

# JUNE 6, 2016

ELLSWORTH STANTON

BY GEORGE ALLAN ENGLAND

ILLUSTRATED BY HARRY GRANT DART

awned, stretched luxuriously in his wood-iber silk sheets, sheets

sed but once and then burned, and opened his eyes as fine a morning as the National Meteorological Bureau had ever furnished the United Pan-American Republic. The telemetric dial on the vitrified porous wall, a wall which insured perfect and draftless ventilation at all times, caught his eye. This dial, spherically operated from the Time Department at Washington, told him the hour was seven-thirty. Stanton frowned, displeased; then, catching sight of a charming young woman's stereograph—natural, to the life, in every minutest detail of light, shade, color, and perspective—which seemed looking at him from a synthetic ebony frame, he smiled despite his vexation at having overslept. "But I ought to have been up an hour ago," thought he; "to-day of all days, when I'm to see—her!"

He threw back the clothes, slid out of bed, and walked into his bathroom. An ozonated sea shower quickly refreshed him. He brushed his teeth with one of the new vibratory brushes, trimmed his hair with the electric clipper, and then rubbed his face with solvent shaving soap. After a wait of only ten seconds he washed off this soap and was now clean shaven.

"Thank Heaven, I didn't live in the old days of razors, brushes, strops, and all that nonsense," thought he. "What a grind life must have been when the governor was my age!"

Quickly he dressed, putting on first his papersilk underwear. No stupid, unsanitary, costly laundry work now hampered the daily changing of linen. These papersilks, despite their elegance, were now so cheap that everybody threw them into the municipal incinerating tubes after one wearing, together with all the fiber dishes, table linen, cooking utensils, knives, forks, spoons, and so on, after each meal. The era of woman's enslavement to the washtub and dishpan had long ago most happily departed. Papersilk shirts, collars and cravats, too, had supplanted all others. Stanton wondered, as he dressed, that people had ever really had things "done up" in the old, expensive, mussy way.

Dressed for business, he rapped at his father's door. "Coming, dad?" he queried.

"Be with you in a minute!" answered the voice of Stanton, Sr. "Go on down to breakfast. I'll join you there."

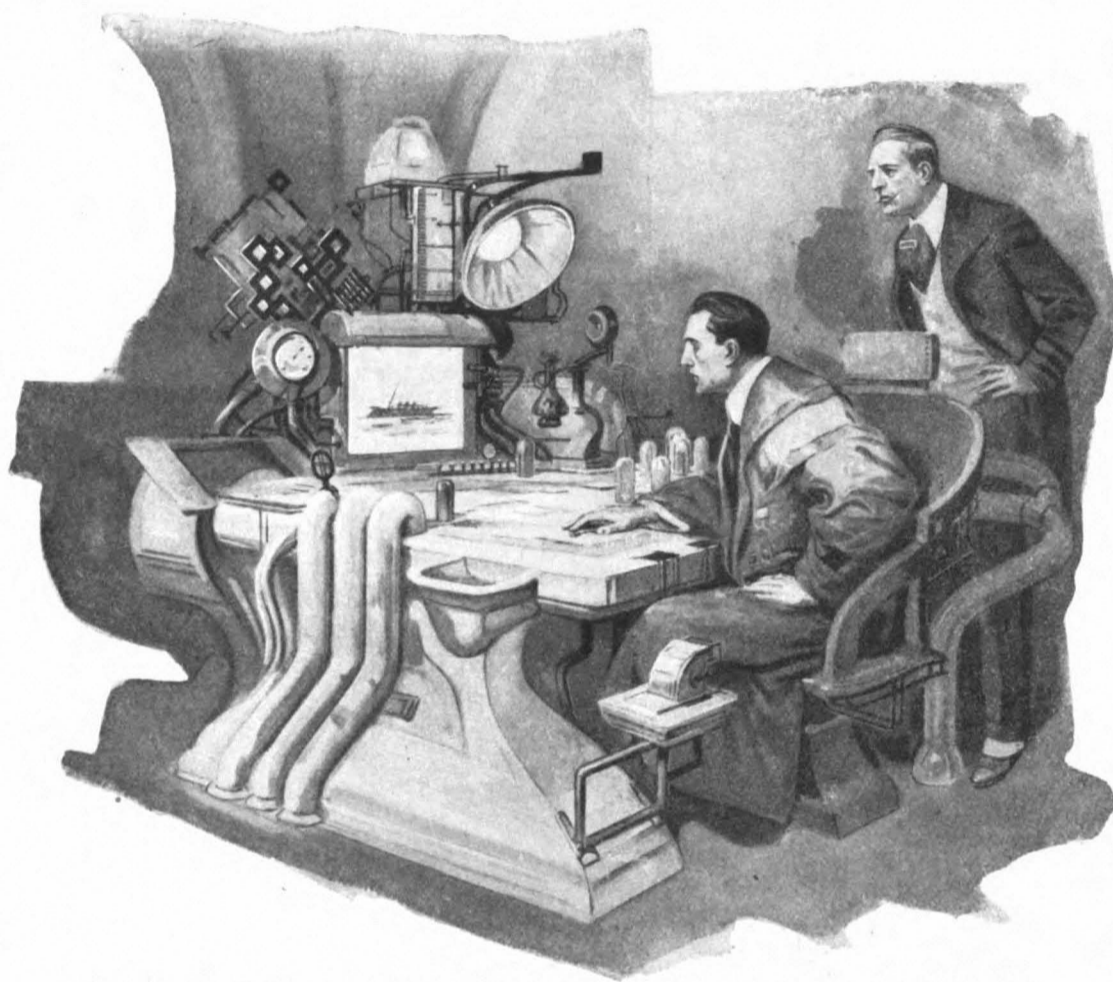
Stanton took the elevator to the civic buffet that served his suburban section by means of the Commissariat Tube system. He sat down, glanced over the menu, and punched his order on the aluminum buttons. In less than three minutes the sealed conveyor plopped into the pocket. He broke the seal with his identification key, and surveyed his breakfast with satisfaction: strawberries of the finest, with cream; an alligator pear; a protose omelet; nutritive wafers, and krava. This krava was a particular favorite with him: a new, harmless beverage made from the Papuan lenticus bean, discovered in 1912 by Howard Oldham of the International Comestibles Bureau.

