



JULES VERNE'S TOMBSTONE AT AMIENS  
PORTRAYING HIS IMMORTALITY

# AMAZING STORIES

## Scientific Fiction

Vol. 6

December, 1931

No. 9

### In Our Next Issue

**POWER**, by Harl Vincent. The destiny of the world depends largely upon power. Man is only a weakling. The falls of Niagara are a giant. And to those who possess and control this thing called power belongs unlimited possibilities for autocratic control of their fellow beings. The days of wind-mills and water-mills are gone. And there is hardly any assurance that our new and latest forms are going to remain forever the best. Our well-known author, for instance, who is definitely interested in the science of electric power, offers some astonishingly interesting possibilities for a certain substitute of our present-day power-making history of the future.

**TUMITHAK OF THE CORRIDORS**, by Charles R. Tanner. It is not necessarily cowardice that makes a people retreat further and further from an enemy which has ruthlessly brought complete destruction and death to thousands. It is sensible caution that comes with experience. But always there is someone—in generations far removed, perhaps—who dares to risk all in an effort to release his people, from the bonds of such enslaving fears. (Crowded out of December issue.)

**THE PLANET OF THE DOUBLE SUN**, by Neil R. Jones. Here is another sequel relating the extraordinary adventures of Professor Jameson, who first started his voyage in a ship of his own construction, in which he was placed in suspended animation and was later rescued when his ship was found, and was at first mistaken for a satellite. Very much more exciting even than its two predecessors.

**THE INEVITABLE CONFLICT**, by Paul H. Lovering. (A Serial in two parts) Part II. In old times the nations of the world were usually ruled by men. Yet there were some ruling Queens. Queen Elizabeth, for instance, governed with an iron hand. And every now and then some woman would be known to do her part in settling the destinies of nations. Now there is a growing tendency to place women on an equal footing with men in the fields of politics. Who can tell how far-reaching these tendencies may become? In the concluding chapters our author tells us.

And other unusual science fiction

### In Our December Issue

#### The Inevitable Conflict

(A Serial in two parts) Part I

By Paul H. Lovering..... 776  
Illustrated by Morcy

#### Pirates of Space

By B. X. Barry..... 799  
Illustrated by Morcy

#### Sky Cops

By Harl Vincent and Chas. Roy Cox..... 818  
Illustrated by Morcy

#### Trial by Television

By Fred Kennedy..... 828  
Illustrated by Morcy

#### What Happened to Professor Stockley P

By E. M. Scott..... 836  
Illustrated by Morcy

#### The Blattids

By Morrison Colladay..... 844  
Illustrated by Morcy

#### The Interplanetary Blues (A Poem)

By Charles Cloukey..... 853

#### What Do You Know?

(Science Questionnaire)..... 853

In the Realm of Books ..... 855

Discussions ..... 855

### Our Cover

this month depicts a scene from the story entitled, "The Inevitable Conflict," by Paul H. Lovering, in which Mowbray's hastily rigged-up machines and his trained men, with the aid of the women from the "Legion," do justice to the faith of Mowbray in a terrific battle for the continued independence of the United States of America, from the Mongolian Empire. Part I published in this issue.

Cover illustration by Morcy

Published Monthly by Teck Publishing Corporation, Washington and South Avenues, Dunellen, N. J.

#### OFFICERS

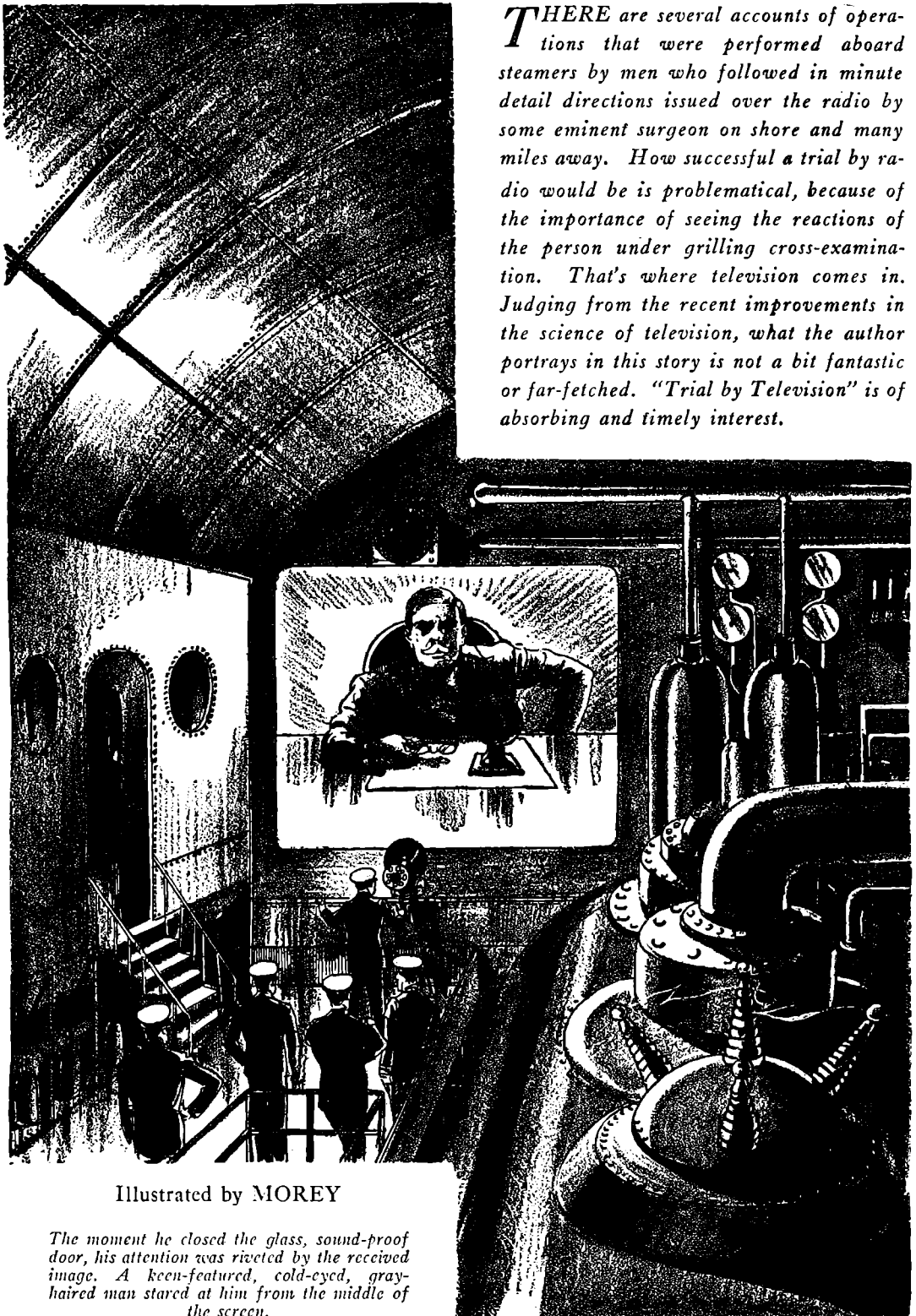
Lee Ellmaker, *President*  
Warren P. Joffery } *Vice Presidents*  
Houston D. Crippen }  
William Thompson, *Treasurer*  
Wesley F. Pope, *Secretary*

