

## Hobson's Choice

Alfred Bester

This is a warning to accomplices like you, me and Addyer .

Can you spare price of one cup coffee, honorable sir? I am indigent organism which are hungering.

By day, Addyer was a statistician. He concerned himself with such matters as statistical tables, averages and dispersions, groups that are not homogeneous and random sampling. At night, Addyer plunged into an elaborate escape fantasy divided into two parts. Either he imagined himself moved back in time a hundred years with a double armful of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, best-sellers, hit plays and gambling records; or else he imagined himself transported forward in time a thousand years to the Golden Age of perfection.

There were other fantasies which Addyer entertained on odd Thursdays, such as (by a fluke) becoming the only man left on earth with a world of passionate beauties to fecundate; such as acquiring the power of invisibility which would enable him to rob banks and right wrongs with impunity; such as possessing the mysterious power of working miracles.

Up to this point you and I and Addyer are identical. Where we part company is in the fact that Addyer was a statistician.

Can you spare cost of one cup coffee, honorable miss? For blessed charity? I am beholden.

On Monday, Addyer rushed into his chief's office, waving a sheaf of papers. "Look here, Mr. Grande," Addyer sputtered. "I've found something fishy. Extremely fishy . . . In the statistical sense, that is."

"Oh, hell," Grande answered. "You're not supposed to be finding anything. We're in between statistics until the war's over."

"I was leafing through the Interior Department's reports. D'youknow our popu'ation's up?"

"Not after the atom bomb it isn't," said Grande. "We've lost double what our birthrate can replace." He pointed out the window to the twenty-five-foot stub of the Washington Monument. "There's your documentation."

"But our population's up 3.0915 percent." Addyer displayed his figures. "What about that, Mr. Grande?"

"Must be a mistake somewhere," Grande muttered after a moment's inspection. "You'd better check."

"Yes, sir," said Adclyer scurrying out of the office. "I knew you'd be interested, sir. You're the ideal statistician, sir." He was gone.

"Poop," said Grande and once again began computing the quantity of bored respirations left to him. It was his personalized anesthesia.

On Tuesday, Addyer discovered that there was no correlation between the mortality/birthrate ratio and the population increase. The war was multiplying mortality and reducing births; yet the population was minutely increasing. Addyer displayed his discovery to Grande, received a pat on the back and went home to a new fantasy in which he woke up a million years in the future, learned the answer to the enigma and decided to remain amid snow-capped mountains and snow-capped bosoms, safe under the aegis of a culture saner than Aureomycin.

On Wednesday, Addyer requisitioned thecomptometer and file and ran a test check on Washington, D.C. To hisdismay he discovered that the population of the former capital was down 0.0029 percent. This was distressing, and Addyer went home to escape into a dream about Queen Victoria's Golden Age where he amazed and confounded the world with his brilliant output of novels, plays and poetry, all cribbed from Shaw, Galsworthy and Wilde.

Can you spare price of one coffee, honorable sir? I am distTessed individual needful of chariting.

On Thursday, Addyer tried another check, this time on the city of Philadelphia. He discovered that Philadelphia's population was up 0.095 9 percent. Very encouraging. He tried a rundown on Little Rock. Population up 1.1329 percent. He testedSt. Louis . Population up 2.0924percent. . . and this despite the complete extinction ofJeffersonCounty owing to one of those military mistakes of an excessive nature.

"My God!" Addyer exclaimed, trembling with excitement. "The closer I get to the center of the country, the greater the increase. But it was the center of the country that took the heaviest punishment in the buz-raid. What's the answer?"

That night he shuttled back and forth between the future and the past in his ferment, and he was down at the shop by AM. He put a twenty-four-hour claim on the compo and files. He followed up his hunch and he came up with a fantasticediscovery which he graphed in approved form. On the map of the remains of theUnitedStates he drew concentric circles in colors illustrating the areas of population increase. The red, orange, yellow, green and blue circles formed a perfect target aroundFinney

County, Kansas .

“Mr. Grande,” Addyer shouted in a high statistical passion, “Finney County has got to explain this.”

“You go out there and get that explanation,” Grande replied, and Addyer departed.

“Poop,” muttered Grande and began integrating his pulse rate with his eye-blink.

Can you spare price of one coffee, dearly madam? I am starveling organism requiring nutritiousment.

