

# The Wireless Death

C.S. Raymond

Courtesy Technical World

## Synopsis of Chapters I and II.

The United States is about to go to war with a foreign nation. The emissaries of the government power station which supplied Washington and New York with electricity for light and power, are expecting orders to apply heavier current. Atsins, an electrician at the station obtains leave to see an invention of his before the day.

### Chapter III

To the surprise of the nation, Congress held back during the day, a narrow fringe of conservative members siding between the country and the news service, which had stepped up again and was voluminous detailed once more, still carried prediction that war was inevitable could be only delayed.

Meanwhile the stolid helplessness of the War Department, which had blanded even the energetic efforts of the department chiefs to do the best they could at the eleventh hour, had given way to a feverish activity extending to departments unaware of the purpose.

Atsins had taken a fast express ship to Susquehanna, returning at top speed with the concentrator, the plans which he had shown Shod and Montrus, and which, many months before, had constructed.

Shod had his orders regarding power, orders which carried a significance to him but to none other at the power station.

At No. 10 Sending Station, Atsins, with an army of electricians and mechanics under him, worked at nerve-racking speed during the day. Montrus, possessed by a devil of impatience, foreboding, and fear, could not contain himself either in the office or at the station.

The work progressed; the death rattle concentrator went into place;

"We'll feel better in the open. Before they could step out of the door, a messenger came in.

"Curtis reports," he said. "The fleet has left Kiel. He will send location."

"Tell Curtis," said Montrus speaking low-voiced, "that the outcome of this war depends on him. We want the location. We must have it. If he can send electrographs, send them; but first the location."

With Atsins, he walked out into the night. The sky was black. The air was heavy and wet. A gentle drizzle was starting.

The two men took a few deep breaths, and then turned to each other. Neither spoke, but each held out his hand. One close grasp, and they parted, Atsins for the sending station, Montrus for the tower.

When the latter stepped off the elevator at the top, he found two assistants busy with the reflector. Far away in the distance were the lights of Washington and the Capitol. The general glanced at the bulletin, but it told him nothing new. The roll-call was being "blayed" by members who insisted on explaining their votes, notwithstanding that they and the others had reached the limits of human endurance. He glanced at the other board, which would give him in duplicate any word that might come from Curtis. It was blank; but as he looked, it flashed out with

"32 30 17 N. O. 53 34. 9 E."

"We've got it!" he almost gasped; and then he turned to the assistants, jerking out his commands:

"Ready there. We ought to get something from Curtis in a moment. Tell the Capitol we must have instant notice of the declaration."

At another telescope he got Atsins at Sending Station No. 10.

There they also had a duplicate of Curtis' message giving the longitude and latitude of the hostile fleet.

"Ready?" asked the general.

"Ready," said the electrician.

Montrus enveloped his head in the hood at the reflector—hardly a necessity, so black was the night. Across the Atlantic, day had broken, and Curtis had the light he needed in his electro-

through the hood: "Here's the flash. War's declared."

The general twitched with suppressed excitement. For a moment longer, he watched the picture in the reflector. Then he saw that the fleet had the news. Across the Atlantic the instantaneous service had carried the declaration of war.

Far below him was the chief city of his nation, now subdued in the knowledge that it and the nation had been brought to the final test. In the sending station was the man on whom his nation's hopes depended. He firmly pressed the button.

In the reflector, he saw the enemy's squadron move. He knew that it had been in readiness to start, and on the instant of the receipt of the tidings was setting forth. If it came un molested, as it had every right to expect it would, there could be but one result to his nation.

It seemed an eternity of time as he watched the reflector.

Suddenly one of the ships disappeared in a bluish which sent confused shadows over the reflector. Montrus trembled in his excitement.

The pictures grew clear for an instant. Then another blur—a quick succession of blurs, between which he could see nothing.

He grew dizzy, and held tightly to the supports of the reflector to steady himself. His unblinking eyes were so held by the grim, silent chaos of destruction portrayed before him, that the seeing faculty seemed to slip apart from him and separated completely by his dazed condition.

The tumultuous heaving and blurring on the reflector cleared away. It revealed a torn and shattered fleet—two-thirds of the ships had vanished completely, others beating feebly and in their last efforts, others slowly sinking through the air, a few trying to escape from an unseen terror.

General Montrus, veteran though he was, shuddered at the horror of the sight. Unseen, unheard, softly through the thick darkness, the wireless death had swept that proud aerial fleet out of existence in one tense instant. And Atsins, the shock-headed youth, was the destroyer, sitting calmly up there in the sending station, with one soiled hand on the lever of his great, terrible concentrator. It was he who had utilized the force formerly used to send messages, to bear intelligence across boundless areas, which, increased a hundred thousand-fold in voltage, had now carried absolute destruction.