EDITORIAL AND EXECUTIVE OFFICES  
350 HUDSON STREET, NEW YORK CITY, N. Y.

Entered as second class matter at the Post Office at Dunellen, N. J., under the act of March 3, 1879. Copyright, 1931, by Teck Publishing Corporation. All rights reserved. Title Registered at the U. S. Patent Office. Printed in the United States of America. The contents of this magazine must not be reproduced without permission. We cannot be responsible for lost manuscripts, although every care is taken for their safety.

25c a Copy, \$2.50 a year,  
\$3.00 in Canada, \$3.50 in  
Foreign Countries. Sub-  
scribers are notified that  
change of address must reach  
us five weeks in advance of  
the next date of issue.

*THERE* are several accounts of operations that were performed aboard steamers by men who followed in minute detail directions issued over the radio by some eminent surgeon on shore and many miles away. How successful a trial by radio would be is problematical, because of the importance of seeing the reactions of the person under grilling cross-examination. That's where television comes in. Judging from the recent improvements in the science of television, what the author portrays in this story is not a bit fantastic or far-fetched. "Trial by Television" is of absorbing and timely interest.



Illustrated by MOREY

*The moment he closed the glass, sound-proof door, his attention was riveted by the received image. A keen-featured, cold-eyed, gray-haired man stared at him from the middle of the screen.*

# Trial by Television

By Fred Kennedy

**M**OLBY GRANT stood on the upper deck of the Brantler air liner, engaged on the 40° Parallel run. It was the year 1985. Overhead, the huge steel hangar formed an arch, spotted with the powerful Mackenzie ray lights which illuminated the giant dome with a brilliant white glare; no shadows here.

Grant was second engineer of the ultra-modern Brantler. He was watching abstractedly the scene full 200 feet below him. Ant-like figures of passengers filing slowly towards the escalator tube that conveyed them to the huge ship. Mechanics and greasers running hither and thither intent upon various errands. Egmine fabric testers with their voloscopes testing the metal case of the cigar-like air giant on which they stood. Further forward fifty men were overhauling the pressure equalizers.

Grant made a colorful picture on the bridge—his tall figure in the Meridian Company's blue uniform being thrown into relief by the expanse of silver hull that served as a brilliant background. The lines of gold braid on his sleeve indicated his rank, that of second engineer.

The lift came up and another figure emerged from the hermetical doors of the streamline lift-head situated on the port side of the bridge. An older man came out, much shorter than Grant, and as fat as Grant was thin. Grant towered head and shoulders above McCurdie, who seemed to be in high good humor. He had undoubtedly been fortifying himself with a few stimulants.

"Well, Grant lad, only another wee hour before we start on this hell busting trip again."

"Yes, sir, and I hope we make as good speed as we did in our last voyage."

The chief winked his eye. "Aye, we're after making as good a speed and better. The gas company's just slipped us a new and improved type of alacrine that vaporizes at 500 lbs. less pressure; if we don't chip another two hours off this trip, lad, I'll be after resigning me job to ye."

Grant smiled; he intended to get the chief's job anyhow, and in this coming trip, but he only said, "Then I hope your new patent lets you down, sir."

McCurdie smiled, and said, "Don't you worry, laddie, wid de brains of yourself. It won't be after long when you get the chief's ticket."

One of the fabric testers came up to the chief, saluted and made his verbal report.

Grant leaned over the rail, his chin on his hands, thinking bitterly how often had the chief spoken like that. "He'd get the chief's ticket by and by; not long now." The same talk ever since he had worked his way up from the bottom of the long line of engineers to the position

of second. For two years he had held this position, and yet there were no signs of obtaining the coveted rank of first. Time had dealt kindly with McCurdie. He was past middle life with a goodly sprinkling of silver in his once-raven hair. He was in excellent physical condition, though. To wait for McCurdie to retire meant another five or six years of delay. True, the company was reluctant about placing the engines of their huge ship in command of comparatively young men, but he had been promised McCurdie's position when the Scotchman retired.

Grant's chest swelled at the thought of being in command of the engineer's department at the age of 30. Fate seemed unwilling to hurry things. Well, he must take matters into his own hands. It could be done.

