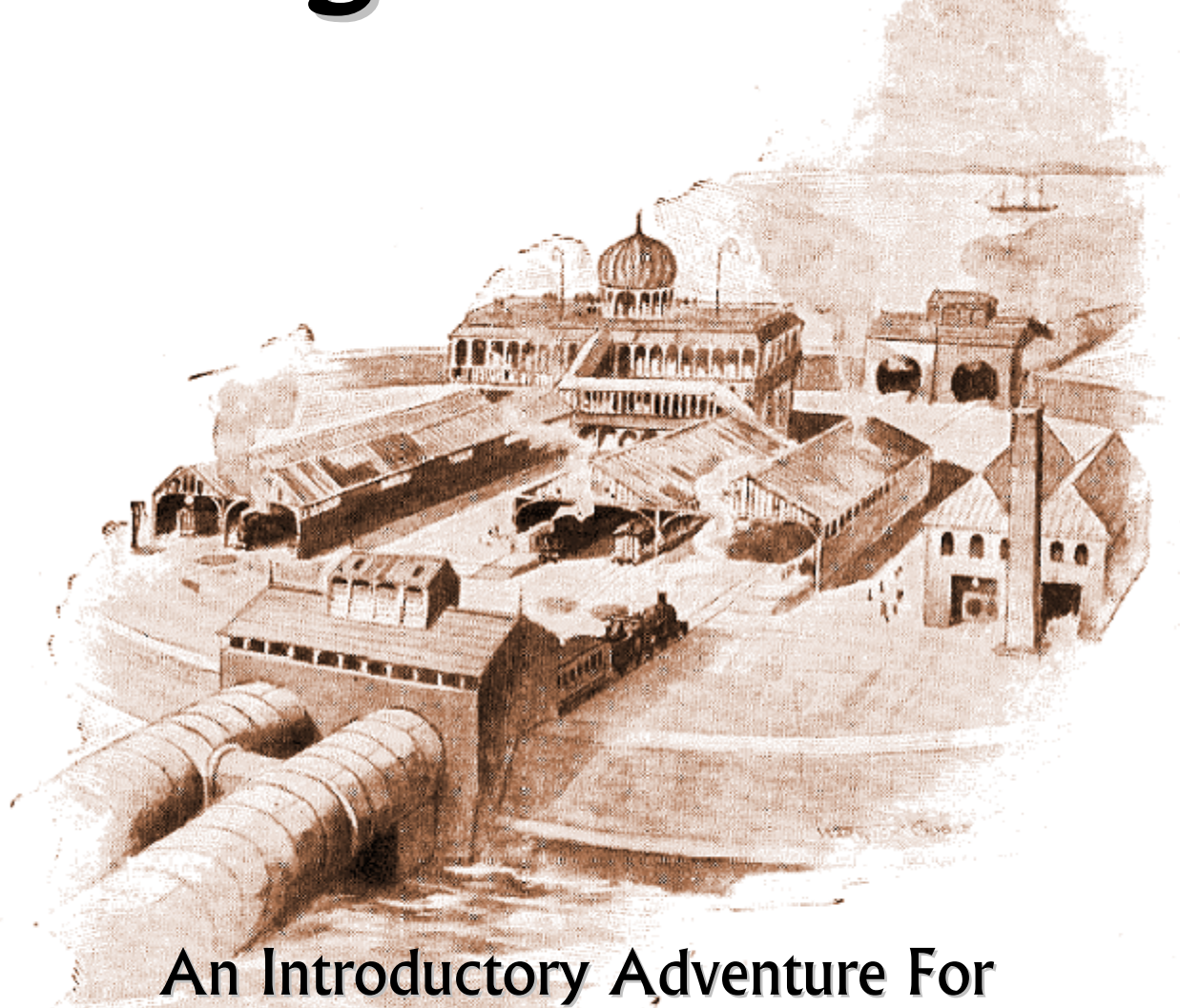


Taking The Tunnel



An Introductory Adventure For

Forgotten Futures

The Scientific Romance Role Playing Game

By Marcus L. Rowland

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Forgotten Futures

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This PDF has been published as a free download – if you are asked to pay for it please contact the author!

