

Ralph 124C 41+, Part 5

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(Continued.)

Synopsis of Preceding Installments

Ralph 124C 41+ living in New York in the year 2660 while in conversation with a friend at his Telephot, an instrument enabling one to see at a distance, is cut off from his friend and by mistake is connected with a young lady in Switzerland, thus making her acquaintance by Telephot.

The weather engineers in Switzerland who control the weather decided to strike against the Government and turned on the high depression of their Meteorotowers, thereby snowing in a large district. An avalanche threatens to sweep away the house in which the young Swiss lady, Miss 212B 423, lives and she appeals to the great American inventor, Ralph 124C 41+, to save her, which he promptly does by melting the avalanche by directed wireless energy from his New York laboratory.

The inventor on the same afternoon is given an ovation by distance, in which the Telephot plays a great part. Afterward he reads a "newspaper," the size of a postage stamp, and "writes" a lecture by means of the Menograph, an instrument by means of which words are made to appear on a paper tape by impulses from the brain acting on the apparatus. During the night his head is connected electrically to the Hypnobioscope, an instrument by means of which words and sentences are transmitted directly to the brain while one sleeps, in such a manner that everything can be remembered the next morning.

The great inventor, the next day, is visited by Mr. 212B 423 and his daughter from abroad. Both arrived by means of the Subatlantic Tube, piercing straight through the earth from New York to Brest in France. In the afternoon in presence of his guests and twenty professors from all over the globe, 124C 41 brings life to a "radiumized" dog, who had been killed three years previous in presence of the twenty professors. The dog had been preserved with the rare gas Permaganol and Radium-K bromide, which latter occupied the blood vessels of the dog for three years.

STRANGE to say, she had never been in New York before. 124C 41 could not understand it at all. In conversation with her it transpired that Miss 212B 423 had been over the greater part of the globe, but for some unknown reason she had never visited New York.

124C 41 took it upon himself to “show her around.”

“You know,” he said before they started, “we New Yorkers are strange birds. We only like our city when we are far away from it, or when we can take some stranger about to show him or her the marvels of the town. As a matter of fact the real, dyed-in-the-wool New Yorker hates the town and only stays in it because it has cast a spell over him which he cannot escape. New York is a gigantic vampire. It sucks the blood of the strongest ; still, it gives us valuable experience and knowledge in exchange for it, so I suppose we have no right to complain. It has thus been for centuries and will be thus as long as the town exists.”

By this time they had arrived at the street level of the building and 124C 41 bade Miss 212B 423 sit down on a chair in the vestibule. He pressed a nearby button twice and a servant brought two pairs of roller-skates—at least that is what they looked like.

In reality they were Tele-motor-coasters. They were made of aluminum and each weighed only about one and one-half pounds. Each had three small, rubber-covered wheels, one in front and two in the rear. Between the wheels was located a small electric motor—about the size of a lemon ; this motor could only be operated by high frequency currents and, despite its small size, could deliver about one-quarter horsepower.

124C 41 explained the coasters and their use to his companion and after they had put them on by means of an ingenious clutch, whereby the coaster could be snapped onto the shoe in less than five seconds, they both went out into the street. From each coaster a thin insulated wire led up the wearer’s back to the hat or cap. Here it was attached to the collector, which was a stiff pin about eight inches long; projecting half-way out from the hat or cap. This pin sucked up, as it were, the high frequency electricity and carried it to the small motors, which latter propelled the coaster. Ladies could use their usual headgear, but they attached the wires to one of their hatpins, which projected four to five inches into the air. To control the speed of the motor, one simply lifted up the front part of the coaster ; this not only cut off the current, but automatically braked the two rear wheels.

When 124C 41 and his guest rolled out in the street, Miss 212B 423 at once remarked about the splendid condition of the roads.

“You see,” 124C 41 explained, “for centuries, the city had to content itself with bad pavements, bad asphaltum, etc., till about fifty years ago it woke up and covered every street with steelonium.

