Inspiration

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As usual, this is the product of one Lynn Bridges, whose address at the moment is 301 N. Adams, Ypsilanti, Michigan. INSP reappears after an absence of some 9 months, and it is hoped by the writer that there will be no further such lapses in the future.

For the benefit of whoever is interested, I'm still in the army and at the present moment am enjoying the customary 30 days at home allotted to those who have returned from overseas. Being uncertain of my forthcoming military location, the home address is being used. Having served overseas once, it is my hope that I will not be called upon for such service in the future. I even have some hopes of a dischargein the not remote future, but perhaps I am only dreaming.

Now comes the sad tale of the missing mailings, which is also an explanation of why the stuff in this INSP will be of a different type than that found in past issues. No FAPA mailings were received by me while in France, I having decided that it would be best to have them sent home for later perusal. So it was that I reached home a few days ago looking forward to reading the accumulation of 3 FAPA mailings -- only to find that no mailing since that of last January had ever gotten there. What, I wonder, can match the desolation of a FAPA member who hasn't the slightest idea as to what is going on in FAPA? I trust that Watson or whoever is now handling the mailings can discover what has happened. Meanwhile, I must struggle along as best I can.

Fortunately for me, FAN-TODS came via post mailing, so I have had a chance to read one of the better of the fapazines. Congratulations to Stanley for his commendable words concerning the place of science-fiction and fantasy in fandom and in FAPA. Since the death of the popular science-fiction fanzines of a few years ago, there has been a somewhat incomprehensible neglect of the science-fiction and (to a lesser degree) the fantasy fiction fields. It is still one of the strangest of things to me that such a thing as a separate and organized fandom can exist away from the field of fantasy literature. Yet, to many of us, FAPA is becoming more and more of a straight amateur journalism club.

There are, naturally, some members who are keenly interested in journalism as such. But I believe that there are more of us who are interested in it only as a means for conversing with others who are also interested in fantasy. Most of us got our start in fandom thru the medium of the prozine readers columns, and most of us still find of favorite type of reading in fantasy of one type or another. Well, in that case, why should it be such a crime to devote part of our fapazines to such material?

My own preference is strongly toward science-fiction, and I like to fondly imagine that most of INSP is along such lines. Otherwise, there would be little reason for its existance. I have no great love for fantasy, and judge it by the same standards that I would use in judging mystery, adventure, historical, or any other type of fiction. In other words, it must be good to be liked. In fact, I probably have even a better acquaintance with mystery stories than with fantasy. Not so with science-fiction. To be enjoyed, it just has to be science-fiction.

But that, it would seem, is a most unreasonable creed for a fapafan.

THE COMING OF THE MACHINE AGE

Perhaps it is due to World War II, or perhaps it was inevitable in the progress of civilization, but on the light of current knowledge it would seem that almost every science-fiction writer who has dealt with the near future has been far too conservative in his descriptions of the mechanical marvels which are to be mankind's at no late date. All that has transpired thus far in the century-and-a-half which we know as the Industrial Age is but the merest preliminary to what is to follow.

Most of the necessary preliminary research and invention has already been accomplished. What remains to be done to bring about the true Machine Age is the application of these inventions and processes, and, most important, the conditioning of the human race to the correct use of the machine.

The application consists mostly of improvements towards labor-saving and automatic devices, and is already making progress. Such comparatively recent steps in radio sets as push-button tuning and automatic volume control, for an example, do much towards relieving the listener of the tedium of operation, and improve the efficiency of use of the instrument.

This trend towards greater simplicity and ease of operation is the most pronounced feature of the advance of industry today. Years ago, one had to be practically an engineer to operate an automobile. On newer models, even such supposed necessities as the clutch and transmission aren't needed, and the operator is concerned only with 2 foot pedals (accelerator and brake) and with steering the car. Eventually, especially on long trips, even these can be dispensed with -- leaving man the master of the automobile, rather than its servant.

