

# • RADIO • WRITING



• by PETER DIXON •

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# RADIO WRITING

By

PETER DIXON

In this first book of its kind a man who has been active as a radio writer for three years—the author of the successful program "Raising Junior"—tells the would-be radio writer what he needs to know before breaking into the newest field of authorship, writing for the air.

While Mr. Dixon makes no promises of teaching radio writing in ten easy lessons, he does give a clear picture of the mechanics of writing for the microphone, and he explains in detail the fundamentals as well as the more advanced technique of preparing manuscripts for broadcasting.

Among the subjects discussed are the methods used in training radio writers; the various branches of writing open to persons desiring to specialize; the possibilities of financial reward; the taboos and restrictions of radio; the technique of presenting plays without scenery, costumes or make-up; broadcast humor, melodrama and mystery sketches; how radio serials are written; the marketing of radio scripts and ideas; and many other questions asked every day by those outside the studios. He also discusses the future of the radio script and what will happen when television arrives.

Mr. Dixon has written a valuable and fascinating book—a godsend to the budding author of the 1930's.

*Illustrated*

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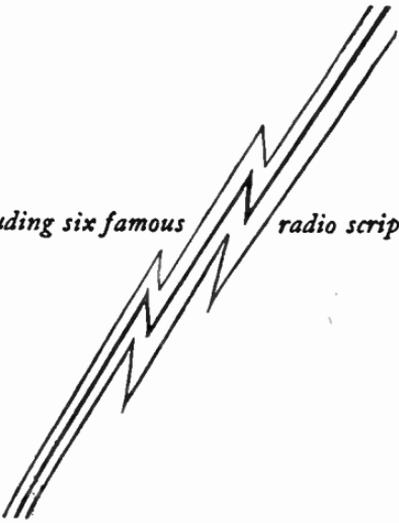
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# RADIO WRITING

BY PETER DIXON



*Including six famous radio scripts*

*Illustrated with Photographs*

THE CENTURY CO • NEW YORK

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*NBC Photo*

It's all in fun

Raymond Knight (center) and the staff of Station KUKU

To  
**BERTHA BRAINARD**  
who could write Radio history  
if she was not so busy making it

## INTRODUCTION

In writing this book the author has been in the position of a reporter attempting to dictate a running story of a three-ringed circus. So many things are happening in the broadcasting studios at the same time that concentration on any special incident means that something else which may be of equal importance has been overlooked.

Radio broadcasting moves forward at a tremendous speed. It has reached its present important position in the world in ten years. Radio writing has developed as rapidly.

To discuss authoritatively the technique of writing for radio is almost an impossible task. In the first place, there are few authorities on this technique. Further, the methods of these few authorities differ widely. Still further, this so-called technique of radio writing is changing every month. In fact, radical changes sometimes come overnight when an experimental program is discovered to be a success.

The task is comparable to an attempt to write a volume on ship-building after watching the builders lay the keel. The keel of radio writing has been laid and some of the ribs are up. At this time no one can

predict just what will be the final outlines of the completed vessel.

The writer firmly believes that the literature of radio will take its place with the literature of the theater and with the literature that comes from the printing-presses. Some of the sketches that have been written might be placed on the shelves with the best dramatic literature. Still other sketches that have been broadcast might be well worth preserving in bound volumes. Yet these sketches represent no definite technique and are merely indicative of outstanding ability in the ranks of the radio writers.

The writer therefore has approached the literary phase of broadcasting as a reporter. It is his aim to tell what has been done and what is being done. He will also tell, whenever possible, how it is done. His own opinions, based on his own experience and observation, will be offered, but they will be offered as his own thoughts and not as a consensus of radio opinion.

The development of a new industry is no unusual thing in this age, but the development of a new art is. We have witnessed the development of screen pantomime—only to see it crumble to nothing when the motion-pictures became audible.

The silent pictures taught persons to hear through their eyes. Radio teaches them to see through their ears. Television, perhaps, will destroy this gradually developed ability to see things in sound.

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Radio, however, is more than sound, and whether or not radio ultimately will make it possible to see as well as hear a performance, it has one characteristic that sets it far apart from the theater and the motion-picture palace. Radio is of the home. Its unit audience will always be small. While numerically an audience to a radio program may include millions of listeners, seldom will the listeners number more than four or five to a group.

A thousand people in a theater will respond in a certain way to any given line or situation, while the response of a group of three or four people in a living-room will be totally different. Therefore the problem of the radio writer is to determine the reactions of the family group to his creations. It is a simple matter to note the reactions of an audience of a thousand people in a theater. It is not so simple to divide this audience into more than two hundred groups and check the reactions of each group in order to obtain the average reaction. Thus at the outset the radio dramatist faces a problem unknown to the writer who works to please numerically large groups.

So we can approach the spectacle of hundreds of young men and women struggling to develop radio writing much as we approach some highly interesting football game. Their training counts for much and their willingness to work hard against the odds of necessary mass production and conservative restric-

tions again means much. There is a big element of chance in the game they are playing and the unknown second-string writer may become a star overnight.

This book, then, is not merely a set of rules and instructions. It is a chronicle of a current event—the development of a new literature. If the writer is at times caustic in his analysis of certain policies of the powers that control broadcasting, please remember that he has no personal animus toward either individuals or organizations in the broadcasting world. He believes that radio has made many mistakes and will continue to make mistakes. He also believes that some of the most-criticized policies of the important broadcasters are entirely justified at the present time, and at the same time he believes that the well-known American dollar speaks in many instances with a more authoritative voice than that of the exponents of art and culture.

Radio is destined to be the greatest influence the world has ever known. It is young as yet—scarcely born when one compares its age with those of the theater and the printing-press. Yet it reaches millions who have never seen beyond the footlights or who rarely glance over a printed page.

It is the hope of the writer that this book will play some small part in developing the literary phase of this new influence and that it will cause its readers to

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realize something of the problems and handicaps that confront it—and that in understanding, they will be ready to encourage what is good and to condemn what is bad.

PETER DIXON

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# RADIO WRITING

## CHAPTER I

### *RADIO WRITING*

Twist the dial on your radio set to your favorite station. You are listening, perhaps, to a widely known program that is being broadcast through fifty or more radio stations scattered from coast to coast.

The announcer speaks. As a rule he doesn't waste words, but tells you briefly and concisely what you are about to hear. He doesn't stumble nor are his phrases awkward. These announcers are glib fellows.

The reason the announcer is able to speak so confidently and so concisely is that he reads what he has to say from a printed sheet which he holds in his hand. It is his "continuity," and every word he utters is written by some other man. This writer's name is never mentioned on the air. He gets very little publicity and as a rule he isn't highly paid. Yet he has become one of the most important persons in the broadcasting studios.

With a few exceptions, every word spoken by announcers, actors, speakers on various subjects, and all other persons who address themselves to the radio audience, is carefully written hours and even weeks before the broadcasts. The exceptions are the broad-

cast descriptions of football and other games, broadcasts of current news, and broadcasts originating at public gatherings where there are extemporaneous speakers.

It is true that some of the small independent radio stations depend upon extemporaneous announcing. But the ability to "ad-lib," as the radio world says, means nothing to the makers of the network programs, and practically everything to be said in them is first written and often rewritten. The reasons for this are apparent, but in order to appreciate the importance of the written continuity one must have some slight understanding of the mechanics of a radio network.

One of the most noticeable things in a network center is the large number of clocks. There is one in every studio, in every control-room, in every hallway, and in every office. All keep exactly the same time and all are controlled by a master clock. Nor are they ordinary clocks, for each one has a third hand, moving around the dial every sixty seconds. The entire system of broadcasting depends on these clocks, and seconds, not minutes, are the units of time on which network broadcasting is built.

The network programs, then, must be built to fit the space allotted on the time-schedule. A thirty-minute program must begin at an exact second and end at an exact second.

The curtain in a theater can be five minutes late without causing more than a few grumbles. If the

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curtain on a radio program is five minutes late, not only is the entire network schedule upset but also the network organization is almost sure of losing a very profitable contract with some national advertiser. If a program exceeds its allotted time as much as five seconds, a report is made, and if it is fifteen seconds off schedule, there is an investigation. Broadcasters have found themselves jobless because of failure to start and end a program at the assigned time.

It is no simple task to take a dozen musical numbers, write the appropriate introductory phrases and fit the whole into exactly thirty minutes. It is still more difficult to write a dramatic sketch that will, including the opening and closing announcements, play a half an hour and no more and no less. Yet it is done not every day but many times a day, and has become such an accepted part of the routine that it becomes second nature to the average radio writer.

With the possible exception of the rewrite men on daily newspapers, the radio writers turn out a greater quantity of words than any other group of scribes. If you doubt that, tune in on a half-dozen different stations at any hour of the day. You will hear music but you will also hear words, words, and more words.

It is a curious craft—writing for radio. There is little glory in it, for present network regulations forbid mentioning the name of the author of a script or an elaborate continuity on the air. This rule is broken

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only when the broadcasters engage such widely known writers as Theodore Dreiser or Lulu Vollmer.

There is not much financial gain in the work, since the rank and file of radio writers are as poorly paid as their acquaintances in the newspaper city rooms. Even the stars among the radio writers are poorly paid in comparison to the rewards given successful authors of plays, photoplays, and books.

There is little possibility of writing stuff that will last. A radio sketch is seldom broadcast more than once and usually is forgotten within a few days. There has been no attempt to publish in book form any radio sketches, with the exception of a few of the famous episodes involving the national idols, *Amos 'n' Andy*.

Up to the time that this is written, no awards have been offered for the best radio continuity of the year. Announcers receive medals for excellent diction and young singers receive scholarships for excellent radio voices, but no one has given a thought to the man who creates the words for others to mouth.

The field of radio writing, then, would appear unattractive to the young writer. But it isn't. Reporters desert their jobs to become radio writers. Playwrights who have had some success on Broadway discard dreams of the Great American Drama and struggle over phrases glorifying a widely advertised salad dressing.

The big radio stations receive hundreds of applica-

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tions for jobs as radio writers. The mails are full of unsolicited manuscripts. Many young writers offer to work for nothing just to learn what it is like.

Why? What's it all about? It isn't money that attracts them. It isn't a longing for fame. It isn't a desire for easy work, for they are warned in advance that it is a hard job.

The answer is that it is radio. Ten years ago radio broadcasting was all but unknown. People who had radio sets were classed with stamp-collectors, butterfly-chasers, and first-edition addicts. Harmless, but not normal. To-day one of the few ways to be different is to have a home without a radio set. It has been conservatively estimated that there are more than sixty millions of radio listeners in the United States and the number is growing. Radio programs are actually heard around the world, and the microphone enters the White House and the British House of Parliament as an invited guest.

The executives and the engineers of radio say that what has been done is just the beginning. Already they have not only demonstrated that a radio program performed in New York can actually be sent around the world, but they have brought the music and voices of the rest of the world into the American living-room. Kings and princes address the radio audience and the microphone is going wherever men can go.

The importance of radio writing must increase as

the power of radio increases. The listeners will grow more critical. The present system, which is little more than hack-writing, will be discarded, and radio will begin to create its own literature. Just as good books may be read time and time again, so will radio dramas be repeated at intervals in response to a listener demand.

If you are inclined to be imaginative, you will find in the future that radio offers the writer an unequalled opportunity. If you care to write dramas, you can visualize an audience of a hundred million listeners, all held in the grip of your creation. If you are a crusader and wish by your own words to awaken the millions to some cause, then the microphone will take you to the millions. If you are an educator, think of the nation as one gigantic lecture-room.

But be you dramatist, public benefactor, or pedagogue, you must first learn the magic words that will keep your listeners attentive. And these magic words will be radio writing in its perfected form.

## CHAPTER II

### *A VERY SHORT HISTORY*

THE history of radio itself is a short one as history goes. Prior to 1920, radio was a thing of the laboratory or a signaling system comparable to wire telegraphy. Then station KDKA in Pittsburgh went on the air with the Harding-Cox election returns, and broadcasting as we now know it was born.

Radio writing got its start much later, unless you can think of the news bulletins, talks, and other matter that was broadcast during the very earliest days as radio writing. It was not until 1925 that original material, intended for broadcasting and nothing else, was prepared.

To WGY in Schenectady must go the credit for the first dramatic broadcast. In August, 1922, a small group of Schenectady players presented "The Wolf," by Eugene Walters, through the medium of radio. The play was originally written for the theater and its selection as the first play to be broadcast in this country was more or less accidental. During the summer of 1923 the play "Potash and Perlmutter" was broadcast and during 1924 and 1925 many plays, some of them picked up direct from the theaters on Broadway, went on the air.

Judged by present standards these broadcasts were hardly satisfactory. An alien voice, that of the narrator, had to explain the pantomime and such scenes as could not be visualized through the broadcast dialogue. And these scenes were many. In December, 1925, Cosmo Hamilton, British novelist, broadcast a fifteen-minute version of his novel "Paradise." By that time there were other story-tellers and speakers on the air, reading their remarks from manuscript.

Announcers scorned notes or written continuity. An announcer was judged by his ability to find words to meet any situation. It was this era that developed such announcers as McNamee, Major Andrew White, and Norman Brokenshire.

As soon as the novelty of hearing a stage play by radio had worn off, this type of program fell into disrepute. And it was in 1926 that writers began to consider seriously the preparation of special dramatic material for broadcasting. Shakspeare had been adapted for radio presentation and some progress had been made in revising some of the better-known plays to meet broadcasting conditions, but few people ever expected that the time would come when there would be radio dramatists.

The first material written was for sponsored programs. The first sponsored program was broadcast in 1924 and it was not long before there were several adventurous advertisers on the air. As they began to get results from their broadcast advertising, the

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thought must have occurred to them that perhaps it would be better to have the advertising "copy" prepared in advance, rather than trust to the momentary inspiration of the announcers. And so the announcers received typewritten sheets of the words they were to use during the broadcast. These announcements were laughed at and some of the star microphone men were insulted. But gradually the practice of writing out announcements before the program was developed until to-day the ad-lib on the air is almost unknown.

But to get back to the writers who decided that broadcasting could use some material of its own. Perhaps the best known of these pioneers are Henry Fisk Carlton and William Ford Manley. In the studios these two men are considered the deans of radio writing. They have been at it longer than any one else and have been identified with more successful dramatic programs. Carlton and Manley first did radio adaptations of legends, historical episodes, and myths. The "House of Myths" is a program still remembered.

Then, just before Armistice Day of 1926, Carlton wrote the first original radio sketch. It was titled "The Three Elevens" and had to do with Armistice Day.

The preparation of original manuscripts developed slowly, however. The late Col. C. T. Davis created a series under the title of "Donald and Dorothy." In collaboration with Malcolm La Prade, another vet-

eran radio writer, he wrote and produced "Old Man Donaldson."

Carlton and Manley were busy with their adaptations. They took O. Henry's short stories and made them into excellent radio sketches. Manley produced a series known as "Biblical Dramas," which proved to be so popular that it was later published in book form. They also collaborated on a historical series, and they are responsible for "Soconyland Sketches," which have been broadcast almost continuously for three years.

In 1928 the radio writers began to hit their stride. Raymond Knight happened into broadcasting and produced a series of dramatic sketches involving a gang of children. The program was known as "The Gold Spot Pals." Knight was one of the pioneers in the extensive use of sound-effects. Over at WOR George Frame Brown, then better known in the art theaters of Greenwich Village than in radio, wrote and acted in a series known as "Main Street." Brown had a disagreement with WOR and came to NBC, where he launched "Real Folks," which is on the air at this writing. His sketches might be broadly classed as "hick" comedy but they are more than that, for Brown understands human nature.

In Schenectady the WGY Players were experimenting with original radio material and the listeners liked it. In Chicago two young men became im-

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mensely popular with a dialogue sketch they called "Sam 'n' Henry." It concerned two negro characters and it was on the air for ten minutes every night. This, the first of the daily programs with dramatic continuity, had its première in January, 1926. "Sam 'n' Henry" continued on the air for two years, sponsored by the "Chicago Tribune." Then, after an amicable disagreement with the "Tribune," the two men who had created the sketch started a new series. It was called "Amos 'n' Andy," and it first went on the air in March, 1928. It was not until August, 1929, that "Amos 'n' Andy" became a network feature. Before that time, the pair were heard from various stations through the medium of electrical transcriptions.

Back in New York radio writing was becoming quite an important part of radio. The networks grew and more and more advertisers sought time on the air. Everything had to be written. Where once a station boasted of one man who had nothing to do but write continuities, the departments now included ten and fifteen trained writers. The advertising agencies lured these writers away from their station jobs with larger salaries, and soon many of the agencies had radio continuity departments.

The Great Northern Railroad went on the air in 1929 with a weekly dramatic series and surprised people in radio by engaging a man to do nothing but write the weekly dramatic sketch. The man was Ed-

ward Hale Bierstadt and he did an admirable job. Bierstadt later produced a series called "Historic Trials."

Columbia, by 1929 well organized as a rival to NBC, produced an amusing piece of foolery known as the "Nit-Wits." Raymond Knight, who holds top place among the NBC humorists, went on the air with a burlesque called "Hello, Mars." This was succeeded by "Station KUKU." The "Eveready Hour," considered by many listeners to be the finest program series ever broadcast, did some notable work in presenting radio writing. "Eveready" used the writings of such well-known scribes as J. P. McEvoy. A dramatization of "Alice in Wonderland" was one of its high spots.

Other advertisers ditched musical programs and demanded radio drama. Some, afraid to desert music entirely, ordered sketches with musical interludes or asked for dramatic continuities in which music could be used appropriately. There were the "A.B.A. Voyagers," the original "Westinghouse Salute" programs, and others that are forgotten.

The publishers of the "True Story Magazine" decided to go on the air. William Sweets, a radio writer who received his first training on NBC's staff, undertook to dramatize a "true story" each week. He used the "play within a play" technique and listeners shared dramatized narratives with two very well-known radio characters, *Mary* and *Bob*.

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“Collier’s Magazine” decided to go on the air and listeners received a program in which they heard dramatic sketches, an episode in a serial story, short talks by widely known individuals, and music. The program was supposed to and did reflect the contents of the magazine. A story is told of “Collier’s Hour” to illustrate how the radio program affected the editorial policy of the magazine. The magazine ran a sketch by Rube Goldberg called “Professor Butts.” The character was used in a radio program. So popular did *Professor Butts* become that “Collier’s” found it necessary to sign a contract with Goldberg to deliver a series of cartoons concerning the crack-brained inventor. Yet Goldberg did not write and has never written the radio episodes concerning *Professor Butts*. He merely gets credit for the sketch in the magazine.

In the past few years radio writing has made its greatest strides. Columbia and NBC have spent large sums in experimenting with every type of writing that showed indications of the long-sought “perfect radio technique.”

Columbia produced a radio play by Theodore Dreiser that was received with applause. NBC imported Cecil Lewis, a leading British radio producer, and he did several dramatic productions in the British manner. One of them, a radio adaptation of “The Beggar on Horseback,” is still talked about in broadcasting circles. Though his work was excellent, the

system used by Lewis tied up four or five studios for hours at a time and was found to be economically impracticable in this country, with its split-second schedule of broadcasting—as will be explained later.

The fifteen-minute sketch idea, made popular by “Amos ’n’ Andy,” grew and grew. There are a half-dozen or so on the air now on networks and many of the smaller stations are supporting fifteen-minute daily sketches in the hope of developing successors to “Amos ’n’ Andy.”

Floyd Gibbons took a fling at radio and the listeners liked him. Phil Cook proved to the satisfaction of a cereal manufacturer and several millions of listeners that one man is all that is necessary for a daily fifteen minutes of music, comedy, and dialogue.

So fast are things happening in radio and so rapidly are new things being discovered about writing that a mere recital of to-day’s current events will be history within a week. However, tremendous as has been the progress and development of this newest of literary crafts, the development of a perfect literary form for broadcasting has yet to be completed. What is currently known about the business of writing for radio is herein set forth.

## CHAPTER III

### *THE WRITING SYSTEM*

THOUGH radio writing is immature as a literary art, as a part of the business of broadcasting it has been highly developed. The continuity department of a national network organization is the only rival of the newspaper city room in producing words and phrases in large quantities and on a definite time-schedule. Radio has its dead-lines just as does a newspaper, and the radio writer cannot wait too long for inspiration.

An understanding of the mechanics of producing a radio program is useful. Here is what happens:

The advertising manager of Silver Flakes Soap decides to use radio broadcasting to create public interest in his product. His first contact, however, is not with the broadcasters but with some recognized advertising agency. Practically all sponsored programs are now handled through these agencies.

The representative of the agency then calls upon a member of the sales department of the broadcasting organization. The amount of money to be spent, the number of stations to be included in the network, and the preferred time on the air are discussed. The ad-

vertiser may have definite ideas as to the type of program he wants. He may want a dance band with a national reputation or he may request a dramatic program based on adventures in the South Seas. As often as not, however, he asks the broadcaster to suggest the type of program best suited to his product.

We will assume that the representative of the agency and the representative of the radio sales department have agreed upon eight o'clock Thursday night as the time for the program and that it will be heard through a network of stations covering States on the Atlantic seaboard. The sponsor wants a dramatic type of program and is willing to spend one thousand dollars a week for the program. The cost of leasing stations is additional, and is no concern of the radio writer or the program-builder.

The program department of the radio company next comes into the picture. The major broadcasters have groups known as program boards or planning boards. This board, which includes representatives of the various subdivisions of the program department, receives a memorandum from the radio sales department requesting suggestions and outlines of a program for the Silver Flakes Soap Company. The memorandum points out that the desired program is to be heard on the Eastern seaboard, is to last thirty minutes and is to go on the air at eight o'clock on Thursday night, that one thousand dollars is allowed

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each week to produce the program, and that a dramatic type of presentation is preferred.

Members of the group are asked to make suggestions. Sometimes the matter is threshed out at the first meeting, at other times it may be postponed in order to give group members opportunities to outline ideas.

The problems of the sponsor are considered. Women buy soap and therefore the program must appeal to women. The manufacture of soap, hardly a romantic occupation, cannot be dramatized and so any thought of linking the product directly with the program is abandoned.

Finally, after much discussion, it is decided to present a program to be known as "Soap-Bubbles." While the program title does suggest the product of its sponsor, a member of the group points out that soap-bubbles are both fantastic and beautiful—the antithesis of anything as sordidly practical as laundry soap.

The program selected for a trial is to be a series of highly imaginative and romantic episodes. There must be love-interest and there must be opportunities to use romantic musical selections. The signature melody, the radio program's theme-song, is foreordained. It is the once popular "I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles."

The amount to be spent on music, the amount to be spent on actors, and the amount to be paid for the

writing of the program are determined, and the thousand dollars is taken care of.

Then the actual work on the program is started. A staff continuity-writer is assigned the job of writing a weekly program to be called "Soap-Bubbles." He is told to make it romantic and to make it appeal to women and if possible to make the manuscript consistent with the title of the program.

The radio writer goes to work. In order to bring in the soap-bubbles he creates as minor characters a mother and her child. The child blows soap-bubbles and imagines he sees pictures in them. The mother humors the child and builds a story around each soap-bubble picture. As she begins her narrative, her voice fades out and the voices of the characters in her story fade in. The writer may use old legends, merely adapting them for radio, or he may create his own fanciful tales. This writer also provides for the introduction of music and often writes the commercial blurbs that open and close the program.

When his first script is finished, he sends it to the program group for criticism and possible amendment. If it is satisfactory as written—or when it is made so—it is turned over to an expert, who is known as a production man and who casts, directs, and actually puts the program in shape to go on the air.

The first audition, which is a dress rehearsal of the program, is heard only by members of the program group. Minor changes may be made after this audi-

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tion and then the "client's audition" is planned. This is when the program-makers show their finished product to the man who is to pay the bills.

The soap-manufacturer or his representatives—usually both—are called in and made comfortable in the studios. Usually the most comfortable and harmonious room in the broadcasting headquarters is reserved for this audition. The sponsor does not see the program but hears it come from a radio speaker. This audition is the most nerve-racking of all, for unless the program pleases the potential sponsor, many hours of work will have gone for nothing.

If the representatives of the soap company like "Soap-Bubbles," the machinery of broadcasting is once more put in motion. The writer who has prepared the manuscript is told to start his typewriter going and produce one manuscript a week. Usually he has three or more manuscripts written before the first program is actually on the air. Throughout the series, he must keep at least three weeks ahead of the broadcasting schedule. He must confer with musical experts as to the music used in the program and he often attends rehearsals of the program and helps the production man with direction and line-interpretation. The sponsor of the program, unless he is very unusual, manages to attend rehearsals too, and invariably has suggestions about changes in the manuscript. The radio writer must be something of a diplomat, and he has not the privilege of reminding the sponsor that

making soap and writing radio plays require two different techniques. There have been minor heroes who defied the sponsor—but they have gone back to their former occupations.

The writer lives in constant fear of the sponsor. The thing he fears most is that the sponsor, not content with the enthusiastic phrases about his product at the beginning and end of the program, will request that it be “worked into the script.” Then the harassed writer must have his lovely princess speak well of the Silver Flakes Soap, whether it fits the time or situation or not.

The broadcasters themselves have actively campaigned against excessive advertising in radio programs and have eliminated many of the objectionable practices of a few years ago. Whenever a sponsor asks that the characters in the radio skit say a few good words for Susquehanna Sausages, he is reminded that the immortal *Amos 'n' Andy* never mention tooth-paste. The policy of keeping the entertainment entirely separate from the advertising announcements in the program is becoming more firmly established each month. For which let us give thanks.

But nevertheless the writer must never forget that it is the sponsor who pays the bills and who makes it possible for the residents of Duncan, Oklahoma, to hear concerts by the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra as well as his own creations in dialogue, and that business and not art has made broadcasting on its

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present mammoth scale possible. Therefore, no matter if there be faults in the system, without the system there would be no radio—and no radio writing.

## CHAPTER IV

### *THE TWO DIVISIONS*

ALL radio programs may be included in one of two groups. These groups may be compared to the division of a magazine or newspaper into advertising matter and editorial matter. In radio the two groups are the sponsored programs and the sustaining programs.

“Sponsored programs” are those paid for by an advertiser. The “sustaining” features are those paid for and presented by the radio station or the network organization.

Radio's paid-advertising space, however, is more entertaining than the paid space in a newspaper or a magazine. In fact radio broadcasting could exist without sustaining programs, for the “paid ads” of radio attract as many listeners as the non-commercial programs.

The sustaining program, however, is radio's great experimental laboratory. Every forward step in the development of finer programs has originated as a sustaining program. Dramatic programs, burlesques, and even opera were tried and made popular with listeners at the expense of the broadcasters before advertisers would come forward and shoulder the finan-

cial responsibilities of such programs. Among the notable exceptions are the sponsorship of the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra by Philco and of "The Trial of Vivienne Ware" by the Hearst newspapers.

The radio advertiser is a conservative. He demands a program that is sure to be popular and which will attract and hold a sizable audience. He will pay a bonus for a name such as "Lopez" or "Whiteman" because he knows that these names have a proven value.

The ambitious radio writer with an idea for a program that is totally different from anything else on the air will not find sponsors fighting for a chance to pay for the broadcast. Indeed, it will be very unusual if he finds one advertiser willing to talk it over.

The network management, on the other hand, is interested. If the idea is practical, the author will be given a chance to demonstrate it on the air. He will not be highly paid, but if his experiment is successful and his program attracts a large audience, he will be rewarded later—when an advertiser decides that the program is worth sponsoring.

Floyd Gibbons is an interesting example of the development of a national feature through the sustaining program. Gibbons started his radio career as a sustaining feature. His salary, a nominal one, was paid by the broadcasting company. For weeks he told of his adventures in news-gathering. It was something new in radio, but the listeners liked it. Gibbons began

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to be talked about. His value as a radio attraction had been demonstrated. Within a year his salary was increased to more than ten times the original one, and he became one of the greatest stars on the air. Before his run as a sustaining feature his value to a commercial program was practically nil. The men who do "Amos 'n' Andy," too, worked for years without sponsorship and at very small salaries. Then a manufacturer of tooth-paste took a chance and supplied the two comedians with a national network. The rest is radio history.

When NBC and Columbia started experimenting with the rebroadcasting of programs from abroad, the advertisers sat back and watched. After a half-dozen successful rebroadcasts, the sponsors were fighting for the privilege of paying the bills.

The sustaining program is the stepping-stone for every radio writer who hopes to reap the big rewards that come when he is commissioned to write a commercial program. The writers are trained first on such programs. If they create program ideas that are worth trying, they are given the necessary time each week to broadcast their creations. Perhaps "The Doings of the Dooleys" will never be taken over by an advertiser, but that same advertiser may insist that the writer of "The Doings of the Dooleys" is the one for his program.

A concrete example is Raymond Knight, creator of "Station KUKU," one of the funniest programs on

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the air. Though the presentation has a huge following, it has never been "sold" to an advertiser. But Knight himself is in demand. He does comedy sketches for other programs and he made his reputation through his work on "Station KUKU." (A script from this series is given at the end of this book.)

Graham McNamee doesn't receive a huge salary for his descriptions of baseball and football games. Indeed his actual fee for such work is very small. Yet because, through his work as a sports announcer, he has become a national figure, advertisers pay him very good salaries to read brief announcements in the programs they are sponsoring. The sustaining program, then, not only functions as a developer of new program ideas but also develops radio personalities.

Writers accustomed to three-figure checks for magazine stories and articles are amazed when the radio company offers a measly fifty dollars for a one-act play. The radio executives know, however, that until the magazine writer can prove that he is as interesting to the radio public as he is to the magazine readers, his value is even less than fifty dollars.

Virtually every writer, no matter how successful he has been in other fields, must start at the bottom in radio. He must be willing to prepare a sustaining feature and must be content with the small fee that goes with such work. If he succeeds, he will soon graduate to commercial features and again will see the three-figure checks. And what is more, he will

see those checks every week and will have a contract that will guarantee him a market for his product for six months or a year. Few magazines provide so sure a market for even the most successful writers.

While the financial rewards in the division of sustaining programs are small, there are many compensations. Within certain limits the writer is free to experiment with situations and characters. He is not obliged to work in mention of Zilch Silk Hosiery at inappropriate intervals, nor is he subject to the big business man's delusion that he, the big business man, is a better writer than the author he has hired.

He can try out his ideas on a real audience. He can test the efficacy of certain dramatic scenes about which others may have doubts. In other words, he has at his disposal one of the most completely equipped experimental laboratories ever provided for the literary craftsman. True, there are taboos, but if his heart is in his job the taboos will not stop him. They are merely handicaps in a very interesting game.

If he writes for the love of writing, he will be happy in constructing sustaining programs. Eventually, he will obtain enough commercial assignments to take care of the grocery bill, but in the meantime he will learn to love and honor the unremunerative sustaining program for what it is—the workshop where a new literary art is being slowly but surely created.

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One more thing must be considered in a discussion of the sustaining program. That is the effect of good sustaining features on the whole structure of broadcasting.