The hatred that existed between Lopez, the shifty Spanish chief electrician, and McCurdie, the dour chief engineer, was common property of the ship's crew. Time and time again had McCurdie tried to secure Lopez's dismissal on different pretexts. Each time he had failed. The company considered Lopez too valuable to be discarded. The hate that Lopez had for McCurdie increased day by day, until Grant hoped that Lopez would, in one of his fits of rage, murder the chief. The Spaniard seemed afraid to make a move. Well, Grant would make one for him. Were McCurdie to be killed, suspicion would naturally attach itself to Lopez.

A hand slapped Grant on the shoulder and he heard McCurdie's booming voice, "Well, lad, after day-dreaming again."

Grant straightened himself and smiled, "No, sir, only thinking of the might-have-beens."

"Bad notion that, me laddie. Look into the future, and not into yer past."

"But," said Grant, "it's our past that gives us experience."

McCurdie raised his eyebrows quizzically. "Don't you believe it, lad; experience is a thing we're after getting when we have no more use for it."

Grant smiled. "Well, sir, I wish that was the company's idea."

"Aw quit worrying, lad, everything comes to him who waits."

"Yes," replied Grant, "if they wait long enough."

The strident note of the huge buzzer cut short any further conversation, summoning the two in command of the engine room to their duties below. They opened the small hermetical streamline tower, and stepped into the lift. At the sixth tier McCurdie got out to visit the officers' mess for further fortification.

Grant descended to the engine room to attend to the testing of the compressors and ionizers, and to supervise

all the various machines which would shortly prove their worth on their daily trip around the globe.

It was 6 p.m. now. At 6.30 p.m. the ship would leave New York hangar, returning the following day. Eastern U. S. standard time was maintained throughout the voyage.

GRANT thought that when the ship returned from her world trip, and entered the hangar again, he would be in the chief engineer's position.

"All credit, and no work," Grant smiled. The phrase seemed to sum up the position of chief very well.

The lift slowed down, and stopped on the engine room tier, the lowest story of the ship, a full 150 feet below the bridge deck. Grant got out.

Fifty men were here, all attending to the machinery, scattered in various banks over the vast engine room, the latter brilliantly lighted as was the hangar outside by the Mackenzie rays, vivid behind their triangular prisms.

Grant examined the conduits leading to the three million horsepower Weston-Smith motors ranged amidships. Then he looked over the motors themselves, paying special attention to the lubricators.

Upon his command, the starters were thrown over and the huge machines commenced to revolve slowly at first, then gaining speed, till they attained their normal 6,000 revolutions. The engine room was full of their hum, as the notes came in and out of phase. Grant thought if it were not for the sound absorbers, which diminished to a great degree the noise of the motors, it would be impossible to remain in the machine room. He glanced at the various meters. The feed was the normal 100 kiloamperes, the voltage  $22\frac{1}{2}$  kilovolts. Nothing wrong there. The huge æron compressors were next thrown in gear; and the æron gas was compressed into the dummy tanks to stimulate the normal working conditions.

Grant watched the needle of the pressure gauge creep up to 6,000 lbs. per square inch, at which pressure the æron gas began to escape through the safety valve on the exterior of the ship, blowing the engine siren.

He threw the compressors out of gear; all was as it should be—5,000 lbs. per square inch was the normal working pressure of the compressors. The mixing tanks proved to be tight. He hardly expected there to be a leak in the 20-inch double wall of the Stephens pressure equalizers. These enclosed the chamber out of which the æron gas issued at a pressure of 5,000 lbs. per square inch to unite with the alacrine gas, causing instantaneously a tremendous explosion, the recoil of which drove the ship at her normal speed of 1,000 miles per hour. The huge 14-foot exhaust pipe connecting the expansion chamber to the outside of the ship also proved satisfactory under the requisite Board of Trade pressure test.

Grant paused in his inspection to examine the deadly cylinders of alacrine gas. He opened the first hermetical door and stood in the small filter chamber. Taking a gas mask from a shelf, he commenced to put it on. The Board of Trade took no risks with alacrine gas. One part in a million of air was fatal to human life. Right ahead, immediately in front of the door he had just passed through, stood the entrance to the storage room. The space between the two doors had a constant current of air flowing through it. The air in that chamber being sucked out passed through filters to rid it of any trace of alacrine, and then was pumped back again.

Grant entered the storage room, and examined the pressure gauge on the gas cylinders. It occurred to him that the gas offered a very convenient way of killing McCurdie.

Grant stood in deep thought for a few minutes. Eventually a smile crossed his face. He had apparently thought of a solution.

Grant closed the hermetical door, and stood in the ante-chamber, waiting for the outer door to open. It was impossible to reach the engine room till three minutes had elapsed from the time the storage chamber entrance door was opened, this interval being for the purpose of allowing the air to be freed of any traces of the deadly alacrine. The electric time-lock opened the door, and Grant, taking off his mask, went into the engine room.

Grant was met by the third engineer, Slayton. To him Grant spoke a few words regarding the power receptors. These were situated in the after part of the ship, and received the two hetrodyne rays from the central New York power station. These rays served as conductors for the current supply, which was necessary for driving the ship's engines. Thus the ship was always in touch with the power house. Years of research had proved the Cummings hetrodyne ray dependable even up to the distance of the earth's circumference. This ray, together with the Stephens' expansion jacket, had revolutionized flying, enabling aircraft to attain altitudes of 1,000 miles. At this altitude there was little or no atmosphere, enabling ships to travel at tremendous speed, with a complete freedom from storms and air pockets, and with a minimum expenditure of power.

Grant examined the huge zedrometal shaft that drove the helicopter propeller, and lifted the machine vertically to an altitude of 1,000 feet, when the recoil principle was used for driving the craft.

