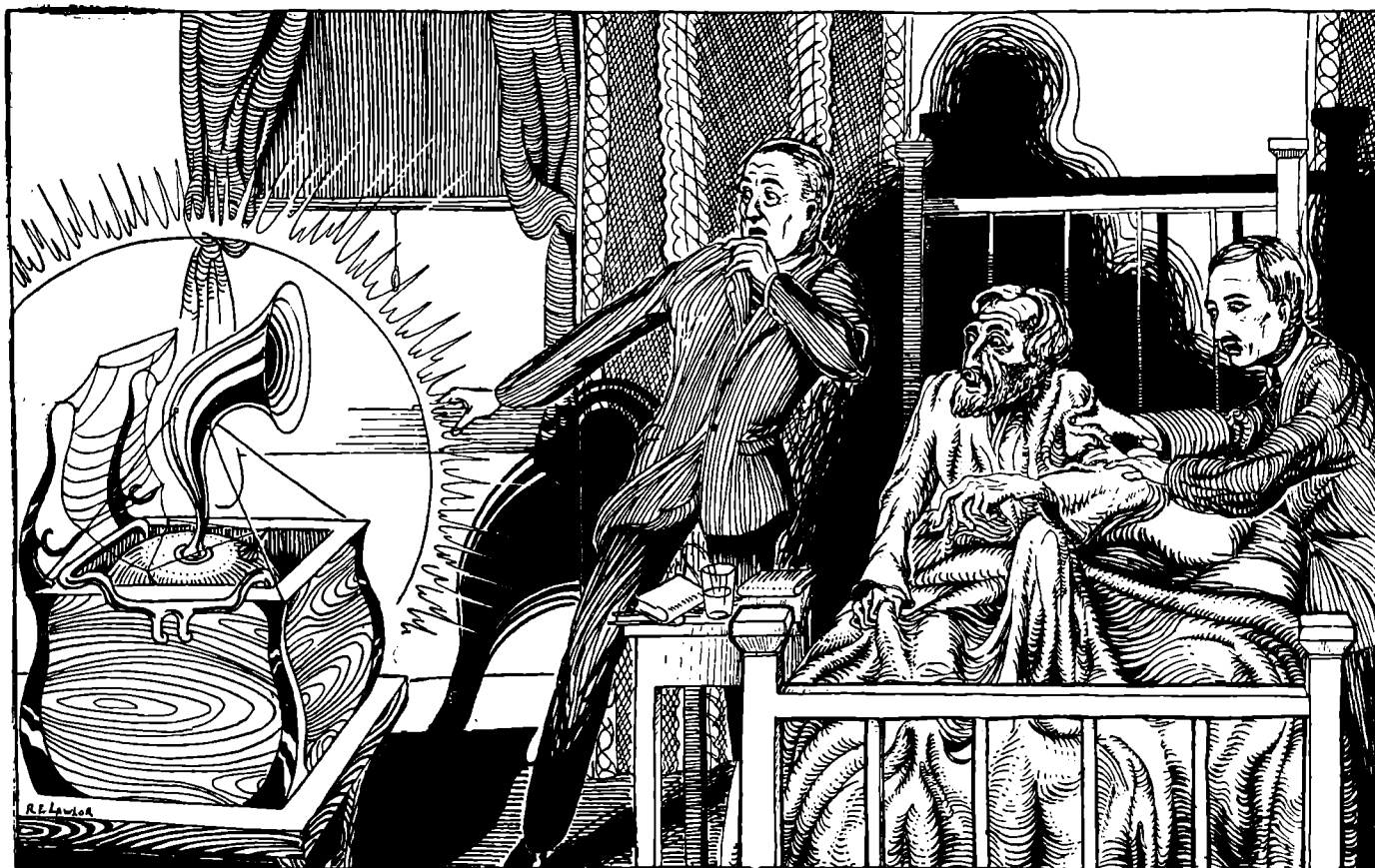
THE DOCTOR: Oh—so-so.

The weather's too decent just now.

THE PROFESSOR: Cheer up, you're going to get a post-mortem examination fee out of me, or rather out of my estate.

THIS month we produce a novelty in this magazine in the form of a play. This play is not offered as a scientification story proper; it is published for those who would like to produce a play, based on science in a sense, for the amusement and entertainment of their friends. It is a most interesting playlet. It requires little experience in producing and yet will give any audience a great thrill. The scientific paraphernalia is easy to procure. Any radio fan will have enough of the material on hand without having to buy any of it—or at least very little.