I do not believe the time will ever come when radio, in the United States, will exist without benefit of the sponsor. There is no known way of collecting an admission fee to the radio theater, and some one must pay the bills. The expense of presenting good radio programs is enormous, and if the listener wants these good programs he must be willing to give some of his good-will in return for an hour's entertainment.

The sustaining program, however, can establish a standard of good taste. It can prove that a program alone may create a tremendous approval and interest—that the mere linking of a manufacturer's name with some excellent program of music or some absorbing dramatic sketch will do more than any carefully prepared high-pressure sales talk which may be inserted between "My Baby Just Cares for Me" and a symphonic arrangement of Rachmaninoff's "Prelude."

You can't blame the sponsor for wanting to talk about himself. After all, he is paying a tremendous amount each week to offer a program that carries his trade-mark. You can demonstrate, however, that sales talk is not always necessary—that a gesture toward

culture or mere amusement will create a kindly feeling for him and his product by the mere mention of its name.

The finer the sustaining program, the finer the sponsored offering. For the sustaining program always blazes the trail that is followed by the man who pays broadcasting's bills.

## CHAPTER V

### *THE SPECIALISTS*

AT the present time writing specialists are being developed in the radio field. There are men who write nothing but programs with a domestic atmosphere. There are others who produce historical sketches and still others who specialize in continuities designed for use with ultra-classical musical programs.

A few years ago the average continuity-writer was expected to write anything that came along. One hour he would be working on a radio address to be delivered by a contender for the heavy-weight championship, and the next his job would be to prepare a dialogue in which the advantages of Slendergurl Corsets were subtly set forth. A day's work might include continuities for the studio's little symphony orchestra, an introduction to a visiting nobleman who had consented to appear before the microphone, several intimate talks to wives and mothers, and an analysis of the political situation in Washington.

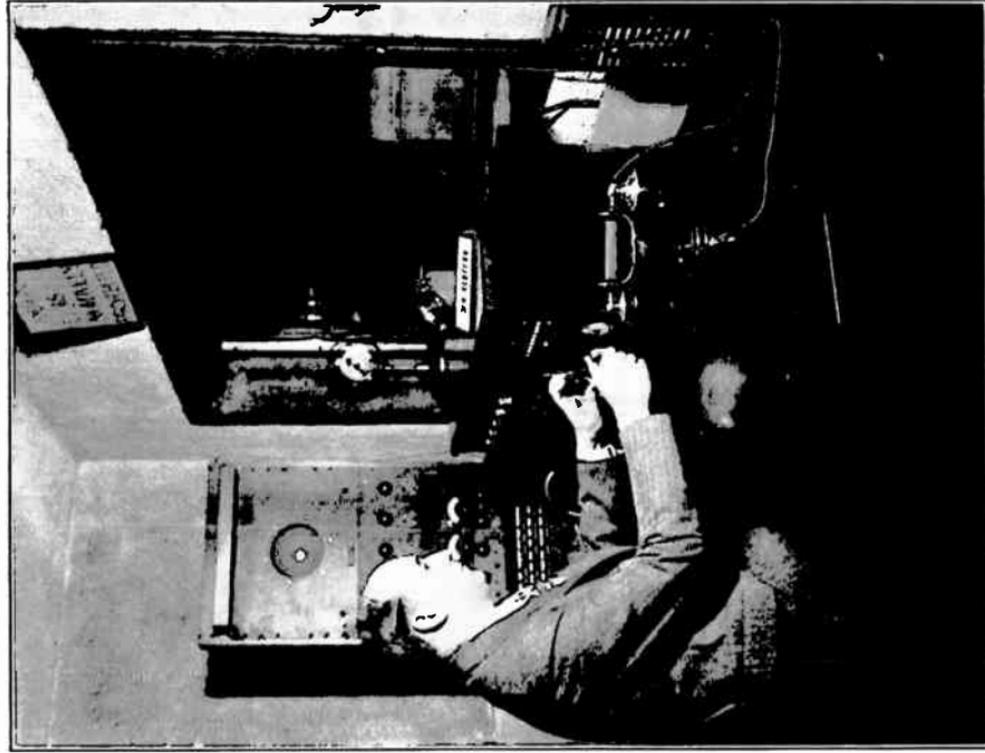
In some of the smaller stations, the continuity-writers do all these things and many more. In the offices of the big networks, however, writers are encouraged to develop their own specialties. The writer

who likes to do sketches of the adventurous type finds enough thrilling dialogue required to keep him busy. If, on the other hand, his knowledge of science is vast, he will find that he can keep busy on scientific phrases eight hours a day for six days a week.

In order to appreciate the varied subjects covered in an average day on an important station, it is well to glance over a day's program. The morning exercises usually are ad-libbed and are not written. The exercises may be followed by a program of music or of humor. If the program is humorous, usually it is written, for few people can be spontaneously funny every morning without reference to notes. The morning may be divided into programs of music and talks of interest to housewives. Continuities must be written for the musical programs and there must be prepared papers on the preparation of food, how to bathe the baby, how to paint furniture, and a half a hundred other household problems.

In one afternoon you may hear book-reviews, a discussion of German politics, a program of fairy-tales for children, and a lesson in French, with musical programs sandwiched in. All these subjects require writing, since extemporaneous speaking is frowned upon.

The evening program may include five dramatic sketches, varying from fifteen minutes to an hour in length, a symphony concert, a talk on investments, three dance programs, a light opera, and two or three



NBC Photo

Studio engineer



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variety programs. Words are spoken in every program and first the words must be written. The dramatists will be kept busy with the sketches, a man able to inject humor into short pithy announcements prepares the continuity for the dance programs, a man versed in music will write the introductions to the symphonic numbers, and a skilled adapter will have condensed the light opera into the hour's time allotted on the air. A financial expert will have written the talk on investments, and the variety programs will require bright and cheerful introductory remarks and announcements of the selections to be offered.

While there are no recognized schools or courses for radio writers, previous training in other work often helps develop the specialist. A woman who has studied home economics, and at the same time has an interest in writing, can adapt her knowledge and her inclinations to the job of writing radio household talks. But first she must learn the fundamentals of writing for the microphone. These fundamentals will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

Specialization is strongly recommended to persons interested in radio writing as a career. It may not be possible to specialize from the start—indeed it is almost impossible. But once the writer has served his apprenticeship in the continuity departments, he will have his chance to devote all his time to the writing that interests him most.

The preparation of dramatic material for broad-

casting seems to be the goal of all beginners in radio writing. This is not to be wondered at when you remember that there are few living persons without the secret ambition to write a play. The young radio writer has a very good chance of realizing his ambition to become a dramatist, for he is writing for a theater with an insatiable appetite for material.

However, if he lacks the ability to write dialogue there is still much work for him to do as a radio writer. The variety of programs mentioned already in this chapter should suggest a half-dozen or more activities for the radio writer. And there are others. Even a weather report, if prepared by a capable writer who is interested in his job, can be made interesting.

Radio has frequently been compared to a magazine or a newspaper. It is like a newspaper in that it must have fresh copy every day and it covers the fields of both the newspaper and the magazine, as well as functioning as a theater, a concert-hall, and a ball-room. Just as a newspaper uses many different kinds of writers and just as a magazine continually has assignments for specialists, so does and has radio.

Already the network organizations have sent reporters abroad. Instead of filing their despatches to papers or magazines, these reporters wrote what they had to say and then went to a microphone and their words, of course spoken, were relayed in the fraction of a second to listeners throughout the United States.

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Radio is already using crack political reporters and analysts in Washington. These men are first writers and then speakers. It is no trick at all for them to speak to millions. They read from a typewritten page—and because they are trained as radio writers, they write sentences and phrases that are meant to be spoken aloud.

The radio interview is becoming more popular. Grantland Rice started the ball rolling and now celebrities from every walk of life tell everything when skilfully questioned before a microphone. However, the seemingly leading questions and the sometimes almost naïve answers are carefully written and rehearsed before the actual broadcast.

Radio demands writers who can interest children. Radio has use for poets who can weave spoken beauty into programs of music. The financial experts are on the air more and more. They explain complicated situations in finance and national economics for the listener. And they are specialists who have merely added some knowledge of radio writing to their technical ability.

The specialists in news-interpretation are becoming increasingly in demand. Floyd Gibbons, Lowell Thomas, and Kaltenborn are outstanding examples of microphone reporters—men who can take written news despatches and translate them into accounts that are gripping and intelligible when spoken aloud.

The book-reviewers, the dramatic critics, the teach-

ers of languages or other subjects of study, the explorers who come back to tell their adventures to the microphone—all are specialists, and unless they know the trick of preparing what they have to say to meet the requirements of the microphone, they must enlist the services of some one trained in radio writing.

The radio listeners have tolerated much in the past five years. They have heard the bombast of the political orator—and it sounded silly and illogical when heard in the quiet living-room. They have heard frightened speakers stumble through badly prepared microphone addresses. They have wondered at long and unfamiliar words, and they have missed important points in discussions because the speakers had failed to remember that you can't reread a paragraph of anything coming in on the radio speaker.

Yet as the specialists came to the fore, the listeners showed their appreciation. They made a national figure out of Gibbons because he had acquired the knack of giving news reports. Thomas is sharing in his glory because before he stepped into Gibbons's shoes he studied the microphone and the requirements of radio carefully.

Gibbons and his associates proved that it paid to study the microphone and broadcasting. They established precedents, and showed that the medium through which they worked required its own special technique. David Lawrence had done the same thing

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years before but he did not combine the showmanship of Gibbons with his fine reporting ability.

So if you find you are not destined to be a dramatist, don't give up radio writing. It is a large field of endeavor and there are many gates to it. Decide what you want to do in radio and then learn the fundamentals of writing for the microphone. This book will discuss those fundamentals, but it is up to you to work out your own particular problems. If you are serious about it, you will find many opportunities to develop your own speciality—and to forward your own career in radio.

## CHAPTER VI

### *LEARNING THE JOB*

THE introduction to this volume stressed the fact that it is not primarily a text-book. Rather it is a laboratory note-book of some one who has written broadcast material and who has watched with interest the experiments of others.

This book cannot teach you to be a radio writer, but it can supplement your work in the experimental laboratories. Practically all broadcast material is experimental. All of it is being constantly improved and there are no established hard and fast rules of technique.

It is improbable that any one ever wrote a short story without having read many of them before attempting to create his own. Likewise it is improbable that a play was ever written by an author who had never seen a play, and certainly no one would attempt writing a motion-picture scenario or script without first studying the pictures already made. Yet I have known personally of writers who have attempted to produce radio material who have not had radio sets of their own, nor been at all familiar with current broadcast offerings. They had heard perhaps an oc-

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casional broadcast, or they had read a few articles on radio drama.

The first and most important job in any preparatory work in radio writing is a thorough study of what is being done. Three or four weeks of serious listening will give the writer a fairly comprehensive picture of the present development of radio writing. If he keeps notes as he listens, he will know what type of play is most easy to follow; what does not hold interest; how the various writers bring their characters on to the radio stage; and dozens of the minor technical tricks.

Not the least important will be an understanding of the advertising technique of radio. He will note the dozen and one methods employed to remind the listener of the product the radio program is planned to exploit. He will note the many instances of "bad copy"—the use of commercial credits that annoy rather than interest the listener.

He will be able to test the efficacy of sound-effects. Did he almost jump from his seat at the sound of that pistol-shot? Did the sounds in "Harbor Lights" bring back memories of a ferry-ride to Staten Island? Did the rattle of knives and forks and dishes give him a clear picture of the dinner-table at which the radio play was being enacted?

There will be instances of a good manuscript's being spoiled by bad casting. The scene between the two women, instead of being an interesting bit of dialogue,

will sound like a senseless monologue. Their voices are so similar that it is impossible to tell when one starts speaking and the other stops. Such a thing has happened many times and even some of the networks have been guilty of offering such programs.

He will be able to examine carefully the worth of continuity for important musical programs. Did the announcer tell him what he wanted to know about a certain musical selection? Why wasn't that passage for cellos mentioned, when it was the most interesting part of the entire selection? Wasn't that galop originally written for the piano? Since when was it orchestrated?

Your serious listener will hear the news-analysts. He will note their use of very simple phrases and common everyday words. If he takes the trouble to check the radio comments against the story as written in his evening paper, he will note the vast difference in style.

He will be able to study broadcast comedy. He will be able to keep a record of the lines or situations that cause him to smile or laugh out loud. These are valuable bits of information for his note-book. When he reads these lines later he will perhaps wonder why he laughed at the time. The lines seem quite humorless in print. Yet they have that certain something which makes them funny on the air. It is his job to find out why they were funny.

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The radio writer can convert his own living-room into a class-room for the work he plans to do. Just as successful playwrights see as many plays as possible, so must he keep listening for new radio programs. From every broadcast he must learn something.

He can add to his store of knowledge by group listening. If possible, he must study the reactions to various radio programs of groups of four or five people. He must ask friends and acquaintances their opinions of different programs. The clever playwright is as much interested in the reactions of an audience to a play as he is in the play itself. So too the reactions of listeners to various types of broadcasts are of utmost importance to the writer. Before he attempts to write for radio, he must have a working knowledge of what listeners want. Often his own ideas of good writing will be in conflict with what makes interesting radio material. He must learn to adapt his own style to that of his audience.

He will learn why action is so important to broadcast dialogue. He will realize that the characters must do more than speak lines—they must give the impression that something is being done. Perhaps this action may be very simple—a man attempting to mend a clock or his wife dusting the piano. Yet the action must be there. Often some little bit of action, injected at just the right time, will save an important bit of narrative dialogue from becoming hopelessly dull.

This serious listening will reveal many more things about radio. It will show, for example, the importance of silence. Three or four seconds of absolute silence may be very dramatic. It will indicate that radio tempo is never constant—that the actors will rush through one scene and then speak very deliberately through the next. This matter of tempo is of course the director's work, but in writing the author must take it into consideration.

Among the most instructive sessions at the radio speaker is one that follows the broadcast adaptation of some well-known play, checking it all the while against the original play, which you may read as the play progresses. Note what scenes are cut out. Keep a record if possible of the changes in lines or the introduction of lines that are not in the uncut version. Not only will this reveal some of the important tricks of adaptations for radio but it will also serve to show the vast difference between the play as written for the theater and the play as adapted for broadcasting.

You can study what is one of the most difficult problems in the radio theater—shifting the scene. Make notes on effective scene-shifting and try to discover why it was perfectly clear to you that the scene was shifted from a living-room to an office on Wall Street, even though no announcement was made that such a shift was planned. Visualize the characters. Find out if they are distinct personalities in your imagination or whether they are merely figures mov-

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ing in a haze. Why are they distinct personalities? How did the radio dramatist make you see them so clearly?

Check your own likes and dislikes against the likes of the majority. Select programs that are nationally famous for this experiment. Listen to "Amos 'n' Andy" for a week. Analyze their work. Try to find out what it is that keeps millions interested in their daily exploits. Perhaps you won't discover the secret, but you will absorb some ideas of the type of entertainment or material with the greatest appeal. Why is "Real Folks" one of the most popular weekly programs broadcast? Why did the "O.K., Colonel" of one of Phil Cook's comic characters become a part of American idiom?

Would you change your dinner-hour in order to hear a certain radio program? Would you turn down an invitation to a party in order to be near the radio speaker on a certain night? Thousands of people do these things. Why? What is the charm of the broadcast? How much did the writer contribute to this quality of gripping the interest of the listeners?

This is mostly a chapter of questions. But the beginner in radio writing must be constantly asking questions. He cannot go to a reference library and find books that answer these questions. He cannot find schools where the answers are given. He must answer many of them himself and his friends and acquaintances must answer others. If he is employed

in a radio studio, the writers, directors, and actors can help him. But much of his knowledge must be acquired by applying his own intelligence and reasoning powers to the many problems of the craft. Any previous knowledge of drama or writing gained in college or through actual experience is splendid background, but he must add to such knowledge through study and exercise in the new medium.

The beginner in radio writing must bring with him a respect for his audience. If his attitude is condescending, if he thinks for an instant that he is bringing precious gifts by making his words and phrases available to the listeners, he is lost. He will discover that radio will require every bit of skill and artistry he has at his command and will demand even more. There must be sincerity in what he does. The radio audience is uncanny in its ability to detect a false note in the work of a writer.

He must learn to conform to certain conventionalities of radio. He must respect its many taboos. These conventionalities and taboos, which will be discussed in detail later, are not arbitrary rulings, but reflect the mass opinion of the listeners or are made necessary by existing conditions in broadcasting.

Have no illusions about its being an easy job. It isn't. It is probably the hardest job existing to-day for a writer. And its rewards, like the rewards of journalism, are measured in everything but cold, hard cash.

And you still think you'd like to be a radio writer?

## CHAPTER VII

### *THE SOLOISTS*

THERE is a group of writers active in radio who may be called soloists. Floyd Gibbons, Heywood Broun, David Lawrence, Walter Winchell, and Lowell Thomas belong in this group. They must write speeches or monologues for themselves. And they must prepare their material so carefully that it will not become monotonous even though the same voice is heard throughout.

They have succeeded not only because they have something interesting to tell but also because they have mastered the trick of telling it in an interesting way. There is nothing as dull as a mere recital of facts. If these facts can be presented against a colorful background of words and phrases they become alive and are interesting.

Gibbons got action into his monologue. His utterances traveled at a breakneck speed, and through sheer illusion of tremendous haste he made everything he said seem of very great importance. Broun depends upon the creation of a mental attitude in regard to what he has to say. He lets his listeners observe the commonplace from new and unusual angles. He

makes them think with him and quite often disagree with him—but they listen. Winchell frankly uses gossip to keep his listeners interested. He is always telling you something about familiar names. Lawrence, who isn't dramatic, has developed the knack of reducing what seem to be very complicated issues to situations that are easily understood. His listeners like him because he answers their questions before they have a chance to ask them. Thomas has brought a sense of the color-value of news to broadcasting. He dramatizes the everyday happenings more effectively than the men who write the eight-column streamers.

Where these five men have succeeded in attracting and holding the interest of a large group of listeners, dozens of other persons have failed before the microphone. Most of these failures have been due to one thing—lack of proper preparation of material before broadcasting. In other words, the material hasn't been properly written.

Every broadcast talk should be written before it is put on the air. The important stations demand this. Only a few of the smaller stations permit extemporaneous speech-making. The speaker has just so much to say and just so much time in which to say it. Broadcast time is too precious to be wasted in mere words and well-turned but unessential phrases.

In the preparation of these talks or monologues for the air there is work for many trained writers. Gibbons, Broun, Thomas, and others in the first rank of

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radio speakers write their own material. However, there are many other men with very interesting messages but without the ability to reduce them to the language of the air. Such men should work in collaboration with trained radio writers. Just as many important men to-day employ "ghosts"—trained writers who create the phrases in which the important men express themselves in print—so is there a field for radio "ghosts." Already many of the advertising agencies are using these "ghosts." An important "name" may make a speech on the air but usually that speech is written by some young unknown who knows what makes good "radio copy." The important personage merely reads what has been written for him.

Book-reviews, dramatic criticisms, talks on interior decorating or gardening, biographical sketches, and political addresses are classed as "talk" programs in the radio studios. And all necessitate solo work at the microphone.

How may these talks be written to hold the interest of a listener for fifteen minutes—sometimes for thirty minutes? First consider your audience—not as a mass but as it is best visualized, as a family group. Remember that you are talking to a family group, unless you are dealing in a highly specialized study, and you must avoid technicalities, obscure words, and references that require explanation.

Instead of thinking of the microphone, imagine yourself the guest of some average family. You have

something you want to tell them. You must hold the attention of each member of the group for fifteen minutes. No one can interrupt you or ask questions—it is up to you to say what you have to say and to leave each auditor with the feeling that you have left nothing unsaid.

How would you go about it? Whatever style of talk you might select is the style to adopt when writing a radio talk. It must be informal. It must be devoid of oratory, for oratory is incongruous in the living-room. It must have continuity. You cannot jump lightly from one subject to another and expect the listener to follow you.

In the past few years there have been many letters from listeners complaining about “too many talks on the air.” For the majority of listeners there have been too many talks. The fault is not the lack of desire on the part of the listeners to acquire information or knowledge, but lies with the gentlemen who have been doing the talking. They have worked on the assumption that what they have to say is of interest to listeners, rather than assuming that they must make what they say interesting. The term “to sell something” has been badly overworked in this country, but it is certainly up to the radio speaker to “sell” his address to the listener.

A discussion of esoteric values may mark the speaker as a person of culture and scholarship, but to

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the average listener he will be just dull and uninteresting and he will be tuned out promptly.

A lecturer in a public hall may assume that he will hold his audience long enough to explain a few things and get his auditors interested in the subject. The lecturer on the air must first get the listeners interested and do his explaining later.

A study of modern newspaper technique teaches a lesson that may be applied to radio talks. The newspaper uses big type and eye-arresting head-lines to grip attention. The speaker before the microphone must develop a similar technique in order to catch and hold the attention of the ear. It would be ludicrous for him to read newspaper head-lines aloud, but surely he can make the opening phrases of his address just as compelling of attention.

How? That cannot be told, because that phase of the new technique is still sadly undeveloped. John B. Kennedy of "Collier's Hour" probably offers better examples of attention-arresting comment than any one else on the air. And Kennedy is a writer who has molded his style to conform with microphonic requirements.

It is true, of course, that the most interesting and intelligent address can be ruined by poor delivery. A monotonous voice will kill interest as rapidly as uninteresting subject-matter. However, that is not the writer's problem. If he is unable to read sufficiently

well to do justice to what he has to say, there are hundreds of trained readers available who can do it for him. This is a mechanical fault, and one that is easily corrected by any capable radio production man.

The development of the solo technique is one of the several interesting problems unsolved in radio. Gibbons, Kennedy, and Broun have proved that radio talks can be interesting, but they have not established a definite technique. Gibbons took his natural writing ability, adjusted it to radio, and developed the trick of talking faster than anybody else. He is a rare combination of a man with the sense of drama in both writing and talking. The same thing is true of other solo performers. What is needed is a style of writing that will present news and information to the ear as graphically as the modern newspaper presents news and information to the eye.

Gibbons, Broun, and Winchell are the feature-writers and columnists on the air. There must be rank-and-file reporters who can do as good a job in writing for the microphone as their contemporaries on the newspapers do for the daily printed pages.

It is possible that the discovery of this technique is a matter of months. Indeed, some unknown radio writer may already have discovered it and any such discovery will be revealed by time. However, there remain the facts that there must be such a technique and that unless the writer prepares his material with

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a thorough appreciation of the difficulties of holding attention with a monologue, he will be wasting not only his time but the very valuable time allotted him on a station or on a network.

## CHAPTER VIII

### TABOOS

THE taboos of the Great God Radio are many. The radio writer is faced with a multitude of "thou shalt nots," and many a young writer has seen the work of hours made useless by one stroke of the blue pencil.

Profanity, so familiar on the Broadway stage and occasionally found in motion-pictures, is not for the radio audience. The one writer privileged to break this rule is dead. Shakspere's plays are not censored. Even a mild "Hell!" or a faintly humorous "Damn!" is forbidden. In one script submitted for broadcasting over one of the big networks the high point in the episode was the leading man's sincere exclamation, "Damn that woman!" But when the actor who was to read the line of condemnation received his part, it read, "Darn that woman!"

Profanity is just one of the taboos. Sex isn't even mentioned in the broadcasting studios. Divorce, the eternal triangles, bastardy, perversion—the listener will hear nothing of these coming from his radio speaker.

Humorously inclined writers have a difficult time.

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Jests at the expense of prohibition are frowned upon. Plays upon the names of nationally known food products are absolutely forbidden. You can't hunt lions with a Flit gun—unless Flit is paying for the program. Your characters may rush from place to place in an inexpensive automobile, but not in a Ford.

It isn't good policy to say you bought it at the five-and-ten. That is giving free advertising to Mr. Woolworth or Mr. Kresge. Nor may you mention such institutions as Macy's or Sears, Roebuck—unless such institutions pay the regular space-rate on the air.

The President of the United States is sacred, as are members of the cabinet, Congressmen, and even mayors of cities. Of course during a political campaign this protection is not extended, but a certain reserve is expected from the political speaker. If you must sling mud, first have the mud analyzed in order that you may make sure that it is reasonably pure.

Mention not the names of such persons as Walter Winchell, Mark Hellinger, Heywood Broun, and others who "column" for newspapers. It has been done, but the practice is frowned upon.

A radio script based on Donald Ogden Stewart's "Crazy Fool" wouldn't get past the hostess in a big radio studio. Insanity is not a subject for jest, nor is an insane asylum an appropriate setting for a broadcast sketch. At least, that is what the broadcasters rule.

Tragedy is permitted but it must not be sordid.

Sketches based on actual happenings are read carefully. Even though the principal characters are disguised carefully, nothing is allowed on the air that will offend any one of importance.

The list goes on and on. It constitutes the greatest handicap in the path of development of a dramatic literature of broadcasting. That the taboos are effective cannot be denied. Radio has no Will Hays. Radio doesn't need a Will Hays. There are no city, State, or national censors of radio programs. Radio, with a few exceptions, has never required censors.

It is possible to justify this policy if one looks at it from the point of view of the powers that control network broadcasting. Radio differs from the theater and the screen in that the broadcast comes to you, while you must go to the theater. If you decide to witness a performance that is risqué or downright vulgar, you usually know what to expect. When you twist a dial in your living-room and settle down to a half-hour of broadcast drama you must accept it on faith. It hasn't been reviewed or discussed in the newspapers, nor has it been advertised as "daring and frank." Therefore it must be suitable for the home atmosphere.

Imagine, say the broadcasters, any family circle. There is Father, a conservative business man and deacon in the church. Mother is president of the missionary society. The daughter of the house is just sixteen and curious. The son is only eleven. Daddy reads the radio programs in the evening paper.

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“There’s a program called ‘Lysistrata’ on the air to-night,” he remarks.

The name is intriguing. The program is tuned in. Perhaps Daddy is secretly amused. Perhaps daughter would like to hear more. Mother is horrified, and the eleven-year-old boy doesn’t know what it is all about but is properly impressed by parental consternation.

What happens? If the father doesn’t smash the radio set he at least forbids his children ever to listen to that particular station again. And the station loses part of its audience. What is more, Father may write a letter to the newspapers, and what is worse, he may write to manufacturers who use that particular station’s time to advertise their products. It is surprising how much consternation one letter from one remote listener can cause—if he has a complaint to make against a station or a program. So the broadcasters, who visualize their audience as an American family group, won’t take a chance.

“Would you say that in a living-room?” is the phrase used to question any doubtful line in a radio sketch.

Adherence to this ideal of purity has cost the networks money. Contracts have been broken with both sponsors and entertainers because of alleged use of suggestive lines or situations. And the broadcasters have refused to sell time on the air to manufacturers of such products as bathroom paper, hygienic prod-

ucts for women, and laxatives. Leading manufacturers of all of these products have tried repeatedly to make use of broadcast advertising. Some of them have succeeded in sponsoring programs on small independent stations but they have yet to get on the networks.

This rigid supervision of what goes on the air includes songs. The lyrics of "Let's Do It," popular several years ago, were banned on the air. Likewise when "Sing Something Simple" became popular, the line "God knows it's simple" was changed to "Gosh knows its simple." Dozens of other lines have been toned down for the American family group.

Yes, this policy has been effective. You don't hear ministers denounce radio from the pulpits. There is no Society for the Maintenance of Purity on the Air. Isolated listeners occasionally write protests because of some alleged bit of filth they have discovered in a program, but as these people are classed with the fanatics who object to nude babies, their protests are ignored.

From the standpoint of good business the policy is sound. From the standpoint of the writers who dream of a time when radio will produce its Ibsens, its Shaws, and perhaps a Shakspeare, the policy is deadly.

The number of dramatic situations available to the radio playwright is necessarily limited. He is denied that great gift to his contemporaries on Broadway and in Hollywood, a national curiosity about sex. Be-

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cause of the ban on profanity, he is unable to make his hard-boiled characters convincingly hard-boiled. It is difficult to imagine the bully of the fore-castle muttering, "Aw, heck!" His love-stories must be saccharine and sterile. Particularly must they be sterile, for the wails of a love-child are kept far away from the microphone.

It is hard to believe that the present state of affairs will continue. Some hearty denunciations from the pulpit wouldn't hurt radio in the least. They didn't hurt Hollywood, and every Broadway press-agent prays that some eminent divine will take offense at the production he is ballyhooing.

The solution of the problem, strange to say, will probably come with an engineering development of radio. Synchronization is just around the corner. When synchronization is perfected, there will be room on the air for many more independent stations and more networks. It is possible that a few courageous persons will take over some of the wave-lengths then available and produce radio programs that will offend some of our best families but which will also please many thousands of sophisticates. There is a place for an "American Mercury" of the air. There is perhaps even a place for a (restrained) Earl Carroll.

Until the time of which we speak, respect the taboos if you wish to write for radio.

## CHAPTER IX

### *THE RADIO AUDIENCE*

WHAT is that mysterious unseen host known as the radio audience? What does it want? What will it like and to what will it listen? Does it prefer jazz or classics, and does it want Broadway humor or the plays of Ibsen and Shaw?

The answer is, "Yes." It wants jazz and it wants classics. It wants Eddie Cantor and it wants "The Wild Duck." It wants everything that man can devise to amuse or instruct and it will listen to anything and like it.

To attempt to consider as a whole the radio audience with its likes and dislikes is the utmost foolishness. There is no such thing as a radio audience. There are many radio audiences, just as there are thirty or forty theater audiences on Broadway every night.

From a commercial point of view, the radio audience is the largest number of listeners who will give attention to one program. And the aim of every sponsor of a radio program planned to attract attention to some article of general use is to find the type of program that will appeal to the most individuals.

To date, no one has ever been able to determine just what type of program will attract the most lis-

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teners. There are people who will not listen to dance bands and there are people who promptly switch to another station as soon as a dramatic sketch comes from the radio speaker.

Offhand I can think of but one type of program that would receive the undivided attention of the nation of listeners. An example of such a program would be a ten-round boxing-match between President Hoover and Rudy Vallée. And as such a program is impossible under existing conditions—even though it were arranged for the benefit of the Salvation Army—it is rather a problem to determine just what will please everybody. A problem, that is, to the serious-minded radio sponsors who have visions of such an achievement.

But just as you can fool some of the people all of the time, you cannot please all of the people all of the time, and the result is that there are many radio audiences in the United States—not just a radio audience.

There is an audience for jazz music. There is an audience for classical music. There is an audience for drama, and there is an audience for educational broadcasts. It is true perhaps that one listener will divide his time among the evening's program offerings, but if he must make a choice between jazz, classics, drama, and education, he will always decide on one, and since there is usually a choice of these four main divisions, you have, to start with, four main audiences.

There are said to be sixty million radio listeners in the United States. This is probably a conservative figure, since the person who doesn't listen to radio at some time or other is rather unusual. However, don't visualize sixty million pairs of ears. Instead see three, four, or possibly five persons seated in a living-room. The father, the mother, one or two children, and possibly a grandmother or a grandfather. That is your radio audience. Seldom more than five persons and they represent the typical American family circle—not the American motion-picture audience nor the audience you will find in a Broadway theater.