Double sided printing – print the front cover page single-sided, the rest of this document double-sided.

A slightly shorter version of this adventure was published as part of a booklet given away by Arcane Magazine in 1997; an HTML version is on line on the author's web site.

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Background Information

IT'S 1897. Victoria is on the throne, and it is an unparalleled era for science and technology. Projects that were once dreams are coming to fruition; chief amongst them is the Channel Tunnel, begun in 1875, endlessly delayed by politics and inept management, but finally opened today. The Queen herself has made a rare public appearance to cut a ribbon at the English end and travelled to France aboard the Royal Train. After a reception in Calais she is about to return to Windsor.

The adventurers are aboard the Royal Train; as reporters, as detectives assigned to the Queen's bodyguard, as courtiers or diplomats, or as servants or train crew. There are other possibilities; for example, a gentleman cracksman planning to steal the Queen's jewels might be aboard disguised as a servant, a doctor might be the Royal Physician. Adventurers needn't know each other. The referee should only allow personal possessions which are appropriate to their roles aboard the train; for instance, an engine driver would not normally carry a gun. As the story begins the train is entering the tunnel at Calais.

Referee's Information

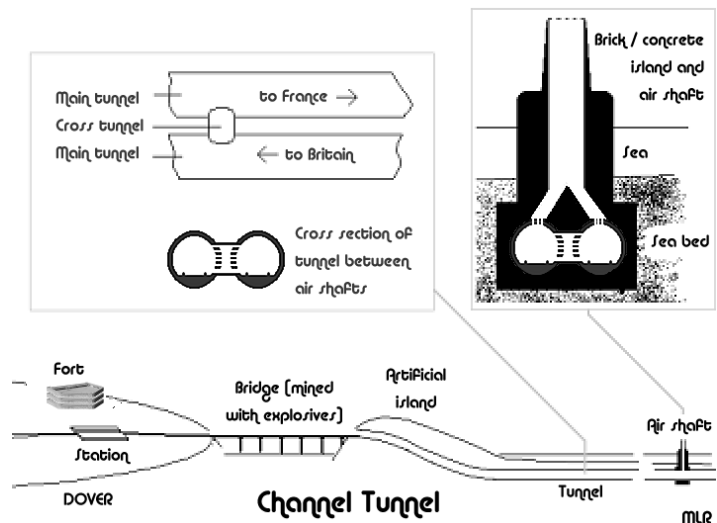
This adventure assumes that the first Channel Tunnel project succeeded. Unfortunately early fears that the tunnel might be used as a route to invade Britain were correct; the French government has planned treachery for many years, making peaceful overtures while waiting to pounce, and the Royal Train is an essential part of their plan.

While the Queen dined in Calais members of the French Foreign Legion were landed on one of the tunnel's ventilation "islands", a brick and concrete chimney that vents engine smoke, and climbed down to the track. They plan to stop the train in the tunnel and board it, then carry on to Dover, where they will force the Queen to perform an unscheduled "inspection" of the fort that guards the

British end of the tunnel, and overcome the garrison before they can destroy the tunnel entrance bridge. Once the fort is in French hands they will signal their main force; several military trains will be brought through the tunnel, securing Dover and Folkestone harbours for a sea-borne invasion fleet, while more troops pour through the tunnel.

The adventurers should be amongst those taken hostage, or somehow escape when the train is stopped in the tunnel, and must somehow foil the dastardly French scheme. The exact means by which it is thwarted are left to the ingenuity of the players.

Note: one possible reason for characters to be aboard the train is that they are anarchists or Fenians plotting against the Queen. If so, they will not be able to put their plans into effect before the action begins.