Still breathing heavily, Montrus threw off the hood, coming back to the utter blackness and the drizzle of the Washington night.

A bulletin was flashed on the board which carried the duplicates from Curtis.

"Fleet gone—Vanished in Convulsion—Pictures Actual and Accurate Disturbance not caused by defects but by destruction of fleet—Can't explain it, but America is saved."

Montrus turned the wireless telescope to the sending station, and saw Atsins sitting quietly on a box in one corner of the little room, gravely smoking a short pipe, his shock of blonde hair badly ruffled, a smile on his freckled face. "Atsins—the commander-in-chief was trying hard to control his voice—Atsins. You have saved us. It is all over. Their fleet was annihilated."

It seemed to the old soldier, veteran of a dozen campaigns, absurdly impossible that the safety of a great nation should have been put into the hands of that grimly boy in blue overalls.

"It worked all right, didn't it?" Atsins answered evenly.

"Come over here," Montrus went on. "Hurry and come. To-morrow Congress'll be giving you a vote of thanks; you'll be a bigger man than old Dewey ever was."

A troubled frown came on Atsins' face. "Excuse me, please, general," he said. "I'm going back to the shop. I've just thought of a big improvement on my concentrator. Good night."

### Longest Climb in the World.

Imagine making the ascent of Mount Washington by means of a staircase. But a feat akin to this many travelers in China have accomplished in going to the top of the holy mountain, some six thousand feet above Taingau-fu. The road leading to it is the best in all the kingdom. About a mile north of the city walls stands a large gate amid the ruins of an ancient floating suburb. Leading from this gate the road is lined with temples, convents and shrines, where pilgrims stop to pray if they are fortunate enough to rid themselves of the hordes of beggars.

Where the real ascent begins there is a stone portal which is inscribed with the fact that here the great Confucius halted 2,600 years ago, not having the strength to ascend the six thousand stone steps leading to the top. These Taischan stairs are by far the highest in the world, for, taking the number of steps in one story of an ordinary house to be twenty, the number of Taischan steps equals three hundred stories. The coolies will carry a pilgrim up the stairs and back, a distance of twice sixteen miles, for thirty cents—fifteen cents for each coolie. When the ascent is made one finds himself upon a large plateau, which is covered with numerous temples and stone monuments. The main temple is that of the holy mother, consisting of several buildings surrounded by a stone wall. The several courts are adorned with magnificent statues and monuments of bronze, with a huge statue of the holy mother on the altar. These doors are opened once only each year, when an imperial commission comes to collect the money offerings of the pilgrims. By means of a substantial "tip" the guard may be induced to push the bar of the main gate aside, so that one may have a glimpse within. The floor of this large temple is usually filled with a heap of coins of every description, size, and value, probably representing \$10,000 in American currency. The money is divided among the convents and beggars of the holy mountain, but the largest share goes into the pockets of that enterprising lady, the Dowager Empress.

In all Cuban cigar factories in the West Indies, Key West and Tampa, a public reader is employed. This man occupies a high seat and reads aloud newspapers, magazines and novels to the cigar-makers as they work.

### "THE DECIDER"

#### A New Trap for Women Who Hesitate About What to Buy.

An ingenious attempt is now being made in some of the big department establishments to assist the opinions of undecided women who come to shop.

Every salesman and every saleswoman knows the woman who haunts the bargain sales, flutters from counter to counter, is shown goods until the attendants are driven to distraction, thinks she will buy everything, and finally invests in a yard and a half of pink ribbon, simple because she is absolutely incapable of making up her own mind as to what she wants.

Drapers have long tolerated this form of mental weakness. Now they have revolted, and the day of the "Decider" has come.

The Decider is an American institution, and Gibsonian at that. She is beautiful as to face and features, and always gowned to perfection. Her duty is to induce the doubtful to buy.

To the customer she appears as a customer, with the earnest intense "sale face" that one now sees every day in the big stores.

She sees a customer a little worse dressed than herself hesitating over the purchase of a dress length of chiffon velvet. The shopman has done his best to persuade the lady that it is the superlative bargain of the season.

"You ought to take it at once, madam," he says, eagerly; "if you leave it to think the matter over, you will regret it."

"I suppose so," the lady says, "but I want to look about first; it is so hard to decide—an evening gown is so very important." And she surveys the dress length again from three different angles.

It is now the Decider's moment to step in. Pretending to have noticed the chiffon velvet, for the first time she thrusts out a perfectly gloved hand, and eagerly catches hold of an end of the material. She hangs it up against her figure, and looks at it admiringly. The doubtful lady looks annoyed, gives the chiffon a tug, but the Decider holds on.

"If you are not going to buy this dress length," she says, "I will take it. It is the only one I suppose," she adds, turning to the attendant, and is told it is.

