

PYRAMID



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STEAMPUNK

ORDER OF PRECEDENCE



by William H. Stoddard

NECROMENSCHEN

by Sean Punch

THE CLANKERS

by David L. Pulver

THE MOHOCKS

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ACROSS AFRICA WITH IRON AND STEAM

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A WHISPER IN THE SKY

by Michele Armellini

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There was a time when a full boiler and fresh blueprint were instruments enough to change the world. That time is now, and the era is steampunk. Welcome, good fellow, to tomorrow!

From the pen of William H. Stoddard – the gentleman scientist behind both *GURPS Steampunk* and *GURPS Social Engineering* – comes the *Order of Precedence*. This transfixing treatise reveals that, in Victorian England, different social spheres can feel like strange worlds. Discover how the guidelines from *Social Engineering* can add greater authenticity to the interpersonal relations of your realistic or cinematic Victorian campaigns.

All aboard the great Trans-Kenya railway; it's time to make your fortune *Across Africa With Iron and Steam*. Written by Matt Riggsby (author of *GURPS Hot Spots: Renaissance Florence*), this alternate-history campaign locale is suitable for many steampunk campaigns looking to add a bold new realm rooted in reality. It offers tips on travel, details on dangers, and pointers on politics. It includes a map and *GURPS* vehicle stats for a personal airship.

What do you get when you cross zombies with weird science? *Necromenshen!* *GURPS* Line Editor Sean Punch melds the science of steampunk with the zeitgeist of zombies. It describes the undead creations with ghoulish detail and plenty of *GURPS* stats.

Victorian London is being terrorized by mechanical machinations, so the Metropolitan Police Department fights back with *The Clankers*. This month's Eidetic Memory offering from *GURPS Basic Set* co-author David L. Pulver is an adventure outline, complete with *GURPS* vehicle and weapon stats for the cogwork creations.

Learn the hard way that not all steampunk innovations are noisy, with *A Whisper in the Sky*. *GURPS WWII: Their Finest Hour* author Michele Armellini soars with *GURPS* rules and stats for fantastic gliding vessels.

An infamous Edwardian gang is revitalized in Victorian London. Discover the motives, history, and key players of *The Mohocks* – a systemless social swarm suitable for any steam-powered setting.

Enjoy a spot of tea with *Pyramid* Editor Steven Marsh's *Random Thought Table*, the wind-up whimsy of *Murphy's Rules*, and other *Odds and Ends*. Catch the fresh-polished brass just right and you'll agree: The future is brighter than ever!

Article Colors

Each article is color-coded to help you find your favorite sections.

Pale Blue: In This Issue

Brown: In Every Issue (letters, humor, editorial, etc.)

Dark Blue: *GURPS* Features

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FROM THE EDITOR

GEARING UP

One aspect I love about the steampunk aesthetic is an underlying optimism: It takes a historical era where everything seemed possible – a time where it appeared as if gentlemen scientists and elbow grease could change the world – and allows the impossible to happen.

I also love steampunk because it provides the thematic mirror to another personal favorite: turn-of-the-century Lovecraftian horror. If steampunk is a natural positive reflection of “humanity is capable of anything” leading up to the Great War, Lovecraftian horror is the post-War pessimistic reflection on the exact same ideal: “humanity is capable of anything.”

