

LONDON IN 2013

By CYRIL CLEMENS

OVER forty years ago, before the First World War, the Lord Mayor of London, Sir Vansittart Bowater, predicted in November, 1913, what London would be like in A.D. 2013. One is interested to note that many things which he predicted have already come to pass, and others will probably come to pass within a few years.

Here then are Sir Vansittart's predictions:

"Locomotion is one of the most absorbing topics of all, for the problem of traffic and transport is just now in the melting pot, and I think it may be safely predicted that the next ten decades will witness a startling transformation in London's traffic system.

"How is the great and daily growing problem of vehicular and pedestrian congestion to be relieved? It already approaches a crisis. Will the street views of London in 2013 be darkened by the criss-cross of overhead or elevated railways such as now exist in New York and other American cities, or will the chief means of locomotion be glorified (tubes) laid one above another like sticks of tinned asparagus, and with underground shops in connection with the termini, such as likewise already obtain to a certain extent in the American metropolis?

"Will London, again, I wonder, form one of the ends of a cat's cradle of canals, cut all over the country for slow goods traffic, or even as highways for the great airship services 100 years from now?

"Will the mono-rail have superseded the double track by then, and will the moving platform, and even moving pavement have virtually abolished walking altogether?

"One hundred years hence will the tram-car and the trackless trolley alike have met the fate of the sedan chair and the road coach, and the silent electric "trailer" motor omnibus be king of the surface passenger transport? Will pedestrians be banned from the streets entirely, and make their way in safety underground, or by way of balconies built along the shop-fronted upper stories of the business houses? In any case, the streets will have to be widened, extended and expanded enormously, and new traffic Avenues and outlets constructed, whatever the cost.

"Certainly, I believe that 2013 will be an exclusively traction year, and that a horse will excite far more wonder and

curiosity in the city 100 years hence than an aeroplane or a dirigible flying over St. Paul's does today. This does not necessarily mean, of course, that horses will not still be used to a limited extent for pleasure, exercise or racing.

"One way in which London will assuredly find part relief from the congestion between now and 2013 will be by the extension of her suburbs. I should not wonder, indeed, if in that year letters from as far away as Brighton, and perhaps much further, bore the London postmark—if, indeed, postmarks or stamps existed by that year, except as curiosities.

"By November, 2013, again, I should not be at all surprised if the channel tunnel scheme is a commonplace of actuality, and that train services will be running every few minutes direct from London to Paris and other great continental capitals.

"The drone of great airships, each carrying, perhaps, many hundreds of passengers, will also probably be heard across both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

"London to New York in twenty-four hours!" I can almost see the attractive poster, illustrated by an airship brilliantly illumined, across the intervening century. The Atlantic airship is a prophecy I can make with confidence for 2013, as also that the aeroplane or the dirigible, or both, changed probably out of all recognition from their present experimental forms, will be as common as motorcycles today.

"Incidentally, the general existence of the new craft will raise problems undreamt of by the average man now. The prevention of smuggling and other crimes and the protection of pedestrians and householders—possibly by wire netting laid over the housetops and even over streets—are merely two of these problems which the future will have to solve for itself.

"Will a visit to Mars or the moon be practicable in 2013, I wonder, by harnessing the elusive ether, by electricity, or by some other present unknown force capable of offsetting gravitation? Well, I can only suggest I do not know that this question will seem any more fantastic to the Londoner of 2013 than wireless telegraphy or the marvels of radium would have appeared to the Londoner of 1813.

"In earth locomotion, as in other things, I should not wonder if the twenty-first century proves to be the real electric age, just as the present century promises to be the oil era, for I think it cannot be disputed that electricity, great as have been its recent developments, is still only in its infancy, and that undreamt of marvels await the next few decades.

"While I greatly doubt whether 2013 will not be still seeking to discover the secret of perpetual youth, he certainly will be a bold man in that year who will venture to say a person is dead beyond the hope of resuscitation. Oxygen and electricity, saline injections, transfusion of blood, grafted organs and members, already promise to give the average man or woman as many lives as the proverbial cat.

"Will suggestion, I wonder, be a recognized branch of Harley Street practice science of 2013. Will medicine again have largely given place to dietetics?

"It seems very probable that 100 years hence such awful scourges as cancer and the hidden plague will be as much a memory as plague and the "black death," are to us today.

"Will woman fill a much greater and more important position in professional, business and commercial life than she does now? Unbiased students of the present economic situation, as well as of the trend of the day, must inevitably answer this question in the affirmative.

"Will the sight of women pointsmen, or women scavengers, to give two every-day illustrations, arouse no more comment in the London of 2013 than they do in, say the streets of Munich today? Will there be policewomen such as already exist in certain towns of the United States?

"Will legislation be centered in nonpolitical and more centralized bodies? Or will the Utopian dream be realized 100 years hence, and there be a federation of the world and parliament of man composed of representatives of all nations sitting and legislating under the same roof?

"Will war be possible in 2013, or will new explosives "infrared" rays and airships, on the one hand, or growing amity on the other, have banished it from the realm of practicalities? Any event, however, are not the years at least preceding 2013 bound to witness Tennyson's airy navies grappling in the general blue.

"Will the victory be with concentrated food, and will the principal items of the aldermanic dinner of November, 2013, for instance, be turtle tablets and lozenges of roast beef? Well, all events, thank goodness, I shall probably not be there to have to eat them.

"Will milk and gas, and drinks of all sorts, hot and cold, newspapers, news sent verbally, and provisions generally be delivered by pneumatic tube, or by means of the penny-in-the-tube machines in 2013. I should not be tremendously surprised.

I confess, however, that I am a little anxious to know what will be the most popular drink 100 years hence, or will drinks be superseded then by, say, gases?

"Will newspapers be confined to a single sheet of concentrated one-line items, will they be printed on metal, as suggested by Mr. Thomas A. Edison, or will there be only a single newspaper run by the state? Or will the cinematograph, the gramophone, the telephone, the telegraph, and the pocket wireless, supersede it altogether? I hope not.

"Will the state by that time, to pursue the growing government control to its logical conclusion, assume complete charge of the people's housing, doctoring, incomes, amusements, marriages, feeding, clothing, education and everything else?

"Last, but not least, will there be a Lord Mayor of London in 2013. There I answer 'yes' confidently, for the office has already existed 700 years, and bids fair to endure many times that number."