



JULES VERNE'S TOMBSTONE AT ALIENS
PORTRAYING HIS "SERIALS"

AMAZING STORIES

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In Our Next Issue:

PIRACY PREFERRED, by John W. Campbell, Jr. In this story, as in his previous ones, our young author offers us a rare combination of accurate science with excellently written fiction—which makes a perfect **AMAZING STORY**. This time, Mr. Campbell looks into the future of aviation—a subject which at the present time compels a universal interest.

THE NON-GRAVITATIONAL VORTEX, by A. Hyatt Verrill. When we discover what gravitation is, scientists will perhaps find it less impossible to annihilate gravity. This is an extraordinary tale, dealing with vortices that develop a strange phenomenon—the local annihilation of gravitation.

ELEMENT No. 87, by Ralph Linn. Chemists have determined from various considerations that there can be only 92 original elements in the chemical scale. Only comparatively recently have a goodly number of these been discovered. But there still remain a few about which chemists know little or nothing, and there is no telling what possibilities an undiscovered element might hold. Our author uses this idea in an exceedingly clever bit of scientific fiction.

THE UNIVERSE WRECKERS, by Edmond Hamilton. (A Serial in 3 parts) Part II. In this instalment our four travelers experience many dangers with the extraordinary beings of Neptune, which is nearly 3 thousand million miles from the sun, but they learn the source of the power that has caused the increased rotation of the sun, which threatens the life of all the nearer planets in the solar system.

FLAMINGO, by Clarence Edward Heller. Much has been said in the daily journals of wonderful robots, the direct successors of the almost historical "steam man" of two generations ago. But think what would happen if not only the servant and the manual worker were replaced by robots—if even our great singers and famous actors were likewise replaced in such manner. Our new author has woven a charming extravaganza of the amusements of the future—not so very far in the future, at that.

In Our May Issue:

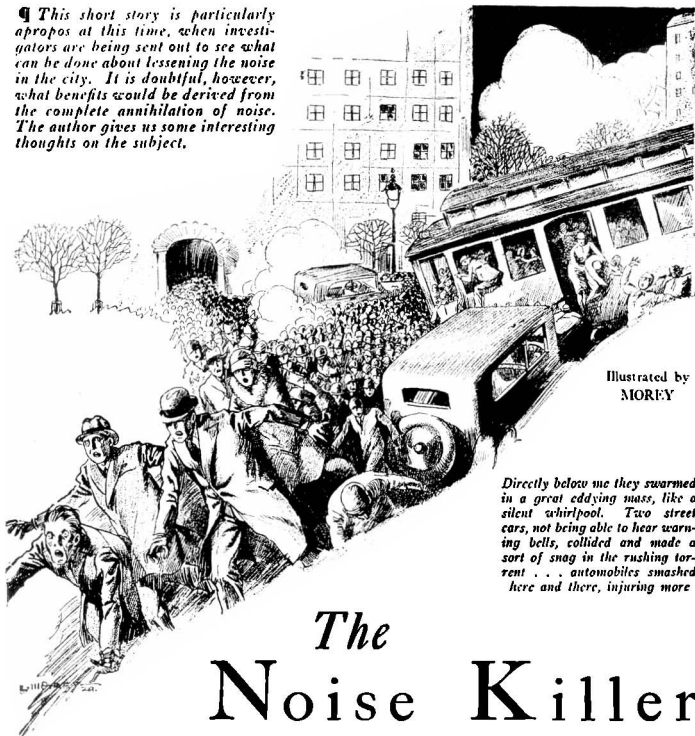
- The Universe Wreckers**
(A Serial in 3 parts) Part I
By Edmond Hamilton..... 102
Illustrated by Wesso
- Synthetic**
By Charles Cloukey..... 130
Illustrated by Morey
- Vis Scientiæ**
(A poem)
By Miles J. Breuer, M.D..... 139
- The Gimlet**
By Victor Endersby..... 140
Illustrated by Morey
- The Noise Killer**
By A. M. McNeill..... 151
Illustrated by Morey
- Madness of the Dust**
By R. F. Storz..... 154
Illustrated by Wesso
- The Ivy War**
By David H. Keller, M.D..... 160
Illustrated by Morey
- What Do You Know?**
(Science Questionnaire)..... 169
- A Circle of Science**
By Stanton A. Coblenz..... 170
Illustrated by Morey
- Through the Veil**
By Leslie F. Stone..... 174
Illustrated by DeFaux
- Discussions**..... 181
- "The Pea Vine Mystery" and "The Dead Sailor"**
By A. L. Hodges..... 182

Our Cover

This month illustrates a scene from Part I of the story entitled, "The Universe Wreckers," by Edmond Hamilton, in which the four travelers, fitted out in their space-walker suits, are making the necessary repairs to their space-flier, which sustained some damages while going through the asteroid zone on their way to Neptune.