The Channel Tunnel

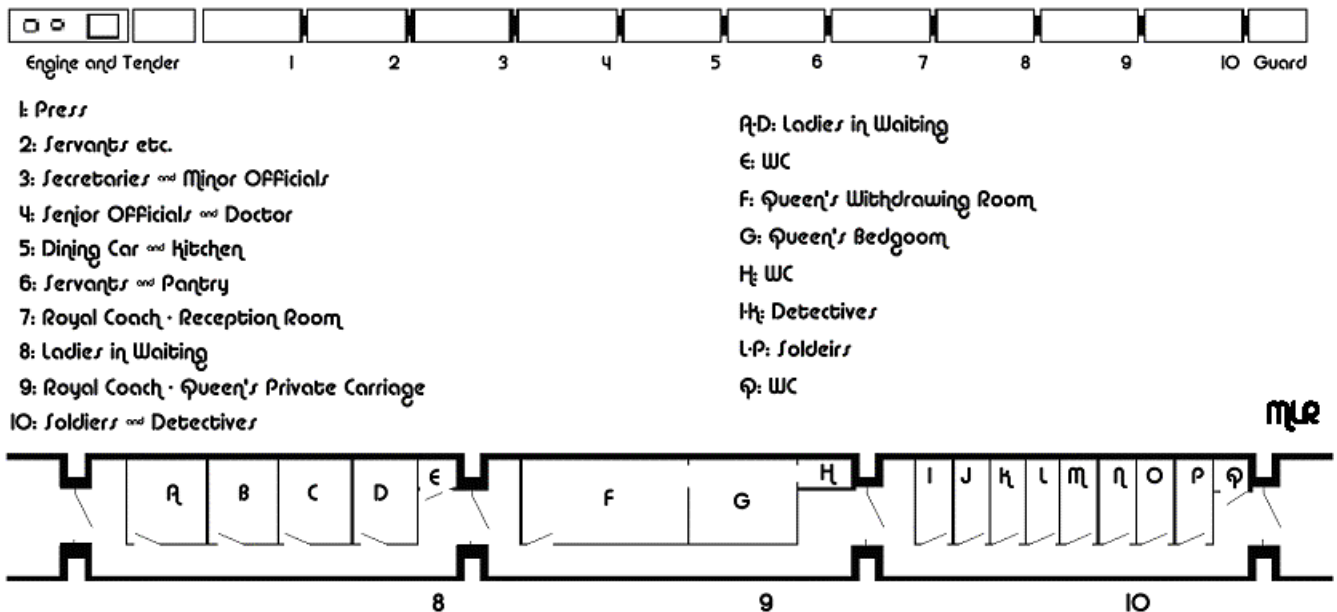
THE Tunnel is the latest marvel of an ingenious age; a railway link between Dover and Calais. On each shore there are stations and railway bridges out to artificial islands, where trains enter the tunnel itself; the bridges are mined and overlooked by the guns of heavily-armed forts, to guard against invasion through the tunnel. Ventilation shafts at intervals lead up to small concrete and brick "islands" supporting tall chimney stacks and warning lights. In mid-Channel, on the Varne bank, a larger artificial island is used for coaling and watering trains, and to give passengers a welcome break from the dust and smoke of the tunnel. Eventually a hotel and docks will be built there.

The tunnel itself is dug through the bed of the Channel. Each of the railway lines is carried in a steel pipe, waterproofed with layers of bitumen and pitch, lined with concrete and brick, and reinforced with steel hoops. At intervals the pipes are linked by cross-tunnels, just large enough for a man, which can be used to evacuate a train in an emergency.

