



JULES VERNE'S TOMBSTONE AT AMIENS
PORTRAYING HIS IMMORTALITY

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Our Cover

this month depicts a scene from the first instalment in this issue of the story entitled THE SKYLARK OF SPACE, by Edward Elmer Smith and Lee Hawkins Garby, in which the scientist, who has discovered a chemical substance for the liberation of intra-atomic energy, is making his initial tests, preparatory to his interplanetary flight by means of this liberated energy, which makes possible his interstellar space-flyer.

In Our Next Issue:

THE AMBASSADOR FROM MARS, by Harl Vincent. For a true prophetic gem, this story can't be beat. If some means of interplanetary travel could be devised sometime, what would be the method of communication between, say, Mars and the Earth. Obviously the spoken word will not be possible. The dot and dash system, on the other hand, seems illogical, because we have no basis of contact. The author suggests a very logical plan.

THE INVISIBLE BUBBLE, by Kirk Meadowcroft. If you know anything about the ultimate stage of matter, this story will seem quite plausible to you. At any rate, it contains a good bit of science and an ingenious idea, beautifully worked out.

THE SKYLARK OF SPACE, by Edward Elmer Smith, in collaboration with Lee Hawkins Garby. (A Serial in Three Parts) Part II. In this instalment, the opposition carries out some of its nefarious plans, but having been prepared, the builders of the Skylark follow and a series of startling adventures in interstellar space and then on another planet are told. This instalment not only retains its high degree of interest, it becomes increasingly fascinating with each chapter and explains many things.

THE VOYAGE TO KEMPTONIA, by E. M. Scott. Certain irregularities of our moon's motion have led some of our astronomers to believe that there is another body—small, to be sure—between the earth and the moon. Around the idea of this extra-terrestrial body is woven an absorbing tale of unusual interest.

And others.

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THE HEAD

By Joe Kleier



O you have come here to ask me to help you, Jim?" queried Professor Beardsley in a weak voice, as he looked inquiringly at his friend, Dr. James Leeson. "What assistance can you expect from a man who has only a month to live at most?"

Dr. Leeson glanced about the room and shifted uneasily in his chair. For some reason he seemed unwilling to state the nature of the help required.

A faint smile flitted over Professor Beardsley's narrow, shaven face as he observed Dr. Leeson's scrutiny of the room.

"Now don't try to foist a little inconsequential research work or something like that on me, so you can have an excuse to pay me a good price and camouflage your charity," bantered the Professor. "I'm devilish poor, I know, but doctors are useless to me now, so I dispense with them. As for food," he added grimly, "in my condition I can hardly eat anything, so that expense is also avoided."

"I may as well tell you straight out what I came for," blurted Dr. Leeson. "I want your head!"

"What?" gasped the Professor.

"Listen," went on Dr. Leeson hurriedly. "We haven't seen each other for some years, but you must have heard that I gave up my practice?"

Professor Beardsley nodded assent. The acquaintances and friends of Dr. Leeson had been astonished when he had abruptly retired some years before without any explanation.

"You may remember how deeply interested I was in biology and plastic surgery when we were students at the university," continued Dr. Leeson. "I became a surgeon; you became a professor of chemistry. I was a success as a surgeon, but I wanted to be independently rich, so that I could devote my whole time to what I considered

my life's work. Having saved some thousands of dollars, I began to speculate in stocks. I was more than lucky. In a short time I was very rich.

"I bought a place in the country not far from here, fitted it up as a laboratory, and withdrew from the world, as you might say.

"I tried for a long time to find a substitute for blood. At last I succeeded in making artificial ape blood, and with a pump that I devised to act as a heart, I have kept a chimpanzee's head alive for over six months!"

"And now you want a human head!" breathed the Professor, wonder and horror in his voice.

"Yes," replied Dr. Leeson. "I am certain that I can do the same with a human head and my substitute for human blood. A man may lose arms and legs and still live. I intend to prove that the entire trunk can be done away with, and the head and brain can be kept alive and active as long as there is blood and something to act as a heart.

