

A SUMMER DAY WITH THE HELLO GIRL.

SOME COMMON NOTIONS ABOUT HER UPSET.

A green and red outlook, the green that of big spreading trees in spacious yards, the red the freshly painted facades of neighboring houses; a clear blue sky and a sense of space and light—that is the outlook that the Hello-to-you girls, those who are fortunate enough to be at work in one of the upper central stations, have to gaze upon.

The generally accepted belief in regard



IN THE SITTING ROOM.

to the telephone girl is that she is the suffering victim of circumstance—circumstance being represented by hard task-masters, long hours and low wages. There is another belief running counter to this, a creed gained from vaudeville and popular song, that she spends her spare time

must be deafened by the noise,—for to the lay mind the thought of being in a room where there are 150 girls, each answering from one to two hundred calls an hour, conveys the impression of a pandemonium alongside which momentary explosions of the subway would be like the ticking of a watch in a dark room.

As a matter of fact, considering the amount of important business that is accomplished in one of these telephone stations, it is marvellous that so little confusion and noise exist.

There are sixteen branches of the telephone company in Manhattan proper and an average of 120 girls to each. The branches are distributed in the centers of the city and each branch has about 3,000 lines under its supervision. Three thousand six hundred lines means how many calls a day? And from how many people? This is a sum in arithmetic for the ambitious.

The waiting room of one of the branches, taken as an example, has always its complement of applicants. It is an interesting fact that most of these applicants are the sisters or friends of the girls already employed, or of those who have left places vacant by resignation.

These girls are usually graduates of the public schools, for while there is no civil service examination in regard to fitness, still an assured mental activity is necessary. An ignorant girl could not fill the requirements and in the telephone business, as in every other, there is always room at the top, if one has strength enough to push away those who encumber the lower lines of the ladder. There are promotions for the fitting as there is unbroken monotony for those who prove themselves incapable of meeting opportunity with open hand.

The price paid to an expert operator is \$11 a week, while the beginner has \$3; not a Vanderbilt income, it is true, but when one considers that many professions offer no wages to the learner, the smallness of the sum assumes a different aspect.

The fact that so few girls resign and that there is always a long waiting list speaks well for the telephone industry, which at present keeps 2,000 girls busy every day in Manhattan alone.

One of the most interesting, as well as one of the first, places to which the visitor in one of these branch establishments is



ONE OF THE KIND THAT GETS A CALL FROM CUPID.

doing cake walk dances, that she usually dresses in gowns that would put a concert hall singer to shame and that her salary must be commensurate with her needs.

The real telephone girl is quite a different person, as a summer day with her dressings, she does not appeal to the sympathies as the first might do, neither does she appeal to the emotions as the second would surely do, did she exist in reality.

"But," says the disbeliever, asking questions according to his wont, "at least she

taken is the school. This is the first step and the place in which the new applicant, as soon as her credentials are examined and she is taken on trial, begins her work.

The eyes trained to notice incongruities will be attracted by the centre desk, at which is seated a young man, apparently oblivious of the fact that he is the only masculine dweller therein. In comic opera he would be inviting the girls to fizzy lunches or other vaudeville sports. In reality he sits before a tangle of plugs and

So quickly are these connections made, so deftly do the brains and hands move, that the onlooker feels as if at a slight-of-hand performance. About 150 of these connections are made every hour, an average of 2 1/2 a minute, and when one realizes what that means all fear as to important conversation's being overheard by the telephone girl becomes ludicrous in its impossibility.

There never was a safer method adopted for the man of fears. He who has hesitated

to put his promises on paper for fear of future court summons may telephone his lady fair at once and may make his declarations as long and as lurid as he pleases.

So long as the insulating arrangements are not turned on the telephone company makes no extra charge, and the telephone girl is in reality as unconscious of what is going on right under her eyes as the most ardent lover could desire.

The telephone girl's happiness and good health under what might be considered trying conditions are due, perhaps, chiefly to the absolute concentration of her attention. There is no second of the day when Miss Hello is not actively employed except at her recreation hours, and this applies

to the syllables shall be enunciated as if at an election lesson.

This might be well for the shrieking subscriber to learn as well as the telephone girl. When one thinks of the unnecessary vigor which is wasted through the telephone, it seems a pity that it could not be deflected toward some other purpose.

From the school and lecture room the visitor goes to the central office, where the regular work of the branch is conducted.

Here there are about one hundred and fifty girls in the daytime, the night force numbering twenty. When the door is opened a peculiar hum is heard. It is like that of insects or the hidden accompaniment of weird musical instruments, numbers in low tones. Its effect is strange and almost uncanny.



LEARNING TO BE HELLO GIRLS.

sized by the telephone receivers fastened to one side of the head by nickel supports and accentuated by a multiplicity of rhinestone combs, shell pins or butterfly bows. One notices the head-dresses of the telephone girls the first thing.