The tunnel structure is extremely strong (BODY 60 at all points), and will only be damaged by explosives etc. if a Kill is rolled. If this occurs water starts to spurt from some joints in the concrete, and there are ominous groaning and creaking noises; the tunnel is badly damaged but isn't yet destroyed. A second explosion in the same place, and another Kill result, will breach the tunnel. Water and mud floods in, surging in both directions and overcoming anyone who fails to outrun it. Everyone probably dies horribly, including the Queen, but at least the invasion is stopped. *Extremely* lucky adventurers might be near a ventilator shaft if this happens, giving them a chance to climb out (or possibly help get the Queen out) ahead of the flood.

The demolition charges in the bridges are installed at key points where they will do the maximum possible damage; they collapse immediately if the charges are detonated. Otherwise the bridges have BODY 50, and will collapse if two of the supports are damaged with a Kill result.

The Royal Train



THE train has ten carriages, plus an engine, tender, and guard's van. Exact details of the passengers are not given, since adventurers will be taking some of these roles. Unless stated otherwise, assume that all aboard have BODY, MIND, and SOUL of 3 and no unusual skills or equipment. From front to rear:

- **Engine & Tender:** A brand new "F" class 4-4-0 locomotive with a crew of three; the driver, a fireman (stoker), and an inspector from the London, Chatham, and Dover railway company, assigned to make sure that there are no problems with signals etc. The engine has BODY 30.
- **Carriage 1:** The press, assigned to report on this historic occasion. There are two photographers, a cinematographer (camera man) equipped with a Lumiere camera, his two assistants, three reporters, and a gentleman from the Times. None of them expect to speak to the Queen, she doesn't give interviews. All carriages are BODY 20.
- **Carriage 2:** Twenty servants of various types, and a large amount of luggage. Some of the servants are employed by one or another of the officials on the train, not the Queen herself.
- **Carriage 3:** Fourteen secretaries and minor officials. Huge amounts of business are done by the Royal Household, even when the Queen is travelling. This carriage has several offices, two modern typewriting machines, and telephone and telegraph facilities; these must be connected to external lines before they can be used.
- **Carriage 4:** Twelve senior officials. The Queen's advisers and diplomatic staff, plus Sir Edward Watkin, former Chairman of the South Eastern Railway and a director of the SER and Channel Tunnel Company. There is also a small sick bay, with accommodation for two patients, for the use of the Royal Physician.
- **Carriage 5:** Dining car for senior officials etc. and the train's kitchen, with a staff of eight.
- **Carriage 6:** Fourteen more servants and the train's pantry. A strong room contains silverware worth several thousand pounds.
- **Carriage 7:** Royal coach; reception and dining room for visiting dignitaries. As the adventure begins it is not in use, although servants from carriage 6 might be clearing the remnants of the reception.



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- **Carriage 8:** Accommodation for four ladies in waiting in four large sleeping compartments. All are in their fifties, members of noble families.
- **Carriage 9:** Royal Coach; the Queen's luxuriously-appointed sleeping compartment and withdrawing room.
H.R.H. Queen Victoria (Hip, Hip, Hurrah!)
BODY [2], MIND [4], SOUL [5], Business [7], Linguist [5] (French, German, Hindi)
Quote: *"Release us at once, young man!"*
Notes: She is the Empress of half the world and an inspiration to all Britons. She has a will of iron and is totally lacking in fear (she survived at least twenty assassination attempts, some at point-blank range), absolutely convinced that God protects the monarchy and Empire.
- **Carriage 10:** Bodyguard. Ten soldiers and four detectives, all armed.
Soldiers / Detectives
BODY [4], MIND [3], SOUL [3], Brawling [6], Marksman [6], Melee Weapon [6]
The detectives carry .38 revolvers and truncheons. The soldiers carry Lee-Netford bolt action rifles (as big rifle) and bayonets. Their Lieutenant has a sword and .45 revolver (huge revolver).
- **Guard's Van:** This contains the guard, four railway workmen, and tools and parts for repairing the track or train in an emergency.



There is 2 ft clearance between the roof of the train and the roof of the tunnel, with occasional protruding bolts and rods reducing the space and making train surfing an extremely bad idea. There is 4 ft clearance to either side of the train. Several telegraph wires run along the tunnel walls.