"Some time ago, I put an advertisement in the papers, for persons who were contemplating self-destruction—of course I did not mention what they were wanted for—hoping in this manner to get a subject for my experiments. I received dozens of answers. Quite a few were women, but I don't want a woman for this. Some came out of mere curiosity. Some were reporters hunting for a sensational news item; others were adventurers looking for excitement. One or two of the would-be suicides were really tired of life, but they lacked the intelligence I desire."

"So you have come to me," remarked the Professor with a slight sneer. "I must say that I'm flattered."

"Wait till I have finished," protested Dr. Leeson, "and then think it over.

"You are as much interested in the progress of science I think—as I am. I need a keen mind in the head I use. By a system of signals we could arrange—for you won't be able to speak—you, or rather your head could communicate with me.

"To be brutally frank, I heard you were dying of cancer, and that you were in bad shape financially.

You have a six year old, motherless daughter to think of, and whether you accept my offer or not, I shall see to it that your daughter never wants for anything as long as I live, because you were my boyhood friend. But—if you want to rest assured of her future, I will give you fifty

thousand dollars cash for your live body, which money you can place in trust for her."

"What about yourself in case I should accept?" asked Professor Beardsley. "If the authorities or some of these pious keepers-of-their-brothers find out what you have done to me, they'll certainly have you brought to trial for murder."

"Perhaps, if the experiment fails," smiled Dr. Leeson. "Should your head live, I don't know what they could bring me to trial for, if I can prove that you were a willing collaborator.

IF you are at all nervous and given to nightmares, we advise you not to read this story before you go to bed. It gives an excellent thrill, and contains good science as well.

Recent experiments in Germany have proven conclusively that it is not only possible to decapitate insects, but to actually transplant heads from one insect to another, and after the heads are healed in place, the insects seem to be no worse for having their heads cut off and exchanged for others.

Of course, it's a far cry from an insect head to a human head, but the thing will not be so improbable a hundred years hence, as it may seem now.



The head heard of all the different aspects of the wrangle. Its eyes held a mute appeal for death, an appeal that no one, now . . . dared to grant.

"You no doubt have read of scientists losing arms and legs fooling with radium and other things; they are never arrested for committing suicide piecemeal, so why should I be accused of murdering piecemeal.

"However, you can let yourself be examined by three specialists. In case of trouble I can have these specialists testify as to your condition. After you have been examined, let it be known that I shall operate on you as a last hope. Should you die, I have a friend who is an undertaker, and he will see to it that you are buried without any questions. Should your head live, I shall preserve the body."

"Do you think I care to have my head live on for I don't know how long?" demanded Professor Beardsley.

"I've thought of that. You must agree to let me keep your head alive for at least two months after the operation, if it is possible. After that you can signal me to let your head die, and it shall be done. Should it be impossible for you to make signs, I promise to let it die within that time."

"This sounds ghoulish! But what about the pain?"

"I have perfected a local anesthetic which heals while it deadens pain. You won't know a knife has touched you during the operation or after."

Dr. Leeson paused and waited for an answer.

"Give me until this time to-morrow to think it over," said Professor Beardsley thoughtfully.

"Good!" exclaimed Dr. Leeson, looking at his watch. "Tomorrow morning at eleven o'clock I'll be here. I'm sure, if you think this matter over, you will see that it is feasible."

With a brisk handshake, Dr. Leeson left the room.

PROFESSOR BEARDSLEY sat in his chair, hour after hour, debating this strange offer with himself. Suffering with cancer of the stomach, he had more than once decided that suicide was the only way to end his agony. But the thought of his daughter had always made him reconsider, for he had clung to the forlorn hope that in some way he could provide for her before he died.

And now Dr. Leeson, who had buried himself in a laboratory for a number of years, popped up like some uncanny genie at this time and made a fantastic proposition. Dawn found Professor Beardsley still in his chair, but his decision was made. His daughter's future could not be left to the vagaries of friendly help, or the mercies of a public orphanage. Then again, he was curious as to the outcome of such an attempt to baffle nature.

Almost eagerly he awaited Dr. Leeson's arrival.

Promptly at eleven o'clock Dr. Leeson knocked, and entered the room.

"Brought my car with me so I can drive you around to see those specialists, and wind up your business," he remarked.

"You're taking me for granted," wanly replied the Professor, "but I'll go through with this thing."