But the mind of the average human is usually far behind what is actually needed for the operation of what mechanical devices we already have. There is quite a bit of truth in the slogan "90 mile-an-cars, 60 mile-an-hour roads, and 30 mile-an-hour drivers." This is not just a matter of inability to keep up with the capabilities of the machine, it is mostly a wrong attitude towards the potentialities and correct use of the machine.

Mankind is still too prone to think of the machine as a mere improved tool which must still be watched carefully and even aided manually if it is to do work. The very word labor brings to us a picture of a man, rather than a machine. Labor is still counted in terms of time units rather than in work accomplished, and a considerable proportion of people have so little trust in the future of themachine that they oppose practically any labor-saving device and in many cases want as many men used with a machine as there were without it!

What is needed is a revolution in the thoughts and attitudes of men in regards to the machine no less complete than the revolution in economic and social habits which has been, and is being, made by the machine. Take the case of a machine by which one man can do the work formerly done by ten, and the frequently heard remark that the machine is throwing 9 men out of work. The human race will never be fully adapted to machinery until it is realized that actually the machine is freeing 9 men for other work or for leisure. The eventual goal to be reached is, of course, is the freeing of man from all necessity of striving for the material things needed for survival and comfort, thus permitting him to spend his time in the pursuit of pleasure and knowledge. This, I believe, is the ultimate goal of civilization.

For some time to come, of course, it will be necessary to maintain human engineers to at least supervise the operation of machinery -- and to design new machinery. And most humans will probably have to spend at least part of their lives in the dull task of earning a living. But eventually we'll have machinery to take over drudgery of all sorts, and take it over completely and without any but the most cursory supervision.

Yes, the day of full emancipation of humanity is coming -- and a lot sooner than most of us realize!

ON TIME AND STUFF

("....and so it was decided that the representatives of Earth and Dactonia would meet again at their rendezvous point in space at the end of two days, and then continue the discussions which were to be of mutual benefit to both planets.

"Two days later, the ship from Earth arrived again at the rendezvous point, and waited for three days with no sign of the Dactonian ship. Giving up, the ship from Earth turned around and returned to its home thru hyperspace.

"And at the end of two days the ship from Dactonia paused again at the rendezvous point and were properly disappointed at not seeing the ship from Earth. For how were they to know that two Dactonian days were equal to some 3.617 terrestial years?")

Time is relative, according to Einstein. It is also something which most of us don't have enough of, except for the songwriter who has it on his hands. Occasionally, it is stuff thru which a science-fiction hero travels.

Time, to the geologist, is measured in ages. The historian thinks in terms of centuries, and the census-taker in terms of decades. Most of us are rarely concerned with any time unit larger than the year, which is subdivided somewhat irregularly into months, weeks, days, hours minutes, and seconds. The subdivisions of time are surprisingly irregular for something we use so often. The irregularities can mostly be blamed upon two natural but mathematically irreconcilable facts, the length of the day and of the year. For most practical purposes, the day and the year are natural, irrefutable events, and their length is something about which nothing can be done.

For divisions of time longer than the year, such as decades, centuries, and millenia, multiples of the year are generally used, and are usually based on the decimal system. For divisions of time of two weeks and shorter, the day and divisions and multiples thereof are standard. The month remains as a more or less third system, based partly upon the year and partly upon the day, yet holding no definite allegiance to either.

The month is a somewhat necessary division, being far handier in use than the day for measurements of considerable periods which are still under (in some cases over) a year in length. Probably the month got its start from early efforts to use that secondary celestial clock, the moon. Actually, there are nearer to 13 moons in a year than 12, and the choice of 12 months in a year is quite a fortunate one. Twelve can be divided by 2 and 4, the most natural ways, or by 3 if we're so inclined. 13 is quite impossible as a number for an ordered system.