The French Plan

THE French force (30 men, plus 2 for each adventurer) is led by Captain Giscard Foch of the Foreign Legion. All are disguised as soldiers of the East Sussex regiment. They hope to trick their way aboard the train and seize control.

The Legionnaires are waiting in the tunnel 4 miles from Calais. They have put three warning detonators on the line, and intend to stop the train and tell the occupants that there was a warning that Fenians have planted bombs on the line. This story doesn't bear close examination (for instance, it doesn't explain how they got there), but it is only supposed to work for a few minutes, long enough to lure the Queen's soldiers and detectives from the train and into French hands, while Foch "reports" to the Queen and takes her hostage. Once she is a prisoner the Legionnaires will disarm everyone else, killing anyone who resists, handcuff them, and deploy to guard the carriages and engine.

Captain "Bernard Pringle" (Foch)

BODY [4], MIND [4], SOUL [2], Brawling [6], Business [5], Linguist [6] (English, German, Italian), Marksman [7], Melee Weapon [5], Military Arms [7]
.38 revolver, sword, 9mm 2-shot concealed pistol.

Quote: (as Pringle) *"I'm sorry, your Majesty, there's a bit of an emergency..."* (as Foch) *"Put your hands up!"*

Notes: Foch is totally ruthless; he has risen in the Foreign Legion, an organisation recruited from the scum of the Earth, but needs a major military success for further advancement. Spearheading the conquest of Britain will do nicely. He will not hesitate to kill anyone who gets in his way. He speaks English with an impeccable Loamshire accent. He is aware that this is an act of war, and that he and all his men will be shot as spies if captured, so has nothing to lose.



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French Legionnaires

BODY [4], MIND [3], SOUL [3], Brawling [6], Linguist [4] (English, one other language), Marksman [6], Melee Weapon [5], Military Arms [4]

Lee-Enfield rifle, bayonet, six hand grenades, four smoke bombs (release a cloud of dense choking smoke, adding a +3 modifier to the Difficulty of any action performed in the cloud), 4 pairs handcuffs.

Quote: "Drop zee gun, peeg!"

Notes: The scum of the Earth. Most are French, a few are German, Italian, or Belgian. All speak French, if it isn't their native language, and English; most have strong foreign accents, but three "sergeants" speak colloquial working-class English and will try to deal with any questions before they unmask.

As well as individual equipment, the French have three Maxim guns, some signal detonators, lanterns, and four 24-stick cases of dynamite with fuses. Three of the soldiers know how to drive a train, if the original driver is killed or escapes. If the Queen escapes in the tunnel, or is somehow killed or seriously injured, one of the smaller Legionnaires will deftly disguise himself as Her Majesty (Actor [7]), producing a grey wig and dress from his knapsack.

Some or all of the adventurers may escape during the initial ambush, and may succeed in stealing explosives or weapons from the French; if so the Legionnaires won't pursue them, and they will be left behind when the train moves off. One of their Maxim guns is set up a few hundred feet down the tunnel towards Dover, with soldiers ready to kill anyone who tries to escape that way; the train will stop momentarily to pick them up as it leaves.

Adventurers escaping here will have a long walk to get help. Anyone with the Morse Code skill may think of short-circuiting the telegraph wires to signal Dover; since they have no receiver, they will not know if the message gets through successfully. If this is tried the signal reaches the Varne Bank station (and Calais) but does not go on to Dover, because another Legionnaire has cut the line North of the bank. If the adventurers realise an invasion is imminent they may think of blocking the lines to derail the French trains; there are tool bunkers for track repairs at intervals along the track. Rigging each track for derailment takes 60 man-minutes (eg 30 minutes for two men, 20 for three) and is Difficulty 8; alternatively, the track is BODY 20, and dynamite will cause the same damage on a Kill result. Unfortunately the trains will be travelling slowly enough to stop before they hit the damaged track, but repairs will take 30+6D6 minutes. Flooding the tunnel will stop the invasion completely, but is likely to kill the adventurers.