Now, travel in those days was hazardous. Addyer took ship to Charleston (there were no rail connections remaining in the North Atlantic states) and was wrecked off Hatteras by a rogue mine. He drifted in the icy waters for seventeen hours, muttering through his teeth: “Oh, Christ! If only I’d been born a hundred years ago.”

Apparently this form of prayer was potent. He was picked up by a navy sweeper and shipped to Charleston where he arrived just in time to acquire a subcritical radiation burn from a raid which fortunately left the railroad unharmed. He was treated for the burn from Charleston to Macon (change) from Birmingham to Memphis (bubonic plague) to Little Rock (polluted water) to Tulsa (fallout quarantine) to Kansas City (the O.K. Bus Co. Accepts No Liability for Lives Lost through Acts of War) to Lyonesse, Finney County, Kansas .

And there he was in Finney County with its great magma pits and scars and radiation streaks; whole farms blackened and razed; whole highways so blasted they looked like dotted lines; whole population 4-F. Clouds of soot and fallout neutralizers hung over Finney County by day, turning it into a Pittsburgh on a still afternoon. Auras of radiation glowed at night, highlighted by the blinking red warning beacons, turning the county into one of those overexposed night photographs, all blurred and cross-hatched by deadly slashes of light.

After a restless night in the Lyonesse Hotel, Addyer went over to the county seat for a check on their birth records. He was armed with the proper credentials, but the county seat was not armed with the statistics. That excessive military mistake again. It had extinguished the seat.

A little annoyed, Addyer marched off to the County Medical Association office. His idea was to poll the local doctors on births. There was an office and one attendant who had been a practical nurse. He informed Addyer that Finney County had lost its last doctor to the army eight months previous. Midwives might be the answer to the birth enigma but there was no record of midwives. Addyer would simply have to canvass from door to door, asking if any lady within practiced that ancient profession.

Further piqued, Addyer returned to the Lyonesse Hotel and wrote on a slip of tissue paper: **HAVING DATA DIFFICULTIES. WILL REPORT AS SOON AS INFORMATION AVAILABLE.** He slipped the message into an aluminum capsule, attached it to his sole surviving carrier pigeon and dispatched it to Washington with a prayer. Then he sat down at his window and brooded.

He was aroused by a curious sight. In the street below, the O.K. Bus Co. had just arrived from Kansas City . The old coach wheezed to a stop, opened its door with some difficulty and permitted a one-legged farmer to emerge. His burned face was freshly bandaged . Evidently this was a well-to-do

burgess who could afford to travel for medical treatment. The bus backed up for the return trip to Kansas City and honked a warning horn. That was when the curious sight began.

From nowhere. . . absolutely nowhere. . . a horde of people appeared. They skipped from back alleys, from behind rubble piles; they popped out of stores, they filled the street. They were all jolly, healthy, brisk, happy. They laughed and chatted as they climbed into the bus. They looked like hikers and tourists, carrying knapsacks, carpetbags, box lunches and even babies. In two minutes the bus was filled. It lurched off down the road, and as it disappeared Addyer heard happy singing break out and echo from the walls of rubble.

"I'll be damned," he said.

He hadn't heard spontaneous singing in over two years. He hadn't seen a carefree smile in over three years. He felt like a color-blind man who was seeing the full spectrum for the first time. It was uncanny. It was also a little blasphemous.

"Don't those people know there's a war on?" he asked himself.

And a little later: "They looked too healthy. Why aren't they in uniform?"

And last of all: "Who were they anyway?"

That night Addyer's fantasy was confused.

Can you spare price of one cup coffee, kindly sir? I am estranged and faintly from hungering.

The next morning Addyer arose early, hired a car at an exorbitant fee, found he could not buy any fuel at any price and ultimately settled for a lame horse. He was allergic to horse dander and suffered asthmatic tortures as he began his house-to-house canvass. He was discouraged when he returned to the Lyonesse Hotel that afternoon. He was just in time to witness the departure of the O.K. Bus Co.

Once again a horde of happy people appeared and boarded the bus. Once again the bus hurred off down the broken road. Once again the joyous singing broke out.

"I will be damned," Addyer wheezed.

He dropped into the county surveyor's office for a large-scale map of Finney County. It was his intent to plot the midwife coverage in accepted statistical manner. There was a little difficulty with the surveyor who was deaf, blind in one eye and spectacleless in the other. He could not read Addyer's credentials with any faculty or facility. As Addyer finally departed with the map, he said to himself, "I think the old idiot thought I was a spy."

And later he muttered, "Spies?"