All seemed in order. Grant was about to enter the lift to return to his place on the after bridge when he was accosted by Lopez, chief electrician.

"Señor, I wish to make it known to you that the trip being finished, I shall resign my position on this vessel."

Grant was surprised. "What's this, Lopez, you resigning? What's in the wind now, found a better job?"

"No, Señor. Only a position in the Lunarfreight service ship at the same rates."

"Same rates, eh? Then why leave your comfortable berth here for a smaller ship?"

"Ah, Señor," the Spaniard's eyes glittered, "with a perro like McCurdie life is a hell."

Grant decided to close the conversation. Anyhow, it was none of his business.

"Well, Lopez, I guess you know best. I shall be sorry to lose you."

"Señor, it is a pity there are few Americans like you."

Grant entered the bridge lift and in a few seconds found himself on the upper deck. Well, that clinched the matter. It would be on this trip. No two ways about that. McCurdie would have to die.

Grant glanced at the drome clock. The huge hands read 6.20 p.m. In ten minutes the ship would be ready to start. He noticed that the escalator tube had already been lifted clear of the vessel. The workers were leaving the stonite platform on which the ship rested.

With a rumbling sound the two halves of the great hangar roof slid open, leaving the regulation space through which, in a minute, the craft was to rise.

Grant gazed at the starlit sky overhead. The night was calm. That meant no lost time in gaining the necessary elevation.

The clock read 6.25 p.m. Only five minutes to go. Deep down in the engine room he heard the muffled sound of a clanging bell. Simultaneously the giant helicopter propeller above his head started to whirl, slowly at first, and gathering speed, until the ship quivered from stem to stern.

On the bows, 600 feet away, Grant could distinguish over the expanse of glistening metal the navigating officer in his triple expanded glass observation cabin.

Grant entered the lift tower, turning on the switch that hermetically locked the entrance door. He reached the engine room just as the ship left the hangar floor, rising higher and higher, gathering speed as it ascended in a vertical line as straight as an axiometer. The ship passed through the oblong opening of the hangar rapidly, attaining her maximum vertical speed. At an altitude of 1,000 feet, the engine room telegraph rang. The main bank of motors commenced to revolve, driving the æron compressors. The engine room floor trembled with the force of the muffled explosions as the ship started to climb upwards into the heavens at a tangent.

At a second command from the bridge the helicopter propeller was withdrawn by compressed air mechanism into the streamline hull.

Grant stood at the control board, keeping his gaze on the needles flickering over the various dials. The vessel's speed was already 500 miles per hour, the engines turning over at 2,000 revolutions. Well, McCurdie was right, for once. This new gas certainly was an improvement. Grant gazed at the television screen, showing the earth already far beneath. It looked to him like a grey blur. In a minute clouds would obscure it. He watched the slight movements of the elevator and rudder-shafts as the electro-originator kept the ship on her prescribed course.

McCurdie emerged from the port door of the engine room, a cheerful expression on his flushed and benign countenance. It was not difficult to ascertain the cause of his high good humor. Probably connected with the contents of a bottle, thought Grant.

McCurdie approached him.

"Well, laddie, dinna I tell ye that the gas would speed her internals up?"

"You're right, sir. I never saw such an improvement in my life. It's put another 200 miles per hour over her normal."

The Scotchman's gaze roved fondly over the various whirling mechanisms. A new note was added to the din—the steady thump of the Stephens' pressure equalizer punps. Grant thought he might as well tell McCurdie of the resignation of Lopez.

"By the way, sir, Lopez has just informed me he's resigning after this trip.

The Scotchman was exuberant.

"Dinna I tell ye, lad? It's the weel of God. The skaramouching greaser. The ship will be weel rid of him!"

"But, sir, he's a valuable help with those raylites."

"Laddie, dinna yer try to convince me that them skulking dagos will ever be more than a curse to humanity."

With his nose in the air, McCurdie stalked out in high dudgeon from the engine room.

SLAYTON, the third, walked over to Grant, "Well, old man, what's biting the chief now?"

Grant told him of Lopez's resignation, and how McCurdie had taken it.

Slayton replied, "Well, couldn't expect anything else from the chief. You know how they love each other."

Grant smiled as the third returned to the compressors.

Grant thought deeply as he watched the needles fluctuating before his gaze. He must act in another few hours. He glanced at the engine room clock. 8 p.m. That meant they were already approximately 1,500 miles on their eastward flight. In another three hours the air liner would slow down over Spain, to unload the passengers into the small helicopter tenders. By midnight they would be well on their way for the second and shortest lap of their run. This would bring them over Constantinople a little after 12.30 a.m. the next morning.

It was customary for McCurdie to take an unofficial watch in the engine room for about an hour between 1.30 a.m. and 2.30 a.m. Well, thought Grant, that would be the ideal time for his plan. Grant and the third usually went off duty during McCurdie's watch. Or rather, McCurdie told them to leave duty if they so desired. The offer, needless to say, was never refused by the two engineers.

Grant hoped that tonight would be no exception to McCurdie's kindness.

All was running smoothly. When Grant next glanced at the clock, it was 10.50 p.m. The usual signal came through from the navigating bridge shortly after. The port and starboard Weston-Smith motors were stopped till only the centre motor was running at half speed. A slight tilt of the engine room tier became manifest, as the ship slowly dived into the earth's atmospheric belt.

At 10,000 feet the helicopters were started. There was now sufficient atmosphere for the propellers to hold the ship stationary.

The air liner stood hovering in space, waiting for the helicopter tender to arrive from Spain. Slayton, the third, wandered over to Grant.