This family circle of course does not represent all the listeners. There are bachelors and maiden ladies who depend upon radio for companionship. But the family group is representative of a plurality of the listeners, and to that family group you must direct your efforts if you would succeed in a big way in radio.

Do you want to write successful radio material? Analyze the family group. Determine, if you can, the type of entertainment that will appeal to every member of that group, from grandmother to little Arthur, aged seven. "Amos 'n' Andy" did it. Phil Cook did it. Rudy Vallée at least won the approval of the majority of the family group—even though Father and little Arthur may have protested. And it will be done again. Not once but many times.

Remember, when you write for radio, this family group. Remember that what you write is to be heard

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in the living-room. Remember that you are a guest in the home . . . that you must not violate the canons of good taste . . . that you must not use profanity . . . that you must not be vulgar. You aren't writing a play to be produced in a theater—you are going into a home where you want to make a good impression and where you want to be invited to return.

If you wish to be recognized as a daring, sophisticated writer, throw this book away. You are not interested in radio as a medium of expression—not under existing conditions. Perhaps the time will come when there will be a field for rather broad humor and somewhat sexy farce on the air. But that time is a long way off. In the meantime, remember that the family group represents the audience most important to please. Please it, and write your own salary-check. Displease it, and you will be looking for another job.

Some one has stated that the average mentality of the radio listener is that of the normal twelve-year-old. That seems to be an unfair statement unless you are prepared to say that the average mentality of the American citizen is that of twelve. If that is the case, then the statement is inconsistent, for the majority of adults—and you compute averages through consideration of the whole—must then be children.

It is safer to say that the average mentality of the radio listener is the average mentality of the American citizen. Just what I.Q. rating that may be has nothing to do with this discussion. The thing to re-

member is that since you are dealing in averages, you must not dabble too much in things that appeal to the minorities. There is one great average group and there are many minorities. It is safer to please the average—also much more profitable.

Lest I be accused of having a somewhat cynical attitude toward the whole business, I must offer as my defense the belief that after all this is a business. The bulk of material that is to be turned out by radio writers must have a general appeal—else it will be unheard. True, some must be crusaders and must write what they feel they should write and not what the public will listen to. However, these same crusaders will fare better if they recognize the conventions, and if they must crusade, they should do it so deftly that they do not offend the listeners.

When Walter Damrosch started his great movement to make American children understand and appreciate good music, he did not do it by presenting the most difficult of the symphonic compositions. He selected rather familiar melodies and gradually, without talking too much about what he was doing, shifted attention to the better compositions. He realized that the average American child was suspicious of high-brow music, and he built his programs to appeal to the average.

Some serious-minded musicians—especially those who had passed the elementary classes in music—declared that Damrosch was offering tripe and was call-

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ing it good music. Perhaps some of the compositions were mediocre from the standpoint of an advanced musician. But Damrosch knew his audience and he didn't scare it away with music that it was not prepared to understand.

There is little room for radicalism in radio. You are not addressing a select group of serious thinkers. You are dealing in masses, and while the masses will respond to the proper treatment, it is not good to scare them away before they have learned to understand you. Therefore, first please the masses and gain their confidence . . . and then they will more readily give you a chance to explain yourself.

Your destiny as a radio writer rests with the radio audience or that particular division of it to which your work appeals. If you are not strictly commercial and believe that you have a message or can do your part in heightening the cultural level of the nation, do not be hasty.

Study your audience. Win its confidence. If you make a mistake, step back and apologize. Don't blunder on. It will forgive a mistake, but it will not forgive stubbornness. Treat it as a friend and make the concessions that are necessary to friendship.

And here endeth the sermon.

## CHAPTER X

### *SOUND-EFFECTS*

THE radio playwright is under one severe handicap. He cannot write pantomime or "business" for his characters. On the stage a character can walk to a window and say, "What a beautiful view!"

On the radio stage the character must add "from this window," and usually there is some spoken line that will indicate that the character is moving toward the window.

On the other hand, the radio writer can make use of sound-effects to a degree not even approached on the legitimate stage. The microphone literally makes it possible for you to hear a pin drop and the wise radio writer knows that he can heighten realism by careful introduction of sounds other than speech.

The big networks, of course, maintain sound-effect laboratories where experts work steadily at developing new sounds. Each production man, too, has his own bag of tricks and the actors themselves are familiar with many noise-tricks.

One of the most interesting dramatic programs of the past few years, "Harbor Lights," made excellent use of sound-effects. The chug-chug of a ferry-boat,



*NBC Photo*

## Man at throttle

A view of the monitor's booth as seen from a studio



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the clang of bells as it glided into its landing, the rattle of chains as it was made fast to the dock, and finally the sounds of pedestrians and motors leaving the boat, were all reproduced with marvelous fidelity. (There is a script of one of the episodes of this series at the end of this book.)

There is hardly any limit to the sounds that can be created in a radio studio. The writer is safe in indicating almost any known sound-effect, for the experts will find some solution to the problem.

Pistol-shots, machine-gun fire, traffic roar, the sound of airplane motors, locomotives, typewriters, printing-presses, and wind—these are among the effects in constant use. All these sounds are comparatively simple to produce.

Animal and bird noises are another problem. Human voices are often relied upon to make the sounds of birds and dogs. A mechanical dog "bark" has been perfected, but the whine is best done by a human voice. Seals, lions, and elephants are all represented by mechanical sounds.

The cry of a baby, strange to say, is one of the most difficult of all sounds to reproduce effectively. The mechanical baby-cries aren't convincing. Few adults have vocal chords that will stand the strain of imitating an infant's wail, and the few persons who can do it get fancy salaries for their talents.

Some of the tricks used to get certain sound-effects are amusing. The sound of a dog wagging his tail

against a wall or a door was evolved after long hours of experiment and was made by a man's thumping his head with a lead-pencil or a short wand. The sound of water gurgling out of a jug or a bottle is produced by the human throat. It was quite by accident that the experts discovered that the effect of crackling flames is best created by crumpling paper a few inches from the microphone.

But the mechanics of sound-effects is not the concern of the writer. His concern is the use of them.

Radio dramatists had a glorious time with sounds when they were first discovered. The result was confusion. The listener heard so many sounds that he was unable to hear the lines of the actors. Several sketches were produced in which no words were spoken and only sounds were heard. These sketches were not successful.

Later came the realization that it is not necessary to include all kinds of sounds in a dramatic script. Unless the opening of a door has especial significance, the entrance of a character is best indicated by having him start speaking several feet away from the microphone. When he is greeted by the other actors, his entrance is definitely established in the listener's mind.

Nor is it necessary to hear a click when a character hangs up the receiver after a telephone conversation. The fact that the receiver has been hung up is not important.

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On the other hand, when the script indicates that a light is to be turned on, the click of the switch is important. The listener then can imagine the exact second when the scene is flooded with light—or he can imagine darkness if the light is extinguished. He is immediately in the mood for the next spoken words of the players.

The most important and at the same time the most difficult thing to achieve in a radio sketch is action. The characters must do more than talk. Something must be happening, at least part of the time. In creating the illusion of action, sound-effects are invaluable. In a scene between two women in a kitchen, the interest may be heightened by introducing the sounds of one of them preparing to bake a cake or ironing clothes. Even the simple act of having a husband hang a picture on the wall will enliven what might otherwise be a monotonous conversation between a man and his wife.

This is not difficult to explain. In order to hold the attention of the listener it is necessary to do more than let him overhear a conversation. He is intrigued by movement, even though it is only present in his imagination. If this action is indicated, the mental image is continuously stimulated. Otherwise he soon tires of a scene in which two characters just remain motionless and talk.

There are few scenes in the theater where the characters are absolutely immobile for any length of time.

One character may walk around a table or twist a handkerchief, but there must be motion or the actors will become figures making speeches and nothing more.

In radio you can't see the movement. But you can hear sounds that indicate this movement. The scratch of a match before a cigarette is lighted may have nothing to do with the plot, but it does help the listener to see the character in the act of lighting a cigarette. Much of this action can be indicated in speech—that will be discussed at length in another chapter—but sound-effects can do much to supply the background of motion.

Our heroine receives a letter. Is she going to open it? It is not logical for her to say, "I will now open this letter." But if she says, "I wonder what this says?" and then you hear the sound of an envelope being torn open, you know that she has opened and is reading the letter. Whether she reveals immediately the contents of the letter may depend on the plot. But at least the listener is convinced that she has read it.

Marvelous comedy can be obtained through the use of sound-effects. A waiter enters with a tray. His entrance may have been established with the line, "Well, here comes our waiter at last." Then there is the crash of silverware and crockery. The listener hardly needs the waiter's apology to visualize what

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has happened. The possibilities in this direction are limitless.

Sound-effects can of course be used to identify characters. Perhaps you heard the radio adaptation of "Treasure Island." If you did, you remember the tap-tap of the blind pirate's stick. Strange to say, this use of a sound to identify the entrance or approach of a character has not been used frequently. It has many possibilities.

While there are hundreds of sound-effects on record, there are many more hundreds yet to be discovered. If the radio writer has a microphone available, he can experiment for hours with sound-effects. Often an unusual effect will suggest an equally unusual situation. Thus he can broaden the present boundaries of radio dramatic possibilities.

The danger of using too many sound-effects cannot be overemphasized. Just as good plays have been spoiled by extravagant scenery and lighting effects, so can the dramatic strength of a radio play be undermined by too many sounds. Use enough to preserve the illusion of action, and when an effect is necessary to a dramatic point, be sure to give it the proper support in dialogue—and what is just as important, in silence. Two or three seconds of absolute silence before the introduction of a sound pregnant with meaning will turn the spotlight of attention on that particular noise.

The day will come when some technician will write an entire volume on sound-effects. In the meantime, use such effects as are necessary and learn all you can about other effects that are possible. Sounds are as much your tools as are the words you pound out on your typewriter.

## CHAPTER XI

### *PRODUCTION*

THE most important individual in the radio studios to the writer is the production man. This person can do more to make a writer's reputation than any one other. Likewise, he can hopelessly wreck the most carefully constructed script.

The production man is one of the busiest persons in broadcasting. He combines the duties of three or four important people in the theater and the talking pictures. He is the middleman between the writer and the listeners.

He must first read the continuity or radio play, and often its acceptance depends upon his decision. Then, if the production he has charge of is dramatic, he must cast it. He arranges the rehearsals and during rehearsals he functions as director and line-coach. He is responsible for the timing of the program and often he creates as well as supervises the various sound-effects. The proper interpretation of every line is his responsibility. He must set the tempo of every scene and of the entire production. If something happens and his stop-watch shows him that the play is moving faster on the air than it did during dress rehearsal,

then he must slow it down. Or if it is not moving rapidly enough, he must speed up the dialogue.

As an exception not mentioned in the list given earlier, a sketch may be written in the morning, rehearsed in the afternoon, and broadcast at night. This has happened many times, despite the rule that all continuities must be available two or three weeks before the broadcast. In such cases there is seldom time to send a script back to the author for revision. If it is too long to fit into its allotted space, then the production man must eliminate lines and even entire scenes.

If the sketch is not long enough, then the director must add lines and scenes. The closing scene may lack "punch." It is his privilege to make such changes as are necessary, though this privilege may be denied by the writer.

Once a script is turned over to him for production he is the final arbiter on policy. Though usually everything written for radio is carefully read and checked for policy (radio's own unofficial censorship), some little thing may slip by—perhaps a "damn" that the editor in the continuity department overlooked. The production man must delete the objectionable word.

He knows the bad air-words, too. "Bad air-words" are words that are difficult to understand when you hear them coming from the radio speaker. Series of sibilants—such as "she sewed shirts seriously"—are

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not good for broadcasting. Too many hissing sounds. Nor are words containing "explosive" sounds, such as "perpendicular," suitable for the air. The director usually has a synonym available.

Quite often the writer produces a sentence that reads perfectly but which it is difficult to say aloud. Then the production man must adapt this sentence to the human voice.

Radio writers who must produce a script a week or a script a day often excuse a poor job with, "Well, you can't beat yourself every time." However, a capable production man can help a poor show. Perhaps an added line is what is needed, perhaps an unusual twist to the situation, perhaps a change from a straight part to a comedy characterization. If there is the proper harmony between the writer and the director, these things will be done.

Some of the most capable writers in radio have started as production men or have managed to get some experience in production.

The writer cannot know too much about production. He must understand the problems of the production man. He must always remember that parts are cast by voices, not by the appearance of the actor or actress or because of expressive shoulders and hands. He must remember that there are seldom more than three hours of rehearsal for every hour on the air, and therefore the shortest route to any point must always be taken.

Many writers manage to be present at rehearsals of their sketches or plays. Every writer should attend rehearsals—not to help direct, not to make suggestions about casting, not to make frequent changes in the dialogue, but to find out how it is done. The writer will learn why it is necessary to change a certain line. He will observe what a trained character actor can do with a few simple scenes. He will hear his bad lines read aloud and will realize that they are bad. He will learn much about the proper use of sound-effects. In all, he will have a more complete understanding of the medium for which he is writing. There are very few plays or sketches on the air in which music is not used. Perhaps a few bars of a signature melody will open and close a program; perhaps there will be what is known as “transitional music,” that is, music played to indicate the transition from one scene to another; often emotional scenes are played against a musical background. Many writers know little about music and merely indicate “Music” in their script without explaining what type of music they wish. The production man, who must know something about music as well as something about everything else, often plans the musical part of the program.

The writer will do well to study this music and determine for himself its effect on the production as a whole. Did it help his program or did it destroy some bit of the illusion? Why did the orchestra play a few

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bars of a waltz between those two scenes? If the writer finds it difficult to answer these questions, he must ask the production man—and usually he will receive a logical answer. There is a reason for everything in a good broadcast.

Possibly the best training now available for a radio writer is on the production staff. Such assignments, however, are not always available. The position is a responsible one and the majority of the production men are persons who have had long training in radio—at least three years, which is a long time in an enterprise just ten years old. However, once the writer has a sketch accepted for broadcasting, he can make an actual contact with production methods. In fact, it is sometimes possible to make arrangements with studio executives and obtain permission to sit through rehearsals of various types of radio shows. Though it is distinctly contrary to policy to take the public back-stage at the radio theater, a writer who is sincere in his endeavors to learn all that can be learned about radio will find little difficulty in obtaining a pass to a rehearsal of a broadcast.

The production man and the radio writer have one thing in common. Both are anonymous, as far as the radio audience is concerned. Seldom if ever does the announcer tell you, "This program was directed and produced by Joseph Wozis." Occasionally a director receives credit for his work in the publicity releases from the radio stations but even then he is given less

consideration than the entertainers, actors, and announcers. The radio stage may have its Moellers, Belascos, and Mamoulians, but they have yet to be identified to the public.

One unusual thing about the radio production departments is that few of the production men have come to radio from the theater. Some of them have had their first radio training as continuity-writers. Others have been announcers. One of the best, C. L. Menser, was a college professor before he decided to enter radio.

There are several reasons for such a situation. One is economic. Just as radio, as established to-day, cannot buy the bulk of its material from the recognized playwrights, so it cannot afford to pay salaries to large staffs of established theatrical directors.

Another reason, and it is as important as the first one, is that a good director from the theater will not necessarily make a good radio director, but often just the contrary is true. The man from the legitimate stage has too much unnecessary technique to unlearn and too many new things to learn. He doesn't fit into the radio scheme.

The broadcasters seem to be handling the problem in the best way. Announcers, continuity-writers, or other studio-workers who reveal directorial ability are given a chance to function on the production staff. If they have the necessary ability, they become production men. Working on five or six different pro-

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ductions each week, they soon learn by experience. To date, radio has developed a small number of excellent production men. There are others who are not so capable but a percentage of these are constantly improving their work. Still others will never succeed, and in the continual shifting of workers that takes place in radio studios they will be eliminated.

Just as the radio writers are developing a new craftsmanship with words, so are the radio production men developing a new technique of interpretation and presentation. Together the two groups must develop the long-sought radio "art form."

## CHAPTER XII

### *WHAT IS KNOWN*

WHAT is actually known about radio writing? What are its precedents? What type of program is most likely to succeed? What can be done and what can't be done? In other words, what are the limitations of the craft?

Instead of attempting to answer those questions, let us study what has been done and what is being done on the air to-day.

The most successful program on the air is not a musical program—it is a program that has its backbone in radio writing. Needless to say, that program is "Amos 'n' Andy." And writing alone isn't responsible for the spectacular success of the daily fifteen-minute sketch. It is a remarkable example of excellent acting and characterization. There are many writers capable of turning out a sketch quite as well written and as interesting as "Amos 'n' Andy." But try to find a pair of actors equal to Charles Correll and Freeman Gosden!

Forget "Amos 'n' Andy." You can't imitate them. Others have tried and have failed. They have staked a claim on the most productive paying ore in radio.

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However, there are undiscovered claims and these claims are waiting for the prospecting radio writer.

George Frame Brown with his "Real Folks" has held the interest and attention of a large radio audience for almost three years. His weekly sketch might be classed as "rural comedy." But it is more than that—it is excellent characterization and an example of the attractiveness of simple, homely humor. Phillips Lord, with his "Sunday at Seth Parker's" and "Uncle Abe and David," also uses a rural background for his writing, but the charm is in the simplicity of the characters and the "close to the soil" philosophy. Lord, too, has had the judgment to write about the people and the scenes he knows best and because he writes what he knows, he is convincing.

If you are ambitious to produce a rural sketch, first be sure you know the rural character. A few "By gums!" and "I'll be horn-swoggleds!" do not make rural comedy. In vaudeville, perhaps, hayseed may be sprinkled over the set. Not in radio, however. You can exaggerate the rural character and the rural scene, but the exaggeration must be an enlargement of the real thing, not merely a burlesque of what was once the popular conception of the people in the cross-roads hamlet.

The domestic sketch, too, has been a popular one with radio writers. Henry Fisk Carlton and William Ford Manley have made "Mr. and Mrs." very real. Why? Because they have made their characters *Joe*

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and *Vi* like people every listener knows. *Joe* and *Vi* are not vaudeville actors. They do not bubble over with smart remarks and wise-cracks. Instead they talk and act like ordinary married people. The situations created by the authors are amusing but never unreal. "Mr. and Mrs." might be your next-door neighbors. And you are always interested in what your neighbors are doing or saying. Columbia had a very interesting daily series known as "The Couple Next Door." The writer used the tried and true domestic formula. When the program was taken off the air because a sponsor declared that it was copied after the dramatic sketch he was paying for, there was much wailing and gnashing of teeth among the listeners. Percy Hemus created "The Jameses" and that chronicle of an American family ran for over a year. Katherine Seymour took a typical American family on a tour and "The Family Goes Abroad" was a success from the listeners' viewpoint.

Mystery plays always attract listeners. Columbia's "True Detective Stories" has a tremendous audience. One of the most popular of the mystery serials on the air was "Mystery House." It ran for a year and the mystery was never quite solved until the final episode. "Polly Preston" is another program in which the listener is kept wondering what will happen next. The dramatizations of the Sherlock Holmes stories have been very successful.

A mystery story, carefully done, makes an excel-



*NBC Photo*

Henry Fisk Carlton



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lent program for a commercial sponsor. If the writer has mastered the technique of telling the continued story, he may be sure of getting the same audience week after week. He must use care, however, not to exhaust the patience of his listeners. All suspense in time becomes monotonous. There must be story and incident, too.

The dramatized historical incident has always been popular with listeners. "Great Moments in History" was one of the most popular dramatic series ever broadcast. "Biblical Dramas" merely turned to the Bible for dramatic material, and this feature held a large audience. Many of the sketches in the "Empire Builders" series were based on actual happenings, and the popular "Death Valley Days" is a dramatization of happenings in the fabled valley of that name. The main advantage to the writer who selects historical material as the framework for his radio play is that his plot is written for him. He has only to tell the story in an interesting way and to bring to life the characters.

There are comparatively few plays, in the sense that the word "play" is used on Broadway, on the air. The Radio Guild does present, in special adaptations, many of the world's most famous dramatic works. These are not radio plays but stage plays, and even the most skilful adaptations, with the lines read by the best available actors, fall far short of the actual production in the theater. While such productions are

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satisfactory to the listener who has no opportunity to see them on the stage, the use of such material will never put radio on a competitive basis with the theater and the motion-picture playhouses.

Lulu Vollmer in her "Moonshine and Honey-suckle" offered a good example of a real play done for broadcasting. She combined all her knowledge of writing for the theater with a knowledge of radio, and as a result the production, from an artistic standpoint, was one of the best in recent years.

The recent "trials" presented on the air also represent excellent radio material. The author of "The Trial of Vivienne Ware" and "The Trial of Dolores Devine" selected something in which dialogue is of supreme importance. No story of a court-room could be adequately told in pantomime. Yet dialogue can tell the whole story, and the radio trials were satisfactory from every point of view. The conflict in the trial dramas was a conflict between men's minds, and words were their weapons. Hence, even though the listener had witnessed "The Trial of Dolores Devine" in a theater, he would have got very little more out of it than he did in his own living-room. There is little actual motion in a court-room; impressions all reach the spectator through his ears.

The radio writer who makes use of scenes and situations where the sense of hearing is most important, is nearest to successful radio writing as it is now known. Court-rooms, dinner-tables, softly lighted

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living-rooms—all places where what people say is of more importance than what they do—offer excellent backdrops for radio sketches.

However, action cannot be eliminated and it is possible to use it in radio. But it is not real action—merely the impression or the illusion of action. The listener's ear catches a certain phrase or a certain sound and that phrase or sound is translated into action in the listener's mind. This is no new technique. There is no real action in the most exciting novel of adventure. The eye sees a word or a descriptive phrase and translates it into action. In radio the ear does the work. Words written for the eye represent one acknowledged art form. Why, then, should not words written for the ear in time be recognized as another art form?

But I have wandered from the original questions in the opening paragraph of this chapter. What is actually known about radio writing is demonstrated in the programs you hear on the air. The most popular programs are those in which characterization is more important than plot. Character rôles are more successful than "straight" parts.

The few established precedents are that the story must be simple and direct and that the motivation must be easily understood. "Strange Interlude" would hardly be successful on the air. Perhaps a time will come when radio will have its "problem plays." However, more must be known about writing

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for the microphone before the writers can juggle with the obscure and hidden emotions.

Almost anything can be done in the way of presenting a dramatic situation over the air, but there are some things that had best be left alone. Just as the movie-makers depended upon action and appeal to the visual sense in order to attract and hold a vast audience, radio must attract the aural sense. There, incidentally, is the explanation of the success of musical programs. Music requires no picture to illustrate it.

The development of appeal to this aural sense is the radio writer's main job. The listener must help him with his imagination but first there must be something to stimulate that imagination.

Programs mentioned in this chapter are all presentations that have pleased listeners. I have attempted to analyze very briefly why some of these programs have pleased. These programs, then, are representative of the types most likely to succeed.

The ambitious radio writer will continually study such programs. He will mentally dissect them to find their appeal. He may not pattern his own attempts at radio writing after programs that have been proved popular, but he can make a fair estimation of what his audience wants by listening to what it already likes.

If there are any secrets about radio technique I have yet to hear of them. The successful writers have developed their individual techniques through a close

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study of the radio listeners' likes and dislikes as expressed in letters and in casual conversation. How they learned to write in the first place has nothing to do with the subject in hand. This book is mainly concerned with the adaptation of an old tool to a new job and the possible improvement of the tool so that it may better fashion the thing it is being used on—which in this case is material for broadcasting.

## CHAPTER XIII

### *THE DRAMATIC CONTINUITY*

IN the previous chapter some of the most successful dramatic programs were discussed. However, there is another type of program that uses dramatic dialogue but which is not radio drama.

This type of program is identified usually as "music with dramatic continuity" or in some instances as "radio music drama." Another variation is the dramatic continuity that is used without a plot background as the program framework on which some celebrity is displayed. An example of this type of program was the "Colonial Beaconlight," the radio presentation featuring Robert "Believe it or Not" Ripley. The Fuller Brush program also uses what might be roughly termed "dramatic" continuity, and the "Arco Birthday Party," which is a hodgepodge but a very entertaining hodgepodge, also uses lines for established characters.

Programs of this type are very popular with sponsors of commercial broadcasts. The ability to produce them is valuable to the radio writer who hopes to make a living. Sometimes such continuities are prepared to be read by one character. In other words, the

script is a monologue with musical interludes. Other examples are the programs built around a master of ceremonies. One man does most of the talking but a few other lines are scattered about and musicians or soloists read them. It is the belief of the sponsor that use of such dialogue makes his program more "informal" or more "natural." In some instances this desired effect is achieved. There is, however, one classic example where this attempt at informality was ridiculous.

A certain manufacturer of an article used in every home decided to put on a "different" program. The basic idea was to present a home scene with a typical American family as the characters. Each week some rather well-known musical artist came to the home and entertained the family. Basically it was a good idea. But when the father of the family brought the guest-artist into the scene—and the guest-artist might have been Mischa Elman but wasn't—the dialogue went on about like this:

"Come on in, Mischa. Gee, we're glad to see you! Listen, old fellow, come on over here. I want you to meet the wife!"

In between this inane chatter there would be some really fine music. The program, however, wasn't the sensation the sponsor expected it to be.

Continuities that use a master of ceremonies masquerading under the name of the product had quite a vogue for a while. Some of them weren't so bad.

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Sir Walter Raleigh cigarettes went on the air and instead of an announcer, a character named *Sir Walter Raleigh*, which was played in the accepted silly-ass Englishman manner, told what there was to be told about the musical selections. He did a good job but it didn't mean anything. Straight announcements would have been just as effective, for there was not sufficient novelty in the idea to make it attract listeners.

Programs of this type, being neither drama alone nor music alone, are difficult to explain. In fact little can be told about how to prepare them, for each one usually represents some one individual's bright idea. They represent no noticeable advance in the development of radio as an art—in fact, they are merely unusual and sometimes excellent pieces of advertising copy.

Many times, however, a program of this type will mean bread and butter to the writer. If he has some fundamental knowledge of writing dialogue for broadcasting and has a pretty good insight into the likes and dislikes of the sponsor, he will find that such a program provides food and lodging and gives him time to wrestle with some of the more intricate and fascinating problems of radio writing.

Such work is usually handled by either the staff writers in the studios or the radio continuity men in the advertising agencies. When a free-lance does get a chance at such a job it is usually through some per-

sonal contact or because he has happened along with an original idea at just the right moment.

If such an assignment is obtained, the best practice is to find out just what the sponsor has in mind and reduce his ideas to a working script. If he wants to create a character called *Farina Fred* because he is a manufacturer of farina, create that character and make him as wholesome and jolly and good-natured as all persons should be if they eat their farina every day.

It is true that there have been some outstanding examples of very good programs as a result of this character creation. Phil Cook is perhaps the best. He is introduced as the "Quaker Crackles Man" or the "Aunt Jemima" man and he also has been identified as the "Musical Chef." Cook, being clever, not only amuses his listeners but also keeps his sponsors happy by managing to work in frequent references to the product and the trade-mark. His technique is worth studying and he is by far the cleverest of the radio advertising-copy writers.

There is still another program type that may be included in this rough classification. It is the "club" program. We're all members of a big club and there's *Big Brother* or *Uncle Aloysius* and there are sometimes membership pins or membership cards, and every week the club meets and there are serious talks and songs and funny stories and sometimes some of the club members put on exercises or playlets.

Robert Emery of Boston does a splendid job with this idea in his "Iodent Big Brother Club." Don Carney—*Uncle Don* to a few hundred thousand or more listeners—also does well with the same technique. William Steinke uses the idea in part in his "Jolly Bill and Jane" program.

It isn't art, but it makes fine radio material if letters mean anything. The secret of the success of such a program is its very intimate appeal. It takes rather a clever personality to put it across and the writing of such a program is of secondary importance. In fact, much of the dialogue or monologue is ad-libbed.

A somewhat different version of a "we're all here at the same party" program is the "Arco Birthday Party." The listener is expected to feel that he is present at a birthday party. The guests of honor are the reincarnations of famous people, long since dead. Their speeches are cleverly written and the characterization is usually excellent. The program is really a novel one and deserves the large following it has. From the standpoint of a writer it means very little. It is just a good idea capably handled and it is chiefly valuable to the person interested in radio writing as a good example of how the effect of spontaneity may be obtained.

While the builders of sustaining programs have little interest in these somewhat novel program ideas, they are interested in the "musical program with a reader."

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Basil Ruysdael, an announcer for WOR, has developed this type of program to a high degree of excellence. Ruysdael prepares a musical program carefully, then, between the musical numbers and often with music as a background, he reads poetic monologue or rather lovely bits of Oriental philosophy. His "Red Lacquer and Jade" won him thousands of admirers and "The Beggar's Bowl," also his creation, had a very enthusiastic following.

Such a program requires good taste in the selection of poetic material and it also requires that the reader have a very melodious and expressive voice. The same idea has been done very badly many, many times and there is nothing quite as nauseating to the intelligent listener as one of these "romantic reading" radio programs when poorly read or badly prepared.

If you enjoy writing brief bits of verbal fantasy or occasionally go poetically philosophical, this type of program is a good safety-valve. Some listeners will love it. Others will say it is terrible. However, the same thing may be said of any program, so it's merely a matter of individual choice.

## CHAPTER XIV

### *INTERVIEWS ON THE AIR*

THOUGH radio has borrowed from the theater, the concert-hall, the vaudeville stage, and the newspaper, the one newspaper feature that has not been fully developed as a radio program is the interview. And the interview, without which a modern newspaper would seem hopelessly incomplete, is peculiarly adapted to broadcasting.

The exact words of a person, when quoted in a newspaper column, catch the eye. These direct quotes are very much in favor with city editors and so important are they considered by the Hearst newspapers that all direct quotations are indented and set in bold-face type.

Radio can go even further than that in making the interview significant. It can make it possible for you to hear the voice of the person who is being interviewed. Since intonation and inflection often count for much in this language of ours, the radio interview, properly arranged, should catch and hold the interest of millions of listeners.

Interviews are broadcast. Grantland Rice interviews sports celebrities in one important commercial program. In another program broadcast in New York

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screen celebrities are interviewed and answer direct questions. Occasionally some important person in the day's news is interviewed in front of a microphone. However, with the possible exception of Rice's feature, these broadcast interviews are rather stilted affairs. The questions run to the "What do you think of the New York sky-line?" class.

The radio interview is essentially a job for a radio writer. In time it will develop a highly specialized writer who may also be an announcer. Inasmuch as the majority of the radio features are arranged in advance, the interview also might be scheduled.

Let us visualize a potential technique of the broadcast interview. Arrangements are made, let us say, to broadcast an interview with the Secretary of War. Perhaps the day before the broadcast the interviewer calls on the Secretary and the subject-matter of the interview is discussed. The writer then reduces the Secretary's statements to dialogue. The questions are made simple and the answers likewise are simplified. Then this interview in dialogue is checked over with the Secretary and any necessary corrections made before the broadcast. The time comes for the broadcast, a microphone is switched on, and the interview begins. Instead of the customary speech, the listener hears plain simple answers to direct questions. Care has been taken to delete any statement that might seem ambiguous; any technical phraseology has already been translated into everyday speech.

