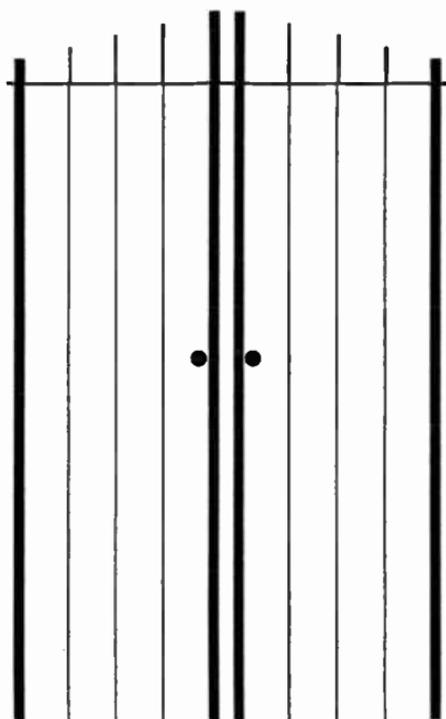


# GATEWAY TO RADIO

THE FIRST BOOK OF THE SERIES

# GATEWAY TO RADIO



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by Major Ivan Firth

and Gladys Shaw Erskine

*With a foreword by* Daniel Frohman

New York, THE MACAULAY COMPANY

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## FOREWORD

“Gateway to Radio,” while showing to the earnest student how best to become associated with the radio industry in all its many phases, bravely champions the cause of the public.

Particularly do I endorse the references made to programs for children. If radio can help to make life at home both entertaining and cultural for the growing citizens, then something worthwhile will have been achieved.

Unfortunately, commercial control over this most powerful means of communication has not always succeeded in this responsibility towards the public.

The constructive criticism contained in this fearless and authentic book should benefit public, sponsor, and performer alike.

May success attend these pioneer scribes of an instrument of the gods that is sometimes a work of the devil.

DANIEL FROHMAN.

## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

GLADYS SHAW ERSKINE, novelist, poet, and playwright, was among the first writers of note to enter the radio field, not only starring in major productions over N.B.C. and C.B.S. networks, but also writing and supervising many radio programs. She was Vice-President of The Theatre Magazine Radio Bureau Incorporated. She pioneered radio personality columns in class magazines, and was Radio Editor of *The Home Magazine* (Tower Group), *Life*, and *The Elks Magazine*. Miss Erskine spoke on radio with the Copyright Committee of The Authors' League of America before the House Patents Committee in Washington, D. C. She is a member of The Authors' League of America, The Authors' Guild, The Dramatists' Guild, The Poetry Society of America and The League of American Pen Women.

IVAN FIRTH was prominent with the British Broadcasting Corporation before coming to New York in 1929. In 1928 he held a record of no less than eighty-six radio contracts as producer, actor, and singer. He has been in theatrical management, written successful plays, starred in light opera and drama, and stage managed for Sir Barry Jackson at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre. As a member of the Incorporated Sales Managers Association of the United King-

dom, he has had practical experience of showmanship in advertising. For nearly two years he was production director at National Broadcasting Company in New York, has been Master of Ceremonies over the Columbia Broadcasting System, and has been featured on many coast-to-coast programs over both major networks.

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# GATEWAY TO RADIO

## CHAPTER I

### WRITING ON THE AIR

**T**HERE is a story of a man condemned to life imprisonment, who spent the latter part of his days in counting the number of words in the Bible.

It might be interesting if someone, who has both the time and the inclination for the work, would endeavor to count the number of words that are spoken through the microphone, even within the confines of greater New York.

Conservatively, we would suggest that two and a half million words are written daily for delivery on the air between the hours of 8 a.m. and midnight.

Who writes those words?—what training have the writers?—who delivers them?—and how are they written and delivered?—these are the questions that we propose to take up in this volume.

Radio entertainment has become a national institution as popular as breakfast.

There are plenty of people who don't like breakfast.

Writers, both old-timers and beginners, should profit by the mistakes of the past. When Moving Pictures first began to move before the Talkies talked, high-brow

writers ignored the new field, and refused to consider it seriously as a market—and, as the Irishman would say, “Now look at the damn thing!” Look back at the Movie and Talkie miracles, and look forward to radio and television.

It is an interesting thought that those ancients who traced their legends and histories in strange hieroglyphics had no idea that thousands of years later those same records would become fabulously valuable, and add to the knowledge and wisdom of the world.

Today, the spoken word, by means of radio, flashes news and entertainment around the world to curious millions. If you are carving your message upon the minds of your listeners, or engraving it upon the red sand-stone of long dead Meydum, the same meticulous care should be taken in its preparation.

The radio industry started as a novelty, which could hardly be termed a natural outlet for feelings or emotions of any sort. It was heralded as a practical means of communication, rather than as a medium for a new method of artistic expression.

The use of radio for message-sending, for warnings of disaster or calls for help, such as an S.O.S. at sea, or an order sent to a moving police car giving the location of a reported crime in progress, or the more amazing directing of an aeroplane lost in a fog—all these practical benefits are continually in use. But in these days the radio has be-

come largely a medium for entertainment and for advertising, and it would be a godsend to the people of the country if the two terms could be made synonymous!

There was a time when the sole purpose of the radio in the family circle seemed to be to see how distant a station one could contact. What came over the wave lengths mattered not at all. If a voice out of the void suddenly said, "This is Denver," or, "This is Kalamazoo," that was thrill enough for the dial twister.

The next phase was the introduction of definite entertainment for the benefit of listeners, but, as sure as history repeats itself, the best literary brains of the country had not vision enough to see where they might fit into the picture, and certainly never foresaw the commercialization of time on the air offered to advertisers, who with their money have helped to build this amazing industry.

Some years ago in London, England, a progressive department store in that foggy city turned 'American' and decided to try to obtain the services of the best known authors in the land to write advertising copy for them. Accordingly they wrote in a most dignified fashion to Arnold Bennett, H. G. Wells, and George Bernard Shaw.

Their several answers to the tainted commercial assignment are interesting and amusing.

Arnold Bennett replied in characteristic fashion that as "the highest paid journalist in the country," it was only right that such an offer should be made to him, but that

while he would very much like to accept, he felt that public opinion would be so strong against him that he would have to decline, until other famous writers had taken the lead.

H. G. Wells outlined the situation exhaustively, and heavily declined.

George Bernard Shaw bristled his famous whiskers, twinkled his keen blue eyes, and stated in writing that he considered it "an offense to the Holy Ghost," to use his genius for advertising anything other than genius—George Bernard Shaw to you!

On the other hand, in America, one of the pioneers in the field of the commercialization of literature was Elbert Hubbard, who not only turned his talents to the writing of his famous aphorisms, but founded the Roycrofters, a publishing group that is still in existence. What is still more interesting to us at the moment is the fact that, unlike his English fellow-craftsmen, he saw and grasped the golden opportunity that advertising writing offered the scribe. He was one of the first writers to capitalize his art through commercial channels, and the brilliance of the advertising copy which he wrote proved the value of the fine mind and analytical ability which he brought to it.

With the development of radio entertainment as a means of advertising, the sponsors of big-time programs have been forced to admit that better material is essential, if better results are to be achieved.

Radio covers all fields of literary endeavor. The news-

paper reporter, the novelist, the playwright, the short story writer, the poet—all have their niche in radio.

If they are to succeed, it would be well for them to take advantage of every opportunity to gain insight into the peculiarities of the studios themselves, and the conditions prevailing there, with particular reference to the requirements and limitations of the microphone.

The spoken word, through radio, has a far wider influence than any other medium of communication. It reaches infinitely farther than the printed word can ever penetrate, and those responsible should, therefore, bear this in mind, when writing words for delivery on the air.

As a concrete example, more people will listen attentively to every word of a vibrant straight-from-the-shoulder talk by President Roosevelt, over a Coast-to-Coast hook-up (in fact, throughout the Anglo-Saxon speaking world) than would read or understand the same speech were it printed in every newspaper in the country.

One reason for this is the power of personality, which President Roosevelt has to a marked degree; and another is that the masses, comprising many illiterates, are able to grasp a fact more quickly and clearly through the sense of hearing than the sense of sight.

As every program is preceded by an announcement, it is logical that our first consideration will be the relationship between the writer and the announcer.

It is amusing that announcers are considered of such importance that their names are almost invariably given out on every program, whereas the writer, all too often, remains anonymous. We will content ourselves with a bow to the all-pervading importance of the announcer, but propose to deal, first and foremost, with the announcements. We will take up the function of the man behind the gun, so to speak—in other words, the writer behind the announcer. It is a lamentable fact that very often the continuity writer has little or no idea as to *who* is going to speak the words he has written, so that there can be no artistic touch fitting the particular personality upon whose voice and delivery the success of his written word depends. The staff writer is considered a very small cog on a very large wheel, his name being carefully withheld from listeners, while the announcer, quite wrongly, gets all the credit or blame. Yet there has been an apparent conspiracy to insist upon announcers (in spite of the fact that their names are given out) smothering their own individuality in a certain sameness that becomes monotonous to the point of irritation.

It is interesting to note that some of the best announcers—for example, Andrew White (the popular Andy of the early days), Graham MacNamee, and Ted Husing—have made their names upon the spontaneity of their own improvised work.

Surely they knew just what type of wording best suited

their particular personalities! They did not lose the charm or dynamic quality, which might be their special gift, by striving to read stereotyped script that no one could breathe life into.

This same spirit of improvisation can be obtained by close co-operation between the announcer and the writer who prepares what the former has to say. We have had sad experience with good programs and fine announcers that have been spoiled by badly written or over-long and therefore boresome announcements; yet there are times when a splendidly written announcement is read by someone who totally lacks the ability to get the warmth, color and full value out of the writer's words.

The loud speaker whence your pleasure or your misery is derived is a permanent guest, who automatically becomes a member of your family.

He (or is it a she?) stands in a warm corner, and is a welcome guest or an irritating bore, depending upon what is happening in some distant broadcasting studio. Because of this family intimacy, it is all-important that the spirit of improvisation should, in most cases, run through the announcements. Many a fine musical program labors under the handicap of the low level of its announcements, and it takes close co-operation between the writer and the announcer if its spirit and pace are to be maintained.

Announcements have two functions: to advertise the product that is sponsoring the program (these are the com-

mercial credits or sales talks), and to explain and set the entertainment both in mood and story.

The old way of introducing musical numbers in a stereotyped fashion became so monotonous and received so much adverse criticism from the public that programs were improved by the introduction of a Master of Ceremonies, who was to season the entertainment with the flavor of his own personality.

To the manufacturer of the commodity being advertised on the air, the commercial credit is everything, and we have the utmost sympathy for, and understanding of, the client, who may be paying hundreds of thousands of dollars for his radio publicity. He feels that if he cannot, for so large a sum, give his sales message to the public, he is not getting his money's worth.

It is very difficult to convince him that his enthusiasm for his product often blinds him to the fact that what is the breath of life to him may be entirely dull, and even offensive, to most of his listeners. An intelligent lover of music, listening with keen enjoyment to a symphony concert, is not too pleased if the thread of beauty is cut by a catalog of products, the prices of ready-made clothes, or the dangers of pyorrhea. Such a procedure creates ill-will, and tends to discount the advertising value of the program, so that, from the advertiser's point of view, the most important part of his program becomes a liability instead of an asset.

An example of the extreme length to which advertisers will go was heard in New York recently.

The sponsor, not satisfied with his regular promises over the air to give presents to everyone who would patronize him, chartered an aeroplane fitted with a stentorphone, which thundered its message above the roar of traffic. In desperation, Police Headquarters was called in an effort to banish this nuisance. Our delight was unbounded when the Sergeant on the desk forestalled our complaint before we uttered it, naming the product and informing us that ours was the fortieth call of complaint within the last half-hour! Goodness knows how many more came in later, or how far-reaching was the ill-will engendered by that ill-advised and blatant publicity.

We do not know whether this sponsor's further plan of campaign was pre-arranged or not, but it is a fact that, immediately following this evidence of outraged public opinion, an *additional* gift was promised the radio fans who would condescend to buy the product!

Some commodities are of such general interest that the commercial credits in themselves may be both entertaining and instructive. A keen motorist will always be interested in a new fuel or lubricating oil that will increase the efficiency of his engine, particularly if the information is given in an informal chatty way, which a friend might use in his home. Where is the owner-driver who ever tires of talking motors? Where is the golfer who will not discuss

the latest putter? Where is the fisherman who will refuse to discuss the merits of helgomites and worms?

It is very obvious that when the product to be advertised, or the service to be offered, is one which deals, directly or indirectly, with recreation, the real difficulties of finding suitable commercial credits hardly exist. In any case, should ill-will arise, it would only be in the minds of non-buyers, who, after all, need not listen unless they want to, and are no serious loss to the sponsor.

On the other hand, the manufacturer of products that are by their very nature unpleasant necessities, such as tooth pastes, little aids to regulate nature, or corn plasters, are faced with a truly difficult problem, and they would be well advised to eliminate as much selling talk as possible, and rely upon the publicity of their trade name, which can be set in a few words.

If the Pumpkin-Pie Band is a very fine band, listeners will talk to their friends about the wonderful Pumpkin-Pie Band. Though they may not talk about the merits of the Pie, there will be an association of ideas which will not allow them to forget that 3 p.m. on Sunday afternoon, let us say, is Pumpkin-Pie Hour.

Sponsors should concentrate on obtaining their commercial credit with a maximum of interest and a minimum of ill-will. In many cases this has been attempted in a childish way, which may have merits in the eyes of a few morons, but which is basically unsound from the adver-

in every field of artistic or social endeavor. Your politicians, your actors, your clergymen, your famous writers, even your confidence men, make use of one or more of these qualities as stock-in-trade.

Why shouldn't these same qualities, or individual whimsical quirks and characteristic mannerisms, be exploited by the radio announcer? This does not mean that showmanship must be neglected, but it does mean that everyone connected with a radio program must look upon his work with the same seriousness as he would were he on the stage or a political platform.

Radio work is something like shadow-boxing in the dark—and is valuable or useless according to the amount of serious effort that is used. You can't see the other fellow out there in the dark, but unless you can imagine him with all the concentration at your command you will not obtain the results for which you are striving.

It is so easy for all concerned—announcers, actors, *and authors*—to shirk, when on the air, but it is almost impossible to do so in the theatre without being found out—and being found out mighty quick!

Certain persons seem to have a telepathic power of thought transference that ensures their immediate and lasting success as radio artists. Such success, however, is very dependent upon the material given to them to deliver, and that is where the writer comes in. The unfavorable criticism that is heaped on radio's head is due more

the setting of the immediate item that follows in the program.

If the latter is done as a bald statement of fact, then there is little or no interest taken in what follows, except among the favored few who have been waiting for it, or who knew all about it already. But if the announcement has a personal touch, interesting the listener through an apparent first-hand knowledge, then people will sit up and take notice.

Take, for example, a program of musical appreciation, in which a Bach fugue is to be played. In a Coast-to-Coast hook-up, only those who have had a musical training would be familiar with a particular fugue—but a well written announcement could so intrigue listeners that they would want to hear the work, which the announcer has ‘sold’ to them by his own great interest in it, and by the sincerity and charm with which the little descriptive talk is written.

This means that announcements should be written by an expert, who not only knows his subject but can present that knowledge in such a way that the announcer can carry on the good work.

There are three qualities, any one of which will endear a human being to his fellow creatures; they are, Sincerity, Humor, and Charm—and these are just as important in the actual writing of an announcement as in the delivery of it. As personal qualities they are deliberately exploited

are the largest buyers—but *he does not know public reaction to entertainment as well as the writer or showman*, whose sole business it is to interest or amuse the public, and thereby to obtain their good-will.

If the advertising statistics were to be given freely, and without restraint, to the program builder, to assist in making the advertising as interesting as the program itself, then there would be an immediate improvement.

After all, the advertising man is nothing if not ruthless.

The poster display that hits you hard enough to leave a lasting impression is successful. Even if it offends you, the offense is only skin deep—but if the same poster were to be planted on your sitting-room wall, then you would have a deep-rooted ill-will that would antagonize you to the product, no matter how good that product might be.

For example, in many of our current magazines we are shocked and horrified to see the reproduction of the face of a very pretty girl, apparently removing her upper teeth with her hand. Most of us turn the page as quickly as possible. If it were a radio program, the dial would be turned as quickly as the page, to banish the ugliness brought to us under the guise of advertising.

Ugliness is a negative quality in advertising, and any sponsor of a radio program should realize that the affirmative is more valuable than the negative.

The function of any announcement is advertising—whether it be the exploiting of a commercial product, or

tiser's standpoint. We are referring, of course, to the sugar coating of sample surprise packets placed on the pill of commercial credit—the argument being that the people *will* listen, *if* they can get something for nothing.

This is nothing more nor less than an admission of failure to be able to provide a sales talk that, in itself, could be heard with interest. It is as if a theatrical manager were to acknowledge the dullness of his entertainment by offering to pay the public to attend it.

Daniel Frohman, that Grand Old Man of the theatre, says that audiences of today are more sophisticated than they have ever been; surely it is reasonable to assume that their minds have advanced with the times. Why not write and talk *up* to the public, and not *down* to the moron?

We believe that if the builders of the program were also allowed to write the commercial credits, both the sponsor and the listening public would benefit. This cannot be achieved without the closest possible co-operation between the advertising account executive and the program builder—a practice which rarely, if ever, exists. Of course, there are a few agencies that build their own programs, and do not go outside their own offices for any material that is used—but the advantages and disadvantages to this way of working will be discussed in detail in a later chapter.

The advertising man knows his product, knows its method of distribution, and knows the class of people who

often to badly written material than to the poor work of the actor or announcer, who gets the blame.

The spelling and re-spelling of a trade name, the childish reiteration as to the exact location of the shop being advertised, can hardly be made interesting, no matter which way it is handled.

Many of the better class writers are entering the radio field. But as the medium of the microphone is entirely new to them, and as a totally different technique must be employed than that used for the novel, short story, or play, they will find themselves, at first, at as great a disadvantage as the youngest tyro might be. The most poignant need of radio is for better writers.

Just as a sponsor strives to establish the individual superiority, quality, or value of his product, so should he obtain a writer who would have the knowledge and the ability to bring those same characteristics to the show, and, to round out the whole, the announcement should be written by the same person, in the same key.

The advertising agencies go to great pains to write the commercial credits for their programs, but sometimes they lose sight of the end in view. Last minute changes are very common, and most disconcerting to those running the program. The time factor may be entirely upset. A program, carefully written and rehearsed to run exactly the fifteen minutes scheduled, is suddenly disorganized by an extra minute of sales talk, rushed into the studio a few

moments before the program is due to start. The result is one of two things: either a portion of the entertainment is cut, with insufficient time for consideration as to where the necessary cut will do the least harm, or the commercial credit is, perforce, gabbled at such a rate, in order to get in *every* word, that it is virtually valueless.

The answer to all these difficulties is perfect co-operation between all parties concerned, *prior to rehearsals*. We believe that advertising agencies would benefit by listening to responsible writers with considered ideas, as to how a certain product may be sold through the medium of radio entertainment.

The sponsor so often listens to the program *in general*, and the commercial credit *in particular*, in order to verify that the sales message is delivered in exactly the same form as it was sent out by him. If he hears this message in its entirety, he is well pleased, not stopping to think that the measure of his pleasure may be in inverse ratio to that of the listening public. Too often, what pleases the client irritates the radio fan. It is somewhat the same idea as if one were to buttonhole a man, and force him to listen to some pet idea of one's own, in which he had no interest whatsoever. If one were to tell this same man an amusing yarn, and then, in an interesting fashion, work in that pet hobby, he would listen and like it!

The entertaining talker is always a welcome guest, which is what the sponsor must strive to be—a welcome guest in

the homes of his radio friends. No one can assist him in obtaining this end so well as the writer, who has had many years *as* a welcome guest between the paper covers of books and magazines, in those same homes. The writer's problem is to establish the sponsor's confidence in his ability to write entertainment coupled with the advertising that will sell the product. It is not easy, but it is the only way in which the standard of radio programs will be raised.

The question as to whether there should be any definite relation between the product and the entertainment varies with circumstances. The announcements should avoid dry-as-dust and offensive facts, and present the necessary information in a fabric of sincerity, humor, or charm—by expert writing.

This is the truth which must be recognized—that the writing of the commercial data, *as well as* the program itself, must be written by an *expert*.

The writer of advertising copy does not fill the bill. The advertising writer writes for the eye to read, *not* for the ear to hear.

A flagrant example of this was heard in a recent broadcast, advertising a well known brand of beer. The written words given to the announcer to read in the commercial credit described the qualities claimed for this particular product, and stated that "in Purity and in Maturity" this beer was paramount. This phrase was repeated four or more times during the program, and in each case sounded

as "Impurity and Immaturity." When set up in print, the words PURITY and MATURITY can be made to stand out, but, when spoken, the juxtaposition of a final *n* to an initial *p* or *m* prevents the finest elocutionist from being clearly understood, and in this case conveyed a meaning exactly opposite to the one intended.

So, in radio, the writer must combine the experience of the playwright with knowledge of the microphone. Commercial announcements, if they are to please the public and satisfy the sponsor, should be written by experienced authors, who are accustomed to create their characters, and then *give them words to speak*.



*Gladys Shaw Erskine and Ivan Firth, seen in front  
of the televisior of W2XAB, where they  
pioneered the television field*



*President Franklin D.  
Roosevelt speaks to the  
nation*



*Robert Trout, official an-  
nouncer to the President*

## CHAPTER II

### EXAMPLES OF COMMERCIAL CREDITS

IT is not possible in this volume to deal exhaustively with every form of commercial announcement used on the radio. We will, however, give examples of announcements based on each of the three qualities mentioned in the preceding chapter; namely, Sincerity, Humor, and Charm.

There is no set rule that a particular type of program is essential for a particular type of product, so long as the entertainment is of interest to the public, and the announcements convey the idea, however subtly, of the truth of all statements made about the product.

Let us take, for example, an oil company. It is conceivable that Amos 'n' Andy would have built up just as large a following for their sponsor had they been identified, in the minds of listeners, with Oil—Oil, shall we say, with which the Fresh Air Taxis were motivated—as they have for the tooth paste with which they have been associated for so long.

All commercial programs should be written and built with one of two ideas in mind. Either the product itself should be exploited through the medium of the program

content, which can be done very rarely, or the entertainment should be built to appeal to that section of the community amongst which the client is most desirous of creating sales—good-will in both cases being of superlative importance.

In this machine age there is, perhaps, no product in more universal use, or of greater importance to civilization than oil. Oil represents transport, travel, and communication, and lives depend upon the reliability of aeroplane engines. Therefore, it is only fitting that a major oil company should present a serious program, in which the qualities of integrity and efficiency should be stressed.

The program opens with a roll of drums, that fades away into the distance, and then the voice of the announcer is heard, low-pitched and sincere.

**ANNOUNCER.** Here are spy stories, tales of mystery and intrigue, plot and counterplot, stratagems and spoils. Here are spy stories—new and true, stranger than fake or fiction.

They tell the startled listeners how, behind the arras of black velvet, sinister actors play in a drama made more fascinating by its very concealment and stealth,—the Great Drama of Secret Service.

Just as the fuel and oil of Secret Service information ensured the smoothness and power of the engine of War in France, so does . . . . gasoline and . . . . lubricating oil ensure the reliability and power of your engine. In tonight's dramatization of a story

from "Our Secret War," by Thomas Johnson, Bobbs Merrill & Co., you will hear the actual Secret Service agent to whom the incident described occurred.

General . . . . . has come to this studio to vouch personally that Agent A.I. is present in person, and will re-enact a story of which the General himself knows the full truth. General . . . . .

GENERAL.

In my capacity as . . . . . in France, during the World War, I was in close and constant touch with the Secret Service men, and I know that without the *fuel* of information, the *engine* of War might have broken down.

These agents, known only by numbers, ran more risks than any soldier in the trenches. For the most part, they worked alone. If they were discovered, it was the end. They neither expected, nor ever received, any help from their employers. They were patriots, all of them, and I feel that it is doing a national service to present these stories of American heroism, every one of which is authentic, and will be re-enacted by the actual agent to whom each incident occurred. Tonight, Agent A.I.—and I can personally vouch that it is he himself who is standing beside me now—will re-live one of his greatest thrills. Agent A.I.

AGENT A.I.

*(Will speak very briefly on the story about to be told, and will conclude by saying:)*

It was during that time, when we worked day and night, with every nerve a-strain,

to detect the secret underground routes by which the enemy smuggled from France the information they depended upon in planning their attacks, that I was summoned one day to the counter-espionage headquarters in Central France.

*(Here follows a moment's silence, then the ring of a bell, and an orderly's called reply from the distance, "Yes, sir," and the action of the play has started.)*

The closing announcement would run as follows:

ANNOUNCER. Next week, at this hour, the . . . . Oil Company will present a further episode in the career of Agent A.I.

But I know that many listeners want to know something about the story tonight, just as I do,—and while Agent A.I. is still here, I am going to ask him. Tell me, A.I., what *was* that letter?

AGENT A.I. While I was pretending to hunt for the cognac behind the bar, I managed to study the letter. It was a cleverly coded message—one of many that the Greek had brought to the little barmaid—and one of the many tendrils of the grape-vine of secret information to the enemy.

ANNOUNCER. But what happened to the girl and the Greek?

A.I. That is one of the most terrible situations that we of the Secret Service have to meet—

when girls are the pawns in the game.—  
The girl? I don't know.

ANNOUNCER. Gosh! But what about the Greek? What was his name, by the way?

A.I. Does that matter? Like the rest of us, he, too, had a number. It must have been thirteen—you see, he was unlucky.

ANNOUNCER. Well, a great deal must have depended upon the right information in war time. And you must have been proud to be able to supply the right kind of fuel to the engine of war—just as the . . . . . Oil Company is proud to be able to offer the motoring public the best gasoline and lubricating oil. Don't forget—the same time next week there will be some more thrills for you!

In such a program, based on fact and not fiction, it is possible to use this interesting method of dialogue announcement, which would only be in bad taste in another class of program.

We have heard a great deal of adverse criticism of a fine dramatic program, based on the Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, in which the character of Dr. Watson was used in the commercial credits in dialogue with the announcer. This had the effect of destroying all illusion. Dr. Watson was neither one thing nor the other—neither a real person in the studio, nor a real character in the play—although the performance by Leigh Lovell as Dr. Watson

was the outstanding high-light of the whole series. Had these programs been built on *true* stories, enacted by a *real* detective, then he could, most certainly, have discussed the product advertised without any destruction of illusion.

In the example we have quoted, where the *real* Secret Service agent is present, the listener feels close to the principal character—just as if he were in the room with them, telling his story and being questioned by some other guest.

The commercial tie-in, connecting the function of oil and fuel in an engine with Secret Service information as a parallel is legitimate and sincere.

But now, for the sake of contrast, we will give an example of the humorous announcement for a dance music program. We are indebted to Mr. James Stanton for permission to use this example. Mr. Stanton is not only a fine writer for radio, but is an experienced advertising man. This program is to advertise a firm marketing HATS, and the entertainment consists of a hot dance band only. All the announcements are written in a brisk and amusing way that, if properly delivered, will never for a moment let the tempo of the music down, and will leave the idea of *hats* as much *in* the heads of listeners, as *on* them!

*THE MAD HATTERS' PROGRAM.*

NOTE TO ANNOUNCER, with the suggestion that he ignore it:

Make announcements whenever you see fit, in any kind of voice, so long as it is absolutely unintelligible.

*(THEME MUSIC PLAYED DISCORDANTLY WHILE READING.)*

ANNOUNCER. And now, that tolerated orchestra, sponsored by the Mad Hatters, are taking off their collars, and soon will be making the night hideous with their racket.

Strolling about the streets the other day, I was amazed to see several hatless men and boys, apparently sane, rushing here and there!

Strange things always interest me, and always I seek to find the reasons for extraordinary happenings.

I resolved to imitate the inquiring reporter.

I stopped one man, begged his pardon, and asked him why he wore no hat.

His name was Herman Glutz. He said that he was a great lover of horses. He could not bear to think of using straw for a hat, because he feared that some horse might have no bed to sleep on.

He also said that he owned a derby hat, but that his cat and her kittens had rented it from him for the season.

However, in the absence of any Mad

Hatter's cat, that perfectly incomprehensible piece, "Kitten on the Keys," will be stamped out by Rin Tin Tin, assisted by Tom Mix's horse Tony.

*(KITTEN ON THE KEYS—ORCHESTRA.)*

ANNOUNCER. Mr. William Washurth, of Open Creek, Staten Island, said that he was a great admirer of Caesar, and he went on to say, after he had blown his nose, that he had never seen Caesar, or even a picture of Caesar, wearing a hat.

"What was good enough for Caesar is good enough for me!" said Mr. Washurth.

So why prevent the Mad Hatters' Orchestra from kicking around the studio that very pleasing melody, "The Hat My Father Wore on Last St. Patrick's Day"?

*(ORCHESTRAL SELECTION.)*

ANNOUNCER. Herbert Hipepper, of the Bronx, brushed the hair out of his eyes, and looked at me sadly.

He said that he had quarreled with his wife, and had gone without a hat in the hope that it would rain or turn cold.

"I hope I catch pneumonia and die," said Mr. Hipepper. "That'll show her!"

And so, the next number, "Yes, We Have No Panamas," a favorite of the Mad Hatters' Orchestra, will be played as soon as the oboe player has had a drink of water. Ready, Oscar? Let's go.

*(ORCHESTRAL SELECTION.)*

ANNOUNCER. Claudius Dippelheimer merely hesitated a moment to say that if nature had intended that we should wear hats, we would have been born with hats on.

Good, sound reasons why men wear no hats. I am content. I shall never have to wonder again, when I see a hatless man.

This selection of the Mad Hatters' Orchestra is from the musical pens of the Seven Sutherland Sisters. It is entitled, "Throw My Hat Away, Ma, I'm Going To Buy a Toupée."

(ORCHESTRAL SELECTION.)

*CLOSING ANNOUNCEMENT.*

ANNOUNCER. If you have not yet tuned off, you have just heard the weekly program inflicted by the orchestra of the Mad Hatters.

The popular musical selections, rather badly played, and the short instructive sermons, were for the benefit of those hardy pioneers who have discarded the hat, so that man's crowning glory, his hair, may blow in his eyes, and be ruffled in the breeze, or be securely held in place with a neat black ribbon.

Remember, next week at this time, to listen to our program, LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM THE HORSE.

And remember, too, to send for that instructive little book, WHY WEAR A HAT? It's yours for the asking.

The Mad Hatters' program has come to you from the Weehawken Studios of the Natural Flycasting Company.

Comment on the above example is hardly needed, but it is a certain thing that a program of this sort would be far less entertaining were the announcements to be dry-as-dust statements about each number, or descriptions of different styles of hats.

What Mr. Stanton has succeeded in doing is to keep the spirit and pep of the band through the rest of the program, and the most exacting critic could hardly cavil at being given too much commercial credit.

And now, from Sincerity, through Humor, into Charm.

Charm is an evanescent quality, a will-o'-the-wisp that every writer and every actor as well as every individual in private life strives to capture, and longs to possess. Brilliance may strike sparks from the facets of the brain, but charm will insinuate itself into the very fibres of the heart.

What better place for charm than a program dedicated to *PERFUMES*—and to the fascination that perfumes have always held for the lovely ladies of any land? Perfumes—captured dreams and drama—the madness of moon-drenched nights!

The following example is not intended as an announcement for one program. It is given to show the full treatment of a subject over a series of broadcasts, and is one method of presenting an idea to a prospective client in a way that is far more understandable than the submission of one completed script, which could not convey the kaleidoscope of change through which the characters will pass.

But let the announcer tell the tale!

ANNOUNCER. The Little Princess is with you again! As you all know, the Little Princess is that charming and capricious beauty whose fastidious taste brought into being the perfect perfumes that now please the most exacting taste of all you lovely ladies throughout the land.

Perfumes that you have dreamed of, and that *now* you can possess! Perfumes that bring into being, the very moment the stopper is removed from the bottle, all the fabulous romance and adventures of Scheherezade—all the color of the Arabian Nights! Perfumes that make you realize that you are indeed, all of you, possessed of the same charm—as wilful and capricious as the Little Princess after whom the perfume is named.

But let me tell you how it all happened!

The Little Princess lived somewhere East of the Sun, and West of the Moon. She combed her hair with a golden comb, had a fountain filled with gold-fish, with fanned black tails—a garden of every flower that ever grew, trilling birds to waken her, and nightingales to sing her to sleep.

One day she found herself very tired of all her lovely playthings.

So she called her handmaidens, and told them to fetch her all her powder and scents.

She tried each one, but still she was dissatisfied. Her soft red mouth pouted, and her long-lashed eyes widened, for the Little Princess thought that she was very badly

treated indeed, if she could be allowed to want for anything in this, her very own Court.

The Court Perfumer and Necromancer were hastily summoned—for it would never do to let a tear fall from the Little Princess's eyes.

She commanded to be made for her a *new perfume*, a different one—something that no other court in any land would have.

The Court Perfumer tried many, but still the little lovely one was not as happy as she should be. So he hit upon a new idea. He called in the Court Troubadour, a gallant young man, really a knight in disguise, who adored the very ground upon which the tiny shoe of the Princess stepped.

Together they conceived a plan! They would amuse their Lady at the same time that they were making for her the finest perfume possible. They would enact plays before her, each one symbolic of a particular ingredient, which would go into the making up of the final lovely scent, which would be perfect.

With each play her shell-like ears should be charmed with the music of that far land, from which they had obtained the special spice, or oil.

So the Old Necromancer tries to hold his position at Court, the mimes act their appointed parts, and the Troubadour looks languishingly upon the Light of his Life, and does his best to win her thus, beneath his humble disguise.

And the end of it all is, that each gains

his heart's desire. The Perfumer accomplishes his aim, and gives the Little Princess the finest, most alluring perfume yet produced—and—because he was a Necromancer too, there was MAGIC in it!

And the Knight, who had been but a singing troubadour to gain his love, won the lovely and beautiful Princess!

And She, because of the Magic in each bottle, was happy as could be!

And everyone who has perfumes such as these will be happy indeed, and will become to every Knight, who meets her, a lovely, loved Princess.

So, FRANGIPANI, from Hawaii!

What a wealth of Romance rests in that double word! One can almost see the picture of a drive along a white sand beach, bordered with the glowing blooms of the Royal Poinciana, and the Frangipani, their flaming tops held aloft like torches, against the impenetrable turquoise of a tropic sky!

With the seductive wail of steel guitars, the gorgeously modulated harmony of singing, love-loving, care-free Kanakas—the wistful wailing of a distant flute, and, beneath all, the constant, recurrent, heart-breaking throb of tom-toms, and the swish of surf against silver sands!

SPICES from the Isle of Pines!

All the poignant lure of the bitter-sweet that is seductive, yet strangely bitter—such as CHYPRE, that pungent smell of the ever-green tree, that carries with it, incorporate with its sweetness, curious charm!

The melancholy romance of lost things  
—the unattainable—the Holy Grail—the  
Gold at the end of the Rainbow—the Mi-  
rage in the Desert Waste!

SANDALWOOD!

From Mongolia, Thibet, with yellow-  
robed priests, mystery, occult knowledge,  
and fantastic happenings!

FLOWER ATTARS!

Gay, like the sunlit fields of France,  
where they are grown—purple fields of  
Parma violets, that rest like a blanket upon  
the breast of nature!

ROSE from Samarkand!

The land called the Golden Rose, the  
Rose of Iran, like the lips of the Light of  
the World, the Desired of the Heart—soft  
as the kiss of a child, clinging as a lover's  
farewell!

GARDENIA!

Bringing with its waxen, heavy, exotic  
perfume, all the lure of the unknown—the  
silent, white charm of the woman with mag-  
nolia petal skin—the scarlet lips, and the  
slow soft speech of the warm and passionate  
South!

AMBER!

That seems always to hold within its  
subtle fragrance the very mystery of Love  
itself!

## JASMINE!

Poignantly sweet, like a soft-clinging woman, who wishes only to be loved, protected! Star shaped! Honey-sweet! Lure of the East, and High-walled gardens!

## AMBERGRIS!

From Zanzibar! The name itself as sweet as a rare perfume, as lingering and soft a sound upon the ears, as is aroma to the senses!