“You will notice that there are no cracks nor fissures or the like. Steelonium, as you of course know, is unrustable and ten times as strong as steel. We now make our streets by putting down large slabs of the metal, six inches thick. After they are in place we weld them together electrically and the result is a perfect street composed of a uniform sheet of metal without cracks or breaks ; no dirt nor germs can collect. The sidewalks as you perceive are made in the same manner.

“As a matter of fact, the Tele-motor coasters would not be possible were it not for the metallic streets. The flat spring which trails on the street between the two rear wheels must make continuous contact with the metallic”ground,” else the current cannot flow.”

“But where does the current oome from ?” interjected Miss 212B 423.

“You have perhaps noticed already the white slender posts at the edge of the sidewalk, and on their tops umbrella-like insulators which carry a thic spiked wire. This wire, as you will notice, is about fifteen feet above the curb and it carries the high frequency current which not only supplies our coasters with current, by way of our needle collectors, but it propels also all the vehicles which you see gliding so noiselessly.”

They had now got well under way and rolled along at a speed of perhaps twenty miles an hour. They passed thousands of citizens all on rollers, all coasting at high speed. There was no noise but the peculiar hum produced by the thousands of motors, but this hum was in nowise annoying.

Each sidewalk was divided in two parts. On the outside only people going in one direction, on the inside only people going in the opposite direction could coast. c;0Uisi9ns threfore were almost impossible. If a person rolling on the outside wished to enter a store, it was necessary to go to the end of the block, then turn to left, which brought him in the e: inside of the sidewalk and he then woul s: roll up to his destination. Of course, thi 0 was only necessary when the sidewal 1 was crowded, nothing preventing one t : cross a sidewalk if but f ew people wer il on the block.

There were no trolley cars in the street, only electromobiles carrying either passengers or else freight. Each vehicle was t equipped with a short collector mast b ll means of which the electrical energy was l: conv,eyed to the motors. The wheels of a all vehicles invariably were rubber-covered. This accomplished two purposes: t one to insulate the vehicle from the metallic street, the other to minimize the noise to the greatest extent.

Although Miss 212B 423 had a good t scientific training, some of the wonders of New York kept her guessing and she, as strangers had done for centuries, kept on asking questions continuously, while her good-natured companion eagerly explained everything with a pleasure pecu · liar to a New Yorker, loving his town.

“What are those strange spiral wire af fairs hanging high over all street crossings ?” was one of her first questions.

“Those illuminate our streets at night,’ was the answer.”They are iridium wire spirals, about ten meters in diameter, hanging forty meters up in the air, at the intersection of all our streets; this evening you will see how the entire spiral will glow in a pure white light which is absolutely cold. The wire emanates the light and after sundown you will observe that the streets are almost as light as now. Each spiral furnishes over one-half million candlepower, consequently one is needed only where streets intersect, except on very long blocks, when a smaller spiral is hung in the middle of the block.”

Presently, while crossing a large square they passed Meteor-Tower No. 26, of the seventh district, and 124C 41 at once launched off in praise of it.

“While you in other countries of course have a good weather service, we in New York boast to have the finest climate of any town on the face of the globe. As you must be aware, our weather-engineers have difficult work right along, owing to the peculiar shape of the city, geographically as well as physically. The tall spires and buildings make the work doubly hard, as the air currents are extremely erratic over the city and extremely hard to control. We now have sixty-eight Meteor-Towers, all of various power, in Consolidated New York. These are scattered over a radius of ninety miles from the City Governor’s Building and control the weather as well as the temperature of New York’s two hundred million inhabitants.

“You may look at a thermometer any time during the year and you will find it invariably pointing at fifty units.* There is never an excess of humidity in our air and life is made enjoyable for the hard-working city dwellers, thanks to our well-trained weather engineer corps.

“During the daytime rain or snow is unheard of. There is continuous sunshine three hundred and sixty-five days during the year. Between two and three each morning it rains for exactly one hour. This is done to freshen the air and to carry the dust away. It is the only rain New York ever gets and it seems to be sufficient for all purposes.”

