

## GOOD-BY TO THE HELLO GIRL.

"Hello, central!" was one of the nineteenth century's pet phrases, with its answering cry, in dulcet or sharp tones, from some feminine throat far away, "What number, please?" But "Hello, central!" now that the twentieth century is here, promises soon to be a phrase merely historic.

Science has made a stride forward. The "hello girl," presiding genius of the telephone ever since its installation, must seek fresh employment before long. For there has arrived, and is now in practical, successful operation, a girlless, centralless telephone system, with which, with a few twists of a curious dial, any one can get the number he wants, directly, in a few seconds.

No delay, no maddening reply, "they're busy, —I'll let you know!" lurks in the recesses of this new instrument. No third person sits in the tantalizing somewhere, ready to "listen in," if she pleases, or to cut off the hurried man or the hurried woman at will, to juggle with wires, put in and pull out plugs, and when the subscriber is driven to the verge of desperation not infrequently to "talk back."

On the contrary, he who "calls up" now, if he is on the line of the new telephone, has at once a private wire in his hand. He slips a finger tip into one of the ten little holes along the curving sides of this metal dial on the telephone box (the holes are numbered 0 to 9), having first taken the receiver off its hook. He jerks the dial around sharply "until it catches," swinging on a pivot the dial moves easily and quickly. It moves back to its place automatically.

If 2741 is the number to be called, the man inserts his finger in the No. 2 hole and makes the first movement. For Nos. 7, 4 and 1 he twists the dial in the same way.

As the disk finally comes back to its starting point he presses a button just below. At the other end the bell is already ringing. The connection has been made, the person called in four to five seconds.

Had the other end of the wire been "busy," the man would have heard, after he had gone through those rapid movements, a faint buzzing sound. Automatically, again, does this telephone announce the fact that any other wire is engaged. Otherwise, if the finger is put into the right holes, the proper connection is secured infallibly. The delicate, complicated, perfect mechanism behind it all never fails. Operated on mathematical principles, it is surer even than human hands.

A big, bare room, filled with rows of high keyboards of glistening metal, is the substitute for "central." A strange, "central" this, indeed! It is nothing but a machine room, with a single electrician listening to the constant clicking these begin at one row of boards, they are echoed on to a second, thence to a third.

There is no sign of a petticoat or any sort of a telephone operator. In charge is a man simply the task of keeping the machinery in order. Saturday night he, with the clerks in the front office and the manager, locks up the exchange, not to return until Monday morning. And through seven nights in the week and all day Sunday the exchange clicks away, the service goes on without hitch, with no human hands to aid it.

The banks of instruments in the room click away, subscribers call each other as they please, the "wipers" move up and down the "selectors."

The telephone girl is truly passing. She is no more a modern necessity. Fall River, Mass., has the most complete, largest and most practically operated of all the girlless telephone systems of America, though it is closely pressed by those of New Bedford, near by, and Augusta, Ga. The latter cities have each more than 100 subscribers on these automatic wires.

Fall River has seven hundred, however, and appreciation of this service in this New England mill town is rapidly growing. Yet these three cities are but a few of those that operate telephone of the new order with no girl at "central."

Geneva, N. Y.; Albuquerque, N. M.; Albert Lea, Minn.; Auburn, N. Y.; Madison, Wis.; Princeton, N. J.; Ithaca, N. Y., and even the far distant wilds of Skagway, Alaska, all have automatic telephones.

But the going of the telephone girl is on no such small scale as this short list would indicate. The German government has experimented, and successfully, with the new invention. It has had a trial set of keyboards for 400 subscribers working in Berlin for a year and a half now, and will soon install the system on a much larger scale. The Strowger patents, operating these instruments, are to be taken up in France. In Havana, Cuba, the girlless telephone is to be the system of the Cuban capital. Twenty-five hundred instruments have been ordered to begin with, and ten thousand altogether are to be put in place as soon as possible.

A curious circumstance has led to the choosing of this "no central" phone for Havana, so the story goes. It is said that the difficulty of getting "central" girls who could speak all the languages required would be too great. At all events no telephone girls are to be there.

But it is in Chicago that the "hello girl" will find her first important Waterloo. Already the cables are being laid. Here will be established the first centralless telephone system of the first rank. It will take probably two years to get the wires in place and the intricate mechanism adjusted, but when it is complete Chicago will start off with fifteen thousand autophones, with an ultimate capacity under the present plan—and these may be enlarged—of fifty thousand of these telephones.

Extraordinarily interesting are the details of this mechanism that seem to come more nearly to human intelligence than any other machinery, and yet they are so intricate and complicated that they are almost beyond the comprehension of all but professional engineers and scientists.