As Stanton was breakfasting with Fletcheristic deliberation (nobody hurried now at meals) his father came in and sat down opposite him. The elder man looked annoyed. "Great day, governor," commented Stanton, smiling.

"Great nothing!" grunted his father. Stanton, Sr., had that morning neglected to take his rejuvenating bath, and in consequence was feeling peevish. He was seventy-six, you understand, and looked nearly fifty, which was unusual. The rejuvenating bath, universally used by all who felt the hand of

time, produced a voltage of more than 100,000,000: so tremendous a force that it not only passed harmlessly through the human system but also thoroughly renewed the tissues. Especially it prevented sclerosis of the arteries. With its aid many a man had passed the 150-year mark, and some had gone to 175 or better.

"What's the matter, dad?" asked Stanton, choosing a cigar from his pocket humidior. The other only



*He was engrossed in a radiomovie of the huge freighter now on her maiden voyage*

shrugged his shoulders, and continued Fletcherizing in silence. Stanton put the cigar (already perforated, so that it needed no clipping) into his mouth. The weed lighted itself. No more matches or electric lighters, thank Heaven! The mere act of drawing air through the cigar sufficed to generate a spark in the thermo cell at the end of the cigar.

SILENCE came between them. Stanton waited for his father, smoking with contentment and glancing about him at the well-filled tables. Now and then he nodded to a friend. When the elder man had finished, they both slipped dishes and refuse into the conveyor, which Stanton dropped into the waste tube to be whisked away to the reduction plant. At this plant, of course, all waste products were converted into producer gas, to run gas engines for electric-lighting machinery. The old-time waste of New York's refuse, by dumping it into the sea—incidentally contaminating the harbor—had long since given place to this better method. Some advanced thinkers were now even advocating using the dead in like manner; but this innovation, though clearly some time to be adopted, had as yet not displaced simple, noncommercial cremation.

"Ready?" asked Stanton.

"Ready?" asked he.

"Mmm-huh."

"All right; let's be going."

Both arose. They passed through the buffet and out the exit to the suburban express tube.

"Smoke, governor?" asked Stanton. His father glumly declined, even though the tobacco would have tempted an anchor. Stanton's cigars represented the last word in tobacco culture and as mopey was reckoned in the old days would have cost upward of three cents apiece: a reckless figure for this new day of cooperation and of prices consequently lowered to figures undreamed of a hundred years be-

fore. These cigars were especially made for him from plants grown under colloid on the Isle of Pines.

The old gentleman felt keen annoyance that his son should be one of the decreasing number of men who still held to the habit. He often lectured Ellsworth on the evils of even this mild tobacco, practically free from nicotine, but the young man had until now remained obdurate.

"What's wrong with you this morning, dad?" asked Ellsworth as they reached the platform. "You're plainly out of sorts. No bad news from that Pata-

gonian ore deal, I hope?" His brown eyes narrowed quizzically.

Stanton, Sr., cast a look of displeasure on his son, and fingered the gray mustache he was still old-fashioned enough to wear.

"Well, Ellsworth," he answered gruffly, "you might as well know. You understand perfectly well that I disapprove of Alice Haynes. If you persist, I shall certainly have to dissolve our partnership, which I emphatically don't want to do unless you drive me to it."

"Persist?" smiled Stanton. "I'm not the only one that's persisting. As things are now—"

"That's just the trouble!" snapped his father. "I know what's going on, and I won't have it, you understand?"

"Why, what's the matter with Alice?" demanded Ellsworth. "I'm sure she's everything a man could—"

"Oh, as a girl, she's all well enough, I suppose, though I've never met her personally," answered the old gentleman. "It's the way this ridiculous romance of yours has been conducted that angers and repels me. I may be an old fogey in my views, possibly am, but I can't reconcile myself to this newfangled idea of a woman courting a man."

"You forget, dad, that the right of woman's proposal came in as a fully established custom more than a quarter of a century ago. Why haven't women got as much right as men to make their choice and declare it? My Lord, father! You'll be quibbling over woman suffrage next. If you must entertain such mossback notions, for Heaven's sake keep them to yourself and don't—"

"That's all very well, Ellsworth," growled the old gentleman. "Suffrage, yes; I admit that's right and just. But this other matter of letting women pursue men—"

"Why, dad, they *always* had that right one year in four. Leap year dates back for centuries. This is only the extension of a very ancient custom!"

"I know, I know; but the length this matter has gone to now is outrageous. The idea, Ellsworth! Letting a girl call on you, send you presents—Good God! In the good old days we men, and we alone, did the wooing, the proposing, and all that. A woman who made so bold—"

"Tempora mutantur, dad."

"Yes, and for the worse, in some things. It's no use arguing, Ellsworth; this sort of thing repels me in every fiber. I can't and won't tolerate a daughter-in-law of this new type. She must be bold, brazen, and unfeminine—"

"Do you know Alice? Did you ever even so much as lay eyes on her?"