The interview, if cleverly prepared, will give the listener the illusion that he is sitting in on a conversation between a cabinet officer and a person who represents national curiosity about certain issues or certain matters of national importance. The advantage to the cabinet officer or to any important national executive would seem to be tremendous. The microphone makes it possible for him to present his views and his understanding of a certain situation before the entire citizenry. The advantage to the listener is that he has a chance to weigh the words and opinions of the executive as human opinions and human judgments and not as some distant utterances that reach him through the medium of a cold, unemotional statement to the press and the public.

It is possible that a closer relation between the members of the cabinet or other high-ranking public servants and the voters is not part of the modern political system. The merits of such a plan have nothing to do with this book. As a potential activity for radio writers the development of the interview is important. If such a development comes it will put the radio writers assigned to such work in the forefront as liaison men between the citizenry and the Government. Newspapers have done the job remarkably well, but radio, virtually without editorial policies and careful to offend neither of the major political parties, should be able to do it better.

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Of course these radio interviews need not be with Government officials only. The microphone can record the remarks of every person of any importance.

At the time this is being written there is considerable national curiosity about an eight-cylinder car said to be planned by Henry Ford. Anything Ford does is news and every motorist, whether he is considering the purchase of another car or not, is interested. Let us imagine our radio interviewer seated at Ford's desk. The microphone is open. The listeners hear:

*Interviewer:* Mr. Ford, it is generally believed that you are planning to put a new car on the market.

*Ford:* Yes, it is true. It will have an eight-cylinder engine and will sell for less than one thousand dollars.

*Interviewer:* That's interesting. How many miles to the gallon may the user of this new car expect?

*Ford:* Well, our tests have shown it will average seventeen miles to the gallon under ordinary conditions.

And so on. The interviewer might represent a potential purchaser, and it is probable that millions would be listening in.

Imagine the thrill of sitting in your own living-room and hearing Henry Ford discuss his latest crea-

tion! Or, if you prefer, imagine being the writer who arranged the interview and sent Henry Ford into the homes of forty million listeners!

There are thousands of people with interesting things to say. Speeches have never quite equaled interviews in paving the way to a clearer understanding of another person's point of view. Ask any newspaper man which he would rather have from John D. Rockefeller—a thousand-word statement or speech or one hundred words of direct questions and answers, in other words, an interview.

I believe that the time is soon to come when the radio interview will be developed to its fullest extent. And when that time comes, there will be many new posts for radio writers. They will be called radio journalists then, perhaps.

Inasmuch as this chapter deals with a phase of radio writing that is still in its embryonic stage, it would be presumptuous to make suggestions as to how these interviews are to be prepared. It is natural to assume that the interviewer would understand national sentiment on any question up for discussion and would be in a position to explain to the man he interviewed just what the citizens most desired to know. He also would have the ability to reduce these explanations to terms and phrases that would be understood by all.

Advance preparation of the interview is of course essential. Any newspaper man realizes that a steno-



*NBC Photo*

George Frame Brown



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graphic transcription of an actual interview oftentimes would appear senseless if printed. Even the most intelligent men get their answers twisted and have to correct themselves. Many times the interviewer helps in rephrasing a certain utterance. There is no particular reason why such a preliminary interview should be broadcast. But there is need for a trained writer to shape the interview for the air.

The interview on the air has many possibilities aside from its value as an informative feature. It can be used in as many ways as the newspaper interview. An interview with an explorer or a flier may bring out a remarkable story of adventure. Then there is the human-interest story, such as the interview with the couple who have been happily married for fifty years. Humor, too, can be expressed in the interview. The fact that the interview concerns real people and not just players in a sketch should make it doubly interesting.

The main difficulty will be instantly recognized by persons familiar with radio. That difficulty will be in getting the person who is being interviewed to be natural when in front of the microphone. Perhaps the writer will solve this problem. It will be up to him to provide such natural lines that the individual in question, even though unaccustomed to reading or speaking before a microphone, will find little difficulty in giving the answers clearly and naturally.

The radio interview, then, is recommended as one of the most interesting experiments in broadcasting. It must be developed by the writers, for it is primarily a reportorial job. As in newspaper offices, usually the best interviewers are the best writers.

## CHAPTER XV

### *THE DRAMA OF SOUND*

HAVE you ever slept alone in an old house? Perhaps for hours you just tried to sleep. There were noises . . . suggestive creaks of stairs . . . the low moan of the wind . . . the scurry of an insect across a bare floor . . . the rattle of a window-pane . . . dozens of other sounds. And for every sound you saw a picture. A masked man creeping up the stairs. . . . The moan of the wind suggested a ghostly figure. When the window-pane rattled you visualized some burglar inserting his jimmy between the sash and frame. Your eyes were useless, yet your mind saw many things.

There is drama in sound.

Have you listened to a conversation between two people you were unable to see? Caught sentences that must have been finished with a wink or a grimace? Heard a woman screaming behind a closed door? Heard laughter and shouted words and phrases from a passing automobile? The persons making the sounds have always been invisible—but have they been any the less interesting?

If you have ears and the slightest bit of imagination, sight is not necessary to drama. And with that

fact in mind, you begin to realize the tremendous possibilities that await the radio dramatist.

Short of a play in which the principal characters are deaf-mutes and the action is pantomime, there are no dramatic scenes or situations that cannot be interpreted by sound, be these sounds human voices or otherwise.

Were there such a thing as a class in radio writing, probably one of the first assignments of outside work would be the recording of action scenes interpreted only by sound. Students would visualize a car gathering speed through the sounds of shifting gears. The ring of a telephone-bell followed by the interrogative "Hello!" in another room would create a mental picture of some one walking to the 'phone and lifting the receiver from its hook. The long-drawn-out blast of a whistle or the far-away rumble of a train always has its reflection in human imagination.

If you wish to make your own records of the significance of sounds, take a note-book and spend several hours wandering from place to place. Note the mental impressions of various sounds. You will be surprised at the number of things seen in the imagination that never were actually seen through the eyes.

The ability to see through the ear is the first requisite of the radio dramatist. His is first of all a job of translation. His mind creates a situation in which his principal character receives a telegram of the utmost importance. It is impossible for him to show the tele-

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gram, but he can have a door-bell ring, use a boy's voice saying, "Telegram, sir," and follow it with the muttered exclamations of the character. It is entirely logical to have the telegram read aloud.

This ability to see through hearing seems to be in-born in some writers but for others it can be cultivated. The experiment, mentioned in a preceding paragraph, of making notes of significant sounds is helpful. Listening to ordinary conversations with the eyes closed is also helpful. One learns that in many cases ordinary conversation is unintelligible unless you can watch the speakers' faces. The trick is to discover what has been left out of the phrases, for what has been left out there must never be left out of radio dialogue.

This close attention to ordinary conversation is valuable in another way, too. Radio dialogue must be perfectly natural. The convincing radio sketch is one that might be a scene between two or three persons in an adjoining apartment. It must be so natural that the listener will not be conscious of the radio speaker.

If possible, obtain a stenographic transcription of a conversation between two or three people. Study it. Observe what is lacking to make the meaning clear but also observe how awkward some phrases appear in print though they sounded perfectly natural to the ear. And always remember that radio dialogue is not writing but merely written talk.

Never lose sight of the fact that the words you are

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writing are to be heard in a living-room and not in a theater. A phrase uttered behind the footlights may sound absolutely in harmony with the atmosphere of the theater. The same phrase heard in a living-room might be ridiculous.

The truth of this has been demonstrated in radio productions of old melodramas. These melodramas, the dialogue perhaps cut but not rewritten, and played "straight" with no attempt at "kidding" the lines, were greeted as very amusing burlesques by radio listeners. Yet these same listeners would probably gasp and shed tears were they to witness the same play in its proper theatrical setting.

As I write this, an interesting domestic sketch is being enacted outside my door. My small son has been making a train out of chairs and boxes. I hear the noise of the chairs being pulled across the floor. Occasionally he does the "choo-choo" of the train. Then there is a crash followed by a howl. I can see a chair topple over and the youngster strike the floor.

From another room my wife calls, "What's the matter, David?" From the tone of her voice I can see a worried expression on her face. The howls sound farther away as the child runs to his mother. Her voice is soft . . . she is consoling him. The howls end. The mother's voice is lighter and she is joking about the slight hurt. Then there is a chuckle and the sound of running feet. David has gone back to his train.

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Actually there have been a half-dozen different sounds and a few spoken words. Yet the whole scene is as complete in my mind as if I had witnessed it from beginning to end.

One reason the scene is so clearly imagined is that it is not an uncommon one. Something like it happens daily in my home and happens daily in every home where there are active children. And it illustrates another secret of the successful radio writer. He re-creates through sound the scenes that are familiar—the scenes that all of us have witnessed and can readily visualize in our minds when the few spoken cues are heard or there is a familiar sound to give form to the mental picture.

The mystic rites of an Indian tribe, even though replete with strange sounds and phrases, would mean very little to the average radio listener. The sounds, if musical, would interest him but it would be difficult for him to create in his own mind an accurate picture of what was happening. On the other hand, a scene in which a husband is fixing a vacuum-cleaner may be very clear when explained only by the rattle of tools and a few vague references to the job in hand.

Never forget that your audience is more than willing to help you by supplementing what you have to offer with its own imagination.

Simplicity is a paramount virtue in radio drama. Complex plots are to be avoided and the amateurish trick of cluttering up a dramatic narrative with super-

fluous characters is fatal to good radio writing. Pageantry should be left to the musicians. It is noticeable that the most successful radio sketches or plays have been built around not more than two or three major characters and perhaps the same number of minor players. Think of *Amos 'n' Andy*, *Uncle Abe* and *David, Mary and Bob* ("True Story Hour"), and *Jolly Bill* and *Jane*.

While the British broadcasters have done some effective work by using a multiplicity of scenes in plays written for broadcasting, the American tendency is toward as few scenes as possible. While scene-shifting in radio has been reduced to a few bars of music, the scene itself must be visualized through the dialogue. Too much of this scenery-painting by the actors slows down the action of the play, which necessarily must be rapid.

"Flash-backs"—the old motion-picture trick of showing a scene that has taken place before the actual time of the play—are not good in radio. They are one more possible cause of confusion.

Radio tempo will be discussed at length in another chapter. At this time it is sufficient to say that your dramatic action must be rapid. You must grip the attention of your audience in the first few minutes and hold it throughout the sketch. Radio cannot afford to use its first act to build the characters and the situation carefully. Adherence to the cardinal principle of simplicity is again indicated.

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In dealing with sound as a dramatic medium the writer is unable to use tableaux or such trivial business as having the maid dust the library table. His characters must have something to say and they must say it. He may use silence—in fact silence is sometimes as effective as sound—but he must use it very sparingly and in just the right amount.

Sound-effects have been discussed in another chapter. They may be used frequently but, as has been said before, too many sound-effects are worse than not enough. The suggestion of a sound is often more convincing than the sound itself would be. Only when the action or the narrative hinges on a particular sound should that effect be allowed to dominate the attention of the audience. If a fire-engine is too noisy, the listener is apt to forget what a character is saying and thus miss an important point in the drama.

There are few things impossible for the radio dramatist. He can make his listeners cry or laugh at will, but he must remember that unless he attains simplicity of plot, naturalness in character and speech, and continuous action, he will lose his audience. He must remember that it takes a certain amount of courage to walk out of a theater during the progress of even a very bad play but that it is no effort at all to flip a switch on the radio set in the living-room.

## CHAPTER XVI

### *SETTING THE STAGE*

AN oft-repeated phrase in all discussion of radio writing is, "Words must paint the scenery." However, the radio writers were not the first to use actors as scenic designers. Glance, for example, at the first scene in Act III of "Midsummer-Night's Dream." Quince sets the scene when he says:

"And here's a marvellous convenient place for our rehearsal. This green plot shall be our stage, this hawthorn brake our tiring-house."

And in the second scene in the same act, Oberon greets Puck with:

"What night-rule now about this haunted grove?"

Shakspeare, writing in a day when elaborate scenery and costumes were unknown, often let his characters set the scene and establish the period or the time of action. Of all the great dramatists, his plays are best adapted to broadcasting without change or without the need of explanatory announcements.

It was an established custom not so long ago to add a "narrator" to the cast of every radio play. This

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narrator described the scene, the costumes, and the weather, and announced the time of the action. He took the place of the theater program and sometimes went farther than that and told what was happening as the curtain went up on the scene. His work is being gradually eliminated as the writers improve their technique.

To-day a radio sketch may open with the following bit of dialogue.

*Priscilla:* Oh, Alice, what a lovely room! And that paisley shawl over the davenport gives it just the right touch.

*Alice:* Awfully glad you like it, dear. Is it turning colder out, Priscilla?

*Priscilla:* Colder? Why, I think we'll have a blizzard before morning. This is the coldest January in years.

The three speeches will be read in less than fifteen seconds. Yet they establish the fact that the action is taking place in the living-room and that the time is January, and the two characters are identified.

Or if a more elaborate scene is desired, a sketch may open with the roar of waters. Then a character speaks:

*She:* Darling! . . . Don't you love Niagara Falls?

Throughout the scene there will be a background of sound suggestive of the falls and the listener will visualize them as a background to whatever action may be taking place.

In many instances, however, the scene may be indicated without using a "literal" description. Suppose our characters are in a restaurant. It is merely necessary to have a voice come in with, "May I take your order, sir? The roast chicken is very good." Or our hero can very easily indicate that he is in a haberdashery by starting the sketch with a request to be shown the latest thing in neckties.

When pieces of furniture or other properties are necessary to the action, they had best be planted in the opening speeches of the sketch. For example, an antique desk is important to the playlet concerning *Priscilla* and *Alice*. Though the desk may not be involved in the plot for some minutes, it can be planted by a comment from *Priscilla*.

On the legitimate stage characters may open and close windows or rummage in desks and chests of drawers without talking about it. But not on the radio stage. First the fact that there is a window to be closed or a desk in which to rummage must be established. *Don* and *Dora* are talking:

*Don*: I wish I could find that clipping.

*Dora*: I think it's in the desk, dear.

*Don*: I'll look. (Sound of rustling paper.)

*Dora:* Find it?

*Don:* Doesn't seem to be here. . . . Oh, here it is!

Or it may run like this:

*Dora:* Darling . . . I feel a draught.

*Don:* Must be a window open.

*Dora:* But there couldn't be. . . . I thought I closed all the windows before we left the house.

*Don:* There is a window open, Dora. . . . Some one has been in this apartment.

It is important for the radio playwright to have in his own mind a clear picture of the stage on which his action takes place. If the same scene is used for a series of sketches, an occasional reference can be made to the setting by the characters. Almost any radio listener could give you a description of the office of the Fresh Air Taxi Company and now all of them are familiar with the interior of the restaurant operated by *Amos 'n' Andy*. Yet none can recall when a description of either set was given.

While the radio play is usually benefited by speeches that give an idea of the scene, this vocal scenic designing can be badly overdone. There was an example not so long ago in a broadcast drama. The scene opened with the heroine speaking. Here is what she said:

*She:* Oh, what a gorgeous room! Those brown walls harmonize beautifully with that purple carpet, don't they? And those old prints are charming. And, my dear, where did you ever pick up that Jacobean furniture? That table is perfect. Honestly, my dear, it's lovely, and that desk in the corner adds the perfect touch.

If the author wanted to make his listeners visualize the room in which the action was taking place, he succeeded. But he overdid it, for one could never get over the impression that the purpose of the sketch was to give some facts on interior decorating. The scenery had become more important than the play, since the fact that the brown walls harmonized with the carpet had nothing to do with the plot.

The matter of costuming the players in a radio sketch is a bit more difficult. Usually, if the time is the present it is more or less unimportant. The listener assumes that the actors are conventionally clothed and that is all that is necessary. However, if the struggling hero manages to buy a new overcoat, it is important to let the listeners know about it. Since they can't see it as he enters the door, it must be seen for them by another character. Thus:

*Don:* Hello, dear! How are things?

*Dora:* Pretty good! Why, Don! You've got a new overcoat! Turn around and let me see it.

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*Don:* How do you like it? Pretty nice, huh?

*Dora:* It's lovely. That shade of brown is becoming to you. . . . I don't like that little belt at the back, though.

There are occasions when historical sketches are presented and it is essential to give some idea of the costumes. Again, it is merely necessary to suggest the mode of dress. Give your audience credit for having the intelligence to visualize the costumes, once the period has been definitely established.

Remember, however, that if any detail of costume is important to the plot it must be emphasized in the lines. If the cloak of one of the characters is to be stolen and this is important to the plot, be sure and establish the fact that he is wearing or has in his possession such a cloak long before the theft takes place. If the listener is conscious of the existence of the cloak, the dramatic value of its theft is enhanced.

Generally the opening announcement of a radio play establishes the time, just as a theater program announces the time of the play. However, the characters may set the time, and if there are a number of scenes it is best to have the passage of time made clear in the dialogue. An alien voice breaking into a dramatic narrative with the announcement, "It is now three days later," only reminds the listener that it is just a play he is hearing. The closing lines of one

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scene and the opening lines of the next can definitely establish this time element. For example:

*He:* Very good. I'll have my answer ready at noon on Friday.

*She:* Three days is a long time.

*He:* Don't worry, my dear. . . . 'Twill pass soon enough. (Fade out . . . and pause.)

*He:* Well, here I am! . . . And I've got my answer.

*She:* Twelve o'clock. You are very prompt, sir.

There are dozens of devices available to establish the time of the day or the day of the month or the year. One character may simply ask another the hour or the date. Sometimes the striking of a clock is effective. An alarm-clock's clamor and a voice muffled by a yawn always suggests early morning. Every writer has his own bag of tricks. Study of a half-dozen or so of the better dramatic broadcasts will reveal these devices.

Always avoid the obvious, but whenever possible let your characters and not the announcer describe the scene and costumes and establish the time.

## CHAPTER XVII

### *RADIO DIALOGUE*

IT is true that some of the world's great plays have been presented through the medium of radio and the listeners have found them of more than ordinary interest. Yet if you have had the opportunity to see Ibsen's "Wild Duck" as it is produced behind the footlights and then have heard the radio adaptation of the same play, you must have listened with a realization that radio had failed in its attempt to present a masterpiece effectively.

The fault is not entirely that of radio. Ibsen wrote his play to be produced on a stage, with the players in full view of the audience. He did not realize that it one day would be produced in an ultra-modern radio studio, and that the audience would be called upon to supply everything but the words he had written. Perhaps had Ibsen visualized radio, or had he been alive to-day, he would have adopted an entirely different technique.

Radio never will do a perfect job of presenting the plays written for the theater. Radio must have its own material, written with its limitations clearly understood and by an author who visualizes his stage as the

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human imagination and not that area behind the footlights.

If radio drama is to succeed, radio dialogue must stand alone as an individual literary technique. Some day books will be written on radio dialogue. To-day a book is impossible. A few chapters must cover the subject, for its form is as yet nebulous.

The entire future of radio drama depends upon the writers. Gorgeous scenery and perfect acting can sometimes save a theatrical production that has been poorly written, but in radio it is what is said that counts.

Bernhardt could take a poor line and with a shrug or a grimace make it significant. But shrugs and grimaces mean nothing to the microphone. The line must be read intelligently, of course, but unless it is an intelligent line to begin with the human voice alone cannot give it more importance than the man who wrote it did.

The dialogue is the action, the dialogue is the scenery, the dialogue is everything. Without proper dialogue there can be no characterization. No matter how strong the plot, its foundations are in the dialogue, and poor dialogue will let the best plot sink into nothingness.

It is a pity, perhaps, that the split-second system must rule in radio in the United States. Too often writers who are working on a thirty-minute sketch are tempted to inject unimportant scenes and mean-

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ingless conversation into the script—just to make it “come out on time.” And only too often a dramatic story is hurried up and condensed in order to keep it within the time-limit.

In England, where the Government owns radio and where there are no vast networks and no commercial programs to consider, time is of secondary importance. There is no use in saying that the British system is best. It is impossible in this country, where the development of broadcasting has followed totally different lines and where, thank goodness! control of broadcasting has yet to be included in the political spoils.

But the stop-watch rules the air-waves, and the radio writer must learn to overcome this handicap among the many others if he is to lift his craft to a higher level.

The test of good radio dialogue is simple. Does the line as written mean anything? Is it a line that conveys every meaning the author had in mind when he wrote it? And is it a line that can be understood if spoken in the dark?

If you have started to read this book with the expectation of learning all there is to know about the writing of good radio dialogue you are doomed to be disappointed. Many of the principles of radio writing are understood and such as are will be set forth in this and ensuing chapters. However, the writing of good dialogue, whether it be for the theater or for

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radio, is not to be learned from one book nor from many books. Like every other craft, it requires study not only of the rules but of every available example of the craftsmanship of others. And it requires hard work. I think it was Stevenson who said that if you would learn to write, write. And that advice applies to radio writing as well as to any other division of the craft.

Already there has been some reference to the principles governing writing for the air. The dialogue must be natural. Never forget that. Your audience is in its most natural atmosphere—the home—and will be critical to the  $n^{\text{th}}$  degree of anything that sounds artificial or theatrical.

The action must be rapid. Each line must take the plot forward. Let the dialogue drag or the action stop, though the words go on and on, and your audience will lose interest. And a radio audience won't wait for the story to be continued, once that interest disappears. It is so simple to turn the dial and get a more interesting program.

Obscure words, phrases, or references are absolutely out of place. There is no time to explain them and the radio audience is not at all interested in the depth or extent of the author's scholarship. The rabid radio baseball fan who once wired an announcer, "Tell us about the game and forget about the scenery," merely echoed the sentiments of the vast majority of listeners. Tell them about the game . . .

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tell them what is happening or is about to happen. The things that are irrelevant are very irrelevant.

Don't rely on epigrams, bon mots, or plain American wise-cracks to put your script over. All the smart lines in the world won't save a radio script from oblivion if it lacks continuity of interest.

Don't let your dramatic story hinge on one or two lines. A crackle of static or a moment's inattention may cause listeners to lose a line or two—and if the most important line of the play is lost, you will have only dissatisfied and disgruntled listeners. Write for situations rather than for sentences.

Don't try for ultra-sophistication. The sponsors of radio programs and the executives of the networks are not interested in ultra-sophisticated material and until there is a decided change in existing policies, it is a waste of time to write it.

Don't attempt involved plots. Simple plots are just as interesting if the dialogue is well written.

If possible, write your sketch to play three or four minutes longer than necessary. Then when it is to be pruned down to the required length for its assigned broadcast period, you will be able to eliminate many unnecessary words and lines. Some of the best radio sketches have been those which have had to be cut in order to fit into the time-schedule.

Use short speeches but not jerky ones. Use familiar exclamations. "By the beard of Allah!" isn't nearly as effective as the more familiar "By gosh!"

Avoid soliloquies. They are unnatural and unnecessary.

Second-hand action is sometimes unavoidable, and the actor may tell what he has just done. But whenever possible use the scene of action rather than some player's account of it.

Radio gives a good deal of leeway in scene-shifting. Take advantage of this but don't overdo it.

Remember that the microphone is very flexible. Its acute ear can follow characters from one room to another and can go with them in airplanes or submarines or wherever the action may be taking place. If two characters are carrying the plot in their dialogue, don't let them walk out of a door unless the microphone goes with them. This does not mean that the microphone is actually moved about the studio, but it is a simple trick to indicate movement from one scene to another. That, however, is the problem of the director or production man and no concern of the writer after he has indicated such movement in his manuscript.

Use whispers. Your characters are never more than a few feet away from the listeners in an aural sense and all your lines may be written with this in mind. In fact, the microphone is the representative ear of all your listeners. Good radio actors never forget that and treat this "ear" with the same courtesy they accord the ears of their friends. The writer will do well to remember this.

Avoid giving offense to any religious group, politi-

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cal party, or race. If your play is produced in a theater, its theme is generally known in advance and persons it would displease witness it of their own volition. Radio plays are not reviewed and mass prejudices must be considered.

If your characters deal with controversial subjects, try to give both sides of the question involved. Listeners are resentful of propaganda.

Let your characters use their eyes frequently. "Look, a black cat!" or "See, there's George in a new hat!" is good radio.

Read your written dialogue aloud and if possible get some one else to read it aloud to you. Many a line looks well in type but sounds harsh or unnatural when spoken.

Make your characters as contrasting as possible. Twins in a radio sketch are rather difficult to handle.

Try to visualize your characters as voices. Your heroine has a light soprano voice with gaiety in it. Your hero is a baritone and speaks rapidly because he is a very energetic type. And so on.

In these "dos and don'ts" are the fundamental principles of writing radio dialogue. There are other rules and approved practices that will be discussed at greater length in other chapters. The foregoing precepts and suggestions, however, apply generally to every radio-writing assignment.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### CHARACTERIZATIONS

THE radio writer can take most of the glory for creating characters on the air. He does not have to share credit with the costume-designer or the actor's skill in the use of make-up. The actor of course does his share in establishing a character through his voice and the production manager can do his part by careful casting of the sketch. In the final analysis, however, the writer is the real creator of the character and on his shoulders rests most of the responsibility.

Inasmuch as most radio plays are episodes in series involving the same characters, the writer must work continually on his characterizations. As in radio scene-shifting, the dialogue does most of the work. A certain twang will suffice to identify a character as being from New England, but if the listener is to have a clear mental picture of the character, the author must do more than depend on a character voice.

The radio serial holds its audience not so much through interest in the plot as through interest in the people concerned. Listeners are not so keenly interested in the experiences that befall a real-estate salesman as they are in the experiences of *Jimmy*

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*Jumpup* as a real-estate salesman. Radio characters become as well known in time as next-door neighbors, and just as it is a matter of interest when your neighbor buys a car, so is it a matter of interest when your favorite radio character decides to paint his house green.

With this in mind, it is understandable that in many radio dramas the characters are more important than the plot. They must be so real that the listener visualizes every facial movement as the character speaks.

Characterization such as this is not accomplished in the first two or three scripts. Indeed, the writer must never cease to develop his character. It is far better to reveal it gradually than to attempt to crowd it into the first week or two.

This may be illustrated by taking an imaginary character in an imaginary radio series. His name, let us assume, is *Tony Black*. In the first script the listener gets certain glimpses of *Tony*. He drawls, perhaps, and one pictures him as rather easy-going. His sweetheart twits him gently about his taste in neckties and the listener thinks of *Tony* as a man with a liking for gay raiment. His age may be established and some idea may be given of his physical proportions.

The second episode may have some incident in which *Tony* is kind to a puppy. It may also reveal that he has a fondness for playing the stock-market. All these revelations, of course, may be incidental to

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the plot. In the third script *Tony* mentions that he is very fond of waffles and sausage for breakfast. In the fourth script his knowledge of ancient history may be casually indicated. And so on. Each week the listener learns something more about *Tony*, about his special interests and about his peculiarities—such as scratching his left ear.

Each week the individual listener is developing a more detailed picture of the character. Seldom if ever will two listeners have the same mental image of *Tony*, but each individual will have his own clear conception and *Tony* will seem more and more like an old friend.

Not only does this steady development of the character assure a corresponding development of listener interest and sympathy but it also paves the way for very dramatic incidents. Week after week your character has been good-natured and somewhat timid. Then, with little warning, he turns into a cave-man for an evening. Something, of course, provokes this metamorphosis but the dramatic value is high.

There is such a thing as too much detail, however. Unless it is important to the plot, don't be too specific about the physical characteristics of your principals. One of the pleasant things about the invisible drama is that you can visualize your hero as you please. If your preference is for tall, dark men, then this voice that comes from the radio speaker is that of a tall, dark man. Nor is it necessary to specify the color of

the eyes. Those are details that the listener can—in fact is even glad to—supply. If radio drama is to succeed it must leave something to the listeners' imaginations.

As a purely technical trick, radio characterization is fairly simple. If the writer has had previous experience in dialogue, he is familiar with character development. The route selected for this development may vary with different writers. The character may reveal his own mental and physical characteristics through his own speeches. However, it is easier to give a clearer picture by letting the listener see him through the speeches of other characters.

If the leading woman says, "My husband is such a child," and the listener is conscious that he is not present when she makes the statement, he is inclined to take this as an actual fact. If on the other hand she says, "Oh, sweetheart, you are such a child!" the meaning may be different.

The principles of simplicity and naturalness, so important in all radio writing, apply of course to character-building. Dr. Jekyll-Mr. Hyde types are difficult to make clear in the limited time allotted to the average radio sketch.

Let there be no doubt about the courage of the hero and the virtue of the heroine. These principles of course are the principles of melodrama but they are very effective in radio drama.

Whimsical characters are generally favorites with

radio listeners. The poet with a peculiar fondness for waffles or the elderly maiden lady who believes that peppermint in hot water will cure all ills always interests the listeners, and even though such characters are incidental to the sketch, they sometimes become principals to that family group.

I know of one sketch in which the author introduced a rather drawling and somewhat affected writer of free verse. Without really meaning to, he offset the silly-ass characteristics with some noble qualities. The character became immediately popular. Listeners wrote and demanded to hear more about him. The result was that this rôle, created as a bit for one or two sketches, developed into a principal part.

If you are writing a series of sketches in which the same characters appear, you soon realize that they are no longer yours to do with them what you will. If the lovely young wife, who is always kind and considerate to her husband, suddenly develops a nagging streak, look out! The listeners will write and threaten to stop listening unless she comes to her senses. Once you have established the characters you must keep them that way.

Too much originality in the treatment of characters is not advisable in radio. You would have a hard time making a hero out of a dullard and a heroine who constantly whined would not hold the interest of the listeners after the first sketch. Your policemen must talk as policemen are supposed to talk, and if

you use a messenger-boy or a newsboy, he is best supplied with "dese," "dems," and "doses." And as for having a Frenchman who doesn't speak with a decided accent—it just isn't done.

This is not intended as a reflection on the intelligence of the radio audience. It is merely a condition made necessary by the fact that the speakers cannot be seen except in the imagination. And if you can help that image by having your actors speak as the listener imagines they ought to speak, then you are merely strengthening the entire production.

One of the most interesting studies in characterization on the air is the program "Real Folks." So cleverly are the lines written and so excellent has been the casting of the production that each character stands out vividly in the imagination whenever he utters a word. Of course the characters are exaggerated. But just the same "Real Folks" is real amusement to several hundred thousand listeners and is well worth the study and attention of any serious radio writer.

One bit of sound advice concerns the creating of villainous or rascally characters. Make them "straight." In other words, do not make your villain obviously a Hebrew or an Italian or a Spaniard. Avoid linking him with any particular race or nation. He can be just as hate-inspiring without having his nationality or color revealed, and you will avoid giving offense to what might otherwise be an enthusiastic group of listeners.

Also, avoid making comic figures of ministers. Not that you will offend any ministers, but because you won't get your manuscript on the air. The broadcasting companies are rather particular on that point.

When in doubt about any characterization, read your script aloud to some one unfamiliar with it and then ask that person to give you his impression of any character you are in doubt about. This is a simple test but it is very revealing. Never forget that there may be some important details in your own mind about some particular character that you have forgotten to write into the lines.

