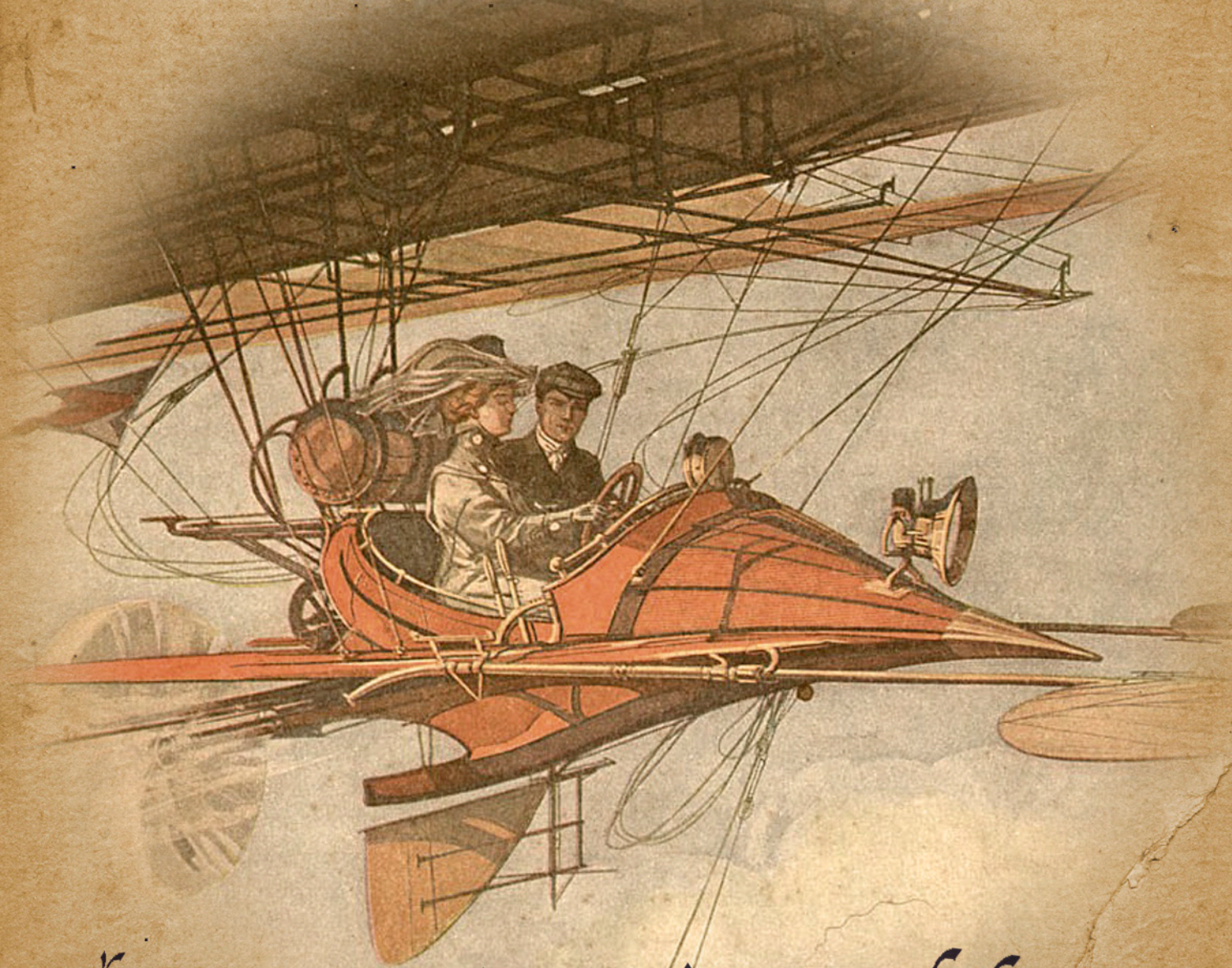# The Imperial Age

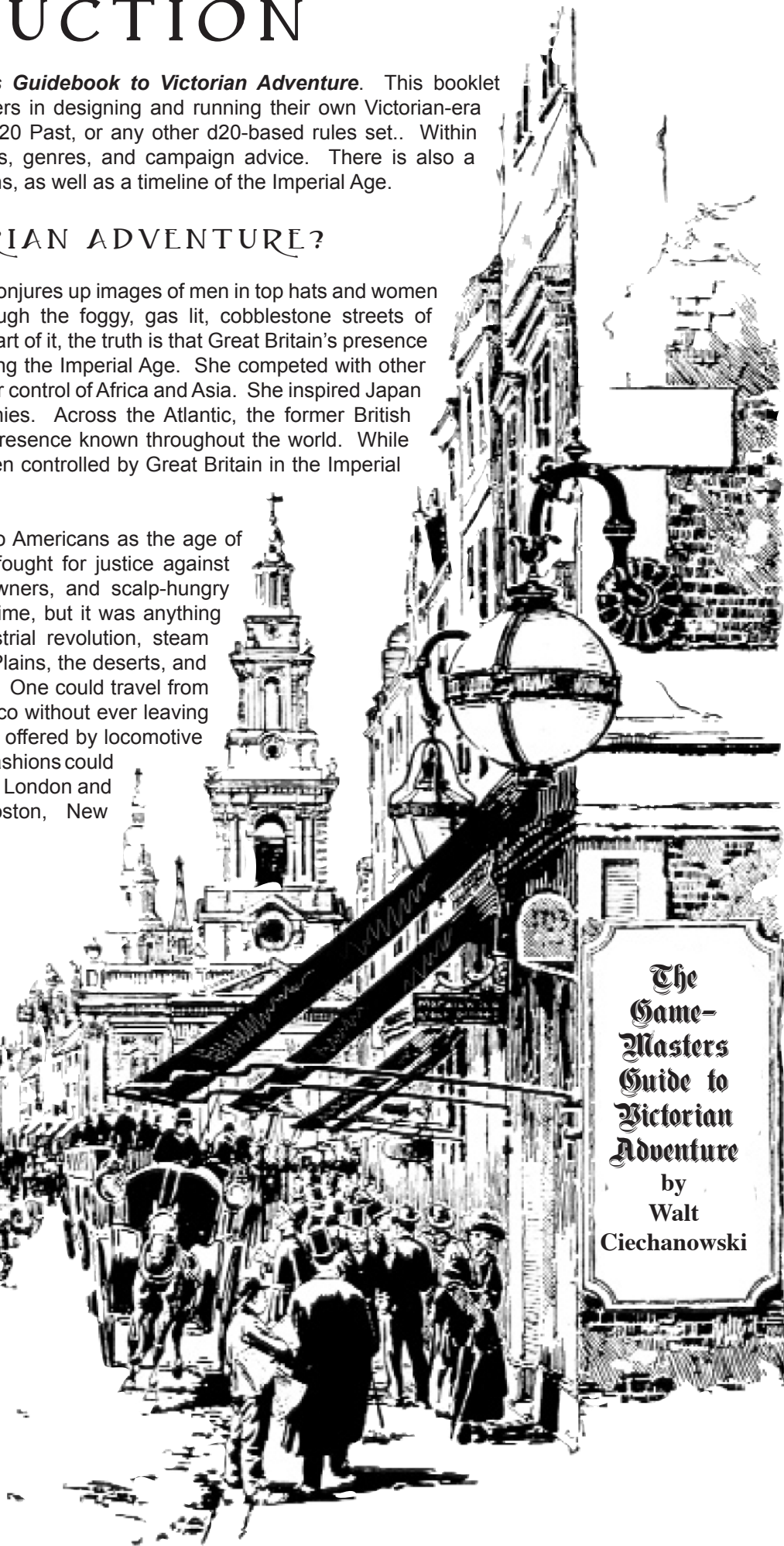# The GameMaster's Guidebook to Victorian Adventure

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to **the Game Master's Guidebook to Victorian Adventure**. This booklet is designed to assist game masters in designing and running their own Victorian-era campaigns, using Imperial Age, d20 Past, or any other d20-based rules set.. Within these pages are Victorian themes, genres, and campaign advice. There is also a selection of new feats and weapons, as well as a timeline of the Imperial Age.

WHAT IS VICTORIAN ADVENTURE?

The term "Victorian" immediately conjures up images of men in top hats and women in bustles taking a hansom through the foggy, gas lit, cobblestone streets of London. While this is certainly a part of it, the truth is that Great Britain's presence was felt throughout the world during the Imperial Age. She competed with other European (and native) powers over control of Africa and Asia. She inspired Japan to westernise its society and armies. Across the Atlantic, the former British colonies were also making their presence known throughout the world. While the entire world may not have been controlled by Great Britain in the Imperial Age, it certainly felt her influence.

The Imperial Age is best known to Americans as the age of the Old West, when gunfighters fought for justice against evil cattle barons, corrupt landowners, and scalp-hungry Indians. It is seen as a simpler time, but it was anything but simple. Driven by the industrial revolution, steam engines roared across the Great Plains, the deserts, and even the Rocky Mountains. One could travel from New York to San Francisco without ever leaving the "modern" comforts offered by locomotive travel. The latest fashions could be shipped from London and Paris to Boston, New

The
Game-
Masters
Guide to
Victorian
Adventure
by
Walt
Ciechanowski

York, New Orleans, and beyond.

In short, while most campaigns will probably be set in London or, more generally, the British Empire (and early Imperial Age supplements support this), Imperial Age campaigns can take place anywhere in the world throughout the 1880s and 1890s, combining Western influences with local culture. Add in a dose of magic or steampunk, and you are truly limited only by your imagination when designing an Imperial Age campaign.

EAST OF WHAT?

Throughout this booklet, the term "Western" refers to North American and European cultures, especially those influenced by Great Britain, France, and Germany, while "Eastern" refers to Asian cultures. Victorians often used the terms "occidental" and "oriental" to mean "west" and "east" respectively, but this author has chosen to use the more familiar terms. The author realizes that the use of "western" and "eastern" is inaccurate and controversial, but it provides a convenient shorthand as well as displays the British mindset of the Imperial Age.

This author has also chosen to refer to the descendants of pre-Columbian Americans as "Native Americans" rather than "Indians." While "Indian" is the term used throughout the Imperial Age, a distinction was desired between peoples of the Indian subcontinent and the Americas. It should be noted that Americans of European descent usually mean "Native American" when they say "Indian," while British subjects tend to use the term to mean anyone from South Asia or Southeast Asia (although the term is increasingly limited to the subcontinent). In this work "Indian" refers exclusively to the peoples of the Indian subcontinent.

IMPERIAL AGE THEMES

There are common themes that run through the literature of the period. GMs can incorporate these themes into their Imperial Age campaigns in order to enhance historical immersion. These themes are intertwined with the genres that are discussed in the next section.

TRAVEL

Victorian readers hungered for stories that would take them to exotic (usually Asian) places, such as Bangkok, Bombay, Calcutta, Hong Kong, and Shanghai. While the steamship and the Suez Canal dramatically cut travel times around the world, many people couldn't afford to take long journeys to other lands. Travel novels filled that need, allowing readers to explore exotic places and cultures through the senses of the characters. Western households that could afford it imported carpets, furniture, clothes, and foodstuffs from the exotic East.

While a travel novel in and of itself would hardly make a good adventure, GMs should keep in mind that the journey is often as important as the destination when designing exploratory adventures, especially in comfortable trains and ships (**Around the World in Eighty Days** (1872) is a prime example of fusing the travel and adventure themes). In addition, the lost world genre is a combination of the travel novel and historical romance. These lost worlds were peppered with liberal borrowings from real world exotic or historical cultures, such as Romans, pirates, and Crusaders.

WESTERNISATION

Another important theme in the Imperial Age is westernisation. Westernisation is essentially a polite way of saying "abandoning your native cultures and beliefs and replacing them with ours, primarily for our economic benefit." While westernisation does include the spreading of Christianity to the rest of the world, the term goes much further. The British, with varying degrees of success, transported their civil service model to other cultures. Railroads, telegraphs, and other machines found their way to India, China, and Japan. Combat tactics changed forever as the rifle replaced the spear and bow and the machine gun tore through charging armies. Some leaders, such as the Emperor of Japan, saw westernisation as a necessity in order to compete with imperial cultures.

Westernisation also included political dominance. Many early trade agreements turned into imperial influence and eventually conquest. The two competing models were imperialism and colonialism. Imperialism left native cultures largely intact, with local rulers that swore fealty to the ruling country. The ruling country would only interfere when it was convenient, providing

oversight and modernizing the nation (to the Victorian mind, "modernization" and "westernisation" were the same thing). Colonialism, on the other hand, was direct rule by the ruling country, often displacing local populations with its own people. Colonialism was a more popular option in places where the natives were loosely organized and resources were easy to get.