And just before bedtime: "Holy Moses! Maybe that's the answer to them." That night he was Lincoln's secret agent, anticipating Lee's every move, outwitting Jackson, Johnston and Beauregard, foiling John

Wilkes Booth, and being elected President of the United States by 1968.

The next day the O.K. Bus Co. carried off yet another load of happy people.

And the next.

And the next.

“Four hundred tourists in five days,” Addyer computed. “The country’s filled with espionage.”

He began loafing around the streets trying to investigate these joyous travelers. It was difficult. They were elusive before the bus arrived. They had a friendly way of refusing to pass the time. The locals of Lyonesse knew nothing

about them and were not interested. Nobody was interested in much more than painful survival these days. That was what made the singing obscene.

After seven days of cloak-and-dagger and seven days of counting, Addyer suddenly did the big take. “It adds up,” he said. “Eighty people a day leaving Lyonesse. Five hundred a week. Twenty-five thousand a year. Maybe that’s the answer to the population increase.” He spent fifty-five dollars on a telegram to Grande with no more than a hope of delivery. The telegram read:

“EUREKA. I HAVE FOUND (IT).”

Can you spare price of lone cup coffee, honorable madam? I am not tramp-handler but destitute life form.

Addyer’s opportunity came the next day. The O.K. Bus Co. pulled in as usual. Another crowd assembled to board the bus, but this time there were too many. Three people were refused passage. They weren’t in the least annoyed. They stepped back, waved energetically as the bus started, shouted instructions for future reunions and then quietly turned and started off down the street.

Addyer was out of his hotel room like a shot. He followed the trio down the main street, turned left after them onto Fourth Avenue, passed the ruined schoolhouse, passed the demolished telephone building, passed the gutted library, railroad station, Protestant church, Catholic church . . . and finally reached the outskirts of Lyonesse and then open country.

Here he had to be more cautious. It was difficult stalking the spies with so much of the dusky road illuminated by warning lights. He wasn’t suicidal enough to think of hiding in radiation pits. He hung back in an agony of indecision and was at last relieved to see them turn off the broken road and enter the old Baker farmhouse.

“Ah-ha!” said Addyer.

He sat down at the edge of the road on the remnants of a missile and asked himself: “Ah-ha what?” He could not answer, but he knew where to find the answer. He waited until dusk deepened to darkness and then slowly wormed his way forward toward the farmhouse.

It was while he was creeping between the deadly radiation glows and only occasionally butting his head against grave markers that he first became aware of two figures in the night. They were in the barnyard of the Baker place and were performing most peculiarly. One was tall and thin. A man. He stood stock-still, like a lighthouse. Upon occasion he took a slow, stately step with infinite caution and waved an arm in slow motion to the other figure. The second was also a man. He was stocky and trotted jerkily back and forth.

As Addyer approached, he heard the tall mansay: "Roo booo fooo mooo hwaaa boo fooo."

Whereupon the trotter chattered, "Wd-nk-kd-ik-md-pd-ld-nk."

Then they both laughed: the tall man like a locomotive, the trotter like a chipmunk. They turned. The trotter rocketed into the house. The tall man drifted in. And that was amazingly that.

"Oh-ho," said Addyer.

At that moment a pair of hands seized him and lifted him from the ground. Addyer's heart constricted. He had time for one convulsive spasm before something vague was pressed against his face. As he lost consciousness his last idiotic thought was of telescopes.

Can you spare price of solitary coffee for no-loafing unfortunate, honorable sir? Charity will blessings.

When Addyer awoke he was lying on a couch in a small whitewashed room. A gray-haired gentleman with heavy features was seated at a desk alongside the couch, busily ciphering on bits of paper. The desk was cluttered with what appeared to be intricate timetables. There was a small radio perched on one side.

"L-Listen . . ." Addyer began faintly.

"Just a minute, Mr. Addyer," the gentleman said pleasantly. He fiddled with the radio. A glow germinated in the middle of the room over a circular copper plate and coalesced into a girl. She was extremely nude and extremely attractive. She scurried to the desk, patted the gentleman's head with the speed of a pneumatic hammer. She laughed and chattered, "Wd-nk-tk-ik-Itnk."

The gray-haired man smiled and pointed to the door. "Go outside and walk it off," he said. She turned and streaked through the door.

"It has something to do with temporal rates," the gentleman said to Addyer. "I don't understand it. When they come forward they've got accumulated momentum." He began ciphering again. "Why in the world did you have to come snooping, Mr. Addyer?"

