

# ..THIS STORE..

Will be closed all day on Sunday and every week day at 6 P. M. until further notice. This is in line with the desire of the government in conserving fuel.....

**Lester Wade's**  
Exclusive Store for Men. Condon, Oregon

## THE LAST BATTLESHIP

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man.  
"All right. Feed him aft."  
Felton was pushed rather than led to the man amidships.  
"How do you do?" he said kindly. "So you thought you'd visit us. We catch all our fish this way."  
"My God, captain," answered Felton, "I'm not visiting! I jumped out of an airship and was sucked into your tube. I'm glad I'm alive."  
And then—was the liquor affecting his brain?—the captain's face, line for line, feature for feature, was the face of the captain of the airship, whom last he had seen sprawling above him in midair. Had he beaten him down and been picked up first? It seemed impossible.  
"How—what—how?" he stammered, rubbing his eyes. "How did you get here, captain? You jumped after me."  
"I jumped after you? You are wandering. I saw you all jump through the periscope, but I was here."  
"Then it's the closest resemblance I ever saw. You're the living image of the airship's commander, or else it's the liquor. My head feels queer."  
"No doubt, but it's not the liquor. You've had a terrible experience. It's a wonder the jump didn't kill you as well as affect your mind."  
Felton was not satisfied with the explanation. It was a strange and striking resemblance, nothing more, and he was about to say as much when a man came forward from the engine with an oil can. He was the duplicate in face and form of the man he had pommelled, but without the contusions. Felton blinked in amazement, then looked at the others, whom in the agitation of his entrance he had not closely observed. Man for man, nine in all, they duplicated the crew of the airship.  
"My God," he stammered, "am I mad or drunk? You've drugged me," he yelled insanely. "Every man here is a double of another."  
"Steady—steady, now," said the captain. "You're not drugged. You're a little off your balance, and the drink was too heavy. Every drunken man sees double. Isn't that so?"  
This seemed logical, and Felton stammered assent. It was a terrible jump—300 feet. He had escaped death by a miracle. Men had gone insane under less pressure, and he had taken two drinks of a powerful stimulant. He would be all right in time—after a little sleep. The captain was peering into the periscope, the nonmagnifying telescope which gives a view of the seascape.  
"Come up here," he said, "and take a look."  
Felton climbed to the small platform on which the captain stood. Just before him was the eyepiece of the periscope, and at a sign from the captain he peeped into it. Pictured on the lens was the dismantled wreck of the Argyl, down by the head, a helpless, sinking wreck.  
"She's floating on five compartments," said the captain. "I just filled the sixth, and I think we'll fill two at once this time. By the way, what did you fellows butt in for? It was my fight. I hit her last night and blew up the forward magazine. Then I lost her in the dark."  
"But, say," answered Felton, "which side are you on in this mix? You blew up the turret, you say, and the airship destroyed her. But the crew of that airship displayed mortal fear of you and jumped overboard at sight of you."  
"Exactly. They would have gone off at a tangent if they hadn't. It's better to die on your planet than to become a comet for all eternity."  
"Like the airship. I see. But how did you do it, if I may ask?"  
"I reversed his polarity; that's all. See that? Look and listen."  
The captain turned a lever, and a dynamo near by began to revolve, while an arc lamp suspended from above glowed, glistened and sparkled as the current passed through the carbons. Soon it became a curious, musical buzzing, and the captain shut it off.  
"Merely an alternating current through an arc," he explained. "But the electric impulses sent out by that singing arc are of a wave length and frequency produced by no other means. They are just right to turn his two magnetic poles into one, and away he goes."  
"I don't understand. Yes, I understand that you might reverse his polarity or combine it, as you say, by some wireless method. But which side are you on?"  
"The side of the Lord."

"Look hard, captain," said Felton angrily, "that is the answer your double gave me when I asked him the same question last night. It means nothing. I am either a prisoner of war or a guest entitled to consideration. Why do you treat me like a fool?"  
"Because you are a fool. You believe in the invulnerability of the battleship. Well, there is one of the best. Look at her."  
"I see. Destroyed, but not by you; by an enemy of yours, one who feared you."  
"Yes, as mediocrity fears intelligence, as the child fears the dark, the savage the gun of the civilized soldier, humanity as a whole the unseen, the unexpected, the invisible. The airship is potential, but not final; she can be seen."  
"And shot," said Felton doggedly.  
"Did that battleship hit your airship? You know that she could not. The airship's limitations are contained in her visibility. She cannot be hit by shot or shell, but she can be seen and projected into space."  
"Granted, but suppose she dropped a bomb on to your back before you saw her?"  
"She could not, except in the dark; then she would have to strike a knife edge, and it would be an accident, one chance in millions. We are constructed like a razorback hog to deflect falling bombs."  
"But you cannot deflect horizontal torpedoes," said Felton, looking up at the dome of the submarine. It looked curiously like the dome shaped roof of the airship. "I know well," he went on, talking as was his wont among his fellow officers, "that if I could see your periscope tube with a telescope I could hit you with one of my torpedoes."  
"Your torpedoes?"  
"I am torpedo officer of that battleship. I was on the turret top when you blew it up last night and went up with it. I landed on the airship."  
"You are a member of that battleship's crew?"  
"I am." Felton dropped his eyes at the menace in the captain's voice. On the way his glance took in the curving walls of the submarine. They had become semitransparent, and even as he looked they vanished, leaving a clear view of the sky and horizon with its string of fighting ships, pursued and pursuing. He was again in the airship, and the upright stanchions that he had first observed as anomalies in a submarine now served their legitimate purpose of supports to the roof.  
"The drink," he murmured, while his brain swam and his soundings disappeared in a mist. "They've drugged me."  
"You belong to that battleship?" roared the captain, but Felton had sunk to the floor, incapable of voluntary action. The captain blew a whistle, and his crew answered.  
"Back to the battleship!" thundered the captain. "Load him into the tube. Expend that torpedo and make room."  
Men sprang to the tube and turned levers. The captain sprang to the periscope. "Right," he said. "I'll finish her."  
How an airship could fire a torpedo was beyond Felton's benumbed faculties at the time. He was struggling weakly, trying to strike, but unable to, pounded on the face and body by the implacable victim of his flats in the former fight, helplessly borne along toward the tube, now emptied of water.  
"Back to the battleship!" they chorused. "In with him!"  
Powerless to resist, he was jammed head first into the tube. He heard the door creek into place behind him; then

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Powerless to Resist, He Was Jammed Head First into the Tube.

he felt the impact of cold water. Then, faintly as the voice of a telephone, came the voice of a man:

"The forward door's jammed; it won't open."

"Hammer it," came the captain's voice. "Get a top maul."

An age or two went by while Felton lay imprisoned in the tube, holding his breath and immersed in water. Then, faintly as the voices, came the sound of a heavy hammer on the walls of the tube:

"Clang clang, clang clang."

Felton awoke in his berth as wet with perspiration as though still immersed in that tube. The gunroom orderly tapped at his door.

"Eight bells, sir," he said.

"All right," he answered. "Eight bells," he murmured to himself. "I heard the first four of them—let's see—about twelve hours ago. Twelve hours of experience between the fourth and fifth strokes. How long does a dream take? Damn a dream, anyhow!"

The next Morgan Robertson story will be "The Trade Wind."

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