Meanwhile, assuming that the French control the train, they order the driver to carry on towards Dover, but not to stop at the ventilation station. The soldiers make the passengers draw the blinds in all the carriages.

If someone has telegraphed a warning there is a red signal as the train approaches the ventilation station, and the train is diverted into a siding; the Legionnaires must get out and change the points, killing anyone who tries to stop them, and cut the telegraph wires. This won't be difficult, since it is a civilian installation, but may give adventurers aboard the train a chance to take action against the French.

If the station isn't warned the train needn't stop; there are green lights all the way, since no other train is scheduled to use the line. As it goes through the station adventurers may catch a glimpse of porters and railway workers standing rigidly at attention on the platform, and hear faint cheers as the train rattles into the Dover tunnel. As soon as the station is out of sight the train stops for one of the soldiers to cut the telegraph lines.

After the Varne bank the French start to herd everyone (apart from the Queen) into coaches 5 and 6, and handcuff them to the seats and luggage racks.

By now the French plan should be obvious; if the adventurers haven't worked it out, some careless boasting should give the game away, and gives referees a chance to try their outrageous French accents. It should be apparent that a miraculous rescue isn't close at hand; however this situation is resolved, the adventurers must handle it with the resources they can find on the train or in the tunnel.



Arrival In Dover

If the adventurers can't come up with a plan, the train eventually arrives at Dover end of the tunnel, and chuffs to a halt in the station. If the French are still in control, they order the Queen to lead their force to the fort that guards the tunnel; naturally she refuses. They then threaten to kill everyone aboard the train if she doesn't give in. She reluctantly agrees to cooperate.

After a few minutes the queen and her "escort" disembark from the train, to the deafening applause of a large crowd. She briefly chats to the Mayor and Station Master, closely watched by Foch to make sure that she doesn't give the game away, then slowly sets off toward the fort. Adventurers peeping through the gaps around the blinds will notice that the "escort" is carrying several crates, the dynamite and Maxim guns. Four guards stay behind in carriages 5 and 6, two more are in the engine and guard's van.



- If the adventurers do nothing the Queen takes ten minutes to reach the fort, and is naturally admitted by the commander. As they enter the French spread out and begin to kill the guards and destroy the guns. The defence is hampered by the possibility of killing the Queen. The main French objectives are the guns and a room containing several fuses, threaded through long pipes to explosive charges in the bridge supports. As soon as these targets are destroyed Foch fires a signal rocket, a tricolour burst that receives applause from anyone who hasn't realised that something is wrong. A mile out to sea a French destroyer transmits a new-fangled wireless signal, and the first trains and ships of the invasion set out towards Dover. The French at the fort set back towards the train, dragging the Queen with them, and prepare to hold the bridge and tunnel mouth until reinforcements arrive.
- It is more likely that the adventurers will take the opportunity to overcome the guards once the main French force has left the train. This should be a bloody fight, and several NPCs should be killed, along with any adventurer who is unlucky or careless. Once shooting begins the police on the platform will move in to investigate, and a confused melee should develop.
- If the guards are overcome there are several things the adventurers can do to stop the French. For example, they could use the engine's whistle or a mirror to signal an SOS; several soldiers in the fort know Morse code. There is even a telephone in the station, but it will take 2-3 minutes to raise the operator and get her to connect a call to the fort. In this event the guards will be alert and will try to persuade the French to put down their weapons; a bloody fight ensues, in which the Queen somehow escapes entirely unscathed. If the French are using their female impersonator he is killed early in the action. If the signal isn't given the French don't invade, but enough evidence is found to prove that their government backed the attack. The British flood their side of the tunnel, and it is several years before relations are back to a point where it can be reopened.
- Once the French are in the fort the best that the adventurers can do is try to stop them returning to the bridge, and rally an attack on the French, hopefully without the Queen getting caught in the crossfire. As above, a carefully organised attack will be a bloody battle but the Queen will somehow escape injury. With the bridge in British hands it should be possible to blow the supports before the invasion trains arrive; optionally the charges detonate as the first engine leaves the tunnel, and it hurtles down to a watery grave. This still leaves an oncoming Naval assault to worry about, but without Army assistance the invasion will soon come to a sticky end. After a few days the French sue for peace, their government falls, and the new republic signs humiliating peace terms which involve the disarming of much of their Army and Navy. A few years later the Germans invade, sweeping the remaining French forces aside easily, and Britain has real problems.