"No, but—"

"Very well, then," answered the young man decisively, "we won't discuss the matter. This isn't business; this is personal. Your judgment doesn't hold me here."

"You'll find you're mistaken," the old gentleman retorted. "I warn you fairly, look out. I'll stop your nonsense, or—"

"Here's our train," interrupted Stanton, smiling with irritating assurance. "Don't get excited, dad."



Stanton peered seaward just in time to catch sight of the Twenty-Hour Limited Flyer as it skimmed on its way to London

It increases the blood pressure, remember. And it's shocking bad for the nerves!"

The swift and silent arrival of a tubular express, gliding on its air films, put an end to a discussion that promised to become acrimonious. Father and son entered one of the cars—rather an old-fashioned steel cylinder—and took seats. No one, of course, was standing. People would no more have thought of standing in a public conveyance than they would have thought of paying. Both these annoyances belonged to a dead age, when private profit still held transportation in its grip. The barbarism of overcrowding and the graft of exacting payment for this service of prime necessity had become as extinct as the ancient system of weights and measures which the neometric standards had long since replaced.

A delightful freshness and coolness from the ozonators filled the car. Noiselessly, smoothly it slid away toward the Commercial Zone on Manhattan; a forty-mile run that would require not more than eighteen minutes at the outside.

For a little while the two men, one vexed, the other well pleased, sat gazing at the teleelectric news-service placards which occupied the spaces once reserved for advertising. On these appeared all the world's latest events, dispatch by dispatch, and as each item faded from the vitroid plaques another replaced it. The more vital dispatches were supplemented by miniature movies wirelessly transmitted. In silence both men absorbed the news of the day.

Presently Stanton, Sr., frowned, as a commercial news item appeared, glowed bright for a moment, and then faded. "We've got to tell those girls of ours to be more careful hereafter," he growled to his son. "They mustn't talk on the outside, that's flat!"

"Why, what's up?" asked Ellsworth. "How do you know they've been talking?"

"Oh, I know it, all right enough. Before I was out of bed this morning I got a telemitic dispatch from the Central Bourse. What do you think?"

"Well, what?"

"The amount of our per diem tax demanded yesterday by the Credit Reserve Board was the exact amount due!"

ELLSWORTH only smiled. This day of days, which he had planned to mean so very much to him, could not be marred by any such petty annoyance as a C. R. B. tax. In spite of the elaborate rationality and automatic, mechanical precision of the world about the young man, an altogether unaccountable but delicious madness throbbed in his breast. He blew a ribbon of smoke into the ion-lighted air of the car, and began humming a little love song, "Up in the aeroline with my Caroline": the song which had not only made a smashing hit in the Greater New York of 28,750,000 souls, but had also swept the entire Republic from the State of Labrador to the Territory of Patagonia.

Stanton, Sr., fumed with annoyance, but said no more. His son's mood quite defied him. Soon the train drew up, at a reduced speed of fifty miles an hour, beside the moving platform of the terminal, the vast, circular system of platforms rather let us say, that by means of graduated velocities enabled

passengers to alight without delay from suburban trains.

Both men arose. The old gentleman's humor could hardly have been worse. Having to use the tube irritated him always beyond measure. He detested the tube. This morning he had taken it only because his touring plane was out of order, with a broken antigravitator, one of the latest 2016 models capable of doing 250 an hour when no air cops were looking.

"Watch your shifts!" warned a policewoman as the crowd scattered over the reducing zones toward the distributing platform. There the two men stopped a moment, waiting the opening of the Cortlandt Street Upper Level slide. A nervous, fidgety old lady close by was heckling a patient official in a meteorological booth.

"It's ten degrees too warm here, I tell you," she was scolding. "I've a good mind to report you. I'll take your index number, anyhow. I can't and won't stand it! We need rain, and we simply must have more mid-oceanic breezes. It's an outrage the way we stifle! I've paid my rain tax, I'll have you know—"

The slide opened, and father and son entered.

"Here, here, take your time!" exclaimed Stanton, Sr., as a fellow passenger elbowed him. "This is no place to use your teleauto!"

The other merely shrugged his shoulders as the sliding floor began to stretch aloft up the chute—swift-moving in its middle portion, but slower at top and bottom—and, quite unmindful of the other passengers, continued to hold his little iridium antennæ aloft.

"I protest, sir!" insisted Stanton, Sr.

"Beg pardon," apologized the other, "but I've just got an urgent telepathic call from Hong-kong, and—"

He did not finish, but bent his brows with attention, taking the message. A few men and women peered curiously at him, for this latest of all inventions was still recent enough to attract some notice.

HIS message finished, the man lowered his antennæ, folded them and stowed them in the pocket of his spunwood waistcoat.

"Dear me, it's fortunate I got that!" he remarked to the woman at his side. "Go right along to the office, Miss Clarke. I'll get off at the next transversal and go down to the Sub-Atlantic Tube."

"That Liverpool matter?" the girl queried.

"Yes. I must be there at thirteen-thirty, by the latest, and it's nine-ten already. Back to-night, sure. Meantime, if Hendricks calls, tell him—"

His words were lost as the Stanton moved forward, walking up the swift-soaring slide. Two minutes later they had landed on the moving viaduct, 1,575 feet aloft, which would bring them to their offices in the Alto Building—a 210-story glass and

aluminum structure of a recent, though not the very latest, type. Stupendous in area, it extended from Cortlandt Street to the site of the one-time "Battery," now obliterated by the concrete fill which made Staten Island an integral part of the city. On the roof of this building stood the Tesla Master Station, with etheric control of more than half of all the transatlantic autcraft, whether aerial, surface, or submarine.