## CHAPTER XIX

### *INVISIBLE ACTION*

ONE of the most difficult tasks confronting the beginner in radio writing is to put action into his sketches. As a matter of fact, there is never real action in a radio manuscript—there is merely the illusion of action. There are, however, dozens of tricks of the craft whereby action can be interpreted through words, through intonations, and through sounds. In creating this illusion of action the writer must work hand in hand with the production man. An action script requires skilful direction and a first-hand knowledge of just what can be done with the microphone.

The writer, unless he expects to assist in the direction of the sketch, must indicate every bit of action in his manuscript. Entrances and exits must be carefully planned and too much detail is preferable to too little.

First let us consider the illusion of action obtained through dialogue. The following scene may be used as an example:

*He:* Will you hand me that paper?

*She:* This one?

*He:* That one on the desk . . . there!

*She:* Oh I see it now. . . . I'll get it. (Rustle of a newspaper.)

*He:* Thank you, dear.

The action in this case is simple; indeed the rustle of the paper is not necessary to complete the picture. But the use of the additional sound-effect sometimes adds just so much more to the mental impression recorded by the listener.

Much more complicated action is often required. One of the most successful scripts I have written was almost all action. The plot was simple. A turkey escaped from its pen and roosted on top of a tall pole. The principal male character climbed the pole and caught the turkey. (The script for this is given at the end of this book.)

Among the effects used was that of the man chasing the turkey up and down the yard before its short flight to the pole. The dialogue helped. His speeches were written in short exclamations—he spoke as a man would who was running after something. Then the production man did his share of the work. In order to give the illusion of running, the character actually ran up and down the studio, his voice alternately fading and coming closer. The actor, too, helped. He let himself get out of breath—an easy trick but very effective. The pole-climbing effect was chiefly brought out in the dialogue. You could hear the grunts and

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exclamations as the man went up the pole. You heard his wife cautioning him to be careful. She screamed—he almost slipped that time. His voice came from a distance, while hers was close at hand. The listener stood beside the woman and watched him climb. In the dialogue his gradual progress was recorded. Then, just as he got hold of the turkey, he slipped and fell. There was a crash, a scream, and some very annoyed exclamations from the man. He wasn't seriously hurt but for a few seconds his fate was very uncertain. This was the climax of the action.

Before the sketch went on the air we were worried. It had almost too much action. Would it be convincing? The script wasn't very funny on paper. In fact, it was pure slapstick, and unless the listener would "see" what was happening it would be a very dull show.

The listeners did "see" what was happening, judging from comments, criticisms, and letters received after the broadcast—and they were amused. It was one experiment that was successful.

In radio, unexpected action is difficult. For instance, it is impossible for a character to draw a gun and hold it ready but unseen by the other characters. The drawing of the pistol must be revealed by some other character. Some one says:

"Look out! Look out! He's got a gun!"

Dialogue must be used to handle a rapid sequence of happenings. In the following scene two men are

battling for possession of a piece of jewelry. There is the sound of scuffling. A third person is watching the battle and the listener must see what is happening through this spectator's eyes. Let us assume *Jim* and *Joe* are fighting for the jewelry. *Jane* is watching and happens to be allied with *Jim*. Here is how it would be written.

*Jim*: You won't get it, do you hear?

*Joe*: I won't, eh? Come across now, buddy . . . or you'll be sorry!

*Jane*: Don't let him have it, Jim. . . . Look out! . . . Jim . . . look out! . . .

*Joe*: You won't give it to me, eh? Take that . . . and that!

*Jim*: Yeah. . . . Try again . . . there! . . . (Sounds of two men fighting . . . thud of blows landed . . . muffled exclamations . . . *Joe* and *Jim* ad-lib through following speech of *Jane*.)

*Jane*: Jimmy! . . . look out! . . . Jimmy . . . he's trying to get his pistol. . . . Grab his hand, Jimmy! . . . Grab his hand! . . . Oh! . . . don't let him get that chair! . . . Watch out! . . . Watch out for his feet! . . . Oh! . . . there! . . . (Fight scene ends with the sound of a body hitting the floor. There is a pause and the sound of a man breathing heavily.)

*Jane*: Oh! . . . you've killed him!

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*Jim*: No . . . I haven't. . . . Now let's tie him up before he comes to.

On paper it doesn't seem very sensible. Yet enacted on the air it is entirely convincing. The climax comes of course when *Jane* exclaims, "You've killed him!" For a moment the audience is left to wonder. Who has been killed? Then *Jim's* voice is heard and the result of the battle is known.

The director can do a lot with such a scene and he must work out the timing of it. The actors, too, can do a lot with it. But it is the writer's job to provide the scene and he must do more than that. He must build to it. The most successful bits of action are scenes that have been planned carefully. During the dialogue leading up to the action the listener must be carefully prepared for what is to come. He must realize that some conflict is imminent. He must have his sympathy established for one character and he must be left in doubt as to the probable outcome of a battle between the two combatants. While this rule applies to almost all writing of this nature, it is especially applicable to radio. If the listener is going to follow the action he must be anticipating it—his imagination must be ready to speed up and give him a blow-by-blow vision of what is happening. The exclamations, the thuds, and the account of the battle as seen by the third character are all merely cues to

the picture that the radio listener has in his mind.

Radio action, if it is to be convincing, must be a re-creation of something familiar to the listener. The average radio listener, unless he had actually witnessed such an event or had seen a motion-picture of it, would not be much impressed by a broadcast built around the snake-dance of the Hopi tribe. However, a sketch built about the embarrassment of a man who has been drafted as a dress-form by his wife would be interesting because it happens in real life and is either an actual or an easily imagined experience.

Tempo has a lot to do with the illusion of action. Radio tempo—the number of words spoken per minute during the progress of the sketch—is considerably faster than stage tempo. Words must hold attention and even the most significant pauses must be shortened to a few seconds. In a scene where things are happening the dialogue must move faster than ever. Also, it must be written so that if a word or two is lost to the listener he will not lose the meaning of the speech. In intense action half the words uttered are merely sounds indicating struggle, excitement, or haste. The listener is mentally “watching” the scene and the time for explanatory dialogue has passed. Only when the climax is reached must care be taken with the speeches. Then the outcome of whatever conflict has been in progress must be made clear.

In the scene between *Jim*, *Joe*, and *Jane* the words of the three during the actual fight may hardly make

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sense. They merely create impressions. But when *Jane* says, "Oh, you've killed him!" the listener must hear her, for her speech immediately explains the thud or sound of something falling and the moment of silence. *Jim's* speech, "No . . . I haven't. . . . Now let's tie him up," is very important. It tells who won and also picks up the action again.

Action has been overdone in radio many times. Tyros, pleased with the response to some scene of action they have created, attempt to produce radio sketches that are as full of action as the old-time movie "Western." Usually the result is so much action that the listener is never able to find out just what is going on. He hears sounds that indicate much excitement over something, but the characters are so busy doing things that they have no time to explain what they are doing. And since their actions are not explained, they cannot be visualized, and the entire broadcast is meaningless.

In the theater or in the motion-pictures an action scene may be introduced suddenly. What leads up to the action may be revealed in a subsequent scene. Often a murder takes place in the very opening scene of a play. In radio this is a difficult thing to do. Since action so often depends upon sound-effects and upon the impression created by unrelated or incoherent words and phrases, such an introduction to a radio sketch under ordinary circumstances would be too great a tax on the listener's imagination. If he does

create a mental picture from the sounds, there is no reason to believe that it will be the particular mental picture that will fit in with the rest of the plot. That is why radio sketches in which the plot is important must move slowly at the start. There must be time to set the scene and establish character.

There are thousands of experiments yet to be made in creating action or the illusion of action for the radio listener. Some day perhaps it will be possible to write a handbook on action alone. To-day we can only make laboratory notes.

## CHAPTER XX

### *RADIO HUMOR*

ONE of the minor tragedies of radio is the large number of programs that try to be funny but aren't. And also the large number of entertainers who think they are funny but aren't.

Any attempt to tell how to write comedy for the air would be preposterous. The only advice one can offer is to suggest studying the few really amusing programs on the air and doing the best imitation possible. Or if you are a genius, produce your idea, and if you get it on the air it may be the funniest program yet. But be prepared for disappointments.

Radio humor is a very distant relative of stage humor. If you doubt that, listen in on a really funny stage comic when he is broadcasting. The very stories over which you laughed and laughed and laughed in a theater will sound either silly or dull. Many good comedians will not broadcast because they know the danger of their material's falling flat when it is put on the air.

Conditions facing the radio humorist, be he writer or entertainer, are vastly different from those in the theater or the talkies. The author of a play may write

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what he thinks is a funny line and yet it fails to get a single chuckle out of the audience. The line can be taken out of the play and another one substituted. Another line that the author has doubts about may be the laugh line of an act. When in doubt it is always possible to try the joke or gag or situation on an audience.

The radio humorist has no such opportunity to test his material. He uses his story or situation and if it is funny some one may tell him about it. Or even half a dozen individuals may say they thought it funny. However, he has no way of finding out the reaction of any cross-section of listeners. The bit of humor might appeal to only six people out of every hundred listening to the sketch.

Of course, were the radio humorist to discover that such and such a line had listeners rolling on the living-room floor, it wouldn't help very much. He couldn't go on using the same line. The demand for fresh material for every broadcast cannot be ignored. However, he would get some conception of what particular type of joke or situation had the great laugh possibilities.

Then again the radio taboos—mentioned previously and at length—are serious handicaps to the writer of funny material. With restrictions on jokes or situations involving sex, prohibition, the Government, and a dozen other topics popular with joke-

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smiths, the writer is hard put to find something to be funny about.

This is the reason for the popularity of the pun with the radio humorists. Raymond Knight, whose "Station KUKU" is probably the most laughable program on the air, depends on the pun and upon burlesque to get his laughs. The "Nit-Wits," Columbia's funniest radio show (and some people will tell you it is superior to "Station KUKU") depends on burlesque. It is a sad state of affairs, indeed, when the pun, indisputably the lowest form of humor, is the backbone of broadcast laughter.

Probably burlesque is the safest route to laughter on the air. Indeed a majority of the successful humorous programs are burlesques.

"Snoop and Peep," an admirable fifteen-minute sketch, is a burlesque on mystery thrillers. *Snoop* and *Peep* are two very funny detectives who hiss and whisper and do things in an, oh, so melodramatic! fashion. The "Nit-Wits" burlesque some of our best-known types of radio entertainers. "Station KUKU" is a loud laugh at the expense of the more serious things in radio, such as bedtime stories and helpful hints to housewives. "Sisters of the Skillet"—a fifteen-minute sketch that will be very well known by the time this book reaches you—burlesques the household experts who attempt to solve all problems.

"Real Folks" may be classed as a humorous pro-

gram. However, it keeps its large following through human interest rather than the abundance of "belly laughs" it provides. Its laughs, which are plentiful, are the result of characterization and exaggeration. George Frame Brown, who writes the weekly sketch, believes in careful casting. Often the tone of voice used by the characters is what makes a line funny. Brown also uses ludicrous situations effectively.

Ray Perkins is a sort of white hope among the radio humorists. His work—and there is no predicting in what program you will next hear him—is rather inspiring. Perkins has the courage to be sophisticated. Though in the opinion of many persons he has contributed much to the gaiety of the listening public, the fact remains that he has not had the commercial success of the Phil Cooks or the *Amos 'n' Andy*s.

My own experience in writing for radio is that the situation is more important than the line. Listeners will remember and talk about an amusing situation longer than they will remember a funny line. If you can put your characters in an embarrassing situation and make their embarrassment rather noticeable, you will get laughter and appreciative letters from your listening audience. Or if you can build carefully to a dramatic high spot and then have the main character do the wrong thing, you will be pleasing your listeners very, very much.

Homely comedy is best on the air. The mistakes that our neighbors make that are laughable to us may

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be transplanted to a radio skit with satisfactory results. The distress of a young father with his first baby, the troubles of a young man in getting up enough courage to propose, the efforts of an amateur cook—all these things provoke chuckles from the listeners.

If you can make Mr. Listener say to Mrs. Listener: "Do you remember . . . we did the same thing when we had our first youngster!" then you are achieving success. Take your humor as close to home as possible. It need not be clever and it had better not be sophisticated. Recall the things that have happened to you that didn't seem funny at the time but did seem funny in retrospect. Then you will approach the type of comedy that has the best chance of success.

Double-meaning lines are absolutely out. Indeed, you must scrutinize your lines carefully, for if even a line written in perfect innocence can be mentally twisted to mean something else and something else that is somewhat naughty, look out! The letters will pour in and you will be accused of corrupting the youth of the nation. Ask any radio writer about that. And these letters, especially if signed by ministers of the Gospel, are sometimes taken seriously by the radio executives.

In no phase of radio writing do you have to depend so much upon your actors as in the writing of humor. Again it is noticeable that in the majority of successful humorous sketches the writer usually acts in the sketch or at least directs it. Raymond Knight is *Am-*

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*brose J. Weems* in "Station KUKU." Bradford Brown is heard in the "Nit-Wits." Ray Perkins always appears on the air with his own material. George Frame Brown plays several parts in "Real Folks." Phil Cook writes all his own material, as do *Amos 'n' Andy*. If you can't act in the sketch you write, at least be present at rehearsals.

So far, this chapter has been mainly concerned with humor presented in a dramatic form. However, there is need for humor in other types of radio writing. Many of the continuities for dance bands might be leavened with humor.

Here is an opportunity for the writer of epigrams. A bright, sparkling sentence may be used to introduce "My Baby Just Cares for Me"—and there is no necessity to have household talks as dull as they usually are.

In this field, much can be done. The main difficulty lies in convincing the sponsor of a program that his product may be gently kidded without hurting it in public estimation. Some courageous sponsors have permitted the radio wits to wax funny about the product and in some cases it has paid. However, few radio sponsors have approached the joyous abandon of the famous Flit advertisements that have appeared in several humorous weeklies.

*Amos 'n' Andy*—they seem to creep into almost every chapter—have only been mentioned in passing so far. However, they do not belong in a discussion

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of radio humor. Their art is more than humor—it is a profound knowledge of what constitutes good human-interest material. And that is discussed elsewhere.

## CHAPTER XXI

### PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN

NOT the least important work before the radio writer is the writing of programs for children. And in no other branch of radio writing do there exist so many misconceptions.

The persons who draw funny pictures and write jokes are largely responsible for the perpetuation of the popular belief that all radio programs for children should have to do with what little *Benny Bear* said to little *Willie Wolf*.

Your modern child is interested in what *Bennie Bear* has to say to *Willie Wolf*, but the same child is also interested in other things. And too much *Bennie Bear* and *Willie Wolf* is just as nauseating to the modern child as it is to his elders. Possibly more so, because the child is expected to enjoy it.

The worst mistake any radio writer—or any writer, for that matter—can make is to attempt to write down to children. They not only resent it but they also develop a positive dislike for the writer. Children like simple stories but they will not tolerate slush. They are, perhaps, more critical of a superfluity of adjectives than the adults are. Knowing little about

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style and less about what is art, they are mainly interested in what it is all about. Tell them the story and they are happy. But be sure you have a story to tell.

A good way to antagonize ninety per cent of your child listeners is to make it clear to them that you are going to tell them in very simple words and phrases, calculated to appeal to their childish understandings, just what you are going to tell them. They will promptly desert your program and tune in on the weather reports. At least the weather reports will indicate whether there is a chance for some good coasting—or a day in the country without danger of rain.

It is interesting to know that the modern youngster usually likes best the program planned for his elders. My youngster—not quite four years old—once refused to go to bed until he had heard Lowell Thomas discuss the news of the day. He also showed a decided preference for a radio serial titled “Gloria Gay.” This particular radio serial was planned to interest young women in the purchase of silk, but my son enjoyed it tremendously. Just why, I have never been able to find out.

On the other hand, take the case of the “Children’s Hour,” a Sunday morning feature broadcast by NBC. It was planned for children and children sing the songs and enact the playlets that make up the hour. But do children listen in? Perhaps . . . but the bulk

of the fan mail that is received by the hour is from adults. Grown-ups seem to get a tremendous kick out of this program for the children. The children wait patiently for the latest instalment in the current radio mystery serial.

The "now, dear children" attitude is bad. Youngsters resent being patronized. They want to be treated as equals. Treat them as equals and give them credit for the intelligence that they have and they will respond accordingly.

Fairy-tales, properly dramatized, make excellent radio material. In order to give a perfect example of what children like we must desert radio for a moment and turn to the theater. "Peter Pan" is probably the greatest play ever written for children. I have yet to meet a child who didn't enjoy it thoroughly. Yet Barrie's immortal play also appeals to adults.

You can learn much from "Peter Pan." It is a fairy-tale. Yet the things that take place are dramatically interesting. You are thrilled by the pirates and the sweetness of *Wendy* makes you love her. There is suspense. There is action. And there are things that haven't happened to you or me, yet we'd like to have them happen to us.

Reduce "Peter Pan" to a formula and you have a formula that will appeal to any child. It can be done. So much of improbability, so much of action, so much of real family life and simple humor, and you have "Peter Pan."

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In order to interest children you must first of all have action. Things must happen. Then there must be the appeal to the imagination. There must be fairies that don't exist but which you would like to believe do exist. There must be something that is easily understood—something in the sketch that may be connected with everyday happenings in the home. And if you must have a moral, don't label it. Children don't like preachments when they recognize them as such. No youngster ever ate spinach because he was told it was good for him. It is more likely that he ate it because he was told the spinach was created to extract the sunshine from the great outdoors just to transfer it to the cheeks and eyes of the boy or girl who ate it.

Grown-ups are apt to forget that when they were children they not only enjoyed Andersen or Grimm but they also enjoyed the adventures of the *Rover Boys* or *Tom Swift*. The result is that sponsors of the programs designed to interest children think too often of the classic fairy-tales and not often enough of the not-so-classic modern juveniles. "The Bluebird" on the air would be a lovely thing, but from a strictly commercial standpoint, you would get just as interested an audience were you to make a radio dramatization of "The Boy Aviators in Africa."

Youngsters admire greatly the

"Bear!"

"Where?"

"There!"

type of dialogue. It is clear and easy to follow and very graphic. It is a particularly good type of dialogue for radio, where short sentences and direct statements tell the story more accurately than involved and rambling speeches.

The writer of juvenile radio sketches must remember, too, that youngsters are interested in animals. Not necessarily the *Bennie Bears* and the *Willie Wolfs*, but animal characters such as the dog *Jerry* in "Jolly Bill and Jane." Penrod's dog *Duke* is the ideal type of animal character for broadcast sketches.

Often a series of sketches designed to appeal to adults will attract a large child audience, and almost invariably some animal character quite incidental to the plot is the center of attraction. In a series I wrote several years ago, an elephant was introduced into the story. The letters from youngsters immediately jumped to a high peak for the year.

Advertisers in many cases overlook the value of this child audience. Get a child interested in a character bearing the same name as a certain breakfast-food and that child will insist that his mother purchase the breakfast-food. The character has become a friend and therefore he is strongly prejudiced in favor of any product having the same name.

While many children's programs are broadcast as monologues and *Uncle Theophilus* tells a long-winded story to the dear little boys and girls, the dramatized story is much more popular. Madge

Tucker, whose "The Lady Next Door" is one of the most popular programs on the air with children, believes in dramatizing everything. Miss Tucker goes farther than that, however. She uses child casts and when she has a plot to work out, she calls her young actors into conference and they help write the episode.

Children's programs have not been given the attention they deserve by radio writers. The field is wide open to the ambitious writer who will write for children with the same thoughtfulness and regard for intelligence that he would use in writing for adults.

The rules are not complicated. Don't write down to children. As has been said before, they resent patronage. Study their interests. The average modern child is tremendously interested in aviation and the major industrial developments that have color. Ships and trains fascinate him, and if he hears the wail of a fire-siren coming from the radio speaker it will have his immediate attention. He will help you in your dramatizations with every bit of his imagination. Children frequently draw pictures of radio characters and mail them to the broadcasters, and these pictures show a remarkable attention to detail. If somewhere in the script you have made some mention of the left hind leg of your dog character as white, then such pictures as you receive will show that left hind leg as white.

As this is being written a tremendous field for the radio writer is being opened. More and more atten-

tion is being paid to the use of broadcast drama for educational purposes. Within a few years, history lessons will come from radio speakers and dramatized historical events will supplement the text-books. Civics, economics, English, and composition can be taught by radio, and some interesting experiments in teaching languages via the ether have already been made.

There are not enough trained radio writers to-day to meet the demand that is bound to come for creators of educational material for broadcasting. And if radio is to succeed as an educator, such writers must be available.



*NBC Photo*

## Jolly Bill and Jane



## CHAPTER XXII

### *A SHOW A DAY*

THE best-paying work now existent for the radio writer is in the production of a daily fifteen-minute dramatic skit. It is also the hardest job.

In this discussion of the daily radio feature the writer must use the first person singular frequently. When I talk about the daily series, I speak from experience, for I have been writing a fifteen-minute dramatic skit six days a week for almost six months ("Raising Junior," NBC).

Before attempting to explain the technique and construction of the daily feature, it is well to give an idea of the amount of work involved. The writer must expect to turn out not less than fifteen hundred words of dialogue a day. In my own case, my dialogue runs more than two thousand words a day, and if the tempo is fast, more than twenty-four hundred words in the twelve minutes of actual dialogue.

There must be a new idea every day, yet day after day and week after week the action must revolve about the same characters. Sometimes one gets terribly weary of these characters. In the end, however, they become the closest friends and to the writer, as well

as to the listener, become real personalities. And that helps a lot.

"Amos 'n' Andy" of course represents the best-known fifteen-minute skit on the air. The dialogue is the work of two men, Freeman F. Gosden and Charles Correll, and these same men play the parts of *Amos 'n' Andy*. How they manage to turn out their six episodes a week and play each episode twice in a day—for they go on late at night for Pacific coast listeners—is one of the miracles of radio. But they do, and there is every indication that they will continue to do so for some years to come.

"Jolly Bill and Jane" is another rather famous daily program. William Steinke, who is the real *Jolly Bill*, does most of the writing, and the *Jane* in the program is a real little girl. Steinke makes very little attempt to write dramatic continuity but his program holds his listeners.

Phil Cook, who for a while did two different fifteen-minute programs every day and still does one a day, uses a somewhat different technique. His dialogue is not as much of a task because he uses songs throughout the program, but as he writes all his own lyrics, he too must work night and day.

"Uncle Abe and David," the creation of Phillips Lord, is heard four times a week and for a while was heard every day. It is all dialogue.

"Sisters of the Skillet," a new radio act just coming into prominence, is a daily feature but the men who

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present it use a number of songs and cut down the quantity of dialogue. "The Lady Next Door," NBC's featured children's program, is a daily feature and requires more than a thousand words of dialogue a day. Madge Tucker writes the dialogue. "Gene and Glenn," heard in the mornings, uses nearly a thousand words of dialogue a day.

There are others. Many of them are on smaller stations and some may be heard eventually on the networks. Others are heard for a few weeks and then discontinued when the writer runs out of situations.

The first requirement of the writer ambitious to produce a daily dramatic skit is the ability to put that particular job ahead of everything else. Also he must have that peculiarity of many newspaper men, that he is able to do his best work under pressure. When you are writing a thousand or more words of dialogue every day you are always under pressure.

To begin with, there must be a formula. "Amos 'n' Andy" has a formula. Reduced to the simplest phraseology, it is: *Andy* does the talking and *Amos* does the work.

If you will take the trouble to glance over the comic strips in the daily newspapers you will see other examples of the necessity of a formula. Take the veteran "Orphan Annie" strip. Annie is poor and almost starving for a certain length of time, then something happens and she has everything that money can buy. As soon as her good fortune becomes monoto-

nous, the artist has her run away or be kidnapped or lose all her money, and again she must face terrible hardships. It has been going on that way for years and it will continue to go on that way for more years.

My own formula for the "Raising Junior" series is very simple. My radio family has some good luck and then it has some bad luck. When things look best, something unfortunate happens and when things look most bleak, something very pleasant happens just in the nick of time.

There are not enough daily dramatic skits on the air to establish any hard and fast rules. Certain practices are obvious, while other ideas for a daily sketch must be tried out.

In no other type of radio sketch is it so important to make the players seem like real people. For that reason it is seldom that the characters are identified as actors. To remind the listener each day, "The part of *Joan* in this sketch was played by Aline Berry," would merely be a daily reminder that after all it was just a playlet. The characters must be more than actors reading lines—they must actually live. And if you have ever seen the letters received by the players in these daily sketches, you would know that they do live in the minds of the listeners.

Frequently some one asks me how I manage to think of a new situation every day. Situations aren't the main worry. The real job is to keep two or three people talking to each other for twelve minutes in such

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a way that their conversation will be interesting to a hundred thousand or more persons who can't see them.

The answer to that is not in the dialogue but in the listeners themselves. They are interested because the characters may have come into their homes for six or seven evenings. In that time they get to know them. When they hear the woman make a certain remark they can almost anticipate the reply of her husband. Not the exact words, of course, but so well do they know his character that they can anticipate his mental reactions to any ordinary remark or statement.

These characters heard in the daily programs become friends or neighbors. When *Amos* gets a new suit, the listener is as interested as if the man who works next to him in the office were to get a new suit. Indeed, that acquisition of a new suit or a second-hand car is enough to create a very dramatic situation.

It is obvious, then, that the first and most important task that confronts the author of a daily series is not to have an ample supply of situations or an involved plot in his mind but to make his characters seem real. The first ten episodes in a series of one hundred and fifty are much harder to write than the last ten. In the first ten "chapters" of the radio serial you must make your listeners like your characters and know them intimately. If the first ten episodes are strong dramatic situations, you will have less difficulty in picking up an audience, but unless you develop sympathy for the principal characters, the dramatic situa-

tions will not bring the listeners back at a certain time day after day and week after week.

Let's take "Amos 'n' Andy" again for an example. One listener told me that the reason he listened so religiously to the pair was that he hoped to hear *Amos* talk back to *Andy*. And in time *Amos* did talk back to *Andy* and it was the talk of the town the next day. Not because it was such a dramatic situation in a theatrical sense, but because the listeners were so thoroughly familiar with the characters of "Amos 'n' Andy" and so heartily in sympathy with the down-trodden *Amos*. The turning of the worm was a personal triumph for every listener. Hadn't they been for *Amos* all the time? Wasn't he usually right? Well, hadn't he done just what they would have done had they been there?

Another characteristic of the successful daily sketch that is worth consideration is the absence of jokes and wise-cracks. Smart lines just don't belong. Just as you get tired of constant association with the "smart Aleck" or professional wise-cracker, so would you get tired of hearing jokes and gags by the same characters for fifteen minutes every day. Offhand I cannot recall the use of a single gag or joke in any of the "Amos 'n' Andy" episodes. If jokes or funny lines are used, they must be used for the amusement of the characters in the sketch and must not be directed at the listeners. *Uncle Abe* may tell *David* a funny story, but the amusement of the audience must be a reflection of the amusement of *David* rather than a laugh at the

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story itself. The moment the characters play direct to the listeners, the illusion is marred if not shattered. It's the difference between a vaudeville act and a serious drama. It is true that there are daily vaudeville acts on the air, but you will not find them listed among the most popular programs. There must be sustained interest and an approach to real life to make your offering as much a part of the day's routine as breakfast or the reading of the weather report in the morning paper.

If it were possible to give instructions on how to write a successful daily radio series, such instructions could be put in sealed envelopes and sold for a price many times greater than this book. Such knowledge would be a sorcerer's stone in broadcasting. If you feel that you can write a daily series, write the first fifteen or twenty episodes. If these are consistently good, the broadcasting stations will be more than glad to put them on the air. No one in radio is taking a chance of letting a second "Amos 'n' Andy" series go undiscovered. Your sketches may have that intangible something that will endear them to the listeners. Then again they may not.

But if you are going to attempt such a thing, remember that your job is to create characters that will be close friends or persons intimately known to the listeners. They must not be glamorous but instead must be very human and understandable. The things they do must be everyday things. They must go

through their actions against a background that is familiar to every normal listener. They must talk like human beings, act like human beings, and think like human beings. Remember, they will be daily visitors to the home of Mr. Listener if they are popular, and they must be careful not to do things that will wear out their welcome.

If you can create such characters and can move them logically and interestingly through a series of incidents that might be a part of the life of any listener, then you may have a second "Amos 'n' Andy." But the listeners will have to decide that.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### *ONCE A WEEK*

THE majority of assignments for radio writers are for series of playlets or sketches, and usually a new sketch is required every week. These assignments are generally for a series of thirteen, twenty-six, or sometimes fifty-two programs. The radio year is divided into quarters.

A new act every week would seem an impossible task to a writer of vaudeville or revue material. In radio it is not at all unusual; in fact, any one who can receive enough for one sketch each week to assure him a decent living is considered rather lucky. Usually it requires two or three programs a week and sometimes one every day to put the writer in the "good income" class.

There are few weekly programs in which the characters are changed every week. In general, these exceptions are programs in which one-act plays are presented, or are historical or romantic episodes such as "Soconyland Sketches" or "Famous Loves of History." Even in such cases, the theme is the same each week. It is true that there are one or two programs in which one-act plays are presented and there are oth-

ers that present condensed versions of standard dramatic works. However, these programs represent the work of the adapter rather than that of the creator of original material.

The most successful radio series—aside from the musical programs—are not unlike the movie serials that once were so popular. The story is continuous and there is always something at the end of each episode to carry interest over to the next week.

Such series are written about a rather definite formula. The writer provides himself with his main characters and writes his first episode. This episode must give a general idea of the type of drama to expect and must definitely establish the principal characters. It is the “first act” of the radio play, which may contain thirteen or twenty-six or more acts. As the series continues incidental characters may be introduced, used for a few sketches, and then may be killed off, lost in a convenient desert or just ignored.

There are some writers who believe that the most successful method is to turn out sketches in which exciting things are always just about to happen. These writers rely on the curiosity of listeners as to what will happen next rather than on interest created by action. It is rather cheap stuff as a rule and after a half-dozen episodes usually loses what audience it has attracted. You cannot promise action indefinitely. It must be delivered.

Another method is to end one situation and de-

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velop another in each episode. Thus, the first half of episode ten finishes the action begun in episode nine and the last half of episode ten builds up a situation for episode eleven.

The preferable method, judging from what has succeeded on the air, is to devote the sketch to one main situation and at the same time lay the foundation for another situation in the succeeding sketch. Thus you tell a complete story and also develop interest for the next complete story. Lulu Vollmer used this technique in "Moonshine and Honeysuckle" and it has been tried and found successful in other radio series.

The "play within a play" formula also is very popular on the air. Hank Simmon's "Showboat," "Arabesque," "True Story Hour," and others are examples of this method. Where the author does not wish to use a continued plot but does wish to carry over interest, this is an excellent method. Usually several characters are heard every week. One of the characters may start to tell a story—and the story fades into a dramatization of what is being told. In other cases the plot concerns a company of players. The listener hears enough of their personal lives to create some interest—and each week he hears a complete sketch or play. "Arabesque" and "Showboat" are examples of this type of program. (The script of an episode from the latter is given at the end of this book.)