As it was near noon time 124C 41 invited his companion for lunch. They both entered a luxuriously fitted out eating place, which across its entrance bore the legend Scientifica fe. “This is one of our best gustatory institutes and I think you will prefer it to the old-fashioned masticating places,” he told the young lady.

Both entered the place and at once a deliciously perfumed, invigorating air greeted them.

They proceeded at once to the Appetizer, which was a large room, hermetically closed, in which sat several hundred people, reading or talking.

The two sat down on leather-upholstered chairs and perused a comic journal which was projected upon a white wall, the pages of the journal changing from time to time.

They had not been in the room for more than five minutes when Miss 212B 423 exclaimed: "I am ravenously hungry and I was not hungry at all when we entered. What • kind of a trick is it?"

"You see, this is the Appetizer," 124C 4t laughed, "the air in here is so invigorating and is charged with several harmless gases for the purpose of giving an appetite before you eat—hence its name!"

Both then proceeded to the main eating salon, which was furnished beautifully in white and gold only. There were no attendants and no waiters, and the salon was very quiet except for a muffled, far-off music, too faint to cause annoyance.

They then sat down at a table on which were mounted complicated silver boards with odd buttons and pushes and slides. There was such a board for each patron. From the top of the board a flexible tube hung down to which one fastened a sl' :er mouthpiece, that one took out of a disinfecting solution, attached to th7 bord. The bill of fare was engraved right into the board and there was a pointer which one moved up and down the various food items and stopped in front of the one selected. The silver mouthpiece was then placed in the mouth and one pressed upon a red button. The liquid food which one selected would then begin to flow into the mouth, its rate of speed controlled by the red button. If spices, salt or pepper were wanted there was a button for each one which dierealy had to be pressed till the food was as palatable as wanted. Another but1on controlled the temperature of the food.

Meats, vegetables, and other eatables, were all liquified and were prepared with utmost skill to make them palatable. When changing from one food to another the flexible tube, including the mouthpiece, were rinsed out with hot water but the water did not flow out of the m'outhpiece. The opening of the latter closed automatically during the rinsing and opened as soon as the process was terminated.

While eating one reclined in the comfortably upholstered leather arm-chair and one did not have to undergo physical exercise like using knife and fork, as was the 'rule in former centuries. Eating had become a pleasure.

At first the scientific restaurants did not succeed well. Humanity ha.cl been masticating for thousands of years and it was hard to overcome the inherited habit.

However, people soon found out that scientific food prepared in a palatable manner in liquid form were not only far more digestible and better for the stomach, but they also did away almost entirely with indigestion, dyspepsia, and other ills, and people began to get stronger and more vigorous than of old.

The scientific restaurants furnished only foods which were nourishing and no dishes hard to digest could be had at all. Therein lay the fine success of the new idea.

People at first did not favor the idea because the new way of ea ting did not seem as aesthetic even as the old and seemed also at first devoid of the pleasures

of the old way of eating. They regarded it with a suspicion similar to a twentieth century European observing a Chinaman using his chop-sticks. This aversion, however, soon wore off as people became used to the new mode of eating, and it is thought that the close of the century will witness the closing of all old-fashioned restaurants.

It must not be thought, however, that the liquid scientific foods are absolutely liquid. They are, especially meats, in such forms that slight mastication is always necessary and desirable. This naturally does away, with the monotony of swallowing liquids all the time and rrfakes the food more desirable.

After lunch 124C 41 and Miss 212B 423 rolled uptown and the former explained the various sights as they progressed. On Broadway and 389th street, in a large square, an extinct petrified animal stood upon a pedestal. Miss 212B 423 desiring to know what it represented, approached and read this inscription, hewn in the stone:

****Pete****

The last Horse in Harness in the Streets of
New York, Died on this Spot June 19, 2096 A.
D.

“The poor thing,” murmured the young lady, “but I think the world is better off without torturing poor dumb beasts when electricity can well take care of all the work.”

Her companion, touched by this feminine remark, smiled sof tly.

(*To be Continued*)

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