## CLOVES of LOVE!

The lover's necklace beads—the very spice of Love itself, from the Island of Ceylon.

AND, last of all—a base for all of these—  
MUSK!

That pungent scent, which maddens the musk deer, until at last he falls, weary unto death with his race against the wind, which brings, ever-recurrently, the enticing fragrance of musk upon the breeze—and there, as he falls, worn out with his long and fruitless chase, he bows his kingly head, licking his breast to try to ease the pain—and there—he finds upon his own breast, the treasure, the perfume, he has gone so far afield to seek.

*(MUSIC HEARD IN DISTANCE.)*

But listen! Can you hear the thrum of steel guitars? Can you catch the subtle scent of Frangipani? Can you see, in your mind's eye, the glory of flaming scarlet Poinsettia?

The sound of curling waters on coral reefs! Listen! Listen!

*(And the voice of the announcer dies away, as the music of Hawaii glides into the opening lines of the sketch.)*

### CLOSING ANNOUNCEMENT.

ANNOUNCER. So you have heard how FRANGIPANI was brought from afar to please the Little Princess.

Next week you will hear of other adventures in strange lands, where many other flowers were found, and now are brought together in the making of one of the perfumes that are to please your fastidious taste, Madame.

The lilt of liquid Malay tunes,  
 Azure tropic skies,  
 The warmth of sunlight on sand dunes,  
 Laughter in dark eyes.  
 From distant lands these magics come,  
 Where love and fragrance meet,  
 The lute and zither's gentle strum  
 Is stilled by desert heat.

From many a visioned, unknown land,  
 A mystic world afar,  
 Mongolia, Thibet, Samarkand,  
 And fabled Zanzibar.

*(The first verses of this poem will be changed each program, the last stanza only remaining as a signature.)*

Such a program is drenched in *perfume*—and yet there is not one word of commercialism that could offend the severest critic.

The cumulative effect of listening to a series of such programs would be a lasting thought of perfume, with interest stimulated in the latest creation.

It is difficult to lay down any hard and fast rule as to the amount of time which should be allowed for the commercial credit, but in several of the leading sponsored quarter-hour programs as much as five minutes, or one-third of the whole, is devoted to theme music and sales talk. This is out of all reasonable proportion—three minutes in a fifteen minute program, and five in one of a half-hour duration, being, in our opinion, more than sufficient.

Boake Carter over the Columbia network achieves something worth while in advertising. The listener does not know when he is news reporting and when he is plugging his product, with such nice feeling and evident sincerity does he work.

Where the sales talk is a thing apart from the program, and the entertainment requires special announcements, or a narrator in a dramatic script, then there should be two announcing voices, of different qualities, so that listeners can immediately detect which is which.

Remember always that the Sincerity of Truth, the Stimulant of Laughter, or the Dream of Charm will hold the attention and win the hearts of most men and women.

## CHAPTER III

### HOW MUSIC AIDS THE WRITER

AS this part of the book is intended for the guidance of writers, it is proper that we should give an insight into the conditions prevailing in the radio studios, so that writers may know what devices may be employed to help the spoken word.

Most important of all is the musical background. This is commonly used, when in connection with announcements, first as a musical signature to forecast the broadcast, and later as a background for the announcer.

If a full day of broadcasting is looked upon as an endless vaudeville or music-hall entertainment, it is not unreasonable to expect each act to be heralded by its own particular theme music, as is generally done in the vaudeville houses.

Theme music is an accepted custom in most forms of theatrical entertainment, and all operas and musical comedies have their own overtures, while legitimate plays are usually more popular when an orchestra is employed to establish 'mood' or 'atmosphere' prior to the rise of the curtain.

The regular theatre patron would not have to look at

his program to know who the next artist was to be if he were to hear, let us say, "You Ain't Heard Nothing Yet," or, "Mammy, Mammy!" blared by the brass and wailed by the saxophones. He would know that Al Jolson would caper down to the footlights, and hold his audience by the sheer force of his artistry, and the vigor and sincerity of his personality.

Just as, in the old country, a man with a red flag preceded a steam roller, so "Some of These Days" would herald the entrance of beloved Sophie Tucker, the last of the Red Hot Mammams!

In radio, however, musical introduction is more than that. Its value cannot be overestimated by program builders. The writer should never overlook the all-important part that *time* plays in a radio program, and music, both theme and incidental, is of the utmost value and importance in this connection.

Many a motorist has been bawled out for not speeding up, when there is traffic congestion and the furious cop is wanting to clear the road. It is the same in radio. The radio cop would welcome a studio full of budding Floyd Gibbonses, rather than that a show would not come off on time! As the actors get slower and slower, the producer would like to yell his rage and disappointment, but as the 'mike' is on, he cannot! It is a wonder that whole tribes of Indians, proficient in sign language, have not crashed the studios! Quiet signs of command would be far more

intelligible to any artist than the frantic gesticulations of production directors, when the last scene, scheduled to play for three minutes, starts with only thirty seconds to go!

In the theatre you pay your money to see the performance, and if the audience holds up the show with applause, the time of performance will be accordingly increased. In fact, the audience becomes an integral part of the show, and the actors are helped or hindered by the reaction of the audience, *which they can see*. But in radio there is no audience reaction to affect the actual time of playing a scene, and the variations result only from the human element of the artists concerned. One actor is cool and collected, and another is highly excitable, so that very rarely does a play time exactly the same as at rehearsal.

In the old days of radio there was always a studio pianist on hand to fill in any gaps that might occur, but it is better to have special music for each program, in keeping with it, which can be curtailed, lengthened, or 'faded,' to meet the immediate requirements in the studio at a moment's notice.

We have known a case of a thirty-minute program that was timed incorrectly, and finished about four minutes too soon. The announcer was left high and dry, to carry on as best he might. Poor announcer! Poor public! Poor program!

The use of the musical signature, or theme song, is not only of value to the writer, giving him some leeway in the length of his scripts, but also to the sponsor. This is because, in time, the musical signature becomes as closely associated with the product by sound as the trade name by sight. This is good advertising. It establishes the product without mentioning it. Examples of this are the Amos 'n' Andy signature, and the Rudy Vallée theme song. The use of this musical device is just as legitimate, from the artistic standpoint, as the theme music used by any well known vaudevillian to herald his entrance.

So much for the musical signature, as such. But writers are more concerned with music as a background to the spoken word, and so the following question presents itself.

Will the average listener respond more readily to a commercial talk—or a straight announcement—with music than he will without music?

There is so much difference of opinion on this question that we are forced to discuss it at some length. Most high pressure salesmen, talking directly to a prospective purchaser, would agree that a background of music would cramp their style! Commercial credits on the air, however, should never be high-pressure selling talks. Radio advertising should not be built to overcome sales resistance. Radio should be part of a general publicity campaign, rather than a method of direct selling, though there are exceptions. Nevertheless radio can be, and is, used to

give the public definite information, not only about the product, but often about sales policy. Therefore, from the point of view of the sponsor—which the writer should always consider—unless the background of music helps it should not be used.

Music on the air is comparable to scenery on the stage, but a good speaker would rather be in front of the curtain than on a full stage set, because there would be no scenery to distract the attention of his hearers. If the eye is so intrigued that it wanders to the falling petals of a flowering cherry tree, or to the golden, thought-stealing glow of the moon, or to any other picturesque or romantic background that does not assist and form a perfect setting for the jewel of words, then, instead of the setting assisting the speaker, the speaker will have to buck the background. A little shame-facedly we are forced to admit that soft music is provided for most commercial announcements, as oil on troubled waters. The advertising man asks hopefully, “Do you think they will listen to our catalog, if we can enthrall them with the strain of Home Sweet Home?”

And the answer is, that they may *hear* what is said, but they won't take the trouble to *listen* to it! There is a great deal of difference between *hearing* a thing, and *listening* to it!

The very word ‘listen’ suggests stopping in one's tracks to concentrate on the sound, and of the countless millions

who have *heard* the Sermon on the Mount, only a small percentage have *listened* to it.

Generally speaking, we would say that the use of the musical background helps the mediocre announcer but hinders the fine commercial announcer, who, with the conviction of sincerity, the whimsicality of humor, or the insinuation of charm, can give his message more efficiently unaided by any device whatsoever.

Where definite color is wanted as a background to words of sheer beauty—words, indeed, that have been written almost as a song, and which would be incomplete without the music—then there is no question that the musical background greatly aids the spoken word.

Many commercial announcements could be written so that the use of music would help them, but, as a rule, there is no thought of selecting special music for special words. In a haphazard way, the deciding vote is for music, but as to *what* music—well, whatever they happen to be playing at the time!

When an announcer has a voice of molten gold, like David Ross, to hear the opening poem to *Arabesque* is a joy to nearly everyone. The combination of a glorious voice and the exquisite music behind it has made radio history.

However, writers should not depend too much upon a voice to help them out. It is true that the poems of Swinburne and Walter de la Mare are popular because of

the sheer sound of the words. But, each to his own public, Walt Whitman, Eddie Guest, and Kipling are more popular on the radio.

In any case, the setting of atmosphere, as done by David Ross in *Arabesque*, hardly comes into the category of announcements. Rather is it an integral part of a dramatic show, and leads us into the wider subjects of music and drama.

If we turn back to the days of the old-fashioned melodrama, we know what a vital part the soft music of violins played in the building of a love scene, or the musical 'hurry' in denoting the approach of the villain! This theatrical device, at one time in such universal use, lost ground when realism became the key-note of the theatre. But the talkies have been quick to make use of this age-old trick, with a fair measure of success. In radio, the use of suitable music is of even greater importance than on either the screen or stage.

Where the eyes are blind, does not the thrum of steel guitars picture a background almost as vividly as scenery could do? And where the voice is cleverly interwoven into a setting of melody, the listener can close his eyes and see, with the clarity of his own imagination, all that the author would paint. The choice of music is so important that the writer who is not familiar with many scores should consult an experienced musical director in order to ensure that the right music is employed in the right place.

In some cases it is better to have special music written—the reason being that a well known tune will revive different memories and bring different pictures to thousands of listeners, who may associate the tune with some episode in their own lives.

Authors should not accept unsuitable background music for their radio writing. Just because the client wants a jazz band in the program is no reason why that jazz band should be used to play the incidental music to a lovers' farewell!

In most cases a string quartette is able to give all the support that is necessary, and with such a combination there is less likelihood of the music drowning out the voices than there is with a hot dance band trying to play softly.

Never forget that in radio, whenever background music is required, it should be used with the utmost discretion, and after serious consideration as to the right music. It can be as important as the dress that a stage star wears—and how important *that* is, only the star and the designer of the dress know!

What is *heard* is all-important in broadcasting, just because nothing is ever seen. On the stage a line may be spoken, and its meaning modified by some movement, or change of facial expression that the actor may make. In radio there is no such aid to amplify what is said. That is why the use of the musical background is so much abused.

It receives far less consideration than ever it would in the theatre, and yet it is relatively more important on the air.

If the author's script calls for music, the author should insist on the right music, and the right playing of it.

If it is too loud, the spoken word will not be heard clearly, and if it is too soft, listeners may not associate it with the play at all, but may imagine that their radio set is picking up some other station, one that is interfering with the program.

It must be remembered that radio audiences are the most fickle and difficult in the world. They can walk out on you at any time, without your knowing it! Too much trouble and care cannot be taken in the selection of incidental music, for the reason that every device to aid the spoken word in radio must necessarily be *sound* in one form or another, and if not correctly used will hinder rather than help.

Music is a great help at the end of a scene, when the sound of the orchestra replaces the falling of the curtain in the theatre.

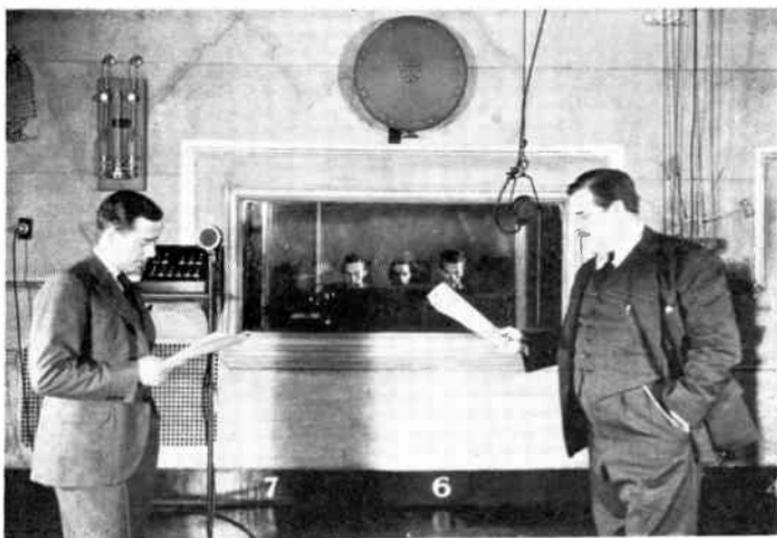
If there is a narrator to set the mood or the locale of the ensuing scene, the music may be continued softly, or faded out altogether. This is a matter of production. Good music, used to bridge from one scene into the next, or to bring the curtain down on a climax, is the greatest possible aid in lifting a fine dramatic show to the height of perfection.



*The March of Time*



*From control room into studio*



*From studio into control room*

## CHAPTER IV

### RADIO DRAMA

**W**HAT is Radio Drama? Why and how does it differ from that of the stage?

In radio, as in the graphic arts, the artist must be able not only to visualize perfectly what he wishes to portray, but, further than that, he must be able to project it so clearly that there can be no two minds about it.

On the air you cannot label a word picture, as children do their infantile efforts, for instance—*This is a cow!* That fact must be self-evident, or it is of no value to the great audience who listen in and sightlessly see the pictures, which the ability of the writer and the portrayal of the actor bring before the eye of the mind.

A true writer for the air, or for any other medium, must, first of all, have something to say, and then be able to paint a picture in words so clear that "he who runs may read," and he who hears may see.

This may sound easy, but it is not. It takes knowledge, patience, artistry, and an infinite capacity for taking pains—and even more than that, it takes that strange quality of being able to place yourself in the shoes of your listening audience—to forget yourself—only to be a means of

bringing laughter, thrills, or tears, to those others—to re-create for them some adventure that they have known, or have dreamed of knowing—to give them some beauty of Romance that they have lost, or have never known.

It might be well for the writer to take as his guide the saying of an old Indian woman, when her son (now a famous and much sought-after writer and performer here in America) left India to start out upon his first adventure into the strange and unknown occidental lands. This son asked his mother for some word of advice or counsel to help him on his journey. The old woman quietly answered, "Remember, my son, that to know anything you must be able to read with the eyes of your heart as well as with the eyes of your mind."

Think it over—it means a very great deal. However, such advice applies to all workers in creative art. The problem before the embryo writer of radio plays, is to know how a radio play differs from a stage play.

The theatre appeals to people in the mass as much through the eye as the ear, but, as is obvious, the broadcast play appeals to people individually, and through the ear only.

The best critics often fail to prophesy correctly the fate of a play because as critics they are above the mob emotion, to which the greater number of the audience fall willing victims.

The radio is turned on so often as a background to con-

versation, or as the accompaniment to the reading of a book, that everyone will readily admit that it is a far less *active* means of entertainment than the theatre. In the first place, one has to pay for a theatre ticket; in the second place, one has to *go* to the theatre; and in the last place, one has no further choice if the play is not pleasing.

As a general rule, a theatrical situation of intense drama when transferred to the air is liable to raise a laugh unless handled with the greatest possible delicacy.

Most people will be inclined to mock at heroics, except when they are keyed up by reason either of circumstances or because of their emotional interest in what is happening. The radio can never present the illusion of the theatre. Similarly, most people will laugh at the tub-thumping orator, unless they happen to be of the crowd, and are swayed by the mob emotion.

Reception of a radio play does not depend only upon the efficiency of the loud speaker; it depends just as much upon the receptive mentality of the listeners. Where the orator may treat his mob as he would a child, the radio performer has to be just as direct, just as simple, but far more logical. 'Hooey' in radio drama will not last. The dramatist must know the psychology both of the characters he is portraying, and the audience he is entertaining. The radio play has no embellishments; there are no lights, no scenery, no costumes—nothing but the play, stripped of all its finery.

Because of this, the playwright must take every precaution against listeners being unable to know, *at once*, which character is speaking; contrast between characters must be more extreme than on the stage, because of possible confusion of voices. The characters should address each other by name far more often than they would in everyday life—and violence, as a rule, should be replaced by intensity.

Writers should unblushingly give each character mannerisms of speech, so that each will be known by his vocal 'trade mark'—which may be a special laugh.

Important points of plot should be repeated with more frequency and emphasis than would be wise on the stage. The reason for this is obvious: not only are salient points heard only once difficult to catch, but there are so many things on the air liable to disturb the listener: a faulty set—static—an error on the part of the artist—an outside interruption in the home—so that one line is generally insufficient to set a point of vital importance to the plot.

Language should be very simple, and all motive should be more philosophically sound than is always necessary in the theatre.

Theatrical impulse is strangely believable; the most hardened playgoer can be made to accept as real some action of incredible folly, whereas on the air the same action would only cause ridicule. This does not mean that situations of intense drama are impossible in radio—on the contrary—but it does mean that they must be handled in a

less theatrical and a more *real* way. In the words of the profession, scenes must be written down rather than up. The reason for this is not only because of the intimacy of the cast with their audience, through the medium of the loudspeaker in the homes, but also because of the mechanical limitations of the microphone itself.

If the artist in the radio studio recedes from the microphone during speech, the listener receives the impression of movement, as if the actor were crossing the stage, or leaving the room. It follows, therefore, that if a girl has to scream, when the villain clutches her by the throat, and she moves far away for fear of blasting, then it will sound as if she has moved a considerable distance away, and the drama of the scene will be impaired. Such a scene must be worked by the villain gradually forcing her away, and himself moving with her, so that his level at the moment of giving her the cue to scream does not necessitate any further movement on her part. His voice will be raised as he recedes from the microphone, and such movement must be made reasonable by the way in which the scene is written.

If a scene requires a climax of considerable physical force that cannot be replaced by intensity of expression, then the scene must move back during the crescendo, or else the climax is likely to be cut off by the engineer.

Here, by the way, a word for the engineer—he can be as helpful to the author of a radio script as the stage man-

ager of a theatre can be to the playwright. He can make or mar any program. He is more important than the electrician in the theatre, because if the limelight fails to catch the star on her entrance, the star herself will not be blamed. The audience would be very conscious of the fact that somebody other than the star was bungling badly.

In radio, listeners are immediately conscious only of the artist, and what he says; they cannot, without inside knowledge, picture the studio production man, the control room engineer, and all the mechanical adventures through which the program has to pass, before it arrives in the loud speaker.

Authors would be advised to insist upon the engineer's having a copy of the script before every performance, and before every audition, not only because by knowing the show intimately he will be more able to assist intelligently, but because during the performance he cannot take his eye off the instrument which indicates the volume of sound passing through the microphone. As a class, the engineers in radio are the most conscientious and painstaking in the whole industry—and we say this advisedly, after many years in radio on both sides of the Atlantic.

Drama on the air comes under several headings, many of which we need mention only briefly.

*Two-in-hands, and One-Man Shows.*

Under these categories come such acts as Amos 'n' Andy, The Stebbins Boys, and Phil Cook—and countless others of varying degrees of popularity.

The success of this type of dramatic program depends upon its human appeal, and the contrasting of different types of people. It is best that the character types chosen for presentation should have their parallels in real life, be easily recognizable, and therefore acceptable to most listeners.

Less successful are the comic back-chat acts that were the rage on the vaudeville stage at one time. These depended so much upon the exaggeratedly silly appearance, or the queer antics of the characters concerned, that we wonder why anybody should 'hear' them as radio material—and they were certainly not true to life. Their visual absurdity was a large factor in their success.

In our opinion there is room for more two-in-hand acts between a man and a woman—and if the writing is clever, the 'stage' can be peopled by inference, rather than by writing in extra characters, or having your principals 'double,' and play several parts.

The playing of all the parts by a man like Phil Cook, probably the greatest living master of microphone technique, is a personal 'stunt'—like that of the old-time Protean actor. There is no value in writing scripts of this

sort except when the writer is definitely commissioned to do so by the performer concerned.

The foregoing does not hold good for the Two-in-hands, which, although not easily marketable, are a popular form of entertainment. The reason that the marketing is hard, is because it is very difficult, even for the most experienced play-reader, to 'hear' a Two-in-hand as easily as he can hear a play with a larger cast, by just reading it.

Variation of dramatic situation is so very limited that the reader will not pass on a Two-in-hand script until it has been heard over the microphone.

Casting and performance, in this case, is a matter of very great importance to the author.

Playlets of this description should always be built on a basis of friendship or love between the two characters concerned. No matter how they may bicker and quarrel, the audience should feel that there is a very human link of kindness between them. However tragic the results of the dramatic action may be, there should never be any real villainy of motive.

Radio, unfortunately, has very little use for single performances; there must be continuity of thought and action, carrying one program on to the next. Therefore, when submitting a script, authors should not forget to include a synopsis, showing how the interest will grow. Look ahead to a cumulative audience, and remember that it takes a

considerable time before a series of programs can establish itself throughout the country, or throughout the district covered, in the case of a local broadcast.

This means that the continuity of action must be slight, so that a short résumé can be given before each program, sufficient to tell new listeners what has gone before, without boring the regular audience, who, of course, know all about it. Each show should be a complete show in itself. It is better for the interest to lie in the characters rather than in the plot. This is not a hard and fast rule, but merely a guide to prevent writers from trying to adapt the technique of a newspaper serial to Two-in-hand radio sketches.

From the viewpoint of technique, but not necessarily content, the Two-in-hand is comparable to the newspaper strip, the climax of which is complete in each issue.

### *Melodrama.*

This is the radio version of the extravagant newspaper serial. There should be a climax at the end of every program, as at the end of every instalment in the paper, and an emphasis on plot. Literary value is of secondary consideration, and situations can be strained to the breaking point of credulity, provided the actors play it as if they meant it all. The script can be broken frequently with scenes played at different levels: shouts in the distance—the heroine's pitiful call for help (in the distance)

—the villain's laugh (also in the distance)—the hero's whispered prayer (very close to the 'mike')—sound effects galore—beating of gongs in the Eastern Temple—the war whoops of Indians—the whirr of the hero's aeroplane engine, as he sweeps down to the rescue of his loved one!

These sensational thrillers are very popular, but they require ingenuity of plot if they are to be sold. The situations themselves, although not necessarily impossible, are usually quite unreal, and the listener's attention must be kept up by the plot's breath-taking suspense.

The most important point to be remembered in all radio drama is to reduce the number of voices to an absolute minimum. The fewer the number of speaking characters in a scene, compatible with the drama of the situation, the better. If the support of numbers of people is needed, it should be suggested by a background of voices, rather than with a number of individual lines to be spoken by different characters.

In melodrama, however, there is but little finesse required, its success being dependent almost entirely upon intense emotion, sudden thrills, plenty of action, and a highly improbable, though not impossible, plot.

*Plays with literary value.*

There is no need in this book to go at length into different theories on drama in general, but merely to point

out the 'nice' points of writing for radio that may not be generally understood.

Remember that on the air, it is not possible for a character to show his reactions in silence, as he can on the stage. His face is not visible while he is listening to the argument that is being put to him; he cannot show either approval or disapproval—he can only voice it. On the stage the actor is able to convey, by gesture or facial expression, his unspoken meaning. On the air the spoken words themselves and the inflection of the actor's voice must convey the full meaning and the nuances the author intends. The author must make the meaning of the lines in his script unmistakably clear, so that the actor will be able to choose the right inflection. In radio there is less rehearsal—less atmosphere—less support in many ways, than there is in the theatre.

Let us take a concrete example. A character in a play is sitting reading to himself, while a scene is in progress, of which he is taking no apparent notice. One of the participants in this scene suddenly moves toward the door to make his exit. The man who is reading drops his book, and in a tone of great surprise says, "Are you going out?"—implying (by tone of voice) that the other's going out was the last thing in the world he had expected.

This simple sentence of four words can be made, by logical inflection, to mean entirely different things. Thus:

ARE you going out?—Implying: Do you intend to do it?

Are you going out?—Implying: And not the other fellow.

Are you GOING out?—Implying: I thought you had not intended to.

Are you going OUT?—Implying—Or only into the next room.

With emotional inflection many other meanings can be conveyed, but what we wish to emphasize is the importance to the radio writer of so wording the line that, without the time for the intensive study that the script would receive for the stage, the actor cannot miss the meaning the author wishes his character to convey to the listening audience. Therefore, if the meaning of the line is, "Are you GOING out?"—then the line should be amplified into, "Are you going out, after all?"—or words to that effect.

Most actors are very good at emotionalism, but very poor on logic, which is one of the reasons why a stage play requires so much rehearsal, even after the cast is word perfect.

Many actors find it much harder to read a part in the radio studio than they would to play it, when they have learned the lines; that is why radio scripts, from the point of view of logic, should be almost actor proof. If the lines speak for themselves, then there is more opportunity for the actor to put all the necessary emotion into them. But if the meaning of the words is even slightly

obscure, then, with the limited time in the studio at the disposal of all concerned, the performance will suffer. Wherever there is any likelihood of lack of clarity of meaning, the author should not hesitate to use a qualifying phrase. For example, the dubious "No" should be amplified, into "No, I don't think so," or whatever suits the script. This serves the dual purpose of making the intended meaning very clear, and also giving the prose rhythm a more definite beat.

This prose rhythm is of great importance on the air; the additional words of the qualifying clause supply the rhythm to the spoken line that would be taken care of on the stage by some physical movement of the body, or expression of the face.

It must always be remembered that there is no stage business on the air—everything must be suggested verbally.

It may be of interest to the readers to know that one of the writers of this book (Miss Erskine) brought an experience to the radio writing field that was of inestimable value. Some years ago she wrote and produced plays for the entertainment of the blind in the institutes of California. It is obvious that the method employed for play-writing for the blind and writing for the radio is very much the same. For example, the setting of the stage is described to the blind audience, so that they have a clear mental picture of the scene, which they cannot see. The

stage is set—the scene a comedy love scene, between a pretty girl and her shy lover.

There is a sofa in front of the fire place. On the stage it would be far funnier mimed than spoken. The lover would shyly place a single chair for her to sit on. She would look askance, sit down on the sofa, and then pat the place softly beside her, and look up at him. He would ‘act shy,’ then sit on the extreme end of it from her—and so on. For the blind, however, the scene would be worked something like this:

HE

Won't you have this chair?

SHE

No thanks. I'll sit on the sofa—over here by the fire. It's more cozy.

HE (stammering)

Oh, I—I—I thought that—er—er—

SHE

Won't you sit down, too?

HE

Thank you.

SHE

No. Not way over there—come and sit here on the sofa by me.

HE

Thank you. (pause) Thank you—you're very kind.

SHE

I wouldn't be kind if I let you sit perched on the edge like that.

HE

Oh—er—er—oh!

SHE

Do lean back. Here's a nice fat pillow near me for you to lean against. (sighs) There— isn't that better?

There is sufficient here to show what is meant. These lines not only move the actors about the stage, but suggest their facial expression and attitude at the same time. This is an example of the translation of mime work into dialogue.

Let us consider another scene in which there is a door back stage opening onto the street, and a French window down right, leading into the garden. A small boy, who has been repeatedly told not to make the steps of the French window dirty with his boots, but to use the front door, enters the room hurriedly, through the window, to discover his irate nurse waiting for him. On the stage her short caustic remark might be:

Why did you come in THAT way??

But for the blind, a qualifying clause would tell what was visible to seeing eyes. Thus:

Why did you come in by the window, when you could see that the door was open?

Or again, take a scene in which a girl is overcome with

gratitude for some act that a man has just done. She goes to him, falls on one knee, and kisses his hand. On the stage proper his line might be:

You mustn't do that.

For the blind, however, the qualifying line would be necessary. The line would have to read:

You mustn't do that! You mustn't kiss MY hand!

These two examples are simple enough to explain the principles that must be employed in all dramatic writing for radio, whether in original work, or in adaptations from plays or stories. Similarly, characters must be set by the lines they speak, and the way they speak them, very much more quickly than would be good theatre. The reason for this is the all-pervading time factor. Sometimes a whole first act on the stage lasting some twenty minutes, is utilized in 'setting' the characters, before the actual drama is really under way.

In radio, with a very few exceptions, a half hour is the duration of an entire dramatic program, which has to include Commercial Credits, the Narrator's announcements, and musical breaks. At the most twenty-five minutes of actual script would be possible, and the whole action of the play, as well as the introduction and setting of the characters, must be done during that period of time.

But drama, though very few people have realized it, has opportunities on the air that are denied to it by both

stage and screen. Suspense, so all-important in the building of any dramatic program, can be obtained in certain ways in radio which are not possible in any other medium. For where you can hear and not see, your suspense can be built directly and not by implication, for one element of mystery is supplied by the inability to see. An elementary example of this is a three-in-hand scene between—let us say—two men and a woman. There is a quarrel between the two men, which culminates in a single shot and a scream from the woman. Here is a situation peculiar to radio drama. Actually, many things may have happened. Either of the two men may have shot each other, or either of the two men may have shot the woman, or the woman may have shot either of the two men—or any one of them may have shot him or herself—or some outsider may have entered and shot them all up—and, incidentally, no one may have been hit. All that the listener can surmise is that a quarrel has culminated in some result which must have a direct bearing on the future of the characters concerned. So the author can easily build suspense by withholding the key to the situation, and yet provide tense drama for his listeners. It is obvious that such a situation could not be done on either the stage or the screen, except with the aid of the done-to-death black-out. Serious-minded writers would do well to develop this idea, not only for tragedy but also for comedy and farce. It is our opinion that the public is not only getting more and more

critical of radio entertainment, but their auditory sense has become so accustomed to following radio plays that they would readily respond to the development of this idea.

Every dramatist in his mind's eye peoples his stage while he is writing. The writer for radio must to an extent forget his stage and listen only to the words as if the lights had failed in the theatre. The darkened stage is an old theatrical device. Many thrilling plays have been based on a murder in the dark. On the air, however, this is not possible. In England L. du Garde Peach has had plays on, before which listeners are asked to switch off all lights to enjoy fully the entertainment.

The use of the musical background is far more criticized on the air than it is on the stage, which goes to show that in radio situations and the handling of them must be made more real and less theatrical than would be allowable in the theatre. There should always be some logical reason for any music that may come into the script. Throwing music into a scene merely to 'help' it, with the idea that the public demands music of some sort, usually invites severe criticism.

With the exception of the Radio Guild's dramatic performances, the duration of which is a full hour, plays are usually of a half-hour or a quarter of an hour's duration. This time factor presents many difficulties to writers who have hitherto been unused to such rigid discipline.

Many a playwright has argued that it is impossible to set characters and have the full action of any play all within the space of fifteen minutes. But it can be done. The method employed should be very direct, very clear, without leaving any uncertainty in the mind of a listener as to what the character who is speaking really means. Because of the fact that none of the characters are ever seen, the dramatic effect of inference is far stronger than in the theatre. It is thus possible to people the stage by having the few characters who are actually in the sketch talk about others who never speak. This requires careful writing, but the author need not fear that it cannot be done successfully. The fewer characters that speak in a radio play the better. It has been found that when stage plays with many characters have been put on the air, such as Joan of Arc, so many voices speaking in one scene are confusing to the listener. Joan of Arc is a good example to take, because in the trial scene she has not one accuser, but many. The expression of many shades of opinion, effective as it is on the stage, where the peculiarities of the various personalities are in evidence, is lost on the air. Two voices against her and one in her favor would be quite sufficient, provided that there was a general background of discussion when some startling statement is made by Joan. Such a device would give very clearly the impression of numbers of people against Joan, but it is absolutely impossible by using seven or eight different

voices to understand the why and wherefore of it all. Simplicity should be the keynote, and it is almost impossible to get seven or eight men's voices, each speaking short sentences, that can be immediately distinguished one from the other. Extreme voice contrast is essential to the understanding of a radio play, and this can be aided to a great extent by the author's exaggerating this contrast by the individual manner of speaking, and the choice of words which each character uses.

## CHAPTER V

### EXAMPLES OF RADIO DRAMA

**W**HEN submitting manuscripts of any sort, whether plays, stories, novels, or radio scripts, the question of set-up is almost as important as the set-up of a published novel. Professional readers are just as human as the public which buys a book, and if they have to decipher an almost illegible and untidy copy, they are likely to be very prejudiced against the content. The tyro will often give himself away, when submitting a play, by showing in the set-up itself that he or she is a novice.

All typing should be double spaced, with double double spacing between the speeches of different characters.

The names of the characters speaking should either stand out clearly in a wide margin on the left of the page, or should be centred and underlined between each speech. It is better that these names should be in capitals.

Stage directions, sound effects, or remarks for the personal guidance of the actors, should be in brackets, and underlined.

As a rule the actors prefer the names of the speaking characters to be in the margin at the left of the page, because they can run a line under the name directly to the

first word of each speech, which makes it very easy to follow.

The use of dashes as punctuation helps the actor. It gives him an opportunity to characterize his part, and make full use of the pause.

The first, A DUET OF ROMANCE, is a Two-in-hand, built to feature two singers, one a man and one a woman, and to provide orchestral entertainment as well.

It is a quarter of an hour program, and is the first of a series which can be carried on *ad infinitum*, and can be readily adapted to the two featured artists. For example, although this script calls for a tenor and a soprano, there would be no objection to a baritone and a contralto.

Actually it was written for a well known French tenor, who has now returned to Europe, but in the radio field it is always advisable for writers to bear in mind that a radio script is a piece of property that should sell on its own merits, and not be dependent upon the availability of one particular singer.

Students should note that although only the two characters are heard throughout, nevertheless many others come onto the stage, and are suggested by inference.

The title page should always carry the name and address of the author, and a statement that the script is offered *for one broadcast only*, and that all other rights remain vested in the author.

## A DUET OF ROMANCE.

by

GLADYS SHAW ERSKINE.

## DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

AMOURETTE. Young soprano—warm gay speaking voice  
—Southern accent.

PIERRE. Operatic tenor—young, exuberant, vital  
—French accent.

ANNOUNCER. Imagine yourselves in the brilliantly  
lighted high-ceilinged salon of a stately  
southern mansion in Old New Orleans.

Through the open French doors comes  
the haunting fragrance of night-blooming  
jasmine, drifting in upon a cool little breeze  
from the bayou.

A ball and musicale are in progress as we  
enter.

*(The last chorus of a dance swells up a  
little, and Amourette hums and sings  
snatches of it, until the finish.)*

AMOURETTE. *(Hums.)* mm—mm—mm— *(sings softly)*  
—I love you—I love you—mm—mm—mm.  
*(Speaks to her partner)* No, Gates, don't  
be silly—those are just the words to the  
song. *(Sings again.)* I love you, I love you,  
I do. *(Speaks.)* Gates! Don't hold me so  
close.—Why, of co'se I love you, honey—  
I always have, evah since we were little.—  
*(Hums again till finish of number, when  
there is general applause.)*  
Oh! I just love to dance. *(Pause.)* What's  
that? *(Pause.)* Oh, please—I'd much rather

dance. (*Pause.*) Thank you kindly, I'd love to sing for you all, but please let's dance. (*Pause.*) Oh! all right, what shall I sing?

*(The orchestra leader calls out the name of the song.)*

That old thing! But I've done it so many times, you all must know it by heart. (*Pause.*) Well, I'll just play my own accompaniment, then.

*(Song with piano, by Amourette, then applause.)*

Thank you all—you're awfully sweet. I should think you'd get so tired, hearing me sing Sunday mo'nings in Church, you wouldn't want me to sing at a lovely party like this. Let's dance, may we, Miss Lucy? (*Pause.*) What? Another song? Well, just a teeny weeny one!

*(She plays a rippling chord on the piano, then stops suddenly, and gasps.)*

Oh! Please, Miss Lucy, not now—heah comes your guest of honor, the famous French singer. Oh! I couldn't sing before him, I'd just die of shame! Why, he's sung all over Europe, before Royalty an' all. Hush, heah he comes.

PIERRE. (*Fading in.*) Ah, madame, it is so charming of you to ask me to your home—the charm of hospitality I find everywhere in this America of yours. Ah! Mademoiselle, I kiss your hand. (*Pause.*) Did I not hear you singing but now, as I came through the hall?