As we offer this as an experiment in AMAZING STORIES, the editor would very much like to have the opinion of his readers on a play of this kind.



. . . the three are startled by the sound of a whistle which comes distinctly from the horn. . . . Each is tense until it has finished and the Professor raises himself in bed.

THE DOCTOR: As Mark Twain said—

THE PROFESSOR: Shut up—the reports of *my* death are *not* going to be greatly exaggerated. Feel that pulse.

(*He extends his left arm toward the Doctor, who takes it as if to humor him, at the same time pulling out his watch. As he waits, his face becomes grave. Quickly he leans over and listens to the patient's heart, then rises decisively.*)

THE DOCTOR: Professor McAndrew, unless you do as I say, you will not live another hour!

THE PROFESSOR: Doctor Johnson, unless you listen to me, you will never hear what I have to tell you.

THE DOCTOR: But don't you understand—

THE PROFESSOR: Yes-yes-yes! I *know* I am dying and I called you here to verify it. You can't stop it—no one can—you could only prolong it. I've been doing that myself until my invention was perfected. (*He waves toward the instrument.*) Now it's finished. I'm going to test it.

(*The Doctor looks in bewilderment from the patient to the instrument and then to the Assistant. The Professor beckons to the Assistant.*)

THE PROFESSOR: Tell him, Kraussner, and hurry it up. (*To the Doctor.*) He's my assistant in this—experiment. Kraussner—Dr. Johnson.

(*The Assistant bows stiffly.*)

THE DOCTOR: Mr. Kraussner.

THE ASSISTANT: *Dr.* Kraussner, if you please.

THE DOCTOR: I beg your pardon. If I had realized you were a physician I should not have—

THE PROFESSOR: He's not one of you veterinaries, Johnson. He's a Ph.D., and Heidelberg at that. Have to get learned ones for this kind of work. Go ahead.

THE ASSISTANT (*speaking unemotionally and in a stilted manner, as one who has to think of his words*): Professor McAndrew retired from active teaching in the university ten years ago—

THE PROFESSOR: He knows all that!

THE ASSISTANT: For the last eight years he has been experimenting in an attempt to communicate with—the other world.

THE DOCTOR: So that is what you've been doing, locked away in here all this time!

THE ASSISTANT: He tried various methods of approach without success—the dead would not speak to him. Five years ago he invented a chemical which he believed, if taken into the human system, would enable him to detach his soul from his body and so come in contact with that world of which we know nothing. The experiment failed—

THE PROFESSOR (*unable to remain quiet*): But the chemical continued to work, Johnson. For five years it has been slowly destroying my tissues—my own invention! How's that for filial ingratitude?

THE ASSISTANT (*pointing to the instrument*): Shortly after this he attempted a *new* approach: An instrument which would enable the dead to speak to him through its medium. Generally speaking, it resembles the wireless telephone, but only the Professor and I know the secret of its composition.

THE PROFESSOR: I *hope* we are the only ones, John-

son. I have something to speak about since you are to be in on this experiment. Did you see a black-haired, rather wild-eyed young fellow when you came in?

THE DOCTOR: Yes. I nearly bumped into him when I came through the door downstairs. He seemed to be listening for something.

THE PROFESSOR: He's a student here in the university. A Russian Jew by the name of Meyer. He started working with me eight years ago, but last December he got a bit too crazy, even for me, and I had to let him go. The work got on his mind. I had to have Kraussner step in just when the thing crystallized. Meyer has been hanging around ever since. Keep your eye on him. There's no telling what he may do. Go ahead, Kraussner.

THE ASSISTANT: This instrument can be used only by the Professor and myself. Otherwise only by accident.

THE DOCTOR (*eagerly*): Have you tried to—well, it sounds like talking about a radio—but have you tried to get anything on it?

THE PROFESSOR: No! I must be sure. I knew I was dying, so I waited—to use it in person. (*He laughs grimly.*) But I'd give my soul if I could be on the receiving end instead of the sending!

THE DOCTOR (*enthusiastically*): If you could live you'd be famous!

THE PROFESSOR: Famous, hell! I'm not interested in fame. I want to see if it works—but I *would* like to live long enough to get the results myself. When you've worked years on something—

THE DOCTOR: I know—I know—

THE PROFESSOR: The great hour is approaching. It's just around the corner. I feel young once more—What the devil! Kraussner, you're letting me get sentimental again!