Each man has his own telephone operator. It is simple enough, but the method by which, in the limits of a single room, one line picks up another without human aid, in a very small fraction of a minute, holds the two together as long as desired, and then, upon the simple hanging up of the receiver, disconnects, is nothing short of the perfection of modern science.

The photographs taken of the Fall River exchange at its busiest hour show the mechanism, unaided by hand, doing its work silently, save for the click following click, like the reports of a boy's popgun.

But one man, the expert electrician, is stationed in all this room. His only duty, besides caring for the machinery, is to answer "trouble calls" and keep track of the work of his construction and repair men.

So, dear "hello girl," "Goodbye!" "Ring off!"

The Greatest Preparations in our History Have Been Made to Meet the Coming

# CONFERENCE ACTIVITY

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Popular Store.

## Conference Dress Goods Specials. Full Dress Lengths.

AN UNEXCELLED OFFER FOR CONFERENCE WEEK IN BLACK AND COLORED DRESS GOODS.

A FULL DRESS PATTERN OF FANCY SOLID COLOR SPRING SUITINGS IN ALL THE DESIRABLE NEW SHADES AT, PER PATTERN, FOR ONLY.....

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38-INCH FANCY JACQUARD SUITINGS IN A VARIETY OF NEW DESIGNS, COME IN ALL COLORS, AND BLACK, WORTH 35c PER YARD, THIS WEEK WE GIVE YOU A FULL DRESS PATTERN AT ONLY.....

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MELROSE CHEVIOTS AND FIGURED PRUNELLA, A BRAND NEW SHIPMENT OF THESE STYLISH FABRICS IN BLACK AND ALL STYLISH COLORINGS, WORTH 40c BY THE YARD, IN THIS WEEK'S SPECIAL SALE A FULL DRESS LENGTH FOR ONLY.....

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## COLORED DRESS GOODS.

ALL WOOL TRICOTS, WHIPCORDS, AND HENRIETTAS IN AN EXCELLENT RANGE OF COLORINGS, CONFERENCE PRICE.....

29c

We call particular attention to these goods because they are strictly all wool and contain an extra high grade quality of stock. They are choice shades of all the newest spring colorings, and sold nowhere else under 75c per yard. The materials are Brilliantines, Whipcords, Chevots, Etamines, Henriettas, Scotch Tweeds, Chevots, Shepherd checks, Vigorons and Venetians.

These Very Superior Goods Will Go at

48c

And we say it's The Biggest Bargain in Town.

## BLACK GOODS.

A most complete department in every detail. Anything you are looking for in Black Goods is sure to be here and specially priced.

38-inch figured satin finished Prunella, per yard..... 37c  
38-inch black figured Mohairs, per yard..... 37c  
38-inch black Cheviot, per yard..... 45c

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46-inch black figured Mohair, per yard..... 75c  
46-inch black Etamines, per yard..... \$1.00

## ALL WOOL FRENCH CHALLIES.

The newest printings in all the latest colorings, dots, rings, stripes and figured designs, per yard.....

40c

The richest Persian and Oriental designs in a great variety of new patterns and color combinations, the 75c grades for, per yard.....

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Satin striped challies in plain colors and Persian printings, sell elsewhere at \$1.00 per yard.....

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FOR CONFERENCE. AN UNPARALLELED SUIT OFFER.

10 Styles of Suits to Select from for only \$6.45.

Made of Covert, Cheviot, Venetian and Broadcloth all new spring shades, some handsomely trimmed and come in all Blouse, Vestee, Gibson, short or skirted jackets and latest cut skirts. Regular prices, \$10 to \$15.

Five Styles of Suits to Select from for only \$13.95.

Made of Cheviot or Covert, in Grey, Castor or Oxford. Come in all new style jackets and skirts and some elegant walking suits, regular prices \$15.50 to \$20.00.

Advantageous Offerings in

## DRESS AND WALKING SKIRTS

Dress Skirt for 80c.

Black and figured cloth, regular price \$1.50.

Dress Skirt for \$3.25.

Navy and Black Cheviot cloth, graduate flounce finished with silk piping.

Walking Skirt for \$3.98.

Two styles. Black Kersey Cloth, stitched flounces, and Grey, Oxford and Castor Cheviot. Flounces trimmed with cluster rows of cord alternating with satin bands.

Taffeta Silk Dress Skirts for \$10.00.

Flaring Skirt, finished with deep graduated flounce, flounce trimmed with rows of herring bone braid.

Peau de Soie and Tucked Taffeta Silk Skirts for \$13.45.

Three Styles. Peau de Soie made flaring, trimmed with three accordion pleated liberty satin ruffles and plain or tucked taffeta finished at bottom with net ruffles, ruffles trimmed with rows of quilted ribbon.

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