Sometimes only one character will appear through-

out the series, such as the *Old Timer* in "Empire Builders." This character is a combination of master of ceremonies and raconteur and is the peg on which the whole structure of the program is hung.

There are any number of weekly programs, dramatic in so far as they are mainly dialogue, but making no effort to present a story or hold interest through plot. These programs, when successful, are generally examples of good characterization. "Sunday at Seth Parker's" is one of the best examples of this type of program. It has a huge following—not because of any story that is told and certainly not because of the quality of the music heard in the program, but because Phillips Lord, who writes the program and plays the part of *Seth*, has done a fine job of characterization. He leaves his listeners wanting to know the characters more intimately.

Dramatic continuity is often used to link together musical numbers. This has been discussed in another chapter (Chapter XIII), and it undoubtedly has its place in radio. However, unless the writer is sure that trained actors will be available to read his lines, he is not going to be happy when he hears the broadcast of his dialogue continuity. When singers and instrumentalists are given parts to read during a broadcast, it is very apparent that they are singers and instrumentalists, not actors. The usual result is to make the entire program sound amateurish. There are excep-

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tions, of course, but the musicians who are also good actors or line-readers generally have very nice contracts and you won't find them readily available.

It is noticeable that the majority of commercially sponsored programs lean toward continued or sustained interest. The reason is obvious. The more often the listener listens, the more opportunities there are to repeat the "sales message" or impress the listener with the slogan of the organization. One of the fundamental principles of advertising is that if you repeat a statement often enough it will be accepted as fact. Thus, if you can get Mr. John Smith to listen to the "Adventures of Prince Pretzel" for thirteen weeks in a row and each week you can tell him that "Prince's Pretzels are the best pretzels," he will come to believe it. Hence, if you have a series of programs or a program idea that will keep the listeners listening, you will find a ready market for it.

A week is a long time in these days of many and varied activities for every one. It requires considerable technical skill to create so interesting a situation that the listener will arrange his various affairs in such a way that he will be sure to hear the next episode in a radio series. And there are several tricks that are worth knowing.

Of course the easiest trick of all is to have some character become suddenly excited—and then let the explanation of this excitement be postponed until the

next episode. In time, however, this device becomes monotonous.

A better device is to create a situation that may be solved in two or three ways. Let the listener understand the situation and make it possible for him to figure out in his own mind the probable solutions or at least one of them. His curiosity will be at a high point, not only because he is interested in knowing what is going to happen next but also because he wants to know whether he is right or wrong in his own solution.

When the "hook"—which is a blunt way of referring to this device to bring listeners back to the series at regular intervals—brings up the question, "Will he do this or that?" many listeners won't even wait for the next episode. Many of them write letters demanding to be told what will happen. Some will even telegraph.

The letter which begins, "My husband says *Reggie* will return the pearls but I say he won't," is frequently received by the writer or the radio station between episodes when the listener is left in doubt as to what *Reggie* will do. Whenever such a minor difference of opinion between two or more listeners can be created, the writer has done something rather clever. He can count on his listeners' coming back for more.

Another effective device is to create a very interest-

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ing character through the dialogue of others. Then let it be known that on such and such a date that character will arrive on the scene. If he is delayed by business, snowstorms, or a shipwreck, interest isn't lessened—indeed his ultimate arrival becomes a matter of great importance. Then, if he is that kind of a character, the problem of getting rid of him may create sustained interest.

The handbooks on writing—and there are scores of them—are full of suggested situations that carry interest from one episode to another. There is little use in listing them here. Almost all of them are applicable to radio writing and the experienced writer should have little difficulty in adapting his knowledge of these devices to broadcasting.

One other thing may be said in favor of the weekly series in which the plot carries over week after week. If the writer is skilful enough to attract and hold a large audience, he will find that he has a job for an indefinite period. Few sponsors of programs have the courage to become identified with a group of interesting characters and an equally interesting plot and then kill both characters and story by going off the air. Usually the reaction is expressed in a minor boycott of the product sold by the sponsor. The writer knows of one sponsor now on the air who several years ago got all the results he had hoped to get through radio advertising. At the present time, he can trace little or

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no new business to his radio program. However, he is afraid to go off the air and the cost of the program is now being charged to maintenance of public goodwill or to some similar item rather than to cost of new business.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### *IN THE LABORATORY*

MUCH of the fascination of radio writing is in its possibilities for experimentation. Every new program on the air is an experiment. If the writer is interested in his job, every new episode in a series may contain dialogue, sound-effects, or music of an experimental nature. He is constantly trying for a better effect of changing scenes or trying for speeches that give the listener a better mental image.

The opportunities for experiments are numerous but they must be conducted with regard to certain restrictions. The taboos, the space-limitations of the studios, and the economic factor must all be considered. Regardless of these restrictions, the radio dramatist has more opportunities to try out his efforts on an audience than his contemporaries in the theater or the talking-picture studios.

The cost of staging a radio production is negligible compared with the cost of producing a play or making a talkie. If his manuscript is intelligent and not too impracticable, he can obtain a cast, a director, and a studio and put on his show. He may even try it under varying conditions for several weeks. If the

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listeners like it and say so, the program stays on and he can continue to use it for additional experiments in technique.

If you are a close observer of the daily radio programs in your newspaper you will notice that the mortality-rate of programs is high. There are more program "flops" in a national network headquarters in one year than on the whole of Broadway. The reason is that the broadcasters are continually looking for good program material. Unable to make sure judgments themselves, they give the public a chance to accept or reject the idea of the program.

One of the most interesting experiments in dramatic broadcasts that has ever come to my notice was the production, more than two years ago (January, 1929), of Oscar Wilde's "The Nightingale and the Rose." Raymond Knight conducted the experiment. He adapted the fantasy and had special music written for it. The part of the nightingale was played by Jessica Dragonette and she sang wordless songs—in fact she was used as a human solo instrument rather than as a human voice. Capable actors and actresses handled the speaking parts and the entire production was played against a background of very colorful music.

From an artistic standpoint the production was one of the finest things ever attempted. It has not been equaled since. But it was not successful. Knight used weeks to rehearse his cast. The special orchestration



*CBS Photo*

World studio, Columbia Broadcasting System



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and the original music made the show expensive. Listeners liked it and said so. Yet economically it was not good radio.

However, this experiment was not wasted time nor wasted effort. Productions of this type are inevitable. The time is not far distant when radio listeners will become accustomed to the idea of "revivals" of radio programs. Such a program as "The Nightingale" could be presented once or twice a month for six months. Each time it would reach new listeners and a certain percentage of the listeners who had heard it the first time would listen again. I heard the complete program not once but at least half a dozen times, for I followed it through all rehearsals. Each time its quality became more apparent.

Columbia conducted another interesting experiment in presenting a playlet by Theodore Dreiser. It was "The Blue Comet" and listeners received it enthusiastically. Again, economics prevented more playlets by Dreiser. Available funds for sustaining programs did not make possible the financing of a series and there was no sponsor willing to back such a radical development in programs.

The British broadcasters are admittedly far ahead of the Americans in the creation of outstanding dramatic programs. But the British work without thought of time-limits. Broadcasting is supported by taxation and there are no sponsors who demand a thousand enthusiastic letters after each broadcast. Inasmuch as

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broadcasting in England is not theoretically self-supporting, as it is in this country, there is much more time available for such experimental work.

Cecil Lewis, a clever British radio producer, came to the United States and showed American radio workers how it is done in London. He put his actors in one studio, his sound-effects in another, his mob in another, and his music in still another. Then, seated at a master-control panel, he directed his players by means of light-cues and blended the output of the various studios into one complete broadcast. The result, artistically, was admirable. Yet again American economics said, "Thumbs down!" though the American artists appreciated the English system. The British system would require a broadcasting station with thirty or more studios. In England, where only one program originates in a broadcasting station and where that program may run two or three hours, space is not a problem. In America, with from four to eight programs emanating from a network headquarters every hour, such a system is impossible.

Lewis outlined to this writer an idea that is worth consideration. He proposed to establish an experimental broadcasting station, endowed with sufficient funds and equipment to attract the best American writers, producers, and players. This station was to broadcast nothing but experimental programs. Programs turned down by the networks because of an al-

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leged appeal only to the most sophisticated would be tried out in the experimental studios. Dramatic programs rejected because they exceeded the conventional limit of sixty minutes would be tried.

The listeners of course would be made a part of the experimental group. They would be asked to write—even urged to write—their impressions of various programs. In addition, representatives of the studios would conduct surveys of listeners' reactions and every effort would be made to determine just what could be done on the air and what couldn't.

Whether Lewis made a serious effort to obtain backing for such a plan I do not know. But such an enterprise, expensive as it would be, is really needed. Its effect on broadcasting as a whole would be beneficial and it would appeal to a group that now feels slighted by radio—the intelligent minority that now finds little to interest it in the daily grist of programs.

Perhaps the development of international exchange of radio programs will give American listeners a chance to voice an opinion of the British technique in radio drama and radio writing. At the present time, only musical programs and speeches have come across the Atlantic and the British do not offer better music nor better musical organizations than those available on American wave-lengths.

Then again the universities and colleges may take up radio as they have taken up drama. Some university

may develop a George Pierce Baker of broadcasting and in the college laboratory studios the art of radio may be developed to a high point.

I am inclined to think, however, that the real development will come in the broadcasting studios as we now know them. It is true that the handicaps are many. Time is limited. There is intense Puritanism to combat on every hand. There is a firmly rooted belief that listeners aren't interested in anything too "arty." The business must be operated at a profit, and there are dozens of other minor obstacles in the way of the creative artists.

In spite of these obstacles, the sincere writer has an excellent chance to develop his ideas. He must make certain concessions to the business office of broadcasting, for after all it is the business office that is making it possible for him to experiment. He must recognize that good reasons exist for certain restrictions and until he can prove that he is right and that the more experienced persons who made the restrictions in the first place are wrong, his best plan is to recognize them.

The laboratory in which this new art is being developed is unlike any other that has ever existed. It includes not only mechanical sound-effects and trained players to interpret the lines but it provides the greatest audience the world has ever known. If the writer creates something fine, he does not have to wait for

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the critics to examine it and tell the masses whether it is good or bad. He can take it to a convenient microphone and the masses can decide for themselves. And what is more, they do.

## CHAPTER XXV

### *LEGAL ASPECTS OF RADIO WRITING*

BECAUSE radio writing as we now know it is little more than five years old, there are few laws concerning it. There is no mention in the international copyright laws of radio manuscripts, and so few have been the lawsuits growing out of disputes over rights to radio writings that there are few cases to which one can turn for opinions.

What is known as "common-law copyright" is used to protect the majority of the radio manuscripts. A rough interpretation of the "common-law copyright" is that you can establish ownership by submitting proof of original creation and submitting further proof that you have not sold or transferred your rights in that original creation.

An original radio script may contain more than material for a half-hour's broadcast. It may contain a story of sufficient interest to be rewritten into a standard three-act play or a talking picture. It may make a short story. It may be used as a vaudeville sketch. The writer must not forget this. Even the names of his characters or the name of the sketch may have value.

The title "Amos 'n' Andy" is a registered trademark. That very name has netted its owners thousands of dollars in royalties. There are Amos 'n' Andy dolls, there is a Fresh Air Taxicab toy, there is Amos 'n' Andy candy, and an Amos 'n' Andy book. "Seth Parker" is another name that has a cash value. Made known nationally through radio, it helped to sell a hymn-book and an "album."

In dealing with the networks such as the National Broadcasting Company and the Columbia Broadcasting Company the writer can expect honesty. He usually gets a square deal.

These companies as a rule buy all rights to a script when they purchase it for broadcasting. Generally, however, there is a clause in the contract which provides that all royalties other than those received from broadcasting are to be divided equally between the broadcasting company and the author. In many cases the broadcasting company acts as an agent and tries to sell radio scripts to talking-picture companies or firms dealing in vaudeville material.

If the manuscripts are published in book form, the author receives half the royalties. If the title or the plot is sold, he again shares equally in whatever is paid to the broadcasting company.

If a writer plans to convert a radio script into a play at some future date, he had best see that his contract reserves such rights. Otherwise when he writes his play, using the characters and plot of his original

radio sketch, he will find that the broadcasting company has a legal right to claim half his royalties. Also, unless provision is made at the time the contract is drawn up, the author cannot rewrite or adapt his radio script for the stage or the screen without receiving permission from the broadcasting company.

At the present time the radio writer has no organization like the Authors' League, and as his market is limited he is not in the position to make a contract entirely favorable to himself. Often, if he is to have his material on the air at all, he must accept the terms offered by the broadcaster. If he has a national reputation as a writer in other fields than radio, his chances for getting a favorable contract are better, of course. But if he is like the rank and file of radio writers, unknown and struggling, he usually takes what he can get and likes it.

While the broadcasters pay royalties on some standard dramatic works, it is impossible to offer royalties on original radio material. For one thing, there is no direct income from such material when it is presented. Such profit as there is in broadcasting is known in advance. If the manufacturer of Shapely Shoes is paying four thousand dollars a program for his broadcast series, the broadcasting company knows to the last cent just how much it can afford to pay for the material used in the sketch. Therefore it buys outright. There is no element of gamble for the radio writer.

Until there is a definite code governing rights to

radio manuscripts and all other rights that might accrue, the writer should demand that everything be put in writing. I know of several instances where writers could get twice the amount for their work by shifting to another network. Yet if they shift they cannot take their programs with them. The broadcasting company has established ownership of the program title, the characters, and whatever plot there may be. Since writers are virtually unknown by name to the listening public, it would not benefit the Zenith Broadcasting Corporation to hire John Smith, radio writer, away from the Colossal Broadcasting Company unless Smith could bring with him his own program "Mystery Mazes."

The broadcasting companies have always had a healthy fear of plagiarism suits. Indeed for a long while unsolicited manuscripts were returned to the writers without being read. This policy was adopted because it was believed that when an idea in a rejected manuscript was used subsequently, and quite by coincidence, in a broadcast, the author of the rejected script would allege that his idea had been stolen. As a matter of fact, it was necessary to settle quietly several such claims.

To-day, however, with the demand for good material constantly increasing, the unknown writer is sure of having his manuscript read if he submits it to a reliable broadcasting company. And there is little danger that his idea will be stolen. If his script is bad

and the idea is good, he may even be paid for the idea. Some one skilled in radio writing can make the necessary revisions.

The laws of libel and slander have been interpreted to apply to radio broadcasting. While libel is usually interpreted to apply to slander written and circulated, the fact that the person speaks extemporaneously into a microphone without having first written out the libel does not make him any the less guilty. He has certainly circulated something that tends to "degrade or asperse character or reputation."

The Federal Radio Commission is empowered to punish obscenity on the air by revoking or suspending the license of the offending station. Other offenses against what may be termed common decency are also punishable by the Radio Commission.

Roughly, what may be used in a newspaper may also be used on the air. Advertising matter is commonly labeled as such or it is apparent to the listener that it is advertising matter.

The legal minds of radio are fully aware of the need of laws governing radio writing as well as laws governing various other phases of broadcasting. They are cautious, however, and realize that there is more danger in premature legislation or excessive legislation than there is in none at all. It is true that these legal minds are all employed by the powerful broadcasters. The radio writers, being unorganized, have no legal counsel and therefore have not adequate repre-

sentation in any conferences in which the legal aspects of radio writing are considered. At the present time there is little indication that they will be sold into slavery nor is there any apparent intention on the part of the broadcasting companies to take more than an ordinary business advantage of their unorganized condition.

The radio writer is advised, therefore, to study his contracts, make the best bargain he can, and look forward to the day when he will be able to deal with the broadcasting companies and others as one of a group rather than as an individual. As an individual, he will find that the common-law copyright offers him considerable protection. If he sells his common-law copyright, that is his lookout.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### *THE RADIO WRITER'S MARKET*

HERE and there throughout this volume reference has been made to the monetary rewards for radio manuscripts. The fact that radio writers are not in danger of becoming millionaires overnight has been stressed. The writers or entertainers who have made a million out of radio broadcasting may be counted on the fingers of one hand.

However, radio writing does pay more than ditch-digging and as a source of revenue is even comparable to plumbing or brick-laying. Besides, think of the fun you have!

I believe as many books have been published on where to sell manuscripts as on how to write them. And any writer will tell you that it is no trouble at all to turn out a short story. The trouble comes later when you try to sell it.

However, the market for radio scripts or ideas for radio programs is limited. So limited, indeed, that instead of appearing in a separate volume on the subject, the worth-while markets will be listed at the end of this chapter.

If the rent must be paid and if the baby just has

to have new clothes, consider seriously the possibilities of writing a series of radio sketches for a national advertiser. If you have a definite idea for a series and have one or two of the scripts written, don't send them to a broadcasting studio to be used "wherever you can find a place for them." Instead, pick up your "Saturday Evening Post" or your "Good Housekeeping" and study the advertisements long and carefully. If you have taken the job of writing for the radio seriously, you already will know what national advertisers are using broadcast time. Unless you are sure that the advertisers are dissatisfied with the program they are sponsoring, don't waste time by trying to sell them a new idea. Instead, note the advertisers that have not yet bought time on the air. There are quite a few of them left, incidentally. Study the program you have in mind and determine the best possible sponsor for it.

Then obtain one of the several books that list the advertising agencies of various big organizations. For example, you have decided that your program is just the thing for the Kitchen Kleaner Corporation. The next step is to find the name of the advertising agency representing the Kitchen Kleaner group. Then write, if you can't go in person, to the agency, giving a brief outline of your idea.

If the idea has merit, the agency will want to know more about it, and if the agency finally decides that your idea is just the thing for its client, you are making definite progress. Don't forget—when a national ad-

vertiser spends a hundred thousand dollars on broadcast advertising, the agency gets ten or fifteen per cent of the amount expended.

To-day a high percentage of network broadcasting is handled through nationally known advertising agencies. Many of them have established extensive radio departments and have their own staff of radio writers. In fact, much more can be accomplished by working with an agency, if you have a commercial program in mind, than by dealing direct with the network or station organization.

On the other hand, if you are more interested in having your brain-child actually on the air, deal direct with the station or the network organization. If your manuscript is submitted, it will be read. If it has merit, you will probably have a chance to prove that you can continue to produce good scripts.

It is comparatively simple to have a radio script actually broadcast if you are not interested in being paid for it. Dozens of smaller stations will try anything once and sometimes two or three times. But there is never an oversupply of good material for the air, and if your creation has any of the earmarks of a good radio show, the network organizations or some of the large independent stations will be only too glad to have it and to pay you for it.

The prices paid an unknown free-lance in radio are low. If you receive fifty dollars a week for a fifteen-minute sustaining sketch, you are getting a good fee

according to existing rates. Many fifteen-minute sketches are paid for at the rate of twenty-five dollars a sketch, and there are only a few persons who receive as much as a hundred dollars a week for a sketch.

The rate for commercial programs is higher. Some of the better-known writers receive two hundred and fifty dollars a week for a thirty-minute sketch. A safe average, however, is a hundred a week for the continuity.

If you can produce a fifteen-minute sketch every day—and can sell it—your income will range from three hundred a week up. However, the majority of the highly paid writers also work in their own sketches and get paid for acting as well as writing.

There is no set scale for program ideas. At the time this is being written a well-known cigarette manufacturer is looking for a novel program idea. A number have been submitted to him and it will probably be worth a thousand dollars to the person whose idea is selected. However, this is an exceptional case. The majority of ideas originate in the advertising agencies or the network program departments. In some cases the sponsor of the program has his own ideas.

Free-lance work in radio writing is not advised. There are too many writers holding jobs in the radio studios to give the outsider much of a chance. These writers are not only in the continuity departments but in other offices, and they keep the program executives

busy reading their sketches and presentation ideas.

The few free-lances who are successful have formerly been staff members or have been associated with radio since its beginning. The best approach to the rewards of radio writing is from the inside. If possible, get a job in a network headquarters. If that isn't possible, get on the staff of some independent station, such as WOR in New York and Newark, WGN in Chicago, or WLW in Cincinnati. If you can't find an opening in the continuity department, become a press-agent or do whatever you are able to do. The important thing is to get inside the studios. Not only does a staff job help in getting attention for your manuscripts but also it gives you a chance to learn more than any book can ever hope to tell you about radio writing.

These staff jobs don't carry big salaries, either. The networks seldom pay continuity writers more than sixty dollars a week to start with—sometimes not that much. The scale in other departments is low as compared with salaries paid in the theater or in the picture studios. However, there are always more people available than there are jobs. As has been said before, radio has such a fascination that the broadcasters are besieged with offers from youngsters who are willing to work without pay in order to learn what it is all about. But working on the theory that people who are willing to work for nothing can't be worth very much,

these applications are thrown in the waste-basket.

Once you secure a position on a radio staff, you will soon learn how to go about getting a sketch or a series of sketches on the air.

The smaller stations—and there are more than five hundred of them scattered throughout the country—are good training-schools. If you can walk into a network office and say that you've worked on the staff of Station KOKX for a year, your application for a job will receive more than passing consideration. Persons with any practical training in radio are comparatively rare.

New York, Chicago, and San Francisco are, however, the logical fields of operation for the ambitious radio writer. More programs originate in New York than in any other city, with Chicago running a close second. The principal advertising agencies are located in these cities and in these cities you run the best chances of making useful contacts.

You won't starve to death as a radio writer if you can produce material suitable for broadcasting. Nor will you have to be the nephew of the first cousin to the second vice-president to get a fair hearing on your material. But it must be good and unless it is, you can be the president's son himself and it won't help a lot. Never forget that hard-boiled business men pay the bills in broadcasting. The margin of profit is too small to allow for useless expenditures or the

waste of the very precious broadcast time on material that listeners won't listen to.

Here are the radio markets:

National Broadcasting Company, 711 Fifth Avenue,  
New York.

Columbia Broadcasting System, 485 Madison Avenue,  
New York.

Crosley Radio Corporation, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Station WOR, Bamberger Broadcasting Company,  
Newark, New Jersey.

Station WTAM, Cleveland, Ohio.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### *THIS THING CALLED TELEVISION*

WE were talking about radio writing and what a terrible craft it is. Hard work, small pay, and no recognition on the air. Just slaves, all of us. Then some one made a comment that wasn't just the usual grumbling that meant nothing.

"What will happen to us when television comes?" he said.

That question is in the back of the mind of every radio writer in America and it is being asked by every young writer who is considering going into radio writing.

The nearest answer to the question perhaps may be found in a similar situation. What happened to the screen continuity-writers when the movies began to talk?

The same thing happened that always happens when an industry or a business is changed overnight. Some of the movie-writers adapted themselves to the changed conditions and continued to write for the talkies. Others were unable to change and lost their jobs. The motion-picture potentates went slightly crazy and tried to corner the American writers' mar-

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ket and every known writer had at least three chances to sign a contract. Novelists, playwrights, newspaper feature-writers, even poets, went to Hollywood. A year later most of them came back and the talking pictures emerged from chaos with fairly competent writers turning out the scripts. Many of them were old staff members who had written for the silent screen and were able to handle spoken dialogue. Others were recruited from the thousands of writers who had received brief contracts.

When television does arrive, something similar will happen in broadcasting. The broadcasters, representing of course the manufacturers and business men who sponsor radio programs, will have their hands full of contracts to offer playwrights, movie-writers, actors—in short, to all the important names connected with the stage and screen. There will be an era of super-super programs with millions spent for known writers and known faces. Then things will quiet down and in the television studios you will discover efficiently organized groups of writers, paid according to their ability to produce, and among these writers the majority will be those who learned their trade before television.

Television is coming. Only a world catastrophe can stop it. But when any one tells you television is just around the corner, ask him, "What corner?"

Possibly there will be television in three years. In fact, there already is television, but you wouldn't like

it if you did have it in your home. Nor will it have passed the novelty stage three years from now. Just as any human sound that came out of the radio set ten years ago was miraculous, so will any dim picture or image hold interest and attention when television sets are first distributed commercially.

Sound-broadcasting established a dangerous precedent. In five years it reached a high stage of development and in ten years it reached its present stage of development. Looking back, ten years is a short time. People have forgotten that for two or three years they endured the most horrible squeals and howls that man has ever devised. The radio listener of those pioneer days was a person of great patience and endurance. But all that is forgotten. When your average listener thinks of television, he thinks of seeing pictures that are as faithfully reproduced as the sounds that now come out of his radio speaker. He is due for a horrible shock, for the engineers will tell you frankly that they are many years from a stage of development in television comparable with the present-day development of broadcast sound.

The electrical interests that have done the actual work in developing television to its present stage have been accused of "holding out" on the public. You will hear stories to the effect that television has already been perfected and that the sets will be released as soon as the present stocks of broadcast receivers are disposed of.

Don't believe it. The powers in electricity are not building television sets because they know that to do so would be to distribute a piece of equipment that would not come up to public expectation. In fact, the wholesale distribution of the television sets that can be built to-day would "unsell" the entire nation on television.

In the early days of radio, there was no standard of comparison. As has been said before, any sound snatched from the air was wonderful. But now television must necessarily be compared with sound-broadcasting and it will be a number of years before it can stand comparison.

But to return to our writers. The well-trained radio writer will be far better prepared for television than the dramatist or screen-writer who hasn't been through the broadcasting mill. Not only will broadcasting have trained the radio writer to produce the most vivid dialogue but it will also have trained him to produce it in quantities.

Just as the first radio stations trained many of to-day's best radio writers, so will the experimental television stations train the television dramatists of tomorrow. The bulk of experimental television will be done by the National Broadcasting Company and the Columbia Broadcasting System and the staff writers for these organizations will write the first scripts for television. If you want to be a television writer, start now as a writer of broadcast material.

If you want to dream about the days to come when there will be a television screen or stage in every home, don't lose sight of the fact that the home living-room is the theater. As in radio, the audience unit will be small. The presentation must be in harmony with the surroundings in which it is received—the family circle. The screen of course will be small. The television play must be written to be produced in miniature. Instead of writing for the persons in the front row, you will write for the persons in the second balcony.

But after all, television is of the future and this volume is of the present. Dream about television all you want to—but if you wish to prepare for it, learn all you can of the radio broadcasting of to-day.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### *ELECTRICAL TRANSCRIPTIONS*

As this book is being written a vast new market for radio writers is being created. That market is the demand for material for what are known as "electrical transcriptions."

Electrical transcriptions are nothing more to look at than glorified phonograph records. They are made by much the same process used for a phonograph record and when broadcast, there is nothing more than a glorified phonograph in the studios to put the program on the air.

For years small radio stations have broadcast phonograph records. A ruling of the Federal Radio Commission requires that such programs be so announced. However, the ruling does not insist that the phrase, "This is a phonograph record," be used and as a result the more astute station managers announced programs of "electrical recordings." This was gradually developed into "electrical transcriptions," which certainly sounds more impressive than "phonograph records."

The modern electrical transcription is a good program. For the small station, unaffiliated with a net-

work and unable to hire good talent, these "canned" programs are a godsend. The art of making the records has been developed to such a degree that they almost equal regular studio presentations. Of course the listener may sense that he is hearing a record and that the artist is not in the studio singing for him. But in spite of this loss of the "human" appeal, the records find an interested audience.

The network organizations are sincerely and wholeheartedly opposed to the electrical transcriptions. They argue that such programs are unreal and artificial and that the public will quickly tire of them. The companies interested in the records, on the other hand, feel sure that the electrical transcription in time will replace the networks. To the unbiased observer, it seems that there is room for both types of programs and that the more expensive network program will always attract more listeners because of its "human" appeal. At the same time, a "canned" program of good talent from a small neighborhood station is preferable to the amateurs who now infest the air-waves.

Where does the writer fit into the electrical-transcription plan? That he does fit in is evidenced by the very attractive offers the recording companies are making established radio writers. They are actually outbidding the networks. Prices ranging from \$1,500 to \$2,000 for a series of thirteen fifteen-minute sketches are being offered and what is more important, the fee is paid when the writing is finished and deliv-

ered. It is not necessary to receive the fee in thirteen weekly instalments.

The programs are prepared in batches. First the series is written. Then the artists are called in and rehearsed and the records are made. It is possible to make a group of thirteen programs in less than a week after the scripts have been delivered. After the master record is made, the records to be sent to the individual broadcasting stations are pressed and the job is done.

How extensive this market for recorded programs is can be judged by looking at the present-day situation in radio. There are approximately six hundred broadcasting stations in the United States. Less than two hundred of these stations are affiliated with networks. Possibly another hundred can afford to employ good talent to present programs. The remaining three hundred are potential customers of the producers of recorded programs.

Because the recorded program does away with the very expensive wire-charges, the sponsors of the programs can spend more money for talent. Thus it is possible for station KZZZ in Bryan, Texas, to present a program featuring Irene Bordoni or Lily Damita. Of course it is a record, but if the record is carefully made, it will attract listeners. And there are probably many listeners in the vicinity of the transmitter who will tune in KZZZ because reception is good.

The electrical-transcription service may be com-

pared to the boiler-plate feature service that is such a great aid to small-town newspapers. And just as there are rewards for the writers of boiler-plate features, so are there rewards for the writers and entertainers who make the recorded programs.

In writing, the program designed for the electrical transcription does not differ from the program designed for the network. The technique is exactly the same; the only difference is that the writer cannot make such changes in his script as he might make if he had listener reaction to the first three or four episodes in his series.

This is a handicap for a trained radio writer, for he has learned to study listener reaction and to mold his script, week by week, closer to the pattern that pleases the listener most. He must make the best of it, however, if he turns his talents to recorded writing.

The recording companies are not interested in amateur authors or beginners in radio writing. They cannot afford to experiment with writers who are not familiar with radio technique. Everything is done in advance and every precaution must be taken to insure a good job throughout the program. Once the disks have been made and are sent to the broadcasting stations, it is too late to make changes.

Electrical transcriptions have come to stay until some new and unheard-of method of broadcasting proves more economical. They are not expected to contribute very much to the art development of radio;

rather they will carefully pattern their products after the programs tried and found successful by the network broadcasters. They offer a chance for a good income to the established radio writer and a future field of activity for the writer who has yet to learn his trade.

The beginner, unless he has a remarkable idea or has very unusual ability, had better stick to the stations where human beings still approach the microphone. He will learn more and he will have a lot more fun.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### *RADIO AND EDUCATION*

MUCH has been written and many speeches have been delivered about the part radio broadcasting must play in education. To date the part that radio has played in education is more or less negligible. In the first place, radio has made no serious effort to become a part of the educational system of the country, and in the second place, the listeners have made no serious effort to get their education from the air. Most of them will tune in on a good dance band any time in preference to a talk on exports and imports of the Chinese treaty ports.

It is true that Walter Damrosch has given the American school-boy a rather good conception and appreciation of a symphony orchestra. Indeed, Dr. Damrosch has done more than that—he has shown that it is possible to educate without being dull.

This dullness has been the main fault with the few attempts at radio educational programs. Damrosch dramatizes, tells stories, makes music a very human and interesting thing. Too many of the educators face the microphone much as they would face a class-room, where the students, unable to leave the room, must

listen and may possibly absorb some ideas or facts. But your radio listener doesn't have to listen and he won't listen unless you interest him.