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- If the adventurers fail miserably the French gain control of Dover and Folkestone, and an extremely nasty war begins. This is far beyond the scope of this adventure, and is probably best handled as a strategic war game.
- If the French are stopped before the train even reaches Dover the Queen orders all aboard to say nothing about the incident, which is handled at senior diplomatic level. The French cede two colonies to Britain, and any captured Legionnaires are executed as traitors to France and the Entente Cordial.

Rewards

- If everything went horribly wrong the adventurers are probably dead, and certainly gain no Bonus points.
- If the French damaged the fort but are ultimately overcome give adventurers 4 points each, plus extra points for good role playing, dialogue, cunning plans, etc.
- If the adventurers stopped the French without the loss of the fort give them 5 points each, with bonuses as above. Additionally, they are in line for monetary rewards, knighthoods, promotion, or medals, as seems appropriate to their position and status.
- If the French were stopped before reaching Dover give the adventurers 6 points each, with bonuses and additional rewards as above. Anyone talking about the incident will be branded a liar or insane, and may lose these rewards.

Alternative Adventures

- If there is no plausible reason for characters to be aboard the train, they could be tourists or British agents who stumble across the French plan, and must struggle to reach the Queen and/or Dover and warn of the attack. Possibly they steal an experimental steam ornithopter and use it to fly down the tunnel after the train... naah, it'd never work...
- For an interesting change of pace the adventurers could be members of the Foreign Legion, assigned to take out the Royal Train. Put one or two crack British agents aboard, disguised as pastry cooks or off-duty detectives, to give them a hard time; "Now I have a Maxim gun, ho ho ho".
- If you want to use this variant and make things *really* strange, what if "Queen Victoria" is actually a disguised British agent; British Intelligence has somehow learned of the French plan, and assigned a crack agent from the OO section to teach them the error of their ways. In this context it may be worth mentioning that the film *Casino Royale* implied that Sir James Bond was active in the 19th century, and would of course be a master of disguise.
- For a more complicated adventure, the French attackers might actually be Germans in disguise, ordered to cause an incident that will spark a war between Britain and France. In this case no invasion forces are waiting, apart from German units poised to sweep into France when the war is under way.
- *Forgotten Futures VI* includes the adventure *Steam Pirates*, which assumes that the French plan fails and uses the same setting but for historical reasons must be set in 1888. If you plan to run both change the date of this adventure to 1887, a period when most trains are slightly more primitive. See *FF VI* for full details.

Sources

Essential sources are Harry Harrison's novel *A Transatlantic Tunnel, Hurrah* and the films *The Taking of Pelham 123*, *Under Siege*, *Mission Impossible*, and *Die Hard*. Most of the information on the Channel Tunnel comes from two articles published in 1900 and 1901, which are available as part of the *Forgotten Futures CD-ROM*. The tunnel described combines elements from several proposals. Special thanks to Tim Illingworth for railway data and Alex Stewart for making encouraging noises.

Publishing history: *Arcane Magazine* 1997, online HTML 1998, in *Forgotten Futures* printed rules 1999, PDF conversion 2006



Remember how the future used to be?

When vast fleets of flying ships blackened the sky...

When psychic investigators used electric pentacles...

When Venus was a paradise, never fallen from grace...

