

To the recipient of this here epistle, whatsoever the geographic and temporal circumstances of your receipt thereof:

It began as a fine spring morning much like any other, sitting on the terrace with my custom'ry pipe and the latest *Telegraph*, watching sporting young lads playing cricket on the green. Then reality itself seemed to grow awfully tired of existing as it has since time immemorial, and something quite inexplicable happened.

In a sudden flash of inspiration, I realized that this young chap Einstein everybody's been talking about must have been right after all, and what I was looking at was a hole in *the very fabric joining space and time!* This was the last thing that crossed my mind before the rift enveloped me, only to deposit me G__d knows where and G__d knows when!

My younger and more imaginative readers are no doubt already grown frenzied, with such thoughts as: "Oh, jolly good! Just like in that smashing new novel by Mr. Wells!"

Think no such thoughts! For this land is bleak, bitter, and cold; there is nothing like the fine weather we experience so often in the isles! I spied two locals slipping and skidding as they tried to traverse a vast sheet of ice, and flailing about madly with what appeared to be brooms.

"Tell me, sirrah, what madness is this?" I entreated the first such ruffian. Or pray tell, in G__d's name, where have I ended up? And in which year of the lord?"

I did not give voice to the nagging possibility that I had arrived at some point in time so remote from nineteen-hundred-and-six that the true Anglican faith had been forgotten, or worse yet, not even revealed in the first place! How frightful! His replies, in a base vernacular so far removed from the purity of the English tongue that I will not reprint them here, chilled me to the very bone.

North Americer! And Chicago, that wild city of steel and slaughterhouses practically verging on the territ'ry of the natives! And the distant future, the year two thousand and ten! How I shall make my way and survive in this rugged dystopia, I know not.

Should this ever reach dear old England in a future more vivid[†] than the one I have had the misfortune to experience, perchance 'twill serve beneficial as a cautionary tale to the young scallywags of our day who spout all sorts of Bolshevik propagander and don't give a damn about fastening their knickers. I will now describe the most striking features of this harsh world in the form of a numerical list (using of course the civilized numerical system of the ancient Latins rather than the whimsical, serpentine numerals imagined by the sheiks of Araby! Heavens no!)

[†]: Nay, good reader, think not that the bleak circumstances in which I find myself have robbed me of my G__d-given ability to pun on erudite subjects in the time-honored British tradition of the Bard himself! Should it so happen that I meet a fine educated fellow from Cambridge (though I suppose Harvard will probably have to do; I hear even *Chicago* has a university now: Ha!), he will no doubt appreciate my ability to subtly reference grammatical formulations in Latin that are really of no use to anybody whatsoever. For the rest of you uncultured plebians, I must resort to such explanatory footnotes as this.

- I: Ruined and crumbling mason'ry lies scattered across the ground with no rhyme or reason. It looks as if efficient central administration, never strong among those unruly Americans, has really vanished altogether.
- II: Cats appear to be venerated among certain fanatical sections of the populace. Does this signify a regression to the ancient animalistic cults of the mysterious Nile Valley empire of the pharaohs?
- III: Though I would it were not so, perhaps the most tragic indicator of how far humanity has fallen short of its G__d-given potential is the fact that humans seem to be engaged in a bitter uphill battle with particularly hardy representatives of the murine species for control of the few buildings that provide shelter from the biting cold. Perhaps this explains the growing popularity of the cat cult? Citizens are officially encouraged to pray at a mysterious shrine known only as the front desk in order to receive cunning traps designed to put an end to the invading rodents. However, a small faction of dissidents staunchly advocates humane treatment of the enemy. Perhaps there is something to this argument. If we lose our human dignity in destroying the mice, how can we claim to be any better than mere animals ourselves?
- IV: One small polity known as Snell seems to have adopted a curious political system in which the right to rule is held only by those named Alan. Recently a peaceful transition of power from one Alan to another occurred. Why the inhabitants have not realized the glaring flaw in this arrangement and named all of their children Alan is entirely beyond me, but I fear for the stability of the state when they inevitably do.
- V: For theatrical entertainment, it seems, the residents of Snell and neighboring Hitchcock prefer crude Italian melodrama over the many fine English and classical pieces so beloved in our times. Should this sham of an opera pique your interest for any reason whatsoever, seek out the uncouth rabble rouser known as Mr. Samuel R. Bowman or his associate Ms. Hackner. Mr. Bowman in particular seems to coordinate trips to other theatrical venues as well; seek him out if these are of any interest to you.
- VI: The fascination of these people with the Italian race extends further still: the government of Hitchcock has announced plans to celebrate its first successful survey of all its inhabitants by inviting them all to partake of a vulgar peasant dish frequently consumed by Southern Italians, that most unpleasant tribe of men. This is supposed to occur on Tuesday, 12 January.
- VII: A wandering scholar with considerable knowledge of antiquity, rare enough in these times, is due to arrive in the lands of Snell and Hitchcock on Thursday, 14 January. Should you wish to meet such a fine upstanding example of a man, simply inquire as to the remaining available space at the front desk.
- VIII: I happened upon a very curious gathering of the citizens of Hitchcock voting by an overwhelming majority to invest a significant proportion of their treasury funds in so-called "Jell-O." The proponents of this plan argued that "Jell-O" is more liquid than good old-fashioned paper money, and all of Hitchcock's truly liquid assets have frozen due to the cold. I fail to see the relevance to sound financial policy, but it demonstrates that the locals seem to have at least a rudimentary knowledge of chemistry.
- IX: At this same gathering it was announced that Hitchcock will likely be visited by a roving band of nomadic "prospies" in approximately eight weeks. Why anybody would care to enter such a G__d-forsaken land by choice, I know not. But at least the residents of

Hitchcock seem to care for their own. An expatriate named Claire Wolf was welcomed back into the hall by unanimous consent at the end of the meeting.

- X: It appears that the distressing and possibly suicidal activity noted above involving ice sheets and broomsticks is some sort of ritual of social cohesion. Those interested in ending their own lives should note that it occurs every Tuesday at 21:30.
- XI: Gentle reader, be advised that the week of 11 January marks beginning of a terrifying ritual practice known as Kuviasungnerk/Kangeiko. According to a number of eminent linguists, this name is apparently a concatenation of two of the putative six thousand Eskimo words for snow. Citizens are hauled from their snug beds before dawn and forced to run outside, often in the nude, for the amusement of the cruel Eskimo overlords. Tremble, good reader, tremble with fear. Lock your door at night lest this happen to you.

G__d save the Queen!

Benedict B. Baker, esq.