"Say, old man, hope the dago plane won't be late tonight; cheeky sort of bounders these dagos. Remember what a stink Draglier kicked up that time we were ten minutes late? Beats me why the Meridian Company stood for it. I should have told the blighter to go boil himself in some of his own olive oil."

Grant was gazing into the televisor screen, fitted under the ship. He called Slayton's attention to the green and red ray lights of a fast approaching vessel, perhaps 5,000 feet below the liner—it was the tender.

The little plane drew up on the port side of the ship, her helicopter idling as the Feranz electro magnets held the small craft against the liner.

"Not many passengers today," remarked Grant, as the liner transferred the mail, and perhaps a hundred travelers to the helicopter.

"No," replied Slayton, "probably a thousand or so for Constantinople."

The usual signal came through from the bridge, and once again the helicopters were thrown in gear. The tender vanished far below the ship, as the liner got under way.

The second lap of the journey had begun.

Grant decided to ring up McCurdie. He wanted to find out for certain if McCurdie was going to relieve him at the usual hour.

McCurdie's answer came in the affirmative. Tonight would be no exception to McCurdie's good-natured relief.

Promptly at 12.30 a.m. the giant ship's course was arrested, and she lay at an altitude of 10,000 feet, waiting for the Constantinople tender.

Fully a thousand people disembarked at this point. Only about a hundred air voyagers boarded the liner. The express mail was safely shipped and a quarter of an hour later the Weston-Smith motors were already turning over at their normal speed. The ship started on the third lap of her journey. By 6.30 a.m. the next morning, they should be over Peking. Another five or six thousand miles run, thought Grant.

At 1 p.m. Grant decided it was about time he started to prepare the stage for the drama in which McCurdie's death was to be the chief feature.

Grant called Slayton over to the main panel, and left him in charge. The fourth could attend to Slayton's compressors for a few minutes. Grant explained to Slayton that he thought the pressure on the alacrine gas was a trifle low. He was going into the gas storage chamber to investigate. Grant's heart was beating like one of his engines when he eventually stood inside the storage chamber, surrounded by the long black gas cylinders. He looked a strange sight, his head and face totally enclosed by the Jennings filter mask.

Grant bent over the cylinder of gas that was driving the ship, and opened the safety valve ever so slightly, just enough to reduce the pressure by a pound or so in half an hour. In other words, just enough of a leak to be noticeable.

Grant meditated. Already, in those few seconds, there was sufficient gas in the air to be fatal when breathed. Grant next turned his attention to the raylights. He opened the electronic emission gap inside the prism just enough to extinguish the lamp. It would look as though Lopez, the chief electrician, had been careless in his attention to the lights. Just as well, thought Grant, that he had kept friendly with Lopez and learned how to manage these raylights. Grant closed the storage room door, and put the filter chamber light out of commission in the same manner. Then he waited in the darkness for the second door to open. After the usual three-minute pause, the door swung back. Grant took off his mask, and went into the brilliantly lighted engine room. He blinked as the light from the ray-lamps dazzled him after the darkness of the filter chamber.

Slayton walked over to greet him.

"Well, old chap, find any electrads in there?"

Grant smiled. "No, all correct; guess it must have been my imagination. No signs of any leak. Usual pressure in all cylinders."

"Say, old man, you look pale. Guess you'd better have an eye opener with me when McCurdie comes on."

Grant accepted, remarking that the "collection of atoms," who attended to the air suppliers, was probably getting stingy with the oxygen.

At 1.35 p.m. McCurdie came into the engine room. He was cold sober once again. His eye roved over the whirling mechanism.

"All correct, Grant?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then you and Slayton had better clear. I'll take over for the next hour."

"Thank you, sir."

Grant took one more look at the portly Scotchman, and thought this would be the last time he would see him alive, if all went well with his plans. Then, he would be in sole command of this vast engine room.

GRANT left Slayton at the mess door. He promised to join him in a few minutes, saying, "he must scrub up a bit first. Always feel so grubby after being in that motor-house." apologized Grant.

Grant strode swiftly along the white corridor to his room. McCurdie's was immediately opposite. He halted a minute, and glanced up and down the narrow alleyway. No one in sight. All quiet, save for the vibration of the ship's engines.

Swiftly he entered McCurdie's room, and opened the small closet in which he always knew the Scotchman kept his gas mask. Lucky, thought Grant, that McCurdie was so particular in wearing his own private mask.

Grant located the mask; hurriedly he emptied the precious lucrine from the gas mask filter chamber. The lucrine had the property of absorbing the deadly alacrine gas. He emptied the whitish lucrine powder into the small glass vial he had brought from the engine room. He would dispose of the lucrine in his own room.

Grant replaced the mask in its original position. Against the deadly alacrine McCurdie's mask would be absolutely useless. Anyhow, it would be a quick death. Grant closed the closet. His gaze searched the corridor. So far so good. His actions had been unobserved. He wondered how long it would be before McCurdie noticed the alacrine gas leakage in the engine room.

Grant shut McCurdie's door, and went across the passage into his own room. Once inside, he poured a little Zilatric acid into the vial containing the lucrine. The contents frothed and grew warm. A minute later, only a whitish foam remained in the tube. This Grant threw into his wash sink. The whitish foam disappeared in the water. Grant washed out the vial. He next washed his hands. The lucrine was deadly poison.

Having effected an improvement in his appearance, Grant went to the mess. Saddler, the second navigating officer, and wit of the party, greeted him.

"Well, Mr. Protons, where did you spring from? Thought you'd have enough poison to drink in your own gas shop without troubling us."

A general laugh greeted his sally. Grant made a suitable rejoinder, and sat down. He did not feel like joking. At any minute he expected to receive a hurried call from the engine room telling him of McCurdie's death. He paid but little heed to the banal conversation going on around him; even Slayton, sensing that he was in a silent mood, left Grant alone at the little stonite-topped table, a drink in front of him, and a cigarette between his lips.