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¶ This short story is particularly apropos at this time, when investigators are being sent out to see what can be done about lessening the noise in the city. It is doubtful, however, what benefits would be derived from the complete annihilation of noise. The author gives us some interesting thoughts on the subject.



Illustrated by
MORFY

Directly below me they swarmed in a great eddying mass, like a silent whirlpool. Two street cars, not being able to hear warning bells, collided and made a sort of snag in the rushing torrent . . . automobiles smashed here and there, injuring more

The Noise Killer

By A. M. McNeill

THE strangest experience of all my flying days never got into a report for two reasons. For one thing I was afraid of losing caste with my superior officers if I had handed in an exact record of what I went through. They would probably say that I had become permanently light-headed from the altitude and was not to be trusted with another 'plane.

Nevertheless, if the report of my last attempt to establish a transcontinental non-stop flying record had been complete, it would have told of that foggy sky out of which I dropped to a place hard to believe of this world.

I had been bucking head winds for several hours when suddenly my engine stalled. With so much depending upon keeping in the air, I put her into a tail

spin with a pretty sick feeling. The cloud bank through which I cut in a hurry was much thicker than I had expected. When I straightened her out I was almost uncomfortably close to compact white buildings, piled in neat square formations of a city. Then it was I saw that I must land for minor repairs to the fuselage received in my steep climb and swift fall. Knowing that the chance of making the coveted record was lost, yet still tense with the effort, I cruised about over the city for signs of an airport.

Of course there was the great wide river upon which to settle in case of need. At last I sighted an open space

on the margin of the river and tried to read a name painted on the hangar's roof. Some letters must have been obliterated for all I could read was a terminating "ville."

It was the most deserted haven into which I had ever taxied. Overcoming a sense of unreality I ran across the tarmac to rattle locked doors and frantically shout for someone to get me the needed materials. Not a sign of life could I raise. At last, concluding some important occasion had perhaps called everybody uptown, I went off at a great heat towards the main thoroughfare.

The moment my stamping feet left the soft, dry grass of the fields for the hard pavement I knew for a certainty that something was very wrong. My heavy boots made not a sound. I might have been walking on cotton wool. For a horrible moment I knew the feelings of a person who learns for the first time he has lost one of his senses. I thought I must have become deaf. Perhaps the sudden change of altitude had brought it on. Sometimes I had known a throbbing in my ears from such a cause. I shook my head until I thought it would fly off and pounded both sides of my skull like a madman, but still my footsteps were inaudible.

Unable, as it were, to believe my ears, I went on for further signs that would prove my deafness. Though I walked the length of the principal street on which the city hall tower rose tall and alone I met only staring windows, echoless walls and empty sidewalks. Papers swept past me without a rustle. A bird perched on a telephone wire quivered with a burst of silent melody. A hungry looking mongrel rushed out to bark without menace because without sound. I picked up a stone and heaved it at him. It hit the asphalt as noiselessly as a wind-blown feather.

"Have I gone crazy?" I asked myself. "Or did I bring down my 'plane in an unexpected crash that sent me wandering in outer Hades?"

Just then, to my inexpressible joy, I sighted a 'plane passing overhead. Assured that I was still on earth, I watched it fly close only to be plunged into deeper bewilderment. It was accompanied by no familiar throb of the engine. Letting out my breath in what should have been a yell, I waved my arms frantically and ran back toward the airport. My lungs were heaving with great, noiseless, panting gasps. I never slowed down until I came within sight of the open field of the airport and the blessed spread wings of my own 'plane. Here was something familiar. If I were in the other world I had the comfort of knowing my old ship could be there with me.

I flopped down in the shade of a wing with a great heaving sigh. As I lay there in its homelike lee it suddenly occurred to me that I had heard that sigh. I sighed again just to prove it. Sure enough! Excitedly I sat up and shouted, "Whee! Yippee!" like an Arizona Indian.

THAT yell immediately brought results. The moment it ceased I saw cautiously advancing around the rudder of my ship the scuffed shoes and frayed pants of a man who finally peered under the wing at me, his little blue eyes squinting and his white bearded chin working in agitation.

