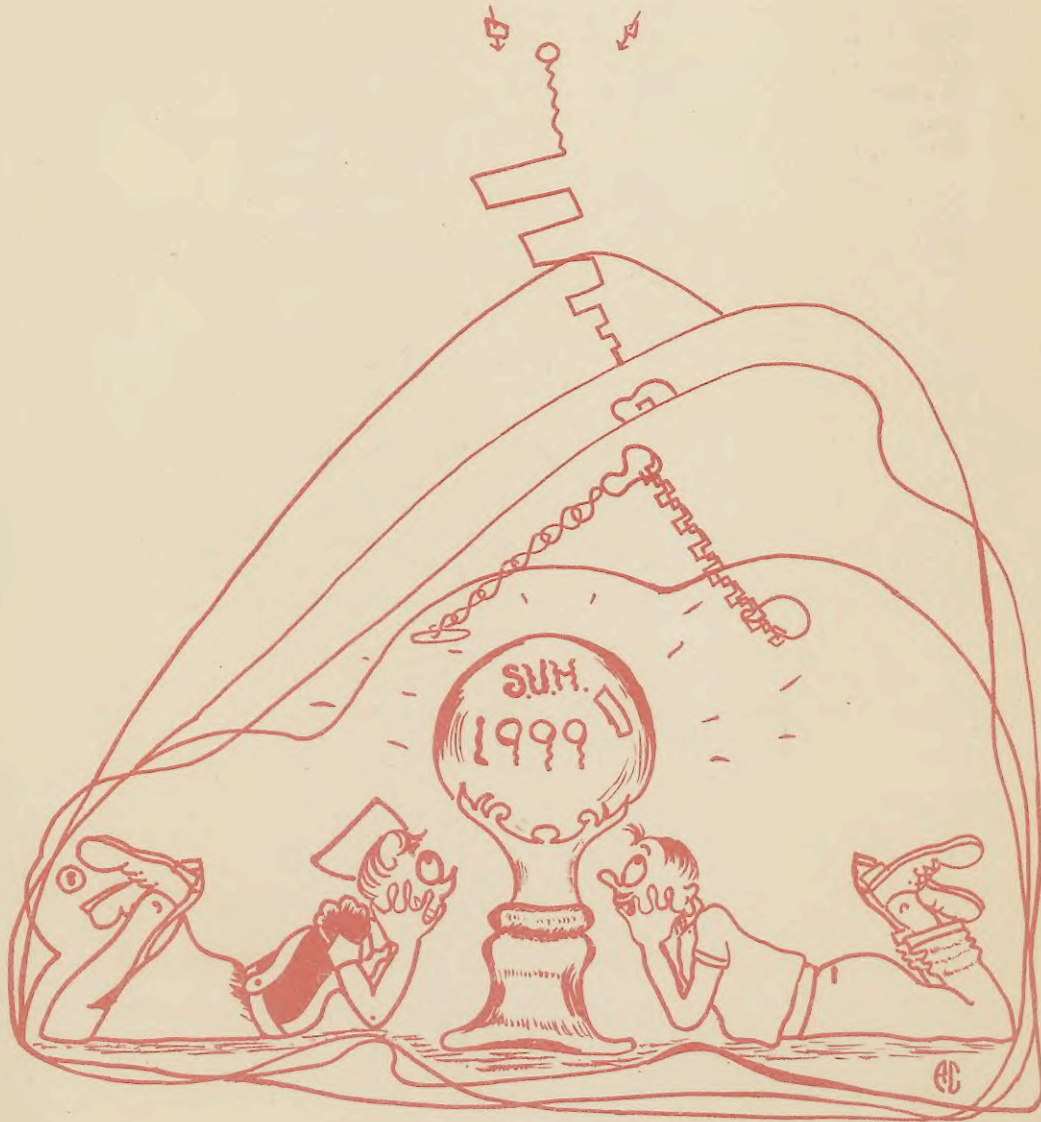


STAT

Fall

1949



TELE-MEDICA FUTURA



by HEMINGWAY FREEMAN and SINCLAIR ELLIS

The numerals seemed to hang in mid-air over the center of the city. It was being announced, now, that this was a projection from the new Tele-Sky tower on Twin Peaks. Only last week the president of Tele-Tele, Inc., had said in a Tele-Home showing that the passing of 1999 would be teledramatically demonstrated to each and every person in San Francisco. And here it was!

Even as I rode up Clay St. on the Tele-Scalator, a huge red arrow ran through the tall gray numbers. As if by magic, they crumbled, leaving only a few wisps of dust. But before I had reached the Stanford Tele-Hospital entrance, tiny specks of green could be seen rising from what had been the gray dust of 1999. Yes, there it was, in tall, bold Tele-Print: 2000! Instantly, bells, sirens and whistles began a clamor, the likes of which I had not heard since the day Dr. John Connelly, et.al. (his dogs), had returned from a Tele-Send expedition to the moon, back in 1973.

So this was another New Year--Tele-Year it was to be known as. It would probably be just a little more difficult to adjust to this one, since so many new laws went into effect, as of now, January 1, 2000. For instance, the one that Tele-Tele, Inc., had managed to lobby through two weeks ago, forbidding the printing of all calendars, and the manufacturer of all clocks. The new law even made it a misdemeanor to be found in possession of same. Gad! The only way to tell the time would be to put a quarter in the slot of your Tele-All set marked "Tele-Time," and for two seconds the screen would show the year, month, day, hour, minute and second it happened to be just then. I remember once last month when they were having test runs, I tried it out, but I got some smoke in my eye from a cigarette, and by the time I blinked a few times to clear it up, the Tele-Time was gone--and so was my quarter! Since then, I've rigged up my Polaroid camera in front

of the screen, so I can get a picture of it.