THE ASSISTANT: I'm sorry, sir.

THE PROFESSOR: Now, here's where you come in, Johnson.

THE DOCTOR: Let me give you a heart stimulant. It will help you to talk.

THE PROFESSOR: No! It will only keep me going a few minutes more. I'm impatient to be on the way. (*The Doctor shrugs his shoulders impotently.*) First, I've been watching you. You are going to be successful. Some of you young doctors have brains as well as education. I've been taking notes of the effects of this chemical on my body for several years. You are to summarize and publish them and the formula of the chemical is to be your property. Get the notes, Kraussner.

(*The Assistant goes to the desk, extracts a bulky folder of notes and gives them to the Doctor.*)

THE PROFESSOR: That's the medical aspect of this—er—touching incident. The second and most important—to me—is the, we'll call it the spiritual aspect, psychic, what you will—I am dying. Immediately after my death I will attempt to communicate with this world through that instrument. (*Here he holds up the sealed envelope.* In this envelope are written a set of pre-arranged signals by which it is to be determined that the communication is genuine. Only Kraussner and I know them now. You are to be present—that's why

you are here now. I shall continue to record my impressions from the moment of death until I have revealed—who knows?—what there is to be revealed.

THE DOCTOR: You will *talk* to us?

THE PROFESSOR: Of course. This table rapping and clanging of bells is all bunk. I am convinced that communication can be established by word of mouth—by one who knows how to use that instrument. And if I fail—well, I was going to die anyway.

THE DOCTOR: And the signals—what are they like?

THE PROFESSOR: That I cannot tell you. You will read them later—but I *will* tell you the first one so that you may see what a sentimental old fool I am. (*He whistles the two opening bars of "Roaming in the Gloaming."*) When I was young, I used to sing that song—about the only one I can remember, I guess.

THE DOCTOR: You intend to whistle that from—beyond?

THE PROFESSOR (*smiling queerly*): If I can pucker up my lips. (*He stops and listens intently.*)

THE ASSISTANT: There is something, Professor? (*In answer, the Professor points toward the door. The Assistant goes to it silently and throws it open. A young man who has been listening there stumbles into the room.*)

THE STUDENT: Damn you! (*He recovers himself and with a contemptuous look at the Assistant, approaches the bed. He is about 28, pale of face, dressed carelessly. The Doctor seeks to interpose himself between the Professor and the Student, but the Professor waves him away. The Student addresses the sick man.*) You caught me listening. All right. I'm entitled to know what's going on. This is as much my work as it is yours. (*Turning to the Assistant.*) And as for you, you damned German—six months' work and you get all the credit, whereas I worked eight years—and get kicked out. Just because you're a Ph.D. I suppose it will sound better when it's published!

THE DOCTOR: Professor McAndrew is dying.

THE STUDENT: Don't I know it? Haven't I been waiting for it? Just as he has, for five years. Do you think I am going to let all my work and sacrifice go for nothing?

THE DOCTOR (*soothingly*): I am sure that the Professor regrets that he is unable to use you further.

THE STUDENT: Then why doesn't he show it? I gave up everything for him. My doctor's degree—my career—everything. And now he throws me aside just as the goal is about to be reached.

THE PROFESSOR (*brutally*): Meyer—you're crazy!

THE STUDENT: That's what I've thought again and again these last weeks, but I know it's not true. I've tested myself. I'm as sane as you are.

THE PROFESSOR: I tell you you're crazy. Get out of here.

THE STUDENT: You can't fool me. I've worked with you too long. You think you can frighten me by making me believe myself crazy and so get rid of me. But my fear of you is all gone. You taught me too much.

THE DOCTOR: I must insist that you control yourself or leave.

THE STUDENT: I'll leave when I'm treated like a

man and not like a dog. Six months ago I came here one morning as usual and this dolt here shut the door in my face without a word of explanation.

THE ASSISTANT: Shall I do it again, Professor?

THE STUDENT (*screaming*): Try it—you dunce.

THE PROFESSOR: No. Kraussner, I'll take care of him.

THE DOCTOR: But you are in no condition—

THE PROFESSOR: That's why. The excitement may hurry my—demise. Meyer, don't you know when you're not wanted?

