

The Choice
by W. Hilton Young (1952)

What would you do if you had the chance to travel to the future?

BEFORE WILLIAMS WENT into the future she bought a camera and a tape recorder. She also learned shorthand. That night, when all was ready, we made coffee. She might want some - if and when she came back.

"Good-bye," I said. "Don't stay too long."

"I won't," she answered.

I watched her carefully. She hardly seemed to move at all. She was back from her trip within the second she had left. It seemed that way, at least, by our sense of time.

We had not been sure how long she would be away. Maybe a minute. Maybe several years. But here she was, as if she had never left.

"Well?"

"Well," she said, "let's have some coffee."

I poured it out, hardly able to contain my impatience. As I gave it to her I said again, "Well?"

"Well, the thing is, I can't remember."

"Can't remember? Not a thing?"

She thought for a moment and answered sadly, "Not a thing."

"But your notes? The camera? The tape-recorder?"

The notebook was empty, the film was still at "1" where we had set it. The tape in the tape-recorder had not been used.

"But good heavens," I protested, "why? How did it happen? Can you remember anything at all?"

"I remember only one thing."

"What was that?"

"I was shown everything, and I was given the choice whether I should remember it or not after I got back."

"And you chose not to? But what an odd thing to—"

"Isn't it?" she said. "I can't help wondering why."