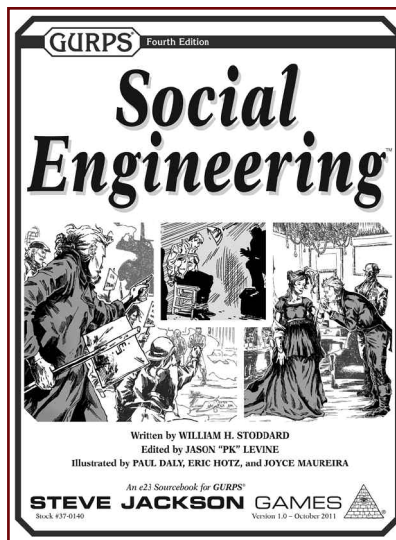
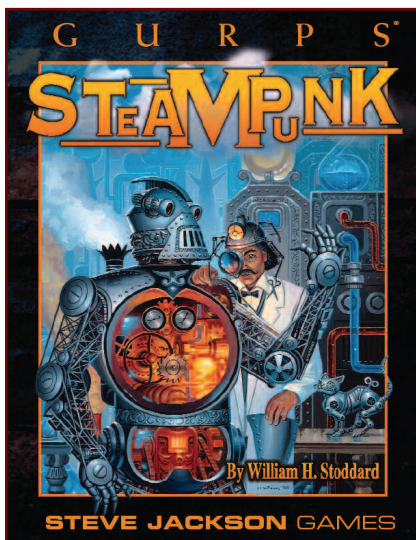
Regardless of where your historical gaming takes you, hopefully you’ll find something in this issue – there’s quite the spectrum to choose from, including new tech of all stripes, social ramifications, and a campaign setting. Embrace the future!

STEAM EFFORT

On another note, one thing I love about *Pyramid* is its speed and focus. It was natural to invite William H. Stoddard – author of *GURPS Steampunk* – to participate, but it wasn’t until we started brainstorming ideas that I realized how exciting I found the thought of support for the recently released *GURPS Social Engineering* (also from the Stoddardian pen). I feel the power and flexibility of *Social Engineering* really shine through in *Order of Precedence* (pp. 4-9), and it’s a great introduction into what Victorian England was like.

WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW

Was our past look at the future what you expected today? Are our gears clogged up with sand? Let us know what you thought about this issue, by sending private feedback via pneumatic tube at pyramid@sjgames.com, or posting a circular of your ideas for public veneration at forums.sjgames.com.



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ORDER OF PRECEDENCE

BY WILLIAM H. STODDARD

Victorian Britain, the classic steampunk setting, felt the strain of conflicting values and colliding institutions. The Industrial Revolution, built on steam power, created new wealth that supported new forms of social mobility. But the old social hierarchies survived and adapted. Adventurers in the Age of Steam need to find their way through a maze of class distinctions.

GURPS Social Engineering offers tools for mapping out this maze – new rules for defining social advantages and disadvantages, and how they fit together, in more detail. Victorian social distinctions offer a perfect example of how to use *GURPS Social Engineering* to build a campaign world and create characters for it.

“It is in bad taste” is the most formidable word an Englishman can pronounce.

– Ralph Waldo Emerson

WHAT KIND OF SOCIETY?

Great Britain is a society with a hybrid government. Functionally, it’s a representative democracy: Parliament holds supreme authority, established in the English Civil War in 1649 with the execution of Charles I, and confirmed in 1660 with the restoration of his son Charles II. But the Restoration led to the reestablishment of the earlier feudal organization, with a monarch, a House of Lords in Parliament alongside the House of Commons, and a landed aristocracy and gentry. From 1837 to 1901, the monarch was Victoria; the reign of Edward VII, her son and successor, was largely similar.

Until the Reform Act of 1832, Parliament was an essentially oligarchic regime; many members were elected in “rotten boroughs” with under 100 voting residents, whose votes could easily be bought by the wealthy. The Reform Act did away with nearly all of them, and allowed anyone who owned land worth \$1,100 or more to vote. The Second Reform Act, in 1867, extended the vote to all householders.

Great Britain in this era is CR2. Taxes are light, going mainly to support a small army and the world’s largest navy. There are

few restrictions on trade and industry. However, Ireland, despite having its own representatives in Parliament, is actually subjugated, under the control of a Protestant oligarchy that maintains CR4 for the general population. The remnants of Irish customs and institutions are clan/tribal, with significant religious influence from the Roman Catholic Church.