With feeble steps Professor Beardsley walked to the car, turning as he entered it, to take a last look at the shabby exterior of the cheap rooming house that had been his home for several years.

After the specialists had been called upon, they pro-

ceeded to a bank where Professor Beardsley received fifty thousand dollars, and wrote his will.

"I think it the best not to see my daughter," said Professor Beardsley in reply to a question from Dr. Leeson. "I might get squeamish and not fulfil my end of the bargain. She is well taken care of by a kind-hearted woman, whom I paid, whenever I could, for this service."

Late in the afternoon of that day, they drove out to Dr. Leeson's place, which was situated in a quiet, secluded spot far back from the main highway.

"You're too fagged to be shown around today," declared Dr. Leeson. "I'll take you to your room, and give you something, so you can get a little rest."

Professor Beardsley drank the draught prepared for him, and sank into a stupor-like sleep. The morning sun was shining through his bedroom window when he awoke. Dressing slowly, he then stepped out of the room, and found Dr. Leeson pacing up and down the corridor.

"I'll show you about the building," said Dr. Leeson, taking the Professor's arm, "and explain anything you wish to know."

On their way, they met several serious and studious-looking men.

"My assistants," Dr. Leeson informed the Professor. "Every one of them heart and soul with me in this work."

Finally, they stopped in front of a solid-looking door.

"The inner shrine," softly laughed Dr. Leeson, opening the door, and pointing to the center of the room.

Professor Beardsley walked to where Dr. Leeson pointed—and then stood rigid. The live head of an ape lay strapped to a board—with no sign of a body!

On closer examination, the Professor saw that the head ended in the stump of the neck over which skin had been grafted. Several short tubes extended from the neck to an apparatus that supplied the head with life-sustaining fluid.

"This," explained Dr. Leeson, lightly touching with a finger a small pump which was working with regular, exact strokes, "is the heart. That," indicating a box-like affair, "is the filter or lungs, and also the stomach of my artificial blood circulating system.

"The used blood leaves the head, passes through the filter, where it is purified, nutrition added, the right temperature given, and then is ready to be pumped to the head again.

"The whole thing is run by electricity, generated by my own power plant.

"As you may have noticed, there is an auxiliary circulating system here. Two of my assistants are watching here continually. In case of a breakdown, it would hardly take more than a second to start the blood flowing back to the head."

"Isn't there danger of a bursting blood vessel?" ventured Professor Beardsley.

"Hardly. The volume of blood needed by a head at each stroke, and the number of strokes to the minute are determined beforehand."

"Won't the blood corrode the insides of the pump, filter, or tubes, and in this manner carry foreign substances to the head which might prove harmful?"

"Pump, filter, and tubes have a special lining which won't corrode, and is so tough that it takes a great amount of friction to wear it off; what does wear off is a tonic to the blood instead of a poison."

Professor Beardsley suddenly felt nauseated. The head of the ape, that Thing strapped to the board, was a sample of what was to become of him.

And Leeson jokingly called this chamber of horror the inner shrine! The man was mad, inhuman. He was a man or a friend no longer, simply a tool of science to whom a human being, or animal, was valuable only as an object for his probing knife.

WITH tottering steps, the Professor began to walk away.

"What do you think of my work?" asked Dr. Leeson, as he followed the Professor.

"Diabolical!"

Dr. Leeson glanced at him covertly.

"I'm going to keep my word," Professor Beardsley whispered hoarsely, as he caught the glance and stiffened. "You shall have your pound of flesh. What I saw in there kind of upset me. When do you want to begin on me? I'm ready now."

"Well," replied Dr. Leeson after a pause, "the sooner the better. Your body doesn't have to be built up for this operation, and you're liable to die unexpectedly. Shall we say this evening, at six o'clock?"

"Satisfactory with me. It means money for my daughter, and besides, I always wanted to achieve fame, wanted to be first in something, but I have failed. As fate has left me only this choice I shall take it. If my head lives, my name will gain some notoriety at least."

At the request of Dr. Leeson, the Professor prepared a written statement, witnessed by several of the assistants, to the effect that he willingly placed his live body at the disposal of Dr. Leeson.