Meanwhile the genuine customer has observed the exquisite "turn out" of the eager "sale-hawk," as she imagines the Decider to be. If she is a person is anxious to buy the stuff it must be worth securing, she argues, so without further doubt she says sharply:

"But I am going to take it." The transaction is closed, and the seeming charmed Decider disappears.

Having settled this little business of the chiffon velvet she sails off to the fur department.

Here she fixes on a sallow-faced young wife, who has brought her husband to help in the choice of a set of furs.

"Do you like it, dear?" the lanky girl-wife asks, holding up a white boa.

"Is \$22 too much for this, and the muff?"

She has \$400 a year of her own, and he has his pay as a lieutenant in the artillery, so she decides to be gracious.

"No, \$22 isn't too much," he replies, but isn't the whole thing a bit too light—for—"

"Then another is brought out and he objects to it too. "I hate these ashy-colored things," he says petulantly. "Oh! take it off."

"Well, dear, what am I to do? You think the first one is too light and the other one is too ashy." The tone is despairing.

"Try this one on again, madam," says the saleswoman, and the wife turns to take it but it is gone. She finds herself confronted with the elegant figure of the Decider, who has arrayed herself in the boa and a bolster muff.

The young wife looks at her husband and sees his eyes fixed on the charming vision of bright hair, bright eyes, gleaming teeth, and warm complexion, set off by the duffy softness of the boa and muff. Entirely forgetful of her own sallow appearance, she quickly makes up her mind to have that boa—it is so very becoming.

"I think dear," she says to her husband, "that this is just what I want. I am sure mamma would like it. Her husband is still gazing at the pretty "Decider" arrayed in the boa, and answers her jerkily.

"Yes, it's pretty," he says, absent-mindedly, "awfully becoming to—yes, it is so clean and fresh-looking isn't it?" You can't do better; have it." In another second the boa and muff are both in the shop girl's hands, and the pale wife is giving her address.

The Decider is liberally paid. She draws a regular salary, and in addition receives a commission on all sales effected through her interference. The profession opens up a new vista for attractive women whom circumstances have forced into the labor market.

#### Entrapping the Victim.

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## THE ANGLE LAMP

is not an improvement on the old style lamp, but an entirely NEW METHOD of burning oil which has made common kerosene (or coal oil) the most satisfactory of all illuminants.

And when we say satisfactory, we mean satisfactory—not an illuminant that merely gives a brilliant light, but one that combines brilliancy with soft, restful, pleasing quality; that is convenient as gas, safe as a tallow candle; and yet so economical to burn that in a few months' use

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DESTRUCTION OF THE GREAT GERMAN AIR FLEET.

reinforcement was added to every detail of the station; its capacity was increased to the limits of possibility. Night had come and was advancing. Still Congress held to its tense debate. Ten o'clock came; and Atsins sought Montrus, finding him nervously pacing back and forth in his office. The young electrician was calm and charged with quiet confidence.

"If we can get their location, they will not leave," he said. "Maybe you cannot furnish it."

"We can if we can get Curtis again," said Montrus. "What if we can't?"

"Then we shall have to take them when we get it," replied Atsins. "It would be safer to annihilate them before they start."

"Try for Curtis again," ordered the general, turning to the side in the room. They waited for an answer, which came back presently. The operator at the Sending Station No. 5 reported that his efforts were not successful, and he advised against many repetitions.

"It endangers him," he said. "He will report when he can."

With nothing to do but wait, in nervous tension, they saw the hours mount to 12. Then came a bulletin from Congress. The vote was about to be taken. Of the result there could be no doubt, and there was none in the minds of the men sitting in the office. There had been none from the start, and yet, now that the moment had come, they looked at each other, pale faced and heavy-eyed.

"Come outside," said Montrus to At-

photography and transmission. Somewhere above the hostile fleet, Montrus knew, the scout hung precariously in a position to send not only information but a continuous reflection of the movements of the airships. He might be discovered, but that was the hazard of his occupation. If he were well concealed by distance, and out of the path of the enemy's scouts, he would win out. If otherwise, he at least had done his duty to the best of his ability.

With one finger on a button which would give the signal to Atsins, the general waited word from the Capitol. Sixty seconds after the vote had been taken and war declared, the world would know it. The hostile fleet would know it almost as soon as Montrus. It was in the arrogance of superior force that the enemy had waited the formal beginning of hostilities.

Ripples of light were chasing each other across the reflector; shadowy forms appeared and disappeared in vapors and fogs. Then came an outline growing distinct, and presently he had the picture again.

Outside the hood was the black, drizzling night; inside, the face of the reflector was glowing with a picture of clouds lighted by the early rays of the sun and of a fleet of airships languidly floating at rest.

Montrus could see the fogs floating from the ships, could see their torpedoes and the graceful movement of one here and there as it changed position slightly.

One of the assistants at his side stooped over and shouted at him

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