"You're spies," Addyer said. "She was talking Chinese."

"Hardly. I'd say it was French. Early French. Middle fifteenth century."

"Middle fifteenth century!" Addyer exclaimed.

“That’s what I’d say. You begin to acquire an ear for those stepped-up tempos. Just a minute, please.”

He switched the radio on again. Another glow appeared and solidified into a nude man. He was stout, hairy and lugubrious. With exasperating slowness

hesaid, “Mooo fooo blooo wawww hawww p000.”

The gray-haired man pointed to the door. The stout man departed in slow motion.

“The way I see it,” the gray-haired man continued conversationally, “when they come back they’re swimming against the time current. That slows ‘em down. When they come forward, they’re swimming with the current. That speeds ‘em up. Of course, in any case it doesn’t last longer than a few minutes. It wears off.”

“What?” Addyer said. “Time travel?”

“Yes. Of course.”

“That thing Addyer pointed to the radio. “A time machine?”

“That’s the idea. Roughly.”

“But it’s too small.”

The gray-haired man laughed.

“What is this place anyway? What are you up to?”

“It’s a funny thing,” the gray-haired man said. “Everybody used to speculate about time travel. How it would be used for exploration, archaeology, historical and social research and so on. Nobody ever guessed what the real use would be. . . . Therapy.”

“Therapy? You mean medical therapy?”

“That’s right. Psychological therapy for the misfits who won’t respond to any other cure. We let them emigrate. Escape. We’ve set up stations every quarter century. Stations like this.” -

“I don’t understand.”

“This is an immigration office.”

“Oh, my God!” Addyer shot up from the couch. “Then you’re the answer to the population increase. Yes? That’s how I happened to notice it. Mortality’s up so high and birth’s down so low these days that your time-addition becomes significant. Yes?”

“Yes, Mr. Addyer.”

“Thousands of you coming here. From where?”

“From the future, of course. Time travel wasn’t developed until C/H 127. That’s . . . oh, say, AD. 2505 your chronology. We didn’t set up our chain of stations until C/H 189.”

“But those fast-moving ones. You said they came forward from the past.”

“Oh, yes, but they’re all from the future originally. They just decided they went too far back.”

“Too far?”

The gray-haired man nodded and reflected. “It’s amusing, the mistakes people will make. They become unrealistic when they read history. Lose

contact with facts. Chap I knew . . . wouldn’t be satisfied with anything less than Elizabethan times. ‘Shakespeare,’ he said. ‘Good Queen Bess. Spanish Armada. Drake and Hawkins and Raleigh. Most virile period in history. The Golden Age. That’s for me.’ I couldn’t talk sense into him, so we sent him back. Too bad.”

“Well?” Addyer asked.

“Oh, he died in three weeks. Drank a glass of water. Typhoid.”

“You didn’t inoculate him? I mean, the army when it sends men overseas always .

“Of course we did. Gave him all the immunization we could. But diseases evolve and change too. New strains develop. Old strains disappear. That’s what causes pandemics. Evidently our shots wouldn’t take against the Elizabethan typhoid. Excuse me . .

Again the glow appeared. Another nude man appeared, chattered briefly and then whipped through the door. He almost collided with the nude girl who poked her head in, smiled and called in a curious accent, “Ic vous prie de me pardonner. Quy estoit cette gentilhomme?”

“I was right,” the gray-haired man said. “That’s Medieval French. They haven’t spoken like that since Rabelais.” To the girl he said, “Middle English, please. The American dialect.”

“Oh, I’m sorry, Mr. Jelling . I get so damned fouled up with my linguistics. Fouled? Is that right? Or do they say . .

“Hey!” Addyer cried in anguish.

“They say it, but only in private these years. Not before strangers.”

“Oh, yes. I remember. Who was that gentleman who just left?”

“Peters.”

“From Athens?”

“That’s right.”

“Didn’t like it, eh?”



“Not much. Seems the Peripatetics didn’t have plumbing.”

“Yes. You begin to hanker for a modern bathroom after a while. Where do I get some clothes . . . or don’t they wear clothes this century?”

“No, that’s a hundred years forward. Go see my wife. She’s in the outfitting room in the barn. That’s the big red building.”

The tall lighthouse-man Addyer had first seen in the farmyard suddenly manifested himself behind the girl. He was now dressed and moving at normal speed. He stared at the girl; she stared at him. “Splem!” they both cried. They embraced and kissed shoulders.