SOCIETY

Society plays a large role in Victorian England. Officially, British society is divided into two classes, noble and commoner. Each is represented by a House in Parliament. Industry and trade, however, made some commoners very rich, and although they could never be nobles (which is a birthright), they shared little in common with the rest of their class. Victorian society, therefore, understood that British society was in fact made up of three classes. The British middle class apes the upper class in ritual and some middle class gentlemen are actually wealthier than some of their "betters." Faced with dwindling finances, many upper class bachelors take middle class or foreign wives to acquire wealth. Society discourages such cross-pollination, of course, and each class has its own constantly shifting rules of etiquette and manner. Classes are encouraged to keep to themselves, interacting with each other only when necessary.

Two concepts to keep in mind when using society are politeness and scandal. Politeness extends beyond etiquette; there are simply things that a member of society will not do. Open displays of emotion were not permitted in polite society. Men, especially heads of households, will keep from discussing business or delivering troubling news to women. A common practice is for the head of the family to read a newspaper and then relate appropriate news to his wife and daughters. A gentleman or his wife would never be seen doing manual labour, that's what servants are for. And although the coin had long since left circulation, the guinea was used to quote prices for art, horses, land and professional fees.

Scandal is the one thing that a member of society must avoid. Having a mistress, for example, is not nearly as bad as society finding out about it. Many marital partners will quietly accept that their partner has a paramour as long as they are discreet. This extends to other vices as well, especially overindulgence. It is also scandalous for the upper class to engage in business (patronage is a different matter).

Other nations have their own class systems. In America, for example, land ownership has created a de facto elite even though "all men are created equal." Former slaves and other Americans of African descent also tend to be treated as a lower class. In Russia, the peasantry resented the noble landowners, especially those that had formerly been serfs (emancipation occurred only a decade prior to the Imperial Age). These sentiments will come to a head in the beginning of the next century. In Japan, the Emperor clashes with the samurai class, which he intends to abolish. In the colonies and empires, social classes are divided by race and ethnicity as well.

Society provides many hooks for campaigns. A broke baron may try to court an American heiress. A noble may find himself in love with a peasant. A samurai might not wish to lay down his sword for the emperor (see the movie ***The Last Samurai*** (2003)).

New Occupation: Heir

Heirs are the elite sons and daughters of powerful magnates, influential nobles, and imperial monarchs. Unlike dilettantes, however, they are bound by their lineage to certain responsibilities, with the assumption that they might someday rise to lead their families into the future . . . assuming the stars are properly aligned and they do nothing to jeopardize their birthright.

Prerequisite: Age 21+.

Skills: Choose two of the following skills as permanent class skills. If a skill you select is already a class skill, you gain a +1 competence bonus on checks using that skill.

Craft (visual art or writing) (Int), Knowledge (art, business, civics, current events, or history) (Int), Perform (act, dance, keyboards, percussion instruments, sing, stringed instruments, or wind instruments) (Cha), Ride (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis).

Pre-Selected Feat: An heir must choose the Educated feat as one of her starting feats at 1st level.

Reputation Bonus Increase: +1.

Wealth Bonus Increase: +6. An heir may permanently reduce her Reputation bonus by 1 to increase her starting wealth bonus by an additional +1d6; this expenditure must be made before the character begins play. As long as her Reputation bonus is +1 or higher, an heir's wealth bonus can never drop below 10.

SEXUALITY

Whether warranted or not, those living in the Imperial Age are considered prudish (derisively called "Victorian morality") when it comes to sexual matters. While this perception is generally limited to the upper classes in general and British society in particular, it can be said that most western literature was very delicate in regards to sex. Polite conversation would never include any sexual topics. While this attitude was maintained in public, very different attitudes arose in private. Courtship was a very formal affair and allowed for little time between prospective partners to get to know each other. Marriages were based on social desirability, not romantic love. This enforced prudery fuelled interest in literature about sexually charged vampires and dashing rogues.

In an Imperial Age campaign, such a situation often leads to married people having affairs, or single people (often male) sneaking around to be with women that he could never marry. These affairs can be used for blackmailing purposes, or allow for unlikely characters to have intimate information. Even player characters can use this to their advantage, using their wiles to gain benefits.

PROGRESS & INDUSTRIALIZATION

Another key theme in the Imperial Age is progress. Science has captured the imagination of the public, and there seems little that science will not achieve. Railroads, telegraphs, and steamships connect continents. A canal has been dug through the Suez. Factories churn out machine-made products. Gaslight keeps cities alive well into the night. Electric light bulbs and telephones are making their debuts.

This scientific and technological progress has fired the imagination of novelists. Jules Verne would write about vessels that could swim beneath the ocean, take to the air, or even shot into space. H.G. Wells explored the concept of a time machine, first in the short story "The Chronic Argonauts," (1888) and later his more well known novel *The Time Machine* (1895). The latter novel was in part an allegory on social classes, with the far future being divided between the beautiful Eloi, a childlike race with everything provided for them, and the hideous Morlocks, a bestial, industrial race that provides for the Eloi, who is in fact their food source. Neither race is as intelligent as the time travelling protagonist.
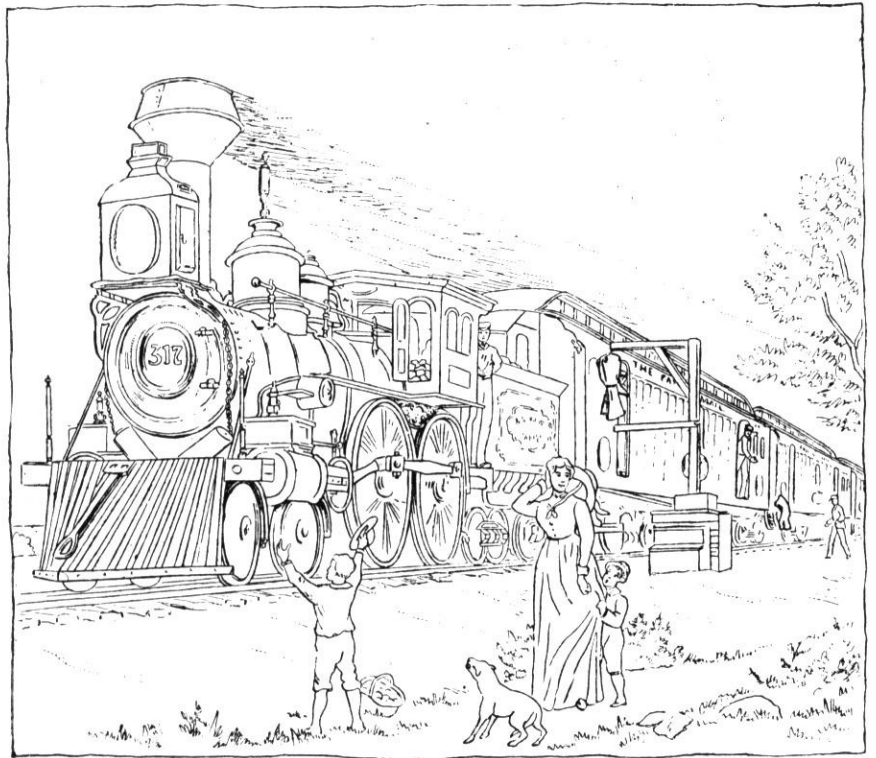
While perhaps not as extreme as the Morlock future, Progress and Industrialization in the Imperial Age did have its downsides. The poor flocked to the cities in the hopes of finding factory work. What they found was low wages, poor working conditions, and crammed slums (also known as rookeries). Smokestacks belched black smoke into the air and stained clothes, obscured vision, and, in extreme cases, caused suffocation or drowning (as those who lost their way fell into rivers). Disease tore through the densely populated rookeries. Human evolution, promoted by Charles Darwin, suggested that man was little more than an advanced machine, possibly with no God to guide him.

Needless to say, this dark side of the industrial revolution and evolutionary thought also fuelled novelists. A few decades prior to the Imperial Age, Mary Shelley wrote *Frankenstein, or a Modern Prometheus* as a warning about man daring to play God. The works of Charles Dickens, many of which showcased the plight of the London poor, are still very popular. During the Imperial Age, Robert Louis Stevenson would combine science and the restraints of polite society in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde.*

REVOLUTION

While America and France had their major revolutions in the previous century, the nineteenth century was almost continually marked with revolutionary fervour. Many dissatisfied subjects and citizens, mainly from the lower classes of their respective societies, would stoke the fires of revolution. Partly spurred on by Karl Marx's Communist Manifesto, popular revolutions exploded across the European continent. For the most part, these revolutions were suppressed. Communism made a resurgence during the Franco-Prussian War in 1871, when a socialist government emerged to take over Paris. This Paris Commune reigned for two months until it was defeated by the regular army. Communism would remain an issue throughout the European continent throughout the Imperial Age, although somewhat curiously Britain and America were virtually untouched by the fires of communism.

All western nations were subject to anarchism. Anarchism was the term given to any movement that sought violent overthrow of the government. While some anarchists were communists, anarchism was a movement all its own. Indeed, any group that used terrorist tactics to influence government was considered an anarchist. Significant anarchist activities throughout the Imperial Age included assassination attempts on the German, Russian, Chilean and British leaders (the attempt on Russian Tsar Alexander II was successful). In Britain, anarchism was equated with Irish separatists (the Fenians). While Fenian terrorist attacks were primarily used as scare tactics, they made assassination attempts on Queen Victoria and stabbed the Chief Secretary of Ireland to death in 1884.

Communism and related equality movements could provide interesting background colour or the motive behind intrigues. Anarchist attacks can add an element of surprise to any Imperial Age campaign. Indeed, the PCs could be in a public building or park on an unrelated adventure when an anarchist bomb or assassination attempt springs out of nowhere. In a covert campaign, the PCs could be secret agents tasked with eliminating anarchist threats.

THE OCCULT

While the Imperial Age is marked by increased interest and application of science and technology, magic and folklore did not go quietly into the night. Indeed, throughout the world, people continued to make offerings to fairies or place wards upon their households and children. Victorian literature tended to portray faeries as tiny winged humanoids or small humans with stocking caps (these latter types were usually called elves). Sometimes these creatures would be portrayed as stunningly beautiful humanoids, especially in Scandinavia (it is this perception of the elf on which the d20 version is modelled).

The Imperial Age also saw the rise of another phenomenon, the practice of magic as a science. In previous centuries magic was considered the province of religion, either as miracles bestowed by the gods, or as a tool of demons or devils. Occultists in the Imperial Age, however, believed that magic was a natural force that could be harnessed through precise rituals (hermetic magic or "magick"). This led to a rise of occult organizations such as the Theosophical Society, the Martinist Order, and the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Many of these organizations modelled themselves after the Freemasons, known for their secret gestures and rites of initiation. Members still met in secret, as practicing magic was still not acceptable to the general public. French author Leo Taxil caused quite a stir when he invented a black magic order, the Palladian Order, as a secret cult of Freemasons.

Spiritualism, or the ability to speak with the dead, was also prevalent in the Imperial Age. The American Fox sisters became world-renowned for summoning spirits that would make their presence known by rapping (a knocking sound). They were discredited in 1888 when one of the sisters revealed how she could make rapping sounds by cracking her toe joint. Still, spiritualism continued to be popular throughout the Imperial Age and gained some legitimacy in the scientific community.

Although a religion and not a magical practice, Christian Science, founded by Mary Baker Eddy in 1875, taught (and still teaches today) that, since man is made in God's image, man is perfect. It is man's own misperceptions of the material world that causes injury and through special prayers designed to see the spiritual reality man can heal himself. While not specifically banned, many Christian Scientists refuse medical attention, believing that all they need is the power of prayer.

GMs that wish to incorporate the occult into Imperial Age campaigns will have to determine whether any or all of these occult beliefs are true. It is possible for a campaign to have fairies while hermetic magic doesn't work. **Imperial Age Magick** provides a system for using hermetic magic in a campaign, while **Imperial Age Spiritualism** and **Imperial Age Alienist** add mediums and psychics, respectively.

IMPERIAL AGE GENRES

There are many different genres in the literature and of the Imperial Age. An Imperial Age campaign may centre upon one genre, incorporate a few genres, or even shift from one genre to the other between adventures. Some common genres are explained below.