- AMOURETTE. No, no—no! I wasn't singing—you see I don't sing, not really, I mean—not what *you* would call singing.
- PIERRE. What do you mean, what *I* call singing? Is not singing the same to all peoples, in any language? For is not music and melody the same in any country? *Mais oui!* A song without words—that speaks to the heart?
- AMOURETTE. Yes—but the heart must be able to understand.
- PIERRE. *Mais non, Mademoiselle!* Everyone has the heart, and so, *voilà!* everyone understands when the music speaks. But come, surely Mademoiselle must know that—for did I not hear the most charming Miss Lucy call you Amourette? That is a French name. Is then Mademoiselle French?
- AMOURETTE. Most of the old Louisiana families are of French descent, but we're all *Americans*, suh.
- PIERRE. But, of course, I know that you are Americans—that is one of the most charming things about America. (*Both laugh.*) And, Mademoiselle, may I say that you are one of the most charming examples, or shall I say exhibits, of your country, that I have the so great honor to meet?
- AMOURETTE. Perhaps you say that, M'sieur, because we are, after all, Creole—of French extraction.
- PIERRE. *Mais non*—you do me an injustice.—It is the American of the America that I like so greatly.
- AMOURETTE. Then I'm so glad.—You'll like Gates, I'm suah. He's real American.
- PIERRE. He?

- AMOURETTE. Yes. He's a sort of beau of mine.
- PIERRE. A beau? What is that over here—a beau?
- AMOURETTE. I mean, I've always known him. He's always been around, you know, evah since we were little.
- PIERRE. Ah! *Oui*. I understand. It has been all arrange, by the parents. It is to be the marriage, *n'est-ce pas?*
- AMOURETTE. What do you mean? (*Mimics.*) All arrange by the parents? This is America, you know—and we arrange our own love affairs.
- PIERRE. Ah! *C'est vrai?* Is it true? That interest me *very* much, Mademoiselle. Very much—*more than you can know!*
- AMOURETTE. Heah comes our hostess, Miss Lucy. She's going to beg you to sing, I know. Oh! You will, won't you?
- PIERRE. If you ask me, Mademoiselle.
- AMOURETTE. Please do!
- PIERRE. Ah! Madame Lucy, it is like a poem to watch you but move across the room. (*Pause.*) Sing? Me? But of course! It is the pleasure—what you request becomes the command to me. *Voilà!* I sing!

(*He gives the name of the aria, and sings it with orchestra. General applause follows.*)

- AMOURETTE. Oh, that's lovely. I wish I could sing like that! I think I'd rather sing that way than anything else in the world!
- PIERRE. You think it is better even than love, Mademoiselle, eh?
- AMOURETTE. Yes. Better than anything.

PIERRE. Do you mean, Mademoiselle—let me understand you—do you mean you would leave all the beauty of these jasmine-perfumed moon-silvered nights? All the peace of your own friends around you? Your home? Your garden? Do you mean that to sing means more to you than all this?

AMOURETTE. Yes, I do! It's always been my dream. Oh! You don't know—you've always had it—the applause of the public, the cheers of people in the gallery! Oh, I've read of it all. I've devoured books on famous singers, I've followed their trials and their troubles, and I've thrilled with them in their successes. It must be wonderful to be a truly famous concert singer—a celebrity.

PIERRE. *Qui sait?* Who knows? One often wonders if the result is worth the price.

AMOURETTE. Gates thinks that the only thing worth while in life is a home, and peace—and love—and—children.

PIERRE. But who knows? Perhaps M'sieur Gates is right, and you are wrong. But only time and experience will tell that.—Shall we try to find out, Mademoiselle Amourette?

AMOURETTE. What do you mean? I don't believe I understand.

PIERRE. Oh, it is nothing so serious as to bring the trouble to your so pretty eyes. It is but the idea I have! *Alors!* Mademoiselle speaks French?

AMOURETTE. It would be right hard to find a real New Orleans family who did not.

PIERRE. Splendid—but of course! Come, we sing—together—now! Mademoiselle knows (*the name of duet.*)

AMOURETTE. A duet? Oh! I couldn't! Tell me your idea, please.

PIERRE. (*Laughs.*) Later, Mademoiselle. Later I will tell you the so great idea. But now—come—we sing!

*(The orchestra strikes up the duet number, and they sing. Applause follows. Then the announcer's voice.)*

ANNOUNCER. So Pierre and Amourette will meet and sing again, and we will then discover just what Pierre's idea was, and what Amourette is going to do about it. So tune in at this same hour next week, and follow the course of these song-birds in their Duet of Romance.

*(Musical signature fades in and up to finish.)*

The second example we are taking is a straight dramatic show, written around a family. The thread of continuity is less important in each program than a separate incident which becomes the high-light of each sketch.

Actually the *raison d'être* of this program is to create the confidence of the public in doctors, and it could, therefore, be very well used as a commercial program sponsored by a manufacturing chemical company, who would wish the doctors to prescribe their products. It is a combination of a series and a serial, and, in many ways, constitutes the most useful form of dramatic radio entertainment.



stories, has known the joys and sorrows of those with whom he has come in contact, intimately—and has always done what he thought best, whether as medicine for the body, advice for the mind, or strength for the spirit—and, always, to all his varied prescriptions are added in generous measure his own kindness of heart, wisdom of learning, and depth of understanding.

And so—on with our story—which concerns **YOUNG DOCTOR JIM**, following in his father's footsteps, but new and modern in all his methods;

**LETITIA**, the old doctor's spinster sister, who has helped raise his motherless son from infancy, and has ruled his home for thirty years with a hand of iron, a sharp tongue, and a gentle heart;

**THE JUDGE**, the old doctor's colored servant, who has been with him for fifty years;

*and*

**THE OLD DOCTOR** himself, whose dream through his many years of sacrifice and service has always been, when the silver hand of time has rested upon his head, to retire—and—

You see him sit

And scan

The race of man,

With understanding infinite.

*(Musical signature swells and ends.)*

LETITIA

I declare, it seems to me that menfolk get more and more careless every year. I pick up after these two all the time, and it seems to me the minute my back is turned they come in and throw something down.—Seems like they did it just to spite me. (*Calls.*) Judge! Judge, come here!

JUDGE

Yassum, Miss 'Titia—I'se comin'—I heahs yo!

LETITIA

Oh, there you are, Judge. I was just saying that I do believe that menfolk are getting more careless and untidy every single year that they live—if that could be possible.

JUDGE

I heared yo, Miss 'Titia, but I don't know as I agrees with yo.

LETITIA

What do you mean by that? Of course you would take their parts—that's natural.

JUDGE

It may be nat'rel and it may not, Miss 'Titia, but most always I'm takin' the part of someone. Seems like human folks is always needin' someone to do their thinkin' and their fightin' for them—don't it now?

LETITIA

Go along with you, you old fraud. You know perfectly well that you spoil both the old Doctor, and young Doctor Jim. And I do believe you spoil the old Doctor the most, if that is possible.

JUDGE

*(Chuckles.)* Wal, naw, Miss 'Titia—I reckon as how that's nat'rel—don't you?

LETITIA

Why should it be? Goodness knows neither one of them could get along without you, Judge, but I don't see why it should be natural for you to spoil the old Doctor more than you do Doctor Jim.

JUDGE

Suah you does, Miss 'Titia—suah you does. You haven't disremembered, has you, how my pappy was his pappy's body servant all through the war, and how I was set to take keer of young Marse, now old Marse, when he was a little fellah, no higher than a grasshopper's knee!

LETITIA

Well, you weren't much bigger yourself, and both of you were a nuisance, even way back in those days. Hurry, you old lazy-bones, help me get this place cleared up. *(Sound of door in distance.)* There's the door.

*(Sound of cheerful whistling and footsteps, then:)*

DR. JIM

(*In distance.*) Where are you, Aunt Tish? Hey, Aunt Tish, where are you?

LETITIA

Here we are, Jim. Goodness me, you make more noise when you come into the house than four average people would make.

JIM

Well, Aunt Tish—why not? I've got four times the joy of living that most folks have.

JUDGE

An' you's about four times as big as what most folks is, Marse Jim, suh.

JIM

Hello, Judge, you old flatterer. It was so dark in the room that I didn't see you—all one shade, you know. (*Chuckles.*)

JUDGE

(*Chuckles.*) Go 'long with you, Marse Jim, go 'long with you.

LETITIA

And you're both just about four times as big fools as anyone else living.

JIM

Oh, come now, Aunt 'Tish—that's not right. Your percentage is far too low. (*Judge and Jim laugh.*)

LETITIA

Both of you are worthless—just worthless. Step out of my way there, young Jim. Come on, Judge, let's hurry and finish redding this room.

JIM

I tell you what, Aunt Tish—with a dust cloth in your hand you're as dangerous as a woman with a shot-gun—never know where you are going to land, or what you are going to hit. Anyway, you'd better not scold me, or I might not tell you the news I've got.

LETITIA

Oh, what is it, Jim? I declare, sometimes I think you're so close-mouthed that it seems like you just like to keep a secret to spite me.

JUDGE

Sumthin' happen, young Marse?

JIM

I should say so. Plenty.

LETITIA

You *are* so aggravating, young Jim—as aggravating as your father used to be years ago. Seems like I just have to suffer from aggravating men in my family. Is it big news?

JIM

Well—yes—and no!

LETITIA

What do mean by that, I'd like to know?

JUDGE

Who was it, young Marse, suh? Old lady Williams over on the hill?

JIM

No, Judge—not old lady Williams—though now that you ask me, she did look pretty old and wrinkled—years and years older than her age.

LETITIA

You're just talking to annoy me, young Jim. Whatever have ages got to do with your news? When a subject is a *her*, it just seems you men must talk ages at the same time.

JIM

Well, Aunt Tish—isn't it necessary? Age is something that won't stand still.

(*Judge chuckles.*)

LETITIA

That's all very well. But what I want to know is—what did you mean when I asked you if it was big news, and you, in your father's very own way and manner, answered (*Mimics*) "Yes and no"?

JIM

Why, Aunt Tish, I meant just that. It *is* big news, and yet, it is little news too—or at least *recent*, I might say.

LETITIA

Well? WHAT IS THE NEWS?

JIM

It's about Edna May.

LETITIA

Edna May?

JIM

Well—not exactly. It's about her daughter.

LETITIA

Well, I never! I declare it doesn't seem possible that that child should be the mother of a little girl. Why, your father was her mother's doctor, and he attended her when Edna May was born.

JUDGE

Jus' like you done brung little Miss Edna May's new baby along into this world. (*Chuckles softly.*)

LETITIA

I remember the arguments there were about a name for the baby—but they insisted that she be called by the same name as her mother. And so there were two Edna Mays. Is she all right?

JIM

Perfect—went through it just fine. Of course, she would. You know, Aunt Tish, she has been in constant touch with me, and did everything I told her—even ate exactly what I told her. And she went to the hospital in plenty of time. There was no fuss or fluster. Why, that baby made her debut onto the stage of life with much less fuss than lots of first appearances seem to call for.

The baby's perfectly sound, and cute. They are both fine, and Edna May's so happy she could cry. Only she'll be wanting to see Dad right away—she can't wait to show him the baby, and I want to tell him the news. Where is Dad?

LETITIA

I haven't the slightest idea. He said that he was going to stop in and take Mary Lou some roses from the garden. You know how proud your father is of his roses.

JUDGE

Jes' about as proud as young Marse Jim is of Mary Lou.

JIM

That'll do from you—you know too much!

*(Sound of door opening and closing.)*

Here's Dad now. *(Calls.)* Hello there, Dad! Come on in here—we've all been waiting for you.

OLD DR.

*(Fading in.)* Well now, that's nice. I don't know of anything more comforting than to come into your own home and find your folks, just waiting for you. How are you, Son? Anything worrying you? There, there, Letitia, I know I leave things lying about sometimes—but then it isn't everyone has as caretaking a sister as I have. Ah, there, Judge—I suppose you've been keeping these folks in order, until I got home, eh?

JUDGE

Jes' redden' up, old Marse, suh, an' waitin' fo you.

LETITIA

Did Mary Lou like the roses?

OLD DR.

I didn't give them to her—in fact, I didn't see her at all.

JIM

Wasn't she in, Dad? She said she'd be there all afternoon.

OLD DR.

I don't know, Son, whether she was in or not. I didn't go to her house. I was—called away.

JUDGE

Set down, suh. You're right wore out lookin'. Set down here.

OLD DR.

Thank you, Judge—thank you. Yes, I am tired—very tired. I'm not as young as I used to be. Sudden things tire me now—yes, sudden things tire me.

LETITIA

Well, if you wouldn't let the whole town come to you with all their trials and tribulations, you wouldn't get so tired out. Retired! If what you're doing is retired—I'd like to see somebody that's working—that's all I've got to say.

JIM

Don't be silly, Aunt Tish. Dad is retired. He isn't in active practice any more.

LETITIA

Yes, he is. I suppose you think because he doesn't take money for all the good he does that he's not active any more, and that you are the only doctor around here, because you run the office. Well, young man, let me tell you . . .

OLD DR.

Now, now, Letitia—the boy didn't mean that. He's right. I'm not in active practice any more. (*Chuckles.*) I'm just naturally active, and I just can't quit. That's all.

JUDGE

And you is always bein' called upon, suh, always.

OLD DR.

I'm glad of that, Judge. That's what I'm here for, that is the reason for my existence—to be called upon by those in trouble, and to be of service.

JIM

What was it, Dad, that called you away in such a hurry this time? Not a patient of mine was it, in distress, while I was out making calls?

OLD DR.

Well, Son—yes—and no. I was just starting out with the roses for Mary Lou, when Ted Farley, Edna May's

father, came and got me in his car. I tell you what—things can be done with speed these days. Not like the days I remember, when I was your age, and we had no speedy automobiles, and no sleep-giving drugs to help a person through their time of trouble. I tell you a doctor's job was harder in those days, but I sometimes think that he got a lot closer to the hearts of his patients than you do today.

JIM

You'd get close to anybody's heart, sir—yesterday or today.

OLD DR.

That's nice, Jim—thank you. But you know Edna May has always been very dear to me. And there's another thing that I never told you that makes me feel sort of responsible for this little new bit of humanity that has just arrived.

LETITIA

You always felt that way about Edna May. I never could see why you favored that child so, even if you did bring her into the world—and were her godfather. But then, it seems to me you feel responsible for most everyone alive.

OLD DR.

Well, Letitia, someone has to watch over every other someone, and help them when they can.

JIM

So you stole a march on us, did you, Dad? You've seen the new baby already, and I haven't got any news to

tell you. It takes a lot to get ahead of you. But what was the story that you never told, that made you feel so responsible for Edna May and her baby girl?

OLD DR.

It wasn't only myself that was responsible. I had a companion in crime, as it were—old Dexter.

JUDGE

(*Chuckles.*) I could never disremember that old hoss as long as I live. Had right good sense he did, but, Lawsy, warn't he stubborn!

OLD DR.

That's just the way it all happened.

JIM

What do you mean?

OLD DR.

Why, my idea, coupled with Dexter's stubbornness. It was all way back, and had to do with Edna May's mother, the first Edna May, when she was just a young girl, and Ted Farley. Must have been twenty-two years ago.

JIM

'Fraid you'll have to explain.

LETITIA

Go on, now—don't tease the boy. Tell your story. You know you are just aching to.

OLD DR.

And you're just dying to hear it. How a woman loves to hear a bit of gossip, even if it is many years old. Stir up that fire, Judge. These fall days are getting chilly. (*Pause.*) Well, it was like this. I was sitting one day in my study—in this very house—when there came a frantic knocking on my door.

(*Loud knocking on door.*)

Yes? Who is it?

TED FARLEY

Ted Farley, Doctor.

OLD DR.

Yes, Ted. Come right in.

TED

Sorry to come in on you like this, Doctor. Hope I'm not disturbing you, but I have just *got* to see you.

OLD DR.

That's all right, boy. Steady now. What's wrong?

TED

Everything, Doctor, everything.

OLD DR.

Oh, no. Not everything, Ted. It often seems that way, but it rarely ever is. There's always something that's all right.

TED

Well, everything seems to be all wrong with me, I can tell you that, Doctor.

OLD DR.

What's the trouble, boy? Sick?

TED

Yes. Sick at heart.

OLD DR.

What of?

TED

It's not what of, Doctor—it's what about. And it's all about Edna May—that's what.

OLD DR.

Edna May? Has she been hurt? Is anything the matter with her?

TED

No—no! She's all right. It's me that's in the trouble.

OLD DR.

What's Edna May got to do with it?

TED

She's the trouble.

OLD DR.

Well, well, youngster. Sit down quietly and tell me all about it. What's wrong?

TED

I'm wrong, Doc—all wrong.

OLD DR.

In what way, boy?

TED

Oh, I don't know—it's hard to tell. I seem all right when I'm with anyone else—anyone I don't care about so terribly. But the moment I get near Edna May, I just go all of a quiver, and my tongue clings to the roof of my mouth, and I can't talk—and I act like a plain darn fool.

OLD DR.

Well now, Ted—lots of people have suffered from that same malady. I remember I used to myself, years ago, when I was courting.

TED

That's just it, Doc—I can talk like a house afire, when there's no need for it—but just let little Edna May trip onto the scene, and I suddenly lose my tongue, and stand around and stammer like a farm boy—and you know that won't get you any place with a girl like Edna May.

OLD DR.

Reckon it won't get you any place definite with any girl, Ted—that is, unless you can replace speech with action. There's a prescription for you I might offer.

*(Dexter, the horse, neighs outside.)*

Yes, there's a prescription I might give you.

TED

That's all very well, Doctor, but how am I going to get into action, if I can't get into speech? I ask you.

OLD DR.

That's what I intend to tell you, Ted—or at least to help you to find out. Do you know anything about motor-cars?

TED

Yes. Plenty.

OLD DR.

Well—then you know that some are self-starters, and some have to have quite a lot of help, before they can get going.

TED

That's right. Everyone knows that.

OLD DR.

Well, you are NOT a self-starter. That's all.

TED

I know that. Why, Doctor, I sit in my room, night after night, and I say all the things to the blank wall that I mean to say to Edna May—when I see her alone. For instance: Darling, I have been dreaming of this hour ever since I saw you last, your little dimpled face has come between my eyes and my work. Every breeze that fans my brow brings the fragrance of the perfume of your dainty self. I can't work, or eat, or think—or sleep, be-

cause of the thought of you. I am lost for ever—drowned in my helpless need of you——

OLD DR.

Well, now—if I were Edna May, and you would tell me all that—in just that way—I know I'd say YES.

TED

But that's just the trouble—you're not Edna May!  
(*Dexter neighs.*)

OLD DR.

That's true, boy, but while we're waiting for just that right prescription for you, I wonder if you would do me a favor, eh?

TED

Why, why, of course—I'd be glad to, Doctor.

OLD DR.

Well, I've got a number of other patients, you know—some of them quite ill.

TED

I know. Edna May's father has been one of your patients for many years, hasn't he, sir?

OLD DR.

Yes, that's right. He certainly has—my patient and my very good friend. Why, that house of his on the corner there has almost come to seem like my own, I turn into it so often—and little Edna May like my own daughter. Why don't you go right up the gravel walk, and call on Edna May?

TED

I've tried, Doc—but somehow I don't seem able to turn in. My feet just won't walk that way. But you're awfully good to listen to me, sir. What was it you said I might do for you?

OLD DR.

Eh? Oh, yes. Certainly. I wish you would deliver some prescriptions for me. I promised them, and intended to take them myself, but I'm tired. Will you take them for me, in the order I give you, and deliver them?

TED

Of course, sir, I'll be glad to. Shall I get out the car?

OLD DR.

No—No! The car hasn't been working well lately. You drive Dexter in the cart.

TED

I can fix the car in a minute, sir. Won't need to get Dexter out.

OLD DR.

No. The car won't work, I tell you—and besides, old Dexter needs the exercise. In fact that's part of the favor I wanted to ask you to do for me—just to take old Dexter out. But this way you can kill two birds with one stone—or—accomplish two things with one Dexter, as it were. Come along, let's start things moving. I like to see my prescriptions get a fair chance to gain proper results.

TED

But what about me—and my trouble, sir?

OLD DR.

Oh—I'm taking care of that, Ted—I'm taking care of that. Here are the prescriptions, with the order in which they must be delivered. Go past Edna May's house and deliver the first one at the Grigsbys', four doors on. Dexter will turn in—he knows the route by heart. You needn't worry, my boy—you can trust Dexter to turn in at the right place. Yes, sir. He's got that rare thing known as horse sense.

TED

All right, Doctor. I'll do just what you want me to, and then I'll come back and ask your help in my trouble.

OLD DR.

Goodbye, youngster.

*(Door opens and closes. Pause.)*

And if you come back this evening, you'll certainly need my help, my boy, you'll certainly need my help.

*(His voice fades out, and the piano accompaniment of a song that Edna May is singing in her own home fades in.)*

EDNA MAY

*(Singing.)*

There's a lad I love, and I love him very dearly,  
Very fondly, very madly, but so truly and sincerely.  
But he's dumb as any oyster, all the time that I am by,  
For the lad I long to marry—is a wee bit shy.

*(She sings part of the second verse, when she is interrupted by the sound of a horse's hoofs, and the scrunch of wheels on the gravel path.)*

Oh! There's the dear old doctor.

*(Slight pause. Sound of opening and closing of door. The carriage scrapes on gravel as it stops.)*

TED

Get up, Dexter! Tck—tck—tck! Come on, there! Tck—tck—move on, you old fool—tck—tck!

EDNA

Ooh! Why, Ted Farley? I thought it was the doctor.

TED

N-n-no.—It's me!

EDNA

I see that. I'm awfully glad it is. Did the doctor send you?

TED

Yes—no! I mean I wasn't coming here!

EDNA

What do you mean? Didn't you want to come here?

TED

No! No—I mean YES!

EDNA

Well, just what do you mean, Ted Farley? Has the cat got your tongue?

TED

Afraid so, Edna May. It most always has when I see you. What I meant is this. I wanted to come, of course—but I didn't intend to—it was Dexter.

EDNA

That just doesn't make sense. How could it be Dexter? Do you mean he brought you here against your will?

TED

I mean just that.

EDNA

Oh!

TED

Wait a minute. I'll try to explain. You see, I went to the doctor for some help, and he asked me to deliver some prescriptions for him, and told me particularly that I was to come around this corner past your home—and he insisted that I take Dexter—said the old nag needed exercise.

EDNA

Oh! I see! (*Laughs gaily and knowingly.*) I can finish your story for you, Ted. Old Dexter just would turn in at our house, and you couldn't stop him! Didn't you KNOW that he is the most stubborn horse in the world, and that he always makes the exact round he is accustomed to with the doctor?

TED

Does Doc know that he does that?

EDNA

Of course he does. Why, he sometimes has trouble with him himself. When he has been calling upon a certain patient for some time, and then they get well—the doctor doesn't have to go there any more, but old Dexter just insists on turning in to their house—until the doctor has reasoned him out of the idea.

TED

Well—I'll be blowed! Who'd have thought it of old Doc?

EDNA

What do you mean? Were you ill that you should go to the doctor?

TED

Yes. Very sick. And I've taken part of his prescription by force—now I'll take the rest—by choice.

EDNA

I never saw you like this before, Ted Farley. You're different someway.

TED

You bet I'm different. I'll tell you what's the matter with me. I'm love-sick. And I went to the Doc to get him to tell me what to do—and he told me—and he helped me over the hardest part, which was getting up the courage to come in here—and now I'm going to prove to him that he prescribes good medicine.

EDNA

What did the doctor prescribe, Teddy?

TED

He told me that I must substitute action for speech.

EDNA

Why should he do that?

TED

Because I went in and told him that I couldn't eat, or sleep, or work—because of the thought of you, of your eyes, and your curly hair, and your darling little mouth. And I told the doctor that I dreamed about you day and night, and that I was jealous of anyone else that even looked at you—and I told the doctor that I adore you, and that I always had and always will, and that I wanted you to marry me.—Will you, Edna May? Will you?

EDNA

Why, of course I will, you silly. Why didn't you ask me before? I've always adored you, too—ever since you carried my books to school.

TED

You darling! Look up, dearest—I just must kiss you. I can't wait another minute!

EDNA

'Fraid you'll have to, though! You see, Teddy, my kisses belong first to someone else.

TED

What do you mean?

EDNA

To the dear doctor. And I do want to give Dexter a grateful little kiss on the end of his stubborn old nose!

TED

Well, I can't be jealous of those two, can I? Come on—let's get in and drive back together to the doctor's.

EDNA

Oh, let's! (*A little laughter between them.*)

TED

Get along there, Dexter, old pal—tck—tck! Git up!

EDNA

Come along, Dexter darling—we're going home!  
(*Dexter neighs—carriage scrunches gravel—horse's hoofs gather speed, and fade out.*)

OLD DR.

(*Chuckling quietly.*) So you see, Jim, why I feel responsible for your little new patient—Ted and Edna May's baby girl's baby girl!

LETITIA

The very idea! As though you didn't have enough to do without turning matchmaker—and I suppose you're going to be godfather, too?

OLD DR.

Yes, Letitia—that's right.

LETITIA

I thought so—I knew that would happen!

OLD DR.

Wait a minute, Letitia. You haven't heard it all yet.

LETITIA

Don't tell me there is something more?

OLD DR.

Yes. You are to be the godmother!

LETITIA

Well—well! The idea! I never! Isn't that lovely?

JIM

Well, Dad, you're a wonder—a ways knew it. Guess I'll have to come to you for advice about how to win Mary Lou. You didn't see her at all, you say? Wonder where she was?

JUDGE

What I want to know, old Marse, suh, is what you done did with de roses? You-all cut 'em to take to Miss Mary Lou, and you-all never saw her. And yet you haven't got that gret big bunch of purty roses you tuk away from heah—that's what I want to know.

OLD DR.

Why, after all the excitement was over, and little Edna May and the new baby were resting there, looking so sweet, both of them—I just tiptoed in, and laid the roses

down beside them—sort of seemed as though they belonged there somehow. They must have felt as much at home as if they were in their own garden.

LETITIA

I'm glad you did that, brother—very glad. Have they thought of a name for her yet?

OLD DR.

*(Chuckling.)* That's the funny part—they had planned to call the newcomer Jim—after Old Doctor Jim—but, of course, they had to change their minds, so they are going to call the little thing May Rose for her mother and for *me*.

*(THEME MUSIC fades in, and remains as background for the announcement.)*

ANNOUNCER

Next week, at this same time, you will be able to overhear another story that the old doctor remembers. Also you may meet Mary Lou, the girl that young Jim is so anxious to win, so don't forget—next week at the same time.

*(THEME MUSIC up to finish.)*

The last example we are taking is a true radio serial. The same main characters run through the series. There are no flash backs, and the action is continuous. Note the contrasting types, the volatile Frenchman, the drawling

American, and for the ladies, the mysterious Yvonne, and the practical little American newspaper girl.

*THE ADVENTURES OF JACQUES.*

A Radio Serial

by

*GLADYS SHAW ERSKINE.*

DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

- JACQUES DE CHARNISET . . . Gallant and adventurous scion  
of a noble house of France.
- BOB NORRIS . . . . . His buddy since War days,  
formerly in the Secret  
Service.
- YVONNE LA ROUX . . . . . The Lady of the ENCHANTING  
PERFUME and the haunting  
voice.
- BETTY BERNARD . . . . . American girl, feature writer  
for big newspaper.
- MADAME JULIE GASPARD. Duenna to Yvonne, a distant  
poor relation.

*Scene.* Here, there, and everywhere.

The first sketch takes place in the luncheon room  
of a fashionable New York Hotel.

Later: On board ship at dock.

*(The orchestra opens with the theme song, which is re-  
peated as a background to the opening announcement.)*

ANNOUNCER

There is a curious lure about the unknown; an enchantment hovers over the mirage in the desert's waste.—Each

and every one of us has kept hidden in his heart the wish of the child who will never grow up, to seek, and, who knows, perhaps to find at last, the Pot of Gold that rests at the Rainbow's End.

Adventure is a gallant and lovable rogue, a vagabond with a gay heart—who has a long line of followers.—And Romance is like the evanescent mysterious perfume, whose fragrance leads us ever on and on, in search of the source of its beauty, but whose blossom is hard to find.

Two followers of this grail, Jacques de Charniset and Bob Norris, are at this moment dining in a fashionable New York Restaurant.

With your permission, and in the fellowship of all those who dream of, and seek, the Rainbow's End, let us listen in.

*(Music of fashionable restaurant fades in. Towards the end of the number, restaurant noises, muffled clatter of dishes, etc., fades in.)*

JACQUES

*(Speaking throughout with a slight French accent.)*  
Why is all the food in New York French? *(Reads from menu.)* *Consommé Julienne—Blanchaille au diable—Crème de Champignons—*

BOB

That's Jim Jeffries.

JACQUES

What do you say?

BOB

What you said—Cream of Champions.

(*Laughter.*)

JACQUES

*Non, non, mon frère*, you do not pronounce it right.—Listen again—*Langouste à la maître d'hotel—Blanquette de veau—filet mignon*. Steak minute—now, can you tell me, why do they always have a steak minute?

BOB

(*Didactically.*) You pronounce it wrong, Jacques.—That's where a good deal of the profit comes in. The prices are large, but the steak minute.

JACQUES

(*Laughing.*) *Oui*, in-fin-i-tes-im-al. But seriously, Bob, these enormous New York prices have made my small income seem very small indeed.

BOB

Well, you're luckier than lots of us at that. At least you have got a steady income from those ancestral estates of yours.

JACQUES

Yes, but that is just it. In France it is sufficient for a man like myself—of simple tastes. I live very comfortably in my old chateau—but there a franc goes a long way. I visit New York—*et voilà*, the red light is against my

taxi—and *phut*—a franc has gone! Every two blocks, two francs.

BOB

(*Quieting Jacques whose voice has been raised.*) Pipe down, son—don't be so *franc* about it. These people don't care for our f-f's.

JACQUES

(*Pleased with himself.*) Ah, *oui*—I understand.—You mean what in Virginia they call f-f—first families.—But yes, of course—they do not care here that I am a de Charniset.

BOB

No—I don't mean anything about your coat-of-arms and family crest. You're right about f-f meaning first families in Virginia—but in New York it means "Frenziered finance."

JACQUES

Well, frenziered finance has made a frenziered Frenchman out of me. (*Laughs and sighs.*) Do not for a moment, *mon frère*, think that I do not love deeply my own country, and the home of my ancestors. (*More eagerly.*) It is but that I am young, and wish to see all the world before I settle down there within the walls of my own garden.—(*More eagerly but still softly.*) There in that same old chateau is Romance, for is not my France the very home of Romance itself?—(*Music starts up—"Ah! Reviens."*) Ah, it is beautiful there—a place to dream in—to meditate

quietly upon the beauty of all things. What is that they are playing?—*Ah! Reviens!*

(*Song by Jacques.*)

*Ah! Reviens!* I wish I could go back, but it is not good to retire when one is young, and so I long to follow that Will-o'-the-wisp, Adventure, in far strange lands.—(*Chuckles.*) And, at last, *mais oui*, of course, to retire to my own lovely garden, where I shall become a white-haired and benign old gentleman, pacing the paths, and dreaming, *hélas*, of what has been—walking there in the garden of my chateau, a figure that the village children will point out.

BOB

Well, don't look so sad about that prospect. There's no great grief connected with it. Your place is just a stone's throw from Paris.—Paris—Gee! Will you ever forget how good it was to get back there from the trenches?—'Member that time when we came in from the Argonne?—Ugh!—five days and five nights with mud for a mattress, mud for a blanket, and mud for a pillow.—Hell!—Mud, mud, mud. (*Laughs bitterly.*) From mud to Mademoiselles—there's a war slogan for you.

JACQUES

Come, *mon vieux*, forget the mud, and remember only the mademoiselles.

BOB

Guess you're right at that.—(*Calls.*) Say, waiter, tell the orchestra leader to play Mademoiselle from Armentieres.

(*Song played, Bob and Jacques taking refrain.*)

WAITER

Shall I serve the minute steak, sir?

BOB

Yes—the filet mignon is mine, and the steak there.

(*Clatter of dishes.*)

JACQUES

*Mon Dieu!* I see now why the steak is called minute.

(*Both laugh.*)

BOB

Son—that's no mistake!

JACQUES

(*Scenting the perfume.*) Ah! *Mon Dieu!* Did you notice that?

BOB

What?

JACQUES

Why—why—it was like a breath from some old-world garden—delicate—warm as a languorous tropic night—and yet piquant, gay.

BOB

What the devil are you talking about?

JACQUES

Luxurious and strangely haunting.

BOB

Snap out of it, fellow! What are you raving about?

JACQUES

Why, that mysterious perfume.—Didn't you notice it, Bob?

BOB

No—when—where?

JACQUES

Here—just now.—It was as though Lady Romance herself had passed our table.

BOB

*(Chuckles.)* You incurable old romanticist—a lingering fragrance in the air—and off you go dreaming, idealizing.

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*(In distance.)* Mister de Charniset—Mister de Charniset.—*(Closer.)* Mister de Charniset.

WAITER

*(Speaking through these calls.)* Will you have your coffee now, sir?

JACQUES

Yes, thank you.

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*(Closer.)* Mister de Charniset—Mister de—

BOB

Here, boy—right here.

*(Sound of silver on tray.)*

PAGE

Thank you, sir.

JACQUES

It's a cable from France.

BOB

Hope it's no bad news.

JACQUES

*Je regrette de vous informer de la demise de Monsieur Armand de Charniset, votre oncle, qui vous a nommé heriter de sa fortune.* An uncle I have never heard of has died and left me a huge sum of money.

BOB

How much?

JACQUES

*Deux cents cinquante mille francs!!!*

BOB

Ninety-four dollars in our money.

JACQUES

*Non—non*—it is more than that! About fifty thousand dollars. Now with this I can do what always I have longed to do.—Oh! *Mon Dieu*, the great things we can do together, Bob. We—

BOB

We?

JACQUES

*Oui, oui, oui!*

BOB

Us, huh? Was he my uncle, too? Then we are cousins.

JACQUES

*Non, non, mon brave.*—Brothers. Were we not brothers in France?

BOB

But this is brothers in francs.

JACQUES

*(Laughing excitedly.) Mais oui*—that is it—brothers in everything.

BOB

All right, son, all right—what's your plan?

JACQUES

You and I are going to spend this money, Bob—and spend all of it.

BOB

What shall we buy—Brooklyn Bridge?

JACQUES

Oh!—You may make fun, my friend—but we shall see. We will travel—every place—and see everything—

BOB

Everything?

JACQUES

And we will have no fixed plan—only one rule—to follow Adventure and to find Romance.

*(Music ceases.)*

YVONNE

(*Clearly but a little away.*) But there's no hurry, Aunt Julie.—The boat doesn't sail for several hours.

JACQUES

(*Tensely.*) Did you hear that, Bob?

BOB

What?

JACQUES

That voice—my heart, he turn over quite when I hear it.

BOB

Which voice?

JACQUES

There was only *one*.

BOB

Do you know her? Where is she sitting?

JACQUES

I don't know her—yet!

BOB

You are sure you are going to, eh?

JACQUES

*Naturellement.* Did we not say we would follow Adventure and Romance—and shall we not start now?

BOB

That's okay with me, and you'll need me some. I wasn't in the Secret Service for nothing.

JACQUES

That is true.—After all, you came to France attached to the Service, and if you had not come, we might never have met.

BOB

(*Laughing.*) It was a very good thing for you that night when you got arrested by the Americans outside Graincourt, and I arrived in time to identify the body, as it were. You couldn't talk much English in those days.

JACQUES

(*Joining in his laughter.*) But it was better than your French.

BOB

Well, what are we going to do? That is, if you are still serious.

JACQUES

*Mais oui, mon vieux*—I am still serious. I am never so serious as when I am happy.

BOB

It sounds all right, but it doesn't mean a thing to me.

JACQUES

And now I am more serious than ever—for it is not just Romance we follow now, my friend—but a girl.—For I must find her, Bob—that girl with the lovely voice, and the elusive and fascinating perfume.

BOB

(*Laughing.*) So you are sure they go together, are you?

JACQUES

But yes! Of this I am sure, and also that I will find her.

BOB

You certainly need me, son.—I can see where I am going to have my hands full, keeping you out of trouble.

WAITER

Here is your change, sir.