"Are yuh hurt?" he finally said.

"No! Just frightened!" I saw no chance of hiding

the fact. When I tried to gain my feet, I was so weak from shock that I sank back upon the ground again. The old fellow stooped and drew himself slowly under the wing on his hands and one hip.

"This is the hell of a place!" I blustered to hide my shaky voice. "Are you alive or just walking around to save funeral expenses?"

"Oh, I'm alive," he said, looking at me quizzically, "but I'm the only one in this town who is!"

This, uttered in a tone hollow and as if coming from far away, was enough to add new terror to my already shaken mind. I edged away from him. He noticed my movement.

"I'm harmless enough," he chuckled, then suddenly becoming serious he added, "but you won't find another human being in this whole city. I helped to kill some and the rest just left!"

"A lunatic! What next?" I thought, and summoned my returning strength in case he should spring. He was too uncomfortably close!

"Aw, I'm not crazy," the old fellow said, reading my eyes, "though Heaven knows I've had enough to make me so! I'm the brother of Sanford Lewis . . . the inventor . . . you know . . ."

"So you're his brother!" I had heard it was best to humor the demented.

"Yes. He was the only one of us who ever made a name for himself. You see we came from an old pioneer family of this city and my brother took such a great pride in it that all his inventions were toward its betterment and progress. I expect you've heard the motto, 'The best in the west?'"

"Oh, yes."

"'The best in the world' was my brother's slogan for this city. . . ."

"And of course he realized his ambition?" I asked, with a sarcastic smile toward the scene of devastation I had quitted in such a fright.

"No," he answered soberly, "he failed miserably. But he ain't to blame. He died in the attempt."

"That's too bad," I sympathized, for I really pitied the poor cracked fellow.

"Yes. He gave his life to his great idea."

"And what was that?"

"He aimed to make this a city without noise!"

"Without noise?" I asked, wondering where the old man's craziness was leading us.

"I mean without the terrible racket and thunder of its traffic. My brother tried to make this a city without noise. Think! Think, man, what success would have meant! People would have flocked to it! Every city in the world would have copied it. . . ."

"I should think that anything which would kill noise outside of buildings would kill it inside. Nobody would be able to hear themselves talk and you'd be as badly off as before," I objected with an arousing interest.

"That was the trouble. I don't pretend to understand these scientific things . . . wouldn't take any more'n a grammar school education . . . but my brother could have told you everything about his invention. He used to make himself so clear that even an ignorant like myself could see what he was driving at . . . and then five minutes after he was through I couldn't tell you what he said. My family were all patient with my —my stupidity—but just the same it was me that caused that. . . ." and he stretched his hands towards the dead

city. His voice was casual enough but I noticed a peculiar twitch of his whole body, as if all his nerves suddenly contracted and then relaxed. Whatever terrible thing had happened, he had evidently trained his mind to review it dispassionately but his inner self could not be trained to look back without a quiver. At first I thought it would be unkind to resurrect the past for him, even though I was dying to know just what happened. Then it occurred to me that lonely people sometimes find relief in talking about their troubles, so I led him on.

"CAN you remember," I questioned, "how your brother overcame his great difficulty in making a noiseless city?"

"Yes, I can remember that. It appears to me his air fluid was supposed to kill all sound produced by metal but not that produced by the human voice. Yes, I know all sound is just waves of air. But there are different qualities of sound, aren't there? Well, this fluid of his was of such a subtle nature that it neutralized and balked only the waves which were caused by the ring of metal. At least, that's what he claimed. I saw several demonstrations that seemed to me to prove he had succeeded. Why, I saw the demonstration that convinced the city council that he had a great thing and induced them to let him try an experiment on the air of the city itself. I can tell you it was a long, hard pull to bring those auto-crats of the city hall to that state of mind. But one day a moving picture magnate came here from Hollywood. He had read in a scientific journal of my brother's invention—one of the scientists at work on his sound pictures had seen it. This moving picture man—I forget his name—offered to move his entire studio here if the sound-killing device of my brother's proved successful. He said that other companies would follow if they were sure of finding a place where they could make sound pictures without the danger of outside sound interference. That prospect is what moved the city council to give my brother a trial. They even hoped to make this a second Hollywood."

"How did you go about a demonstration of this sort?" I asked, beginning to see the bearings of his story.