“St’u my rock-ribbering rib-rockery to heart the hearts two,” the man said.

“Heart’s too, argal, too heart,” the girl laughed.

“Eh? Then you st’u too.”

They embraced again and left.

“What was that? Future talk?” Addyer asked. “Shorthand?”

“Shorthand?” Jelling exclaimed in a surprised tone. “Don’t you know rhetoric when you hear it? That was thirtieth-century rhetoric, man. We don’t talk anything else up there. Prosthesis, Diastole, Epergesis, Metabasis, Hendiadys

And we’re all born scanning.”

“You don’t have to sound so stuck-up,” Addyer muttered enviously. “I could scan too if I tried.”

“You’d find it damned inconvenient trying at your time of life.”

“What difference would that make?”

“It would make a big difference,” Jelling said, “because you’d find that living is the sum of conveniences. You might think plumbing is pretty unimportant compared to ancient Greek philosophers. Lots of people do. But the fact is, we already know the philosophy. After awhile you get tired of seeing the great men and listening to them expound the material you already know. You begin to miss the conveniences and familiar patterns you used to take for granted.”

“That,” said Addyer, “is a superficial attitude.”

“You think so? Try living in the past by candlelight, without central heating, without refrigeration, canned foods, elementary drugs. . . . Or, futurewise, try living with Berganlicks, the Twenty-Two Commandments, duodecimal calendars and currency, or try speaking in meter, planning and scanning each sentence before you talk . . . and damned for a contemptible illiterate if you forget yourself and speak spontaneously in your own tongue.”

“You’re exaggerating,” Addyer said. “I’ll bet there are times where I could be very happy. I’ve thought about it for years, and I .

“Tcha!” Jelling snorted. “The great illusion. Name one.”

“The American Revolution.”

“Pfu! No sanitation. No medicine. Cholera in Philadelphia. Malaria in New York. No anesthesia. The death penalty for hundreds of small crimes and petty infractions. None of the books and music you like best. None of the jobs or professions for which you’ve been trained. Try again.”

“The Victorian Age.”

“How are your teeth and eyes? In good shape? They’d better be. We can’t send your inlays and spectacles back with you. How are your ethics? In bad shape? They’d better be or you’d starve in that cutthroat era. How do you feel about class distinctions? They were pretty strong in those days. What’s your religion? You’d better not be a Jew or Catholic or Quaker or Moravian or any

minority. What’s your politics? If you’re a reactionary today the same opinions would make you a dangerous radical a hundred years ago. I don’t think you’d be happy.”

“I’d be safe.”

“Not unless you were rich; and we can’t send money back. Only the flesh. No, Addyer, the poor died at the average age of forty in those days. . . worked out, worn out. Only the privileged survived, and you wouldn’t be one of the privileged.”

“Not with my superior knowledge?”

Jelling nodded wearily. “I knew that would come up sooner or later. What superior knowledge? Your hazy recollection of science and invention? Don’t be a damned fool, Addyer. You enjoy your technology without the faintest idea of how it works.”

“It wouldn’t have to be hazy recollection. I could prepare.”

“What, for instance?”

“Oh . . . say, the radio. I could make a fortune inventing the radio.”

Jelling smiled. “You couldn’t invent radio until you’d first invented the hundred allied technical discoveries that went into it. You’d have to create an entire new industrial world. You’d have to discover the vacuum rectifier and create an industry to manufacture it; the self-heterodyne circuit, the nonradiating neutrodyne receiver and so forth. You’d have to develop electric power production and transmission and alternating current. You’d have to— but why belabor the obvious? Could you invent internal combustion before the development of fuel oils?”

“My God!” Addyer groaned.

“And another thing,” Jelling went on grimly. “I’ve been talking about technological tools, but language is a tool too; the tool of communication. Did you ever realize that all the studying you might do could never teach you how a language was really used centuries ago? Do you know how the Romans pronounced Latin? Do you know the Greek dialects? Could you learn to speak and think in Gaelic, seventeenth-century Flemish, Old Low German? Never. You’d be a deaf-mute.”

"I never thought about it that way," Addyer said slowly.

"Escapists never do. All they're looking for is a vague excuse to run away."

"What about books? I could memorize a great book and . . ."

"And what? Go back far enough into the past to anticipate the real author? You'd be anticipating the public too. A book doesn't become great until the public's ready to understand it. It doesn't become profitable until the public's ready to buy it."