BOB

That's all right, waiter. Come on, Jacques—let's hurry.

JACQUES

But Bob, you are too fast, even for me.

BOB

It is no use sitting still, son.—You have fired me with this idea of leaving everything to chance—but be fair, man—and give chance a chance!

JACQUES

But I must anyhow return to Paris to settle my affairs. It will not take long—but it is not satisfactory to do these things through the mail.

BOB

That's all right. I can come with you at once. I still have my Secret Service passport—and I'll enjoy the trip.—After all, this first move was fixed, as it were, by your uncle, and we must go to Paris. But, as to how we go—let's leave that to chance.

JACQUES

But I do not understand—I do not want to fly.

BOB

Well, I'm not a Lindbergh either—but shall we go Cunard or United States Lines?

JACQUES

But does it matter?

BOB

Of course it matters.—Fate must decide—and in the good old American way, with the flip of a coin—for money talks, they say.—So here goes—heads, Cunard—tails, United States Lines.

*(Sound of falling coin.)*

Heads it is! Cunard! Come along—the ship sails in less than three hours.

*(Restaurant music swells up—fades into noises on dock side—then ship's band fades in.)*

BOB

Well, our luck was surely in today, old man.—Imagine our being able to get a double stateroom and bath at the last minute like this.

JACQUES

It *was* lucky for us that someone cancelled his reservation at the last moment, wasn't it?

BOB

Come along.—Let's get our luggage stowed away, and—

WOMAN

(*High and nervous.*) You stand right here, Genevieve, and don't you dare to move until mama comes back and gets you.

CHILD

All right, mama—I promise—I won't move.

(*Woman's voice fades out admonishing child.*)

JACQUES

What a shame—*la pauvre petite*.—The mother should not have left it alone so, in a strange place.

BOB

Come along.—Let's get our baggage seen to—the kid's all right.

OFFICER

You can't stand in the passage-way, kiddie—better move aside.

CHILD

I won't—I'm going to stand here.

OFFICER

Come on, come on, little girl—you're on board ship now—you'll have to do what you are told.

CHILD

(*Tearfully.*) I *am* doing what I was told.

JACQUES

I'll look after *le petit enfant*, officer.—Bob, you—

BOB

Sure—that's great—just what I was about to suggest.—You take care of the kid, Jacques, and I'll go and get its mother.

*(Sudden commotion—cries, etc.)*

OFFICER

Sorry, miss—you can't come aboard—only passengers now—no more guests.

BETTY

But I just must come aboard, officer.—PLEASE.

OFFICER

Can't be done, miss—too late to let any more visitors on.

BETTY

But I'm here on business.—I just HAVE to get an interview with someone on board.—She's terribly important.—PLEASE, officer.

OFFICER

No more visitors allowed, miss.

BETTY

I'm Betty Bernard, of the Daily Enquirer.—See—here's my press card.—I've just got to see her, officer.

JACQUES

Can I be of any assistance to mademoiselle?

BETTY

Oh, thank you!

*(General laughter and commotion.)*

OFFICER

Ducked right under my arm, she did—and was down number one companion before you could say knife. She'll get her interview all right—determined, I'll say—and pretty.

WOMAN

*(Calling.)* Genevieve—Genevieve!

CHILD

Mama—mama—here I am.—I didn't move, mama.

BOB

Well, there you are—the family re-united.

WOMAN

Thank you so much—you are very kind.—Come, Genevieve.

BOB

What was all the fuss? What happened, officer?

OFFICER

Nothing, sir—just a little excitement with a young lady—and a very pretty one, too.

BOB

What, Jacques? You?

JACQUES

I explain—it is of interest.—*C'était comme ça*. The young lady, she try to get aboard the boat and the man—

BOB

I guess it is interesting enough—but it will have to wait.—Come along—let's see about our baggage.

(*Whistle—bell—etc.*)

OFFICER

All ashore that's going ashore.—Everybody ashore that's going ashore!

YVONNE

Goodbye—goodbye—I promise to write.—But you must keep in touch with me, and let me know where you are.—Goodbye—take care of yourself—goodbye.

JACQUES

Bob—it is the voice—oh, *le bon Dieu* is kind to me today. She is here on this ship—she sailed with us!

BOB

Wait a minute, son—not so fast.—Was she saying goodbye to the shore, or goodbye to the ship?

JACQUES

Oh, *mon Dieu!*

(*Signature music.*)

(*Closing announcement.*)



*Television forerunner. Left to right: Virginia Gardiner, Charles Warburton, Florence Malone, Richard Gordon, Gladys Shaw Erskine. Centre front: Iran Fith*



*"Old-Timer" Harvey Hays*



*Burns and Allen, madcap of radio*

## VERSATILE RADIO PERFORMERS



*Georgia Backus*



*Elsie Hitz*



*Phil Cook*



*Ennice Howard*

## CHAPTER VI

### DRAMA PECULIAR TO RADIO

**T**HE intimacy of radio is the stumbling block upon which so many otherwise good showmen fall down. The great popularity of the Little Jack Littles, the Ray Perkinses, and other similar entertainers, who could hold you just as interested and amused were they to be performing in your own home, proves our contention. They succeed where many a fine vaudevillian fails. The quality of their success lies in the intimacy of their appeal and method of performance.

The success of such dramatic programs as *Real Folks*, *Seth Parker*, *The Eternal Question*, *Raising Junior*, depends more upon this intimacy and simple human relations than upon what is commonly called action.

The questioning of a suspect by a District Attorney as he verbally rebuilds the crime must be more thrilling on the radio than the act itself, which cannot be clearly conveyed to listeners. A revolver shot may be startling, but it is only an isolated sound when divorced from the sight of the act or the setting in which it occurs.

In America, where millions of dollars have been expended for program costs, little intensive experiment has

been made in method. So much time is spent, and so much studio space is occupied, in satisfying the commercial demands of those that pay, that there is neither time nor space available for artistic experimental research. However, a few advanced dramatic programs have been devised by American writers for radio, without any thought of pecuniary reward.

A most interesting experiment was tried over the Columbia network, where an idea of Georgia Backus' was put on the air.

Miss Backus' idea was that music should be used as a background to the *thoughts* of her characters, but that their actions should be unaccompanied.

To a certain extent this was based upon Eugene O'Neill's *STRANGE INTERLUDE*, in which the characters spoke their thoughts as soliloquies before speaking the lines that carried on the action of the play.

The experiment that Miss Backus had the courage to sponsor may have a great influence on the future of Radio Drama.

The advertisers who cry for "Action! Action! Action!" in their radio scripts should read the newspapers, and take a good dose of Nick Kenny—they might change their minds! The best Radio Drama is supplied by *mental conflict*, rather than action.

Miss Backus devised a method whereby not only can mental conflict between two characters be more strongly

conveyed, but she has achieved the portrayal of *spiritual conflict* within the heart of each character.

So interesting is her initial experiment that we reproduce here a part of it from her original script. The program department at Columbia, fearing "lack of action," changed her work to such an extent as to destroy the full value of her intention.

"THE OLD, OLD STORY."

ANNOUNCER

We bring you today a dramatic act which is new to Radio. Perhaps this is not the correct way of stating it, for it is the old, old story, told again in the old, old way, but, we would add, with a new dramatic interpretation.

There are times when each of us has said words which were entirely opposed to the thoughts which were seething in our minds. Each of us vibrates to a certain chord in the great soul symphony of life, and as that chord is touched into sensibility, the tone which it strikes is sometimes very different from the note which we would like it to strike. But, for each of us, there is a melody of thoughts, and in them our inner self lives.

So this drama today is an attempt to present a small bit out of the lives of three people—the hero, the heroine, and the villain. But, as in life no one is ever the complete hero and no one the complete villain, we delve deeper into the consciousness of these three people, and hear the

secret tones of their thoughts and their emotions and their lives, and we know them as they are, and as we would like to know everyone. Through the spoken THOUGHTS, which come to us like a strange bar of music, we gather the emotions and the inner selves of reality,—through a deeper sense, if such could be. Bear with us in this attempt to bring to you through Radio—Life—as we know, and life as we think we know it.

NORMA FIELDS and ROBERT STACEY have been childhood friends. Living side by side, in a small town, they have played at childhood's games together; they have quarreled and made up; they have worked their school problems out together; they have grown up together.

Our little drama tonight opens at a party, one of those affairs where old friends gather to enjoy the evening at the home of one of the group.

It is an accepted fact that Bob and Norma will come together, as it is an accepted fact that some day they will be married, although neither has spoken to the other about such a thing. And so, we find them sitting together on the broad veranda of a beautiful old country estate, talking. . . .

BOB

Gosh, it's hot in there, isn't it?

NORMA

Yeah.

BOB

Most too hot to dance tonight.

NORMA

What's the matter, darling? Tired of dancing with me?

BOB

'Course not. What gave you that idea?

NORMA

I don't know. I just thought maybe you were.

BOB

*(Slowly.)* I can dance better with you than with any girl I know.

NORMA

We've danced together enough to know each other's steps, and what turns we're going to take, and—everything.

BOB

I wonder. . . .

*(BOB'S THEME MUSIC STARTS.)*

M I wonder if we know each other too well. Maybe  
 U that's the trouble with us. We don't seem to get  
 S any thrill out of being together any more. Now—  
 I I sort of wanted to dance with that little red-  
 C headed kid tonight, but Norma seemed to expect  
 me to dance that dance with her. Gee! That red-  
 head was cute. Wonder where she is?

*(BOB'S THEME MUSIC STOPS.)*

NORMA

What are you thinking about, Bob?

BOB

Me? Oh, nothing! Nothing particular.

NORMA

Oh!

BOB

Oh, maybe I was thinking of you. What would you say to that?

NORMA

After your preface of “nothing particular” I wouldn’t think so much of it.

BOB

Well, I was thinking of you.

NORMA

Were you?

*(NORMA’S THEME MUSIC STARTS.)*

What was it? What is it? Are you going to say anything? Bob—I wish he wouldn’t have such a far away look in his eyes. Lovely eyes—what are they like?—I wish I could think of what they are like. Deep pools, maybe. Oh, how can I make him talk to me—as other boys do? It isn’t because he knows me too well—after all, you always want to know people awfully well.

*(NORMA’S THEME MUSIC STOPS.)*

There is no question but that listeners would have to get used to this method of establishing psychological reaction and mental mood, but as soon as they were accustomed to recognizing immediately the theme music of each character, then they would follow the conflict of personality through each scene, with more intimate knowledge of the characters themselves than they could well obtain in any other way.

There is not, however, at the present time, anything commercial in such an idea. No client would wait for his results until the audience were trained to accept this convention.

The greatest difficulty that the writer has, in attempting to sell his material, is not the production of either original or entertaining plays, but the satisfying of many minds used only to marketing a particular product, and having but little idea of audience reaction to a program.

The writers had a very amusing experience in one of the biggest radio stations in New York. An internationally known perfume house was seeking a dramatic radio program. Such a program was accordingly specially written for them, in less than forty-eight hours' notice. Special theme music was written for them, and orchestrated. A full dramatic sketch, including a visiting star, was actually put on for audition at the station concerned, after which there was a mutual admiration meeting, at which everyone was feeling very happy.

The program was as good as sold; everybody was happy—the client—the advertising agent, the radio station, the program builders and producers, and the cast of performers—until word came from the sponsor that the company would like to have a second audition in order that forty of their factory girls could pass judgment upon the program! The request, very foolishly, was granted, and a second audition was accordingly staged for them, with the most amazing result. The factory girls were horrified that in the script were mentioned certain cosmetic commodities in universal use that their firm did not manufacture! In vain was it pointed out that the program was built to appeal to BUYERS of the commodities, and NOT the makers of them.

One director of the concern objected to a girl in the play having a minute steak, and a cup of coffee, before going to her first night in chorus in a Broadway show! This had to be changed to fish and tea! This sort of interference has been the rule rather than the exception, and it is mentioned because authors who are fore-warned are fore-armed.

When the writer of a short story sends it in to a magazine, it is generally accepted or returned, and if accepted a few minor alterations may be asked for. But even in this case the demand for change comes from an editor, whose business it is to please his readers, and not from

a manufacturer of perfumes, or motorcars, who has never made any sort of study of audience reaction.

The expressed opinion of many leading advertisers is that the mind of the public is at the most only thirteen years old, and that the majority of buyers are morons. Nevertheless, there are sponsors who, like Socony, have engaged fine radio writers such as Carleton and Manley to sustain a series of dramatic programs year after year. The writer for radio who can accomplish what these two men have done may well be proud. And in radio there is no speculative value in the work done, as there is in a play or a possible 'best seller.' There is, nevertheless, excellent financial reward for steady work, week by week. Contracts are never limited to one program—the minimum is usually thirteen, and twenty-six, and even fifty-two, are not impossible to obtain.

Another great trouble for the radio writer is the fact that he is seldom called in to do a specific job. Rather does the advertising agent want to have hundreds of ideas thrown at his head, out of which he MAY select one.

There are many cases where the client has heard so many auditions, ranging throughout the whole gamut of dramatic entertainment, that he decides not to go on the air till he has made up his mind what he wants!

Writers are like so many other creative artists, who forget that they have to live. They will turn out script after script, without any guarantee whatsoever, in the hope

that a series will be accepted. It is understood that a great deal of writing work must be speculative, but on the other hand most editors know what they want, whereas in radio the sponsor rarely has the least idea, so that the authors do not receive fair treatment.

The editor at least does need material, even if he has to return a great deal of what is sent in to him. The radio sponsor, on the other hand, will think nothing of holding up a script for six months, without any financial commitment, and will then decide that advertising on the air is too expensive! Writers should endeavor to be a little more business-like in the protection of their own interests, and so benefit the writing craft as a whole.

Radio stations and sponsors alike should be compelled to give a credit line to the author of a dramatic program, in all circumstances. As it is now, only the actors' names, and that of the announcer, are mentioned, and these are dropped when there is insufficient time available. This rule should apply not only to the writers of an original radio script, but to the adaptor of any classic.

Most students of English are familiar with *précis* writing, but the adaptation of a long novel into a short radio script, retaining all the beauty of the original, plus the story value, without benefit of scenic background, or the visual portrayal of characters, is an art unique to radio.

The following example is a radio version of the world-famous American classic, "Ramona," by Helen Hunt

Jackson, and one of a series of dramatic, entertaining, and educational features written by Miss Erskine.

*RAMONA.*

ANNOUNCER

From time immemorial, all down through the ages, the names of great-hearted women have been graven on the tablets of Time.

Not only in their own particular, gentle, domestic field—but as pioneers, soldiers, brave and gallant ladies, who stood shoulder to shoulder with their men in the fighting ranks of Life—women of infinite courage, of deep understanding, of warm-hearted fervors.

*Helen Hunt Jackson* suffered from a fatal disease, and knew that her days were numbered.

With magnificent will power, and a great knowledge of her subject coupled with literary genius, this Friend of the Indian wrote against time, and made literary history for America.

This woman of great heart and great achievement should not be looked upon as a one-book woman—she wrote many fine novels, and was a poet of distinction—and yet it is as the author of “*Ramona*” that her name echoes down the hallways of Fame.

And you will now hear an echo of this epic story.

Senora Moreno is talking with her son, Felipe, in the

Moreno hacienda, where RAMONA lived with the family as an adopted daughter.

SENORA MORENO

(*Fading in.*) And is it, Felipe, that I must even tell the hands on the farm what their duties to such as the Morenos are? Can I not depend on my only son for even that small thing? Pah! The Americanos are taking land as they see fit—and we of old Mexico are to stand beside the road and cheer, is it not? Why, even the Indios seem, at times, to have more spirit than you, my son! Even Ramona, that child who is not of the Moreno blood—even she feels the fighting spirit, not to let the land of the Morenos be trespassed upon by these invaders.

FELIPE

Ramona, she is a sweet child, madre—a good girl, and a pretty one.

SENORA MORENO

You would have eyes for that one, my son—you, a Moreno of Old Castille, and you well know that Ramona is but a maiden your aunt brought into the family because the girl's father had once been a sweetheart of hers. You know well the story. When he returned from a voyage, being as he was a sailor, he found that your aunt had married another in his absence (and quite right too!)—and then this sailor, a blond man named Phail, made for himself a name as a drunkard—a Scot he was, with blue eyes.

FELIPE

What has that to do with Ramona, madre mia?

SENORA MORENO

Why this! Years later, he suddenly appeared before your childless aunt with a girl baby in his arms. He told her that the child was his, and that its mother was an Indian woman, long since lost and forgotten. He left with the baby a box of jewels—all that was left of his fabulous fortune. A year later, he died. And so, Felipe, my sister named her Ramona, and cared for her as her own. Before she died, she called upon me, and, as a good sister and as an obedient member of the Church, I have ever since cared for the child, as well you have seen, my Felipe.

FELIPE

And Ramona—does she not know of this?

SENORA MORENO

Nothing. She has no suspicion that she has Indian blood. She knows but that there was a mystery in her life.

FELIPE

And do you love the girl, mother?

SENORA MORENO

Love her, my son? I am kind to her, as the Church would command, and I look after her well being. I do not see that *love* enters into the affair at all.

FELIPE

But she is so beautiful—so lovely to look upon, mother. Surely you cannot fail to see, and to be moved by her charm?

SENORA MORENO

Yes. She is a sweet child—but mark you, my son—there is a wildness in her blood! The Indian strain, of which she knows nothing! There is no telling what that foreign blood will do. Not for anything would I let Ramona know that she is of any other blood than the pure Castillian of the Morenos.

FELIPE

And I—I would not care what taint of Indian wildness there might be in her blood, for I adore her, my mother. I love Ramona, madre mia, I adore her—I—

SENORA MORENO

Felipe, my son, now may the lightnings strike you! You, a Moreno, to tell me that you love a maiden of Indian blood—you, a Castillian—you—a Moreno—you! (*Quietly.*) And what does the maiden say of this?

FELIPE

She does not know, my mother. She looks upon me as a brother—beloved and gentle.

SENORA MORENO

Pah! We shall see. Blood will tell, my son, blood will tell!

\* \* \* \*

ANNOUNCER

In the meantime, during the sheep-shearing, Ramona, still in ignorance of her parentage, is courted by Allesandro the Indian, son of the Chief of Temecula, whose vast lands had nearly all been confiscated by the Americans.

Allesandro, proud of his own blood, faced the arrogance of Senora Moreno with quiet dignity, but rejoiced in the affection and admiration of her son Felipe.

\* \* \* \*

*(Sound effects fade in. Men's voices singing a rhythmic chant, something like a broken lullaby. One voice with a guitar, both in the distance, would suffice. There need be no words to the song—only an Indian chant—Hi . . . ah . . . eeoh! Mingled with this should be the baa-ing of many sheep, and the metallic clicking and clanking of the sheep-shears, with murmuring voices and occasional laughter.)*

ALLESANDRO

Juan Red Eagle, the day has gone well. Many sheep have been sheared.

RED EAGLE

True, Allesandro—and praise be there are still many more to be sheared. I am thinking that this trip will help the poor Temeculas.

ALLESANDRO

Yes, praise be! My poor people—that they should have to come from their own lands, what there are left of them, and work for the rich Mexicans like day laborers—

they, who once had lands, and hired others to do the shearing of their own flocks.

RED EAGLE

And now those flocks are as pitiful and scattered as the tribes soon will be, Allesandro.

ALLESANDRO

Come, Juan Red Eagle—enough of gloomy thoughts and speeches! It is time for the noon meal, and siesta. Call it out so to the men.

*(Red Eagle's voice fades out calling orders, etc.)*

SERVANT

*(Old man.)* Senor Allesandro? Senor Allesandro?

ALLESANDRO

Yes? What is it?

SERVANT

I have a message for you from the little Ramona.

ALLESANDRO

A message? Yes—well, speak, slow one! What is it?

SERVANT

The Lady Ramona said for her servant to tell Allesandro the Indian that she would be walking by the willows at the little river at this noon hour.

ALLESANDRO

Thank you, ancient one. Here are coins for yourself. *(Calls.)* Red Eagle! Take charge of the men for the

moment! I have been commanded to another place for a short time!

*(Sound effects swell up as before, and fade quickly into the sound of running water, a bird call or two, and then the whispered call of Allesandro.)*

ALLESANDRO

Ramona! Ramona!

RAMONA

Oh!—Allesandro! How thou hast startled me! I thought that thou wert occupied with thy eternal shearings of the little woolly ones, and could not find the time to stroll beneath the willows at high noon.

ALLESANDRO

Cease thy chattering, little magpie! I know well thou art but trying to cover up thus thy maidenly blushes for thy boldness in sending a message by old Diego!

RAMONA

A message? A message, thou sayest? To whom, pray?

ALLESANDRO

To a person of no account—a humble pleader at thy little feet—a man who fears to put his fate to the touch! A man who loves thee—who adores thee, Ramona—to Allesandro the Indian!

RAMONA

Allesandro the Indian! Why dost thou call thyself of no account? Art thou not the Son of the Chief of all the

Temeculas? And, furthermore, art thou not thyself, which in itself makes of thee Allesandro, a great person?

ALLESANDRO

Oh, Ramona, dost thou truly care for me, an Indian, so? Is it true that thy lovely eyes look upon this Allesandro with favor?

RAMONA

I know that a girl of Mexico, such as I am, should blush to tell of affection to a man—and yet, Allesandro, it would seem I have the bravery of thy own people in declaring myself.

ALLESANDRO

Well then, little Ramona, I will further prove that bravery—I, who have feared so to speak to a little gentle bird, such as thou! Ramona, I, Allesandro the Indian of Temecula, love thee! I have but one prayer to the Gods of my father's people, and that is, that thou shouldst come with me to my own land—Father Gaspard will marry us, and oh, Ramona, little loved one—I will care for thee, and love thee, and see that no harm comes near thee! Speak, querida, tell me thy answer.

RAMONA

Allesandro, thou dear one—I should cast down my eyes in maidenly confusion, and pretend to not know what it is all about—but, my Indian, the bursting of my heart is too great for that! Allesandro, I love thee—I will come with thee when thou callest!

SENORA MORENO

Ramona! Ramona! Is it possible that I see what I see? Rather would I be told that my eyes had lost their sight, than to know that I truly find you, thus, in the arms of an Indian!

RAMONA

But, madre mia—let me explain!

ALLESANDRO

Senora, permit me to speak.

SENORA MORENO

Quiet! Not another word! There is nothing either of you can say! Ramona, go to your room, shameful creature! As for you, Allesandro—you will be answerable to your master! Ramona, come with me! (*Fading.*)

RAMONA

(*Calling back.*) Allesandro—I will be true!

\* \* \* \*

ANNOUNCER

For the rest of that day, and the following night, Ramona was locked in her room. Felipe had secretly seen Allesandro, and advised him to absent himself for as long as it would take to go to Temecula and return.

\* \* \* \*

SENORA MORENO

Well, ungrateful one, has the night brought you any wisdom? Your hours of solitude should have served to show you the folly of your ways.

RAMONA

Madre mia—I have never disobeyed you before, but this is different from all other things. I have promised to marry Allesandro!

SENORA MORENO

Are you mad? I will never permit it! You cannot marry without my permission. I forbid you ever to speak of it again.

RAMONA

You may forbid as much as you please! You are not my real mother. The whole world cannot keep me from marrying Allesandro. I love him, I have promised, and I shall keep my word.

SENORA MORENO

Pah! You talk like a fool! I will shut you in a convent before I will permit such a disgrace in the Moreno family.

RAMONA

Do that, madre mia—and what avail? There are no walls built so high that my Allesandro cannot scale them, and free me.

SENORA MORENO

Shameless one! I will have the servants set the dogs upon him, this thieving Indian, that comes to steal the honor from the house that gave him shelter!

RAMONA

That is not true! He is an Indian, yes—but a great and good one, of a character that any man of Castille

might well be proud. He is not thieving—he stole nothing! I gave him my love freely, gladly, willingly.

SENORA MORENO

Shameless, unblushing one! I will set the dogs upon the upstart!

RAMONA

That you will not dare! For is not the Hacienda that of the Morenos? And is not my Allesandro the friend of Felipe, the son of the house?

SENORA MORENO

(*Changing front.*) Ramona? Have we not always had the feeling between us of mother and daughter? Look you, my child—here, behind this saint, I open a secret door. (*Sound of key and door.*) And in this box—look well, my daughter—are jewels and satins and laces, that might well make a princess gasp.

RAMONA

What have they to do with me, madre mia?

SENORA MORENO

They are all yours!

RAMONA

Mine?

SENORA MORENO

Left in my charge—to give you as a bride.

RAMONA

As a bride?

SENORA MORENO

*If you marry worthily!* See! Here is the letter of my sainted sister, who brought you into this family. (*Reads.*) All those jewels and these laces and satins are to be her dowry, if she marry worthily.—Look you, Ramona—a fortune is here—emeralds, rubies, diamonds! And laces of the finest quality! All yours—*if you marry worthily!*

RAMONA

And if not, madre mia? What then?

SENORA MORENO

Then all this beauty and richness goes to the Church. That is what the letter says.

RAMONA

But the letter doesn't say who my mother was.

SENORA MORENO

Are you, in truth, a fool, as your acts would make you seem? All these jewels and fabrics before you—yours for the taking—and you ask—"Who was my mother?" Your mother doesn't matter, stupid one—she was only an Indian!

RAMONA

An Indian? Oh! Who was my father? Was he Moreno?

SENORA MORENO

No! A sailor. His name was Phail.

RAMONA

I thank you, madre mia, for telling me this. See here this handkerchief—it was my father's—and see you, here within its folds are pearls, doubtless of untold value.

*(Sound of beads scattered on table.)*

I will keep the little linen handkerchief in memory of my father. You may give the pearls to the Church!

\* \* \* \*

*(Cathedral chimes in the distance.)*

ANNOUNCER

Ramona, true to her word and to her Indian blood, withstood the threats of Senora Moreno, and fled in the night with Allesandro the Indian. Father Gaspard married them at the Mission of San Diego, and the two started life together, a maiden without a name, and a chieftain without a tribe.

Many years later, on her death-bed, Senora Moreno speaks to her son Felipe.

\* \* \* \*

SENORA MORENO

*(Faintly in a dying voice.)* The jewels, my son—the jewels—there behind the Madonna—get them.

FELIPE

I have them, mother. To whom do they belong?

SENORA MORENO

To the Church. They should have belonged to the maiden, Ramona—if—she—married—worthily. But she married Allesandro the Indian!

FELIPE

If she married worthily? But—

SENORA MORENO

Yes—then they were hers—but not to Allesandro the Indian! (*Sighs.*)

DIEGO (*Old servant.*)

Madre de Dios! She is dead, don Felipe!

(*Murmur of Rosary Mass by several voices fades out, and then distant hoof-beats fade in.*)

FELIPE

Hola! Hola there! Where did you get those fine horses, friend? It looks to me as though I well know the buckskin mare.

VOICE

I got them both from an Indian, Senor. He called the mare Baba.

FELIPE

Baba! Ramona's mare! What was the name of the Indian?

VOICE

Allesandro the Indian, of Temecula, he was called.

FELIPE

Allesandro the Indian! Dios Mio—now my quest is ended. Can you tell me, friend, where I can find this Indian?

VOICE

He is dead, Senor.

FELIPE

Dead? And his widow, the young Ramona?

VOICE

She lives alone, Senor—high above there—in the valley of the tall Sequoias.

FELIPE

Thank you, friend—may God be with you.

VOICE

And may God be with you, Senor!

FELIPE

And with Ramona!

*(Hoof-beats fade out.)*

ANNOUNCER

\* \* \* \*

And so Felipe found Ramona again, and nursed her back to strength and life—and, at last, persuaded her to go with him into Mexico. That part of her which belonged to Allesandro was dead, but in making the good Felipe happy as his wife, she found peace. Sons and daughters came to them—but the most beautiful, and, it is said, the most beloved by both, was Ramona the younger, whose father was Allesandro the Indian.

THE END

## CHAPTER VII

### THE RADIO MARKET

**B**EFORE discussing the markets for radio material, let us outline the general conditions prevailing in the industry.

There is a Federal Radio Commission, now part of the Inter-communication Commission, which grants licenses to the various radio stations, determines their wave-lengths, and dictates certain policies and methods of procedure, which have to be followed if the license is to be retained. The broadcasting companies are then obligated to "go on the air" during the period covered by the license, and are responsible for the entertainment provided. They then offer their "time" to business firms and their advertising agencies, in much the same way that a magazine offers space for advertising matter. This selling of time constitutes their basic income.

In New York alone there are some forty radio stations all broadcasting simultaneously. It can, therefore, be readily seen that advertisers are disposed to pay fairly well for the best entertainment, in order to attract the greatest number of listeners.

The broadcasting companies themselves have their own

staff of program builders and continuity writers, and are in direct competition with outside organizations and individuals, who also have ideas and suggestions to offer the advertiser. Owing to the fact, however, that the permanent staffs have to prepare programs for all the time not sold to clients, they work under pressure. Therefore the independent author has a better chance to turn out good work, which he can sell at a reasonable figure provided he has the necessary commercial contacts to bring his material before the right people.

The duration of each program is in multiples of fifteen minutes, though it hardly ever exceeds one hour, and in every sponsored program there must be included the commercial credit or selling talk.

There is also a station break every quarter of an hour, in order that the letters of the individual station may be given. This is a matter of policy set by the Federal Radio Commission, but it is not enforced where there is continuity of thought, as would be the case in a play, or in a long symphony concert.

Many factors enter into the final choice of a program, one of the most important being the extent of the territory covered by the broadcast. A Coast to Coast hook-up, covering the major portion of the entire country, cannot be nearly so sophisticated as one built to appeal only to New Yorkers or to listeners in one or two big centres.

The National Broadcasting Company has gone to great

trouble and expense to check up, by house to house calls, on the actual number of listeners, and the most popular forms of entertainment. This report (which is confidential) is periodic, and shows that while good orchestral music still tops the list, dramatic shows and entertainers whose performances carry a thread of interest or suspense connecting one program with the next, are becoming more and more popular, and it is this aspect that is most interesting to writers.

Of course, a studio broadcast of a play once done is over. Repetition is extremely rare. It is not like a song which may be, and often is, repeated *ad nauseam*, and unlike a stage play which may run for years, there is no speculative aspect in the radio rights. The pay, indeed, is comparable to that received in journalism for an article.

Some programs are weekly, some twice a week, and some daily, the latter not being unlike "strips" in the newspapers, many of which are, indeed, actually on the air now.

As publicity is the *raison d'être* of broadcast advertising, it follows that anyone, whether author, actor or musician, who has good publicity, usable by the Press in connection with the radio program concerned, will be able to command a better figure than anyone with no background.

In every case where the radio drama is taken from a published work, both the author of the original book and the publisher is given credit.

Better known writers can, of course, command higher prices, but fees payable are not as good as those paid by class magazines for short stories.

Commercial "hours" are sold in series of thirteen, twenty-six or fifty-two weeks, and it is therefore expedient, when building a dramatic continuity, to bear in mind the number of programs. They should be built somewhat similar to a series of short stories, featuring the hero or heroine throughout, or, better still, should carry a thread of suspense like a newspaper serial, where each program is sufficiently complete to give an evening's entertainment, but has a strong thread of interest that regular listeners will make every effort to follow.

There are very few 'cold' dramatic programs, as the public seems to demand music, and even Shakespearean productions carry a twenty-three-piece orchestra, which has the doubtful advantage of reducing the actual text to a minimum.

The time factor is of great importance, and every program must finish within a variation of five seconds either way.

A sketch in a quarter of an hour program should not exceed ten and one-half minutes, and in a half-hour program not more than twenty-four minutes. The rest of the time is devoted to commercial credits, and to opening and closing musical signatures and interludes, if such are required.

Care should be taken that only radio rights for one performance are sold—all other rights being reserved to the author. This should be done, even at the risk of losing a contract, because of possible sales to talkies, television, or subsequent publication.

The copyright situation is far from being clear in the radio world, and authors cannot be too careful in the protection of their interests.

Very recently the demand for radio programs has been increased by the making and marketing of recorded programs. This is primarily due to the considerable changes in time throughout the country (there is a variation of four hours between New York and San Francisco), with the result that an advertiser who wishes to catch people at dinner cannot do so without resorting to records of his program.

The bigger broadcasting companies are very much opposed to these recorded programs, but, nevertheless, it is a field that the author should very seriously consider. When a key station broadcasts a play it constitutes only one performance even if some fifty odd chain stations relay it. On the other hand, a recorded program, once made, can be used at different times and in different places, and adequate return for this should accrue to the author. In some cases both recorded and studio presentations of a program take place on the same day.

Authors should be aware of all these facts in order that they may fully protect themselves in any contracts made.

Writers who have already sold books of short stories, or series, to magazines, and writers of newspaper serials are advised to consider either doing radio adaptations of their works or having these done for them by competent writers. The names of experienced writers for radio can be obtained through the courtesy of The Authors' League of America.

So far we have dealt particularly with commercial programs, but our book would not be complete without reference to those put on by the radio stations to fill that time remaining unsold to advertisers. These programs are known as sustaining features. It is obvious that the broadcasting company cannot afford to pay as much as an advertiser, but at least the writer gets his work heard, and many a sustaining feature has been sold to a client, after its popularity has been established. When a station sells a sustaining feature to an advertiser, author's fee should never be less than double the sustaining fee, and very often it is considerably more.

Just as in the magazine field, fees for radio material vary in amount. As much as five hundred dollars for a half-hour sketch may be obtained on a commercial program. Sustaining features, on the other hand, will rarely yield more than fifty dollars, unless the author is already famous.

Detective series are always popular, stories of adventure on both land and sea, love stories, in fact, any sort of series in which there can be both human interest and suspense.

The main thing to remember is that isolated plays, no matter what their merit may be, are difficult to sell, except as an occasional sustaining attraction. Because a radio play is as transient as a thought, it has to be caught at the exact time of its presentation, and there is no opportunity for the interested listener to tell a friend to hear such and such a program. On the other hand, if the following week's offering carries the answer to a riddle already set, or the climax to a scene already suggested, then there is at least the chance of building up a cumulative audience, which is, after all, the real objective of the program.

Briefly, the opportunities afforded may be tabulated as follows:

1. Works may be offered directly to advertisers or their agencies. Full royalties expected could then be asked. Some of the bigger agencies employ writers to do the adaptations, but it is better to employ your own dramatist, and submit a full synopsis and one complete script. In this way the author is assured that the adaptation is good enough not to injure his own reputation.

2. Already published works may be offered to broadcasting companies on a royalty basis, the company utilizing its own continuity department to make the radio adaptation. Royalties would be very low, but would increase if the program were subsequently sponsored by an advertiser.
3. Original ideas and manuscripts may be offered in the same way, but registration at the Authors' League of America is highly advisable.
4. All program ideas may also be offered to recording companies specializing in radio presentations.
5. Scripts may be offered to organizations of radio program builders, which are rapidly increasing in number.

The market, although not very lucrative at the present time, brings writers into the world of business, the possibilities of which are incalculable.

In a Coast-to-Coast broadcast some 30,000,000 people may hear the program. This tremendous publicity, for which the advertiser pays so much money, must be of inestimable value to the author of a published work.

## CHAPTER VIII

### PROGRAM BUILDING

**P**ROGRAM building requires a great deal more intensive thought than the layman can appreciate, and the shortcomings of radio entertainment in America are due, not to lack of experienced men, but rather to lack of cohesion of thought and planning between the interested parties.

The sponsor's program may last only a quarter of an hour, but the radio station's program lasts the full broadcasting day.

A manager of a vaudeville house is not interested only in one star turn, but in the considered sequence of many variety acts, differing as widely in character as should the radio offerings during a full day.

Nick Kenny, radio editor of the New York *Daily Mirror*, is as fearless as he is truthful, and the following quotation from one of his columns expresses conditions so ably that it deserves permanent record. He writes:

“From radio's infancy the owners of broadcasting stations have failed to assert themselves. They have been so greedy for the sponsor's money that they have sold the

people's birthright—the airwaves—for a mess of pottage. Anyone who could buy their time could put anything on the air he wished. This has gradually turned the radio into a three-ring circus where the average listener doesn't know what he is going to get when he tunes in.

“Jazz bands have been permitted to follow each other three and four at a time. Sketches have cluttered up the biggest network, three in succession. Quacks are permitted on the air so long as the quack can find a sponsor. Verily, radio has come to a sorry pass. The broadcaster is like a man who rents his home with a beautiful garden to a family with 50 wild dogs. There is nothing that can be done about it.”

