

The World of the Future

SOMEWHAT OF A FANTASY

By J. M. ROBINSON

NEXT I looked round the room and my eye fell on a number of books evidently put there for my instruction, for by this time it had barged in upon my intelligence that my coming had been expected and that I should be given every opportunity to learn and record what I wished so that my trip would be both enjoyable and profitable; so I examined the books and to my joy found not only a written record of the things which would be of chief interest, but subjects treated by old friends, those who would be recognized as authoritative when I related my experiences to the Fortnightly Club.

I found among others:

- "Spices of Flavor" (Wetmore), 1965.
- "Harrowing Details," a description of old time farming (Cody), 1970.
- "Electric Railroad Operation—Ancient and Modern" (McMillan), 1974.
- "Iniquity of Interest — From Early Experience" (Weyman), 1950.
- "Saws, Wise and Otherwise" (McLean), 1967.
- "Rubbing the World Right" (Spangler), 1973.
- "The Very Idea" (Brodie), 1940.
- "Jemseg, Past and Present" (Dykeman), 1955.
- "The Poetry of Vocation" (Peacock), 1975.

A very comprehensive bibliography which would lend itself to a relation of progress attained, and at the same time serve as a basis of comparison with things as they were, probably back to the Victorian Age, when the last days of approximate freedom of mankind, prior to 1935, had been enjoyed. So, as a fitting preparation to the adventure in store I scanned through the first and was delighted to find that the Spices I might expect to meet were so great an improvement over those of an earlier day, that the latter in the words of the experienced author, "were gross even to the point of being disgusting to the still backward negro of Central Africa"; and indeed this proved to be the case; I so recall the apple pie flavored with nutmeg which was served that day at lunch; Dearborn at the height of his attainment seemed such an amateur and I thought of the unholy joy with which in days even farther back, Connecticut foisted on an unsuspecting world the wooden nutmeg.

It seems fitting at this juncture, that the general habits of diet might be referred to; everything served was delicious; fruit both raw and cooked formed an important part of each meal; cheese and dairy products provided the substantial, as I had been accustomed to call them in the former days; there was a notable absence of the heavy meats and when I called attention to this and compared the dietary with what had been so usual, I was informed that for many years the consumption of heavy meats had been discontinued; chicken and such light meats were abundant and freely used, but the public health which some 30 years back had become a matter of the greatest importance in governmental consideration had been found to improve in proportion as the foods more natural to man were made more prominent in his daily consumption, and those which carried the seeds of disease were subordinated. Each meal was prepared with regard to digestion as a first consideration; only those foods which would assimilate readily together being served; each meal was, as it were, a happy family of related materials; the result was apparent in the sunny dispositions, the happy faces and the obvious attitude of well-being

evidenced in the people whom I met, and I was further struck by the general physique which, compared with 1935, was to say the least, remarkable.

I had just picked up "Harrowing Details," and was beginning to find myself on more familiar ground in the description of farming in New Brunswick as I had experienced it, when a knock came at the door and a young man entered, introducing himself as my grandson who had been delegated to show me round and see that in this holiday time I should be given every opportunity to obtain all the information possible. "You have," he said, "two weeks to stay with us, and I am sure we can show you a great deal, for we can certainly cover the Atlantic seaboard in that time and do it quite leisurely."

As it had never been my habit to display surprise but rather to await developments in the older days, I merely remarked my thanks and appreciation and asked what he could suggest; to which he replied that as it was still winter we might run over to Montreal and have a look at the festivities; there, would be gathered a great number of people from all parts of the continent and a day could be spent in observation and he felt he very pleasantly spent. "Put on," he said, "the over-clothes which you will find in your closet and I shall meet you at the door in ten minutes." That offered a wonderful chance to ask questions, but the old stubborn habit of keeping mum and allowing events to develop was strong, so I merely did as I was told and was waiting at the door in the ten minutes allotted; there was plenty of snow, but the road leading out to the highway was rolled flat and hard, providing footing as good as in the summertime of old; opposite, in the field was a circular spot of about 100 feet in diameter which had been similarly treated, and as I watched, a shadow crossed the sun and to my utter astonishment a plane dropped almost perpendicularly and came to rest; it was evident that that was what the spot had been prepared for.

I should have liked to examine that plane; it intrigued me with its bullet-shaped body and its wings shaped so like those of a gull; even the brief glance I had time for showed that those wings, attached to the upper part of the body, were supported without the use of struts and could be so inclined that, like those of the gull, they could be used at will to break the speed, while at the same time the tail piece which was designed in the form of an elongated V was an extension rather than an attachment of the body, and could be used in conjunction with the wings to effect an easy landing; and I realized that that was what I had observed for the plane had come to rest much as a gull settles on the water.

But there was no time for further observation, for the door opened and I was entering a small and luxurious cabin and given a seat behind the operator who touched his control and we were away, rising softly and gracefully over the trees. He seemed to be at no trouble to stabilize the plane and when we had mounted to about 2,000 feet he set his direction instrument and turned to chat with me. "There will be about an hour of free flying," he said, "then I shall have to watch out for the others; a parking field to the east of the Mountain has been assigned to the Maritime flock, there we shall land; in the meantime let me entertain you."

For the next hour he chatted of this and that, telling me many things of the remarkable improvement in aeronautics, the

wing suspension and control, the stability; the wings, he explained, were independent and while for straight ahead flight in normal weather were set at the soaring pitch, for banking on a curve or for landing could be operated almost as a bird would operate its wings; stability was produced by a gyroscope, quick and positive in its action on the wings and tail,

even a slight roll was at once picked up by this mechanism and the adjustment was so rapid that one was sensible of hardly any departure from the even level of perfect flight. Motive power was supplied by electricity carried in a new type of storage battery located in the floor, which took up very little room and was composed of three dry cells weighing in all only five pounds; for charging purposes these were connected with the roof ridge, and on landing the service station would project on this ridge a beam ray to bring the batteries up to strength. The body of the plane was a marvel of lightness and convenience; it was composed of light metal which seemed to be a lineal descendent of aluminum alloy of

earlier days, but so perfected that while semi-opaque as to the floor and roof, it was fully transparent along the sides and nose, so that visibility was of the best; so we coasted along on the brilliant winter air and in a very short time dropped into our place in the parking ground.

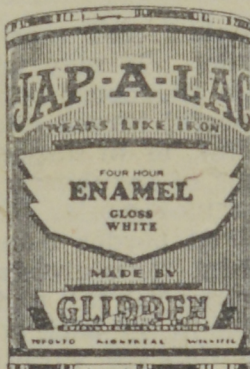
Emerging from the plane, I was amazed at the spectacle of airships which met my eye; not much difference in general design, but a vast difference in point of size; there were many of the type which I had just quitted, lots more were of family size, and some evidently designed for freight, though my guide told me that they were only medium-sized express planes, and that I should

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