These girls are usually about 17 or 18. Few are out of their teens. They face the switchboard, which is divided into spaces, giving each operator a certain number of calls.

To the uninitiated the switchboard looks like a perpendicular game of parchesi or an Alice-in-Wonderland chessboard with modern improvements. There is a confusing array of rubber plugs, of long serpentine cords which writhe in and out without apparently any reason or excuse; there are miniature poker chips, although the visitor is solemnly assured that they are not. The most engrossing article in the equipment are the tiny lamps which burst suddenly into brightness in their glass bulbs, miniature incandescent burners about the size of the diamond studs in the shirt front of a successful old clothes man.

As in the parable, it is the wise virgin who attends to the lamp. For the lamp, according to the explanation of the superintendent, is the secret of the telephone's prompt service to its patrons.

When a number is called for the little lamp responds quickly and burns until the connection is made. Then it is quickly extinguished. If it does not go out, the operator is made aware of some obstruction on the line, and, whatever the delay, it is her place to remedy or explain its significance.

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in the school as well as in the regular working rooms.

The tuition hours are broken by a half hour's rest morning and afternoon, and also by the time given to hearing lectures and lessons which relate to the work in hand and also coaching in geographical matters, for it is essential that the telephone operator shall have some knowledge of localities.

One of the first lessons taught the result of which is one of the initial surprises to



THE WISE VIRGIN AND HER LAMP.

the visitor, is the use of a low tone in asking and answering questions, calling numbers, etc. The tone used is almost a whisper, soft articulate and that is all. There is no shrieking, no raising the voice. The only thing necessary, according to the in-

struction, is that the syllables shall be enunciated as if at an election lesson.

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THE MANAGER INQUIRING INTO ONE OF THE TWO COMPLAINTS A DAY.

having any personal conversation over the line she is reprimanded. If it occurs a second time she is notified that her place will be filled. However, they are taught that in the school, and a second lesson is seldom necessary. The usual conversation, in fact, the only one permitted, is to repeat the number, and if there is any hitch

Downstairs a big lunch room saves her the necessity of going out for her lunches. Besides the lunch room and the cloak room where big lockers are ready for her wraps and packages, there is the "fainting room," stocked with smelling salts, medicines, etc., ready for emergencies which, according to statistics, are rarely needed. The busy woman has but little time to faint and inspection proved the fainting room to be guiltless of occupancy.

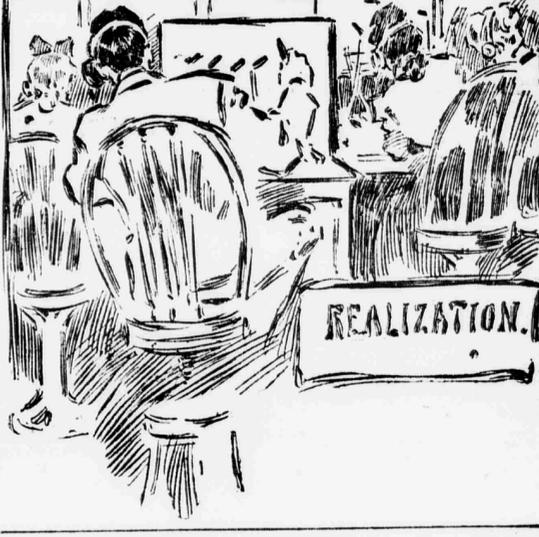
Then there is the sitting room, with comfortable easy chairs, papers on files, the new magazines and, above all, largeness of space, which to eyes tired of gazing on the restricted limits of their work must prove infinitely restful.

There are many questions which come to the lips of those ignorant of the intricacies of the telephone service.

"I boarded last winter," said one of the visitors, "with a chronically bad-tempered woman who went to bed every night at 9 o'clock. When the telephone rang at 10 one night, she immediately informed 'Central' that she was never to be rung up again after that. Would such an order be observed?"

"I am afraid not," was the answer. "It might be for a few days, but such a permanent arrangement does not exist. So long as a subscriber has a public telephone the calls will have to be rung up."

"A public telephone?" "Some of the subscribers have private telephones. That is, the numbers are not in the book, and they are only called for by certain people who know them. We do not give out these numbers to anybody



to explain the reason for it.

"What effect," the superintendent was asked, "does this work have on the girls' nerves?"

"So far as can be learned, there is no effect after the preliminary weeks. Then they are a little rattled at times, but no more than they would be while learning any new profession."

"And the hearing—does it affect that?" "It renders it more acute, if anything. It certainly does not injure it in the least. The personal comfort of the telephone girl is also a matter of concern. There are perfect ventilation and cleanliness in the operating room, and on the warmest days with the electric fans going the current of air is always ready to cool and soothe

who asks for them. We are very careful about that.