Grant stared at the clock. God, how slowly the minutes seemed to pass! Only 1.50 p.m. No doubt McCurdie was having trouble in getting Lopez to fix the raylites that Grant had thrown out of adjustment.

Grant tried to calm himself. He was getting just the way he did not want to be—nervous. He must stop that. He drained his glass, and called for another. He attempted to join in the conversation. His results did not meet with very great success. The speaker phone-buzzer on the wall hummed. Grant's heart missed a beat. Was it to be now? No, it was only a call for one of the officers.

Grant was wondering if his carefully laid plans had been upset. He was getting feverish in his excitement. He wondered if anybody else noticed his nervous condition.

Hurried steps sounded outside. The door was thrown open, and Barraud, the fourth engineer, framed the opening, his collar open, and face flushed. He called for Grant. The other officers clustered around the two men. In a few words Barraud explained what had happened. McCurdie had noticed the alacrine gas pressure dropping, had sent for his mask, and gone to the storage chamber. Upon opening the first door he had found the raylite out. Lopez had been summoned, and had effected the necessary repair. Lopez had gone with McCurdie into the actual storage chamber, as there was a possibility that the other ray lamp, being on the same circuit, had also developed a fault. Five minutes later Lopez had dashed into the engine room, his swarthy face pale, gesticulating, saying that McCurdie had collapsed. He had dragged him into the filtered air chamber, and had been compelled to wait the necessary three minutes before the time lock allowed him to summon help.

They had examined McCurdie, and found him dead. Barraud went on to state that he had examined McCurdie's masks, and found the lucrine filtering chamber empty!

Not waiting to hear any more details, Grant hurried to the engine room, closely followed by Slayton and Barraud.

McCurdie lay on the engine room tier beside the starboard motor, his glassy eyes staring at the raylamp overhead. His face had already assumed the greenish hue common to all alacrine gas victims.

Grant saw that the chief was already far beyond human assistance. He ordered McCurdie's body to be carried to his room. Grant notified the captain of the ship, explaining in a few, concise sentences what had happened. Lopez stood in a corner jabbering in Spanish, and gesticulating wildly to an audience of Spanish greasers. In a time like this, rank was forgotten.

Grant temporarily assumed command. Now that the thing was actually accomplished, he felt better. He placed Slayton, who became second in command, on the main panel, and went to McCurdie's cabin. There he found a small group of men gathered—the captain of the air liner, the doctor, and second officer.

The doctor stood back and shrugged his shoulders. "No hope, sir. Instantaneous death, due to alacrine poisoning."

The captain was chewing his mustache. "Most regrettable incident, Grant. Most regrettable. This will necessitate a long inquiry. Have you any idea how it happened?"

Grant explained, laying special emphasis upon the fact that Lopez was alone with McCurdie behind the time locked door when the chief engineer met his death.

He continued, "Sir, though none of my business, I feel it my duty to tell you that Lopez could not on any account tolerate McCurdie. In fact, only today I heard Lopez abusing him, and stating that he would leave the vessel at the end of this trip. This, taken together with the fact that McCurdie's mask was deliberately tampered with, I think, makes a clear case."

The captain seemed to swallow the tale whole. He replied, "Under those suspicious circumstances, Grant, I think it advisable to detain Lopez. Tell Brangman to

assume temporary duties of chief electrician. You, Grant, will take the position of chief engineer, till the end of this trip.

GRANT'S heart leapt. Everything had surpassed his most sanguine expectations. He saluted, and left the cabin, returning to the engine room.

There was little talk there. The chief's death was so sudden, and McCurdie had been a popular figure, admired by both engineers and navigators alike. Lopez was locked up in the detention room, pending further investigation.

The sudden death of the chief did not affect the management of the engines. Such occurrences had to be provided for.

Grant wondered if the captain would hold a court of inquiry, *en route*. Hardly likely; they would probably wait for the ship to land at the New York hangar.

An hour passed. The port engine room door opened, and three men entered, escorting Lopez; the *impromptu* court of inquiry, thought Grant.

He saw them file into the glass television office at the far end of the engine room.

They were not long in establishing communication with New York. Apparently the captain thought it an urgent case, requiring instant investigation, and was unwilling to delay till they reached the home port.

Grant could see the television screen already blurring, and a minute later the image of an elderly man sitting at a desk became visible. Grant from his post on the main panel could not clearly distinguish the figure on the screen behind the glass television office doors, but he thought it looked like the chief of the New York Intelligence Police Department.

Lopez, he could see, was standing in front of the television transmitter box, and was being questioned by the figure on the screen.

The questioning took quite a time. The Spaniard appeared to be talking volubly, and was gesticulating in the usual Spanish fashion.

Grant thought it was lucky Lopez had a television transmitter in front of him. His gestures and facial expressions were not being wasted. The far-away detective was having them all reproduced on a similar screen.

Shortly Grant saw why the enquiry committee had selected the engine room television office, rather than the forward one.

Barraud, the fourth engineer, who had seen Lopez come out of the alacrine gas chamber, was next called in to give his story.

So they intended to put any of the engineers who might have been connected with McCurdie's death through a questioning? That was why they had chosen the engine room television office—in order to have all the necessary witnesses right on the spot as and when required.

Grant decided it would be quite an easy matter to answer the detectives' questions with a scapegoat like Lopez handy.

All the same, Grant had not expected the captain to summon the New York police. He thought that if McCurdie and the captain had not been old acquaintances, this extra complication would not have arisen. Anyhow, it did not make any difference.