Father and son entered the building at the 1900 story. As they passed through the antipulvo chambers just inside the entrance, ionized air currents effectually removed all dust from their persons, for this was a dustless age, perfectly and universally aseptic. Even the aluminum labor disks that had replaced money had to be sterilized no less often than once in forty-eight hours, under stringent penalties and paper mediums of hand-to-hand exchange had praise be, long since vanished from the earth!

DOWN a wide, fiber-felted corridor the two Stanton proceeded, with the rest of the incoming tenants. Not a footfall could be heard. Buildings and streets were now all noise-deadening, in accordance with the stringent regulations of the entire Metropolitan Area Board. The old-time clangor of great cities had become as obsolete as epidemics or diseases of any kind whatsoever. Noise and infection had, in fact, become social crimes, punishable as such.

Young Stanton paused a moment at the huge registration directory of the building to note that the little red glow beside his name was burning properly. "Stanton, G. 11,862," was correctly illuminated. The red meant, of course, that he had not yet reached his office. On arriving there and plugging in with his key, the color would change to green. By cross-connections all over the city any individual could immediately discover whether or not any other individual were at home or in his office. The archaic confusion of wirelessly about to see if people were "in" had been almost entirely done away with by this system, and also by means of Willard Paul's visualizing audiphone.

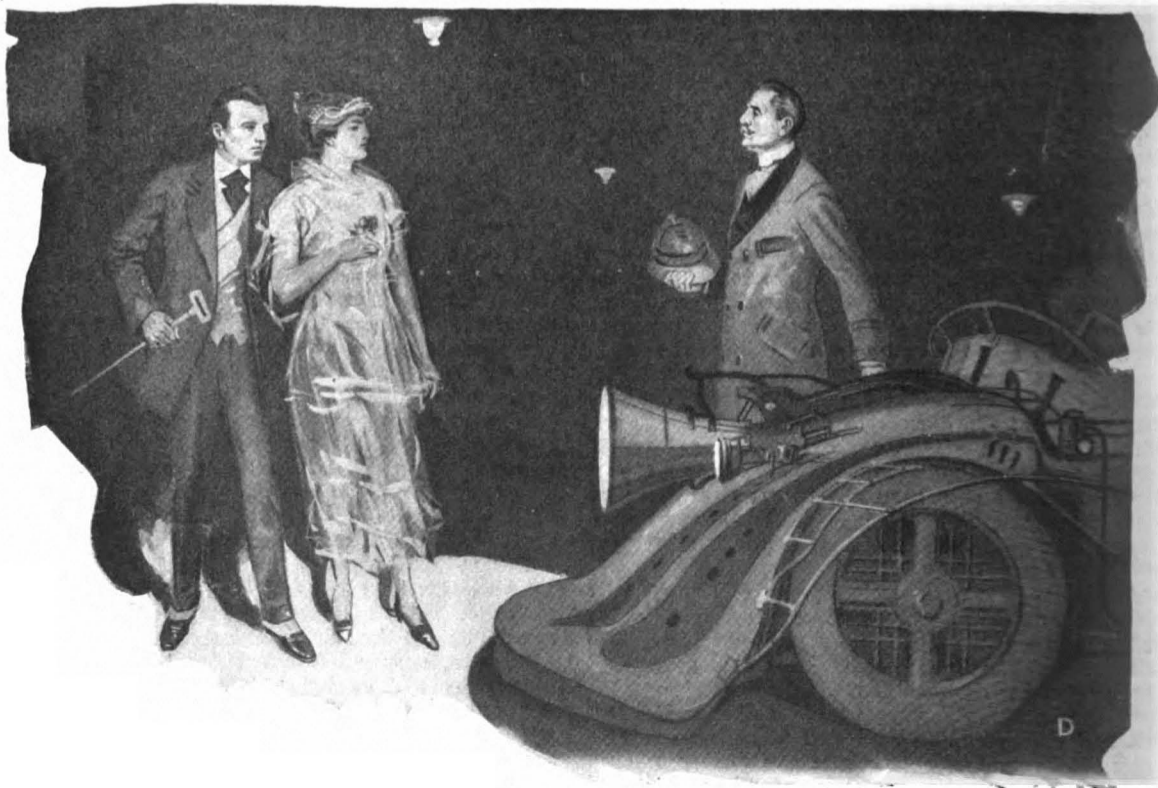
Arrived at their offices, the Stanton busied themselves, each in his own way. The father, without a word, walked through into his private room, took off his outer coat, and slipped into his office kimono. The cares of the day at once absorbed him. Ellsworth, however, had another and more weighty matter than mere business on his mind. He sat down at his desk of aluminum and porcelain, and picked up the letter tube that lay waiting in the metal cul-de-sac. Hastily unscrewing it, he shook out the missives.

At sight of one, postmarked "Peaks Island, Me.," his eyes lighted with anticipatory joy.

"Good little girl!" he whispered as he slit the envelope with the tiny steel blade embedded along its top. "Business may come and business may go, but she—she never forgets!"

With no less eagerness than as though he had been a troubadour lover of the fourteenth century, Ellsworth Stanton, man of affairs in the year of grace 2016, leaned back and with a smile of contentment read the letter from the lady of his heart's desire.

Despite the wireless, the audiphone, and other apparatus, the archaic art of letter writing had not yet wholly gone out of use. Among lovers especially the written word was still cherished. A few even wrote poetry, but not all Stanton's passion for Alice Haynes had ever been able to drive him to quite such extravagances, comparable to knight-errantry



"Well, I'm here!" he angrily announced. "Oh, hello, dad!" exclaimed Stanton. "That you?"

if practiced by a twentieth century lover. Alice, indeed, sometimes composed verses; but in a woman such archaic romanticism was still excusable.