"Do you have many complaints?" was the next question.

The answer must surprise many users of the telephone. "We have on an average about two a day, and this from all over the city, not our own lines exclusively. The company is rightly proud of this fact, and in a majority of cases such complaints traced to their source show that the fault is on the side of the subscriber who forgets to hang up the receiver or we find that there is a private switchboard in question and the fault is there. With our system it is impossible that anything serious can be traced to the central office."

BIG TREASURE HUNT IN TOWN.

SEARCHING AN ARMY VISITS THE PENNSYLVANIA STATION SITE.

As Plunder Varies From a Piece of Lead Pipe to a Porcelain Bath-tub—Hunters of Hidden Gold Also—Once the Crowd Thought It Had Struck the Hoard.

If Capt. Kidd had lived in the Tenderloin his hidden gold could have aroused no keener excitement than the destruction of buildings on the site of the Pennsylvania Railroad station has created among the residents in the neighborhood. Each night at 6 o'clock, when the laborers finish their day's work, their places are taken by eager men, women and children, who pore over the ruins and dig in the cellars amid rubbish, searching for anything valuable.

The moment something bright is unearthed, there is a fierce struggle for possession.

"I want you bloke, I seen it first!" you may hear.

"It's mine, Jim; my stick turned it up," is the angry response.

"Drop it or I'll bat your head," is the next stage.

Four hundred houses are to come down. Fifty of them have already been leveled. Others are coming down every day. In spite of police, in spite of night watchmen, it is impossible to drive away the night pirates that infest the scene of destruction.

The houses torn down are destroyed singly, not in groups. The piles of rubbish are separated sometimes by half a block. So that when a policeman strolls up one street, the salvage crew goes around the corner and begins upon another green spot where wreckage may be found.

Sticks of wood disappear during the night. Beams are chopped up and used for firewood in the nearby tenements. Even bricks have been carried away.

Some one stole a stone window ledge from Thirty-second street last week. Metal pipe melts out of sight over night.

A porcelain bath-tub which had been removed from a house about to be demolished, was stored in the cellar over night. It was gone the next morning.

Pieces of broken mirrors are snapped up eagerly whenever found. Sometimes they help to make a rich haul.

The Pennsylvania Railroad is spending nearly \$200,000 to clear the blocks, the buildings.

The vandals seldom flock about the older and cheaper buildings which are being torn down. The flat houses and private brownstone fronts found between

Eighth and Ninth avenues prove more tempting.

A great double apartment house on Thirty-second street is being destroyed, half at a time. One part of the brownstone front remains. A score or more of the wreckers can be seen in this run every evening.

Occasionally one of them turns up a good length of pipe or a piece of a gas fixture. Then there is a rush for more of the same kind. As soon as darkness falls, the army follows, each person carrying something.

Approaching Eighth avenue on Thirty-first street, private residence has been the object of much curiosity. Half dismantled at the present time, it is overgrown each night, and the back yard has been dug up in half a dozen places.

Rumor says a wealthy woman died there several years ago, and the treasure-seekers went to think some of her money will be found hidden in the yard or behind rafters. The word has been passed along from one person to another until a crowd can be found there nearly every night.

While the crowd was searching the cellar and digging up the back yard a few nights ago, a boy about 15 crept down under the front steps with a cry of delight.

"I've found the money," he shouted, attracting a small mob. "It's mine—it's here under the steps, in the arwayway," and he began to tear out the loose stones feverishly.

The word was passed around that the boy had unearthed a kettle of gold, and in a short time the street was nearly blocked. A policeman came up and found half a dozen men down in the arwayway, trying to crowd out the small boy, who yelled lustily and insisted upon keeping his place, saying that the rest of the money was his.

Finally the policeman persuaded him to hold out his precious discovery, promising that the boy could keep it unless someone proved ownership. The boy showed a silver quarter.

"I struck a tin can down there," he cried, "and it's full of money, it's mine." But the tin can was simply a tomato can and no one has found any more money in the arwayway. The silver quarter probably rolled in from the street.

DOOMSDAY ON NOV. 23. Georgia Negroes Alarmed by a Printer's Error in an Almanac.

ATLANTA, Ga., Aug. 1.—The error of a compositor in substituting the figure 1 for the figure 3 in setting up the matter for the 1903 issue of an almanac has resulted in a state of excitement almost approaching a panic among the negroes of Gainesville, Ga., who think that the day of judgment is near at hand.

The excitement was started by a sermon by the Rev. J. D. Lovejoy, pastor of the St. Paul Colored Methodist Episcopal Church of Gainesville, in which he declared that the day of final doom will come on Nov. 23. To dispel all doubt on the subject he pulled a copy of the almanac from his pocket and pointed out the incorrectly set item.