"What about going forward into the future?" Addyer asked.

"I've already told you. It's the same problem only in reverse. Could a medieval man survive in the twentieth century? Could he stay alive in street traffic? Drive cars? Speak the language? Think in the language? Adapt to the tempo, ideas and coordinations you take for granted? Never. Could someone from the twenty-fifth century adapt to the thirtieth? Never."

"Well, then," Addyer said angrily, "if the past and future are so uncomfortable, what are those people traveling around for?"

"They're not traveling," Jelling said. "They're running."

"From what?"

"Their own time."

"Why?"

"They don't like it."

"Why not?"

"Do you like yours? Does any neurotic?"

"Where are they going?"

"Any place but where they belong. They keep looking for the Golden Age. Tramps! Time stiffs! Never satisfied. Always searching, shifting . . . bumming through the centuries. Pfu! Half the panhandlers you meet are probably time bums stuck in the wrong century."

"And those people coming here . . . they think this is a Golden Age?"

"They do."

"They're crazy," Addyer protested. "Have they seen the ruins? The radiation? The war? The anxiety? The hysteria?"

"Sure. That's what appeals to them. Don't ask me why. Think of it this way:

you like the American Colonial period, yes?"

“Among others.”

“Well, if you told Mr. George Washington the reasons why you liked his time, you’d probably be naming everything he hated about it.”

“But that’s not a fair comparison. This is the worst age in all history.”

Jelling waved his hand. “That’s how it looks to you. Everybody says that in every generation; but take my word for it, no matter when you live and how you live, there’s always somebody else somewhere else who thinks you live in the Golden Age.”

“Well, I’ll be damned,” Addyer said.

Jelling looked at him steadily for a moment. “You will be,” he said sorrowfully. “I’ve got bad news for you, Addyer. We can’t let you remain. You’ll talk and make trouble, and our secret’s got to be kept. We’ll have to send you out one-way.”

“I can talk wherever I go.”

“But nobody’ll pay attention to you outside your own time. You won’t make sense. You’ll be an eccentric . . . a lunatic . . . a foreigner . . . safe.”

“What if I come back?”

“You won’t be able to get back without a visa, and I’m not tattooing any visa on you. You won’t be the first we’ve had to transport if that’s any consolation to you. There was a Japanese, I remember . .

“Then you’re going to send me somewhere in time? Permanently?”

“That’s right. I’m really very sorry.”

“To the future or the past?”

“You can take your choice. Think it over while you’re getting undressed.”

“You don’t have to act so mournful,” Addyer said. “It’s a great adventure. A high adventure. It’s something I’ve always dreamed.”

“That’s right. It’s going to be wonderful.”

“I could refuse,” Addyer said nervously.

Jelling shook his head. “We’d only drug you and send you anyway. It might as well be your choice.”

“It’s a choice I’m delighted to make.”

“Sure. That’s the spirit, Addyer.”

“Everybody says I was born a hundred years too soon.”

“Everybody generally says that. . . unless they say you were born a hundred years too late.”

“Some people say that too.”

“Well, think it over. It’s a permanent move. Which would you prefer

the phonetic future or the poetic past?”

Very slowly Addyer began to undress as he undressed each night when he began the prelude to his customary fantasy. But now his dreams were faced with fulfillment and the moment of decision terrified him. He was a little blue and rather unsteady on his legs when he stepped to the copper disk in the center of the floor. In answer to Jelling’s inquiry he muttered his choice. Then he turned argent in the aura of an incandescent glow and disappeared from his time forever.

Where did he go? You know. I know. Addyer knows. Addyer traveled to the land of our pet fantasy. He escaped into the refuge that is our refuge, to the time of our dreams; and in practically no time at all he realized that he had in truth departed from the only time for himself.

Through the vistas of the years every age but our own seems glamorous and golden. We yearn for the yesterdays and tomorrows, never realizing that we are faced with Hobson’s choice. . . that today, bitter or sweet, anxious or calm, is the only day for us. The dream of time is the traitor, and we are all accomplices to the betrayal of ourselves.

Can you spare price of one coffee, honorable sir? No, sir, I am not panhandling organism. I am starveling Japanese transient stranded in this so miserable year. Honorable sir! I beg in tears for holy charity. Will you donate to this destitute person one ticket to township of Lyonesse? I want to beg on knees for visa. I want to go back to year 1945 again. I want to be in Hiroshima again. I want to go home.