THE STUDENT: I've tried to have some pride but ever since then I've been doing nothing but think—think—

THE PROFESSOR: You think too much!

THE STUDENT (*defiantly*): Who taught me?

THE PROFESSOR: I wasted my time. You're no scientist—you're a mystic. Listen to me—you want to know why you were kicked out. It was because you were of no more use to me. I am no sentimentalist. As long as you could do the work—good. But when you began to run down—it meant someone else.

THE STUDENT: But I never tired!

THE PROFESSOR: Not physically. But your brain weakened. You didn't have the stamina. This work requires a clear head at all times. Your thoughts became too involved. *I am doing the thinking in this experiment. My assistant does the mechanical work.*

THE STUDENT: So I became too clever, did I?

THE PROFESSOR: If you choose to put it that way.

THE STUDENT (*mocking*): I did too much thinking for the great Professor. (*He turns to the Assistant.*) That's something you'll never do, Kraussner. (*He laughs tauntingly.*)

THE PROFESSOR: You are too temperamental, Meyer. You wanted to know too much. As far as I am concerned, you are a failure.

THE STUDENT: A failure! Yes? Very well, I agree. I'm getting the dirt end of this—but not for long—I'll win yet! I'll beat you at your own game. Look out for me. I warn you, I'm dangerous—you think you've eliminated me from this thing that I've spent years working on—this thing that has crept into my head until I think of it day and night. But you haven't—you haven't—I'll beat you yet. (*He shrieks with rage. The Doctor and the Assistant move hastily toward the instrument. The Student laughs.*) Don't fear for your precious instrument. I won't touch it. A man like our unimaginative Kraussner would try to break it to pieces, but not I—I think things out. I am too subtle—too mystical—ask the Professor. He'll tell you I'm neurotic and lots of other things—and should be watched. You'd better watch me—remember, I know more about this than the Professor would like me to know—and with every passing hour I know more and more. Damn you! Damn you all!

(*Again his voice rises to a crescendo and he sinks into a chair trembling with rage. The Doctor looks toward the Professor to see if he shall put him out.*)

THE PROFESSOR: No—leave him alone for a few minutes . . . he'll get over it. Then send him out—you can see he's just on the verge. He doesn't know what he's saying. Weakling!

THE ASSISTANT: But the instrument—

THE PROFESSOR: It's safe. You heard what he said. Johnson, take my pulse again—I think I'm slipping. (*The doctor takes his pulse. The Assistant moves protectingly toward the instrument, and hovers about it. The Professor calls.*) Meyer!

(*The Student does not move. He calls again.*)

Meyer! (*The Student raises his head slowly.*) Get yourself a glass of wine over there on the desk. Pull yourself together—be a man—then get out. I want to get this dying over with.

(*After a moment's hesitation the Student moves to the desk and mechanically pours himself a glass of wine. He drinks it slowly and it seems to refresh him. Again the Professor calls to him.*) Bring me some—my throat is dry.

(*The Student pours some wine in a glass and takes it to the Professor. The Doctor watches the Student carefully for signs of violence.*) Come to think of it, get some for all of us. We'll toast my departure. What could be more appropriate?

(*The Doctor looks at the Professor and points doubtfully at the Student without being seen by him. The Professor nods reassuringly and speaks.*) Give him something to do to take his mind off himself. He feels better already—don't you, Meyer?

(*The Student does not answer. He stands, back to the audience, hands poised on the bottle.*)

THE PROFESSOR: How's the pulse?

THE DOCTOR: Weak.

THE PROFESSOR: Good.

THE DOCTOR: This is the queerest case I ever had!

THE PROFESSOR: Cheer up—you won't have it long.

(*The Doctor, after a glance at him, takes a stethoscope from his bag and applies it to the Professor's chest. He listens intently with it. The Student takes a swift look about the room. The Doctor is bending over his patient. The Professor cannot see him, and the Assistant is inspecting the instrument. With a quick movement of decision the Student turns his back and for a moment is huddled over the desk. When he turns around he has two glasses of wine in his hand. He comes down to the Doctor who has now finished his examination and gives him a glass. Then he goes to the Assistant and hands him the other. As he takes it, the Assistant stares at him silently and uncomprehendingly. The Student returns the stare with a touch of bravado.*)

THE PROFESSOR: That's more like it, Meyer. Now get me some and we'll all drink to success.