In the November table of the rising and the setting of the sun the astronomer calculated for the 25th that the sun will rise at 6:59 and set at 5:01. Right here where the printer got in his work. By substituting a 1 for a 3 he made it appear that on Nov. 23 the sun is to set at 1:01 in the afternoon.

Mr. Lovejoy, in looking over his almanac, came to this item. Being a close student of the Holy Scriptures, he at once recalled that passage of Amos (viii, 9), which reads:

"The Lord God, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day."

The thought of doubting the time set in the almanac did not occur to the preacher last Sunday. He took for his text the passage quoted and then, with a voice trembling with excitement, called attention to the statement in the almanac, and announced Nov. 23 as "that great day of the Lord's."

Gainesville on June 1 suffered from a storm which in an instant snuffed out more than a hundred lives and destroyed thousands of dollars worth of property. With the roar of the tornado still in their ears the negroes were more than usually ready to believe in such a prophecy, and a season of repentance and prayer at once began.

Runners soon carried the news to other negro churches in the town, and in a short time the entire negro population of Gainesville was gathered at the Methodist Church, praying and waiting. The morning meeting became an all-day affair and the praying was kept up until late at night.

The next morning many negroes failed to appear at work, and for two days the labor of the town was demoralized. The negroes declared that they cared nothing for earthly things as they were all soon to go to their reward. The excitement spread to outlying farms and many negroes deserted their crops and came to town to talk of the impending doom.

White citizens have now persuaded nearly all of them to go back to their work with the idea that they will have to live until Nov. 23, even if the judgment is to occur then, but all efforts to explain to them the error which caused the prophecy have been unavailing, and Mr. Lovejoy and his hearers are still in mortal fear of Nov. 23, and all because the compositor used the wrong figure and the proofreader failed to catch the error.

DINNER AND COURTESY, TOO.

QUANTIFY THE BOHEMIAN HUNTER HASN'T FOUND YET.

A Picturesque Hungarian Restaurant on the East Side Where Everybody is Friendly and Polite to Everybody Else and the Guests Pass the Platters.

One East Side Hungarian restaurant has not yet caught the trick of catering to the amateur Bohemian. It was once merely an extension of the barroom, but now the barroom has become in a measure merely an adjunct of the restaurant.

The few tables stand in a moderate-sized basement room. Close beside them in the same room, and separated from them only by a screen, is the bar.

When guests enter the proprietor rises with courteous urbanity and shows them to seats at a table where he and perhaps half a dozen others are eating. The cloth is clean, but coarse, and the napkins are like unto it. The china is of the kind that does not break in the hands of a careless maid and at need makes an effective weapon of offense or of defence.

Everybody at table imitates the courtesy of the host. The food is served on large platters, which the guests pass from hand to hand, while the host urges everybody to take a large portion. There is no hesitation in accepting this invitation.

Whether the meal be the midday dinner or the 7 o'clock supper, which is in effect also a dinner, the guests all eat heartily. Soup, meat, two or three vegetables, a Hungarian sweet pudding, which alone is enough for an ordinary luncheon, with black coffee, make up the midday bill of fare.

with some elaboration. Cheese goes with the pudding. Almost every guest has the very largest schmeer full of wine and salt-zer, which is included in the moderate price of the meal.

As luncheon or dinner goes on the host and guests talk freely together. No one stands on ceremony. The fact that you sit at the common table is sufficient introduction. The talk is of politics, foreign or domestic. A portrait of Kossuth on the table often gives a stranger an opening with the host, and all present are ready to talk of Hungary and her relations with the Austrian Empire.

A guest will occasionally make his fellow guests forget his too great dexterity with knife and thumb by timely and intelligent opinions on the subject in hand. The host is ready to interpose a scathing word if the discussion threatens to stir bad blood.

As the meal goes on one or another customer comes in. If the main table is full the late comers sit elsewhere, but not too far off to put in a word occasionally when the discussion takes on special interest.

Few drink at the bar, but the host is interrupted by calls from customers who buy wine by the gallon. A Hungarian must feel all work occasionally passes through the room, seemingly inconspicuous of the glances at his shaggy low-cut collar.

Perhaps at the next table the conversation is in English. As likely as not it will be on some public question or literary topic. Shakespeare and his contemporaries occupied the table for the better part of an hour the other day.

A stranger became so interested that he left his place and, with apologies and some hesitation, asked if he might join the discussion. Brown was made for him without delay, and the discussion again went on.

The newcomer bows his part and was heard with patient at the bar, but the host is full of the time comes for the party at table to break up with the host stands and waves his guests out with the suavity of a grand seigneur. He hopes they have enjoyed the meal, that the pudding will sit well, that all will return. His smile is a thing to remember; it decorates the gloomy apartment as with rich gildings.