Most of the plans for an improved calendar deal almost entirely with changing the fitting of themonths into the year, and one or two of them even suggest using 13 months to the year! Practically all of the improved calendars have a "year day" with no other date (along with a "leap day" every 4th year) to dispense with the extra day which keeps us from having exactly 52 weeks in each year. There is some question as to whether there's any advantage in evening out the weeks in a year or not, but that seems to be the main advantage offered by most impoved calendars. Some ideas even call for "season days" and 12 months of 30 days each, which is a fairly commendable idea. However, the government and banks get along quite well by just assuming that each month has 30 days, regardless of what is actually shown on the calendar. (In the army, we get 3 days pay on the 28th of February -- no pay at all on the 31st day of a month.) About the best and simplest of the improved calendar plans calls for a year day, and, in each 3 month period, one month of 31 days and two months of 30 days. Thus, each quarterly period would have the same number of days, each would begin on the same day of the week, and each year

would likewise begin on the same day of the week. So much for present improved calendar systems.

It will be noted that the week figures prominently in our scheme of things temporal, yet of all divisions of time which we have the power to control, the week is distinguished by its lack of mathematical sense. The division of time into periods of 7 days was brought about, naturally, by man's desire for a rest from work at frequent and regular intervals. But, like everything else he did, primitive man had to give the regular holiday a superstitious religious significance. So strong is this type of superstition even today, that few people have even dared to suggest that some number other than 7 should be used for the length of the week -- this despite the fact that 7 is a singularly illogical number to use for the purpose. Mathematically, 6 or 8 would be far superior, permitting the splitting of the week as they do. Even the magic 10 of the decimal system would be more satisfactory. But 7 it is, and it will probably remain so for some time to come. The most violent objection to the "year day" plan has come from religious circles who object to the breaking up of the regularity of the "Lord's Day".

The day, as already stated, is a natural division of time controlled by the rotation of the Earth upon its axis. Commonly, it is based upon that rotation with respect to the sun, altho an astronomer can argue logically that it should be based upon the rotation with respect to the more fixed stars. It is doubtful whether the astronomer can gain any popular support, since the sun is by far a greater influence in the lifes of most of us than are the stars.

Perhaps the happiest choice of all among divisions of time was that of having 24 hours to the day. How 24 hours was picked when most of the Earth uses the decimal system of arithmetic is probably a somewhat incomprehensible mystery. However, 24 can be divided into 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, or 12 equals sections, which is sufficient for most purposes. The one fault with the common usage of the 24 hour system has been the long time habit of splitting 24 into two 12 hour periods, distinguished from each other only by a cumbersome A.M. or P.M. label. Progress is being made in that direction thru the more and more widespread adoption of the true 24 hour clock, with hours commencing at midnight and running right thru from 1 to 24. In addition to our own military forces, this system is in use thru much of Europe. There is, in the 24 hour clock, no colon between the hour and the minute designation. Thus, 2030 in place of 8:30 P.M. And it really is very simple and easy to learn. One argument to be found is that practically all timepieces are of the 12 hour type, but that doesn't interfere excessively. However, the addition of one simple gear to practically any standard watch or clock would enable the hour hand to take 24 hours to circle the dial, while the minute hand would still make the trip in exactly one hour. Just renumber the dial, and you'd have your 24 hour timepiece.

One other logical development in the clerical method of writing time, in use in the army, is that of putting the day of the month first, then the month, and lastly the year. This is progressive, in that the smallest unit is first and the largest last, and in addition eliminates the comma. Generally, the day of the month is what interests us most, and placing it first rather than in the center of the date is logical. A small step, but one which I predict will become more and more common in the future.

The two most common subdivisions of the hour, the minute and the second, proceed in reasonably logical 60th's. Perhaps 60 isn't the best number that could be chosen, but considering how bad could have been the choice, I'm quite well satisfied. Units smaller than a second, which are of importance to few except scientists and sports enthusiasts, camera fans, and other specialists, are usually based on the second and are either fractions or decimals.

To keep this somewhat within science-fictional bounds, let's take a look at possible future methods of recording time. I doubt if any of the currently publicized improved calendars will ever be placed into effect, but is it too much to hope for a future with a 6 day week; free of the present superstitious religious holiday, but permitting a much easier and more efficient arrangement of leisure time? With the 6-day week, a combination of 15 4-week months or 12 5-week months would be indicated. (I'd favor the latter.) The 5 or 6 extra days could be used as a holiday period in the middle of the year.