When the government's main job was to make the airships run on time...

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By Marcus L. Rowland

Illustrated by Aaron Williams

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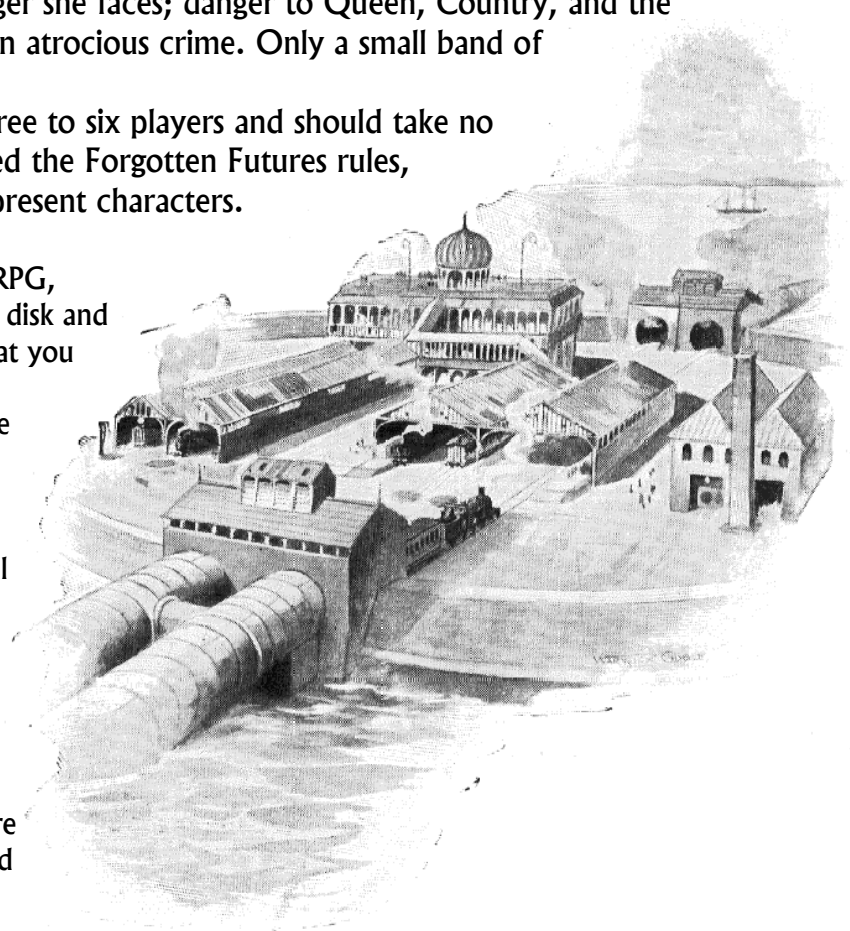
THE SCIENTIFIC ROMANCE ROLE PLAYING GAME

By Marcus L Rowland

1897. When Queen Victoria visits France for the ceremonial opening of the Channel Tunnel she little realises the danger she faces; danger to Queen, Country, and the Empire, as a group of ruthless men plot an atrocious crime. Only a small band of adventurers can save her...

Taking The Tunnel is an adventure for three to six players and should take no more than 2-3 hours to run. You will need the *Forgotten Futures* rules, 6-sided dice, and optionally figures to represent characters.

PROBABLY the first shareware tabletop RPG, *Forgotten Futures* has been published on disk and on line since 1993. What you see is what you get: everything that you need to play can be downloaded without charge, although you are asked to pay a registration fee if you find it useful. Registered users are sent the latest release on CD-ROM at least a month before files go on line, and with it additional material such as Victorian and Edwardian fiction, articles and illustrations, advertisements, etc. Currently more than a hundred megabytes of support material are on line including worldbooks, adventures, and the novels, articles, and stories on which they are based. The full *Forgotten Futures* CD-ROM adds more than 300 megabytes of additional background material.



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