One notable and very Victorian exception to this list is the historical novel. While very popular during the Imperial Age, the historical novel would be of little use to GMs running Imperial Age campaigns (unless used to flesh out the histories of Imperial Age characters).

FOREIGN ADVENTURE

With advances in communication and travel, the world was becoming a smaller place. As empires and colonies grew, more and more stories about these far away lands would intrigue those at home. H. Rider Haggard wrote stories set in Africa, many featuring British explorer and big game hunter Allan Quatermain and jungle queen She. Rudyard Kipling does the same for India in **The Jungle Book** and **The Jungle Book II.** Explorer Sir Richard Burton wrote many travel novels before and during the early part of the Imperial Age (he died in 1890). Sir Richard also translated **The Arabian Nights** and the **Kama Sutra**.

Foreign adventures provide escapist fantasies for those locked in the restrictions of society. They feature interesting protagonists in exotic locales, coming into conflict with savage tribes, scimitar-wielding Arabs, and cutthroat pirates. Major female characters, especially those in remote locals, tend to be strong, independent, and fierce, until the right man comes along to tame them. While these tales are prototypes of the later pulp foreign adventures, Imperial Age protagonists did not have to be especially heroic. Allan Quatermain cares little for Sir Henry's missing brother; he simply offers to guide Sir Henry and crew to **King Solomon's Mines** for money. In A**round the World in Eighty Days**, Verne's Phileas Fogg wishes to prove a point with his reputation on the line.

A subset of the foreign adventure genre is the lost world adventure. While lost world literature would hit its stride in the pulps of the following century, there are many lost world stories in the Imperial Age. While most are arguably "travel stories," albeit with the blank parts of the map fictitiously filled in, other lost worlds were more fantastic. Jules Verne took his readers to underground worlds (**Journey to the Centre of the Earth** (1864)), under the sea (**Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea** (1869)), and even to the moon (**From the Earth to the Moon** (1865)). In 1882, American author and politician Ignatius Donnelly would publish **Atlantis: The Antediluvian World**, contending that Atlantis really did exist and was now sunk beneath the Atlantic Ocean.

GMs running foreign adventures should keep in mind the cultural differences between the traveller (or colonial) and the natives. Some authors actually used native cultures to point out the flaws in their own. GMs running other types of Imperial

Age campaigns can also bring a bit of foreign adventure home, either by having PCs or NPCs from other cultures arrive in the city or by having a colonial bring foreign ways and ideas back with him (Helen Blavatsky's Theosophical Society was transformed when she merged it with Indian religion and philosophy). One common place for foreign adventure, the Indian Subcontinent, is covered in Imperial Age: British India.

While intended for the 1930s pulp era, two products in Adamant Entertainment's Thrilling Tales series, Thuggee and Perils of the Orient can provide inspiration and stock characters for Imperial Age campaigns.

DETECTIVE STORIES

One of the iconic images of Victorian fiction is a particular consulting detective with a deerstalker cap. For many, Sherlock Holmes embodies the Imperial Age, and his first case, **A Study in Scarlet**, is set at the dawn of the Imperial Age. Holmes was the forerunner of the modern detective, using deductive reasoning, disguise, and chemistry to solve his cases.

The detective story, of course, predates Sherlock Holmes. Doyle, like other detective authors, was influenced by Edgar Allen Poe's C. Auguste Dupin, a detective that appeared in three stories in the 1840s. While Dupin was not the first literary detective, many of the common detective tropes were established by Poe: the thoughtful detective, the locked room mystery, the least likely suspect being the criminal, clues hidden in plain sight, and the less-gifted confidante. Old Sleuth, created by Harlan P. Halsey in 1872, is a New York City detective that gave his nickname to private detectives in general. Other writers, including Charles Dickens and T.S. Eliot, would also contribute to the detective story.

By the Imperial Age, detective stories usually contained certain elements that a GM should keep in mind when drafting his own mysteries. In addition to those listed above, elements included incapable police investigators, lengthy questioning by the detective, and false suspects. An important element to keep in mind, especially if magic or superscience is involved, is for the GM to play fair with the players. The detective story is a mystery, and the players will only derive satisfaction from solving the mystery if they can follow the clues and arrive at the solution themselves.

GM's running detective stories should check out the **Scientific Detective** advanced class by Adamant Entertainment. GMs that want to create detective stories in a magical Victorianesque world should read Randall Garrett's Lord Darcy tales. While set in an alternate "modern" world (primarily the 1960s and 1970s), Lord Darcy's world resembles Victorian England in dress, custom, and technology. Lord Darcy himself is not a magician, but uses the Holmesian method to solve crimes when magical means cannot.
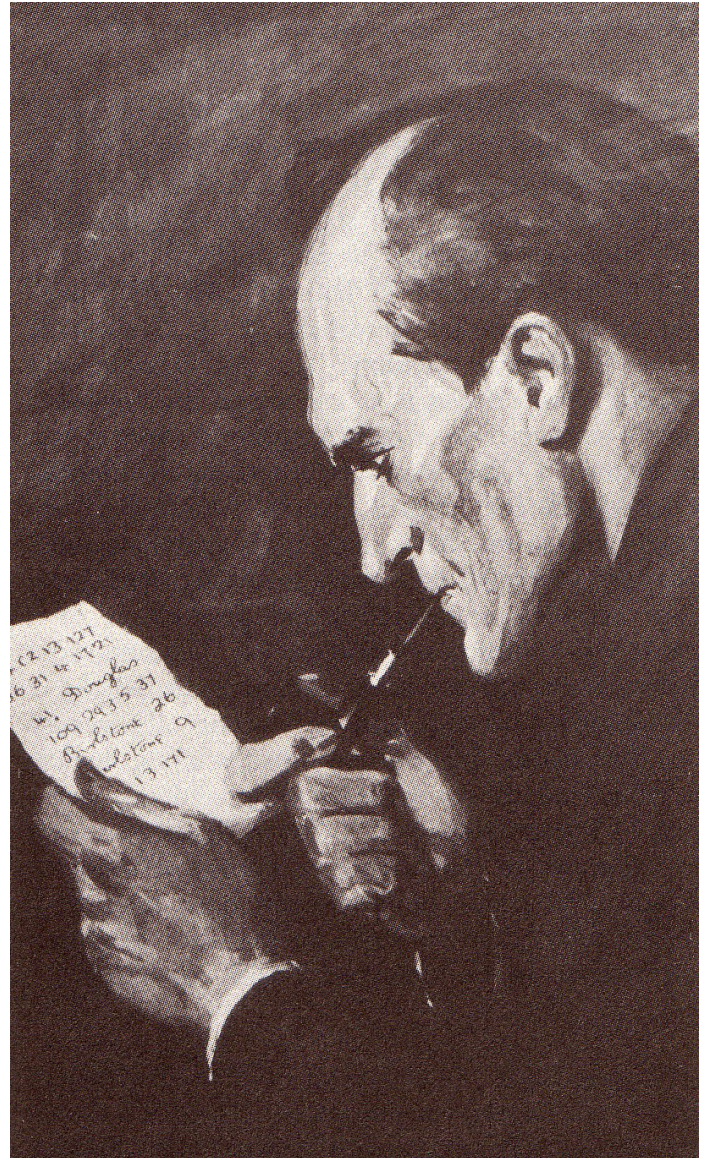
HORROR

Horror stories were very popular in the Victorian era. While the Gothic era is generally considered pre-Victorian (or, at best, early Victorian), Gothic themes and tales remained prevalent throughout the era. By the end of the Imperial Age, the Gothic tale would again take centre stage, with Bram Stoker's **Dracula** (1897) burning certain Gothic tropes into popular culture. Progress and industrialization would also provide fodder for horror stories, with one of the first influential stories, **Frankenstein; or the Modern Prometheus** (1818, revised in 1831), being written during the Gothic era. Dr. Frankenstein would provide a template for later mad scientists that would cross lines man was not intended to cross by creating life.

Horror tales typically use one of the Imperial Age themes and add a horrific twist, usually ending badly for the protagonist. Victor Frankenstein, pushing progress beyond where man was meant to go, loses his bride and friends to the Monster before perishing in the Arctic; the Monster hates what he has become and commits suicide. Dr. Jekyll's Mr. Hyde persona represents a shedding of the rules of society. The Invisible Man doesn't quite perfect his formula. He feels superior to those around him and is willing to sacrifice others for the perfection of his invention. In The Invisible Man (1897), the title character is driven insane by his permanent invisibility, entertains notions of world domination, and is, in the end, beaten to death.

The classic Victorian horror creature is, of course, the vampire. The modern interpretation of the modern vampire myth has its roots in the same story-writing contest that produced Frankenstein. *The Vampyre* (1819) was written by Lord Byron's physician and partly modelled on Lord Byron. This novel marks the point in popular culture when the vampire was transformed from a folkloric demon into the aristocratic monster immortalized almost eighty years later in *Dracula*. Another popular Victorian vampire story, *Varney the Vampire* (1845), placed the aristocratic vampire Sir Varney in the mid 1700s. *Carmilla* (1872) would add some new angles to the vampire myth. While female vampires became increasingly common in Victorian literature, Carmilla (or Countess Millarca Karnstein) is portrayed as a lesbian. She preys exclusively on women and develops romantic feelings for some of them (quite shocking for a contemporary reader and a prime example of mixing horror with the theme of sexuality). The other major angle is Carmilla's shape changing ability. Rather than transforming into the expected bat, Carmilla changes into a cat. Carmilla would be a major influence on Bram Stoker, and its placement in the Imperial Age actually makes it prime source material.

Perhaps the ultimate "horror story" of the Imperial Age is the Martian invasion in *The War of the Worlds* (1898). While other Imperial Age themes can be read into it (such as extreme versions of Colonialism and Westernization, as the Martians clear the Earth and transform it for their own use), at its heart *The War of the Worlds* is a horror story. The protagonist is helpless, and it takes a deux ex machina to save the world.

GMs running horror adventures can take inspiration from Imperial Age themes. Horror does not have to have a preternatural or super-scientific angle. A medical scientist that kidnaps street children or prostitutes and infects them with a deadly disease in the name of science is just as horrific (if not more so) as a vampire stalking the West End. A GM can also draw from real literature. Perhaps Dr. Frankenstein really did exist, and a passing Russian steamer recently thawed his Monster, frozen in the arctic for decades. Perhaps, as in the movie version of *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* (2003), someone else has come across the Invisibility formula.

Adamant Entertainment's *Monster Hunter* advanced class is perfect for player characters that must confront these horrors.

MAGICAL FANTASY

Even with the great technological advances of the Imperial Age many people still believe in myths and folklore, such as faeries, elves, and curses. Indeed, a family curse regarding a spectral hound drives the plot of the Sherlock Holmes novel, *The Hound of the Baskervilles,* and a vampire is believed to be sucking a baby's blood in the Holmes short story "*The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire.*" While the truth in both cases turned out to be mundane, the causes are believed by some to be preternatural.

In 1858, George MacDonald would pen *Phantastes: A Faerie Romance for Men and Women*. The protagonist, Anodos, is transported to Fairy-Land and has adventures there before awakening (which implies that the whole adventure was just a dream). MacDonald would influence later authors such as Lewis Carroll, C.S. Lewis, and J.R.R. Tolkien. In Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* (1871), a young girl named Alice enters a fantastic world filled with curious creatures such as the White Rabbit, the Mad Hatter, Tweedledee and Tweedledum, the Cheshire Cat, and Humpty Dumpty. Alice finds potions and food that make her shrink and grow. In the end, like Anodos, Alice discovers it had all been a dream.

While mentioned in the Detective Story, the Lord Darcy tales are full of magic. In Lord Darcy's world, magic is acceptable (except for black magic), codified, and understood. Magic is considered as logical as science.

A few role-playing games have also used the idea of advancing traditional medieval fantasy into the Victorian world. Such an Imperial Age campaign would have elves, dwarves, and orcs integrated into society and magic would be practiced more openly. In a darker campaign, the world appears mundane on the surface, but evil sprites and goblins lurk in the shadows, tempting and preying on man.

Adamant Entertainment's *Imperial Age: Faerie* contains many ideas on running Imperial Age magical fantasy campaigns.

THE OLD WEST

Imperial Age campaigns set in America will probably focus on the Old West. The American frontier was officially erased in 1890, although the tropes of the Old West still continued through the rest of the Imperial Age and beyond. The Old West is one of the most vivid examples of American mythology, and many people of other cultures believed that all Americans were like the gunfighters of the dime novels. Indeed, during the Imperial Age, "American" and "cowboy" are synonymous.

