

really contribute to the happiness of mankind; but it's very difficult to know what to do with money. When Mr. Rosenblatt told me that you'd be here tonight I asked the mayor to invite me. I certainly would value your advice."

"Would you intend to do anything for the advancement of science?" I asked.

"No," Mark Gable said. "I believe scientific progress is too fast as it is."

"I share your feeling about this point," I said with the fervor of conviction, "but then why not do something about the retardation of scientific progress?"

"That I would very much like to do," Mark Gable said, "but how do I go about it?"

"Well," I said, "I think that shouldn't be very difficult. As a matter of fact, I think it would be quite easy. You could set up a foundation, with an annual endowment of thirty million dollars. Research workers in need of funds could apply for grants, if they could make out a convincing case. Have ten committees, each composed of twelve scientists, appointed to pass on these applications. Take the most active scientists out of the laboratory and make them members of these committees. And the very best men in the field should be appointed as chairmen at salaries of fifty thousand dollars each. Also have about twenty prizes of one hundred thousand dollars each for the best scientific papers of the year. This is just about all you would have to do. Your lawyers could easily prepare a charter for the foundation. As a matter of fact, any of the National Science Foundation bills which were introduced in the Seventy-ninth and Eightieth Congresses could perfectly well serve as a model."

"I think you had better explain to Mr. Gable why this foundation would in fact retard the progress of science," said a bespectacled young man sitting at the far end of the table, whose name I didn't get at the time of introduction.

"It should be obvious," I said. "First of all, the best scientists would be removed from their laboratories and kept busy on committees passing on applications for funds. Secondly, the scientific workers in need of funds would concentrate on problems which were considered promising and were pretty certain to lead to publishable results. For a few years there might be a great increase in scientific output; but by going after the obvious, pretty soon science would dry out. Science would become something like a parlor game. Some things would be considered interesting, others not. There would be fashions. Those who followed the fashion would get grants. Those who wouldn't would not, and pretty soon they would learn to follow the fashion, too."

"Will you stay here with us?" Mark Gable said, turning to me, "and help me to set up such a foundation?"

"That I will gladly do, Mr. Gable," I said. "We should be able to see within a few years whether the scheme works, and I'm certain that it will work. For a few years I could afford to stay here, and I could then still complete the three hundred years which were my original goal."

"So you would want to go through with your plan rather than live out your life with us?" asked the mayor.

"Frankly, Mr. Mayor," I said, "before Mr. Gable brought up the plan of the foundation, with science progressing at this rapid rate I was a little scared of being faced with further scientific progress two hundred years hence. But if Mr. Gable succeeds in stopping the progress of science and gives the art of living a chance to catch up, two hundred years hence the world should be a livable place. If Mr. Gable should not go through with his project, however, I would probably prefer to live out my life with you in the twenty-first century. How about it, Mr. Mayor?" I said. "Will you give me a job if I decide to stay?" "You don't need a job," the mayor said. "You don't seem to realize that you're a very famous man."