Barraud came out of the office for a minute to get the

gas mask McCurdie had worn. Grant was oblivious of the instruments below his hands. He was gazing intently at the scene in the distant office. He saw that Barraud was holding the mask in front of the television transmitter box. On the received image, he saw the detective studying the mask. Barraud turned the mask that the ill-fated McCurdie had worn, this way and that, as the detective directed through the voice reproducers overhead.

Slayton was next called into the television office. He was not detained long. Apparently he only answered two or three questions, and came out again.

As Grant expected, he was the next one to be summoned. Placing the main panel in charge of Slayton, Grant entered the television booth. Now for a grilling, he thought to himself. He was not mistaken. The moment he closed the glass, soundproof door, his attention was riveted by the received image. A keen-featured, cold-eyed, gray-haired man stared at him from the middle of the screen.

The image spoke. "Mr. Grant, I believe, second engineer, at present taking late McCurdie's place?"

"Correct, sir."

"Now tell me all you know about this unfortunate occurrence."

Grant did as he was bid. The image listened, never taking his eyes off Grant. He felt tempted to put his fist through the delicate sinitine screen that carried the transmitted image of the detective in distant New York. The man's face, his expression, everything about him, annoyed Grant.

The detective waited patiently till the end of Grant's recital. Then commenced to question him.

"I am informed you were the last to come out of the alacrine gas chamber. Is that correct?"

"Yes, sir."

"Was the ray-light emitting when you left the chamber?"

"Yes, sir. Both ray-lights were in action."

The instant Grant said this he felt he had made a mistake. Yet he wondered what else could he have said? The face on the screen remained inscrutable.

The detective's next question came immediately.

"What did you do from the time you left Slayton, till the time you entered the mess? Slayton informed me you did not enter the mess with him."

Grant explained how he had washed his hands, and generally tidied himself. The answer did not seem to satisfy the detective.

"Did you notice anyone in the corridor, or in McCurdie's room when you were in the vicinity?"

Grant's answer was emphatic. "No, sir."

Why that question, anyhow?

THE detective continued: "I have had McCurdie's mask under odifloron test. You will observe the machine at your elbow. Besides the characteristic sense odor of McCurdie, the needle registers two distinct odor-presences. I have had the door knobs of McCurdie's room, and the closet, where he kept his mask subjected to similar tests. The odor-presences tally. Judging from the intensity of the deflection, the odor-presences are all recent. The most intense deflections given by the odifloron machine are naturally those of the last presences; one of them is the odor-presence of McCurdie; the other I have identified as the odor-presence of the mechanic

who was sent by McCurdie to fetch his mask. The third presence I have yet to identify. Please make an odor-presence of yourself on the piece of boronoid next to you. Then place it in the reception closet of the machine. When you have done this, stand back so I may observe the machine's scales."

Seeing Grant's expression, the detective added, "Take no exception, Mr. Grant. I am only performing my duty. I have examined everyone in any way connected with McCurdie's death in the same manner."

Grant made the impression with his hand, and put the jelly-like substance into the reception drawer of the odifloron machine. He pressed the little ivory button as the detective requested. The needle of the machine crept over the graduated scale and came to rest. Grant saw the detective examine the reading on his screen with an image intensifier. He checked the figure given by the needle against a set of figures he held in his hand. Grant tried to see what the figures were, but could not. The detective's instinctive and instantly repressed smile of satisfaction was reproduced on the screen.

"That will do, Mr. Grant. You may release the button. And go now. You will hear from me later."

Grant left the television booth, his knees like water under him. He was as white as a piece of lackrade, and trembling, he took up his position at the main control panel. He heard Slayton's voice as from a dream. "Heavens, old man, judging from the minutes you were gone, and your expression, they seem to have given you a pretty bad time."

Grant smiled faintly in answer.

A few minutes later Grant saw the little four-wheeled truck, resting on absorbine tyres, containing the transmitter box and voice reproducer, being wheeled towards the gas storage chamber.

Slayton was called across, and he saw him enter the first door of the alacrine storager. Lopez also accompanied him.

Grant highly resented Slayton being called in instead of himself. He wished he knew what was happening behind the twin doors. The detective was apparently examining the interior of the gas chamber through the portable televisor.

The men were gone an eternity, or so it seemed to Grant. He kept his eye on the pressure-cylinder gauge. The pressure was steady now. They must have found the safety valve leaking, and tightened it up.

More odor-presences and evidence against him, thought Grant. A wave of apprehension swept over him. If he had known that there was going to be such a careful examination, he would have acted differently.

Grant was gradually losing all his nerve. He was almost ready to admit his guilt if the stern-eyed figure on the television screen questioned him again. Various wild ideas entered Grant's head of wrecking the ship, poisoning himself, or landing the ship, and trying to escape. He rejected them as useless. All he could do was to wait till he heard the verdict either way. Perhaps it was only his imagination; for no one had declared him guilty as yet.

Grant was so absorbed in his thoughts that the clanging of the engine room bell almost passed his attention. He glanced at the clock. 6.10 a.m. Time had passed quickly. Like an automaton he pressed the necessary buttons, and the great ship hovered over Peking, waiting for the usual tender.



Grant was far too busy to pay any attention to the transference of passengers. His whole attention was riveted to the door of the gas chamber.

THE air liner had been on the last lap of her voyage for about a quarter of an hour, when Slayton came out of the gas chamber, wheeling the television truck, followed by Lopez. Grant saw the two men walk to the television booth, and once again the screen on the wall blurred and the sharp-faced detective took his place on the televisor.

Slayton left the booth, and went out of the engine room door. Grant wondered where he was going. He did not seem to be consulted in the least about any of these men's actions. He more than resented it. Yet what could he do?

Slayton returned soon after, talking to the captain of the ship.

The captain entered the television booth, and Slayton came over to Grant. "Say, old chap, I'll take this job over. The minus charge yonder" (the detective in New York), "wants to see you and the old man together; suppose you're going to get your sole command job at last."