Stanton's smile as he read the girl's message would have betrayed the state of his heart in any age of the world. Comfortably at ease in the plastic chair which automatically adjusted itself to every posture, he read the letter twice. Then he glanced at the door leading into his father's room. Stanton, Sr., was hard at work. The young man imprinted a kiss on the sensitized fiber where the girl had traced her message with the electric stylus; then, refolding the letter, he put it into his breast pocket—on the left side.

The temptation assailed him to postpone business a few minutes and have a talk with Alice, to hear her voice and see her face again. The frosted plate of the visualizing audiphone would show him her blue eyes, her fascinating mouth, her hair, every quality and expression of her beauty. Three hundred miles

apart, they could talk face to face: or three thousand, for that matter. He reached for the instrument.

"Portland, 4534 K-B!" said he.

The elder man looked up from his correspondence.

"Ellsworth!" he exclaimed angrily, "I warn you, you're driving me too far!"

"See here, father!" cried Ellsworth, "I protest against—"

"Protest and be damned!" retorted the father, with rising temper. He appeared in the doorway. "No more nonsense now. The idea of bringing thoughts of a sweetheart into a business office in this advanced age of sanity and efficiency! No partner of mine shall make an ass of himself. Interpret that any way you like. But if you persist, and drive me to extremes, don't ever say I didn't warn you!"

Ellsworth pondered a moment, then hung up the receiver. "There, that's better," said his father. "Now get to work!"

Reluctantly the young man turned to the mass of

communications on his desk. Stanton, Sr., eyed him a moment, then, nodding and grumbling to himself, returned to his own room. And for a while silence reigned in the office of Stanton & Son.

Those offices, a little more than 1,900 feet aloft, were filled with sunshine and invigorating ozone. Their temperature was automatically regulated by the Federal Hygienic Department apparatus, which likewise adjusted the percentage of oxygen. A delicious breeze percolated through the mesh windows. Cloudless, the sky seen through these windows extended to vast horizons of human activity, all smokeless now. Vapors, smoke, and fogs had been utterly banished from the world. Even rain had been relegated to the position of a nocturnal phenomenon. Agriculture had become as certain as manufacturing. Machinery had liberated mankind from gross forms of drudgery. The slum had long since been wiped out as an intolerable menace. The world in which Stanton lived had

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developed into a place of reason, order, and security. He could hardly believe that only a century before, in 1916, uncertainties had oppressed mankind, wars had bled the race, poverty and wealth had jostled each other, diseases had raged, and a haphazard, hit-or-miss *laissez-aller* had been complacently accepted.

Stanton's office typified the newer, better order. The room had not a single corner where dust might collect. Its glass and metal construction harbored no bacteria. The prevailing tints were green and white. On the desk stood a teleone, an audiphone, and also the cul-de-sacs of the various receiving tubes from the Postal, Radiographic, and Kinetogrammic Departments. At the side of the desk a bronze hopper with descending chutes awaited outgoing business. A wireless chronometer, showing the hours in changing red figures on a translucent dial, registered the time from midnight till twenty-four o'clock: the Italian method universally adopted.

DISMISSING Alice from his mind, or trying to, Stanton turned to business, and began gathering up the threads of his affairs. The old-fashioned sealed mail was, of course, almost wholly obsolete; it now carried, through the magnetic tubes, little save strictly personal correspondence, documents, money orders, and circulars. Nearly all business was done with the dictograph, the dictogram, and the tachometer.

Stanton turned first to his dictogram. During the night it had been receiving messages from the Federal Wireless and had been recording them. Now as he plugged in on the reproducer these messages began issuing in printed form.

He answered such communications as he deemed advisable by radiogram and wireless telephone. The remaining answers he dictated into the tachometer, which swiftly and accurately recorded his speech in the print of the new orthophonic system. These letters were briefer than those of the old days. All polite formulas were omitted, so that the communications seemed almost in code:

6-6-16. *H. W. Co., 45,347, Phila. Cannot fil ordr til Dec. Shal we delivr then? G. 11,862.*

6-6-16. *Urban Board, London. British President's veto on chartr for proposd watr-frate line to Livrpool makes yr proposishun impossibl. G. 11,862.*

6-6-16. *Ferrocarriles Nacionales, Rio. Likwidashun of acc't July 1, by aeropost. G. 11,862.*

Thus ran the written correspondence. Having finished it, Stanton took up the day's reports of the firm's branches in Reykjavik, Callao, Madrid, Petrograd, and Tokyo, now capital of the United States of Asia.

Stanton's papers, differing in color, size, and thickness according to the nature of the business and the department they referred to, were automatically distributed by the dactylopress. As he touched the lever that released the correspondence baskets into the chutes leading to the departments on the floor below a huge shadow dimmed the room for a second, then vanished.

Stanton arose, walked to a window, and peered seaward just in time to catch sight of the Twenty-Hour Limited Flyer as it skimmed on its way to London. Only a few minutes before it had released itself by demagnetizing the anchors that had held it in its cradle on top of the 2,000-foot Harlem Tower. Soon it was dwindling and fading on the horizon, far above the vague sea floor that sparkled away and away to southeastward. Stanton watched it disappear, then returned to his desk, slipped a tobacco clip into his pipe, and lighted it by pressing the knurl that set the rim of the bowl to glowing. Once more he sat down to commune with the news of the day, preparatory to mapping out a new line of business activity in the Orient.

Just then his father appeared in the doorway. He coughed nervously. Stanton saw that he had taken off his kimono and had resumed his street garb. This was unusual at such an early hour of the day. But Stanton made no comment. The elder man had been getting on his nerves rather badly

of late. If he were going out now, so much the better.