"With a band and speeches," he smiled down into that funny little white beard of his. "The night my brother came home and told me the mayor was going to let him try his experiment on the city I didn't sleep a wink all night. Neither of us did. I was terribly worried, for I was to operate the projection machine from the roof of the City Hall." He raised a shaky finger to the one skyscraper outlined against the setting sun. "On that roof from which the central tower springs the machine was to be installed. It's the highest point in the city. I can tell you I was nervous!"

"Why didn't your brother control the machine himself?" I asked, to draw him from his reverie.

"He had to be across the street in the City Hall Square with the rest of the celebrities to see how things turned out. He did his best to help me, though. He explained the workings to me a dozen times. It didn't seem humanly possible to make a mistake. But I was scared and didn't take in half of what he said. He left and I waited for my cue to turn on the substance that was to work miracles. My cue was the sound of the brass band playing the 'Star Spangled Banner.' When they got to that part where it says 'bombs bursting in air' . . . you know . . . well, I was to work the magic. I was so

nervous I hardly recognized the tune when it came. And in the end I just turned it on any old place in the music. I did it for him . . . my brother . . . I meant only the best for the city . . . I turned it on!"

"What happened? You stop in the worst places! What happened when you turned it on?" I urged. "Nothing!" He spoke as one coming out of a dream. "Nothing except silence . . . dead silence!"

"What did you do?"

"I waited for I hardly knew what. At last I went to the parapet and looked over. . . ."

"Well? What did you see?"

"I saw hell . . . a silent hell! The street was thick with people. All up and down as far as I could see the buildings were emptying just as they do after a heavy earthquake. Seems like folks had the terrified feeling that goes with a great calamity and wanted to get clear of the buildings . . . out in the open. And they did the worst thing they could do. They stampeded toward the City Hall Square. Directly below me they swarmed in a great eddying mass, like a silent whirlpool. Two street cars, not being able to hear warning bells, collided and made a sort of snag in the rushing torrent. People kept running out to help those already injured and getting knocked down themselves . . . automobiles smashed here and there, injuring more . . . everywhere lay men and women and children injured or dying without audible cries or groans . . . it was ghastly . . . like a motion picture of warfare . . . I don't think about it any more . . . it would drive me crazy!"

I respected his silence for some time and then asked gently, "The experiment was unsuccessful?"

"Well . . . it killed all sound within a radius of a mile . . . all sound . . . caused by metal or anything else. You notice our voices sound kind'a hollow. Well, we're on the rim of it. It is getting faint here. But you couldn't hear a cannon shot in the city itself!"

"Why didn't you turn the infernal machine off when you saw what it was doing?" I offered.

"That's the terrible part! I couldn't!" and I saw tears in his pale blue eyes. "I tried . . . oh, how I tried . . . but I forgot how. . . ."

"Why didn't you get your brother to come and turn it off?"

"I tried to. I beckoned to him like fury. I could see his tall black silk hat in the crowd milling around the band stand. He pushed through the crowd there and came running across the open space. He was waving his hand and looking up at me. In the middle of the street an automobile hit him . . . he couldn't hear it you see . . . he died instantly. . . ."

For a long time we sat there in silence looking out upon the city over which the sun had set.

"And so it was never turned off?" I really knew without asking.

"It was never turned off! I couldn't remember what my brother had said even when I was calm again several days afterward. I tried until I thought I would go mad. But it was no use."

"Why didn't you take the machine away and junk it?" I asked hopefully.

"No use! Once that stuff was on the air nothing would do any good except to neutralize it. And my brother was the only one who could do that . . . and he was gone. No, there was nothing we could do. People

(Continued on page 180)

The Noise Killer

By A. M. McNeill

(Continued from page 153)

were frightened and left the city . . . all those who weren't killed."

"And you . . . what makes you stay in such a gruesome place?" I asked, crawling out from under the wing.

"I don't know. What makes any of us cling to lost hopes. I never quite gave up hope of being able to remember what my brother said. Some day, perhaps when I am dying, it will come to me what he said and then I'll be able to lift the curse from this beautiful city so that people can live in it again. Can I help you,

young fellow? I have the keys to these buildings and anything in them is yours."

Before night actually closed in I had made repairs and was on my belated way again. As I tilted my wings and droned up into the air, it occurred to me that the only name by which I could identify the place was a half-obiterated "ville" I had seen on the shed. In this lack of definite data lies the second reason why I could not include the strange visit in my official report and why I am writing it now for the first time. Clearly, it was the only course for me to follow.

THE END