So far as the human race is concerned, our present day is almost certain to remain the ultimate basis of all time systems. Yet, when interstellar or even interplanetary travel becomes common, there will be a necessity for some sort of universal time constant.

In the as yet remote future, it is perhaps not inconceivable that the ultimate method of calendar simplification will be used. Can you picture the moving of the earth the fraction of a parsec closer to the sun needed to give a year of precisely 360 days? At the same time the earth would be tilted on its axis slightly to provide an angle to its orbit of exactly 30°, an aid to astrogation and to the logical order of things. It would, of course, be a simple step to give the moon a new orbit of 30 days length, making it of use as a celestial clock. Probably, our future engineers would even set the moon to rotating more rapidly upon its axis so as to make a complete revolution once each 7 days, providing that such an archaic measurement as the week were still in use!

ON ATOMS

It is to be wondered just what effect the atomic bomb will have upon the literature of science-fiction. It is certain that a lot of stories of the near future and of the discovery of atomic power will be rendered obsolete. But even more it is to be wondered just what was the effect on science-fiction fans?

There is little doubt that the news of the atomic bomb was quite a shock to mankind in general. It was something so immense and so unexpected as to be generally unconceivable. Yet it is my contention that the actual use of atomic power came as a shock to no one so much as to the science-fiction fan, familiar tho he was to the idea.

To most of us, I imagine, it was just something used in stories and not to be encountered in real life. It was in pretty much the same category as such stuff as time and 4th dimensional travel, remotely possible but far removed from the realm of probability. Also, we had the background, far more than the average person, to see atomic power not just as an irresistable and uncontrollable method of destruction, but as a revolution in the way of life as we knew it. For atomic power, to most of us, was the source of energy needed to transform many of science-fiction's flights of imagination into almost unavoidable reality. Far more than the end of a war, it meant the beginning of space flight, of unlimited power, and the bringing of much of the s-f horizon of dreams into sharp focus.

TIME magazine for 20 August 1945 had this to say. "In an instant, without warning, the present had become the unthinkable future." To most of mankind, I imagine, that thought was one of horror and awe. Too us, it was also one of awe, but also of hope. While there was, naturally, the uneasy thought that the human race was not yet ready and couldn't be trusted with atomic power, the main sentiment among science-fictionists was probably that it was a means of emancipation of mankind.

It will probably be recorded with sorrow in history that a force which contained the power to do so much good should originally have been used for destruction, necessary as that destruction was towards ending the most des-

tructive of wars in favor of the side which could best be trusted with the future of the race. It is to be hoped that it will never again be necessary to use atomic bombs. Should such use again be needed, it is doubtful that civilization would survive -- and even more doubtful that it should deserve to survive.

The ending of World War II also ended one of my pet science-fiction gripes. For years I've had a particular prejudice against stories of future wars which ended with the sudden discovery of the hero of a new, irresistable weapon. Such an invention, I'd have argued, took time, and no single invention would ever be so far advanced over its predecessor as to immediately end a war.

Yet the sudden use of the the atomic bomb, without warning, and the capitulation almost immediatly following, of the Japanese Empire, provided an almost science-fictional ending to the war. About all that was lacking was the "darkest hour" situation. The reality varied from science-fiction standards only in that we were winning anyhow and the surrended of the Japs was a foregone conclusion requiring only time to complete.

FINIS

For once, I'm not going to bother filling the last stencil. It's already the 10th of September and time to send this to Warner. And, at the moment, I can think of nothing else which I particularly want to write.

Since writing the first page, I've gotten a little more information concerning my own immediate future. My division (the 13th Airborne) is going to the Pacific for occupation duty next month. But I have sufficient points to remain in the states, altho not enough for immediate discharge. Private guess is that I'll be a civilian again within a few months.