The growing railroad network and the Homestead Act were primarily responsible for the rapid settling of the frontier. New towns sprang up along the railroads overnight. Native American tribes were continually pushed aside to make room for these new tracks, telegraph lines, and settlements, leading to hostilities. The 1870s was a decade in which USA cavalry and various Native American tribes were almost constantly at war. Conflicts also arose between farmers and ranchers, as ranchers driving cattle would often allow them to graze on farmland. As the government placed the burden of protection on the farmers themselves, both sides hired gunmen to assert their rights. These Range Wars would last throughout the Imperial Age (the movie *Open Range* (2003), set in 1882 Montana, highlights this theme). Buffalo herds were hunted to extinction, many shot at for sport from the windows of passenger trains.

Many Europeans and coastal Americans would venture into the frontier to make a better life for themselves. In the American dime novels, gunfighters became the equivalent of wandering knights, championing causes for those unable to protect themselves. Even villains achieved popularity, as the exploits of Billy the Kid and the James Gang were fictionalised. Buffalo Bill brought the Old West to Europe with a travelling show toward the end of the Imperial Age. In short, the Old West provides many opportunities for GMs to mine for adventures.

SCIENTIFIC ADVENTURE

The scientific adventure is another popular literary genre of the Imperial Age, primarily due to the works of Jules Verne. Scientific adventure involved the creation of new technologies through which to have adventures. Unlike the modern "steampunk" genre, scientific romances rarely resulted in wholesale alterations to society. In addition to the flying Albatross and the submarine Nautilus, many other inventions made their way into scientific adventures, especially in American juvenile stories. The popular Frank Reade short stories involved the young inventor and his descendents building such devices as a steam-powered robot, a steam-powered garden, and an electric-powered airship. H.G. Wells even puts time into play with *The Time Machine*.

A Mexican Mystery (1888) by British author W. Grove, deserves special mention. The antagonist is a self-aware locomotive, possibly possessed by a demon. The Engine spews steam and feeds itself with clawed arms that project from its sides. It is one of the earliest "machine revolt" stories, and the sequel, *The Wreck of a World* (1889), has so many other engines becoming self-aware and hostile that mankind is driven off North America.

While "steampunk" is a modern term, essentially placing the tropes of cyberpunk in the Victorian era, steampunk can add very interesting elements to an Imperial Age campaign (and is more fully dealt with in the upcoming *Imperial Age Engines* supplement). Steampunk is the scientific adventure taken to the next level. Factory smokestacks dominate the landscape, churning out steam and brass versions of future technology like airships, tanks, and submarines. War veterans have bulky mechanical prosthetics. Spaceships take explorers to the moon and Venus while large burrowing machines take them to the Hollow Earth.

WAR

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Imperial Age is one of almost continuous warfare. While continental Europe remained largely at guarded peace (with two exceptions, the Franco-Prussian War and the Russo-Turkish War), many wars took place throughout the world. The United States of America fought various Native American tribes in the (American) Indian Wars throughout the 1870 and 1880s. Japan and China fought for dominance of the Pacific. Great Britain fought many wars in Africa and Asia. France fought China over control of Southeast Asia. The Ottoman Empire had to deal with independent-minded Balkan states that were aided by Russia. European and Americans attempted to influence and control East Asia.

An adventure or even an entire campaign could be developed around one or more of these conflicts. Players could be soldiers or sailors for either side or simply caught in the crossfire, struggling to keep some semblance of normalcy in a recently occupied city. Even if the campaign does not take place in a war zone, war can be used as background colour. Sherlock Holmes' sidekick, Dr. Watson, was wounded while serving in the medical corps during the Second Afghan War.

Many older European military men could have served in the Crimean War, while American military men could have fought in the American Civil War on either side. English campaigns set at the beginning of the Imperial Age could include soldiers fresh off the battlefields of the Zulu War.

The foreign invasion was a popular war sub-genre, kicked off a decade before the Imperial Age with George Tomkyns Chesney's "*The Battle of Dorking*" (1871). This short story posited a devastating invasion of Great Britain by an unnamed German-speaking nation. The short story came out in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War. The British public was shocked by how well the upstart Prussians invaded France and they believed that the newly consolidated German Empire would soon attack them. Many imitations of "*The Battle of Dorking*" would appear throughout the Imperial Age, culminating with the invasion by Mars in *The War of the Worlds*.

IMPERIAL AGE WARS

Below is a list of wars that took place during the Imperial Age. In most cases, the Victorian contemporary rather than the present name is used for the war (e.g. Second Afghan War rather than Second Anglo-Afghan War). After the title is the year or years of the war, followed by the main combatants. Victors are listed first. In cases where there is no clear victor, the party that benefited most at the end of the war is listed. Note that, in many cases, fighting was not continuous throughout the given period.

War	Combatants
Apache Wars (1871-1886)	USA vs. Apache and Navajo
Aceh War (1873-1903)	Netherlands vs. Aceh
Second Afghan War (1878-1880)	Britain vs. Afghanistan (with Russian aid)
Saltpetre War (1879-1884)	Chile vs. Bolivia and Peru
Ute War (1879-1880)	USA vs. Ute
Gun War (1880-1881)	Basotho vs. Britain
Transvaal War (1880-1881)	Boers vs. Britain
Sino-French War (1881-1884)	France vs. China
Madagascar War (1883-1885)	France vs. Madagascar
Mahdist War (1884-1899)	Britain vs. Sudan
North-West Rebellion (1885)	Canada vs. Metis
War of Unification (1885)	Bulgaria vs. Serbia
Third Burmese War (1885-1887)	Britain vs. Burma
Pine Ridge Campaign (1890-1891)	USA vs. Sioux
First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895)	Japan vs. China
First Italo-Ethiopean War (1895-1896)	Ethiopia vs. Italy
Zanzibar War (1896)	Britain vs. Zanzibar
Philippine Revolution (1896-1898)	Spain vs. Philippines
Thirty Days War (1897)	Ottoman Empire vs. Greece
Boxer Rebellion (1897-1900)	China vs. Chinese Rebels
Spanish-American War (1898)	USA vs. Spain
Boer War (1899-1902)	Britain vs. Boers
Thousand Days War (1899-1902)	Colombia vs. Colombia (ended by Americans)
Philippine-American War (1899-1902)	USA vs. Philippines

Running an Imperial Age Campaign

There are many ways to approach an Imperial Age campaign. The game master must determine the time period (the official period of the line spans 1880-1900), the F/X involved, and the types of adventures he wishes to run. No single campaign will utilize all of this information; this section is designed to showcase the breath of campaigns possible in the Imperial Age.

Historical Campaign

The historical campaign portrays the Imperial Age as history remembers it, without fantastic elements. Player characters are limited to advanced classes that are grounded in reality, such as Soldiers and Investigators. Quasi-fantastic advanced classes such as the Martial Artist or Scientific Detective are usually allowable, so long as their class features can be rationalized as "realistic" and appropriate. F/X-based characters do exist, but they are not capable of producing F/X abilities. An occult mage in a historical campaign would have many levels of Knowledge (arcane lore), but that would be the extent of his magical training.

Many Imperial Age genres work well in the historical campaign. Without F/X, mysteries are complicated but logical affairs; with enough clues and interpretations, PCs can arrive at the solution of a case. Exploration also works well in a historical campaign, with exotic locations, hidden treasures, and dangerous men and beasts providing much excitement without resorting to F/X. Finally, war adventures also work well in the historical campaign, as it forces PCs to rely on their wits and their skills to survive on the battlefield.

It is important to note that a historical campaign need not ignore superstitions and fears. If a serial killer uses clawed gloves when committing his crimes, local authorities may believe that a werewolf is responsible. A character cursed by a fortune-teller may truly believe that he is suffering bad luck as a result. A deux ex machina may still save the PCs at a convenient moment. In the historical campaign, however, all of these events will either prove logical or coincidental.

Horror Campaign

The horror campaign shares many elements of the historical campaign. Player character choices are limited to the same choices; the Imperial Age world looks and feels exactly the same, and no one ever jumps to the conclusion, beyond what is appropriate for the time, that F/X elements are involved in an adventure.

The key difference in a horror campaign is that F/X elements are usually involved, although they remain firmly in the hands of the Game Master. The PCs may be detectives in a murder case that discover that a vampire is involved. There will be no Monster Hunters, Hermetic Disciples, or Mediums to aid them; the PCs are on their own, using the legends of vampires to aid them. An evil scientist might invent a formula that turns animals into giant, ferocious beasts. A group of cultists may meet in a secret grove to summon a terrible creature from another plane of existence. An engineer may threaten the world with a terrible new invention. The PCs will have only their wits and skills to defeat these threats and, even when a little F/X is given to them, its use is likely limited to the outcome of the current adventure.

Occult Campaign

The occult campaign is similar to the horror campaign except that the PCs can use F/X as well. The world at large is still ignorant of F/X and the outside world looks very much the same as it would in a historical campaign.

The difference, however, is that real monsters lurk in the shadows, and spiritualists and occultists wield true powers.

The occult campaign is likely the default setting for most Imperial Age campaigns. Virtually all Imperial Age advanced classes are available and historical information can be relied on with only limited deviations. Characters with F/X abilities are expected to keep their abilities secret and share that knowledge only when appropriate.

Occult campaigns may focus on science rather than magic and the supernatural. In this sense, 'occult' is used in its meaning as 'hidden' or 'secret', rather than being related to the supernatural. This form of occult campaign features secrets going on behind the scenes of normal history. The television series (and movie) *Wild, Wild West* was about government agents that utilized superscience against their enemies and many of these enemies used superscience as well. So long as the superscience doesn't transform the world it is an occult campaign.

GMs incorporating superscience into an Imperial Age campaign should check out Adamant Entertainment's *Imperial Age: Engines*.

FANTASTIC CAMPAIGN

The fantastic campaign is the occult campaign revealed. Magicians practice magick openly. Luxurious airships take passengers from London to Paris and back. Mediums truly are a switchboard to the afterlife. Massive engines and automatons storm battlefields. Communists march the streets, demanding that magick be equally available to all.

F/X is accepted as part of life in a fantastic campaign. The Game Master determines what F/X is available. Some fantastic campaigns might have open cabals of magicians vying for influence. Another campaign may be pure steampunk. A third might adopt a "kitchen sink" approach, allowing for Spiritualist mediums boarding steam-and-propeller-driven airships in Lisbon bound for a spirit conference in Atlanta.