(*The Student brings a glass to the Professor and has one for himself. Silently the four men turn to each other and drink. Suddenly the silence is broken by a wild laugh from the Student as he hurls his empty glass across the room where it breaks with a crash.*)

THE STUDENT: Success! (*He laughs again and dashes to the door, turning as he reaches it, to shout*): It's just around the corner!

(*He rushes out and the closed door shuts out his weird laughter.*)

THE DOCTOR (*looking after him*): Poor chap!

THE PROFESSOR: You see how much use he would

be to me? He probably would go to pieces at the crucial moment.

THE DOCTOR: I'll look out for him—afterwards.

(They are interrupted by the sharp sound of a pistol shot outside the door. The three men look at each other in a second's bewilderment, then the Doctor rushes out. The Assistant moves to the bedside and the two men watch the open door. The Doctor returns.)

THE PROFESSOR *(sarcastically)*: Did he succeed?

THE DOCTOR: Yes—he's dead.

THE PROFESSOR: Idiot! It's his own fault. Such men have no right to take up science—eh, Kraussner?

THE ASSISTANT: No, sir.

THE PROFESSOR: This isn't going to be a cheerful place for you with two corpses lying around.

(The Assistant looks at him with a faint touch of concern in his face. Suddenly the Professor starts and presses a hand to his heart.)

THE PROFESSOR: Johnson! *(The Doctor jumps to the bed. Then the Professor relaxes as the pain eases.)* Ah—that got me for a minute. I guess I haven't long to wait now.

(The Doctor takes his pulse. While he is doing so the Assistant, with a vague expression on his face, goes to the door and leaves. He reenters almost immediately, much more disturbed and passes across to the instrument where he stands in troubled thought. He is interrupted by the Professor.)

THE PROFESSOR: Kraussner. Wake up. It's approaching. Come here. *(The Assistant comes to him. The Professor takes his hand and shakes it briefly.)* Thank you for your help. Now set the instrument, I must be sure it is ready.

(The Assistant returns to the instrument and makes an adjustment while the Professor and the Doctor watch him. He stands back, and as he does so, the three are startled by the sound of a whistle which comes distinctly from the horn. It is the first two bars of "Roaming in the Gloaming" and is whistled slowly, as the Professor first whistled it. Each is tense until it has finished. Then the Professor raises himself in the bed.)

THE PROFESSOR: Johnson—Kraussner—did I imagine it or—*(He is interrupted by a cool and sinister voice which comes from the instrument.)*

THE VOICE: No, Professor—you heard correctly. It is possible to pucker one's lips here. I thought you might like to know.

THE PROFESSOR: Meyer!

THE VOICE: Yes. Meyer—the thinker—I beat you to it, didn't I? *(A loud laugh follows.)*

THE DOCTOR *(whispering to the Professor)*: Is it possible?

THE VOICE: Don't bother to whisper, Doctor. I can even hear your thoughts.

THE PROFESSOR *(in answer to the Doctor)*: Yes. He must have known the secret of the instrument.

THE VOICE: My dear Professor, you do me an injustice.

THE PROFESSOR *(pointing to the door)*: Johnson—make sure that he is dead.

THE VOICE: Yes, Doctor. Do make sure. Step out and look at the remains. Perhaps they have moved.

(The Doctor goes out. Kraussner, who has shrunk away from the instrument, stands watching it in awe. The Doctor returns and nods his head in confirmation.)

THE VOICE: Take his word for it, Professor? Very soon the Doctor will have the pleasure of doing the same to you. *(A low laugh.)*

THE PROFESSOR: Meyer—you are a fool!

THE VOICE *(in mock reproof)*: Professor! Have you no respect for the dead?

THE PROFESSOR: You are a coward. You took the easiest way.

THE VOICE: I use a pistol—you use a chemical—what's the difference?

THE PROFESSOR: But Meyer—listen to me. You have failed again. You can not defeat the experiment. I will soon be where you are and I am stronger than you.

THE VOICE: Remember what you said about me yourself, my erudite experimenter? Do you think I would do such a banal thing as commit suicide without thinking it all out first?

THE PROFESSOR: I give you up. I repeat—you are a fool. Kraussner, shut off the instrument. I have other things to think about.

(The Assistant moves cautiously toward the machine. Just as he puts out a hand to turn the connection, the Professor halts him.) Kraussner. Stop. Wait a minute. *(He is lost in a moment's thought.)*

THE VOICE: Ah! Just what I was waiting for. The great Idea has come.