Why the radio stations do not take the stand that the publishers of class magazines take can only be explained by the fact that they consider the sponsor's dollar before the public's welfare. The class periodicals keep control of space and advertising set-up. They would not sacrifice their readers to the whims of the richest advertiser in the world; they would refuse his business first. If a radio network were to establish itself as the *Saturday Evening Post* of the air, all the better advised sponsors immediately would patronize it. The quality of serials, the authenticity of articles, the punch of short stories, and the good taste of humor in the reading matter is just as im-

portant to the advertiser as is the layout of his own commercial space.

This analogy between magazines and radio is closer than one would imagine. Just as certain publications are definitely built to appeal to certain classes of readers, so different classes of people listen to their radio at different times. To advertise women's corsets on the air at 9 p.m. would be as badly advised as displaying them in *The Black Mask* instead of the *Ladies Home Journal*, or the *Woman's Home Companion*.

The advertiser knows this well enough, but listeners are apt to resent the time at which certain programs are heard, forgetting that these are built to meet the requirements of the majority listening at that particular hour.

Radio stations, subject only to the censorship of actual vulgarity or treason enforced by the Federal Radio Commission, care neither for the content of the advertising layout nor for the quality of the subject matter adjacent to the commercial space. They allow sales talk so to intrude into the program that it offends most listeners. They also permit a standard of performance and entertainment selection so low that members of the radio station staffs must blush for their own programs. The public are not fish to be baited with the crumbs of free samples and caught with the hook of ill-chosen entertainment. The power of radio for good or evil is so strong that it should be controlled with both character and wisdom.

There is an ancient Chinese saying that "a candle in the hand of a child is more dangerous than a hundred torches in the hands of robbers"—but radio is in danger from both.

Gladys Bevans, writing in the *Daily News*, says:

"A committee of the parent-teachers' association has made a survey of the children's programs offered between 4:45 and 8 P. M. It has adjudged them and will try to protect children from those considered unsuitable. This action was taken after parents reported that the children after listening to some of the children's programs had hysterics, nightmares, and other bad nervous reactions.

"The committee found:

- 5 of the 42 programs excellent.
- 2 of the 42 programs very good.
- 6 of the 42 programs good.
- 11 of the 42 programs poor.
- 8 of the 42 programs very poor.
- 10 of the 42 programs fair.

"And some of those listed as 'very poor' were found most popular with the children.

"It is interesting to note that these parents are not blindly prejudiced—they have no objection to the children listening to an exciting story. But they are fearful of the effect on them if this excitement is continued day after day.

And because many of the programs are continued, the matter is harder to control.

“It is said that good children’s ‘scripts’ are hard to get. Let us hope that the writers of children’s stories, or story telling teachers or other competent people will solve this problem, working with the broadcasting stations which express themselves as being anxious to co-operate with parents.”

We do not believe Miss Bevans is right in her concluding remark. Of course the radio stations will *say* yes to the parents, but they will *act* yes to the sponsor, who pays.

Good children’s scripts *are* available, but it is very hard to find a sponsor to buy them, because, as the committee of the parent-teachers’ association has pointed out, the children prefer the ‘very poor’ programs. They also prefer unwholesome food, and staying up too late.

The first essential of any program is an *idea*, which must be built later into a *theme*. A sponsor’s only idea is his product. The idea, once born, must be nurtured by creative thought and *critical analysis*. If it survives the latter test, then a series of programs can be built upon its foundation.

It has been said that there are only seven original plots in the world, but it is certain that there are an infinity of ways of presenting the same thing, to give it variety.

Thus many superstructures can be erected upon the same foundation, and many stories written upon the same theme.

How many plays based on great thoughts, have proved poor plays, and how many more radio programs have had good enough ideas, but have been written so cheaply that the performances have been worse than useless?

The fact is that the sponsor, wishing to save money, thinks that a good idea can be written by an inexperienced writer, with the result that the beautiful thought is dressed in tinsel or dross, and its quality unrecognizable.

Every program goes through three distinct stages, its conception, its writing, and its performance. Even if the writing is excellent, the performance may not do it justice. This is where showmanship is required.

Not only must the selection of the actors be done with considerable thought, but the choice of the music, both as to quality and quantity, will mean the difference between a good and a bad show.

A very much neglected essential is the accurate timing of the musical interludes, or bridges between one scene and another. These are gauged more by dramatic instinct than by any hard and fast rule, and are comparable to the all-important timing of exits by vaudeville performers. Every old professional knows that if his exit is correctly timed, he will be able to secure many more recalls than if it were made either too soon or too late.

In the broadcast of a play, if the musical bridge is too

long, then listeners lose the thread of interest in the spoken lines. On the other hand, if there is too little music, then there will be a sense of hurry, which is most irritating.

Some very able musical directors do not have a natural sense of dramatics, and may not be nearly so useful on a dramatic program as a less competent musician who has a flair for this particular sort of work. In a variety, or straight concert program, the sequence of numbers and the keys in which they will be played are both of importance. In this connection the ideas of the musical director will be sounder than those of the program builder without expert musical knowledge.

Just as the old vaudeville entertainment was built in such a way that there was a crescendo of interest leading up to the highspots of the program, so also in radio just as much care must be taken in this essential planning.

It would not be good to have a sacred song immediately follow a knock-about comic, unless there were some very definite reason for it, which would be announced. It would also be bad showmanship to have a sequence of numbers all in the same musical key or rhythm. In this connection it is interesting to know that many musicians have what is called 'perfect pitch.' Our experience has shown us that perfect pitch is more common than perfect tempo.

<sup>1</sup> Rudy Vallée is one of the few who have perfect tempo.

He will look at a score, and immediately say that "this will play thirty-six seconds," or "this will play forty-five seconds"—and he is invariably right, even when checked on a stop watch. This is what makes his radio programs among the smoothest on the air, and very restful to listeners because there is no uncertainty in his work.

We propose to deal briefly with educational programs, to include musical appreciation, history, general knowledge, and those of special appeal, such as poetry, and from these to draw certain inferences, which may be of value to the sponsor.

The first of these, musical appreciation, is not always designed for the student, but rather aimed to attract listeners who already understand the music to be demonstrated in the program. This is not as it should be. An educational hour should be an educational hour, and not straight entertainment.

It is, of course, a very excellent thing for students to hear the classics played by a fine orchestra, but program notes, however convincingly read, cannot be instructive unless they are short and directly followed by the passage concerned. To anticipate the musical moods of a whole movement is insufficient for the learner, and unnecessary for the qualified scholar. If a counter-melody is taken, let us say, by the 'cellos, it would be advisable to stop the orchestra, and re-play the particular passage, preceded with suitable remarks. This would enable stu-

dents to follow the master's work with a keener and more critical appreciation.

Such programs should reinforce the teacher's work with their students. There should be previous notification of which passages are to be replayed, or which salient points of a particular work are to be stressed. The student will then be enabled to learn by ear what his teacher has taught him.

There is so little time devoted to educational programs that the few hours so used should be utilized *definitely to instruct the student*, rather than entertain the masses at the same time.

With regard to historical programs, these have been competently handled by the American School of the Air, although the standard of writing of the scripts themselves has very often been below standard. Great care should be taken in historical accuracy, and the teachers at schools, who listen regularly, should be notified ahead of time not only of the incident to be dramatized, but also of the authorities from whom the facts have been collated.

The educational value of radio is so powerful that it is impossible to exaggerate the seriousness with which these programs should be taken, and it is a lamentable fact that many inaccuracies both as to date and place often creep into the text, presumably excused by dramatic license. Characterization is not deemed important, and many an actor has portrayed some famous historical figure, without

knowing either his age at the time, or his peculiarity of speech.

Some method should be devised of making available to every radio station in the country approved educational programs, planned and executed by the best authorities on important subjects. In this way the needs of every locality could be served at very low cost, and inestimable benefit accrue to the rising generation.

Unfortunately history is not an exact science like mathematics, and it is probably true that much international misunderstanding is based upon the biased history that is taught for political purposes in the different countries.

General knowledge programs are easier to build. Talks by experts on gardening, agriculture, engineering, astronomy, or physical geography can be given by specialists in each subject. The ultimate influence of these talks will depend upon the ability of the expert to project his knowledge through the medium of radio. Great care must be taken in his selection. The man who has the greatest number of books to his credit is not necessarily the best man to deliver his message by means of the spoken word. It is best that the voice of the actual authority should be heard. Full credit should be given to him, and not to the speaker, in those cases when some other person reads the treatise prepared. The responsibility for the authenticity and truth of the program content should rest entirely on the selected authority.

It is of more than passing interest that in Great Britain these talks by specialists are among the most popular of all the programs offered by the British Broadcasting Corporation. This popularity was not immediate, but cumulative, and therefore more lasting.

For programs of special appeal, none have been more significant than A. M. Sullivan's New Poetry Hour over WOR. In this there is no pandering whatever to the sentimentality of the moron, who will respond to the third rate poetry of the cheap ballad type. The whole presentation is motivated by a sincere desire to project an appreciation and understanding of poetry in its various forms, rhythms and moods, to the student and lover of poetry, and the major part of it is delivered by Mr. Sullivan himself, whose poetic genius has placed him among the highest ranks of modern poets. The fan mail on this series is remarkable, and is indicative that the public will respond to serious programs, *if and when they are given the chance*. The letters are not asking for free samples of something to eat; they are rather letters of keen appreciation, and sometimes criticism, which show the intense and concentrated interest taken by these listeners.

Our experience has led us to believe that the programs heard by the greatest number are not necessarily the best advertising programs. The finest orchestra becomes a background to conversation, and the commercial credit is heard but rarely. Time and time again we have danced at

## FOUR IMPORTANT MEN



*"The sage from Paducah,"  
Irvin S. Cobb*



*William S. Rainey, produc-  
tion manager of NBC*



*Rudy Vallee*



*Walter Damrosch,  
musical counsel, NBC*

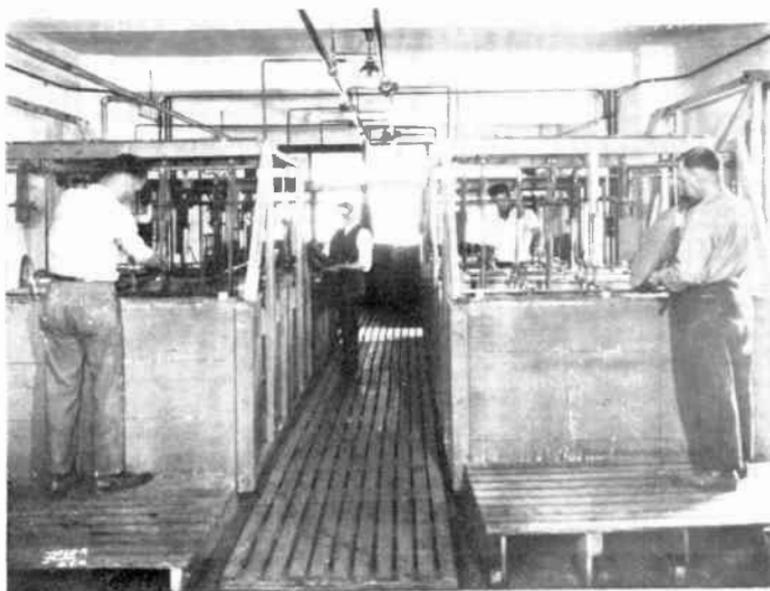
## ELECTRICAL TRANSCRIPTIONS



*Reproduction apparatus*



*Grinding and buffing  
stampers*



*Galvano baths, where master records are made*

*By courtesy of World Broadcasting System*

parties to excellent music provided by the radio, but no one has either known or cared who the sponsor was.

On the other hand, when the speaking voice holds the attention, there is a personal curiosity to know who it is. The interested listener will hush everyone, so that he or she will not miss the announcement, which alone can satisfy this curiosity. For this reason we believe that sponsors will turn more and more to the spoken word for their commercial programs.

Dramatic offerings, however, must be of the highest possible order, with a fine cast to attract and hold the attention of listeners. If the play is uninteresting, the dial will be twisted, because conversation in the room will be interrupted by the dialogue of the sketch, whereas with music the conversation will be continued to its background.

But if the play, or the speaker, is dynamic or really interesting, all talk will cease, and the loud speaker will actually become, for the time being, the honored guest.

## CHAPTER IX

### RECORDED PROGRAMS AND SPOT BROADCASTING

**N**O treatise on radio would be complete without mention of recorded programs, and what is known as spot broadcasting.

In America, where there are networks from coast to coast, the most important programs have emanated from a studio in a key station, and have been relayed across the country. The recorded program is, indeed, an innovation, for which a need most certainly existed.

Spot broadcasting means that the program is not relayed, but is put on at a single station, and is heard at that time only by those within the coverage of that station. There is a great deal to be said both for and against this method of utilizing radio, whether for commercial or educational purposes. Because of the hold of the major companies over the smaller stations throughout the country, the latter have great difficulty in obtaining programs that can compete with the costly offerings that the national advertiser can present over a network. The facilities in the small stations are very limited, there being less studio

accommodation, less equipment, and, in most cases, less competent program builders and directors.

The stars available in large centres like New York and Chicago place local talent, no matter how good it may be, at a disadvantage. Then again the local stations with the highest powered transmitters and widest coverage are likely to be under contract to the bigger radio companies, so that the time requested by the local advertiser may already have been contracted for by a national advertiser, operating from a key station.

It is true, however, that local support for home town business, more concentrated advertising in local newspapers and on posters, and the keener interest taken by the sponsor and listeners in local talent, tends to make the station favor the local advertiser in preference to the national advertiser, with whom there is little or no direct contact.

Lack of talent can be circumvented by using recorded programs, the standard of which can be as high as any studio performance. The Federal Radio Commission, however, has a ruling that every recorded program must be designated "by electrical transcription."

It would be difficult for any but the most highly trained ear to tell the difference between a studio performance and a recorded program, but this damning announcement causes an immediate reaction in the minds of the audience against the program. They sense, almost unconsciously,

that a record has no life, and they will imagine, even if it is not there, a lack of spontaneity in performance.

It is not our intention in this volume to discuss the ethics of this label of "electrical transcription"; the business and political angles involved are too considerable.

Indeed, the power of the vested interests in the big radio chains, and the dictatorial policy of the Musicians' Union would, in themselves, require more than one volume to elucidate.

Actually, the Musicians' Union is the only group in radio organized and protected to the Nth degree, and they care little or nothing for the unorganized groups and individuals who are their associates on every program.

Spot broadcasting is, at the outset, severely handicapped, and since the programs in this case emanate from the local studio, there are only two alternatives for the entertainment: either to employ local talent, or to use a recorded program.

The New Yorker is apt to turn his nose up, and his thumb down, at the idea that local talent may be just as good as any other. He is forgetful of the fact that many very popular radio personalities established themselves in a local station. Tony Wons is an example of this.

With intensive local publicity for the artist concerned, and a tactful handling of the community spirit, a hometown performer would stand a fair chance of competing with most Broadway stars, and the sponsor wishing to

support home industry would be well advised to bear this in mind.

Every case must be considered on its individual merits, but broadly speaking, the local advertiser should employ local talent, while the national advertiser using spot broadcasting would be better served by using a recorded program, in which his talent would be comparable to that used by his competitors on a Coast-to-Coast hook-up.

But there are other considerations just as vital to the sponsor as program content. Following the analogy of radio to magazines, the question of the time at which a program is heard is as important as the periodical in which an advertisement appears. If from 11 a.m. to noon is the equivalent to, let us say, the *Woman's Home Companion*, then it is obviously a poor medium in which to advertise an essentially masculine product, such as a meerschaum pipe, or a strong cigar.

An advertiser wishing to concentrate upon a certain class of listener must employ the right medium in each zone. This is not possible on a network, since there is a variation in time of approximately four hours between New York and San Francisco. The only way to catch the eleven-o'clock-in-the-morning audience everywhere is to put the program on at that particular time in each station concerned. If the same program is to be submitted in each locality, then the sponsor must choose between two alternatives: either a recorded program that would not alter

in any degree whatever, or the employment of local talent to perform the same show, which would leave the excellence of performance a variable quantity, and would incur multiplication of program costs.

So important is this question of time that several national advertisers, unconvinced of the efficacy of recorded programs, have repeated New York studio performances four hours later, for the benefit of audiences in the far West. The additional cost of this procedure is proof positive that the sponsors realized that in one performance only on a Coast-to-Coast hook-up there was an even more costly dissipation of advertising effort. This phase of broadcasting is one of the major problems of the radio industry, and one over which there are endless arguments between sponsors, advertising agencies, and radio stations.

Other advantages to spot broadcasting are that the commercial announcements can vary in each station for the benefit of the local retailers, or to meet the requirements of an intensive local advertising campaign. In other words, spot broadcasting is more elastic than its competitor, and in most cases cheaper, this being dependent upon the number of stations used.

On a network basis, the sponsor pays for network time, program costs, and line charges for telephonic transmission of the program from the key station to each local or relay station concerned.

On a spot broadcast basis, he pays for local time in each

station, program costs, and so much per record, with a guaranteed minimum. Thus if he wishes to increase his coverage by taking time on additional stations, he has no further program costs. If records are required for distribution to a large number of stations, then the cost of each is far lower than the fixed line charges from the key station to each point on the network used. With recorded programs it is possible to obtain the services of artists, and authorities on various subjects, who could never, except at prohibitive fees, be persuaded to accept a contract that would tie them to time and place for many months at a stretch.

There are, however, certain types of programs, and certain classes of entertainers, which would suffer considerably by being recorded—programs of topical interest that would suffer by being held up for a single day, and which would be valueless after a week; programs of emergency or special appeal, dependent upon the presence of an important person in a certain place at a certain time; and programs built around a personality performer, in whose variation of mood lies his charm, and whose selections may be in direct response to requests from his public.

From the standpoint of cold logic and fair competition, the advantages of spot broadcasting outweigh the advantages of the chain system. In theory, at any rate, spot broadcasting is the more ideal from the sponsor's point of view, but it cannot be conclusively proved effective until

the "electrical transcription" announcement has been waived—unless, of course, it triumphs in spite of it, which would spell death for the chain system altogether.

In the meantime, radio artists will continue to prefer to know that they are performing, at the time of performance, to a nation-wide audience, while listeners will be happier when assured that all the performers are in the studio "in person."

## CHAPTER X

### RADIO STUDIO PRODUCTION

**T**HE average radio fan knows very little of the adventures to which a program is submitted before he hears it.

It is the Production Director who is responsible for the practical work done in the studio. This entails a great deal more than the accurate timing of the program, which is his first consideration.

In particular, in dramatic shows, he is responsible for the casting, the direction of the actors, and the maintenance of discipline in the studio, not only among those engaged on the program, but also among any guests who may be invited to visit a broadcast.

The producer of a play in the theatre has every opportunity to make a thorough study of the play he is staging. He knows its every mood before he calls his first rehearsal, and he has already decided in his mind exactly what actor or actress he requires for each part. Conditions prevailing in radio are not so ideal. Single performances, of which there are seldom any newspaper criticisms, since a radio show is no longer news when it has been heard, tend to

produce a carelessness and lack of enthusiasm, for which the listening public suffer.

In radio, the producer very rarely has time to study his script. He has to base his decisions upon hastily conceived first impressions, and he is often as much in the dark as to the meaning of a play, or a line in it, as the actors themselves. Indeed, it is not unusual to look at the play for the first time, when the actors are reading it at first rehearsal! He is faced with the difficulty of relying upon actors to accept a change of inflection, which they have no time to *learn* as they would on the stage.

Apart from the poor writing of many radio scripts, lack of competent direction is largely responsible for the low standard of radio drama. There is a very real need for better radio producers, if the standard of dramatic programs is to be raised.

At the present time a production director is a cog on a large wheel, and not an artist. He may be bubbling over with ideas, but his chance of airing them is slight indeed. Nevertheless, the work is not uninteresting. He is certain of a living wage, and gains experience far wider than he would in a theatre, because he will have to cover programs of music, science, politics, and drama. Through these he should acquire not only knowledge, but be able to compare every conceivable method of histrionic and musical technique.

To hold his job, he should be gifted with tact—for he

may be called upon to handle a temperamental artist suffering from 'mike fright,' break the news to some aspirant to fame that his work was not acceptable, or struggle to uphold a professional point of view against a sponsor, who may be too conceited to admit his abysmal ignorance of what is good entertainment. He need not be a trained musician, but he should know a good deal about music. He should be able to use his voice in whatever capacity necessary, in case of emergency—there are no understudies in the theatre of the air!

A production director in a radio studio will see more artists of every sort at work in a month than most theatrical producers will in a year. This is what makes his work so interesting; he can observe the application of various forms of showmanship, and is enabled to form an opinion about what will be successful, and what will not.

Even the greatest artists in vaudeville, or on the films, may fail in radio, because there has been no one to help them constructively in the transference of their art from one dramatic channel to another.

The late Marie Cahill, of beloved memory, although one of the greatest of artists, actually feared the microphone, as if it were the head of a cobra about to strike. But she was not above taking direction, and spent many hours with her production director, away from the studios, until she had regained her self-confidence, and gave excellent radio performances.

There is probably no one work of the production director that cannot be done by someone else, but he must be the jack-of-all-trades—to judge of the balance of an orchestra, since the musical director is in the studio and not in the control room—to act as announcer in case of emergency—to cast a show so that no two voices are too nearly alike in quality—to re-write a faulty script at a moment's notice—to maintain discipline in the studio pleasantly and with tact—to time every performance he covers to an exact nicety—to realize immediately if the tempo of a number, or the pace at which a dramatic scene is being taken, varies from the speed taken at rehearsal—and to be able to make an intelligent and helpful report on the completion of each show.

In the small radio stations, he may be called upon to fill in, at very short notice, so that if he can sing, or play the piano, or has any other special talent, he should never allow it to lie fallow. The radio industry is one, indeed, in which a man can make use of many secondary talents, and even earn a little extra money at times because of them.

The hours that a production director has to keep are the longest and most irregular of any on the staff of a radio station.

He may have to cover as many as twenty-four productions in a six day week, and be on duty from 7 a.m. to midnight. He will also be assigned to various auditions

over and above his regular schedule. The duration of the rehearsals both for auditions and programs will vary, but as a rule musical programs require less rehearsal than dramatic ones. Rehearsals are essential, even when the artists themselves may have worked their act together outside the studio.

As many of the artists assigned to certain programs may be working on many others, it is easy to see how difficult it is to get full rehearsals, and how irregular the production man's hours are likely to be.

Some of the bigger advertising agencies have their own production staff, and the really keen production man would rather work with an agency than with a radio station, because he will have fewer programs to cover, and can give intensive thought to each assignment, and so produce better results. Experience, however, should unquestionably be gained in the radio stations, because a wider knowledge of the whole range of radio entertainment can be acquired there more quickly than anywhere else.

The production director in the radio station will always represent the station on any commercially sponsored program, which may be built and rehearsed by the advertising agency. In such cases, he acts not merely as check on timing, and on the musical numbers used, but should hold himself in readiness to place at the disposal of the agency whatever station facilities may be required for the benefit of the program.

The actors, musicians, or singers in the program will look to the agency man for their direction.

As in every other profession, the youngster who pays attention to detail, and is painstaking and conscientious in his work, will gradually establish his reputation, and be able to seize his opportunity when it arises.

If radio advertising is to prosper, there will be more and more demands for competent radio production men by the sponsors themselves, or by their advertising agencies.

In small stations, the station manager will very often combine the duties of production director with his own, and there is, in many ways, more opportunity for freedom of thought and action than in the big key stations. For one thing, there is far greater intimacy between the personnel of the radio station and the local inhabitants, and if a man has the strength of mind to resist the flatteries of a mutual admiration society, he will be able to achieve a great deal that may become important. A local station is analogous to the stock company in the small-town theatre, and some of the greatest artistic endeavors in the theatre have been born in these surroundings. Although, in the smaller radio stations, there are less technical facilities to help the producer, the same applies to the small-town theatre when compared to a Broadway house. Great ingenuity can be utilized by radio production men in getting sound effects when the mechanical facilities are limited. Of course, in the big stations there is always a special

sound effect department, but even then the call on this department is so heavy that the production man may often be left to his own devices.

The crushing of a match box close to the microphone will sound like the roof of a burning building crashing; the blowing of air through a straw into a glass of water will simulate the babbling of a brook; and the tramp of a thousand feet can be obtained by suspending on wires in a frame about a dozen wooden feet, each measuring about two inches square.

The crinkling in the hand of a piece of cellophane, taken from a packet of cigarettes, will produce the most realistic effect of the crackling of a forest fire.

The most curious thing about sound effects is that clever devices have been made to simulate the desired sound far more realistically than the actual noise itself.

For instance, the self-starter of an automobile is more recognizable as such by whirring a flower sifter in front of the microphone, than it would be by having a car in the studio.

The sound of the engine itself is suggested by using an electric motor, to which is attached a length of rubber tubing, which can be easily moved towards and away from the microphone. So silent is this 'motor' that it is hard for the actors in the studio to hear it, and yet the *phut* of the engine is picked up with amazing clarity in the loud speakers in the home.

A shot is simulated by striking a padded board with a stick, but the crack of a circus master's whip is actually obtained by firing a toy pistol!

Noise, through the microphone, is relative and not actual. The mechanical limitations in the transference and reproduction of sound make it necessary to keep the actual volume within certain limits. The result of this is that a climax may sound terrific in the studio, but in the loud speaker may be nothing out of the ordinary. For this reason, the production director should take advantage of his engineer's ability to help him solve his problems. If the director knows the relative effect he wants to get, the engineer knows *how* to get it.

Radio production is not a one-man affair. It requires more co-operation between various classes of experts than almost any other form of entertainment. And, in the end, it is only too true that the engineer can make or mar any show, no matter how hard the director may have worked.

An amusing story comes from England in this connection. A very poor musical comedy was put on by the British Broadcasting Corporation, because of some contract that had been signed with the composer, who was foolish enough to conduct the work himself. There was an excellent cast, but nothing could save the show. After it was over, one of the moguls of the company met the leading baritone, and remarked that he had given a very bad performance, and that hardly a word had been heard.

The baritone smiled, and replied briefly, "Thank God for the engineers!"

It is no easy matter to judge the personality quality of a voice, *when you can see the artist*, and therefore come under the spell of his, or her, personal charm. The smile suggests amusement, but many serious old-time actors are unable to smile with the voice alone. In radio, a cripple in a wheel chair could give a virile and moving performance of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, or *Hamlet*. There are many fine actors and actresses whose physical disabilities preclude their ever appearing in public, and if directors would learn to close their eyes, and open their ears, great talent and splendid voices might be discovered for radio.

Like the writer for radio, the production man is veiled in anonymity, so that the public will always blame the actors for a bad performance. When classical plays are produced, such as Shakespeare, Shaw, Wilde, or Barry, then the producer's name should be given out, so that he can receive the abuse or praise he merits. If the producer's name were also to be made public in the production of efforts of inefficient writers, whose name is legion, it would be found that ambitious directors would refuse to put on certain shows, or at least to be associated with them publicly. After all, a theatrical producer of any significance will never produce a show in which he has no faith, and until the radio director has similar discretionary powers

poor results will continue to be the rule rather than the exception.

The production director can help his cast during a performance by always being in sight of them, by giving encouragement, by seeing that they speak at a correct distance from the microphone, by smiling when a joke is well made, and by catching the eye of an actor, or the sound effects man, shortly before the cue for either of them to be ready. In other words, he should act towards his cast in a somewhat similar capacity to that of a conductor with his orchestra. He must also see that the cast maintain the same tempo as was set at rehearsal, which he checks with his stop watch, page by page through the script.

The actor, after all, misses audience reaction. He has no way of knowing if his voice is 'coming over' well or not. He waits in vain for the round of applause on his exit after a big scene.

It must be remembered, however, that many actors are nervous, and it often happens that a sign made to one actor is noticed by another, who does not know what it is all about, and may be embarrassed, and imagine that he himself is doing something wrong. The production director should, therefore, consider his cast, and only do those things which are helpful. There can be no hard-and-fast rule when dealing with the human element, but the success of a radio play depends so much on the con-



*A close-up of sound effects used on the  
Fu-Manchu program, CBS*



*The world's largest radio studio, NBC*

centration of the performers that the production director should be familiar with their idiosyncrasies, and so act in the studio as to get the best out of every individual taking part.

The ideal of every ambitious radio production director is that he will wake up one morning, to hear a sponsor say to him:

“I want you to produce for me a half-hour program to appeal to the great middle class, for whom my product is designed. The money available is so much per program. The time of day the program will go on is so-and-so. The coverage is such-and-such. Here is a contract for thirteen weeks, with a further year’s option, if you can give me what the public will respond to. I will guarantee you NO INTERFERENCE. I have NO FRIENDS I want to perform on the program. I have NO IDEAS as to what the program should be, but here is my present advertising campaign in magazines and newspapers. Here is your contract—please sign it, and get on with the job!”

## CHAPTER XI

### BRITISH PRODUCTION METHODS

**I**T has been said that the biggest difference between British and American broadcasting is that in England there is time to spend, whereas in America there is time to sell.

The British Government control the radio industry in England, and their source of revenue is derived from money paid by the public for licences to possess radio receiving sets.

Those responsible, therefore, for the program building throughout the year have knowledge of the approximate amount of money available for this purpose, and can plan accordingly.

There are no commercial sponsors. In fact, the most absurd restrictions are enforced, so that no proprietary article of any sort may be mentioned on the air, with exception of Fords and Rolls Royces!

It may also be of interest to know that for many years in the lounges of the broadcasting studios there used to hang a large framed placard of Instructions to Artists. This read:

## NO JOKES MUST BE MADE AT THE EXPENSE OF:

- (a) The Clergy.
- (b) The Jews.
- (c) Prohibition in America.

Since there is no advertising, and the broadcasting authorities have an absolutely free hand in the selection of programs, they are able to experiment much more successfully than can be done in America. Let us consider the results of these experiments.

Perhaps the most startling difference between British and American methods is that where the latter invariably employs only one studio in a broadcast, the former generally uses two in a dramatic program, and sometimes as many as five, simultaneously. There is really no great difficulty in the mechanical arrangement necessary for multiple studio control. Just as in American broadcasting studios several microphones are used in one studio, in England, as a rule, only one microphone is used in each of several studios.

It may seem, at first sight, a little strange that the use of different studios in the same broadcast should improve the reception of the play; but, on the other hand, the quality of room resonance, or the acoustical properties of each studio, varies to such an extent that the change of scene is actually heard. If, for example, a play is being

presented showing the meeting of a Board of Directors in a city office, alternating with the Company's workers fighting in the jungles of Central Africa, one scene can be faded in against the other, and whereas the first will sound as if the speakers were sitting in a heavily carpeted room, the second will have an acoustical background of open air, and the echoes of large spaces.

Then, again, there is the all-important question of sound effects. In America, these are necessarily introduced into the one studio, where all the actors and musicians perform. In England, however, whenever these sound effects are of sufficient importance to warrant it, a special studio is used for this purpose.

There is much to be said for both methods. It is undeniable, however, that the whirr of many aeroplane engines, the rolling crash of thunder, or an artillery bombardment of heavy guns, creates so much actual noise within the studio that the actors cannot hear themselves speak, and are, from force of habit on the stage proper, tempted to raise their voices in an effort to drown the noisy background. Should they do so, the engineer will be compelled to lower the level of the whole program, with the result that the climax will be partially lost.

On the other hand, if these noisy sound effects are being produced in a separate studio, the controlling engineer can bring up the volume of sound effects, or the volume of voice, into the proper relationship one with the other.

In this case the actors have to imagine the storm, since they cannot hear it, and it is reasonable to suppose that this may, in some cases, detract from their performance.

With the sound effects and the actors in the same studio, the noise that each may make is picked up (to a greater or lesser degree, dependent upon the relative position to each microphone) by all the several mikes in use—even if, as is usually the case, the sound effects are placed in a far corner of the studio, with their own individual microphone.

In England, the controlling engineer of a dramatic broadcast is somewhat like an organist. Instead of pulling out stops for different qualities of sound, he twists dials gradually to superimpose what is happening in one studio upon what is taking place in others, and intermingles these until the required mixture is correctly balanced. He is like a cook mixing the ingredients of a recipe—too much salt, and the dish is spoiled—so, too much thunder, and the actors are drowned!

If an effect is wanted of flashes of music being momentarily heard, as when a door opens and closes, this can only be perfectly achieved by the music being actually in progress in another studio. Then, as the door is opened, the engineer twists the dial which immediately projects the sound of the music—and as the door closes, he switches that studio off altogether.

Some fine comedy scenes have been performed in this

way, as when a man drives up to a garage to ask for a simple gadget for his car. Every time he reaches the crucial word, there is a terrific noise from the workshop, but the mechanic to whom he has been speaking thinks he knows what is wanted, and calls for the wrong thing. This is built up to a point of absurdity, and can be very amusing. It would be very difficult to do in a single studio, since the deafening noises would have to be started on cue each time, whereas in the case of dual studio control, the noise is started way ahead of cue, and is merely turned on and off like a tap of water, whenever it is wanted.

The American method, however, has done one very excellent thing. It has produced the most ingenious sound effects in the world—sound effects that simulate the marching of a thousand men, and yet make so little disturbance within the studio that the actors are not in the least disconcerted by it.

Where there is multiple studio control, the method of communication between the studios is a system of colored lights,—a green light for warning, and a red one for go. In some cases this system is re-inforced by a man in each studio wearing headphones, so that he can follow the actual script, and pick up the cues coming from the other studios, without relying entirely on the lights.

As can be imagined, in big productions in England a great deal more rehearsal is necessary than would be considered feasible in America, and it is allowable, with so

much time being spent in the perfecting of performance, that the standard of dramatic shows is generally higher.

One of the biggest programs ever attempted by the British Broadcasting Corporation was a radio adaptation, designed and performed by Ivan Firth, from Owen Rutter's celebrated "Song of Tiadatha."

This program, the duration of which was one hour, entailed the simultaneous use of no less than five studios.

In the main studio was a full orchestra of some sixty pieces, and a male chorus.

In the second studio was Ivan Firth, reading the epic poem against a musical background, which he heard through headphones.

In a third studio were the sound effects, simulating all the noises of war, the disembarking of troops, and the rattle of equipment.

The fourth studio was an 'echo' studio, utilized for giving the suggestion of troops drilling on the barracks square, with the resounding thump of hundreds of steel-shod rifle butts dropping to the concrete floor.

The fifth studio was for an extra band, so that when the troops were marching along the quayside to the martial strains of a military band, a dance orchestra, in a night club they were passing, could be distinctly heard in another rhythm and another key. This helped to give listeners a vivid impression of those good things in life that the soldiers were passing on their way to the front. This

effect could not be obtained in a single studio, unless a gramophone record were superimposed, which would be, of course, the equivalent of another studio.

In America today the use of sound effect records is becoming more popular, but this is not so effective as an independent studio.

During the course of this broadcast of "The Song of Tiadatha" no less than one hundred and twenty-six light cues were flashed from studio to studio, and there was not a single hitch. It is impossible that a performance of this nature could be broadcast from one studio without simplifying the production to such an extent as to detract from its merit.

Of course there will be many to say that such effort and meticulous care taken in planning is hardly worth while for a radio program, which is as fleeting as a cloud across a stormy sky. But if radio is to progress, slipshod methods must be replaced with thoughtful planning, and careful execution of those plans.

A few years ago a well known British radio producer was invited to put on several of his best shows for the National Broadcasting Company in New York City. A great deal of labor was spent in boring holes in the studio walls, in running wires for signal lights from floor to floor, and studio to studio—but the net result of the experiment was that the producer in question returned to England, where he slammed American broadcasting meth-

ods up hill and down dale, while the N.B.C. quietly went to work to repair the ravages that were created in their studios on his demand.

The experiment may be considered a failure, but on the other hand if the process had been reversed, a similar failure might have occurred on the other side. The fact is that there are often two right ways of doing anything, and the American broadcasting authorities have developed their own method to an extremely high pitch of efficiency.