Fantastic campaigns allow for the widest range of advanced classes, limited only by the type of F/X allowed. Game Masters should be cautious when designing fantastic campaigns, as the addition of too many elements could become confusing or even unplayable.
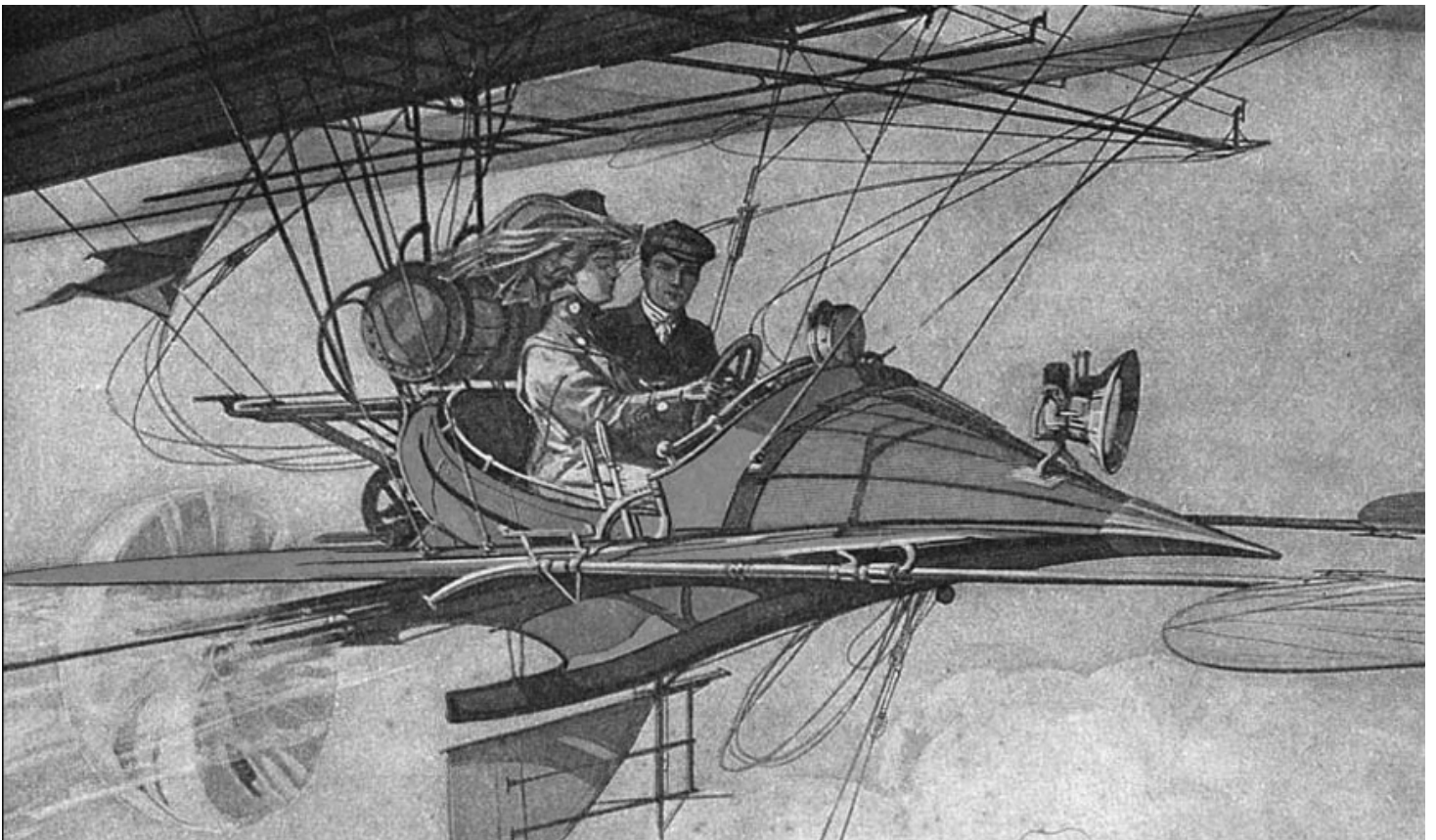
Drifting Campaign

All of the campaign types mentioned above are subject to drift; that is, the campaign could slide from one type to another. Sometimes, this is calculated. A Game Master may design a historical campaign about a PC scientific detective and his occult-savvy companion, only to confront them with a ghoul four adventures in. Sometimes, drift is unintentional. A Game Master may design a horror campaign, only to find that, after collecting spell books and ritual magic items, the PCs are starting to practice magic themselves. A campaign with only a few scattered superscience items suddenly blossoms into weird inventions popping up everywhere.

It is important for the Game Master to remain focused and vigilant when running his campaign. Drift is okay as long as you prepare for it and the players are happy with it. If the campaign is starting to drift off-course, the GM can take steps to minimize it. If the campaign originally started out as simple police investigations and suddenly all of the killers turn out to be a monster-of-the-week, start running adventures with human criminals again. If the players are starting to use magic out of a spell book, have a botched spell check cause the book to burst into flames. Of course, if the players are actually enjoying the new tone and the GM doesn't have a problem with it, then he can let things be. It's all about maintaining interest and enjoyment.

Super Campaign

While unconventional, Game Masters can run the Imperial Age as a superhero campaign. Modern graphic novels, such as **Gotham by Gaslight** (featuring a Victorian take on one of DC's most famous heroes) and **The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen** (creating a Victorian super team from literary figures such as Allan Quatermain, Captain Nemo, and the Invisible Man), have cloaked the superhero motif in Victorian trappings. Similarly, modern comic books have placed superheroes in the Old West (the original **Ghost Rider** is a prime example).

Inspiration for Imperial Age super campaigns tends to be drawn from pulp rather than the "four colour" tropes. Polite society would find tight-fitting outfits scandalous, especially since stretch fabrics are unavailable and a body stocking could be easily torn. Victorian superheroes, if they bothered to wear a costume at all, would, like their pulp counterparts, be content to mask their faces while wearing normal clothes (ironically, a cape is normal). Similarly, Victorian superheroes tend to have "powers" based on extraordinary prowess, scientific invention, or occult studies. Mutants and aliens need not apply (at least until the tripods arrive). An Imperial Age PC that mixes the Scientific Detective and the Hermetic Disciple advanced classes would be a potent "superhero." An Imperial Age Monster Hunter PC that is also a vampire can be a fearsome preternatural hero.

Super teams could be created within a gentlemen's club or social circle. Social class may play a role as well; aristocratic superheroes may find working with their working class counter-parts bad form, and London super teams of differing social classes may limit their territory to particular districts. Imperial Age superheroes that work together regardless of social class might be constrained in their private social relationships with each other.
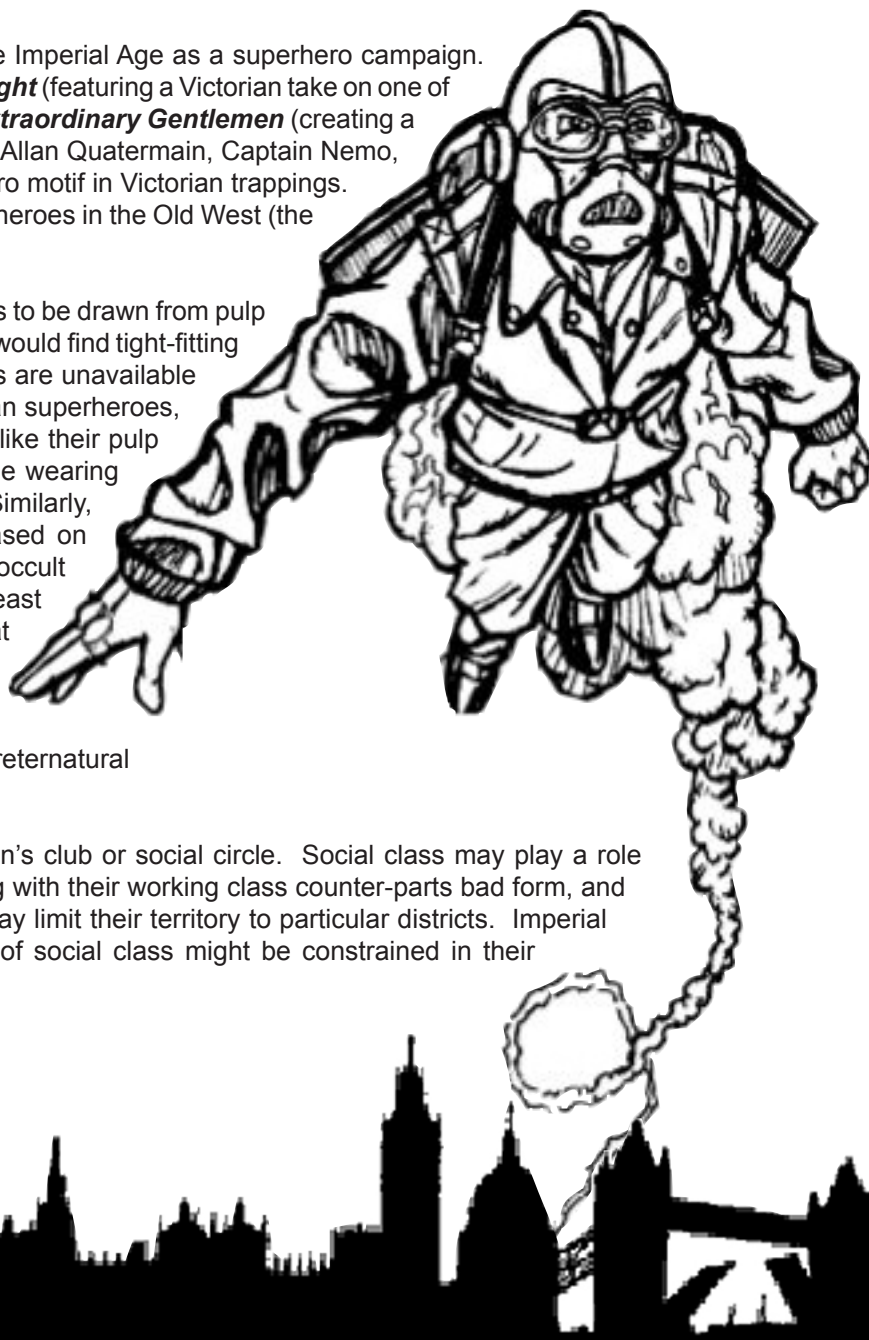
MIXING ENGINES AND MAGICK

Game Masters running campaigns that include magickal and technological F/X will have to decide how magic and engines work together. Can magick and technology work side-by-side, or does one preclude the other? Below are the primary possibilities of using different types of F/X in an Imperial Age campaign.

- In a "segregated" campaign, magic and technology exist side by side, but neither can enhance the other. Magicians stick with traditional methods, materials, and rituals, while engineers build engines. Placing a rune or magical spell on an engine will not enhance its performance in any way. This may be due to the legends of "cold iron," in that magic is ineffective against or on metal objects.

- In a "melting pot campaign," magic and technology may be combined with no limits. An invisibility spell could make a steam automobile disappear. Bolt-action rifles could have their accuracy increased. A steam elemental may power an airship. The sky is the limit in this campaign, and the GM will have to be careful to ensure that the integrity of the campaign holds.

- In a "kryptonite campaign," magic and technology interfere with each other. Magicians must practice their rituals in the countryside, away from the cities and factories. The mere presence of a magician on a steam locomotive could cause the train to stop. An engineer that dabbles in magic may find her engines infected with gremlins. In such cases the more prevalent F/X will trump the lesser F/X as far as the law is concerned (usually magicians pay the price).

The above choices could also be used with other types of F/X. Perhaps psionics won't work in the presence of divine magic or mediums can't contact spirits in a gas lit room. Multiple types of F/X may have differing relationships with the others. Maybe divine magic can cast blessings on engines, but arcane magic will shut them down.

BLURRING THE LINES

When running Imperial Age campaigns, especially historical campaigns, it can be easy for a Game Master to get bogged down in details. Which guns are appropriate if the adventure takes place in 1884? How extensive is colonial life in the French Congo in 1880? What is the appropriate ballroom etiquette in 1889?

Designing Imperial Age adventures should be fun, not a chore. The players expect the game master to entertain them, not write a thesis. It's best not to get bogged down in details. Chances are that the players won't pick up on them anyway. Make sure that major events are adhered to, but don't worry about the small stuff. Concentrate on themes instead. Don't worry about trying to accurately portray colonial life in Calcutta in 1880, just concentrate on portraying colonial life. Don't worry about accurately portraying the social season of 1886; just use the stereotypes of polite society.

Also, game masters should not worry about historical authenticity when creating adventures. Jack the Ripper didn't terrorize London until 1889; that shouldn't stop a game master to have a serial killer running around London in 1875 (or Boston, or Paris, or St. Petersburg, for that matter). Communism had little impact in England in the Imperial Age, but that doesn't mean a game master can't construct an adventure about a vast communist conspiracy to overthrow the Queen.

ANOTHER TIME, ANOTHER PLACE

While products in the *Imperial Age* line presume that the campaign is going to take place in a recognizable world of the 1880s and 1890s, game masters may adapt these products for other campaigns. Some of the most common ways to use *Imperial Age* products in non-standard campaigns are listed below.

- ### Outside the Boundaries

The decision to place the Imperial Age between 1880 and 1900 is an arbitrary one. Queen Victoria's reign took place between 1837 and 1901; Charles Dickens' works spanned from 1836 to 1870. Sherlock Holmes adventures continued into the 1890s and beyond. African colonialism started with the "race to Africa" in 1876.

It would require little work for a game master to set an *Imperial Age* campaign in another decade. Virtually all of the advice given here and other supplements in the line can be easily adapted. For example, a campaign set in the early 1860s would include the American Civil War and make travel to south and East Asia more prohibitive (as the Suez Canal won't be open until 1869). The Edwardian Era of 1901-1910 is little more than an extension of the Imperial Age.

- ### Piecemeal Application

Many *Imperial Age* products are suitable for adaptation in existing campaigns. *Imperial Age Magick* can be used as an arcane spell user variant, standing side by side with traditional mages. *Imperial Age Engines* may be used as a toolkit for a particular technologically inclined race in a fantasy campaign. *Imperial Age British India* can be used as a template for any imperial province in a particular campaign. Themes and genres introduced above can be worked into any campaign background. Perhaps the elvish race has Victorian attitudes, while the dwarves embrace a communist ideal. Many campaigns can be "freshened up" with *Imperial Age* products.