THE PROFESSOR *(deliberately)*: Meyer.

THE VOICE: Your obedient servant, my dear sir.

THE PROFESSOR: You are not such a fool as I thought. You can help me.

THE VOICE *(mocking)*: I, help you?

THE PROFESSOR: Yes. Kraussner, prop me up. *(The Assistant and the Doctor push the pillows under him.)* Meyer, this is the opportunity I have never dared hope for. I never expected to live and hear this communication. I have but a short time to live. Tell me everything.

THE VOICE: You want my assistance, eh?

THE PROFESSOR *(excitedly)*: Doctor, quickly, give me the heart stimulant. Kraussner, paper and pencil . . . hurry—move! Meyer, stay with me—you still have your chance to accomplish something for humanity.

THE VOICE: Humanity? Hah-hah-hah—

(The Doctor hastily prepares a stimulant. The Assistant excitedly manages to get the writing materials and hurries with them to the bed.)

THE PROFESSOR: Meyer—are you there?

THE VOICE: Yes, I'm here.

THE PROFESSOR: Give the message to me—to me. I shall take it myself, after all these years—speak, Meyer!

THE VOICE *(tauntingly)*: You are dying, Professor.

THE PROFESSOR *(rising excitedly)*: I will to live. I will to live. I shall not die until I have accomplished my task. Speak, for God's sake.

THE VOICE: Why should I?

THE PROFESSOR: Can't you see after all these years what it means to me? I am dying. I demand it of you. What right have you to be silent?

THE VOICE (*louder*): What right had you to deny me my work? I suffered—why shouldn't you?

THE PROFESSOR: This is not personal—it is for the whole world.

THE VOICE: I was willing to work for the whole world until you turned me out.

THE PROFESSOR: I am stronger than you. I command you to give me the message. I *command* you!

THE VOICE: You want the message?

THE PROFESSOR: Yes—yes!

THE VOICE: After all, I have one for you—

THE PROFESSOR: Speak—now!

THE VOICE: Listen carefully, Professor. Miss not one word of it. Pencil and paper ready? I say are you ready, Professor?

THE PROFESSOR: Yes, yes—quickly.

THE VOICE: The message is—GO—TO—HELL!
(*Mocking laughter floats out into the room. In violent anger the Professor rises in the bed.*)

THE PROFESSOR: Damn you, Meyer—damn your meddling—I'll fix you, you fool—you ingrate—you shall not interfere longer. I'll settle with you soon. The instrument—shut it off—shut—it—off—

(*He falls back on the pillows. Both the Assistant and the Doctor rush to the instrument, but are halted just as they reach it, by the Voice.*)

THE VOICE: STOP—gentlemen! Do you not fear Death?

THE DOCTOR: Not you—whatever you are— (*He reaches for the connection.*)

THE VOICE: Oh—not I—not I—gentlemen—behind you!

(*In apprehension the two men turn about and look at the Professor. He has fallen back among the pillows and is lying still. They cross cautiously to him. The Assistant is torn between dread of the Voice of the instrument and the body on the bed. The Doctor makes a hasty examination, then pulls the bedclothes up over the head.*)

THE DOCTOR: He's dead. I must get an ambulance. We can't leave them both here this way— (*He turns to the door.*) You stay here—I'll return immediately—

(*At this the Assistant breaks down completely, trembling and sobbing.*)

THE ASSISTANT: I can't stay here alone, Doctor—this is terrible—I didn't expect to feel like this—it's not human—

THE DOCTOR: Nonsense—pull yourself together—I'll be right back. (*He goes to the door.*)

THE ASSISTANT (*rushing to him*): No—no—I tell you I can't stay here! If you go, I must.

THE DOCTOR: Be a man! You have work to do. The Professor is counting on you. You have seen that the instrument works—

THE ASSISTANT: That's it—that other man means to do something—his voice is terrible—

THE DOCTOR: Stay here, you coward!

(*He throws him to the floor and rushes out the door. We can hear the click of the key in the lock. The Assistant follows him and furiously tries to open the door but is unsuccessful. He falls to the floor in fright. For a moment the room is silent except for his*

sobs. Then from the instrument comes the Voice. It is low, coaxing, malevolent.)