SOCIAL CLASSES

The traditional British class system – and the one that’s still officially recognized – is based on *ascribed* Status: Your place in society mainly reflects your birth. Bonuses to Status from Rank or Wealth don’t actually raise your Status; rather, they reduce the cost of your (unchanged) total Status. British ascribed Status covers the full allowed range, as shown below.

Status	Examples
8	Empress (Victoria, after 1876, when the British Raj is instituted) or Emperor
7	Queen (before 1876), Prince Consort, Prince of Wales, other royal family
6	Duke, marquess, archbishop
5	Earl, viscount
4	Baron, baronet, bishop
3	Knight, Member of Parliament
2	Gentleman
1	Prosperous yeoman
0	Yeoman
-1	Husbandman (tenant farmer) or tradesman
-2	Cottager (farmhand), laborer, or pauper

Status 3 and above is accompanied by equal Courtesy Rank. For Status 4 and above, this Courtesy Rank is hereditary. Titles from baron up to duke grant a seat in the House of Lords; holders of these seats make up the *peerage*. Baronets are not part of the peerage. However, a knight or baronet (amounting to a hereditary knight) often holds a position of real political power in a country government, as a magistrate, sheriff, or the like; treat this as actual Political Rank 3-4. Gentlemen without knighthoods often use the title of esquire.

Baronets, knights, and gentlemen make up the *gentry*. They are expected to have enough money (or property) to live on the interest (or rents) without working. Being “in trade” is contemptible, by definition. Serving as an army or navy officer doesn’t count; neither do the learned professions – the clergy, law, and medicine – as they require a university education, and thus the wealth to support a young man who doesn’t work.

NECROMENSCHEN IN THE CAMPAIGN

The obvious use for zombies in steampunk closely resembles the role of zombies in fantasy: They're minions of a megalomaniac who dabbles in the forbidden and doesn't want living, complaining slaves who require food and housing, much less servants who expect to be paid. As most of them are monstrous by nature, they're unlikely to be found anywhere public. Their lot is that of guarding secret laboratories, waylaying coaches on remote roads, and dragging corpses through sewers. The GM might require heroes who believe they're dealing with ordinary thugs to make a Fright Check if, after a battle, they take a sniff or peel off a mask and find a rotting corpse – and the -3 for grisly mutilations should *definitely* apply! See *Fright Checks* (pp. B360-361).

The infectious zombie plagues of horror don't align well with steampunk traditions – that's why infected ghouls don't appear as an example – but zombie *outbreaks* still fit. The GM might have *Necromenschen* without a master boil out of a graveyard as a direct consequence of mad science gone awry (perhaps a critically failed Prototype roll). The rotting army of a recently defeated villain may even start attacking random townsfolk as a consequence of a twisted standing order ("If I do not show up to inject you daily, and you start to feel the pain, then go forth and savage the living.").

An interesting variant on the previous idea is the *Necromenschen* horde with a master that isn't its creator.

Perhaps a mad scientist created vast reserves of antithanatic, which leaked or spilled into a cemetery (or a Thames suitably stocked with murder victims). In itself, this would simply create a bunch of mindless zombies that don't do much of anything. However, an unethical surgeon or a particularly savvy crime lord might smell opportunity and put the undead to work.

Nothing says that *Necromenschen* must be the result of rare, secretive experiments, though. Some views of steampunk feature European empires locked in total war, hurling all manner of new inventions into battle. If that's the case, then dead soldiers might be raised to fight again as a matter of course, giving rise to a political or religious cause – or just an expected battlefield hazard – rather than a mystery or an unexpected horror.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sean "Dr. Kromm" Punch set out to become a particle physicist in 1985, ended up the *GURPS* Line Editor in 1995, and has engineered rules for almost every *GURPS* product since. He developed, edited, or wrote dozens of *GURPS Third Edition* projects between 1995 and 2002. In 2004, he produced the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition* with David Pulver. Since then, he has created *GURPS Powers* (with Phil Masters), *GURPS Martial Arts* (with Peter Dell'Orto), and the *GURPS Action, GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*, and *GURPS Power-Ups* series . . . and the list keeps growing. Sean has been a gamer since 1979. His non-gaming interests include cinema, cooking, and wine. He lives in Montréal, Québec with his wife, Bonnie. They have two cats, Banshee and Zephyra, and a noisy parrot, Circe.