- ### World Upgrade

Another interesting use for the Imperial Age line is to "upgrade" a fantasy world, using the real world as a model. Perhaps an industrial revolution washes over the fantasy world and evolves into a pseudo-Victorian Age, with half-elf barristers defending necromancer clients in court while orcish navvies organize a strike.

An easy way to upgrade the world is to take existing nations and model them after real world states. Perhaps a collection of bandit kingdoms, united by a single culture but disorganized over petty squabbles, can be united under a strong military kingdom (as Prussia did with the German Empire). Perhaps a kingdom created colonies on another continent that are now an independent, growing nation (the United States of America). Perhaps one nation wasn't touched by the industrial revolution at all and is now trying to modernize (Japan).

One need not make rigid comparisons. The new "American" nation in the fantasy world may have fragmented into multiple nations, or become a powerful magocracy. Perhaps France inspires two nations on the fantasy world. Perhaps there is no Russian equivalent.

A world upgrade allows the Game Master to use most of the material from the *Imperial Age* line in slightly different ways, creating a unique new world based on the foundation of an older one.

- ### Fantasy Earth

Technically speaking, any of the campaign types described in the above section except for the historical campaigns are "fantasy earths." Here, however, the term is used to describe a world based on actual history, but cloaked in the standard fantasy tropes, including multiple sentient races, clerics of different faiths that wield actual power, and fantastic creatures roaming the wilderness.

There are roughly two approaches to fantasy earths. One is the "rubber band" model. The fantasy tropes tug and pull at history, but by the Imperial Age, most of history manages to snap back into place. The major political powers are still familiar, the same monarchs sit on the thrones (though perhaps sporting elongated teeth or pointed ears), and the same conflicts continue. This model allows the GM to introduce fantasy tropes as background colour, but has little effect on the world at large.

The "speculative model" is more demanding. Under the speculative model, the GM determines how the addition of fantasy tropes has impacted the world, creating an imperial age that may bear little resemblance to the original. Maybe the half-elves of Albion (England), after centuries of rule and interbreeding by the human Roman Empire, have finally won their freedom and are now trying to compete as a world power while the Romans are busy fighting the Aztec

Republic. The speculative model shares many points with the alternate earth model below.

• Alternate Earth

The alternate earth model uses a world that has deviated at some point in history. How this affects the Imperial Age world depends on how recent and how critical the deviation was. An Imperial Age where the Confederate States of America managed to win their independence in the mid-1860s might not alter the geo-political landscape of Europe in 1882 at all, while one in which the American Revolution failed could have a much larger impact. An alternate earth where Alexander the Great conquered India and returned to Greece as a Hindu convert may not be recognizable at all in 1880.

Alternate earths allow the GM to run an Imperial Age campaign without worrying about the consequences of player actions or unexpected plot developments. In fact, it might be a good idea to convey this message by altering an event that would have little impact within the scope of the campaign. By way of example, a GM plans to run a campaign set in Calcutta in 1884. During casual conversation at dinner, one of the guests remarks that relations between Britain and the Confederacy are starting to cool since Britain supported their independence two decades ago. While the GM never plans to have American politics spill into his campaign, he has just indicated to the players that anything can happen, which is important if a popular Indian leader is urging his followers to rise up against British rule.

Alternate earths could also deviate in the present or near future. A GM inspired by "the Battle of Dorking" might want to place the British PCs in the middle of a German invasion of England. Perhaps a socialist revolution succeeds in overthrowing Queen Victoria.

Finally, a deviation (perhaps caused by magick or superscience) could cause the Imperial Age to arrive earlier or later than it did in the real world. Randall Garrett's Lord Darcy tales take place in the modern world (1960s-70s) but the society is clearly "Victorian." Heroes and villains use sword canes and revolvers, while the world is lit by gaslight. As another example, a continuing Roman Empire might bring about an earlier Imperial Age, with the Roman Empire vying for control of the Atlantic against the competing Songhai Empire and the Aztec-Incan Alliance.

• A Different World

An Imperial Age campaign can also take place on a completely different world that models the real world. While this is similar to the Piecemeal or World Upgrade models, the Different World campaign uses the real Imperial Age as a model and files off the serial numbers. It is possible for a Different World campaign to be a historical campaign in that there are no F/X elements but the GM has the creative freedom to create a society to be the way he wants it to be. The comic series *Ruse* by CrossGen comics takes place on an F/X-laced Different World.

It's possible to use the Different World model for a small setting. Many fictional stories take place on "a Different World," such as the fictional country of Ruritania or Gotham City. The PCs could be members of a small fictional country in Eastern Europe or a fictional principality of India.
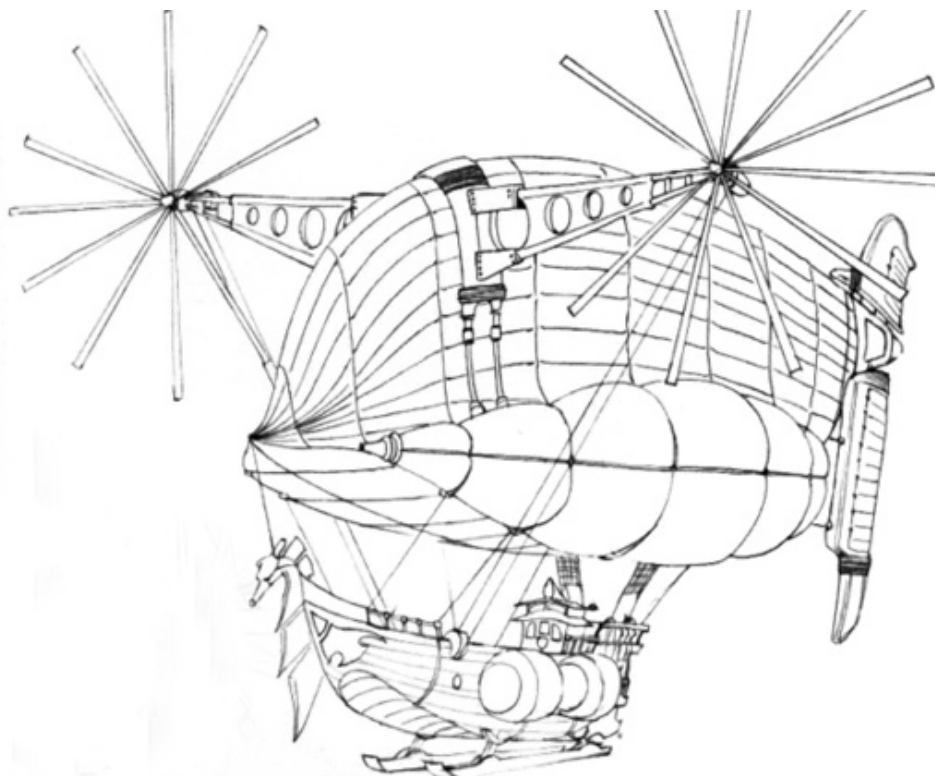
Using Thrilling Tales Advanced Classes

The ***Thrilling Tales*** line, also from Adamant Entertainment, offers many advanced classes for the pulp era (1930s) that are also suitable for use in the Imperial Age. The same could also be said in reverse (the Hermetic Disciple, the Medium, the Monster Hunter, and the Scientific Detective can be used as-is in the pulp era). Particularly relevant ***Thrilling Tales*** advanced classes in the Imperial Age include the following:

Big Game Hunter
The Big Game Hunter is a staple of the Imperial Age, especially after the scramble for Africa begins. Alan Quatermain was a Big Game Hunter that had gone native.

Boxer
The Queensbury rules were established in 1861 and are fairly close to modern boxing rules. While boxing as a professional sport does not appear until just after the Imperial Age, there are many amateur bouts. Boxing becomes especially popular in 1882, when bare-knuckle fighting was held to be a criminal act in British court.

Cowboy Hero
The pulp era cowboy hero fits well in the 1880s and 1890s, especially as a travelling member of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show.

Femme Fatale
The Femme Fatale is as popular a literary character in the Imperial Age as she is in the pulp era. The difference is that many of these Femme Fatales are simply waiting for the right man to come along and turn them into docile, respectable wives.

Fortune Hunter
The Fortune Hunter shares many similarities with the Big Game Hunter except that he hunts artefacts, not animals. Many Fortune Hunters in the Imperial Age are academics looking for evidence of lost races and cultures. Many of these expeditions are fuelled by racist notions (such as Great Zimbabwe being "proof" that a white tribe existed in Africa) or faulty science (lost continents that have sunk beneath the waves).

Hooded Terror
As this advanced class is at least partly inspired by Jack the Ripper (who was also the inspiration for many pulp variants), the Hooded Terror makes an excellent antagonist in the Imperial Age. He is a ruthless murderer that can provide a frightening challenge for investigators or lower class characters.

Mastermind
The Mastermind is Doctor Moriarty to the Scientific Detective's Sherlock Holmes. He is a shadowy underworld figure, the spider in the middle of a web of crimes. The Mastermind is a perfect fit for Imperial Age urban adventures, and can be the focus of an entire campaign arc.

Noble Savage
The world of the Imperial Age has more untamed areas than the pulp era that followed it. Many Imperial Age stories included jungle kings and queens. Whether the campaign is set in Africa, South America, or even Australia, the Noble Savage can either be a staunch ally or a formidable foe.

Other Advanced Classes
Game Masters running Imperial Age super campaigns may find use for other ***Thrilling Tales*** advanced classes that are not appropriate in other Imperial Age campaigns. The Man of Mystery, Paragon, and Rocket Ranger advanced classes would work well as Victorian superheroes.

IMPERIAL AGE FEATS

The following new feats are particularly applicable to Imperial Age campaigns.

Allure
You have a strong appeal to those normally attracted to your gender.
  Prerequisite: Cha 13
  Benefit: NPCs ordinarily attracted to members of your gender have their starting attitude improved by one step (indifferent to friendly, unfriendly to indifferent, and so on) when you encounter them. In addition, you receive a +2 bonus on all Bluff, Diplomacy, and Perform checks made with the intention of seducing an appropriate NPC target.
  Special: The bonuses stack with the Exotic Features feat.

Black Market Bargain
You are especially adept at buying and selling items on the black market, and can pawn off stolen or illicit goods with great ease.
  Benefit: When buying or selling an item on the black market, you are able to increase the sell value or decrease the Purchase DC by one.

Country Squire
You have status in rural communities due to your large property ownership.
  Prerequisites: Must own largest country estate in rural area (usually near a village)
  Benefit: Characters with this feat gain a +2 to Diplomacy checks. In addition, you are considered to be a gentleman and you wield political power in the closest village (acting as a justice of the peace, selecting rectors, etc.).

Courtesy Title
You are from a noble family or have married into one. Your father holds the true title.
  Benefit: You gain a +2 to all Diplomacy checks and gain a +5 wealth bonus. In some countries you are considered an aristocrat, while other countries (such as Britain) treat you as a respected commoner.
  Special: If you take this feat at 1st level, you may choose whether you are part of a noble bloodline or are already married to a noble. If you take this feat after character creation, you must marry into a noble family to gain this feat.

Exotic Features
Whether it is your unusual accent, physical features, or lack of social etiquette, you are viewed as a foreigner. Men feel overprotective of you and tend to underestimate you.
  Prerequisites: Female only, Cha 13+.
  Benefit: When dealing with a male PC or NPC, you gain a +2 to Bluff, Diplomacy, and Sense Motive checks.
  Special: You may only take this feat at 1st level.

Extensive Library
You have personal access to a large library and a number of related contacts.
  Benefit: You gain a +2 to all Gather Information and Research checks.

Fool's Fortune
For you, things have a way of coming out for the best.
  Benefit: Once per day, re-roll one attack roll, saving throw, skill check, or ability check and choose the better result.
  Special: You may only take this feat at 1st level.

Gentry

You have a British title. While not considered part of the Peerage, you are addressed as "Sir" or "Dame" and are granted certain noble privileges. Baronets and Knights are considered gentry; only Baronet is an inherited title.

   Benefit: Characters with this feat gain a +2 to Diplomacy checks. In addition, they are considered members of the upper middle class, and are awarded all perks appropriate to their station.

   Special: Characters that gain this feat at character creation may choose to be a knight or a baronet. Characters that acquire this feat during play become knights.

Gone Native

You've spent so much time in a particular exotic locale that you've started to understand and emulate their ways. This has given you greater expertise in this particular culture, but has a negative impact on those who feel you've turned your back on their ways.