Instead of speaking to his father, Stanton raised the little visualizing screen at the back of the desk, connected it up with the coil of the Amalgamated Current Events Service, and, moving the control lever to "Commercial," immediately began to watch a miniature presentment of events calculated to interest him. Small wonder that newspapers had long since given up the struggle and died! Technical and business reviews still thrived, but news sheets as such were no more. They were practically as dead as alcohol itself, which had now not been manufactured for drinking purposes in more than thirty years. Old wines and liquors still existed and were somewhat used, but no new stocks were being made.

Stanton, Sr., evidently wanted to say something of importance, but his son remained obdurately interested in the A. C. E. Service. One view in particular engrossed him: a radiomovie of the huge new ocean freighter, the *J-143-41*, recently commissioned by the International Traffic Board and now on her maiden voyage from Seattle to the Asiatic naval base at Honolulu. The elder gentleman came and stood beside his son; stood there and also watched the radiomovie in silence.

The monster vessel appeared on the screen as plainly as though she had been actually before them, though in reality her wirelessly controlled tubular helicoids—Archimedean screws operating in longitudinal tubes below the water line—were driving her at 74.6 knots through a sea 4,500 miles distant. A monster, yes, but not the largest afloat. Her dimensions were, in fact, only 1,232 feet length, 124 feet beam, 81 feet depth, and 47 feet draft. Her tubes developed 175,250 horsepower; her tonnage was rated at 67,500 gross. A freighter pure and simple, of course. Passengers would as soon have thought of resuscitating the stagecoach as of traveling now by surface transportation.

"Pretty fine, dad, isn't it?" Stanton remarked, leaning back and glancing up at his father. "I wonder what the calamity howlers of a hundred years ago would say now? They were always predicting that when coal came to an end, or oil, or something, we'd be up against it. Well, coal and oil are all gone, and have been this half century past; but water power, tidal power, gravitation, and intraspatial magnetic force have more than a thousand times over filled the gap."

Stanton, Sr., nodded. "We've cut in on boundless zones of energy," said he. "But that's neither here nor there. What I want to say is this: I've just got a call to run down to Valparaiso.

It's now eleven-fifteen. If I catch the eleven-thirty from the Southern Aero-Terminal, I can make it by fifteen-thirty, or better, and be back by nineteen or twenty. You can handle things all right to-day. But mind, now, no more of that Alice nonsense. Remember, I'll have you constantly in view. I'm in no mood to be trifled with. Go against my will and I'll cut you off with a penny: a point ten time check, I mean."

Young Stanton only shrugged his shoulders.

"*Hasta la vista*," said he. "Take care of yourself, and if you run across Alvarez tell him I'll be down next week to beat him eighteen holes on the Guayaquil links."

They shook hands and parted with a slight ceremony as would have prefaced a trip to Jersey City in the old days. Alone, Ellsworth leaned back in his plastic chair, closed his eyes, and indulged in a little day-dreaming. The smile on his lips seemed to tell that his dreams lay far afield from his office and the cares of business.

**RETURNING** from his synthetic lunch at thirteen-twenty, Stanton found two tremendously important messages awaiting him in his dictogram.

One of the dictograms was from Margaret Pearl, president of the Himalayan Development Syndicate, offering Stanton a position in its London offices at quite a dizzy figure. He had been expecting the offer for some time, but was agreeably surprised that it should come so soon and so opportunely.

Stanton, his eyes shining, gave the matter fifteen minutes' thought. Here at last was his chance to get out of the humdrum rut of Manhattan; here was his chance to break the paternal chain restrain-

ing him. His answer was decisive and to the point.

*Offer accepted. Will come immediately if necessary. G. 11,862.*

By thirteen-forty-five the message was on Margaret Pearl's desk.

The second message was from Alice:

*Called you at twelve-fifty. Can you come this afternoon?*

Three minutes later Stanton was in communication with her at her father's bungalow on Peaks Island, where she was spending the two months' vacation allowed her as treasurer of the Intercontinental Adjustment Board. Her face, mirrored on the frosted slide of the audiphone, lighted up with joy as he told her the good news of his new opening. "I'm leaving the office at once," he concluded. "I'll be with you inside an hour. Now that my salary's going to be even bigger than yours, I don't see how father can object."

"We'll discuss that when you arrive," interrupted the girl laughing.

"Dad is really a serious problem," he answered. "In spite of all his boasting about being abreast of the times, he's incorrigibly old-fashioned when it comes to women and—"

"Well, that's a bridge we won't cross till we reach it," again urged Alice. "Come along this afternoon and we'll talk it over."

THEY passed a few words of small talk; then Stanton broke the connection. Hastily he finished up one or two urgent matters, and made ready to catch the 14.05 Portland aeroexpress. Just as he was leaving the office a call from Panama flashed on the receiver.

"Damn!" he muttered, sitting down again at his desk. "Oh, is that you, dad?" he called into the audiphone.

"Yes, it's I!" came an irate voice, while his father's face, stern and angry, developed on the slide. "You scoundrel! I told you I'd keep tabs on this thing, and I have. I've just picked up your plan, and, by the gods, I'll check-mate it or—"

"Oh, so!" exclaimed Stanton hotly. "How can you?"

"I'll show you, you young traitor! I'll fix your little game. I'm jumping the first flyer back to Boston. There I'll catch a Portland plane. You've still got to reckon with me, Ellsworth; don't forget that! I told you I'd cut you off if you persisted in this nonsense, and I swear I will. So look out!"

"Go ahead and cut," the younger man retorted. "I'm ready to quit anyhow!"