The Columbia Broadcasting System, with its daily "American School of the Air" program, is handling its educational work in a sensible manner. If the program deals with literature, the story is dramatized. If the lesson is in history, again drama is used. In fact, wherever possible, the educational message or the lesson is prepared in advance by a trained radio writer and a trained cast presents the dramatized version. Surveys made in schools where these broadcasts are included in the curriculums indicate that the children not only enjoy them but get a lot out of them.

The National Broadcasting Company, which has conservatively refrained from launching a broad educational program until a suitable plan can be evolved, makes use of drama in occasional programs. Especially in its programs designed for what is termed "the farmers' network" is dramatic writing utilized to impart instruction or information.

That radio will eventually be used in every school-room in the land seems inevitable. Whether the State or the federal Government will control this radio education or whether it will be a part of the public service offered by the major networks remains to be seen. Whatever happens, the educational work will require many, many writers.

The successful teacher has always been the inter-

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esting teacher. The successful radio educator will be the educator who can keep attention riveted on the radio speaker. And this teacher, whether he ever speaks a word into the microphone or not, must first of all be an interesting and convincing writer.

It is easy enough to hire mellow voices, trained actors, or good line-readers. But these hired voices must have material with which to work. The real educator will be the person who can incorporate the most knowledge into broadcast matter that will attract and hold the greatest interest. The teachers in the school of the air will be writers rather than lecturers.

It is entirely possible that the electrical transcription, the recorded program discussed in the chapter before this one, will play its part in future educational programs involving radio. Use of the recorded program will enable schools to schedule its radio instruction to meet their own conditions instead of being forced to rearrange their schedules to fit broadcast schedules. It is entirely practical to install equipment in schools that will amplify programs lasting fifteen minutes or a half an hour. We are not concerned with the technical problems, however, but with the fact that every one of these text-books on disks will require the services of a writer.

Radio's part in national education is not concerned solely with elementary and high schools. Many adults are not only in need of education in certain subjects

but are eager to get such education. Women, busy with their housework, have little time to attend classes, Yet if they can flip a dial on the family radio receiver and hear a thoroughly interesting and instructive lecture or dramatized instruction, they will do so.

It is true that the daytime programs are heavy with "talks" and that in the course of a month the listener, if sufficiently interested, can hear addresses on every subject from Afghanistan to zebras. However, few of these addresses represent the work of trained radio writers, and while they may be instructive, they are often boring.

As I write there is on my desk a list of one week's programs for one of the largest networks. I have checked a few of the features that are thought of as "educational" or "instructive." Among them are talks on "Social-Avocational Activities," "The Challenge of Child Labor," "Responsibility of the United States," the country of Tibet, "Health for the Worker," and "Common Sense for Mothers." Undoubtedly each one of these programs will have an audience, but the question arises, Does the size of the audience justify the precious broadcast time given over to the speakers? The persons who prepared these talks evidently are not trained in the first principle of radio writing, which is to use a title that is either attractive or interest-provoking.

The title "Social-Avocational Activities" is decidedly dull. One is forced to assume that the talk



*NBC Photo*

NBC engineers with sound effect instruments



will also be dull and as ponderous as the title. Perhaps such an opinion is unjust. However, if the person who titled that talk knew radio writing, he would never have used it. The talk on the "Responsibility of the United States" might be more interesting. And if it had been announced as a discussion of this responsibility by two or three persons known to have definite views on the subject, I might listen. The prospect of overhearing a conversation rather than a monologue would be infinitely more attractive.

One reason American newspapers are an educational force is because reporters are trained to look for the interesting and the unusual. Never does a newspaper print an address with such a simple head-line as "George Watkins Makes a Speech." Instead the reporter, if he uses a printed copy of the speech, runs through it until he finds something that attracts attention. In the course of his address Mr. Watkins may point out that sixteen out of a group of fifty observed office-workers really belong on farms. This is interesting and thought-provoking. The newspaper calls attention to this thought in its head-lines. "Farm Not Office Place for Many Says Watkins" might be the head-line. And as many newspaper readers are office-workers they will read more in order to find out just why Mr. Watkins makes such a statement.

Educational matter prepared for broadcasting should receive the same treatment. It should be the obligation of the broadcaster to edit his material as

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carefully as the managing editor of a newspaper does his. He should assign trained men to study the material and heighten its interest. Just as the interesting newspaper is rewarded by a steady increase in circulation, so will the broadcasting station receive its reward in increased numbers of listeners and increased interest.

This, of course, is work for trained radio writers. The bulk of the material, since it is originally created by persons trained in other fields, must be rewritten. It must have an interest-compelling caption. It must have a "lead"—opening paragraphs that tell something of the whole story and grip the listener's interest sufficiently to keep him at his radio speaker for the entire address.

These are journalistic methods and naturally will be frowned upon by some serious-minded educators. However, if education of the masses is a national obligation, then the likes and dislikes of the masses must be considered. If sugar-coating makes the educational pill more attractive, use sugar-coating. A baby knows, perhaps, that cod-liver oil is good for him, but the baby that will voluntarily take cod-liver oil is hard to find. The average citizen knows that education is good for him, but he isn't going to accept hours of boredom along with a smattering of instruction. Like the child, he must be coaxed or the dose must be made attractive instead of repellent. But why shouldn't

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the matter of education be made attractive? There is no reason why education should be discipline.

This chapter has become almost an editorial instead of a discussion of the part the radio writer must play in radio education. But I believe it is sufficiently clear that there is need for trained writers in this work and that if the educational program of to-morrow is to be successful, it must use the ability and technique of the experienced writers for the radio.

## CHAPTER XXX

### *POSSIBILITIES*

THOUGH literally thousands of playlets, sketches, and series have been written and broadcast, there are as many thousands of ideas that have yet to be tried by the radio writers. This chapter will merely attempt to enumerate a few of the things that have not been done in radio writing. It is possible that some of the suggested ideas have been tried and have not been successful. However, many an idea may be unsuccessful in its first interpretation yet may succeed when it is tried again.

Microphones have been placed in night clubs and listeners have caught some small bit of the gaiety and glamour of such places. Yet scripts based upon happenings in imaginary night clubs have not been successful. The restlessness, the color, and the gay confusion of such places have escaped the writer. Some day, some one is going to produce a script that will create a very real night club on the air. And that script will find several sponsors eager to pay the bills.

"Peter Pan" has never been broadcast nor has an adaptation been made for broadcasting. Eventually it

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will be done. In the meantime there is a place on the air for fantasy of the "Peter Pan" type. Perhaps radio has yet to produce a Barrie—but there is a need for fantastic whimsy and imaginative drollery on the air.

Some notable experiments in burlesque have been tried and have been found successful. But satire pointed at institutions such as State legislatures, Congress, educational bodies, and other amusing American groups has not been attempted. A State legislature is often one of the most entertaining bodies. Such an assembly can be burlesqued and is certainly open to satirical thrusts. And some pointed disrespect of these august bodies might have a healthy effect. The difficulty in the production of a burlesque of a State legislature would be in finding a broadcasting company sufficiently courageous to sponsor such a program. The broadcasters are inclined to humor politics and politicians. The harpoon of satire is not kept sharp in the studios for such targets.

A radio "newspaper" is another potential job for ambitious writers. Such a newspaper, instead of presenting the news of the day in printed columns would offer listeners dramatized news incidents, interviews with persons in the day's news, and dramatized comic strips not unlike the "funnies" offered nightly by Phil Cook. In short, almost every section of a modern metropolitan newspaper could be translated for broadcasting.

Biographies of famous men offer much material for

radio writers. The public enjoys biographies. That is evidenced by the huge sale of biographical books in the past few years. Yet very few radio series have been based upon the lives of famous men. There is an abundance of plot material available. It merely needs adaptation for radio broadcasting.

The development of the radio interview has been discussed at length in a preceding chapter. It offers a real opportunity to the radio writer.

Little has been done with the classic fairy-tales. Occasionally a fairy-story finds its way to the air, but usually it is told by one person. The dramatizations are few and far between. Imagine a series based on the tales of Grimm or Hans Christian Andersen. Then there is a wealth of material in the story of "Pinocchio" or in the adventures of Palmer Cox's famous "Brownies." The importance of the child audience is just beginning to be appreciated by broadcasters. The radio writer who supplies programs that children like will be kept busy in the next few years.

The tendency in programs, especially programs of a dramatic nature, is to make them shorter and shorter. A few years ago there were more dramatic programs lasting sixty minutes than there were half-hour broadcasts. Then the half-hour program became popular. Recently the fifteen-minute broadcast has assumed first place, especially when it is continued day after day and the story is serialized. Nor will this shortening of the episode stop at fifteen minutes. This writer

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believes that within the next two years there will be a great demand for programs of five-minute length.

A comic strip that would take fifteen minutes to read would bore listeners before the end, even if it were possible to produce such a strip each day. While the radio sketches have managed to hold listeners for fifteen minutes with little difficulty, a five-minute sketch will be popular some day—and soon. It is not hard to imagine a radio “comic page,” lasting perhaps half an hour, in which there are five or six different sketches, all of them with continued interest. The newspapers have found that such a system attracts readers. Radio may find that a broadcast interpretation of the same idea will prove equally attractive.

On some stations affiliated with newspapers, the comic strips are read every day before the microphone. Listener response to this type of feature has been gratifying. Further adaptation of the idea to meet radio requirements is logical.

Throughout this book there have been suggestions as to possible developments in various phases of broadcasting, such as education, news analysis, and interpretation of Government affairs. Other developments, not even thought of, must suggest themselves to individual readers. An original idea or a novel twist to an old idea is a valuable property to the radio writer.

Because of the constant demand for a mass of fresh material, the writer with the largest number of workable ideas will always be the most successful in radio.

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This ability to develop or originate ideas need not be inherent. It may be cultivated and trained. The writer of a daily series hears everything with the thought, "Can I use that in my sketch?" The radio writer is not unlike the newspaper reporter. He must be constantly alert for incidents, situations, scraps of conversation, or characters that will make "copy." He must be much more alert than the playwright who produces his material for the legitimate stage. The playwright can take one situation and a few definite characters and work for two or three months without seeking fresh foundation material. The same might be true of the novelist. Only when the radio writer is developing a radio play to be presented in fifteen or twenty weekly episodes can he be content with a small group of characters. Otherwise, like the short-story writer, he must be constantly on the hunt for color, situation, and characters.

The possibilities for radio sketches are limited only by the restrictions of conventionality and economics. A scene between a Pullman porter and a fussy old lady may make good radio-sketch material. Such everyday incidents as stoking the furnace or cutting the grass can be used for comedy or dramatic situations.

Note-books should be in constant use. Ideas come at the most unexpected times. They should be recorded, for they are often forgotten almost as quickly as they originate unless some note is made.

Newspapers are full of ideas for radio sketches. Almost any news story will suggest a situation or a plot. The feature stories will sometimes suggest an entire series. Interviews, properly written, may provide inspiration for scenes in dialogue.

This book must end here. The writer has attempted to tell all that he has learned about radio writing in his three years of experience and observation of the craft. If at times he has passed quickly over something of importance it is because he feels that extensive discussion of that particular phase is useless. It will probably all be changed in a year.

No attempt has been made to teach the reader how to write. If his purpose in reading this book has been to acquaint himself with what the writer must know before entering radio, he has made a mistake, for the assumption is that he already knows the rudiments of writing. If, on the other hand, the reader is merely interested in broadcasting as a whole and has selected this volume to add to what general information he already has, we hope that he has received an accurate picture of the involved business of radio writing.

Perhaps in a few years it will be possible to publish a handbook of rules for the radio writer. At the present time, the technique is changing too rapidly to set forth definite rules. Where rules or "don'ts" have been given, they are merely some of the initial steps in

working out the formula. Much remains to be done, and if this book makes clear to the ambitious author what he must face when he turns seriously to radio, then it has served its purpose.

One last word. If you decide to write for radio, expect to work hard. Don't write with your tongue in your cheek—and preserve a healthy respect for your job. You will be disillusioned in many things, but if the stuff that makes a radio writer is in you, you will learn both to love and to respect this newest of literary crafts.

## SCRIPT I

"SKYSCRAPER," written by Lawrence Holcomb, staff continuity writer for the National Broadcasting Company, is considered one of the best original radio plays ever presented. Holcomb has created a drama that could hardly be presented through any other medium than radio. He has made excellent use of suggestive sound-effects and the actual production of "Skyscraper" was very stirring. The play is unusual, as the broadcasters avoid tragedy or morbid situations whenever possible. The following script is worth careful study. The playing time was thirty minutes.

### SKYSCRAPER \*

BY LAWRENCE HOLCOMB

**OPENING ANNOUNCEMENT:** We take pleasure, ladies and gentlemen, in bringing you the fifth offering of the Radio Playbill.

This new program series is a special presentation designed to bring you the best and newest in the field of original radio drama.

We present this afternoon an original play entitled "Sky-

\* Copyright, 1931, by National Broadcasting Company, Inc.

scraper." The setting, New York City. The time, the present.

#### THE PLAY

THROUGH *this entire scene can be heard the following sounds, which are common to steel construction work on a tall building: The constant chugging of an air-compressor engine supplying air for riveting machines; riveting as indicated in script; the creak of cranes and hoists; the clash of steel against steel as girders are slung into place; hammering on girders; the calls of distant workmen to each other; the hissing of the blower of the furnace on which rivets are heated as indicated in script; once in a while the racing of a donkey-engine and the whistle signal to start and stop it; and through all of this the distant sound of traffic from the street thirty stories below. A combination of all the above sounds with the riveting machine close up must fade in when the opening announcement is completed. When the riveting machine stops, the other sounds are far enough back to allow the voices of the members of the riveting team to be heard as they shout to one another, their greatest rival in sound being the air-compressor motor.*

TIM. [*When riveting machine has stopped.*] Done!

LEFTY. [*Shouting.*] Another rivet, Steve!

STEVE. [*Back—calling.*] Take your time!

[*Sound of blower on furnace being worked by STEVE back.*]

MARIO. Agh, he's a-not ready again.

LEFTY. [*Shouting.*] Come on—shoot us a hot one, Steve!

TIM. [*Shouting.*] Get th' lead out av your fait! You're holdin' us up!

STEVE. [*Back—shouting.*] Catch it!

MARIO. Here eet come.

[*Plunk of a thrown rivet landing in a tin can.*]

LEFTY. Got it!

TIM. Stick 'er in, Lefty.

[*Sound of LEFTY knocking hot rivet, held in tongs, against steel beam to shake the flakes off.*]

MARIO. Make it-a fast, Lefty.

LEFTY. There! . . . Lean on 'er, Mario!

MARIO. Okay, Lefty.

TIM. Ready?

MARIO. Okay, Tim. Give 'er da gun.

[*The roar of the riveting machine for a few seconds. Then—*]

TIM. She's in!

LEFTY. [*Shouting.*] A hot one, Steve!

STEVE. [*Back—shouting.*] Comin' at yuh!

TIM. [*Low to MARIO.*] And shure that Steve is a total loss the way he's been workin'.

[*In the middle of TIM's speech the plunk of the rivet in LEFTY's tin can could be heard.*]

LEFTY. [*After knocking rivet in tongs against steel beam.*] Here's th' hot one. Knock that drift-pin out, Mario.

MARIO. Sure t'ing. [*Couple of strikes of hammer.*] Stick 'er!

LEFTY. She's in.

TIM. Lean on th' gun with me, Lefty.

LEFTY. Right.

MARIO. Shoot!

TIM. [*Suddenly.*] Hold on! Wait a minute! Knock that rivet out, Lefty. It's too cold.

LEFTY. I'll say so!

MARIO. What's-a da matter wid Steve?

TIM. [*Yelling.*] Hey, Steve, that wan was cold. And we'll have to be usin' th' rivet boy as a heater instid av you if you can't be doin' better.

STEVE. [*Growling—distant.*] All right.

LEFTY. Come on, get your dolly-bar out th' way, Mario.

MARIO. Hit it. I'm-a da waitin'.

TIM. Catch it in your can, Lefty.

LEFTY. What did yuh think I'd do? Let it fall?

TIM. Catch it—that's all.

[*Hammer hits rivet out of hole. It plunks into can.*]

LEFTY. Shoot another, Steve.

STEVE. [*Back.*] Comin'!

[*Sound of rivet landing in tin can.*]

TIM. Come on! Come on! Be makin' it snappy!

[*During this speech the rivet in tongs has been struck against beam.*]

LEFTY. She's set.

MARIO. Use-a da gun!

[*Clatter of riveting machine. After this stops, distant factory whistles one after another are heard blowing for a few seconds.*]

LEFTY. There's five!

[*Nearly all sounds of building work stop at once.*]

MARIO. Time-a t' stop.

TIM. [*Sarcastic.*] An' shure it's a fine showin' we made today, Oi'm a-tellin yuh!

LEFTY. How many did we drive, Tim?

TIM. Five hundred an' three, an' Oi'm sayin' it's not Steve Carter's fault ayther that we did so well as that.

LEFTY. Gee, it's th' first time we've done worse'n five-forty in eight months!

MARIO. We ought-a punch-a dat Steve right in de eye. [*Suddenly determined.*] I weel punch heem! He can't-a do—

LEFTY. [*Interrupting—sore.*] Never mind that stuff, see? You lay off the kid. I'm takin' care of him, see?

TIM. Yis, niver mind the fightin', Mario. Oi'm boss av this rivetin' tame, and if there's any punchin' to be done Oi'll be th' wan that's tendin' to it mesilf, Oi will.

MARIO. Agh! A punch in de jaw would do heem de good!

TIM. Come on, Mario. Be movin' so Oi kin be climbin' down out av here. . . . Lefty, you were jist sayin' you would take care av Steve.

LEFTY. [*Belligerent.*] That's what I said!

TIM. Well, be takin' care av him then. Find him another job. He's through! [*Calling.*] Hey, Steve! Come over here.

STEVE. [*Back.*] I'm comin'.

LEFTY. Tim, no! You won't fire th' kid! He was feelin' bad to-day.

TIM. [*Snorting.*] Feelin' bad?

LEFTY. Bawl him out, but give him another shot to-morrow. He'll come through.

MARIO. Mebbe, Tim, eef I geev-a heem a beeg-a da sock in da jaw, he would work-a da harder.

TIM. You keep out av this, Mario.

LEFTY. Now listen, Tim, you—

TIM. [*Breaking in.*] You'll be the wan that's doin' th' listenin', Lefty Gregg! For a whole wake now Steve's been layin' down on the job, and there's goin' to be no wan, Oi don't care who he is, that don't work as hard as th' rist av us.

LEFTY. But, Tim—

TIM. [*Not letting LEFTY speak.*] It was ten cold rivets th' lad threw to you to-day. And there was three we had to cut out for the inspector afther rivetin' because Steve had hated thim too hot and they was no good. And there's no in-

spector's goin' to have to be condemnin' th' rivets Oi drive. They're goin' to be put in right in the fairst place jist loik they've always been.

LEFTY. I'll see the kid snaps out of it, Tim. Just you—

TIM. It was as your friend that Oi worked him on to our rivetin' afther Schmidt got kilt. But your friendship won't kape him on now that he's not a-tendin' to bizness. [*Shouting.*] Steve! Oi told you to come over here to me!

STEVE. [*Back—gruffly.*] Take your time, will yuh? I'm comin'!

LEFTY. Listen, Tim. You said only a short time back that Steve was the best heater we ever had. Why—

TIM. It's not what he can do; it's what he does do that goes with me. What Oi can't for the life av me understand is what you want to go supportin' th' likes av him for, Lefty. He's been tratin' you mane enough of late.

LEFTY. He's younger'n us. He'll get hep to himself if you give him th' chance, Tim.

TIM. Are you manin' Oi haven't give him as fair an' square a chance as any—?

LEFTY. [*Quickly interrupting.*] Sure you've given him plenty of chances, Tim. But give me just one more shot at snappin' him out of it. I feel like you do about keepin' th' gang th' best rivetin' team in th' city, Tim. If the kid don't come through after this, I agree with you—fire him. But not now.

TIM. For the love av Hiven, Lefty, why are you . . .

[*Sighs as if it is hopeless.*] All right. We'll be tryin' him once more because you ask it and because, when he wants to, he can be as good a heater as the next. There!

LEFTY. Thanks.

MARIO. [*Disgusted.*] He no, come when you call or nothin'. If you leave-a to me, I smash hees nose for heem.

STEVE. [*Back—calling—fading in a little.*] What do you want?

LEFTY. Here he comes.

STEVE. [*Fading in—belligerently.*] I suppose you want to bawl me out about those cold rivets. Well, if you didn't like it, you know what you can do!

MARIO. [*Ferocious.*] You talk-a like dat an' I'll—

TIM. [*Interrupting.*] Mario! . . . Steve, Oi was callin' you over here to fire you, but . . .

STEVE. Well, fire me if you want to! What do I care?

TIM. [*Angry but holding himself in.*] Oi was saying "but!" Oi was about to be firin' you, *but* Lefty spoke up, an' now . . .

STEVE. [*Furious—breaking in.*] What's he got to do with me? I won't have him buttin' in for me. I don't want any of his favors.

TIM. Oi've a mind to go on and fire you, begorra!

STEVE. [*Laughing.*] Yeh, and if yuh did that, you'd throw the whole team out of work!

MARIO. Agh! Six-a da men wait to get on dis team. Six

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good-a da men. We work day after you go wid good man on your job.

STEVE. Get one then!

TIM. Oi will, bejabbers!

LEFTY. Tim, you promised me. . . . Steve, you're worryin' over sompthin'. You don't know what you're sayin'. Come on, let's go. Drop into my place with me, and have some beer. It'll make you feel good.

STEVE. Leave me alone, will you! I don't want your help.

LEFTY. Come on, Steve. We've stuck together all along. Forget what's on your mind. . . . He'll be all right tomorrow, Tim. . . . Come on along, Steve.

STEVE. I don't want . . . [*Stops suddenly and sighs deeply.*] All right.

LEFTY. That elevator hoist over there is going down. [*Fading back.*] Let's catch it.

STEVE. [*Fading out.*] Go ahead. I'm coming.

MARIO. [*Low.*] I t'ink a sock in da jaw is what he need most, boss.

TIM. That wouldn't begin to cure th' trouble that's th' cause av this, Mario. It's the divil that's got into that Steve—him tratin' Lefty the way he does afther all that Lefty's done for him.

MARIO. You know-a da sompthin', boss?

TIM. Lefty's the only wan that don't be knowin' it, Mario. Steve's in love with Lefty's wife. That's what's on his mind.

MARIO. [*After a second's pause—gravely.*] Dat's no good.

TIM. You're right it ain't. An Oi'm jist a wonderin' what'll happen up at Lefty's place this avenin' what with the three av thim together.

[*After a very brief pause a radio—with much static—fades in playing a popular dance-tune. When the music has played a few seconds, a door is heard to bang a little back.*]

LEFTY. [*Fading in—loud so as to be heard over music.*] She's alluz playin' that radio! It drives me nuts!

[*After a few more bars the radio is switched off abruptly.*]

DOLLY. [*Back, fading in a little—angry.*] Who turned that off?

LEFTY. [*Calling.*] It's me, Dolly. I'm home an' I brung—

DOLLY. [*Fading in.*] You could of left it play to the end, Lefty, couldn't you? [*As she sees STEVE is along.*] Oh-h! I—hello, Steve!

STEVE. [*Strained also.*] Hello, Dolly!

LEFTY. That's what I was tryin' to tell you—that I brung Steve along. You know where to wash your hands, Steve. Go right along. . . . We're both dirty from the job, Dolly.

DOLLY. Sure. Get cleaned up.

LEFTY. You go ahead, Steve.

STEVE. [*Fading out.*] I will, then.

LEFTY. [*Low.*] We got to pep the kid up. He's had sompthin' on his mind lately that's got him all wrought up. You've noticed it, haven't yuh?

DOLLY. Why—yes. Yes, I noticed it.

LEFTY. Be nice to him. You've been kind o' short with him lately, I noticed. Be nice—he needs it.

DOLLY. All right . . . I will, Lefty.

LEFTY. What's on his mind has been affectin' his work. He's as good a little heater as they is when he's goin' right. There ain't no one—an' when I say no one, I mean no one nowhere, I don't care where you mean—that can bring rivets to just th' right heat better'n Steve.

DOLLY. [*Very tired.*] I know.

LEFTY. But the way he's been goin' lately is crumby. Why, Tim O'Donnell would of fired him to-night if I hadn't spoke up for the kid.

DOLLY. [*Suddenly very concerned.*] There's danger of his losin' his job, Lefty?

LEFTY. I'll say no one ever come closer to losin' one than he done to-day; and any more days like this un and he will lose it.

DOLLY. We can't let him lose his job. That'd be awful.

LEFTY. Well, I ain't speakin' up for him no more. Tim's right. A man on our team has got to work with the rest or get out. We on'y drove five hundred an' three to-day. Now you know we ain't goin' to keep that up.

DOLLY. Do you s'pose my speakin' to him would help?

LEFTY. Yeh, maybe you can do sompthin'. He thinks a lot o' you, Dolly.

DOLLY. All right, leave us alone then for a time, will you?

LEFTY. Sure. That's what I want. I brung him up here to give him some of that one half of one per cent I made. I'll ease out to get some pretzels to go with it and you give him th' lecture.

DOLLY. That'll be fine. [*Door back bangs.*] Here comes Steve now.

STEVE. [*Fading in.*] I used the towel on the right.

DOLLY. That's all right. It's mine.

LEFTY. Listen, Steve. I'm goin' to run around th' corner to get us some pretzels to go with th' beer. Just you sit tight with th' wife. I'll be back in a second.

STEVE. All right, Lefty.

LEFTY. [*Fading out.*] Make him sit down an' rest. He's tired, Dolly.

[*Door bangs back—dead silence for a second, then—*]

STEVE. Come here!

DOLLY. [*Almost under her breath—denoting happiness and hopelessness.*] Oh!

STEVE. I can't stand this much longer.

DOLLY. Steve, you're hurting me.

STEVE. All right. All right.

DOLLY. [*Laughing a little.*] That's better. I couldn't breathe. [*Growing very serious.*] Steve, you're not going to lose your job, are you? You must work harder. Lefty said you almost got fired to-day.

STEVE. [*Flaring up.*] You leave my job to me! What I do at work is none of your business.

DOLLY. [*Protestingly.*] Steve!

STEVE. I'll take care of myself, see? What you got to worry about is when you're goin' to tell Lefty where to get off, and come with me.

DOLLY. It's not so easy on me, Steve. You're already free. And Lefty has been good to me, I don't care what you say.

STEVE. Do you want to be married to a riveter all your life? Do you? He'll never be anything better and you know it. But I'm goin' somewhere. I'm a high-school graduate, anyway.

DOLLY. Lefty might not be a riveter always, Steve. We had some other things in mind.

STEVE. But no matter what he is he'll be as dumb as ever, won't he? Do you think he'll ever realize how beautiful you are and pay much attention to you?

DOLLY. I s'pose not, but he does care for me lots.

STEVE. And what good's it do you?

DOLLY. I know, Steve. I know. We've been through it all before.

STEVE. If you loved me like you say you do, you wouldn't be wastin' any time decidin'.

DOLLY. Oh, I'll get the divorce all right, Steve. I've told you I'll get it.

STEVE. Even that makes things seem pretty far away—havin'

a trial and all. [*Viciously.*] Do you know what I wish would happen?

DOLLY. What?

STEVE. I wish Lefty'd catch his foot in the air-hose up on the scaffold some day. Every day some one gets killed on some building work. Why shouldn't *he* be the one that falls? Why shouldn't it be some one who would make things better for other people by bein' out of the way?

DOLLY. [*Scared.*] Steve, no!

STEVE. You needn't talk in tones like that. It's on'y natural to think that way. A man can't help havin' thoughts like that.

DOLLY. You mustn't let yourself think such things. It's awful, Steve.

STEVE. I know. If I only could forget Lefty instead of working beside him day after day! You don't know what it means to be workin' away up there with a man you hate.

DOLLY. You mustn't hate him.

STEVE. How can I help it? And if he only made one false step—just one—where would he be? How easy it would be to make him make that step and no one be the wiser!

DOLLY. Steve, don't talk that way!

STEVE. [*Chuckling diabolically.*] Now you see what's driving me almost nuts. If I threw him a rivet just a little out of the way—threw it to where he'd have to lose his balance if he tried to catch it—and he *would* try to catch it if I know him at all—if I did that, who could say *I* had made him lose his balance? No one.

DOLLY. Steve, you are going out of your head to talk that way.

STEVE. I know. . . . Don't worry—I won't do it, Dolly. It's just that I've got to grip myself not to—that's all.

DOLLY. I understand.

STEVE. The only thing I'm scared of is that I won't be able to help it some day—some time when I'm right in the middle of throwing a rivet I'll let it go wild. That's the reason I can't work well.

DOLLY. You scare me when you talk that way, Steve. You mustn't even let yourself think such things. Forget it for *me*. Think of *me*.

STEVE. I wish I could forget it. [*Gustily.*] But it would serve him right if it happened!

DOLLY. You frighten me this evening, Steve.

STEVE. Listen, then! Lefty'll be back soon. Let me face him and tell him you've decided to divorce him. That would help me. I wish he'd start a fight or something!

DOLLY. No.

STEVE. [*Continued from his previous speech with hardly a break.*] Gee, I wish he'd take a sock at me!

DOLLY. [*Alarmed.*] No, we mustn't tell now while you feel this way. We'll wait. I'll tell him when I'm alone with him—if I can get courage enough to.

STEVE. I want to be here too when you tell him, so if he acts up—

DOLLY. No! I'm going to tell him alone. You've got to let me do it my own way.

STEVE. I'm going right now, then, so you can do it as soon as he gets back. Tell him I got sick or anything.

[*Door opens and bangs back.*]

LEFTY. [*Loud—back.*] It didn't take me no time!

STEVE. [*Low.*] Gee!

LEFTY. [*Fading in.*] These are good butter pretzels! Not the kind you get around here. Just take a look at 'em! [*Crinkling of paper bag heard.*] Wait till you taste 'em, boy! Got the beer ready, Dolly?

DOLLY. [*Tired.*] On th' table here.

[*Sound of bag being put on table.*]

LEFTY. Well, let's open 'em.

DOLLY. I will. I've got the opener right here.

LEFTY. That's it. [*Sound of bottles being opened.*] Feelin' better, Steve?

STEVE. [*Annoyed.*] Yeah.

LEFTY. That's the stuff. [*Sound of liquid being poured from bottles to glasses under dialogue.*] You'll be feelin' fine when you get some of this beer in yuh.

STEVE. Sure.

LEFTY. Say, Doll?

DOLLY. Yeah?

LEFTY. I saw Williams down to th' store.

DOLLY. Williams? I don't know who you're talkin' about.

LEFTY. You know—the guy that owns that little farm you was so het up over me buyin'!

DOLLY. Oh!