With the resignation of a condemned man, Professor Beardsley waited for the hour without fear or apprehension.

At six o'clock he was taken to the operating room, where he shook hands with Dr. Leeson, and calmly watched the paraphernalia being arranged.

"Begin!" said Professor Beardsley quietly, after he had been secured to the operating table.

Dr. Leeson and his assistants worked as rapidly as possible. At last the grisly task was accomplished. Artificial human blood was being pumped to the living head of Professor Beardsley, while the dead, headless body was removed!

For a number of days the Head was in a stupor, seemingly from shock. But the wound healed rapidly, and the brain apparently began to function. The Head appeared to notice the anxious faces hovering about it. And when some words were spoken to the Head, it signaled with its eyelids as agreed upon.

"The Head hears—understands!" vibrantly declared Dr. Leeson.

But on the following day Dr. Leeson did not come to see the Head as usual. Another day passed, and then the Head was apprised of the fact that Dr. Leeson had been struck by an automobile and killed while on a trip to the city.

In the days that followed, strange faces came into the room where the Head was placed. It was stared at and questioned. The police, so the Head was informed, had found a memorandum upon Dr. Leeson's body after he was killed, giving a full account of the case. The police had promptly investigated.

The assistants were arrested one at a time and released on bonds, for the authorities realized that no one else could take care of the Head, if the assistants were thrown into jail.

The newspapers avidly printed every item that could be scraped up about the bizarre affair.

The prosecuting attorney was plainly perplexed as to the charge on which the assistants should be tried. Murder was out of the question, for it was a fact that the Head was alive and its mind was normal. The assistants were finally brought to trial on the charge of mayhem.*

But the assistants secured the best legal talent in the country. The three specialists testified as to Professor Beardsley's health. The signed statement of Professor Beardsley, the canceled check for fifty thousand dollars, and the headless body—preserved no doubt by Dr. Leeson for just such an emergency—were offered as evidence.

The result was that the jury disagreed, and the two trials that followed ended in the same manner.

Not only in the courtroom, but all over the country the battle raged. Lawyers, doctors, ministers, and scientists talked and wrote learnedly from one standpoint or the other. One side demanded that the Head's life should be put to an end for humane reasons, the other side argued that this would be the same as murder because the brain really made the man.

The Head heard of all the different aspects of the wrangle. Its eyes held a mute appeal for death, an appeal that no one—now that Dr. Leeson was dead—dared to grant. The Head kept on living, and the authorities were satisfied to let the case lie dormant.

DOCTOR LEESON had willed his entire fortune to his assistants. His formula for artificial blood, which he had entrusted to his assistants, they guarded with jealous care.

The years came and went. The assistants grew bald-headed and gray—and died. New, picked men took their place and guarded the Head from death. It was carefully massaged and washed every day, the hair and beard cut when grown too long.

Centuries passed. Great wars were fought and the country beaten in them. The Head noticed that the progress of science was stopped.

The demeanor and character of those taking care of the Head changed. They formed themselves into a secret clique, and were called priests. The government became a hierarchy, and only these priests had any knowledge of electricity or kindred subjects. The laboratory became a shrine to which the people made pilgrimages.

The common people—the Head learned—were gulled

*A term in law; the maiming of a person by depriving him of the use of any of his members in fighting or in a contest.

THE HEAD

By Joe Kleier

(Concluded from page 421)

into the belief that it was a Godhead sent from on high to instruct and rule through the medium of the self-proclaimed priests. So low was the intelligence of the masses fallen, that they paid fabulous sums for the privilege of gazing on the miraculous Head.

On state occasions the Head was ostensibly interviewed as an oracle as to what ought to be done. The Head's lips having writhed into a sneer of disgust, the priests interpreted the expression to their advantage—and profit.

Involved in another war, the country was invaded.

Great crowds implored the leering Head for deliverance from the foe.

But the enemy swept up to the temple gates—and entered. The priests fought bravely. The last to die was the high priest, whose blood, as he fell, spattered over the Head.

A dark-skinned invader strode up to the Head, and addressing it with a jeering epithet raised a club to strike.

A look of utter content came over the Head's features as the blow that meant oblivion descended!

THE END