"You mean you really intend to take up with that London offer?"

"I've accepted, haven't I? I suppose you cut in on that too."

"Yes, I know, but you don't mean—?"

"See here, governor," Stanton exclaimed decisively. "I've had quite enough of this. Alice and I are going to get married whatever happens. She has asked me and I have accepted. We love each other and we're going to get married. What are you going to do about it?"

The face of Stanton, Sr., faded from the slide. The old gentleman had (to use an obsolete phrase) "rung off."

Ellsworth shoved back the instrument, stood up, and nodded savagely.

"It had to come to a showdown, sooner or later, anyhow," said he. "Well, here it is. So much the better. Now, I'm off!"

Taking his ready pack (an ingenious case of traveling necessities for quick trips which now formed as essential a part of every man's equipment as did his electric stylus itself), he left the office. A few minutes later he was rushing northeastward on the Portland Aeroline Company's afternoon express.

The express landed him safely on Portland Tower at just a quarter past sixteen, some few minutes late by reason of trouble with the aft antigravity stabilizer. Alice was there to meet him, as he came down the descensor to the railed landing stage. The shadow of the aeroliner lay dark on half the stage, as the great ship, with the air whistling into its vacuum tanks, lay fastened by its electromagnets to its cradle. But half the stage was bright under the clear June sunshine, at 1,500 feet altitude; and in this sunshine Alice's charming face looked rosy as a blossom of one of the new rose orchids, most beautiful of flowers.

Their handclasp was eloquent—more eloquent than their tongues. The young man had so caught the spirit of the new "age of rational feminism" that he felt no constraint at all in communing with the woman who had wooed and proposed to him. On their way over to Peaks Island, in the little harbor plane, and while walking over the crest of the isle, they talked only of impersonal and nonessential things, speaking of the new aerial summer resort now touring the Maine and Nova Scotia coasts, the newest dances, Eric Arvgaard's latest edition of phonoplate poems with chromatic vacudisk accompaniment, and the recent discoveries of Leighton Norseworth in the artificial production of protoplasm. Stanton found this mixture of the serious and the trivial very charming; it typified the new kind of woman which had now replaced that of earlier days when even suffrage had been a bone of contention—the twenty-first-century woman who could motor, swim, fly, dance, golf, discuss business, comment on current events and science, or banter small talk with equal facility. They were equally mysterious, equally adorable and wonderful to each other.

Ellsworth thought the girl had never been so charming, as he walked beside her up the pathway leading to her

father's vitrified bungalow overlooking the surges that endlessly beat against White Head, across the channel on Cushings Island. Alice's father put down his book—a book of thin aluminum plates, electrically printed—and came to meet them as they mounted the steps. He shook hands cordially with Stanton; so, too, did the girl's mother. They all sat down on the piazza, commanding a splendid view of the sea, along the far horizon of which two or three swift-skimming specks marked the flight of transatlantic aircraft. Floor and roof of the piazza were finished with the new infrakinetic tiling, neutral to human beings but fatal to all forms of insect life. Currents constantly passing from roof to floor instantly killed any fly or mosquito passing the porch rail.

After a bit of conversation, followed by supper ordered from the Portland Commissary, delivered through the underbay tubes and eaten *al fresco* on the porch, and after the dishes and refuse had all been shot back to the reduction plant by the return tube, Stanton asked the girl, clumsily enough, a question he found it rather hard to utter:

"I've heard the surf is splendid down toward North Point. Shall we take a little stroll that way?"

"Don't stay late, dear," Alice's mother cautioned her. "You know the weather service has been wretched the past few weeks; the evenings are quite inexcusably chilly."

"All right, mother," Alice made answer, drawing a shawl of siltex fiber, soft as the fleeciest wool, about her shoulders. When they were well away from the bungalow, walking toward the crags of the headland, along the corrugated glass pavement of the motor boulevard, Stanton said:

"Well, Alice, things seem to be shaping up pretty well, don't they? In the first place, my anthropometric chart for this half year—I just got it from the Eugenics Board, yesterday—shows a 9.35 per cent improvement in my physical averages. My curve is now nearly a perfect ellipse—almost as good as yours. So, you see, on *that* score there can be no objection, and the board's license is mine for the asking. Then, in the second place, this new position of mine is going to make our dream a reality. You know, in spite of everything, I've always clung to the old-fashioned idea that the man should earn more than the woman; and now—"

"Now there's really no reason why—why, you understand—"

"Of course," he answered. "Shall we walk a bit farther? Down on the rocks, maybe?"

"I just love the rocks," said Alice. "They're so wild and romantic. And it's terribly hard to find anything romantic, isn't it, in this matter-of-fact twenty-first century!"

"There will always be romantic nights in the world, darling, just so long as there are lovers," mused the young man.

IN silence they kept on a while. Dusk was beginning to succeed the glow of sunset. Here man and his wondrous works seemed overborne by nature's greater wonders. The spell of the unchanging sea lay heavy on them both. In face of that vast, moving mystery speech had become almost an impertinence.

All at once lights darted along the boulevard. The snarl of a motor signal startled them from their reverie. Behind them a car was speeding furiously. Stanton drew the girl aside. But the car did not pass. Slowing, it came to a noiseless halt, arrested in full flight by its powerful magneto-adhesive brakes.

From it an elderly grim-visaged man hastily descended. He advanced; he faced the pair.

"Well, I'm here!" he angrily announced.

"Oh, hello, dad!" exclaimed Stanton, wholly at ease. "That you?"

"Yes, it's I. You know what I told you, and—"

"Allow me to present Miss Alice Haynes," said Stanton, a subtle mockery in his tone.