One of the finest dramatic programs ever heard by the writers of this book was over the Columbia System, and was a sustaining feature. The sketch was a half-hour program devoted to the pioneer days of the Old West. Apart from the writing and the individual acting, both of which were of a very high standard, the sound effects were so real that one could actually see the ditched wagon, and visualize the efforts of the men to get it out of the mud. Then came the sound of fresh teams of horses arriving, with their hoofs splashing through the mud. Vivid realism was the result, and the play itself was just as exciting to sit and listen to as many a first rate Western talkie thriller. Credit should be given to Miss Nichols, head of the sound effect department, for the able way in which she handled this and other programs. From her success it would seem that there is an opening for women on the permanent studio staffs.

At N.B.C., Mr. Ray Kelly has also devised some very

clever gadgets, and has shown that he can meet almost any demand, without requiring an independent studio.

There would seem to be no reason to change the accepted method, particularly when the change would entail the use of studio space, and rehearsal time, which could be more beneficially applied to the needs of the various sponsors of radio entertainment.

The comparative effect on actors of the two different methods of production is not very marked. It is largely a question of what one is used to, and the English actors will swear that their own show is the best, just as the American actors would fight to uphold their own supremacy. Ideally, both sides of the Atlantic should benefit from each other's methods. The American broadcasting stations should have independent sound studios, for use on special occasions, and the British broadcasting stations should employ more movable sound effects to make possible the presentation of good, ambitious performances in a single studio.

The Production Director under English methods works at a distance from his actors, and may, in fact, be on another floor in the building. He has, of course, a public address system, so that he can speak back to his cast, during rehearsal, through a loud speaker—but *he cannot see them.*

The actors, therefore, never receive encouragement of any sort during a performance, and are never subject to

any nervous distraction by signs, which may be misunderstood, flashed at them from the control room window.

In some studios there are lighted signs, which instruct an actor to come nearer to, or go farther away from, the microphone, as the case may be. Generally, however, if there is anything wrong, the production man will enter the studio, and quietly approach the offending actor, and move him gently to a better microphone position.

The British public have plenty of criticism to level at the standard of radio fare, but it is interesting to note the popularity of the more serious type of program. In 1929 a plebiscite was held, and the most popular dramatic programs were a series of plays by L. du Garde Peach, based on Greek mythology. Of course, the radio dramatist, from the artistic and not the financial angle, has far greater opportunity than in America. In England the program schedule is arranged to include the play selected, and the play is not destroyed by compressing it into fifteen minutes, if it really requires twenty minutes to do it justice. The whole schedule is more elastic, since no specified time has been contracted for by sponsors, who want to catch their victims at dinner time five nights a week. There are fewer programs, but they are of longer duration. The old world is more leisurely in life itself, and radio entertainment is there for those to listen, who will. No great effort is made to attract listeners by either professional or commercial ballyhoo.

The program builders are sincere in their efforts to please the public, and if they fail some other type of program will be tried. But definitely they try only to please the public, and not a sponsor, so that they have a free hand, subject to the universal restrictions of censorship, which are well understood—and once they have sold an idea, they are free to work without either interruption or interference.

The *Radio Times*, published by the British Broadcasting Corporation, and sold by them to the public, gives a comprehensive survey of a full week's programs. Miniature scores and libretti of the more important presentations are also on sale at reasonable cost, so that these programs can be followed more closely by students and lovers of music. The listeners themselves pay directly for everything, and, for that reason, have more justification to criticize. At the same time, such a procedure ensures, on their part, more attentive listening, keener appreciation, and, in the long run, a more serious love of radio entertainment.

Radio in England, or 'wireless,' as it is called, is indeed the Theatre of the Air, with the public paying for admission.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE ANNOUNCER

WHEN it is considered that every program has its announcer, who gives out his own name at the end of the performance more often than not, it is surprising that so few of them have become famous.

This policy of "Your announcer is so-and-so" dates back to the early days of radio, when there was little or no money paid for these services, but when there was an even greater satisfaction in having one's name broadcast than seeing it in print.

But today, when radio has progressed to such enormous proportions, it is quite usual to hear a program in which the performers remain anonymous, while the announcer tells you his name, if he has only a dozen words to speak. This convention has, unconsciously, developed an apparent sense of superiority in many announcers, which is the most irritating of all their faults. Many an announcer, who struts about the studios thinking he is cock-o'-the-walk because he won in some distant past a medal for diction, might be surprised if he could know how sincerely he is disliked by the majority of listeners, because of his milk-

and-water delivery, or his saccharine preface to a program of Romance.

It would be well for beginners and old-timers alike to remember that their mental attitude percolates through the meaning of the actual spoken word, and that a mental sneer is not easily covered by a semblance of sincerity.

The New York Telephone Company created the slogan, "The Voice with the Smile," but too many radio announcers have made their own "The Voice with the Smirk." Many a fine program of charm or drama has been spoiled by the supercilious tones of an obviously bored announcer, and it is hard to understand why the radio stations see fit to give credit, unless material aid has been given towards the perfection of performance.

From the public's point of view, the most important function of the announcer is to create mood. This is not easy, and does not lie so much in intelligent delivery as in mental attitude, which can only be assumed after study, and, if possible, rehearsal, without which no actor would care to undertake any part. The combination of conceit on the part of the announcer and economy on the part of the station enforces impromptu performances by the announcers, who may not have seen what they have to read until some thirty seconds before they are on the air. Thus they become, as it were, adventurers in wordland, and rely upon their native wit to extricate themselves with good

grace from a faulty sentence, and to convey meaning, which may be very obscure.

Announcers, like actors, are born not made, for the everlasting quality of infectious personality cannot be taught in any school, because it is a spiritual asset that has no relation to the rules of rhetoric, or the pronunciation of words.

It is foolish to deny the psychic power of speech—the indescribable something that makes only one out of a thousand Hamlets unforgettably great. Another quality that is very necessary, but all too seldom possessed by present day announcers, is the capacity to surmount monotony, and always appear spontaneous whether they are or not.

While announcers never receive direction as an actor does, they do, nevertheless, sometimes receive general instruction. This instruction has produced a certain monotonous sameness. The most successful announcers have developed their personalities in spite of the stations.

Most listeners know the station on which they have tuned in, and resent the unnatural emphasis, very obviously the result of orders from above, on: "This is the NATIONAL Broadcasting Company," or, "This is the COLUMBIA Broadcasting System." This is the very type of ballyhoo which the radio stations themselves decry in the sales talks of the sponsors, and it only goes to show that it takes a strong man to practise what he preaches.

The latest phase, due, no doubt, to the age in which we live, is for announcers to adopt a machine-gun method of delivery, aimed deliberately at forcing the attention of listeners. This is a variation of high-pressure salesmanship, ill-advised in conception, and offensive in result. It should have no place in radio.

We thought it might be interesting to take a group of the outstanding announcers of today, and analyze the distinctive qualities of their announcership. We have kept the following points in mind: firstly, what these announcers represent to the listening audience; secondly, to what they themselves attribute their success; thirdly, what their respective publicity departments consider the governing factors in their success; and, fourthly, what they must guard against in order to maintain the place in the sun which they have won.

Just as famous men of achievement can be characterized in one word, for instance: Morgan—Finance; Rockefeller—Oil; Einstein—Relativity; and Ziegfeld—Follies, so these announcers, and their significance to the public, can be summed up in the same terse manner.

DAVID ROSS	.....	Voice.
TED HUSING	.....	Spontaneity.
NORMAN BROKENSHERE	.....	Personality.
LOUIS DEAN	.....	Sincerity.
KENNETH ROBERTS	.....	Charm.

## FAMOUS ANNOUNCERS



*Ted Hsing,  
Spontaneity*



*Kenneth Roberts,  
Charm*



*David Ross, Voice*



*Norman Brokenshire  
Personality*



*Louis Dean, Sincerity*

## FAMOUS ANNOUNCERS



*Milton Cross.  
Diction*



*Alwyn Bach.  
Culture*



*Announcers' Gold  
Medal Award*



*James Wallington  
1933 Medalist*



*Alois Harrilla. Naturalness*



*Graham MacNamee.  
Enthusiasm*

GRAHAM MACNAMEE . . . . .	Enthusiasm.
HOWARD CLANEY . . . . .	Salesmanship.
ALOIS HAVRILLA . . . . .	Naturalness.
MILTON CROSS . . . . .	Diction.
ALWYN BACH . . . . .	Culture.
A. L. ALEXANDER . . . . .	Conviction.
FORD BOND . . . . .	Accuracy.

*DAVID ROSS.*

David Ross, perhaps the most outstanding among studio announcers, attributes his success to concentration and study. He analyzes his work, and knows exactly the meaning he intends to convey before entering the studio. He leaves nothing to chance.

The Press Relations Department of the Columbia Broadcasting System state that in their opinion his natural speaking voice, resonant and vibrant, together with his aesthetic temperament, have brought him his signal success.

Mr. Ross, to sum up, believes that the conscious application of mental effort is more important than the natural qualities with which he has been endowed, while press relations would argue that he was "born great" rather than that he "achieved greatness."

The danger to those who are "born great" arrives with the self-consciousness of the qualities inherent to the man. Thus the woman who is too conscious of her own great

beauty soon loses the respect of others, while the matinee idol who stops to admire his own attractiveness will soon lose his drawing power.

Thus David Ross must never allow his audience to hear him *listen to himself*, or to be self-conscious of his concentration upon his own delivery, and the tonal quality of his voice.

### TED HUSING.

When Ted Husing was asked to what he attributed his success, he replied, "Chiseling."

Explaining this answer, he said:

"My whole success in the radio business has been up around sports announcing. When I was first an announcer at WJZ, years ago, I didn't know anything about either sports or radio. I did like football, though, and every Saturday, when Major J. Andrew White was scheduled to broadcast a football game, there would be a couple of extra passes lying around loose. I developed a pretty good drag with one of the assistant program managers, and used to be first on deck every week for those passes. Then I'd go to the game, and sit alongside the Major while he broadcast, and help if he needed aid. After a while, he got so accustomed to having me around that he would squawk if I didn't show up. So that's the way I became a sports announcer, believe it or not. Just a chiseler!"

The press department think that it is Ted's uncanny

ability to carry the eye's picture through his mind and into his speech with unusual speed that has made him foremost among sports announcers.

Ted Husing's shortcomings are due to the fact that his mind, very often, works quicker than his eye, with the result that his spontaneity allows him to sacrifice accuracy for speed. Nevertheless, when a sports announcer has to cover a game that is uninteresting and slow, he is between the devil and the deep sea. If he tells the truth which his eye sees, the broadcast would be dull, or the announcer's language so blue, that he might expect dismissal for bad language; while if he colors what he sees to make it interesting to listeners, he will be accused of inaccuracy.

A sports announcer is like a racing motorist—he has to go fast, but he must take risks at the same time.

### *NORMAN BROKENSHIRE.*

Norman Brokenshire says that he reached his goal in radio "Just because I didn't give a darn!"—which is symbolic of his attitude.

Press relations believe it is because of his informal and confidential loquacity.

Norman Brokenshire—Personality Plus—with his devil-may-care attitude of I-don't-give-a-darn, will hold the gay value of his careless manner only so long as his carelessness is not deliberately exploited. People will love him for his care-free good humor only so long as they feel it

is natural. They would hate it if they thought that Broken-shire were *careless of them*. They will like to have him care-free and careless *with* them, not *of* them.

### LOUIS DEAN.

Louis Dean, once a salesman, believes it is this quality in his announcing that has brought him to the foreground. Dean says he believes in what he announces, and it is this that makes him convincing—for, after all, a radio announcer on a commercial program is but a glorified salesman.

The Press department place their belief in Dean's enthusiasm, which is evident through the loud speaker.

His work certainly bears the stamp of sincerity, and his thought is more on what he is saying than on himself, which is highly commendable. He deserves his popularity, and will probably keep it.

### KENNETH ROBERTS.

Ken Roberts says that it is the persuasiveness in his voice that has helped him. He believes in this gentle art rather than going at announcements hammer and tongs.

Publicity thinks it is the appealing note in Roberts' voice, plus sincerity, that is his keynote.

The continued application of persuasive methods to the varied assignments that come to all station announcers is dangerous, and an overdose of persuasion is apt to become

oppressive. Radio stations do not always exercise sufficient consideration in the selection of the announcer, and the very quality of Mr. Roberts' natural charm might handicap him more than he realizes.

### *GRAHAM MACNAMEE.*

Graham MacNamee attributes his success to "Lucky breaks, and just foolin' along."

The press department agrees with this, but adds some interesting information. They say that Graham has done more to create enthusiasm in the layman for sport, and to build up an immense feminine audience for baseball and boxing broadcasts, than any other man.

This is due to the fact that there is no one who is able to project enthusiasm as MacNamee can, provided that he is himself moved by what he sees. In this lies both his success and his occasional failure.

As a singer, Graham MacNamee applied his natural aptitude for showmanship, and proved that with limited talent he could still achieve far more than many with better voices. Many a time we have heard him say that if Theodore Webb (one of the greatest baritone voices on the microphone) had some of his showmanship, and that if he, Graham, had some of Webb's glorious tones, then they would both be millionaires.

But Graham's triumph as an announcer came to him when he was lucky enough to be assigned to a fight, which

in itself was so thrilling, that he forgot all he knew about showmanship, and was unable to control his own emotions in describing the sport he loved so well.

Enthusiasm of this sort cannot well be assumed, and when MacNamee strives to project a manufactured thrill into a fight, or a ball game, that is actually dull and uninteresting, then his mental disgust for the spectacle he is watching causes him to fumble with words, and renders him unable to surmount his disappointment with showmanship.

The combination of "foolin' along and lucky breaks" is an unstable star to which to hitch a wagon, and the gambler who crowds his luck is likely to lose out in the end, unless he builds upon something more permanent.

### *HOWARD CLANEY.*

Howard Claney says:

"I am new to radio. I spent fifteen years in the theatre, and one can't work that long before an audience without having a pretty definite knowledge of audience psychology.

"Naturalness is often a mistaken thing, for the most theatrical thing in the world is naturalness. The commercial program can be full of high sounding theatricalnesses, and still be natural and extremely agreeable and extremely important to the listener.

"If you are selling hooley, sell hooley, Mr. Announcer—but you can't sell hooley or the most delicate perfume,

unless you think of hooley in the one case and delicate perfume in the other. So don't think you can say *soap* and think *Claney*."

Publicity believe that Claney is the salesman *par excellence*, and from what Claney himself says, it would appear that he is in agreement with them. We have stated elsewhere in this book that in our opinion salesmanship, as such, should have no place in radio. In any case, the awareness of any quality by the possessor of it detracts from the quality.

Apparently Howard Claney has pinned his faith to his own ability as a salesman, rather than to the quality of the goods he is paid to sell. A too great sureness of oneself may be a dangerous thing, if the public is persuaded into purchasing a product by the dynamic selling of the showman salesman, and this same product does not measure up to the standard set in his ardent ballyhoo. A salesman will be damned for ever by those to whom he has sold a pig in a poke.

#### ALOIS HAVRILLA.

Of all the announcers we have mentioned, Alois Havrilla is, to the best of our knowledge, the only one whose native tongue is not English. He is a Czechoslovakian by birth, yet his mastery of English is perfect. He is so natural in his announcing, and so free from striving after an

effect of any sort, that there is no one better able to introduce the best entertainment for the home.

There is a quiet and unaffected scholarliness in his work that suggests the student who knows what he is talking about, and can immediately place listeners at their ease. While he may lack the dynamic quality of some other announcers who *compel* attention, he must have a host of radio friends who will remain faithful to him.

### MILTON CROSS.

Milton Cross is a very experienced radio announcer, and what he has to say is both interesting and instructive.

“My mental attitude before a microphone depends on the type of program I am handling.

“If I have to introduce a dignified program during which a distinguished speaker is to be presented, I assume a dignified style of delivery.

“If I am to introduce a humorous program, I endeavor to infuse the lightness of the program into the style and tone color of my voice.

“If I am introducing my Children’s Hour, I try to portray the character and spirit of this program in my voice.

“Through it all I keep in mind that I am talking directly to people in their homes. Enunciation, grammar, pronunciation or diction are always in my subconscious mind, but these are not paramount in my thoughts when

before the microphone. I believe that the best and finest radio speaker or announcer is he who can, by the very inflection and tone of his voice, take you into his confidence and make you feel that he is conversing directly with you in an intimate and friendly relationship."

The diction of Milton Cross has become a standard, but the student who would learn by listening to him would be advised to guard against the technique of diction ever being in evidence. The greatest singers will have studied for years, but as soon as the audience can hear *how* they get their results, then the spirit of improvisation will be lost, and the performance will sound stereotyped.

#### ALWYN BACH.

Alwyn Bach is an announcer who has certain qualities which are almost unique. His voice does more than project personality and the meaning of the words he speaks; it conveys, at the same time, a very definite impression of what he looks like in person.

He is a master of subtlety, and might well be called the Diplomat of the Air. He can shade meaning to a nicety, and many an actor could learn a lot from him about the art of nuance.

It is possible that his appeal is to the more sophisticated listeners. It is certain that he has a great facility for setting an intellectual mood, whether of humor, poetry, or romance.

*A. L. ALEXANDER.*

A. L. Alexander says that he owes his success to sincerity, and his belief in what he says. He goes out of his way to avoid announcing commercial programs when he does not agree with what he has to say about the product, and he is the only announcer to tell us that he feels the responsibility of selling anything to anybody, unless he believes in the qualities claimed for the article. Considering that he works at WMCA, which is a local station competing with the major networks, his amazing popularity is proof enough that his policy is sound. As Master of Ceremonies on the Mana-Zucca Soirees, one of the finest series of informal classical programs we have ever heard, he was a real factor in its success, so that listeners, whether familiar with the fine artists who were performing, or not, were really interested in what Mr. Alexander had to say.

*FORD BOND.*

Ford Bond is one of the few announcers to take up sports announcing, who never allows himself to be excited by the game he is reporting. His increasing popularity in this field is due to the fact that he always finishes describing any point of human interest in the game he is watching, before he continues with the action of the game. But he never misses a play. It makes little difference to

him whether the game itself is good or bad. He is primarily concentrated in bringing to the public exactly what he sees—and only that. There is a sense of completion in his work. Few people know that Ford Bond is an able writer, as well as performer, and his characterization of The Old Colonel in The Southland Sketches, which he wrote, was memorable. This program featured The Southernaires Quartet, one of the most fascinating and perfect male quartets on the air.

This analysis of announcers leads us to the specialist, and more particularly the commentators.

The outstanding commentators each have a following, analogous to the readers of newspapers.

Thus Lowell Thomas may be called The Times of the Air, and he can be relied upon for authenticity and truth. The listener is safe to form an opinion on facts that have been given by Lowell Thomas, because he does not attempt to convince you of his own point of view. He will give you facts, and not his version of them.

Edwin C. Hill, "The Ace Reporter of them all," brings to his aid a quality that every student should study—that of emphasis. While he never throws away a single syllable, he will stress words of moment to such perfection that he holds the interest of listeners continuously. He projects his own personal interest into what he is saying so strongly that this becomes infectious, and if a radio is tuned in to

one of his programs, people will stop what they are doing to listen.

Floyd Gibbons, the gattling gun of radio, had behind him a wealth of personal experiences, so that he had the advantage of being an eye-witness to much of what he described. The student would not be advised to ape Floyd; he would find himself a hundred words a minute behind. On the other hand, rapid articulation should be practised as an exercise by all who wish to be fully equipped for either stage or radio.

Boake Carter has a peculiar distinctiveness of voice quality that defies analysis, and he combines in his program the work usually done by the announcer. His commercial credit is the best that we have ever heard on any program, and his news-reporting fascinating to hear, though colored with his own personal opinion, with which one may not always agree. It takes a personality, and not a showman, to have the courage of his convictions, and Boake Carter is not afraid to make enemies, and because of his very fearlessness, has a host of friends.

Alexander Woollcott, known to millions as The Town Crier, has a quality of selectivity that enables him to pick and choose his stories, and re-tell them without ever missing the human touch of either drama or heart interest. He is the *reconteur par excellence*, with a Rabelaisian wit which sometimes creeps through in spite of censorship, much to the delight of his more sophisticated audience.

Walter Winchell has been talking in print for many years, and over the air for a comparatively short time. There is every reason why Winchell should talk, for he definitely has something to say, and says it. Though he entered the Hall of Fame through the keyhole of gossip, he has earned his throne by using his power for the good of the underdog. He has the courage of his convictions, and no one is quicker than Winchell to take up the cudgels in defense of anyone meeting with injustice. The 'flash' manner of his mind, and his style of writing, is communicated to his radio personality. Many people may not like this, nor the prying into the private affairs of others for news, but they should not overlook the tremendous power for good that he wields. The very quality which started him on his career as a columnist, that avid interest in anything and everybody, has made him what he is today. Winchell might be called an Open Door. Strangers and friends alike write to him and tell him their troubles, and he broadcasts the woes of the worthy to the world, and in countless ways brings help to those that need it.

A great deal could be said about the essential qualities necessary for successful commentating, but as there are many more announcers than commentators, the student is likely to be more interested in what announcing has to offer, and what its requirements are.

Announcers not only have to read what is given to them, but according to the particular system employed by

the radio station, they may have to work the switches controlling the microphones in use, whether their own or those used for the program itself, as well as signalling to other studios, in which programs, either preceding or following their own, take place. This is a detail of routine which is likely to make many of them very nervous, and we have seen many excellent announcers, as such, unable to hold their jobs because of their inability to get used to pressing buttons and turning switches.

The good announcer must also have considerable presence of mind, so that he can extemporize to cover a studio breakdown from whatever cause, and vary the tempo of his lines in order to finish the program on time.

He must also be unfailingly punctual, not over-confident as to his ability to read anything at sight, and he should be thoroughly familiar with all musical terms, proper names, and, if possible, languages. It is generally better, if a song title is in a foreign tongue of which he knows nothing, that he do not assume an accent, as this makes him sound ridiculous. While he should make every effort to develop his qualities of personality or voice, he should never allow his consciousness of these qualities to intrude into his work. He should remember the saying, "It's all right when the boy wears the hat, but it's just too bad when the hat wears the boy."

The announcer who can read well to a musical background (and only very few can) and who can vary his

method of approach with the type of program or quality of commercial credit, will be more generally useful to his employers, but, on the other hand, the voice that holds an infectious something, indefinable but attractive to listeners, may go a long way.

As a profession, the announcer's is, in many ways, the best in radio. He is on the permanent staff, and has a living wage at all times. He is always in the running for commercial programs, which will pay him as much as he is able to bargain for, so that many announcers have earned hundreds of dollars a week for the duration of a contract, over and above their regular pay.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE ACTOR IN RADIO

**M**ANY aspirants to radio fame imagine that because they have been successful on the stage, whether amateur or professional, there must be a similar opportunity for them in radio.

This is not necessarily the case. On the stage it has been customary to star the player rather than the play, or the part he plays in it. Thus, JOHN BARRYMORE as Hamlet, and not HAMLET as played by John Barrymore; or FLORENCE REED in *The Shanghai Gesture*, and not THE SHANGHAI GESTURE with Florence Reed.

The reason for this is obvious, since in radio the auditorium of the theatre is the home of the listener, and the actress is never present in person to take a curtain call, or to receive a bouquet of flowers, tendered in appreciation of her enthralling performance. Only the character the actor portrays is heard over the loud speaker, and for this reason it is the *character* that must be starred rather than the actor.

It is true that a nationally known stage star may attract many listeners who have learned to love him on the stage,

but the nature of radio entertainment is such that isolated programs do not tend to produce a cumulative audience, which is the alpha and omega of the industry.

In the Rudy Vallée hour, for example, the all-important continuity of interest is sustained by Rudy himself, and the high-spots of the invited stars are only incidental to the success of the series. The sponsor, confident of Rudy's ability to retain listeners once they have heard him, is prepared to pay highly for each visiting star, with his or her attendant publicity, fully assured that every new listener will become a new friend of Rudy's.

It is difficult to understand why no effort has ever been made to build up actors in the same way that crooners or band leaders have been exploited. A matinee idol of the air could command a wider following than any idol of the stage because of the larger potential audience.

It is true that Alfred Shirley has played many parts on the air, but mostly at odd times, and in odd programs, so that there has been no build-up for him. If ever a voice vibrated romance, his does, and if he were to be starred as a romantic lover, and backed with publicity at least equal to that afforded any of the leading crooners, his fan mail would soon exceed theirs.

The fact of the matter is that writing for radio is a specialist's job. A song is a song, whether it is sung over the air, on the stage, or in the drawing-room. But a play

for radio is something that stands apart from the usual channels from which authors' royalties flow. Neither radio stations nor sponsors have yet realized that good radio writers are just as valuable to them as good composers of songs. They will pay highly for excellent orchestras, but when it comes to script writing will not admit that their own regular staff of continuity or copy writers cannot do well enough to satisfy the "thirteen-year-old" public.

Thus the dissemination of knowledge, through the most all-embracing medium of communication in this generation, is left in the hands of a bunch of hack writers turning out material for a sponsor, whose main theme of life may be cakes of soap or surgical shoes. The few fine writers in the continuity departments of the radio stations are among the first to admit the very low standard of what they are *told to write*, and to be thankful for the anonymity which conceals their identity.

With a few notable exceptions, the lowest form of sensationalism has become, in the eyes of the sponsor, the highest form of radio entertainment.

"Talking down" is considered bad manners, no matter in what part of the world one may have been educated, and yet the advertiser will demand a level of entertainment gauged by his belief that the listeners are greater morons than he himself.

To underestimate your enemy is to court defeat, but to

underestimate your friend (and surely the buyer is the friend of the sponsor) means not only the loss of that friend, but also the courting of ridicule.

The actor is the victim of this state of affairs, and whereas in the theatre he will always love his work, in radio he will put up with it for the sake of whatever pittance he can earn. If he is a good actor, that is, so versatile that he can lose his own identity in the character he is portraying, there may be more opportunity for him to get work in isolated dramatic programs, but he is handicapped in obtaining long contracts because only a few set characters, like Sherlock Holmes, will run through a series.

Under existing conditions, then, an actor should strive to create one character, have that character exploited with press publicity, until his own identity is lost in the fictional creation.

In this way are the Amos 'n' Andy's and the Seth Parkers of radio made almost national characters. It would not be impossible for one fine actor to be several characters at the same time, without the world knowing anything about it.

The layman, anxious to enter the radio field, knows very little about the backstage of radio, with the result that many have been victimized by crooks and charlatans taking their money by promises to put them on the air. This is a favorite stunt of the "gyp" schools of micro-

phone technique, and is a racket in the true sense of that most expressive word.

The *modus operandi* is simple in the extreme. The "school" buys a quarter or half an hour of time on a cheap and unimportant station, and for a slight additional cash consideration will use pupils in the programs.

If the pupil has no talent, then this exploitation will result in bitter disappointment later on, while if the pupil is talented, no one of any importance will hear him, and the only one to benefit is the principal of the school to whom the fee has been paid.

Any student who pays to broadcast is very ill-advised, and is encouraging these leeches to grow fat on the vanity and folly of tyros. Many a girl has parted with her last five dollars in the vain hope that some return will accrue to her, and we cannot be too emphatic in advising everyone to avoid these "gyp" schools as if they were the plague.

Many radio stations have Artists' Bureaus offering managerial service, but giving the artists no guarantee, and some arbitrarily taking ten per cent commission on all sustaining programs in their own stations, even when the artist is not signed up with them. We strongly recommend the use of an astute and experienced personal manager.

The Kate Smiths, the Rudy Vallées, the Morton Downeys and the Bing Crosbys of radio, all have managers and press agents, and owe a great deal to these

soldiers, who have been in the vanguard of their attack on success. That is not in any way meant to detract from their several abilities, but in radio it will always be far harder to reach the ranks of stardom without such assistance, because there is no personal reaction between performer and audience as there is in the theatre. Applause is easy, and is spontaneous, but the writing of a fan letter is tedious, and even costs money to mail.

The beginner wishing to get into radio has several channels of approach, and the first of these is the radio station itself.

Auditions are being constantly held, and if you do not at first succeed, try, try, again. Every audition will, in itself, be valuable experience, if only by the creation of self-confidence.

When approaching the production manager the radio aspirant should be very definite as to what he or she wants to do. Most actors think they can play every part under the sun, but more notice is likely to be taken of the specialist, with one or two perfected dialects, or a flair for a certain type of part such as comedy old women or romantic lovers.

Too much should not be expected from a general station audition, and in most cases these are just a waste of time except from the point of view of the real novice to whom the experience is useful. Many voices are heard on these occasions, reading excerpts from all sorts of plays,

each voice having, maybe, as little as two minutes to establish itself as possessing valuable quality for radio. No one, short of a sheer genius, could ever hope to establish anything in a couple of minutes, working under strange conditions, and facing a microphone for the first time.

It is always better to have a special audition arranged, with time allotted for rehearsal beforehand. This can generally be done if the performer can prove that he is serious in wanting to be heard in a certain work, or form of entertaining, and that he cannot establish this without sufficient time.

Having obtained this special audition, then several copies of the script should be made available—one for the production director, one for the engineer, and one for the Plan Board. This is very rarely done, but it shows that the performer knows exactly what he wants to do, and how to do it. It denotes his earnestness, and he will get much more intelligent co-operation than if he wanders in not knowing what it is all about. There should also be another copy of the script for the announcer, if one is needed.

In most station auditions, each actor taking part may be given something to read, which he may never have seen before. In such a case, never be hurried. Take your time, carefully studying it before starting to read. Analyze the meaning of the text, and if characterization is needed, but

not clearly defined in the lines, never hesitate to ask the production director what characterization he wants.

Never hurry the lines, even if you happen to be a Floyd Gibbons fan. Take your time. Be at ease, but beware of monotony. Use intelligent phrasing. Never emote. Let your acting be mental rather than physical. Concentrate on the projection of the meaning of the words, and don't worry so much about the quality of your voice. Never make excuses if you have a cold, since, strange as it may seem, your voice may come over all the better because of it. Don't stop if you make a mistake, rather carry on without comment—it may not have been noticed. Anyhow, the best of elocutionists have made unconscious Spoonerisms.

If the script calls for a sudden cry, remember to turn your head away from the microphone, or to step back a pace, and even so do not use the full voice that you would on the stage. Violence of delivery is hard for the engineer to control, and but rarely means anything. Intensity, in most cases, conveys far more, and the best actor never appears to have reached the end of his reserve of power. Think of the microphone as a woman at all times to be wooed.

Do not worry, at auditions, about what is called microphone technique. The finesse of radio performance is obtained at rehearsal, and is rarely expected at auditions. Relative microphone position will vary with the acoustics

of each studio, so that without rehearsal nice points of performance are likely not to come over.

It is very true that some voices are entirely unsuitable for transmission over the air. This is due to certain resonant qualities, which may be difficult, and even impossible, to change. Sometimes, the volume indicator will register an intensity of sound that is not detectable to the human ear. This is due to vibrations set up on the hard palate by the attack on consonants, and is rarely due to the sustension of vowel sounds, which constitutes the tonal quality of speech. It is very difficult immediately to tell which are the offending consonants, as this can only be done by the exhausting process of trial and error. There have been cases where the offending sounds have been final *ng*'s—although this could not be detected by ear at all.

The camera cannot lie, nor can the microphone, and many a voice will sound pleasing enough in the studio, where the personality of the speaker will mitigate the strident vocal qualities, which sounds very unpleasant over the loud speaker.

The human voice has several resonances, and sounds hard or throaty, mellow or shrill, depending upon the formation of the throat, the shape of the skull, and the condition of the membranes lining the various cavities—to say nothing of the teeth. The composite resonance heard by the ear may sound quite different to that heard

when the voice is transmitted through the sensitive mechanical processes which make radio possible. The microphone is more sensitive to the harder tones, which will predominate. This fact is responsible for the great popularity of the crooner, who uses so little attack that the offending resonant cavities are never brought into play. Indeed, the success of the crooner, as a type, is due almost entirely to the tonal quality of his transmitted voice, and not to his artistry or intelligent interpretation.

This very monotony and lack of variation became an asset which the few were clever enough to exploit in the earlier days of radio. So marked was this sameness that it was like a signature, not easily forged or successfully copied.

The actor, however, has never been so exploited, because the very nature of his art makes the similar treatment of his work impossible. The actor, unlike the crooner, has no melody of music to support the spoken word. Poetry can be read in this fashion, but both the song and the poem reflect the mood or expression of one person, rather than the conflicting emotions and motives of many people, which constitutes a play.

The entertainer, whether a singer, a reader, a vaudeville comedian, or a specialist, works alone—but the actor works in harness with others.

The actor's relationship is direct only with the other characters in the play, but the soloist's is direct with his

audience. Thus if a tenor is singing a love song, he is singing to every girl that listens, but when the actor plays a love scene, he is helping to build an intimacy between himself and the character to whom he is pleading. This distinction is largely mental, and in radio attitude of mind is even more important than in the theatre, because in the latter case facility of technique will cover up a thoughtless delivery of words. In radio, however, mental concentration will engender a certain telepathic power, which will compel the attention of listeners.

The most experienced radio actors have become lackadaisical because of incompetent direction. As a class they are the first to welcome any suggestions to help the show, but when and if criticism is levelled at them by one who has, very patently, less knowledge of the play than they have themselves, then there is nothing but keen resentment. At first they may be inclined to argue, and the rehearsal may deteriorate into a debate. Then they find that silence is the best policy, and they will murder the text rather than risk losing a job by offending the director.

But there are other ways of entering radio than through the stations themselves, although this channel is the best for initial experience. There are several advertising agencies who use dramatic programs, and who cast and rehearse these themselves. There are also companies which specialize in recording radio programs for spot broadcasting,

and many free-lance radio program building organizations, which supply talent and scripts to those advertising agencies in the market for them.

But no matter which channel of approach is utilized, constant following up is necessary. Scripts change each week, and the actor that jumps to the mind of the casting director is not always available at a moment's notice, so that the man on the spot may often be engaged to play a part for which he would not otherwise have been considered.

The future of radio entertainment depends upon audience reaction, which will be discussed in a later chapter, and no matter what policy a sponsor may wish to dictate, in the long run the audience will decide what they want, just as surely as they do in the case of a theatrical production.

Many fine actors are working more or less permanently in the bigger radio stations, where unfortunately, with a very few exceptions, little advantage is taken of their great talents.

There is Charles Warburton, not only a veteran of the stage, but one of the greatest living authorities on Shakespeare. He is a scholar and an artist both. Given the right vehicle, he could make more real friends in the homes of listeners than any crooner.

There is Charles Webster, with a curious nervous tension peculiarly suited to certain types of parts. With this

he combines a delightful whimsicality that places him among the very few who can play—most difficult of all—high comedy on the air. It is not his fault that his talents are squandered in plays unworthy of his art. Both he and the public are victims of the lack of understanding of the sponsors.

Bill Shelley and Teddy Bergman, again, are such fine actors that they can disguise their voices as efficiently as any make-up can disguise their faces. With a vocal range of nearly three octaves, they can play almost any part at a moment's notice.

One of the handicaps under which the actress labors is that since a woman's voice is higher in pitch than a man's, the microphone is likely to emphasize the shriller quality of resonance. This fact is, in some small part, responsible for the rarity of hearing a woman as an announcer or a mistress of ceremonies.

Nevertheless, there is equal opportunity for the actress with the actor, and equal unfairness in the lack of exploitation afforded her.

Actresses like Georgia Backus, Florence Malone, Elsie Hitz, among others, stand out significantly as radio stars, and yet their work is unheralded, and their publicity neglected. Their names are not household words like those of Kate Smith or Kay Parsons. But their art is just as great, and may even require more intellectual application—for the actress may be called upon to portray many characters

foreign to her own, whereas Kate Smith is always Kate, and Kay Parsons always The Girl o' Yesterday.

In every city there may be talented artists, as great as those whose names we have mentioned, seeking an outlet for expression. Radio has come to stay, and as time goes on, more and more opportunities will present themselves, so that financial advancement as well as artistic achievement will be offered to those who take their work seriously. While at the present time the finest actors in radio can make only a living wage, in the near future public reaction against the monotony of musical fare will create a demand for histrionic talent, which will receive compensation commensurate with that obtained in the theatre or in the films.

The theatrical producer for a star will read dozens, and maybe hundreds of plays, before finding one suitable. Even then, the selected vehicle will have to be tailored to fit the leading man or woman. Until a similar procedure is adopted in radio, the chance for the advancement of the individual artist will remain meagre.

The sponsor should welcome the following of an actor, the same as he does the fans of a crooner.