   Prerequisite: Speak Language in the culture you're adopting.

   Benefit: You gain a +2 to all Diplomacy, Gather Information, and Knowledge checks that involve the culture you've adopted. In addition, you suffer no Attitude penalties that would normally be given to someone from your original culture. Unfortunately, members of your original culture treat you as one Attitude level lower than they normally would.

Infamy

You have a particularly bad reputation (whether deserved or not).

   Benefit: You get a +3 bonus on Charisma-based checks whenever the GM determines that your infamy would be a benefit. However, you suffer a -3 modifier on such checks whenever the GM determines that your infamy would work against you.

Jack of all Trades

You've picked up a smattering of even the most obscure skills.

   Prerequisite: Character level 8th+.

   Benefit: You can use any skill untrained, even those that normally require training and those that are exclusive to classes you don't have. You cannot, however, gain ranks in a skill unless you are allowed to select it.

Leadership

You're a natural leader, good at coordinating and directing the efforts of others.

Prerequisites: Cha 13+

Benefit: If you direct or lead others in combat (taking a free action each round to do so), everyone on your side gets a +1 bonus on all checks (including initiative). However, if you're incapable of taking a free action on any round, your side loses the bonus until you recover. Characters can only be under the direction of one leader at a time, and may choose to change their leader as a free action. Characters under the influence of a leader must be able to hear and understand that leader's directions.

Noble Title

You are a landed noble.

   Prerequisites: Courtesy Title. Your father must also be dead or otherwise stripped of title (this is presumed if both feats are taken at 1st level).

   Benefit: You receive a +2 bonus to Diplomacy and Intimidation checks. You also receive a +5 wealth bonus. You are entitled to all rights and privileges of being a landed noble (in Britain, this gets you a seat in the House of Lords and the right to be tried in the House, not common court, for your crimes).

Oathbound

You swear undying allegiance to a person, group, organization, nation, empire, ethical philosophy, moral philosophy, or belief system. By doing so, you can better influence others who share your allegiance and more effectively oppose those who don't.

Prerequisites: At least one declared allegiance.

Benefit: Choose one of your allegiances. The allegiance you select becomes your primary allegiance and cannot be broken, except by you. The strength of your allegiance enables you to better assist other beings who have the same allegiance; if your aid another attempt succeeds, your ally gains a +3 circumstance bonus (instead of +2) on his skill check result or attack roll. Your dedication also grants you a +1 bonus on attack rolls made against creatures that do not have this allegiance.

Special: You cannot apply the benefits of this feat to multiple allegiances. If you break your oathbound allegiance, you forever lose the benefits of this feat but may take the feat again and apply the benefits to a new allegiance.

Perfect Recall

You remember everything you've experienced.

Prerequisites: Int 16+

Benefit: You can recall everything you've seen, read or experienced perfectly. If you forget some detail your character should remember, you can ask the GM to remind you. You get a +2 bonus on any skill rolls for which rote memorization is useful (at the GM's judgment).

Servant

You are part of a household staff and treated as practically invisible. As a result, people tend not to question your assertions or motives.

Benefit: You get a +2 to Bluff and Diplomacy checks

Sidestep

In combat, you have the ability to anticipate your opponent's moves and move in his wake.

Prerequisites: Dex 13+, Dodge, Mobility

Benefit: When an opponent in an adjacent square takes a single 5-foot step to a square that you do not threaten, you may spend 1 action point to move into the square the opponent just left.

Urban Tracking

You can track down the location of missing persons or wanted individuals.

Benefit: To find the trail of an individual or to follow it for 1 hour requires a Gather Information check. You must make another Gather Information check every hour of the search, as well as each time the trail becomes difficult to follow, such as when it moves to a different area of town.

The DC of the check, and the number of checks required to track down your quarry, depends on the community population and the conditions:

Population	DC	Checks Required		Condition	DC Modifier
Fewer than 2,000	5	1d4		Every three creatures	
2,000–9,999	10	1d4+1		in the group being sought	-1
10,000–49,999	15	2d4			
50,000–99,999	20	2d4+1		Every 24 hours the quarry	
100,000–499,999	25	3d4		has been missing or sought	+1
500,000+	30	3d4+1			
				Tracked quarry "lies low"	+5

If you fail a Gather Information check, you can retry after 1 hour of questioning. The GM rolls the number of checks required secretly, so the player doesn't know exactly how long the task requires.

Normal: A character without this feat can use Gather Information to find out information about a particular individual, but each check takes 1d4+1 hours and doesn't allow effective trailing.

Special: You can cut the time per Gather Information check in half (to 30 minutes per check rather than 1 hour per check), but you suffer a –5 penalty on the check.

WEAPONS

The following is a list of weapons suitable for the Imperial Age. For convenience, appropriate weapons included in the SRD are reproduced here as well. Only new weapon descriptions are included here.

Firearms	Dmg	Crit	Type	Range	ROF	Mag	Size	Weight	Pur. DC
Remington Double-Derringer	2d6	20	Ballistic	10 ft	SS	2 int	Tiny	0.5 lbs.	12
Sharps Pepperbox	2d4	20	Ballistic	10 ft	SS	4 int	Tiny	1.5 lbs.	13
Adams 1854 Revolver	2d8	20	Ballistic	30 ft	S	5 cyl	Small	2 lbs.	15
British Service Revolver	2d6	20	Ballistic	30 ft	S	6 cyl	Small	2 lbs.	15
Colt Navy Revolver	2d4	20	Ballistic	30 ft	S	6 cyl	Medium	2.5 lbs.	14
Colt Peacemaker	2d6	20	Ballistic	30 ft	S	6 cyl	Medium	3 lbs.	14
S&W Schofield	2d6	20	Ballistic	40 ft	S	6 cyl	Medium	2.5 lbs	16
Martini-Henry Carbine	2d10	20	Ballistic	60 ft	S	Single	Large	7.5 lbs	14
Spencer Carbine	2d10	20	Ballistic	70 ft	SS	7 box	Large	8.5 lbs	16
Martini-Henry Rifle	2d10	20	Ballistic	80 ft	S	Single	Large	8.5 lbs	15
Winchester Rifle	2d10	20	Ballistic	70 ft	SS	17 int	Large	10 lbs	16
Remington Double Barrel Shotgun	2d10	20	Ballistic	30 ft	SS	2 int	Large	10 lbs	16
Winchester Lever-Action Shotgun	2d10	20	Ballistic	30 ft	SS	5 int	Large	9 lbs	17
Gardner Machine Gun	2d10	20	Ballistic	80 ft	A	100 cart	Huge	80 lbs	33
Gatling Machine Gun	2d12	20	Ballistic	70 ft	A	400 box	Huge	90 lbs	32
Maxim Machine Gun	2d10	20	Ballistic	100 ft	A	250 belt	Huge	80 lbs	35

Ranged Weapon	Dmg	Crit	Type	Range	ROF	Mag	Size	Weight	Pur. DC
Bow	1d6	20	Piercing	40 ft	1	---	Large	3 lbs.	9
Crossbow	1d10	19-20	Piercing	40 ft	1	1 int	Medium	7 lbs.	9
Shuriken	1	20	Piercing	10 ft	1	---	Tiny	0.5 lbs.	4
Whip	1d2	20	Slashing	15 ft	1	---	Small	2 lbs.	6

Explosive Weapon	Dmg	Crit	Type	Burst	Ref DC	Range		Size	Weight	Pur. DC
Dynamite	2d6	---	Conc.	5	15	10 ft.		Tiny	1 lb.	12 (12 sticks)

Splash Weapon	Direct	Splash	Crit	Type	Ref DC	Range		Size	Weight	Pur. DC
Incendiary Bomb	1d6	1	20	Fire	---	10 ft		Small	1 lb.	6

Melee Weapon	Dmg	Crit	Type	Range	Size	Weight	Pur. DC
Bayonet (fixed)	1d4/1d6	20	Piercing	---	Large	1 lb	7
Bowie Knife	1d4	18-20	Slashing	---	Small	3 lbs.	7
Brass Knuckles	+1	20	Bludgeon	---	Tiny	1 lb.	5
Katana	2d6	19-20	Slashing	---	Large	6 lbs.	12
Katar	1d6	19-20	Piercing	---	Small	1 lb	8
Kris	1d4	19-20	Piercing	---	Tiny	1 lb.	7
Pistol Whip	1d4	20	Bludgeon	---	Small	var.	---
Rapier	1d6	18-20	Piercing	---	Medium	3 lbs	10
Rifle Butt	1d6	20	Bludgeon	---	Large	var.	---
Sabre, Cavalry	1d6	18-20	Piercing	---	Medium	3 lbs	10
Sap	1d6	20	Bludgeon	---	Small	3 lbs.	2
Scimitar	1d6	19-20	Piercing, Slash	---	Medium	3 lbs	10
Stabbing Spear	1d8	20	Piercing	20 ft	Large	8 lbs.	5
Staff	1d6/1d6	20	Bludgeon	---	Large	4 lbs.	4
Sword Cane	1d6	18-20	Piercing	---	Medium	3 lbs.	9
Tomahawk	1d6	20	Slashing	15 ft	Small	3 lbs.	4

FIREARMS

Adams 1854 Revolver: This early Adams revolver was rejected by the British military but nonetheless purchased privately by many British officers. It proved itself in the Crimean War. The most distinctive feature of the Adams Revolver is the lack of an external hammer, a result of its double-action design.

British Service Revolver: This is the standard sidearm of the British military. There were three official pistols in the Imperial Age: the Adams .450 (until 1880), the Enfield Mark 1 (until 1888) and the Webley revolver. All three have identical game statistics.

Colt Navy Revolver: A weapon designed in the previous decade, the Colt Navy Revolver was a popular model among cavalry soldiers due to its lighter design and lower recoil.

Colt Peacemaker: Introduced in 1873, this weapon quickly became an American cowboy favourite. It replaced the navy revolver as the weapon of choice in the U.S. Cavalry.

Gardner Machine Gun: Developed in 1874, the Gardner Gun was tested by the U.S. Army and, despite performing well, was not adopted. The Gardner Gun found a home instead with the British Navy in 1881. Ultimately it would be adopted by most European nations. The Gardner Gun had one or two barrels and ammo was fed through a vertical feed. A hand crank discharged the bullets. There was also a 5-barrel variation (ammo listed is per barrel).

Gatling Machine Gun: The earliest machine gun, the Gatling Gun required a hand crank to feed the multiple barrels.

Martini-Henry Carbine: This is the slimmed-down cavalry version of the Martini-Henry rifle.

Martini-Henry Rifle: Introduced in 1871, this is the standard British breech-loading rifle of the Imperial Age. It replaced the Snyder-Enfield rifle, although many are still in circulation (use the same statistics). Bayonets are a standard accoutrement.

Maxim Machine Gun: First developed in 1883, this machine gun used the recoil force of the bullet to eject and insert cartridges.

Remington Double Barrel Shotgun: This shotgun is representative of all double barrel shotguns of the period. It has two triggers, one for each barrel, and can only be fired twice. As a breechloader, it cannot be fired while reloading.

Remington Double-Derringer: This popular variation on the pocket pistol allowed for two bullets to be loaded and ready to fire. Ladies and men that wanted to be discreet about being armed used this weapon.

Sharps Pepperbox: This pocket pistol had four barrels and a rotating pin.

Smith & Wesson Schofield: The original version of this pistol was abandoned by the U.S. Army in favour of the Colt. The New Model 3 was the most accurate revolver of its time.

Spencer Carbine: This light rifle saw action in the early part of the Imperial Age, notably the Franco-Prussian War. The rifle version was bought and superseded by Winchester.

Winchester Lever-Action Shotgun: The Winchester shotgun was one of the first "repeating" shotguns; that is, it carried more than one or two shells.

Winchester Rifle: Like the Colt Peacemaker, the Winchester Rifle is a symbol of the American West. Here it represents all Imperial Age repeating rifles (which is not off the mark, as most repeating rifles of the era were either Winchesters or knock-offs).

Melee Weapons

Bowie Knife: This knife is designed for hunting and fighting.

Katar: The katar is a "punching dagger." The handle is perpendicular to the blade, allowing the user to put more force behind the blow.

Kris: Functionally identical to a dagger (but too unbalanced to throw), the kris is an Indonesian weapon with a curvy blade that gives it an exotic appearance.

Sabre, Cavalry: Cavalry Sabres are longer than their infantry counterparts and designed for piercing.