"Can I Make Them?"

Necromenschen work better as the slaves of sinister NPC villains than as the puppets of heroic PCs. Still, players might attempt to raise their own – and even if they don't, the GM may want to assign sufficient Wealth and skill to someone who does. Here are some quick-and-dirty rules for this.

Steampunk reanimators use *Gadgeteering* (pp. B475-477), with a few tweaks. Required skills are Surgery and Weird Science. Add Alchemy, Bioengineering, or Pharmacy (GM's choice) for antithanatic fluid; Engineer (Robotics) for coal-fired mechanical designs; or whatever Engineer specialty addresses etherics for field-powered *Necromenschen*. For Steeled or Well-Preserved, tack on Metallurgy or Professional Skill (Mortician), respectively. All skills must be TL(5+1). Concept and Prototype rolls use the *lowest* applicable skill.

A walking corpse is no Simple invention by dint of being animate – but in the realm of created minions, it seems fair to reserve Amazing for new life. This puts *Necromenschen* at Average to Complex, but as these are broad categories, the GM may wish to account for variations in point value. Sum the point cost of template, lens, and options, add 400, and multiply the result by \$1,000 to get base facilities cost. Ignore TL increments; zombies are *weird*, not high-tech.

Consult the table below to find skill modifier from facilities cost. If the value falls between two lines, use the *lower*.

While a suitable existing setup divides facilities cost by 10 as always, this has no effect on the cost used to determine the complexity modifier.

Base Cost	Modifier
\$100,000	-2
\$175,000	-3
\$250,000	-4
\$320,000	-5
\$385,000	-6

All *other* modifiers to Concept and Prototype rolls apply. Likewise, each roll has its usual time requirement; treat a complexity modifier of -2 or -3 as Average (Prototype roll requires 2d days) and anything worse as Complex (Prototype roll requires 1d months). The cost of each run at a prototype is 5% of base facilities cost. Once production begins, the cost per zombie is 0.5% of base facilities cost, while reanimation time is an hour per \$100 of unit cost. None of these costs are reduced for existing facilities, either.

Example: A *Necromensch* (-185 points) powered by etheric fields (+1 point) and made Steeled (+20 points) is worth -164 points. Added to 400, that's 236, making base cost \$236,000. This gives -3 for complexity. Each Prototype roll costs \$11,800 and takes 2d days. Each zombie after that costs \$1,180 (about a month's pay for a soldier!) and takes 11.8 hours of work.

He argues the only reasonable defense against that gambit would be friendly glider interceptors charged with defending their mother-ship dirigible.

Naturally, once a glider has lost altitude and speed in air combat, it would need a long time to exploit rising hot air to soar and engage again. Even so, a game of sudden, deadly ambushes from above is possible. Such fighting would more resemble a hawk's dive onto an unsuspecting sparrow than dogs circling each other. The sparrow might be an airship, or another glider. However, once that silent, deadly dive is over, the hawk would find it hard to try again.

Shooting Stars

What the Russian theorist doesn't know is that some armies are working in secret research centers toward the possibility of repeated attacks in a short period. The solution would also make the glider combat aircraft much more lethal all around: temporary power.

Steam engines – with their continual power generation – are basically unsuitable for winged aircraft. Still, power needn't be available at all times. A glider that could rely on some thrust for special occasions could use it to get out of emergencies, regain altitude quickly, or zoom against a target.

Top-secret experiments have been made with flywheels storing energy, connected with airscrew propellers. To date, these have been unsatisfactory. However, a revolutionary alternative is actually as ancient as medieval Chinese warfare: solid-propellant rockets. Booster rockets can be ignited when needed, providing immediate acceleration. With a number of these rockets installed under the wings, gliders might achieve "impossible" performance. A secret desert air base in Nevada is trying this method; test pilots call their new aircraft "Shooting Stars" – true in more than one sense.

