This magazine is the product of Charles Burbee, for FAPA, and is being brought out on extremely short notice. I suddenly decided to stay in FAPA (I was going to let the whole thing slide) and so, in the last few days before the deadline which D. Benson Gerdue has set, I am racing madly to publish something to make up my activity requirement. I forget how many pages I owe and I am not going to get up now and go find out.

I do not intend to make future issues of this magazine larger than I think this one will be, but I have sort of an idea, which may never come to fruition, that I'd like to get one in each mailing. I doubt if I will do it, but as I sit here imbued with ambition, it seems like a very nice thing to do.

The only thing I am really sure of is that as I run off the last stencil I will be sick to death of publishing. I always am when I finish a fanzine.

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AL ASHLEY AND THE NEXT 100 YEARS

(In which Al Ashley permits a brief glance into the dim vistas of future generations)

This machine, when the proper buttons are pressed, said Al Ashley, will foretell the future, and accurately.

We were sitting in his kitchen drinking coffee, that stimulating beverage which Al Ashley finds necessary to existence and which he imbibes in inconceivable quantities to enable his nervous system to carry the tremendous load he places upon it.

He was describing to me this intelligent demon of a machine. This brain-child of his.

You see, he said, it takes all the statistics and histories and all such information. It takes all this stuff, all that has ever been collected. Of course, this information has got to be reduced to the proper form--graphs. A little preparatory work is necessary to prepare the material for the electronic relays. But that won't take long.

Electronic relays, huh? I said.

Oh, sure, said Al.

Well, I said, there is a tremendous pile of statistics.

There's not that much, Al said.

Migod, Al, I said. It would take hundreds of people years and years to assemble all that stuff, pick over it and then turn all the dope into graph form.

Oh no, said Al. I can do it.

But it's not a one-man job, I said.

I can do it in three weeks, he said. If I apply myself.

I said Al do you realize what you are saying? This stupendous accumulation of facts and figures on all sorts of subjects--and you said you were leaving out no subjects at all--why, it would, and probably does , fill a hundred libraries clear to the gunwales. And you think you can reduce it all to graph form to feed into your machine--and do it all in three weeks?

Al stared at me. Why not? he said. You forget that once a fact goes in there, it's in there to stay. I don't have to re eat.

All right, I said. So how long is it going to take you to build this super machine, this calculating genius.

I'd hate to say offhand, said Al.

You have some idea, though.

Oh, said Al, I'd say -in round numbers--about three months.

If you apply yourself.

If I apply myself, yes.

I will let that go, I said. We'll move up to the time of the driving of the last spike which is made of gold. We're ready to press buttons because the machine is finished. Suppose I want to know what the price of wheat will be in six months. I press a button and the machine tells me.

That's right, said Al.

And if I want to know when the next atomic bomb will fall and who will drop it the machine will tell me all about it?

Sure it will, said Al.

I see, I said. Of course it isn't built yet.

Not yet, said Al.

But it will be, soon, I suppose.

Well, said Al, it's not really necessary to build the machine. I may not do it. After all, all that information is available. All you have to do is take it and integrate it and arrive at the same answer as the machine. In fact, with what information I have on hand I can prognosticate quite well on most subjects. I can foresee trends, business cycles, emotional outbursts of national scope--things like that.

Well, Al, I said. Why don't you start out on a small scale. Build a small, simple machine to dope out horse races? That should be comparatively simple. All the necessary information can be bought for 25c---you'd only have to predict the future by a few

hours. You could check results each day and calibrate your machine as necessary. It would be a nice source of income and you would be able to drink coffee 20 hours a day.

I hope the day never comes when I can't drink coffee 20 hours a day, said Al. But this horse-racing machine idea isn't any good. It's not on a big scope. It's too localized. Too specific.

Al, I said, you will never build anything more complicated than a paper weight, so let us move on to other subjects.

No, said Al, I am going to build this machine, though I can still read the trend of the times without it. I'm probably as accurate if not more accurate that most machines. Far more efficient than a lot of them. Machines, after all, have faults. They break down, slip cogs and--well, whatever machines do.

Maybe your electronic relays would get out of phase, I said.

Who said anything about electronic relays? said Al.

Why, you did, a little while ago.

You don't need electronic relays in this machine, said Al. This machine will have no moving parts.

None at all?

Why must a machine have moving parts? They just wear out. I've designed this one--in my head--without moving parts.

All right, I said. But you'll never build it.

It's not really necessary to build it, said Al. I can do most of the work in my head.

May I ask a civil question? I said.

You can try, said Al.

Will you prognosticate for me? Go on, prognosticate. Tell the future. Bring me up to date on the world of 2100 or something, plus or minus 10 years.

What do you want to know? said Al.

Well, give me the lowdown, condensed, on the atomic caper. Give me notes on space travel and other science-fictional matters.

Well, said Al. That shouldn't be hard.

So Al Ashley spoke to me of the future of the race and the world and the solar system. Extra galactic civilizations and psychological invasions were spoken of. At one point his eyes began to get kind of wild and he stared glassily about the room till he spied the coffee pot. The vague terror faded and he relaxed into complete comfort again.

This master of the empirical system told me many things. He knows all about the history of the next 100 years.

And I know, too.

Al Ashley told me.

I was happy to learn that there would be another 100 years.

He set my mind at ease, with his gigantic prognosis machine, the one that foretells even insignificant events, the machine that only Al Ashley could ever have thought of and nobody else will ever build. Al Ashley has not built this machine, actually. But it's in existence just the same. It's all there, in his head, complete, down to the last non-moving part. It's all there, in perfect working order, and now that he has perfected it, his interest is drifting elsewhere and so the world, I fear, will be bereft of this machine even before it gets the machine.

It is a sad situation.

It is a cataclysmic situation. Because there is Al Ashley, a titan of intellect (he never denies he isn't), sitting around drinking coffee 20 hours a day and figuring out solutions to everything you might ever wonder about--designing weird machines, perfecting terrible invincible weapons, new kinds of automobiles and airplanes (none with moving parts) and figuring out ways of subventing any all all extra-galactic invasions....yet none of these glorious plans will ever be carried out and none of this incredible machinery will ever be built. None of this stuff even comes to light except in the slow, hesitant speech of Al Ashley when he passes on some of his surface thoughts to us lesser-endowed creatures.

I often wonder what mighty thoughts course through this cortex unmarked save by Ashley.

I wonder, too, what colossal secrets are locked behind that forhead, behind those enigmatic eyes that seem so concerned about coffee.

In fact, who is the man Ashley?

I don't know. I can't figure it out. It's a great cryptogram to me. But in this magazine I have brought forth some evidence on the subject. Perhaps future issues will throw further light on the subject. Perhaps, after a time; somepne who has read all of these articles (yet to be written) can figure the man out and find some way to separate him, for a time, at least, from his coffee pot and put him to actually working on some of his projects.

If this can be done---and it is in hope of this that I am running this series--I am sure the world can be brought, in a few years to a fantastic height of technological brilliance.

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