Good old Slayton, thought Grant; as yet he had no suspicion of anything being amiss.

The captain and the distant detective were chatting together. Grant opened the door of the booth, and closed it carefully behind him.

The detective beckoned the two men to sit down. "It may be a question of a quarter of an hour or so."

He resumed in concise sentences, "You asked me to find the cause of McCurdie's death, whether accidental or intentional. I have done so. The chief engineer was murdered."

"As I expected," put in the captain. "That vile rat Lopez, I suppose."

"That's where you're mistaken," returned the detective. "The person who murdered McCurdie is at this moment in the booth!"

The captain started visibly.

"You imply Grant murdered McCurdie?"

The detective inclined his head. "I expected it to be a bit of a shock for you, sir, to find Grant, your clever second engineer, a murderer. I will not weary you with details, but suffice it to say that if Grant had made allowances for odor-presences, an innocent man would have been held responsible for McCurdie's death."

Grant was leaning back in his chair. He seemed crippled by the blow—broken and useless. He was sobbing. He admitted his guilt. What did it matter? He was beyond caring.

The captain passed a handkerchief over his feverish brow, and spoke to the detective. "I never should have thought it so—never. I have always had the utmost confidence in Grant."

The blow had been great. Grant's benumbed brain was just beginning to function again. The captain and the detective were still conversing together. He paid no heed to what they were saying. Grant was thinking. Visions of the gloomy detention room, the solitary ray light, the loneliness, the disgrace, the dishonor.

God, it could not be! It must not be! Grant spoke out, interrupting the voice of the detective. He turned to the captain: "Yes, sir, I did it, though God only knows what made me do it. I was a fool, but I am will-

ing to take the consequences. There is one point I should like to ask, sir, one final request before I leave this ship."

His voice was pleading.

"Sir, as you know, if I am confined, the engineering staff will be left very short-handed. Slayton, who I presume will take my place, has had very little experience in landing this craft. I should like to suggest that as a final favor, you let me bring this ship into New York."

The captain turned to the detective, on the screen, and looked at him askance.

The detective replied, "Your request seems fairly reasonable, Grant. As yet your guilt is unknown to any save ourselves. Till your trial in the New York Supreme Court, it will remain secret."

Grant's heart leapt. Hope again took a place in his being. The detective looked at the captain. "Sir, do you see any harm in his request?"

The captain shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, then, Grant, I think you may take it that your request is granted."

Grant turned to leave the television booth, his head erect once again. The detective's voice called him back. "Just one minute, Grant. Under the circumstances, we cannot afford to take any further risks. Just above your head on the main panel, obeying my orders, Lopez will connect up a microscopic television screen, and a ray gun remotely controlled from this New York office. I shall pledge Lopez under oath to secrecy. He will not even know the object of the machines. You will be at the main panel till the end of the voyage, and, Grant, I shall be watching you the whole time. Should you make any strange move or try to escape, I shall have no compunction in killing you. I will summon Lopez, and give him the necessary directions. Please ring up the electricians' quarters."

Grant did as he was bid. He sank back in his chair, and heard Lopez and the detective conversing. He did not pay attention to what they were saying. He did not care. Hot shame seared Grant's soul. They did not trust him. They would not take his word. Great God, how that one act had ruined his whole life! His ideals of being in command, overturned and shattered.

Grant's reverie was broken by the speakerphone buzzer. He pressed the button. It was Lopez's voice, saying the ray and image finder had been fitted on the main panel as the detective had ordered. The detective told Grant to take up his post at the panel.

Grant left the cabin. He seemed an old man. He was sunk deep in despair. He relieved Slayton without a word, and took up his post.

As the detective had ordered, clamped to the wall, unnoticeable save at close quarters, the little violet-glass reflector of the ray gun was pointed at him. Level with his shoulders, a little disc of crystal glass about two inches in diameter was the image pickup of the television transmitter.

Grant was cornered, and he knew it. Worse than useless to attempt escape.

Grant stood at the panel, like a statue, oblivious of everything around him. Once or twice he pulled himself together to check the meters below him. Oh, but it was hard!

Grant seemed to have lost all count of time. When the engine room bell clanged, he realized with a start

(Continued on page 854).

# Trial by Television

By Fred Kennedy

*(Continued from page 835)*

that they had already covered the last 10,000 miles of their trip. The ship, in a few minutes, would be diving, preparatory to entering the New York hangar.

Grant's body straightened. He would show the detective at the end of the television of what stuff he was made.

The recoil engines were shut off, as they came into the earth's atmosphere. The helicopter propeller was gradually lowering the ship into the huge oblong of white raylite, representing the hangar. The task of keeping the helicopter machine at the right speed, and allowing for the strong head wind that tended to blow the ship out of the line, was not easy. Grant brought all his brain faculties into play. He was too engrossed to see the admiring glances cast at him by the engineers.

Eventually the huge ship rested on the stonite reception floor of the hangar.

Grant stood at the main panel. During his attention to the ship's landing, all thoughts of himself, or his situation, had been banished. Now the strain was over, and once again the past day's happenings came before him. He mechanically shut off the helicopter motor that was running in free. The low drone died down to silence. Grant stood thinking. He envisaged himself being led down the escalator tube, by a plain clothes officer; his last gaze at the ship, over whose engines he had made a supreme futile attempt to gain command. He could almost feel the officer's ray gun against his side, a reminder that he was a felon, and the long trial. Grant moved close to the main panel. He pressed his forehead against the circular violet glass of the ray gun, slowly, deliberately. He put up his hand, and pressed a switch.

There was a little stab of blue white light, and Grant toppled over backwards in a crumpled heap.

THE END.