Scimitar: A scimitar a Middle Eastern slashing and piercing weapon. It is a long, curved sword. The European infantry sabre is based on the scimitar and has identical game statistics.

Stabbing Spear: This short, heavy spear was designed by Shaka Zulu to replace the lighter javelin.

Staff: This walking stick also made a good weapon. Many monks and travellers make use of the staff.

Tomahawk: This Native American-inspired weapon is a more balanced hatchet.
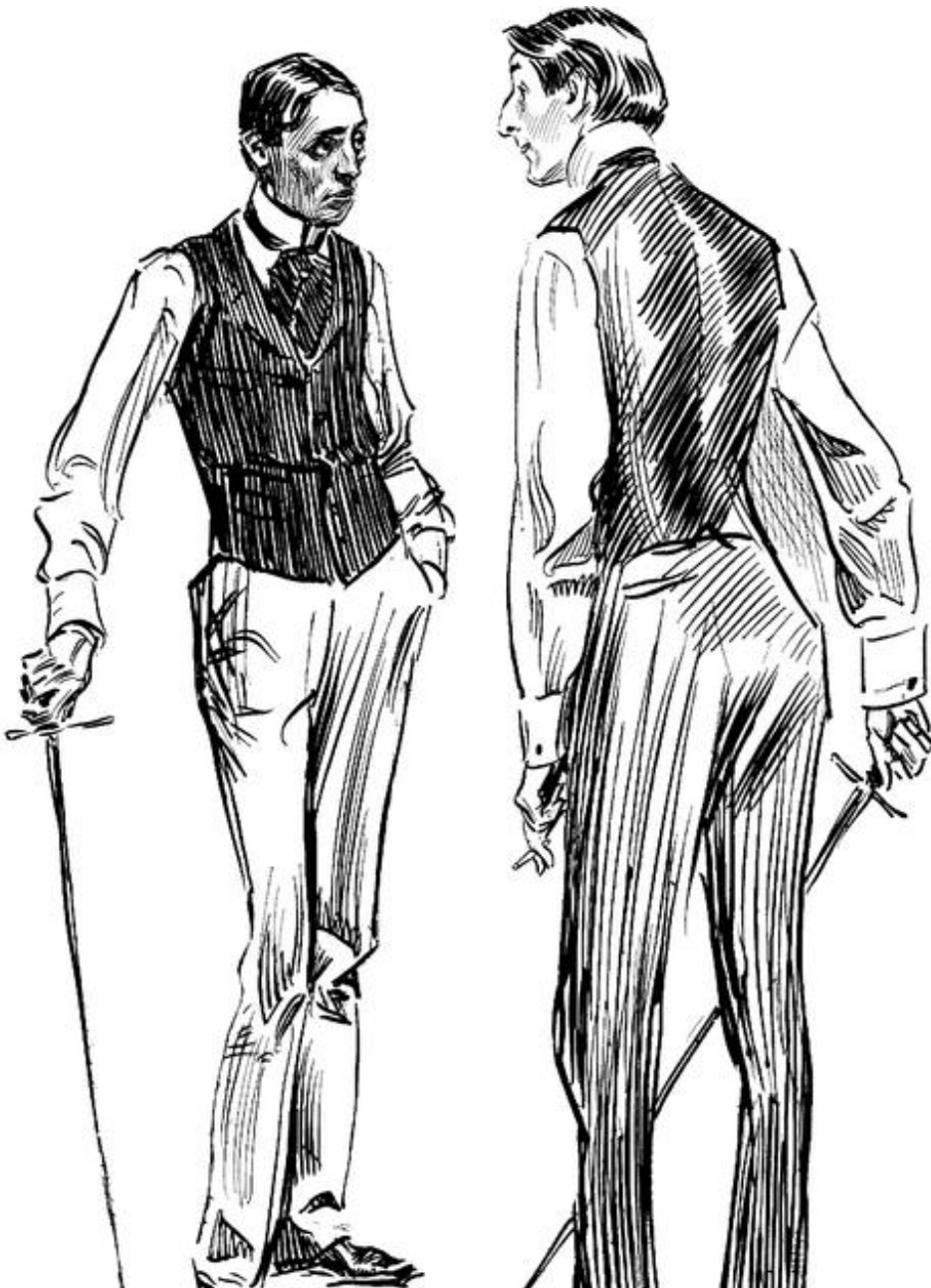
TIMELINE OF
THE IMPERIAL AGE

The following is a list of some key events that took place in each year of the Imperial Age. GMs should also synthesize this list with the Imperial Age Wars list, as not all wars are listed on this timeline.

1880

France declares Bastille Day (July 14) as a national holiday.

Spain suppresses Cuban revolt.

Chile makes gains in Saltpetre War.

Boers drive British out of Transvaal.

Pro-British Emir installed in Kandahar, ending Second Afghan War.

1881

Tsar Alexander II of Russia assassinated. While Polish revolutionaries are responsible, the Jews are blamed, causing a pogrom against Russian Jews.

Britain recognizes Transvaal's Boer government.

Tunisia becomes French protectorate.

France controls Vietnam.

USA President Garfield is shot. He later dies of blood poisoning.

USA outlaw Billy the Kid killed.

First electric tramway opens in Berlin.
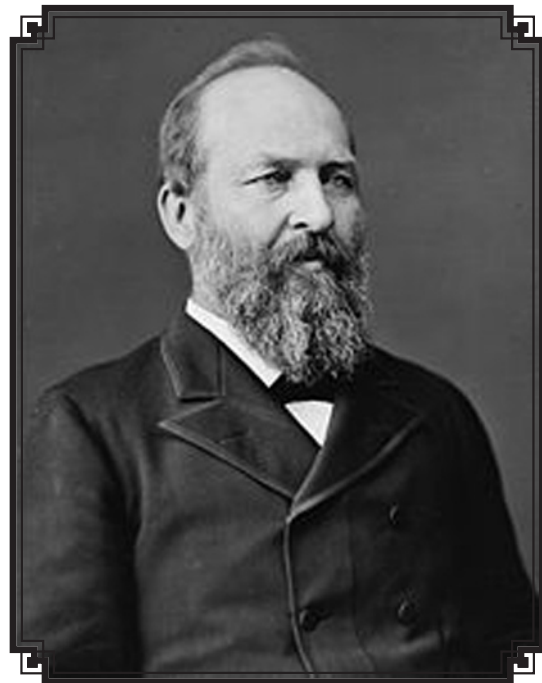
1882

Italy joins Germany and Austria-Hungary in defensive alliance.

British occupy Egypt.

Britain passes Married Woman's Property Act, which allows married women to own their own property.

Pogroms and expulsions of Russian Jews lead to major Jewish emigration to USA.

Pro-Chinese coup takes over Korea.

1883

Saltpetre War ends. Bolivia is now a land-locked country.

Brooklyn Bridge opened in New York.

Krakatoa erupts in Java, killing over 30,000 people.

Buffalo Bill forms "Buffalo Bill's Wild West," which would tour Europe between 1887-1889.

1884

Germany takes Cameroon, Southwest Africa, and Togo.

Chinese troops withdraw from Southeast Asia.

Maxim invents the machine gun.

1885

Britain passes the Land Act. Irish peasants receive large loans to buy Irish lands from English.

Germany turns Tanganyika into protectorate.

Belgium acquires Congo.

French secure Madagascar.

Third Burmese War starts.

China and France sign treaty, giving French control of Southeast Asia (Indochina).

New York City receives Statue of Liberty from France.

Canadian transcontinental railroad completed.

Daimler and Benz create first automobile.

1886

Irish Home Rule Bill defeated in British Parliament.

Apache chief Geronimo surrenders to USA.

USA workers strike for eight-hour workday.

Gold discovered in South Africa.

Britain and Germany divide East Africa between themselves.

Third Burmese War ends with British control of Burma.

Dr. Pemberton invents Coca-Cola.

1887

Britain establishes Nigerian protectorate.

British add Baluchistan to India.

1888

Jack the Ripper strikes in London.

Brazil abolishes slavery.

Chile colonizes Easter Island.

Kodak camera invented.

First Chinese railroad opened.

1889

Dockers strike in London. Its success encourages trade unionism elsewhere in England.

Child labor abolished in Britain.

Miners strike in Germany.

Italians establish colony in Eritrea.

British colonization of Rhodesia begins.

Indian lands in Oklahoma given to white settlers in USA.

Ottomans suppress Greek rebels on Crete.

Brazil becomes a republic.

Japan creates constitutional monarchy between Emperor and Parliament.

Eiffel Tower completed in Paris.

1890

Spain allows universal suffrage.

Battle of Wounded Knee ends Sioux resistance against USA.

"American Frontier" officially ceases to exist in USA.

Japan holds first general election.

1891

London Metropolitan Police headquarters moves to New Scotland Yard.

France and Russia sign an entente.

Construction starts on Trans-Siberian railroad.

Brazil adopts Constitution.

Chile embroiled in Civil War.

Basketball invented.

1892

Oklahoma holds last American open land rush.

Federal troops break up miners' strike in Idaho.

Ellis Island opens to process immigrants to America.

Indian Councils Act allows Indians to be elected to legislatures in India.

Railroad between Johannesburg and Orange Free State completed in South Africa.

Severe famine in Russia.

1893

France takes control of Timbuktu.

Siam recognizes French control of Laos.

America annexes Hawaii.

Great Northern Railroad opened between Mississippi River and Pacific Ocean.

Anti-Saloon League established to advance American temperance movement.

New Zealand is first country to give women the right to vote.

1894

The Dreyfuss Affair begins in France. A Jewish officer is accused of selling secrets to Germany.

Britain occupies Buganda and Uganda.

Ottomans suppress Armenian independence movement.

Sino-Japanese War begins over control of Korea.
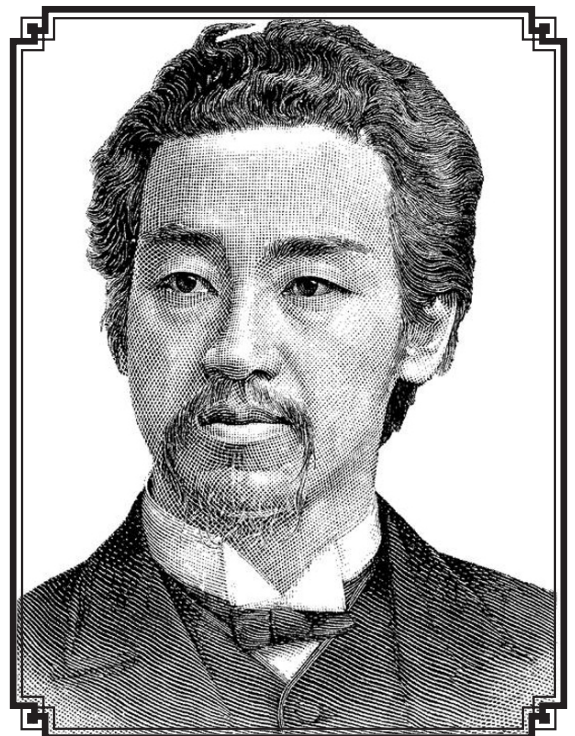
1895

Britain intervenes to stop Armenian massacres.

Sino-Japanese War ends.

El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua unite.

Marconi invents wireless radio.

Lumieres invent motion picture camera and projector.

1896

Britain controls Ashanti Kingdom.

France controls Madagascar.

Ethiopia defeats Italian army, one of the few African successes against a European power.

Klondike Gold Rush begins.

First motion picture shows open.

Olympic games revived in Greece.

1897

Greece defeated in war with Ottoman Empire.

Uprisings against British in Northwest India.

Subway built in Boston.

1898

Spanish-American War begins. America occupies Cuba, Guam, and Philippines.

The Empress of Austria is assassinated by an anarchist.

Five boroughs unite to form an expansive New York City.

Yellow River floods and brings famine to China.

Britain acquires Hong Kong under 99-year lease.

1899

Spanish-American War ends. Philippine rebels unsuccessfully attempt to free Philippines from America.

Boer War begins.

Germany controls Rwanda.

Dreyfuss Affair ends with Dreyfuss' pardon.

The Hague establishes international court.

Ragtime music starts in America.

1900

The King of Italy is shot by an anarchist.

Chile and Argentina agree on shared border.

British establish protectorate in Nigeria.

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The Imperial Age

COMING SOON:

Imperial Age Engines

Imperial Age British India

Imperial Age Faeries

Imperial Age London