The Standard Oil Company, well advised by one of the most competent advertising agencies to specialize in radio, achieved signal success in the starring of Arthur Allen in their Soconyland Sketches. They were not content to accept plays turned out by hack writers, but secured

the services of Messrs. Carleton and Manley, who are masters of the art of writing for radio. The result of this was that for week after week through year after year, tens of thousands of pleased listeners would make a point of never missing these fine programs.

Many advertising agencies, discounting the value of the high-priced writer, have advocated a dramatic program because they have seen a way to save money, with the result that programs of a very low quality have been offered.

A sponsor will pay thousands of dollars for a musical program, and can visualize a studio-full of performers, who present an imposing array, but he does not, as yet, appreciate the advertising value of a first class vehicle for a first class dramatic star.

If only the radio audience would demand dramatic fare of as high a standard as some of the musical programs, then would the advertiser respond, and the actor would be able to come into his own, and prove that his art can be just as attractive to listeners as is the melodious monotony of any crooner.

## COMMENTATORS



*Edwin C. Hill*



*Lowell Thomas*



*Alexander Woollcott*



*Walter Winchell*



*Floyd Gibbons*



*Boake Carter*

*Primary Grades, Center School, Wilton, Conn., Listening to  
The American School of the Air*



*Jolly Bill and Jan*



*Worshiped Tommy,  
a radio veteran*



## CHAPTER XIV

### CHILDREN AND RADIO

**I**N our chapter on audience reaction, we mention the sending and receiving end of the big gun of radio. In this chapter it is with children who perform, and children who listen, that we propose to deal briefly. Though seemingly bound together by the very fact of childhood and the bond of radio, these children are, in fact, far apart.

In a discussion of what goes into the formation of the thoughts and desires of the coming generation, with the effects, beneficial or detrimental, that any form of entertainment, and particularly radio, which comes into the home with the intimacy of the nursery itself, may produce, a whole volume would be too short to do the subject justice. So we must content ourselves with what seems, in our opinion, to be most important, and of the greatest general interest.

Let us take first the receiving end—the vast child audience.

May we start by asking a question of parents, which might well include sponsors, heads of radio stations, program builders, and artists?

Would you permit your child to enter a room where a

varied and luscious buffet was set out upon a table, and would you allow that child to choose from the assorted viands those that he liked the most, and in the quantity he desired?

It is a foregone conclusion that he would abjure the healthful, simple dishes as the devil would Holy Water, and stuff himself with rich cakes and ice cream, until he could eat no more and would suffer intensely for days to come from indigestion and nightmares. The results of his errors in food choice could be remedied with medical attention, or with the proper amount of castor oil, but the results of a poisonous mental diet cannot be eradicated so easily.

Yet the same parents who would rigidly discipline their child from making unchecked raids on the buffet will allow him regular access to a far more dangerous mental meal in listening to the large majority of children's radio programs now being offered. Such highly spiced, badly selected mental diet has infinitely more far-reaching detrimental effects on the child's character and happiness than can any Lobster Newburgh upon the infant stomach. The voluminous literature on the dieting of children and the vast number of pamphlets on Vitamins essential for normal growth are religiously followed by many parents. It would be well if someone would enter the field of mental diet, and impress upon the public at large how greatly both health and happiness depend upon a wholesome

mentality, and how many people's lives have been ruined because of some childhood terror.

These very same parents who attend parent-and-teacher committees, and talk glibly on food values for the growing child, and the importance of environment on character building, will go home smugly satisfied with their few hours devoted to child welfare, and allow their own child at home to listen to adult radio programs, wherein Broadway slang is substituted for wit, or where some horrible ghoulish voice whispers terrifyingly in a program replete with horror. Naturally the children love these thrills, just as they love sugared cakes and ice cream at midnight, but the tragedy is that it is not possible to foresee the after-effects of a serious mental shock. Parents have told us that their children have been hysterical, and even delirious, for several days after a visit to King Kong on the talkies, and even to some of the latest grotesque and terrifying developments of the Mickey Mouse feature. But the prototypes of these unwholesome talkie presentations are on the air all the time in one form or another, until the radio has become a menace that lurks in the loud speaker.

Many mothers trustingly believe that every radio program built specifically for children *must* be safe for their children to hear. Would that this were true! What an infinity of present trouble and future sorrow would be saved both parents and children!

It would be well for all heads of households to constitute themselves *Children's Dramatic Critics of the Air*, and to wield their powers as ruthlessly and honestly as does the dramatic critic of the theatre, who is paid only in money for his or her work. The parents would be repaid a thousandfold in something far more precious than mere coin.

The children's household radio critic should ask himself certain questions upon listening to a program designed to entertain his children.

Does the program entertain pure and simple, with no attempt gently to influence the child? If so, does it entertain in a wholesome, clean fashion?

Is the program of any value in the building of character?

Does the program inoculate the child with desire for just a certain kind of breakfast food, or a certain brand of beverage? If so, unless I agree with this diet, is not the program harmful to a degree?

Are the child actors heard on children's hours of the sort I would like my own child to mimic?

Would I like my own to shout and whine, and be so cock-o'-hoop as some of the children portrayed on the radio? If not, I should refuse to allow that particular program in my home, just as I would refuse to entertain the naughty, boisterous child in person. Also I should

feel it my duty to protest to the radio station which attempts to foist the air-child pest upon my home.

If more parents and teachers would take this attitude, it would materially aid in cleaning up the air waves for the children.

For some years Miss Erskine lectured on applied psychology for children, and a point of interest was that if a statement containing several facts were given to a group of children, each child would specifically remember only one fact, which would vary according to the mentality and attentiveness of the child; and even if the same fact were to be remembered by several children, their respective memories would be colored by their own particular desires or dreams.

Thus in a gangster thriller on the radio, one child will remember only the shooting and his terror because of it; another will want to ape the gangster who did the shooting, and will have less fear, because he will always see himself behind the business end of the gun; while a third child may only remember that he has been told in the program to eat a certain cereal.

If, night after night, these same children follow the thriller serial, the first child will become more and more obsessed with his terror, the second will be all the more determined to become a gangster, and the third will insistently demand the cereal, which may be contrary to doctor's orders.

There is a particular program on the air that has been popular for many years. The artist has a way with him, a most infectious laugh, and is, indeed, a true artist. He is beloved by tens of thousands of children, and his programs contain gently given, whimsical advice and confidences to his small listeners. Of course, you've guessed his name—Uncle Don. His appeal, apparently, is to the very young, and to the very old. The sophisticated in-betweens don't care for him. They find him sugary, and too, too moral.

So here is a program that appeals to all the teenie-weenies, and through them to their parents, and, surely, to the aged also. To those small rebels who think they have ceased to believe in Santa Claus he is not so appealing, since they would rather have a little blood and thunder with their dinner porridge.

Johnny Johnstone, the genial head of Press Relations for the National Broadcasting Company, told us, however, that Uncle Don, with his rich chuckle and gentle chiding, was the cause of his small daughter Susanne's breaking herself of the habit of biting her nails. We can well imagine how grateful this small miss will be, when she arrives at manicure age, to that unseen Uncle Don of the air waves.

Jolly Bill and Jane is another air program that has stood the test of time. For sheer infectious gaiety, educational entertainment, and the fascination of hearing others

doing things that all children want to do themselves, this popular program ranks high. It is built to please, but has a finely drawn undertone of moral value.

Uncle Don might be said to be an allopath of morals, while Jolly Bill believes in the homeopathic dose.

An angle the sponsor knows well and plays upon in his commercial programs for children is the inherent trait in all juveniles towards hero worship and imitateness.

Thus the child audience is told to eat such-and-such breakfast food in order to become even like unto Babe Ruth. The good that these worshipped of childhood can do is great, but the evil that is accomplished in their name can be even greater.

If the hero of real life and accomplished achievement is of a true character value, at least some good can be done, even if the program itself is poor.

But if the hero is fictional and synthetic, at most times a precocious child, whose lurid adventures and egotistically cock-sure ways are irritating to the *N*th degree to the thinking adult, then the harm that can be done is incalculable.

If the child listener emulates badly portrayed and badly conceived characters, who may be held up as the typical American Boy or some other model for the little listener, then the whole program remains for ever a blot upon the name of the sponsor and his product, and a lasting

disgrace on the radio company permitting such atrocities to be broadcast from their studios.

As regards the sustaining program for children, a program that is not motivated by any desire to exploit a product, there is little danger from these sources.

Most of the sustaining features are, in the main, innocuous, and create no wrong or unwholesome desire in the minds of the listening children. But one wonders, with the wealth of material available, why these presentations are generally so poorly conceived and cheaply performed.

If sponsors will not shoulder their responsibility towards future citizens, and if the operating broadcasting companies cannot afford anything better than a string of kids muddling through an under-rehearsed show, then the time may not be so far off when the Federal Government will step in, with subsidies if necessary, but most certainly with rigid censorship and supervision.

The literature for children from which radio material can be drawn is enormous, and there are many excellent and established writers both competent and willing to provide first class entertaining and educational fare.

As on the stage, in radio the child actor is generally more interesting to adults than to other children of the same age.

To the adult the reaction may be, "Isn't she cute?" To the child the reaction may well be that expressed so ably and wittily by Booth Tarkington in a recent series

in the Saturday Evening Post, in which his small hero, representative of his age at large, remarked after being forced to watch a performing infant of his own age, "Haw . . . Poot!"—which we take to be the "raspberry" of childhood.

From an extensive canvass of children to determine their likes and dislikes in the matter of radio programs, we find that the infant prodigy is generally disliked by the child audience. To hear Baby Rose Marie wail a hot mama number, or struggle through a torch song as if her heart (aged five) were breaking, does not interest other children. They would rather hear a grown-up tell a tale of fantastic adventure, an Arabian Nights, or a Treasure Island.

It sits badly upon the stomach of the average right thinking adult to hear an infant coon-shouting a number that Sophie Tucker might well be doing—with all the studied mannerisms of this Mae West era. This type of exploitation makes of every child who thus apes her elders a Coney Island side show, a freak to be gaped at, but never admired.

Another contemptible policy set by some sponsors is the deliberate exploitation of the vanity of certain pseudo-society or pseudo-professional women, who, with inordinate pride in their offspring, will offer the services of their child on a radio program, *gratis*. Thus, week after week for one or two years, there may be children working

for nothing, because of the selfish pretensions of their mothers.

There are a few authentic prodigies in the musical world, but we maintain that these child marvels are of far greater interest to grown-ups than to children, and, in any case, they must be seen as well as heard.

Over the radio it is hard to visualize a very small boy playing a violin concerto, or a wee girl compassing the intricacies of a piano sonata.

We are happy to note that recently there is a trend towards the very ideals we have been upholding for years, and "The Wizard of Oz" has come to the air, to prove conclusively that entertainment for children can be so good, so amusing, so fantastic, and so well performed that it will intrigue the adult and captivate the child.

The place for the loud speaker is the home.

The home should give peace to the old and protection to the young.

Would it not be well to take heed of the menace of the wrong sort of radio program for children, and furnish them with mental as well as physical protection?

## CHAPTER XV

### THE ENGINEER

**T**HE layman has very little idea as to the amount of time and man-power expended on the engineering maintenance of radio service throughout the United States.

The National Broadcasting Company maintains approximately twenty thousand miles of special lines, to say nothing of the thousands of microphones and all the special equipment connected with the transmission and reception of radio programs.

During a Coast-to-Coast hook-up of a Presidential address, as many as one hundred engineers may be working, *excluding* the engineering staff of each local station.

Without question, the engineering department is the most efficient branch of the radio industry.

In any operating company, the most important people are those who bring in the cash returns. Thus, in radio, the salesman of time is considered more important than the engineer, who has nothing to sell. The sales department, in the very nature of its function, is an asset, whereas the engineering department is a liability, no matter how efficient it may be. It may be compared to the research department of a soap factory, constantly on the lookout for

bigger and better cakes of soap, from which the sales department will produce the revenue for the shareholders. Greater deference will be shown to the salesman, who can produce a large order, than to the engineer who can assure the management that if so much capital is spent on certain alterations, an ultimate saving will be effected.

The inventive geniuses who have achieved international fame and personal fortune are very few and far between.

The Edisons and Marconis are fewer in number than the hosts of crooners and blues singers, who achieve fame and fortune, sometimes in spite of themselves.

The broadcasting companies have distinctive engineering set-ups, but we will describe the functions of engineers in radio in general terms that will be understood by all. We are indebted to the National Broadcasting Company for this technical information.

#### *Development Laboratory Department.*

This consists of a very few highly skilled electrical research engineers, who have devoted a large part of their lives to the intensive study of radio problems. Indeed, the development laboratory may be considered the ultimate goal of the true scientist in this form of inventive endeavor.

There is but little chance for the beginner, since, with very few exceptions, this work is open only to degree men.

The research field covered is very wide, and includes all forms of electrical transmission by sight or sound, for entertainment purposes.

Thus it is not radio alone, as the layman thinks of it, but there is wired radio from one fixed spot to another, the electrical transmission of the printed or written page known as facsimile work, radio pictures for newspaper reproduction, and every conceivable combination and variation of these modern miracles. The risks run are comparable to those taken by any experimental chemist handling dangerous drugs, and the work calls for the greatest possible caution at all times.

This department is the theoretical end of the radio industry, and leads us to

#### *The Radio Frequency Engineering Group.*

This group also consists of very highly qualified engineers, whose duty it is to put into practice the proven theories of the development laboratories. Briefly, this entails the application and maintenance of the latest inventions and improvements to transmission, so that the operating company can gain full benefit of the successful results of research without undue delay. The risks run may be high at times, when it is necessary to handle the dangerous high-powered equipment in the transmitting stations.

*The Plan Engineering Group.*

In this group, again, there is no chance for the beginner. It consists of highly qualified professional men, who plan studio arrangements. This may sound simple, but is, in fact, of the greatest possible importance, where errors of judgment may cost the operating company many hundreds of thousands of dollars. The studios are in the nature of capital equipment. They are not easy to change once they are completed, and apart from the architectural considerations of layout and lighting, there are the highly specialized subjects of ventilation and acoustics. Atmospheric conditions will, by themselves, entirely alter the acoustical qualities of a studio, and of all the branches of physical science, the least is known about Sound. Two studios may be built identical in every way; they can be the same size, the same shape and height, and lined with the same wall coverings, *and yet* the same orchestra will sound different in each.

Major Firth was at one time called in to assist on certain acoustical experiments for the Building Research Committee, an organization sponsored by the Privy Council of Great Britain, to find out and tabulate all phenomena connected with the physical sciences in relation to building construction. He found that the greatest theoretical experts in the country were sadly lacking in the application of common sense to the problems of acoustical correction.

Different quantities and qualities of sound-absorbent materials were introduced into a brick and concrete room, fitted with flush steel doors. An electrical connection with a tape machine in the next room enabled the experimenters to time the echo of a note sounded in the test room, and from these results, tabulated for notes struck in the different octaves, a constant was arrived at which was termed the Coefficient of Periodicity. Great surprise was expressed when Major Firth proved conclusively that the human element in these experiments changed the entire aspect. Thus two violinists on the same violin produced a different echo, and the same singer sounding the same note in a different way produced a similar variation. He also pointed out that the position of the source of sound, with relation to the sound deadening materials introduced into the room, also caused a variation. Thus the nearer the source of sound was to the deadening material the less the coefficient of periodicity of the room.

Father Finn of the Paulist Fathers, who has had extensive practical experience with his choir, has told us that he has, many times, made his boys sing a choral work in a different key, dependent upon the acoustical conditions of the hall in which they may be appearing. He says that if he does not do this, the singing will be out of tune, and the choir will lose pitch.

Then, again, there is the all-important problem of sound deadening, in order to guarantee that each studio

is free from the leakage of noise from any other part of the building, and even from the street outside. When you consider a full military brass band crashing out a Sousa March *fortissimo*, and realize that this must not be heard in the next room, the magnitude of the problems faced by the Plan Engineering Group is very evident.

### *Transmitting Engineers.*

These engineers are the true soldiers of the industry. They are mostly experienced practical men, and their work is permanent and regularly routined. They face grave danger continually, and are selected largely for their steadiness and their reliability never to neglect every possible precaution. Just as the true horseman never loses respect for the heels, and will always keep a discreet distance from the horse's hind quarters, so will the transmitting engineer know where to expect a shock, and act accordingly. The voltages they handle are two or three times more powerful than those employed for the electric chair, and the engineers may well pay as much for the least carelessness as the murderer in Sing Sing will for his premeditated crime. The protective devices employed are as complicated as they are necessary. Huge cages, with various make-and-break electric locks, surround the vast power tubes, which are taller than a man, and certain doors leading to the power rooms will automatically switch off the current on being opened. No miser ever went to

greater lengths to preserve his hoard of gold from thieves than do those responsible strive to protect their men from the disastrous accident so liable to occur, when harnessing the elemental forces of electricity.

The bigger radio companies permit the public to visit the transmitting station, an enthralling experience for those who are interested.

Apart from the fatal current always in use, there is yet another peril against which it is almost impossible for these transmitting engineers to protect themselves. This peril is the result of electrical storms. Everyone knows the great destruction that lightning can effect in a thousandth part of a second, but the layman has the idea that the antennae from which the powerful radio signals are sent are fully protected by lightning conductors. In theory this may be correct, but in practice it is found that these static drains, as they are called, cannot always accommodate the full electric charge forced into them during a violent storm, and consequently they overflow. Just as water finds an outlet from a flooded river, or a blocked drainpipe, with irresistible force, so does the collected static find a path which it blazes instantly with death and destruction.

If there were any known means of gauging beforehand the danger spots, then additional safeguards could be provided, but until science can achieve absolute control of the elemental forces of nature men must continue to take

their lives in their hands, when striving to employ such almighty power for their own ends.

*Field Engineering Department.*

This department would seem to us to be the most fascinating of all. It is responsible for all broadcasting emanating from points outside the regular studios. It is manned by men who are difficult to select, not because of lack of electrical engineering knowledge, but because of the fact that the field engineer represents the company on most occasions, and must, therefore, be able to combine with his technical efficiency an ability to meet all classes and nationalities of people, and be able to put them at their ease, and often to persuade them to do something against their inclination. The field engineers may well be called the Diplomatic Corps of radio, and every one of them to be fully qualified must hold an operator's license, and so have passed a civil service examination.

In this department, capability as well as seniority will lead to promotion, and to be a supervisor of field engineers is to hold an extremely responsible position.

The mobility of the field engineers may be compared to that of a city fire department. They are fully equipped with radio wagons, or trucks, with miles of wire, microphones of all sorts, and the necessary testing appliances, so that in case of emergency a temporary broadcasting station can be working, and communicating vital informa-

tion to an expectant nation, in far quicker time than it could be conveyed in any other way.

When news of the Akron disaster was first received in New York, motor cars and radio trucks with announcers and engineers were en route before they even knew where they were going. As they dashed through the night, they were receiving instructions by short wave radio, and changing their direction as fresh orders came through.

Wherever there is a microphone, there is one or more member of the field engineering staff, whether in an aeroplane, or in a submarine, in a ship at sea, or in the salon of a reigning monarch.

Anyone who heard the unforgettable broadcast of the arrival and crashing of the Mollisons would do well to do homage not alone to those whose voices painted so dramatic a picture, but to the silent field engineers, without whose indefatigable and highly efficient effort the broadcast would not have been possible.

### *Studio Operators.*

This group of engineers works in the control rooms of the studios in the radio stations. During a program their duty consists in controlling the volume of sound that passes through each microphone. In front of them is a Volume Indicator, which is an oscillating needle registering intensity of sound on a measured dial. Never for a moment can their eyes leave this all-important detail. Any

sudden overloading of the microphone causes a 'peak,' which is likely to put many stations taking the program off the air, for a second or even longer. These operating engineers have to be thoroughly familiar with the acoustical peculiarities of every studio in which they work, and it is unfortunate that production men do not take their advice far more often than they do.

Many of them are excellent musicians, and know as much of the well known scores as many a musical director, while others have a very keen dramatic sense. Indeed, the qualities that their employers look for are knowledge of music and a sense of acoustics, the latter being a rare and valuable asset.

The writers have met one phenomenal engineer, who could tell, blindfold, where a speaker was standing in the studio, and which direction he was facing.

In passing, it is interesting that the head of the Balance and Control Department of the British Broadcasting Corporation is Mr. Stanton Jeffries, who was appointed for his musical qualifications, and not because he was an engineer.

The ears of these studio engineers must be trained to detect in an instant a faulty microphone, and to judge whether a poor balance is due to bad playing or incorrect placement in the studio.

Not only are a number of these operators fine musicians, but many musicians are remarkable radio engineers.

Andy Sanella is one of a host of saxophone players who have their own amateur short wave radio stations. Billy Irwin, the pianist composer, is another radio fiend who has constructed his own receiving and sending sets, as well as very efficient television receiving equipment.

The other personal qualities looked for in operators are intelligence, appearance, and general background. They must have forbearance and tact, since they are often subjected to slighting treatment from production men, sponsors and their satellites, who know very much less about what they are talking than do the engineers.

As a group they are personally known to most artists working in the radio stations, and from first hand knowledge of them, we can say that they are more conscientious and efficient than any other department directly responsible for the studio productions.

The engineers usually have no time for the niceties of social intercourse, so that those who meet them may not realize that they are likely to possess a better cultural background than most other members on the permanent staffs of the radio stations.

#### *Maintenance Department.*

This department is the Jack-of-all-trades in radio. The maintenance engineer requires at least a full year of intensive apprenticeship, before being really efficient. He has to know both ends of radio, transmission and reception.

He has to be familiar with the *modus operandi* of the Telephone Company, to be able to repair any make of radio receiving set, to know the intricacies of any switchboard, to be fully cognizant of distributing channels, fuses, and testing volt meters for the maintenance of power.

He may be called away on any sort of job, at any hour, and his comprehensive practical experience enables him to take advantage of any opportunity that may offer advancement in any of the engineering groups.

He should have the letters M.D. after his name—  
Microphone Doctor!

Very often they are selected from men who have worked with the Telephone Company, or have been through the Bell laboratories.

As all departments of engineering in radio interlock, the financial reward does not vary to any extent. As a type, all radio engineers are hard workers, keenly interested in their jobs, and the most delightful people to know.

Indeed, the miracle of radio that the world enjoys is due, ninety percent, to the indefatigable plodding of these earnest workers, who toil day and night that the public may benefit to the full from this, the greatest means of communication that has yet been discovered.

## CHAPTER XVI

### PRESS RELATIONS

SO great is the foolish competition between newspapers and radio stations that in 1932 the Publishers' Convention passed a resolution banning radio publicity, and this in spite of the fact that the National Association of Circulation Managers unanimously decided that the printing of radio programs in the press was the greatest circulation builder that any paper could have!

Bearing this in mind, it is easy to see that the press departments of the radio stations have no sinecure, and that the personnel should be twice as good as the competent pressman in any other field.

Radio news is unwanted and unwelcome by the newspapers, so that the radio press department will prefer to employ men who have had previous news reporting experience, because they will know how best to appeal to each editor, whereas the beginner would be beaten before he started.

This open hostility of the press to radio publicity has reacted strongly against the press itself, and it has compelled the radio stations to seek super-news-reporters, in order to be able to build the publicity of the very best of

artists. In this they have not been so successful but that there is always room for the fine news reporter in radio.

The press agent of a famous stage or talkie star can get away with almost anything, because of the vast sums of money spent on advertising, and have stories published that are very far from the actual truth. In radio this is not possible.

Accuracy and truth are essential, and a framed publicity stunt rarely reaches print.

The newspapers are alive to the difference between a commercial program and a sustaining feature, and will give space to the latter in preference, because the radio station which sponsors all non-commercial presentations would not, in any case, be advertising in the paper.

The *raison d'être* of the radio press relations department is to exploit artists, and it is not concerned with assisting a sponsor to sell his product. The advertising agencies, however, generally have their own press departments, and only too often do the radio and advertising pressmen work at cross purposes.

The radio man will deal almost entirely with the radio editor, but the advertising man will, more often than not, strive to get a news item inserted through the commercial channels, and thereby create an ill-feeling with the radio editor.

The whole radio industry, excluding the engineering

departments, has this appalling lack of cohesion of interests, and those who suffer are the sponsors, whose fault it is very largely, and the poor public, who doesn't know what it is all about.

The radio pressman can be the artists' best friend, provided that he is able to dress a true story in such a way that it becomes news, so good that the city editor of the paper concerned feels that he cannot let it go.

Of course in any branch of the theatrical profession a clever stunt can be news, upon which the success of an artist may be built.

Some years ago a young and talented girl was very anxious to go on the stage. She happened to know a newspaper man on the local paper in her home town, and she confided her ambitions to him. He was interested, and, after making sure that she was in earnest, he told her that if she would do what he told her, he could guarantee her a small part in a London production right away.

Of course, she had talent—let there be no mistake about that. She agreed to do whatever he asked.

Accordingly, he made arrangements with press photographers, telegraphed a journalist friend in London, and wrote a letter to the manager of the theatre the girl wished to join.

Then he *posted* her by parcels post, and had pictures taken of her in the process of being stamped and post-marked. More photographs were taken as she was un-

loaded from the mail van outside the stage door of the theatre. This was *news*, all the papers ran it, and, needless to say, she got her start!

The average press agent is apt to neglect class and trade magazines for newspapers, but the radio man will be advised, when building up an artist, to take advantage of any background that will enable even the smallest squib to be included in such publications.

The fact of the matter is that these publications are generally read from cover to cover, because they are designed to appeal to specific groups, who are enthusiasts for their hobbies, or trades, or colleges.

Many people will buy several newspapers each day, but will read only certain portions of each. Thus, one paper will be bought for dramatic criticisms, and another for the scandal column that clothes naughtiness in veiled anonymity.

If the singer to be exploited has been a choir boy, that fact will be of interest to certain church papers, or if he is a chess fan, then publications devoted to that kind of games will welcome an article about him.

So the radio pressman must know everything about his subject, so that he can be as familiar with his past, his present, and his hopes for the future as he is himself.

Then, by the clever distribution of well written columns, very wide publicity can be built—much wider than twice the space taken in one or two newspapers.

Just as the advertising agent must know the value of every publication as a medium for the exploitation of his product, so must the radio pressman know the value of these same journals for developing the future of a personality.

Then again he should have sound, if not expert, knowledge of music, dramatics, and showmanship. The staff of the press relations department are compelled, by the very nature of their work, to study all sides of radio entertainment, in order to tie together in a newsy way actual performance with a human interest story.

Publicity background for any artist is a tremendous asset, provided it is not dissipated. When it is used it should be part of an organized build-up, planned at least as much for the artist as for an advertiser who wishes to make use of it.

Many a fine performer has been taken advantage of, because he has been childishly pleased at some little squib of publicity, which has appeared in the papers, when in fact he should have been paid by the sponsor for the use of that information.

A good press agent would protect him against such treatment, and it is our contention that no radio career will ever be built up without the assistance of either a manager or a press agent, or both, to plan and maintain a very definite publicity campaign.

The press department is, indeed, a training school for

the other branches of the radio industry, and many have been promoted out of Press Relations into more lucrative positions in the commercial or production sides of the business.

Bill Schudt, of C. B. S., an able pressman, has been promoted to the post of station manager of WBT, Charlotte, North Carolina, and has proved that his past experience has fully qualified him for his new work.

Steve Trumbull, who made a remarkable success in Chicago as Columbia's western publicity representative, went with a prominent advertising agency as an executive.

John T. W. Martin left a Brooklyn newspaper job to join the N. B. C. press department, and, when there, opened to opportunity when it knocked, and is now head of the continuity department of a successful and air-minded advertising agency in New York.

More than anything else, perhaps, the radio pressman must be a good mixer. He will be assigned to cover several programs, some commercial and others sustaining. At times he will be directed by the higher-ups to exploit a certain artist, and then it will be up to him to plan and execute a publicity campaign, against the deliberate opposition of the newspapers, and all the competition of other pressmen, each working independently for other and rival artists.

The good mixer will know his editors, and realizing that radio *is* news, will tactfully, by word of mouth, drop

hints here and there, and so sow the seeds destined to bear the fruits of success.

The radio editor, who is smothered with hundreds of press releases every day, is inclined—if his copy is made up—to make generous use of his waste paper basket. The radio representative who can successfully gain the interest of the editors, no matter what method of approach he may use, has established his first objective. Maybe a week later he will follow up his personal talk with a telephone conversation, or perhaps with a general release, the acceptance of which by the editors will be sufficient proof that the interest shown at their first interview was real and not assumed.

The press department produces the only tangible record of radio advertising, and a new sponsor may be persuaded to sign on the dotted line because of the printed evidence of a successful program that the station concerned has exploited. This is the reason why broadcasting companies go to great trouble to make a star on a sustaining feature, as they then have an asset that can be sold to a client.

Every radio press department has a special photographic editor, whose job it is to be able to select good pictures, and to send them where they are most likely to be used. Thus, certain conservative publications prefer beauty modestly clad, whilst others place legs before looks. The photographic editor must know the idiosyncrasies of each paper, and distribute his pictures accordingly.

If an artist finds himself unexploited by the radio station for which he is working, then he would be advised to hold his publicity until a later date, when he can either employ a personal press agent, or allow his background to be used by a sponsor who is anxious to retain his services.

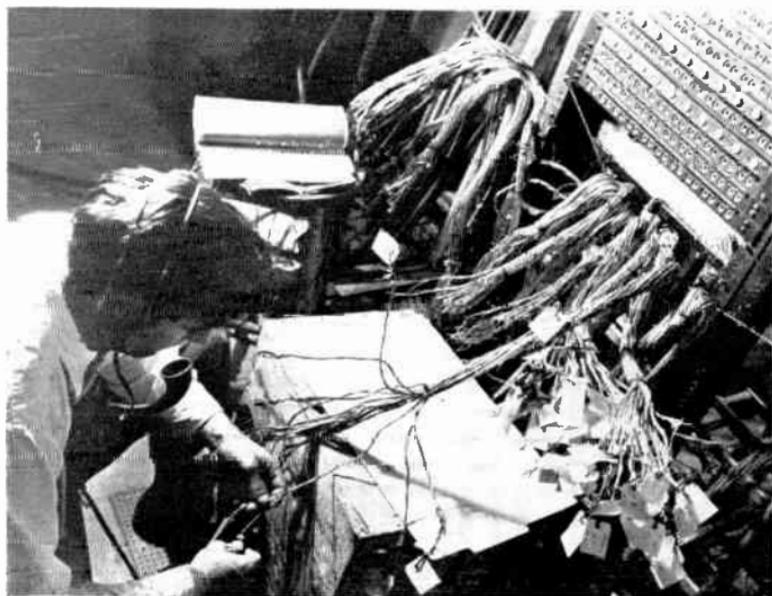
The work of the press department is not confined to meeting or making celebrities, writing biographical notes, or suggesting publicity stunts, or even calling on editors. There is plenty of drudgery and hard labor. Newspapers have to be supplied with full schedules of programs, and no department knows better than press relations that this is not easy.

Programs are likely to change at a moment's notice, and then the newspapers, blamed by their readers for incorrect information, complain bitterly to the radio press department, which, in most cases, has not been informed of the change at all, or, if so, far too late to be of any possible value.

To anyone who has natural tact, versatility of ideas for the exploitation of the individual, a knowledge of news value that is unimpeachable by any city editor no matter how hard-boiled, a facile pen, a not too glib tongue, an understanding of his fellow men, and a great willingness to work, it would be difficult to find a more interesting occupation, as a stepping stone to bigger things, than joining the press relations department of a radio station.



*Nerve-center of the NBC*



*Behind the scenes*

## THEY FOUND NEW FAME



*Nino Martini, First through  
the Gateway of Radio to  
operatic stardom*



*Andy Sanella,  
master musician*



*Madame Ernestine Schumann-Heink*



*Kate Smith*



*George M. Cohan*

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE SALES DEPARTMENT

**T**HE radio industry is so intricate in its various ramifications that it has been quite impossible for us to include in this volume a survey of a number of very important departments.

There must be a legal department, an auditing department, a statistical department, a department of musical and historical research, a plan board which discusses both programs and radio merchandising ideas, a copyright department, floor hostesses, and all the clerical help that a huge business must necessarily employ to maintain and check every phase of both entertainment and communication.

There must be public relations, and station relations, and the whole organization is, indeed, operated like an army on active service, where one department knows little or nothing of what another department is doing.

But beyond all these, the Sales Department is, perhaps, the most important and the most vital to the success of the operating radio station.

It is not easy for the layman to appreciate that the salesmen sell that intangible something which is TIME. If time

is ever money to anybody, it is money to the broadcasting companies, and the Sales Department not only negotiates the contracts between the advertisers and the radio stations, but remains as contact during the life of the contract.

Primarily the salesman must be an advertising man, because he deals directly with the advertising manager of a firm, or with the advertising agency concerned. He must, therefore, be able to speak their language, and be fully supplied with facts and figures from the statistical department so that he can answer every question relating to broadcasting as an advertising medium. He has to meet bigotry and prejudice with bland confidence; he must be possessed of infinite patience; he must establish in the mind of the client an unshakable confidence in the company he represents; he must not only be able to make friends, but to keep them; he must accept complaints seriously, and use the utmost tact in striving to remedy any faults either in program or service.

It makes no difference where a breakdown may occur, the client will run to the account salesman with the most trivial complaints, and even look to him for explanation if static has spoiled the reception of the program in some mid-western state.

The salesman is the buffer between the sponsor who pays, and every other department in the radio station. If there is an engineering breakdown, it is the salesman who must make the excuses; if the music is not up to standard,

it is the salesman who will be rung up on the telephone in a hurry; if the commercial credit is garbled, it is the salesman who will be called upon to allocate the blame.

In all the essential planning of a new account, the salesman's opinion on the nature of the program will be demanded by the sponsor, so that he is often in a very difficult position, having to uphold the suggestions made by his own plan board, which are not always good, and at the same time give of his best to the client whose business he is anxious to secure.

He has to be familiar with the coverage of all rival radio stations, not only in New York but throughout the entire country. He must be a walking encyclopedia of broadcasting information, and should be able to substantiate every statement he makes from facts which can be checked.

He must be a student of human nature, so that he can pass on to his own superiors the preconceived ideas of the prospective client, which may not be definitely expressed.

He should be a good showman, and sensitive to audience reaction. He should know enough about music, dramatics, advertising and engineering to be able to speak intelligently and with authority to any expert on those subjects.

Above all, for his own protection, he should be able to hold a client, once secured. If he can very definitely establish himself as the sponsor's friend, he can be of real service, not alone to his employer, but also to the advertiser, who will look to him for the success of his program.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE SPONSOR

**T**HE immense radio industry in America could not exist under present conditions if it were not for the sponsor. The sponsor, therefore, is more directly concerned with the success of radio entertainment than anyone else.

After all, he pays for it, and if he were to get inadequate return from it, the stations would soon be forced to close.

He is not concerned with the exploiting of fine artists, or the creation of radio stars. He does not care about the artistic value of his program, except in so far as it reacts favorably towards the sale of his product.

In an interesting leading article on Canadian Broadcasting, taken from the *London Times*, the following quotation demonstrates clearly the attitude taken by the Government, in contra-distinction to that taken by the sponsor, towards radio. It needs no comment.

“It is one of the great drawbacks to commercial broadcasting that advertisers are only interested in covering the area where there are plenty of potential buyers, and care

least about the very people who, because they are living isolated and at great distances from big towns, most need the comforting and cultural influences the radio can bring.”

The value of radio publicity has long been proven, but there are still many sponsors who, through lack of faith, have feared to commit themselves to the apparently high cost of first rate programs, and nation-wide coverage. The result is that many advertisers who go on the air insist upon very cheap programs.

A full page advertisement in a national weekly is something concrete, something that can be read and re-read, something that can be pasted in a scrap-book and kept as tangible evidence of advertising done. A radio program, however, once performed, remains to the disbeliever but a ghost of a hazy past.

The belief that radio advertising is costly is contrary to fact. It can be the cheapest form of advertising in the world, provided that the quality of entertainment is such that the percentage of actual listeners is high. It is on record that at the height of their popularity, the Amos 'n' Andy hour was so universally liked that the telephone company admitted to a greater falling off of the use of the telephone during that period than any other time of the day.

A greater proportion of listeners to a program actually

hears the commercial credit than do the readers of a magazine actually see one particular advertisement within its covers.