In theory, such a temporarily powered aircraft could fight enemy dirigibles from a strictly defensive stance. It could scramble on alarm from ground bases under its own power, climbing to engage enemy bomber airships.

GLIDING

Rules for powered flight, and some directions for gliding flight, can be found under *Controlled Gliding* (p. B56) and *Flying Combat* (p. B398). In addition to the rules for *Basic Vehicle Combat* (pp. B467-470), the following optional rules can provide additional flavor, and complexity, to steampunk aircraft.

Glide Ratio

A key optional statistic for sailplanes is the glide ratio. This is the ratio of forward movement to downward movement (or loss of altitude), when maintaining constant speed, in calm air. For instance, someone with the Gliding advantage (p. B56) has an average glide ratio of 10, since his Basic Move in flight is 10 and – in order to maintain that speed – he has to lose 1 yard of altitude per turn.

Modern sailplanes have a glide ratio ranging from 30 to 50, or even 70 for high-performance models. They are carefully streamlined, have extremely long wings, and are built with

The Gliding Cape

Action-oriented adventurers should see the hypothetical utility in a portable, concealable glider. Sure, it's cinematic, but no more so than much of a steampunk world . . .

The gadget resembles a very bulky cape or mantle, with thick seams going down from the wearer's shoulders. It features a body harness and handles on the front edges. When correctly operated, the handles activate the ribs hidden in the seams, snapping them open behind the wearer's shoulders. The ribs also telescope out, tenting the fabric. The cape thus becomes a sort of small steerable parachute, resembling a single wing, which the wearer can control by moving his arms.

It's impossible to take off with it, but it can save the hero if he jumps from a New York skyscraper or the Eiffel Tower.

Once he's landed, the user needs 2d seconds to take it off and bundle it up so that he can carry it under one arm, or a full minute to prepare it to be worn again as a cape. If he tries to walk away without doing either, he will drag a long "tail" on the ground, thus suffering -1 to DX and Move (and the cape might get caught on something).

This can be treated as a vehicle (see p. 29), or as the Flight advantage with a Gadget Limitation.

Flight

see p. B56

Gliding Cape: Flight (Breakable, HP 11, DR 2, SM 0, -45%; Can Be Stolen, Must be forcefully removed, -10%; Controlled Gliding, -45%; No Signature, +20%; Nuisance Effect, Cumbersome after landing (see text), -5%; Winged, -25%) [8]. 8 points.

No Signature reflects the fact that, as long as this is worn as a cape, opponents may not realize the user can fly away! The cape is obvious *while in use*, of course.

advanced, lightweight materials; this figure was lower (around 25) for gliders of the 1930s. With no streamlining and the looks of an early airplane, a steampunk vehicle will probably have an average glide ratio of 15.

Piloting a Steampunk Glider

Steampunk inventions are more dangerous than mass-produced vehicles out of real life, and gliders are no exception. The skill used is Piloting (Glider) for true aircraft and for the gliding cape, if it's treated as a vehicle. If the latter is a gadget providing the Flight advantage (see above), the user can use Aerobatics (see p. B174).

Taking Off

A glider takeoff requires a regular skill roll (see p. B214) when carried out normally, such as being towed by something powered (in all likelihood, a ground vehicle). If launched by a steam catapult, a control roll (as per p. B466) is required; the same applies if dropped from a mother-ship trapeze or pushed off a cliff, but with a -2 penalty. Not achieving a speed above stall speed in the first turn after takeoff automatically means an uncontrollable dive. See p. B469 to pull out of that!

ABOUT *GURPS*

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Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata pages for all *GURPS* releases are available on our website – see above.

GURPS rules and statistics in this magazine are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*. Page references that begin with B refer to that book.

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