THE VOICE: Kraussner—(*The Assistant hears it without at first realizing what it is. Then he starts in fear. Again comes the caressing voice.*) Kraussner—(*The Assistant cowers against the door. When the Voice speaks again it has a purring quality.*) Ah—such self control—remember what the Professor said? A clear head at all times—my dear Kraussner—

THE ASSISTANT: What do you want with me?

THE VOICE: I am just watching you—Kraussner—(*The Assistant pounds on the door, then rushes to the corner of the room away from the instrument.*)

THE VOICE: How cool you are—how cool!

THE ASSISTANT (*with shaking hands*): For God's sake—leave me alone.

THE VOICE: Such a steady hand. You've dropped your pencil. Pick it up. You'll need it to take notes for the experiment. My experiment—Kraussner—

THE ASSISTANT: I will not do it.

THE VOICE: But you are so dependable—*Doctor Kraussner!*

THE ASSISTANT: Stop—stop that voice.

THE VOICE: A simple turn of the mechanism will do it. (*The Assistant attempts a step toward the machine but falls back in the corner, trembling. The Voice taunts him.*) Too weak? or is it something else? Surely—you're not afraid, Kraussner—(*then, simulating incredulity*) or perhaps you are *thinking*—thinking of something. Don't let the Professor catch you thinking. He'll be here any minute.

(*At this the Assistant suddenly remembers the figure on the bed and with a shudder, he rushes away from it to the door.*)

THE ASSISTANT: Let me out—

THE VOICE (*in mock dismay*): You want to leave me? When I have postponed exploring this great mystery just to talk to you? Why I haven't even tried to find out yet what it's all about, because I thought you would be lonesome. But I must see now—I can wait no longer.

THE ASSISTANT: Go—go—

THE VOICE: Before I go I have something to tell you—something of great importance—of more importance to you, my friend, than to the world (*he laughs*). Listen very intently, Doctor—you wanted to take over my work, didn't you?—and reap the results of my years of labor—yes? well, you have it—but I believe that you will not have it long.

THE ASSISTANT: I don't want it—

THE VOICE: You are frightened—over what? Very little, you will say, when you hear what I have to tell you. Listen Kraussner— Here is something to be really frightened over—THE—WINE—I—GAVE—YOU—WAS—POISONED!

(*The Assistant rises from his crouching position on the floor, horror in his face, and takes a staggering step to the center of the room. He stands there as if frozen. The Voice laughs at him as he stands in the grip of fear. The laughter is interrupted by the sound of a second Voice—sharp—decisive.*)

THE SECOND VOICE: Kraussner—it is I—McAndrew—listen—quickly—

THE FIRST VOICE: Yes, Kraussner—it is your master's voice—calmness and coolness in the crucial moment —

THE SECOND VOICE: Meyer—that is enough—you have done your evil—go now—find out what awaits you—

THE FIRST VOICE: Yes, Professor, I turn him over to you—

THE SECOND VOICE: Go at once—your eyes have yet to be opened.

THE FIRST VOICE: Ta-ta, Kraussner—and *au revoir*, Professor—we shall meet again, no doubt—good luck in your experiment.

(He laughs again and the laugh dies away as though the speaker were departing in the distance.)

THE SECOND VOICE: Now, Kraussner. There is no time to lose. You are poisoned. I know. I know everything now. But if you hurry, we can finish this—Kraussner! It is of the utmost importance. What I have to tell you is beyond my greatest imagination. It is the secret of life itself!—take you pencil and write—all humanity depends on you—Kraussner—hear me!

(But the Assistant, still standing center stage, is slowly becoming paralyzed and is unable to hear or realize what is being said. He convulsively clutches at his heart and staggers a step or two toward the right. The Voice rises, pleading.) Don't you realize what you are doing? Try, man, try! Your will power—I have counted on you—

(Suddenly as if in the distance and coming nearer is heard the first voice—)

THE FIRST VOICE *(sobbing)*: Professor—wait—wait—it is I—Meyer—*(Then the First Voice is at full intensity, as if present)* Professor—what have I done? —I was blind—forgive me—I see now—now I know—I know! Kraussner—can you hear me?—don't die, Kraussner—don't die—we have a message for you—for God's sake, Kraussner, *don't die*—WE HAVE A MESSAGE FOR YOU!—

(But the Assistant is now beyond hearing the Voices and with a final lurch he falls, and in falling, he sweeps the instrument to the floor, where it breaks in many pieces. The pleading voice is suddenly shut off.)

CURTAIN