Another one was the new Tele-Med which the Hospital had been forced to install. For the past five years there had been several voluntary Tele-Med Hospitals, but now there was no alternative. I could hardly imagine what it was going to be like on Monday morning. At nine o'clock I would find myself in the Tele-Surg Clinic camera room. On the way I would undoubtedly come by long lines of patients, waiting to put their quarters in the Tele-Info machines. These had been designed to show the patients where to go: Tele-Surg, Tele-Med, Tele-Ped, etc. There would probably be some cheating going on, with two or three people trying to get a look on someone else's quarter's worth. But Tele-Tele, Inc., would have their efficiency men stationed around to pick up such culprits.

Back in the camera room, everybody would have to be ready for action as new cases came up. The Tele-Tele representative had explained it to us at a meeting last month: For the first few days, we would all be pretty busy. Every case that came in would require a Tele-Photo on its treatment. However, if that type of case came in again, it would simply be shown from the original Tele-Photo. So it was going to be pretty easy for the House Staff, once a good library of treatments had been built.

The patients, though, would have more trouble--which was really no change from the older methods. After they saw where they were to go, they would have to wait in more long lines to get into small booths containing Tele-Med Screens. There was a lock on each booth, which required a quarter to open, and another quarter slot on the machine which had to be nourished in order to turn it on. Each set had numerous dials, so the patients could set the machines to correspond to their complaints. One dial controlled the part of the body you wished to ask about, another the symptoms, another the duration of symptoms, another the kind of treatment you had B.T. (before Tele-Year), etc. Of course each dial could not be turned without the ever-present "quarter in the slot." Once the dials had been set, another quarter would start the Tele-Treatment showing. These were to be limited to two minutes, and could only be repeated by placing two quarters in the slot. So the patients would have to be very observant, and listen carefully to all the suggested treatment, or they would find themselves at the end of the line, working their way up again, with a new supply of quarters.

I had been wondering what would happen to the B.T. nurses when the new system went into effect, until I heard that the Tele-Nurses would circulate through the crowds, dressed in the latest uniforms (called Tele-Clothes), changing silver dollars to quarters. These two coins had become the medium of exchange, through a recent Tele-Act of Congress: These Tele-Nurses might be some-

thing to keep an eye on, or so my informer had told me. Well, I would see. (How right I was!).

Of course, most of the profits from the new machines would go into the coffers of Tele-Tele, Inc. The Tele-Doctors who were to get additional remuneration were the Tele-Surgeons, since it was decided that patients couldn't very well remove their own appendices or gall bladders via Tele-Med Screens. If the Tele-Med told the patient he needed an operation, for another quarter it would show pictures of each available surgeon. The patient then picked his own Tele-Surgeon. At this point, the cost of the operation would be shown on the Tele-Med Screen and the patient deposited silver dollars in a special slot, marked "Tele-Op." As soon as he had paid the amount, a date would be flashed on the screen and the patient shown where to go for the operation.

The Tele-Surgeons had managed to make a deal with Tele-Tele, Inc., so each surgeon got half of the Tele-Op profits from his cases. For this concession the Tele-Surgeons were required to give free service to all the executives of Tele-Tele, Inc., and their families for life. This had caused a violent protest from the Tele-Internists, because all of their services, but one, could be rendered via the Tele-Med Screen. But I had become accustomed to such outbursts from them for years. I guess it all started many years B.T., when they were occasionally called upon to type blood during the night for some needy patient. However, since the advent of such progress as Tele-Med, the sole remaining problem of the Tele-Internists, outside the Tele-Med Screen duties, was that of typing blood, day and night. I heard they had tried to make a deal with Tele-Tele, Inc., to get paid in silver dollars for this job, but had been refused. I guess they'll be doing it for some time to come, gratis, of course.

At this point in my anticipation of next week, I found myself in the Tele-Mail room of the Hospital, watching a hill-billy band playing "No Tele-Letter Today," which had cost me a quarter.

With a feeling of disappointment, and the need for a breath of fresh air, I decided to take a look at the old Med School. Surely, this would not be changed by Tele-Med. But to my utter amazement, I found only a large Tele-Transmitter, which I was to learn later, would be used to send Tele-Lectures to the New Tele-Med Students. I was also to learn that these Tele-Lectures could only be received on specially built ceiling screens, designed to

put the students in an obviously comfortable position.

So this was Tele-Med! No more days of sitting through tedious lectures, making cracks to the fellow next to you; or the long clinics with the neurotic old women taking up your time with their sundry complaints; or the little old men you couldn't understand, or couldn't be made to understand; or making time with some chic little nurse who was in your clinic for two weeks; the others you wished were going to be there for only two more weeks. A sudden wave of nostalgia engulfed me, and I felt I was going to cry, but knew I wouldn't. This was progress! This was the year 2000! Tele-Year! I wondered: maybe this wasn't progress; maybe we were going in the opposite direction from all we had hoped to accomplish. And as I thought thus, from somewhere in the dim recesses of memory, I recalled a thing I had read long years B.T.-- a thing which made no sense to me then, nor since, to now. It was Lowell who authored the thing which now took on a significant meaning, and from which I am sure I can never be quite the same:

*"'Tis man's worst deed
To let the things that have been, run to waste
And in the unmeaning Present sink the Past."*

Jordan 7-0726

Mary Baxter

The Yarn Basket

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