Stanton, Sr., gazed curiously and sternly at the young woman who stood, smiling, beside his son. His eyes widened with astonishment, as the muscles of his firmly set jaws relaxed. Though it would be unjust to the young women of 2016 to say that Alice Haynes was the most wonderful, the most beautiful of them all, yet the old gentleman realized as he gazed for the first time at his son's sweetheart, that she was

everything that he had expected Ellsworth's wife to be—yes, even more.

Incredible! This was, then, really the girl who had engineered getting an introduction to his son, who had sent him gifts—once even flowers—who had told him of her love and who had actually proposed?

"Well, I'll be damned," muttered Stanton, Sr., under his breath, in the now archaic vernacular.

HE looked at his son, smiling, confident, and proud; then at the young woman, more fresh and lovely than any radiomovie heroine he had ever seen. On the girl's face he saw a noble dignity. Her soft blue eyes compelled his admiration. He noted indications of unusual intelligence in the becoming width of her white brow shaded by silken masses of golden-tinted hair, which glowed luminously in the light of the vacuo-vibratory lamps on his car. Slowly he raised his hand and dragged his woodfelt hat from his head. The girl, detecting the new glimmer of comprehension in his eyes, impulsively offered her hand with a frank, contagious laugh.

"Don't you really approve of me?" she asked. "Not even a little bit?" Her smile was pure magic.

The old gentleman coughed and took her hand gingerly. He blinked his eyes and shifted his position on the composite paving. In a sudden panic lest he capitulate too rapidly, he stammered: "I must—positively insist—"

"That you do not approve of me?"—feigning a pretty pout. "Why don't you approve of me—Papa Stanton?"

"Papa Stanton!" the old gentleman repeated loudly with an attempt at anger. "Papa Stanton! Why, I haven't consented; I—I tell you, young lady," he cleared his throat and rolled his gloves into a ball, "say, are you really the one, the young woman, who—who made love to my son and—"

The lovers interrupted him with their laughter; then grew sober as the girl stepped up to Ellsworth's father and placed her hands gently and affectionately upon his shoulders. "Oh, Papa Stanton," she confessed, "I believe I am, if you put it that way. Yes, I'm guilty. I'm dreadfully guilty. You see—"

"Disgraceful, disgraceful!" murmured the father, wanting in vain to escape from the girl, yet thrilled in his heart by the love-filled eyes and affectionate caress of this splendid woman who fulfilled his son's dream of home and happiness.

Ellsworth also approached and laid his hand upon his father's shoulder. Then, remembering an odd phrase he had read recently in a queer novel of old New York, he said: "Dad, you can't get away with it. Isn't she wonderful? Look at her!" Gently he placed his other arm about his sweetheart's shoulders.

Stanton, Sr., melted.

"My son," he began, "I am angry, you understand, I am very angry. But you are sure that Miss—Miss—"

"Alice, Papa Stanton," laughed the girl.

"You are sure that this is the young—that Alice is the same young woman who proposed and—"

THE lovers laughed again, while Ellsworth's arm tightened about the girl.

"Yes, dad, this surely is the same one," the young man affirmed. "She certainly proposed to me. But if she hadn't, I'd have done it myself—just a mere matter of detail. What difference does it make, anyhow, who began it, if it's going to end like—like this?" And, bending, he kissed her luminous, soft hair.

The old gentleman stared hard at these amazing young people. Then all at once he held out his arms.

"Come, Alice," said he.

Laughing, she threw her arms about his neck and kissed him on both cheeks. He returned the kiss; then, holding Alice back at arm's length, smiled upon her, chuckling like a happy boy.

"It's all right, it's all right," he yielded. "I capitulate. What do you want the old man to hand you as a wedding present? A radiometric limousine, a touring plane, or—?"

"Don't bother about trifles, daddy," laughed Alice, hugging him again, as a good daughter should. "Just shake hands with Ellsworth and forgive him—that's the very best present you could make us. Then we'll ride back in the car with you and tell my anxious father and mother. I think father's got a bottle of very ancient Château Leclair—"

it dates 'way back to 1976 or some such remote period—that he'll open. Well, what do you say?"

"In my day," the old gentleman stammered, still haunted by his old superstition, "in—in my day—"

"Yes, daddy, but times have changed since then!" Alice replied. Then she teased. "Come, now, be a good daddy and make up with my boy! And let's not keep that Château Leclair waiting!"

She drew the son's hand and the father's together.

"Now will you both be good?" asked she, a little quaver in her voice.

"No fool like an old fool!" grumbled Stanton, Sr. "Ellsworth, if you—if you'll overlook—"

"Forget it, governor!" answered his son with unnecessary energy, as though he too felt a bit lumpy in the throat. He gave his father's hand a savage squeeze, then turned and took Alice in his arms once more and kissed her carmine lips.

"No fool like an old fool," repeated

Stanton, Sr., turning discreetly toward the motor. "I guess I'm hopelessly out of date. The world's sweeping all the old ways mighty fast into the discard. It's a new world; I swear I can't get used to it. Even the ways of romance have changed. Lord, Lord!"

"There's *one* thing, though, that never changes, governor," commented Ellsworth, as he took his seat in the car beside Alice, who had found her place without waiting to be helped in. "Never changes, and never will, so long as youth and life remain in this world; and that's the way of a man with a maid."

"You mean the way of a maid with a man, you foolish dear!" laughed Alice. "We've really always done just this same thing, but you've never known it, till lately—that's the only difference. And . . ."

But she did not finish, for Ellsworth gathered her yielding body in his arms, and her lips could say no more, because her lover's eager lips, upon them, muted their feminine philosophy in a kiss.