The potential coverage of a Coast-to-Coast hook-up is probably far greater than the circulation of all the national periodicals put together, even assuming that four people read each magazine. It is not the purpose of this book to give facts and figures that can be obtained either from the radio stations or the advertising agencies, both of which have gone to great trouble and expense to have accurate and reasonably reliable statistics compiled. But the compilation of statistics is one thing, and the building of radio entertainment another.

The sponsor should know that there are very few advertising agencies equipped with a comprehensive radio department, though many may claim to be so equipped. He should also know that many agencies are opposed to radio advertising, not because they disbelieve in its efficacy, but because of the uncertainty of their being able to obtain a full fifteen percent on program costs, or because they lack confidence to advocate a medium of which they know so little.

Advertising agencies are not paid by the sponsor, but by the publications selling space, and the radio stations offering time. If the agency has to re-adjust a blanket appropriation to include radio, and thereby lose commission on the outlay on program costs, it stands to reason

that there is at least a great temptation to dissuade the client from using the air.

The radio man in many an agency is not a returned prodigal, but a black sheep. The other departments resent his intrusion, feeling that any money he can spend will be deducted from their own particular allotments.

It certainly seems unethical that the agency should receive commission on program costs, *unless* they have a fully equipped radio department, which can render a service similar to that given by their staff artists and copy writers.

But there is another prevailing condition just as serious, which is the active antagonism of newspapers and magazines to radio advertising.

From the standpoint of cold logic this is as absurd as if doctors and dentists, or barbers and chiropodists, were to go into competition. Many a patient would die were a tooth to be pulled instead of an appendix being removed.

Competition between one radio station and another, or one magazine and another, makes for good business, but for radio to fight newspapers, when the aim of both is to increase the sale of a product, is sheer folly.

Business has to be nurtured like a child, and just as the human body requires the administrations of many experts in different lines, so, too, if a product is to grow into a king among products, then many experts will be needed to nurse it through adolescence into manhood. It

is unthinkable that these experts should fight for the child like a lot of dogs for a bone, and yet it is only too true that one advertising medium will malign another advertising medium in an effort to get rich quick.

The sponsor is probably very often kept in the dark, and does not know that his advertising policy has been adapted to meet certain conditions, of which he would, most certainly, disapprove.

All forms of advertising should assist each other, and there is no doubt that if there were whole-hearted co-operation, the sponsor would benefit by bigger and better returns, while the advertising media would also benefit, because of the continued prosperity of the sponsor's business.

Many of the responsible advertising agencies decry the fact that some of their competitors have so-called radio departments, manned by inexperienced youngsters, who may have a flair for snappy copy-writing, but who are in no way competent to build radio entertainment.

When competing advertising agencies offer a prospective client comprehensive advertising campaigns, the ideas incorporated are looked upon by the client as the absolute property of the agency concerned. This is ethical enough when the work so offered is produced by the paid agency staff, but it is very different when the idea has come to the agency from a free lance writer, or organization, who has done the work speculatively.

Any work so conceived and carried out should certainly remain the property of the free lance, so that the client can have the benefit of it, no matter if it has first been submitted to him through an agency which he does not ultimately employ. Some of the very finest radio shows have been lost because of misunderstandings of this sort. There is no reason why the free lance should be penalized, because of some ethical consideration in a business of which he knows very little.

In the final analysis, if the advertising agency is to receive commission on program costs, then there should be an efficient radio department. If, however, an outside expert has to be called in, he should be selected by the client, in exactly the same way that the advertising agency itself has been selected in the first instance. Then, just as the doctor and dentist will work in harmony over the same patient, so, too, would the radio program builder and the advertising agency work together for the health and prosperity of the client's business.

Some of the most brilliantly conceived and executed radio campaigns have been conducted by leading advertising agencies, fully equipped with fine radio departments—but it must be granted that the clients in these cases have been very wealthy firms, to whom a few thousand dollars one way or the other was of little moment.

Of all experts in any profession to suffer from the folly, false pride, and ignorance of others, the radio ex-

pert is the most unfortunate. On several occasions we have seen a first rate musical director being given various instructions from as many as seven different people (connected either with the sponsor, or with his advertising agency) not one of whom knew half as much as the expert for whose services they were paying so highly. Many a program has been spoiled by childish alterations insisted upon by someone who didn't know what it was all about, but who was presumably paid by the sponsor to look after the program. Even more programs have been rendered ridiculous to the educated listener by the introduction of poor and untrained singers, who were, perhaps, related by marriage to the sponsors of the hour.

On the other hand, both in the advertising agencies and in the radio stations, so much deference is paid to the client that he comes away feeling that no one can run a program as well as he.

There is, perhaps, a glamor similar to that of the stage which attracts the business man to radio. His vanity is tickled when he can walk into a studio and tell a great conductor to play a Magyar Gypsy dance on trumpets instead of violins—which incident actually occurred at a dress rehearsal in New York. Needless to say, the trumpets remained *tacit* during the actual performance!

There are many business men who are, indeed, competent musicians, good writers, and excellent performers, but these would not offend, because the performing artists

would recognize in them fellow craftsmen. But the business man who has devoted his life to hard work and the making of money, and whose education has lacked the nicer points of culture, receives more ridicule behind his back in the radio stations than would do him good to know.

This type of sponsor has bred the Yes-men of radio, who are legion in number.

The vainest of women would dismiss a personal maid, who in apparent admiration failed to mention the blemish that was to make her lady ridiculous before others, and many a sponsor is like a foolish matron, who prefers flattery to truth.

Many a time when a dramatic performance is being rehearsed, the sponsor has sat in the control, with knit brows, to listen. He has weightily laid down the law for this or that change. He will even go through the script with his paid expert, and make him take notes of the changes to be made. The production director will catch the engineer's eye, and the microphones will be turned off for a few minutes, during which the director and the cast will go into a huddle. The sponsor, very satisfied with himself, will then listen to the performance a second time, and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred will express his keenest appreciation, although, in fact, not a single change has been made!

This constant and foolish interference acts very unfavor-

ably on the actual performance of the program. The actors, and all others concerned, do not care to work for a fool, and a spirit of anything-will-do creeps into the performance. Lack of intelligent response from the man the actors are striving to please is always a drawback.

There are both orchids and scallions for the most popular of artists, and the sponsor would be well advised to accept the judgment of his expert, in the selection of talent, rather than be guided by his own personal taste, which may be either too fastidious or too crude.

Another point that the sponsor should realize is that he is laboring under a handicap in judging radio talent, when he is allowed to meet the artist—because he has a more personal reaction than the experienced radio producer. The public who listens cannot see the artist performing, and the sponsor who would wish to get a true perspective on his program should insist rather upon *not* meeting the artists than on meeting them. He should also insist upon hearing only one audition of the same show, because first impressions are *only* impressions, so far as radio entertainment is concerned.

With regard to commercial credits, the sponsor who is not willing to leave this all-important item to his expert would be well advised to listen to other commercial programs, when he would be quick to resent the ballyhoo of his competitors. His courage to reduce his own sales talk to a practical minimum would be greatly strengthened,

and help him to rid himself of a sense of ownership, which is as unprofitable to the program as is the misguided super-admiration for an only son by a doting parent.

Sometimes the sponsor feels that he is being overcharged for the program, and wonders where the thousands of dollars spent on a half hour's entertainment really go. There is little doubt that if he were to employ a reputable expert program builder costs could, in many cases, be substantially reduced. When a high-priced star is contracted for, it would be just as well to know how many middlemen have to be taken care of before the artist concerned receives his or her net fee.

An impresario who finances and exploits a singer, let us say, and agrees to pay that singer so much a performance over a stipulated period, is justified in getting from the client as much over that fee as he can—since that is the way in which he makes his profit. But if the singer is represented by an agent, who is entitled by law to a commission from the artist on the fee obtained (as is the Artists' Bureau), then there should be no possibility of this agent's charging a higher fee than that agreed to by the artist, and then paying over only the original fee less the commission. This may happen without the knowledge of the artist, who is often a poor business man.

Another way to trap the unsuspecting client is to specify so much per broadcast for "suitable music." The client will be delighted at his audition with a fine orchestra, but

when the novelty of his program has died down, the orchestra is liable to dwindle to meagre proportions, although the money paid is still the same as at the beginning.

A client is entitled to an announcer without additional cost, since those services are included in the charges for time. But if the client requires a special announcer who always is on the program, then he has to pay an extra amount, according to the price of the announcer selected by him.

In some cases, this special announcer has been unable to appear, because of some emergency that has arisen at the last moment. The charge for his services should then be refunded, but it is not unlikely that a special charge for "musical arrangements" may be included on that particular program, to balance the slated refund.

The wise sponsor should realize that a small orchestra is probably better for ordinary purposes than a large one, *provided* that special arrangements are made for the combination used. Most famous band leaders owe their success to the brilliance of their orchestrations, which they do not, by any means, always do themselves. The sponsor charged for special arrangements should be very certain that they remain his property. Otherwise these same arrangements may be used by similar combinations, and the peculiar originality of his own entertainment is destroyed.

Having definitely decided to go on the air, the sponsor

should then, and not till then, ask for auditions, for which he should be prepared to pay a reasonable figure.

One of the reasons why the sponsor is held in such contempt by the theatrical and entertaining professions, is that he will often put writers, singers and actors to an infinity of trouble to build, rehearse, and finally give an audition—not of one program, but perhaps as many as twenty—for no return whatsoever.

An author submitting a manuscript to a magazine, or a publisher, is free to take it elsewhere on its rejection, with confidence that the next editor need not know that it has been refused by anyone before it came to him. In radio, however, there is no possibility of discretion or secrecy. All the radio world knows beforehand about nearly every audition, and should it be unsuccessful, it will be labelled as a show that so-and-so turned down.

In many instances the program has been specifically built for that one client, and may not be suitable for anyone else. In this case it is a total loss, and the creators of it not only have to live while they prepare it, but are actually out of pocket for all the incidentals, such as typing, car fares, and other miscellanies.

The fine advertising agencies who have stood out for fair treatment for artists, and who pay at least half fee for auditions, well deserve the success that has attended their efforts in establishing their clients' products through radio.

The better writers and the better performers are getting tired of so much abortive work, with the result that the standard of programs is falling for lack of competent talent.

The sponsor owes something to the industry that serves him, but he owes more to the public that he serves, and unless he realizes his responsibilities, and shoulders them squarely, the time will come when the Government will be compelled to step in with constructive decisions for the future of radio.

## CHAPTER XIX

### TO THE RADIO AUDIENCE

**T**HERE are two sides to every question, and, so far, we have dealt only with the host of people, including artists, writers, engineers, pressmen, and sponsors, all of whom are at the safe end of the gun, so to speak.

We will now take up the other and more important side of the question—the target at which every microphonic pistol is aimed, that vast array of listeners, of all ages and races, of all creeds, and of all occupations.

The public, at any given moment, is likely to be as critical as any individual member of it, so that any offering to the public should be able to pass the eagle eye of the expert, and be approved. The true showman realizes this, and goes to great trouble and expense to present something that is flawless in its workmanship. The average patron of the cinema may laugh at an animated cartoon of Betty Boop, or Popeye the Sailor, but will have no conception of the amount of intensive thought and labor that has been expended in preparing the musical background, which to them may be the least important item in the feature. We have been privileged to see these cartoons in the making, and know that fine musicians have spent many hours

in experiment and careful preparation, so that no single highly qualified member of the public could reasonably complain of the music.

If the great showmen of the film industry realize how important these details are, should not the sponsor of radio be equally concerned?

It has been said, with more wisdom than is at first apparent, that genius lies in the infinite capacity to take pains. A masterpiece can be destroyed by the inclusion of one small blemish, and many craftsmen look to the structure as a whole, and are apt to neglect the very detail, to them unimportant, that will react against the completed work.

The finest picture framed in an unsuitable setting no longer appears to be the work of art that it may be, and the beauty of many a radio program is destroyed by the ugly frame of commercial credit.

The sponsor, eager to exploit his product, neglects his consideration of the listeners' point of view. The radio audience have not paid for tickets to a concert, and lack the eagerness which presupposes enjoyment of it.

We have taken great pains to find out the mood of listeners, who take their radio seriously, and will settle themselves down for a half hour of uninterrupted enjoyment. This is the mood that really matters, and may be aptly called the Armchair Mood. To encourage this is to achieve the height of radio entertainment, to form a

bond of sympathetic friendship in the home, and to bring to many thousands a much-needed solace.

There is an amusing story told of a famous radio star, who was engaged to make a talking picture of his radio act. When he entered the film studio, he asked for the director, who had sent for him. The director was pointed out, and the radio star walked over to him, and said:

“I’m so-and-so!”

The director looked blank, so the star repeated:

“I’m so-and-so. You know, the radio star!”

“But my dear fellow, I’m married,” came the pat reply.

“What’s that got to do with it?” laughed the star.

“Plenty,” snapped the director. “Happiness in married life depends on two things, love making, and conversation. Radio disturbs both!”

Unfortunately, as far as the disturbing element of radio entertainment is concerned the director was right.

Unless the Armchair Mood is considered much more than it is, radio will continue to strengthen the reaction against the noisy and ill-chosen programs that are foisted upon listeners.

As we have mentioned, a catch phrase among sponsors and their advertising agencies is, “Remember that the audience are mostly morons. You must write and act to please the mind of a thirteen-year-old!”

During the last five years, Gladys Erskine has been Radio Editor of three different magazines, one of which

catered to the masses, another to the sophisticates, and the third to the home group. These magazines were *The Home Magazine*, distributed through the Woolworth stores, *Life*, and *The Elks Magazine* with a circulation of nearly a million.

Through the fan mail she received in her editorial capacity, she was enabled to gauge audience reaction from all walks of life, and from every quarter of the country. Many of the letters from actual thirteen-year-olds revealed them as far less moronic than the sponsor, director, and continuity writer, all of whom looked down upon the mental attributes of listeners. Others of the letters asked for the name of the author of a certain script, or for the identity of an actor in a certain part, while some contained sound logical criticisms of certain very mediocre programs, and displayed a keen analysis of characterizations.

One thing was very clear—there was a more decided interest taken in personalities who had become intimate friends in the home through regular radio visits than in the casual star, however great the glamor of the star might have been. The daily or weekly visitor had become a welcome guest in whom the fan felt a personal interest, whereas the visiting star was only a brilliant moth, coming out of the night on gossamer wings, and as quickly gone.

Another very enlightening fact was that there were many letters which commented adversely on the practice

of "doubling," that is, one actor playing many parts. This proved that the development of the auditory sense is rapidly advancing, and suggests that within a few years deception will be impossible. It is comparatively easy for an actor to change his voice but it is very rarely that he will change his mentality, or his method of approach, when portraying different types of characters. His mentality will creep through the finest vocal disguise.

In the theatre, when an actor essays the playing of two separate characters, the audience reaction to his work becomes critical of his histrionic art, rather than appreciative of the quality or infamy of each rôle portrayed. As soon as they *know* that both villain and hero are being played by the same actor, then their enjoyment lies more in the cleverness of the acting than in the play itself. In radio it is the same, and program directors, sensing a blind audience, have deceived themselves rather than the listeners, when they have used actors to play more than one part, in order to save a little money.

The other day we were talking to a well known Broadway actress, and were discussing the great difficulty of completely changing one's personality, living a different life, under a different name, and in different surroundings, but running the risk always of meeting someone who had known one before. She agreed, and made a very interesting comment. She said,

"Yes, it must be almost impossible, because no one

would ever be able to conceal those points in his character of which he himself was fond."

If this is true of anyone, it is true of the actor and his art, and these letters to Miss Erskine proved that the public are beginning to hear something very much deeper than the sound of the voice.

It is because of our first hand knowledge of this most intelligent audience reaction to radio drama that we are prepared to prophesy more and better dramatic radio entertainment in the very near future.

The radio audience is the most dictatorial in the world. With a twist of the wrist they can silence the loudest singer in the world, and with the careful manipulation of a powerful set, they can cut adrift from America altogether, and travel thousands of miles away to seek what they want. But the average listener is somewhat like the average voter, who refuses to realize his own power to govern the machine that can be changed at his will.

The loud speaker has become almost as universal as mural decoration in the home, but whereas the housewife will take great pains in choosing the shade of her wall paper, she will make little or no effort to influence the manufacturers of radio programs to make something that she loves.

In the early days of radio, the few owners of expensive sets would invite friends into their homes to listen to the latest wonder. Now that this novelty has worn off, the

radio has become an adjunct of the home with which the family lives day in and day out. The quality of entertainment has become a matter of real concern to almost every member of the household, particularly to parents.

The mother of a small family will protest with vehemence to a guest who insists on spoiling her children by overloading their little insides with unwholesome candies, but she will bear in comparative silence the exciting and unwholesome children's programs that go on night after night, and reduce the children almost to the point of hysterics, or send them to a bed of nightmares.

*Of course* the child likes the excitement, but the sponsor, relying on the insistence of the youngsters, and the weakness of the parents, uses this situation for his own ends, in a way that is virtually criminal.

If the mother turns the dial, in an effort to find something suitable, the child will rage and scream. It actually wants to hear about the kidnaping, and the gangsters, and who is the latest machine gun victim.

In the film industry a similar situation exists, but by its very nature it is easier for the serious parent to combat, because the child can be kept away from the cinema. But for the parent to deny the child the right to listen to the radio, *which should be an incentive for children to stay at home*, is unthinkable.

Most heads of families know about the deplorable condition in the film theatres; they know that there are

laws which prevent children attending the picture shows without a legal guardian in attendance with them; they know that these laws are never enforced; they know that crowds of children, sitting two on a seat, will watch salacious and gangster films, and make up their little minds to become gangsters when they grow up, because the cops never get the breaks; and they may know that many of these theatres could not afford to keep open, except for the support of these children. But at least the parent, knowing all this, can protect the child from these demoralizing influences by keeping him at home and controlling his spending money.

We know, but the parents do not, that the radio stations have not the strength of character to refuse the sponsors' dollars by insisting on a certain type of wholesome program for children.

In the beginning, this danger does not enter the head of the normal guardian, and in the end it is too late, and the child develops the taste for nightly thrills, and the parent is almost powerless to curb it.

There is no question but that the sponsor knows what the children want. But the parent is not considered.

This aspect of radio is the most serious of all, and is of national importance. Indeed, so vital a question is it that, unless something is done about it, we predict strong Government intervention.

In the meantime, it is up to the radio audience who have

in their own hands the power to compel reform in radio, as they can in Government itself. At least the Federal Radio Commission insists on the name of the station being called every quarter of an hour, so that the enemy is not hidden.

The trouble is that the attack on children is so insidious that many will complain that we are guilty of gross exaggeration in our scathing condemnation of the average children's program. Nevertheless, we are supported by the official statements of the Committee of the Parent-Teachers' Association, some of which are quoted elsewhere in this volume.

If only the suffering parents would write to the radio stations, or to the sponsors, to demand reform, as often as they will write to a laggard landlord, who will not repair a roof (a trivial matter in comparison), then there would be an immediate improvement.

One thing is certain, and that is that the success of the sponsored program, as a product-selling campaign, lies wholly in the hands of listeners. An offensive program may so antagonize listeners that they will set their minds *not* to buy the particular product advertised, no matter what its excellence may be—and in this very real part of audience reaction lies the strongest power of the public. This is a situation in which the public can take the law into its own hands justifiably and with a foregone conclusion. If they will write to the radio stations, or sponsors

concerned, not only to complain of the offensive programs, but to state positively that they would not, under any circumstances, purchase the product until the quality of radio entertainment were to be improved, there would be immediate and lasting results.

Any great force or power that is misapplied, either through ignorance or with malicious intent, becomes a grave public danger, and it is against this very real menace that radio audiences should assert themselves.

The adult mind is not likely to be injured by a radio program that is either mediocre in quality, or replete in sensationalism, but the child mind can be so influenced by the constant shock of recurrent thrills that a permanent injurious impression can be left.

The sponsor who deliberately exploits the craving of childhood for unwholesome mental diet is as guilty as any gangster who killed an innocent child in the street.

Until the sponsors and all those responsible have a greater respect for the radio audience, which can only be achieved by that audience showing a greater respect for themselves and for the programs brought into their homes, the full entertaining and cultural value of radio will not be obtained.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE FUTURE OF RADIO

**W**ILL Television replace radio?

For nearly two years we pioneered this field, and made a careful study of the problems to be faced in program building. We do not propose to go into these details at this time, for, although television has made strides at which even Mr. Marconi himself expressed his amazement, the expense involved in building an efficient receiving set makes the commercialization of this latest miracle further off than many believe.

A television studio can be described as a Black Hole of Calcutta, small to the point of being cramped and in utter darkness except for the pin point of brilliant flickering light, called The Flying Spot, which is focussed so acutely on the small screen that the darkness seems as black as Stygian night. Surrounding the aperture through which the light is projected are a series of photo-electric cells, which are, of course, the vital factors in television transmission. A peculiarity about these cells is that they are extremely sensitive to color, so that a definite type of make-up is essential in order to obtain a reproduction of natural appearance. We found that well defined contrasts of black

and white reproduced better than any blending, so that the pale brunette with black hair came over better than a blonde with cheeks of apple red.

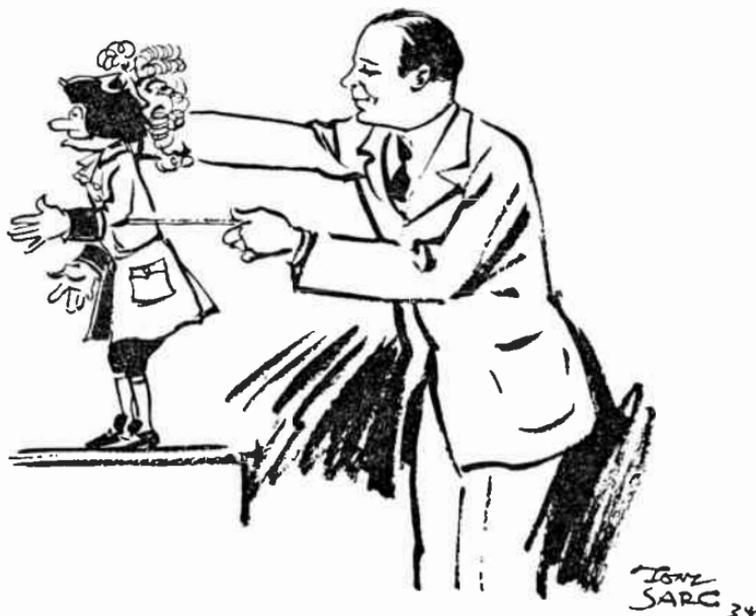
The cells do not pick up red, so that we found the lip rouge better replaced with black or dark blue, while the face, unrouged, should be heavily powdered. One amusing fact was that a man with a blue shaven jowl would often appear on the screen as a full bearded duplicate of Rasputin, or one of the Smith Brothers!

To view the head and shoulders of an artist singing a song with a funereal face became in a short time as uninteresting as watching a lone gold fish opening and closing its mouth. So we conducted our programs along certain lines that proved very successful.

First the station announcer would take the stage to introduce Miss Erskine, who acted afterwards as Mistress of Ceremonies, and she would meet him within the focussed area, give him a suitable exit line, and would then be met by the guest artist while she was still in front of the screen. Miss Erskine would then informally discuss the program, and, when it was interesting, the background of the artist, after which he would be left alone to continue his performance.

Many of the programs were interesting, not alone from the point of view of program value, but because of the personality value of the artists who were gracious enough to offer their services. Many of these were celebrities of

international reputation, so successful in their respective lines of endeavor that they would not have wasted their time unless they had foreseen the great future to television, and were, accordingly, well pleased to say so in this way.



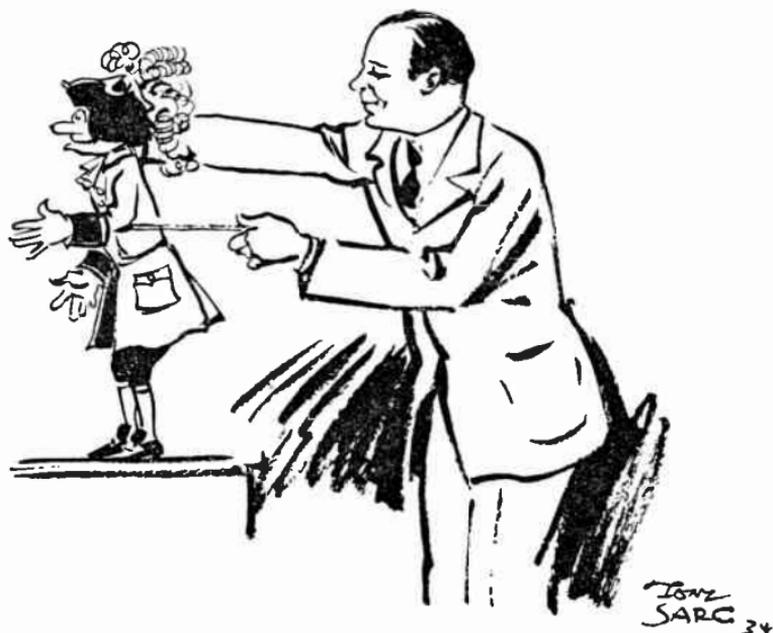
TONY SARG PRESENTS GREEDY GEORGE

Tony Sarg, famous alike for his illustrations and his marvellous marionettes, gave us an hilarious performance entitled, and performed by, Greedy George and Jane. This Darby and Joan couple are marionettes of a unique kind, Mr. Sarg's special invention. They never fail to amuse.

pitch darkness, except for the small square of illuminated screen, before which the object to be televised has to be placed. Out of the darkness into the light would be thrust a hand, the owner of which was quite invisible to Mrs. Baldwin. Without a moment's hesitation she would describe the more important traits of her subjects, invariably mention their present occupations, and also trace the stronger nationalities in their ancestry. The clarity with which the palms themselves could be seen made this program very much appreciated.

Colonel C. D. H. MacAlpine was another to come before the television audience, which numbered over nineteen thousand in the metropolitan area of New York alone, so we were officially informed. He told something of his famous exploration disaster, when as leader of the Dominion Explorers' expedition he was marooned in the Arctic in the fall of 1929. He was able to show to the audience very interesting photographs, maps, and diagrams of these ice-bound regions, which, largely because of the publicity attendant upon the marooning of his party, is now teaming with prospectors and mining gangs, working to extract from the barren looking ground the wealth of gold, silver, and radium that is destined to lift Canada out of the depression in double quick time. The Colonel was delighted and amazed when, within half an hour of his telecast, his old friend Bernt Balchen dashed up to him, having just seen him in a television receiving

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The bodies of the marionettes are made on wires, and are clothed as little actors would be, but they have no heads. One hand of Mr. Sarg, and of Kenneth Murchison, who motivated Jane, were each made up to represent a face, the thumb and forefinger being held in such a way that when they were moved, an amazing replica was created of a toothless mouth munching, or articulating speech. A wig was placed over each of these bald pates to complete a perfect illusion.

The arms, legs, and torso were motivated by the other hand of each artist, which was, naturally, out of sight.

Then Mr. Sarg and his able and jovial assistant proceeded to make their expressive-faced actors go through their pace. Greedy George, under the deft hands of his creator, talked, sang, ate soda crackers, and even drank a glass of water!

These are the only known marionettes who are not truly wooden headed, and at least a part of them is actually alive.

Sherman Ripley, of Boy Scout fame, and the author of "Magic for Boys," appeared frequently. He has made a particular study of the art of conjuring as applied to television. He also gave a most instructive program on rope knotting, which gave proof of the tremendous teaching power that lies in television.

Anton Schubelj, the Yugo-Slavian baritone, assisted by his partner Llubjana, gave costume recitals. He is an excel-

lent television artist, because his facial expression is as fascinating to watch as the glorious tone of his voice is to hear. He is an actor and a singer both. As these programs were transmitted on the short wave, both for sound and sight, his own countrymen were able to listen in in Europe. The costumes worn were genuine historical antiques, and they could be seen in detail in a way that would not have been possible on the concert platform. Each ornament on the bridal headdress could be focussed, and an explanation of its symbolism given, and this became a feature of the program.

Edward Lasker, the chess master, who played the first game ever conducted by radio from ship to ship, when his opponent was Mr. Norman Dodge, the President of the Mergenthaler Linotype Company, replayed his famous game in which he defeated Sir George Thomas, ex-champion of Great Britain. A huge chess board was loaned to us by Mr. Helms of the *Chess Bulletin*, and the chessmen were suspended in front of each square on the board, which was vertical and not horizontal. Thus Mr. Lasker has the distinction of being the first chess master to play by both radio and television.

E. K. Baldwin gave us several intensely interesting programs on palmistry. She had worked with the famed Bertillon in Paris, and had specialized in assisting wounded and disabled soldiers to re-find their vocations by applying the principles of this science. The television studio was in

pitch darkness, except for the small square of illuminated screen, before which the object to be televised has to be placed. Out of the darkness into the light would be thrust a hand, the owner of which was quite invisible to Mrs. Baldwin. Without a moment's hesitation she would describe the more important traits of her subjects, invariably mention their present occupations, and also trace the stronger nationalities in their ancestry. The clarity with which the palms themselves could be seen made this program very much appreciated.

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set somewhere in New York. As they had not met for years, and Mr. Balchen was to have been the Colonel's pilot on his ill-fated trip, if Admiral Byrd had not had first option, it was one of those incidents that leave an indelible impression on the mind. When television is popularized, there will be many such happenings, parents seeing their long lost sons, who may be included in a picture flashed from the other side of the world. Indeed, a bureau of missing persons may well be established in television, with far-reaching results.

Then there was Professor Donar, the grand old puppeteer, who gave us his inimitable Punch and Judy show; and there was Frank Rigney, of *Boys Life*, who gave a display of rhythmic draughtsmanship and quick-fire cartoons that were as amusing as they were instructive.

But perhaps the most successful of all our programs was that in which Max Fleischer, the beloved creator of Koko the Clown, Barnacle Bill, Betty Boop, Bimbo, Popeye the Sailor, and a host of other pen and ink stars, appeared for us in person in a presentation of the first animated cartoon to be televised. Standing in front of the brilliant light, Max Fleischer, while carrying on a running conversation with Miss Erskine, drew with rapid, sure strokes of his charcoal pencil the pert Miss known to millions as Betty Boop. Suddenly, lo and behold, Miss Boop (Betty to her intimates) came to life, rolled her eyes, blinked her famous lashes, and then, without more ado,

opened her pouting mouth and sang her Boop-a-doop song, with all the allure of lowered lids. So successful was this feature that it was selected as the only program to be presented at the World's Radio Fair at Madison Square Garden on the ten-foot screen. Although scheduled for only one performance, the program was repeated nearly thirty times, to the delight of Mr. Carveth Wells, who was acting as special announcer.



MAX FLEISCHER AND HIS BETTY BOOP

There is still great rivalry between Miss Erskine, who introduced her and so became the first Television Girl, and Betty herself, who says that a girl is a girl for a' that, even if she springs from Max Fleischer's ink well.

The greatest difficulty in the early days of television was the problem of focussing, so that a portrait appeared more real than the person, the tip of whose nose might be in focus, while the ears might appear blurred.

The quality of Mr. Fleischer's delightful drawings, coupled with this fact was what made the program such an outstanding success.

But as we are not amongst those who believe that radio will die in giving birth to television, the future of radio itself is a more fitting conclusion to this attempt to give readers an insight into the intricacies of broadcasting.

It is a misfortune to which humanity is heir that in all successful endeavor there is danger from the dishonest element. There is no more basically honest industry than gold mining, and yet, because of the opportunity for great gain, there is always the risk of bogus promotion, and all the dishonest methods of high-pressure finance.

In radio, the same condition pertains. Here is an industry which has grown with all the amazing rapidity of an oil company that brings in a gusher, and, true to humanity, the chiseler, the crook, and the middleman playing both ways from the ace, has crept into the industry. Things have been done, and are still being done, that are neither legal nor ethical from any standpoint, and the abuses are legion.

N.R.A. is attempting a radio code, but such is the power of radio itself, to say nothing of the interests vested in it, that the whole is hemmed in by a ring of political issues, which would require the wisdom of Solomon to adjudicate. While we have been working on this book, commendable

efforts have been made to bring clean thinking and honest endeavor into radio.

John T. Adams, when President of the Federal Broadcasting Company, made a very real effort to compel sponsors to toe the line, and accept a standard of both program and commercial credit very much higher than that to which they had been used. His successor, Mr. George B. Storer, now operating a new chain, the American Broadcasting System, is going even further and limiting commercial credits to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  minutes in a quarter hour program, and rigorously censoring commercial medical sales talks. This is excellent news, and all those responsible are to be congratulated.

Ed. Wynn, the popular comedian, entered the business end of radio by sponsoring another chain system, but soon found that constructive ideas on radio entertainment did not help him to solve the problems of politics and finance. It was unfortunate that this effort gave an opportunity, from the outset, for newspapers and the entertaining profession generally to register bitter complaint that the performers were to work for no pay, until the commercial sponsors would come to the rescue, after the excellence of program content had been proved. There is nothing new in this policy, as it dates back to the inception of the industry, and many a radio star worked for a long period of time for no pay, before establishing himself. It is strange, but true, that the American nation demands free

entertainment in the home, while content to pay for gas and electricity, and other public services. Nevertheless, Father Coughlin, over WJR in Detroit, has built up a self-supporting congregation for his radio sermons, by organizing the Radio League of the Little Flower, with nearly one hundred thousand members who each pay a dollar a year to meet the cost of the broadcasts. This example may yet make radio history.

It hardly seems equitable that the entire nation should be enabled to hear an address by the President of the United States, or a superb symphony concert, because, and only because, advertisers pay so highly for time on the air that the operating broadcasting companies can afford to offer these uplifting features as a gesture of goodwill.

The willingness with which Father Coughlin's followers pay to ensure the permanence of their chosen program would seem to indicate that the general public might do likewise, if the full truth of the situation were comprehended.

We are loathe to prophesy how far the American System, or other new companies, will be able to progress, since the power of transmission, the wave lengths allotted by the Federal Radio Commission, the possibility of interference from other stations, and the clarity of reception, are factors that may destroy the finest of programs, and reduce the drawing power of the greatest talent to very meagre proportions. But there is, most certainly, a real

need for one or more additional major networks able to compete with the two mammoth systems.

The other day an ambitious young actress was asked by an elevator boy, who had seen her around a great deal,

“Excuse me, miss, but do you work here, or are you *only* broadcasting?” (The italics are ours!)

In this one question a great deal of the abuse of radio is exposed. The major companies were built up with the help of artists who took a chance on their talent and time, and it is not always easy to know where the line should be drawn. Is the artist who works for nothing on a sustaining feature any more a blackleg than he who gives many commercial auditions for no pay? We hardly think so.

If there is a radio station in the country which can say that they have never presented a sustaining feature without paying for it, we have never heard of it.

Even WOR, operated by the Bamberger Broadcasting System, which is known to be making profits, will retain a sustaining feature that is very successful for month after month, without even paying car fare to the artists.

President Roosevelt in his dramatic talk to the nation on October 22, 1933, told how N.R.A. had abolished the eighty cents a week labor, along with other industrial abuses.

But radio is a strange business. Unlike any other industry it seems to be free to pay no wages until profitable business comes into its studios.

Nevertheless, in all fairness, there must be a limit to the speculative risk of capital expended on public service, and not simply on an out-and-out gamble. Unless an operating broadcasting company has enough commercial accounts *paying profits*, out of which the cost of sustaining features can be met, where is the money to come from for the payment of those artists, whose work is only to educate or entertain, and not to sell a product? Until this question can be satisfactorily answered, the future of radio must remain uncertain.

There is only one alternative to philanthropy or Government subsidy, if a living wage is to be paid to all performers giving free entertainment to the entire nation. That alternative is the payment of a small yearly license by every possessor of a radio set, *or* an indirect tax on radio sets and tubes. Radio deserves public and Government support, for it not only promotes industry, a fact commendable in itself, but it is capable of bringing refining and cultural influences into the homes of millions, great joy to the shut-ins and invalids, and is a link between the citizens of the vast cities and those who live in isolated spots away from theatres, and churches, and free lectures.

Radio, too, with its power to span the world, should be used to promote international understanding, and so help to lay the bogey of wars, mistaken racial prejudices, and engineered enmities.

The extent to which the American nation will benefit from a cultural, rather than a commercial, development of radio is, today, in the hands of the gods and the public themselves.

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