LEFTY. He was sayin' he might be interested in comin' down some in his price. I think I might be able to swing it for you. We got two thousand in the bank now and with a good mortgage, we might be able to do it . . . only the poultry'd cost considerable.

STEVE. [*On edge.*] What's this talk about a farm and poultry?

LEFTY. Don't you know?

STEVE. No.

DOLLY. Let's talk of something else. Why bring the farm up to-day, Lefty?

LEFTY. 'Cause I saw old Williams, natchurly. I thought you'd be kind of glad, seein' you've had your heart set on that farm for so long.

STEVE. So you've been plannin' on gettin' a farm?

DOLLY. [*Hurriedly.*] Oh, that's just an old idea I had, Steve.

STEVE. I hadn't heard of it.

LEFTY. [*Chuckling.*] *Old idea*, she says, Steve! Why a farm's the thing Dolly's wanted most ever since we was married six years ago.

DOLLY. Steve doesn't want to hear all that, Lefty.

LEFTY. Sure he does. Don't you, Steve?

STEVE. Why . . . sure.

LEFTY. Dolly alluz worried 'cause rivetin' was so dangerous and all. And she's alluz wanted to live in the country herself, so—

DOLLY. [*Swiftly.*] So I was after Lefty to buy us a farm, and that was a long time ago.

LEFTY. [*Chuckling.*] Doll thought I'd forgot all about it, Steve, but I hadn't. You know I'd kind of like to run a chicken farm myself and have a dog or two. And now it looks like I'll be able to put it across maybe. Won't it be great, Dolly? I'm goin' to see Williams again on Fri—

DOLLY. [*Breaking in passionately.*] Stop! Lefty, please don't talk about that any more now.

LEFTY. [*Surprised and concerned.*] Why, what's the matter, Doll? I thought you'd like hearin' about this.

DOLLY. I . . . I'm not feelin' very well, Lefty. Steve, if you'll only go, I'll tell Lefty what we were talkin' about. Go, won't you?

STEVE. [*Meaningly.*] If you're sure you'll go through with it.

LEFTY. Why, no, you ain't goin', Steve. Gee, it ain't right to ask Steve to go jest like that, Dolly. If you ain't feelin' well, lie down and Steve and I'll talk.

STEVE. No, I'm goin'. Dolly has sompthin' to tell you.

LEFTY. Forget it, Steve. Shall I get a doctor or sompthin', Doll? How are you feelin' bad?

DOLLY. Oh, it's not that! I just want to talk to you alone—that's all.

LEFTY. [*Not understanding it.*] Why, all right, dear. . . . I—I hope yuh don't mind, Steve. I guess it's sompthin' important.

STEVE. I'll go then. . . . Dolly, jest remember what you promised me. . . . [*Fading back.*] Good-by.

LEFTY. By, Steve.

[*Short silence followed by door closing back.*]

LEFTY. I didn't know sompthin' was the matter, Dolly. I wouldn't of brought Steve home with me if I'd of known you wasn't feelin' well.

DOLLY. I'm feelin' perfectly well. I couldn't stand hearin' you talk about the farm any more knowin' what I know—that's all.

LEFTY. Knowin' what you know?

DOLLY. Don't ask me yet. I'll tell you in time in my own way—just in a few minutes. I couldn't talk about it with Steve here.

LEFTY. Is it sompthin' about money?

DOLLY. Money? [*Laughs almost hysterically.*] I wish it was only that.

LEFTY. [*Very serious and sincere.*] Well, whatever it is, kid, take your time an' tell me.

DOLLY. You've been awful good to me, Lefty. Maybe you think sometimes I don't feel that, but I do. You know, I—

LEFTY. [*Hoarsely.*] Gee, keep off th' mush!

DOLLY. I've got to tell you how I feel first, Lefty. I've got to tell you that first.

LEFTY. Listen, there's no sense in you sittin' up and sayin' how good I've been to yuh. Can yuh tell me why I shouldn't be good to yuh? Can yuh? I'm not much good at sayin' how I feel about things, Dolly, but I jest want you to know that bein' married to you leaves me jest about sittin' on top of th' world. A feller that feels that way has got to be good to his wife, don't he? Yuh see?

DOLLY. [*Almost crying.*] You're makin' it . . . [*Gulps.*] . . . awful hard for me, Lefty. [*Starts to sob lowly.*]

LEFTY. Gee, turn off th' waterworks, Doll. . . . Gee, I wouldn't have said nothin' if I'd known you was goin' to do a Niag'ra Falls over it.

DOLLY. [*Pulling herself together.*] Would you mind . . . if . . . I didn't tell you until some other time?

LEFTY. You can tell me now, kid. Why don't yuh get it off your chest, whatever it is? You'll feel better then.

DOLLY. Gee, I couldn't now. I jest couldn't, Lefty. Don't ask me.

LEFTY. [*Tense.*] I can stand it, whatever it is.

DOLLY. Please don't ask me now . . . please don't. [*Showing more interest.*] Let's just . . . do the usual things together now while we can. [*Faster.*] Here's the beer. We ain't drunk it yet. Let's drink! Let's drink happiness to each other!

LEFTY. [*Very gravely and slowly.*] All right, kid.

DOLLY. Smile, Lefty! Try! . . . And . . . and clink glasses!

[*Glasses clink.*]

LEFTY. [*Automatically.*] Skoll!

DOLLY. [*Feverishly.*] Skoll!

[*A moment's silence in which the glasses are drained. LEFTY blows out his breath with satisfaction at the end of the drink. Suddenly DOLLY speaks.*]

DOLLY. Promise me one thing, Lefty! Promise me you'll be careful at work after this. Promise you'll be more careful than usual.

LEFTY. Why, I—

DOLLY. [*Interrupting.*] Promise—that's all. Say you won't reach for any wild rivets or take any chances at all. Promise me that. Please!

LEFTY. Sure I'll promise, Doll. But why all this all of a sudden? I've been rivetin' every day for years. What's wrong?

DOLLY. I'm worried—that's all. It's . . . it's nothing. It's just that I've got a scared feelin' inside. You will be careful, won't you?

LEFTY. I said I would.

DOLLY. I hate to think of you bein' up there to-morrow. I—How high are you now, Lefty?

LEFTY. Thirtieth floor. We ain't half-way yet.

DOLLY. Couldn't you stay home to-morrow with me? Just one day, Lefty? I'd feel better if you did.

LEFTY. No, I couldn't do that. When one of us don't show up, the whole team's chucked out of work for the day. I couldn't do that, kid.

DOLLY. [*Bowing to the inevitable.*] All right. Go then. But be careful. Be awful careful—for me.

[*Silence for a moment. Then a very long blast on a steam-whistle. When this ends—*]

TIM. Lunch hour's over. Come on, Mario.

MARIO. Okay, boss.

TIM. Get that blower on your furnace goin', Steve.

STEVE. [*Fading back.*] All right, Tim.

TIM. See that the air-compressor motor gets started, Lefty.

LEFTY. [*Fading back.*] I'll get 'er goin', Tim. [*Slowly the noises of building as described at the beginning of the script pick up one by one. First there is a little hammering on the steel beams back, and a few distant shouts are heard. Then you hear the cranes begin to work. All this behind the conversation.*]

TIM. Hand me up th' rivetin' gun, Mario.

MARIO. Here, boss!

TIM. Now be climbin' up beside me yoursilf.

MARIO. You know somet'ing, Tim?

TIM. What, Mario?

MARIO. You see how Steve look to-day? He got-a da devil in hees eye.

TIM. And how could Oi help but see it?

MARIO. Eet's ver' bad.

TIM. What Oi'm tryin' to figure out is Lefty.

MARIO. You t'ink he know, boss?

TIM. It's not Oi can be tellin' you, Mario. Oi've marked him down as a mite nervous to-day and that's all Oi can make out av it.

MARIO. I tell-a you, boss, somet'ing happen to-day. Somet'ing bad.

TIM. Go long with yuh. You're alluz predictin' sompthin' direful happenin'. Oi won't listen to none av your talk.

MARIO. You leesten to Mario, boss. He tell you somet'ing happen.

TIM. Oi'm not takin' it in at all, Oi'm not.

MARIO. How many man been keeled so far on dees building, boss?

TIM. Only wan, Hiven be praised! And him on the fairst floor.

MARIO. Eet time for more, boss. Evra da building keel more dan one man. Five, seex—more dan one, always.

[*Air-compressor engine starts—a little back.*]

TIM. We'll be settin' a low record this toime. You'll see, you superstitious Eyetalian.

MARIO. Lefty come.

TIM. [*Calling.*] Hurry along, Lefty!

LEFTY. [*Fading in.*] I'm ready.

TIM. [*Calling.*] Steve! Got a hot wan ready?

STEVE. [*Back, calling.*] Ready! Here it comes!

LEFTY. [*Calling.*] Let 'er come!

[*After brief second there is the plunk of a rivet in the catching can.*]

TIM. [*Mad—yelling.*] Hey, watch the way you're throwin' those rivets, Steve.

MARIO. [*Laughing a little.*] Gee, Lefty, I t'ought you would-a fall dat time sure.

LEFTY. [*Nervous.*] That was a close one.

TIM. Don't catch no more like that, Lefty. Let 'em go.

LEFTY. [*Calling.*] For Pete's sake, watch it, Steve! [*Laughing nervously.*] I don't want to take no tumble from here.

TIM. And you let it go loik Oi say if he throws wild again.

LEFTY. One of them loose rivets would kill some one in the street if it hit 'em. I gotta stop 'em, Tim.

MARIO. Come on. Stick-a da rivet in before it get cold.

[*Bang as rivet in tongs is struck against beam to knock off flakes.*]

LEFTY. There! Hold 'er in!

MARIO. Okay, Tim. Shoot!

[*The roar of a riveting machine for a few seconds.*]

TIM. Next!

LEFTY. [*Calling.*] Toss a hot one, Steve! [*Low to himself.*]  
And straight.

TIM. [*Calling.*] Now be throwin' it careful, Steve!

STEVE. [*Back—calling.*] Coming!

MARIO. [*Shouting warning.*] Look out!

TIM. [*Warningly.*] It's wild! Let it go!

LEFTY. [*Low, as he strains in reaching.*] I got it.

[*Sound of rivet striking edge of can.*]

MARIO. [*Fear-struck.*] Look out! Look out!

TIM. [*Fearful—shouting.*] Grab something! Hang on!

STEVE. [*Back—shouting.*] Hold him!

TIM. Grab him, Mario! Catch him!

[*LEFTY, who is slightly nearer the mike than the others, gives a series of scared "Ohs" as he tries to regain his balance.*]

LEFTY. Oh! Oh! Oh!

MARIO. Hold a minute. I get-a you!

TIM. [*Simultaneously.*] Reach for him! Quick!

LEFTY. Help! Quick! Grab me! Oh! O-o-o-oh!

[*Note. From this point on the mike follows LEFTY and the speeches of the others fade quickly back.*]

TIM. He's falling!

MARIO. He go-a da off!

TIM. Lefty's falling!

*[From this point on a slight rustle can be heard under everything, steadily, in order to denote the movement of the air as LEFTY hurtles through it. The cries of the others can be heard in the distance, fading completely out.]*

LEFTY. Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! *[LEFTY's voice fades into a pitiful groan. For a second there is only the rustle of the air. Then a deep singsong voice murmurs, as if at LEFTY.]*

VOICE 1. *[Not fast.]* You're falling, Lefty!

VOICE 2. *[Another weird voice follows the first.]* You're falling!

*[Gradually the voices commence to speak more swiftly and to follow each other more rapidly.]*

VOICE 1. You're falling!

VOICE 2. You're going to die!

VOICE 1. You're falling!

VOICE 2. You're going to die!

VOICE 1. Thirty floors down!

VOICE 2. Thirty floors!

VOICE 1. You're falling!

VOICE 2. Only a second to live!

VOICE 1. Thirty floors!

VOICE 2. You're falling!

VOICE 1. You're going to die!

*[By the last speech, the voices have accelerated to trip-hammer speed. Now LEFTY cries as if for help.]*

LEFTY. I'm goin' to die! Mother! Mother!

[*At this point a boy's voice—about eight years old—substitutes for LEFTY and continues the calling. He'll be called "SONNY" in the script and he represents LEFTY as he was as a child.*]

SONNY. [*Continuing LEFTY's call in the same beat.*] Mother! Mother!

MOTHER. [*Fading in.*] Yes, sonny. Here I am.

[*Note. The swish of air continues in background of all these flashes of LEFTY's imagination.*]

SONNY. [*Almost weeping.*] I fell off my wheel. It hurts! Oh! Ouch! Ouch! It hu—urts!

MOTHER. Let me see your foot—stop hopping around. Hold it up here.

SONNY. It hurts so!

MOTHER. [*Soothingly.*] There! It'll be all right in a minute. There now! There! Be my big boy. That's it! Don't cry!

SONNY. I'm not crying! [*Gives a sniffle.*]

MOTHER. That's right. Come up here on my lap, sonny. Mother wants you always near her . . . [*Fading out.*]  
. . . always near her.

VOICE 1. [*Loudly.*] You're dying!

VOICE 2. You're falling to death!

VOICE 1. You're going to die!

[*Kids' voices fading in—excited as they play a game of keep-away with a tennis ball. In this scene LEFTY's part is played*

*by a boy's voice that is fourteen years of age. The part in the script will be called "YELLOW."*]

KID. [*Away back.*] Throw it to me, Lefty! Throw it here!

BULLY. [*A little closer, fading in.*] Throw the ball to me, Lefty!

[*Throughout this scene KID plays back a little further than YELLOW or BULLY. Other kids' voices back shout, "Here!" and, "To me, to me!"*]

YELLOW. Here go, Sam!

KID. I got it! Atta way!

BULLY. [*Very close and very angry.*] I told yuh t'row dat ball to me, Lefty! Didn't yuh hear me?!

YELLOW. [*Very scared tones.*] I kin throw to who I want in keep-away! [*Yelling with pain.*] Ow-w! Let go my arm! Let go! Ouch! Don't bend it!

BULLY. Are yuh goin' to t'row it to me next time when I tell yuh—are yuh?

KID. [*Back.*] Don't let him bully yuh, Lefty. Leave Lefty alone—you're bigger'n him!

YELLOW. Oh, ouch! Ow-w-w—

KID. Don't be yellin', Lefty! Don't do it!

BULLY. [*Viciously.*] Will yuh?

YELLOW. [*Howling.*] Oh-oh-hhhhhhyes! Leggo!

BULLY. Den say "uncle" foist! Say "uncle"!

YELLOW. Ouch! Uncle, uncle!

KID. Lefty's yellin'! He said "uncle"! He's yellin'!

[*Kids' voices back take up the cry of "Yeller!"*]

YELLOW. I ain't yellin'!

KID. Yes, you are! You're scared, you're Yeller!

[*Suddenly you hear a hand strike a face.*]

BULLY. [*Surprised and angry.*] Hey! What's de idear!  
What're yuh hittin' me for?

YELLOW. I ain't scared of yuh! Come on an' fight! I ain't scared.

KID. Lefty hit 'im! Atta way, Lefty!

YELLOW. I'll show yuh!

[*Sound of scuffling. Cries of kids, back—"Fight! Fight!"*]

KID. Lefty's fightin' the bully!

[*As noise of all this fades out, YELLOW, in the middle of the fight, almost crying, says:*]

YELLOW. [*Fading out.*] I ain't yellin'! I ain't!

VOICE 2. You fell off the building!

VOICE 1. You're dropping fast!

VOICE 2. Dropping!

VOICE 1. Dropping!

VOICE 2. Dropping!

[*Fade in the continuous firing of heavy guns on the Western front in the World War. This firing is back. Staccato sputtering of machine-guns heard back. Near, you hear shells first whine and warble in the distance, then shriek in and ex-*

*plode. Between explosions you hear the motor of a truck being turned over by the hand-crank without its having any effect on the engine. Each time it sputters and dies out.]*

BUDDY. [*Excited.*] Hurry and crank, Lefty! We gotta pull out of here!

LEFTY. The engine won't catch, soldier.

BUDDY. Gee, caught with a truck in a bombardment like this!

*[Engine whirls lifelessly once more.]*

LEFTY. There's no use. It won't go.

BUDDY. What'll we do? These shells'll catch us.

*[Shell starts to whine in.]*

LEFTY. Under the truck!

*[Loud explosion near, followed by falling earth and spattering shrapnel.]*

BUDDY. [*Laughing nervously.*] Gee, jest in time!

LEFTY. I thought that one had our names on it.

BUDDY. If we hadn't dived under this truck, Lefty, the shrapnel would have got us sure.

*[Another shell whines in and explodes.]*

LEFTY. I'm stayin' right under here.

BUDDY. Me too. Nothin's goin' to move this boy!

*[The motor of an automobile fades in. The brakes of the car screech and the motor begins to idle.]*

LEFTY. [*Hearing motor—surprised.*] What's that?

BUDDY. Gee, a car's pulled up beside us!

GEN. [*Back a little—calling.*] *Américains*, come from under zere!

BUDDY. He's callin' us out.

LEFTY. It's a French general!

BUDDY. Gee, now we'll catch it!

GEN. [*Back a little.*] *Dépêchez-vous! Vite!*

LEFTY. Crawl out!

BUDDY. Sir, we—we—

GEN. [*Fading in.*] You have need to say nussing. Eet eez very brave to repair ze auto under fire. I weesh your names.

LEFTY. My—mine's Gregg, sir.

CAPT. [*Reading a military order in routine manner.*]—for extreme danger under fire has been made a Knight of the Legion of Honor by the French Government! [*Fading out.*] He will henceforth be entitled to wear—

VOICE 1. You're in space!

VOICE 2. Nothing to hold to!

VOICE 1. Falling—

VOICE 2. To death!

VOICE 1. Falling to death!

TIM. [*Fading in.*]—and that's the way that Schmidt got killed. He was a good workman, too.

LEFTY. Tim?

TIM. What yuh want, Lefty?

LEFTY. I know who can take Schmidt's place as heater on th' rivetin' gang. There's a friend of mine—a young feller that's bright and could learn in no time.

TIM. And who is he, Lefty? What experience has he had rivetin'?

LEFTY. Steve Carter, an awful nice kid! He ain't had no experience rivetin' but he knows heats from workin' in th' gas-plant since gettin' out of high school.

TIM. We gotta be havin' a foine man, Lefty. No kids'll be on our tame.

LEFTY. Give him a chance, Tim. He'll learn fast. I'll risk my own job on it, Tim. You will give him a shot at it, won't you?

TIM. [*Fading out.*] Well, seein' you think so high av him, Lefty, bring the lad around an Oi'll be havin' a talk with him.

VOICE 2. You're dying, Lefty!

VOICE 1. A second to live!

[*Suddenly voices commence to pour in, seemingly from all sides, at great speed with ever-increasing acceleration.*]

MOTHER. It'll be all right in a minute! Don't cry!

KID. Yeller! Yeller!

[*As each character finishes his line, he begins muttering in background, to give an accumulative effect.*]

GEN. I weesh your names!

BULLY. Say "uncle"! Say "uncle"!

MOTHER. There now—be my big boy!

BUDDY. The shells'll catch us!

TIM. That's how Schmidt got killed!

VOICE 1. [*In same conglomerate tempo with others.*] Falling!

VOICE 2. Falling!

[*Now through the general muttering comes clearly the voice of DOLLY calling and fading in closer and closer. Other voices die out.*]

DOLLY. Lefty! Lefty!

LEFTY. [*Calling.*] Dolly!

DOLLY. [*Fading in close.*] Lefty, come to me!

LEFTY. Dolly! Dear Dolly!

DOLLY. We've got to drink to each other's happiness. We got to drink.

LEFTY. Skoll!

DOLLY. Skoll!

LEFTY. They're butter pretzels. I love you, Dolly. I'll tell you more often after this.

DOLLY. I love you. Thank you for buying me the farm, Lefty. We've nothin' to do now but tend the chickens and be happy. [*Dog barks.*]

LEFTY. And I have the dog. I had an awful dream, Doll. I dreamed I was still rivetin' and fell off a skyscraper. I dreamed Steve made me fall. [*At this point DOLLY commences to laugh softly in the background at the absurdity of the idea.*]

LEFTY. [*Continuing.*] It all seemed so real. There I was—  
[*Suddenly.*] Why, it seems almost real now. [*Abruptly*  
DOLLY stops laughing. Her tones take on a worried tone as  
she says—]

DOLLY. It can't be! You were dreaming! You were dream-  
ing!

LEFTY. [*Gropingly.*] No, it's almost real. [*Fearfully.*] I—  
believe it is real!

DOLLY. [*Frightened.*] No! No! It can't be!

LEFTY. [*Terrified.*] It is real! It is! Dolly, save me! Dolly!  
Dolly!

DOLLY. [*Fading back—horrificed.*] Don't leave me, Lefty!  
Stay with me!

LEFTY. Dolly, I love you! Dolly!

DOLLY. [*Away back, fading out completely.*] Lef-f-fty!

LEFTY. [*With terrible moan.*] Oh-h-h-h-h-h!

[*There is a terrific thud as LEFTY's body strikes the pave-  
ment. At this point the swishing of air, which has continued  
as an undertone ever since the fall began, stops completely.  
At the same time the traffic sounds swell in from all direc-  
tions. There is the shriek of a woman and then you get the  
effect of a crowd closing in around LEFTY's body.*]

WOMAN. [*Shrieking.*] Oh-h-h-h-h-h-h-h!

MAN 1. [*Fading in—shouting.*] A workman fell!

MAN 2. A man killed!

BOY 1. Gee, a bird fell off!

WOMAN. [*Sobbing.*] Th' poor man—the poor man!

BOY 2. [*Frightened—crying.*] Mama! Mama!

MAN 1. Oh, don't look at him! Look away!

BOY 1. Here comes de cop!

BOY 2. [*Crying.*] Mama, I scared! Mama!

MAN 2. He's dead all right!

MAN 1. Let the policeman through!

COP. [*Fading in.*] Comin' through here! Look out of the way! Stand back there!

MAN 2. [*Low to friend.*] Fell right down here from I don't know how high.

BOY 1. I never saw a dead un before.

WOMAN. Is he—dead, officer?

COP. He is, ma'am. [*Calling.*] You'll have to stand back there!

WOMAN. With a wife no doubt at home.

BOY 2. [*Wailing.*] Mama!

MAN 1. No use our standin' here.

MAN 2. Nothin' we can do.

WOMAN. His poor woman! It's a sad life she'll be leadin' from now on!

*[All street and crowd sounds fade out. For a moment there is dead silence. Then the continued and violent ringing of a door-bell is heard. This is followed by knocking on the door. Then the door is opened.]*

STEVE. [*Nervous.*] It's me, Dolly.

DOLLY. [*Wearily nervous, almost to the breaking-point.*] What did—you come—here for, Steve?

STEVE. I came to tell you again I didn't do it! I swear to you I didn't. . . . Tell me you believe me! It wasn't my fault! I was nervous. I was trying to throw the rivets straight, but they wouldn't go! I couldn't help it, I tell you! You believe me, don't you?

DOLLY. Please go. I'll try to—believe you.

STEVE. But you've changed toward me. Why don't you love me still? You *will* love me, won't you?

DOLLY. No, Steve.

STEVE. But you've got to. I didn't do it, I tell you. You can't let this ruin both our lives.

DOLLY. I can't help . . . how I . . . feel. This has . . . drained everything out of me. [*Impetuously.*] Go, will you?

STEVE. But, Dolly—

DOLLY. [*Almost screaming.*] Go-o-o! I can't stand this!

STEVE. But I—

DOLLY. Will you go or won't you?

STEVE. [*Angry—fading back slightly.*] All right, I will!  
[*Doors bangs to.*]

DOLLY. [*Commencing to weep—low to herself.*] Lefty!  
[*After a few seconds her broken-hearted sobs fade out.*]

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**CLOSING ANNOUNCEMENT:** This brings to a close the radio play "Skyscraper," the fifth to be presented from the Radio Playbill. We hope that next Wednesday afternoon at this time you will be with us again to hear another of these plays written especially for radio production.

## SCRIPT II

THE following episode, from the "Famous Loves of History" series is written by Katherine Seymour, assistant continuity editor of the National Broadcasting Company. It is a good example of broadcast material built about actual characters and incidents.

The program was sponsored commercially and the commercial announcements are included. The broadcast runs fifteen minutes.

### FAMOUS LOVES \*

ROBERT EMMET AND SARAH CURRAN

BY KATHERINE SEYMOUR

#### OPENING ANNOUNCEMENT:

*(Theme song is played.)*

Another in the series of Natural Bridge Romances—a series of dramatic sketches based on "Famous Loves"—is presented by the nation-wide distributors of Natural Bridge Arch Shoes for the smart feminine foot. These shoes are modern—fashionable—and retain the natural loveliness of dainty feet—naturally. Dealers of Natural Bridge Arch Shoes can fit almost any foot smartly, comfortably—and at very moderate expense. Their slogan is "Good to the foot—good to the eye—good to the pocketbook."

*(Theme music continues to end.)*

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## THE DUOLOGUE

**NARRATOR:** In many an Irish cottage, on many a night during the past century, a favorite topic of conversation has been the brave lad Robert Emmet, a youthful martyr to the cause for which he fought—the independence of his native land, Ireland.

Robert Emmet, who lived during the latter half of the eighteenth century, was a brilliant student at the University of Dublin, until he left college as a protest against the political restrictions imposed by the English governors.

For three years he roamed on the Continent, meeting other exiled Irishmen, and completing plans to free Ireland from the yoke of England. Finally, after an interview with Napoleon, and a promise of French aid, he returned to Ireland to carry out his plans, and also—to see again Sarah Curran, the girl he loved.

This beautiful girl, daughter of the distinguished lawyer John Curran, had twice rejected him, and after his return he lost all hope that she would ever love him. Nevertheless he had always been a welcome guest in her father's house, and although he was absorbed in secret plans for Ireland, he could not forget Sarah nor could he resist dropping in from time to time to chat with her.

One afternoon in the early spring of 1803, Sarah was strolling in the garden, as Robert Emmet opened the wicket gate and hailed her.

**ROBERT.** Good day, Sarah! May I stroll with you in the garden?

**SARAH.** Why, Robert! Is it not a glorious spring day? Do come in.

ROBERT. I scarce noticed the day, Sarah. You are more glorious than the first flowers of spring.

SARAH. Robert, I fear you will not have the heart to flatter me when I tell you the message my father bade me give you.

ROBERT. Message? Is it unpleasant?

SARAH. I fear it is—I do not understand it. . . . Oh, please forgive me, Robert, but he has asked me to tell you— Oh, I cannot—I cannot tell you!

ROBERT. Please tell me his message, Sarah.

SARAH. He does not wish you to come to our house again, Robert. Oh, please forgive me—I do not know the reason.

ROBERT. Do not be distressed, Sarah—please do not be troubled about me. I shall not bother you or your father again, for I have come here to-day to say farewell to you.

SARAH. Farewell? You knew then of my father's request?

ROBERT. No, Sarah, but I am in danger of arrest and—

SARAH. Danger of arrest! Oh, Robert!

ROBERT. Sarah! Does it matter to you—my life or death?

SARAH. Death? Oh, no—you cannot mean that!

ROBERT. Yes. At any hour I may have to flee from Ireland. My brother is in America—I shall join him there. Oh, I am thankful now that you do not love me—

SARAH. Robert! Why are you in danger? Tell me.

ROBERT. Sarah! Your eyes are filled with tears! . . . Ah, your sympathy is sweet. When I am far away in America this shall be the happiest memory—a picture of you here under these blossoming hawthorns—

SARAH. Robert! I—do not wish you to go so far away—I do not wish you to leave me.

ROBERT. You don't—love me? Oh, no—it is not possible, Sarah darling!

SARAH. Yes, Robert, I have this moment learned my own heart—when you spoke of danger, I learned that I love you. . . . Oh, Robert, do not say farewell!

ROBERT. You love me! Oh, no, it is not right now—my future is so dark—clouds are gathering—I thought that you could never love me and death has never mattered.

SARAH. Robert—you cannot die! I love you!

ROBERT. If I do not die, then I shall be an exile. How can I ask you to share an exile's life?

SARAH. Robert, won't you tell me what danger threatens?

ROBERT. Your father has heard vague rumors—that is why he has ordered me away from his house. On the night of July twenty-third I shall lead forth a faithful band of United Irishmen to capture Dublin Castle and the artillery barracks—

SARAH. Oh, Robert! . . .

ROBERT. If the attempt succeeds, Ireland will be free—if I fail, then I shall be hanged for treason.

SARAH. Oh, Robert dearest, must you attempt this? Would it not be wiser to abandon it and let Ireland continue to be ruled by England?

ROBERT. I have dreamed all my life of helping Ireland. All preparations have been made—for many months we have been storing guns and ammunition in secret places—the date is set for the attack.

SARAH. I shall pray that the attempt succeeds, but if it fails—then I shall follow you into exile.

ROBERT. Darling, until to-day I felt uncertain of success—with your love and your prayer, how can I fail?

[*“Wearing of the Green” is played.*]

NARRATOR. Throughout the night of July twenty-third, Sarah Curran trembled and prayed as she sat at her window, listening to the sounds of guns and the roar of cannon.

From time to time horsemen rode past the house bearing news of an uprising, but no definite report came.

As the first pink streaks of dawn colored the sky, some pebbles struck her window. Then she heard—

ROBERT. [*In hushed voice.*] Sarah! Sarah!

SARAH. Oh, Robert! Thank God you are safe!

ROBERT. Darling—soldiers pursue me—every moment is precious, but I had to come this way to see you.

SARAH. Oh, tell me—did your attempt succeed? What happened?

ROBERT. It failed, Sarah, miserably. The hour came—I set

out with but eighty faithful men . . . I found treachery at every point . . . the few men I had trusted with full knowledge of our plans betrayed me—

SARAH. Oh, Robert! How terrible!

ROBERT. Yes. Our revolution planned to liberate Ireland ended in an unglorious street brawl.

SARAH. You did your best, Robert, I know that, and you look so brave and handsome in your green and white uniform.

ROBERT. I fear it will be the last time green is worn in Ireland for many years. Our poor country is not yet ready to throw off the English yoke.

SARAH. Where will you hide, Robert? Oh, I shall not be able to sleep or eat until I know you are well out of Ireland!

ROBERT. Sarah, I shall never leave Ireland without you. I have word of a ship which will take us away—I shall send letters to you—

SARAH. But the letters may betray your hiding-place, dearest!

ROBERT. I have one servant who can be trusted. Now I must go, but, Sarah, when I send you word that the ship is under sail, will you flee with me to America?

SARAH. Yes, Robert, and may God keep you safe until next I see you!

ROBERT. Good-by, my darling! I go now to the mountains, where I must remain until the hue and cry has died down.

SARAH. Good-by, Robert! . . . I love you, darling!

NARRATOR. Robert Emmet remained safely hidden for several weeks, and there were but two people who knew his hiding-place—one was his father's servant, the other was Sarah Curran. Before long his servant was arrested and brutally tortured, but she refused to betray her master. No one knew of Emmet's love for Sarah Curran. Then, because there was no one to carry letters to Sarah, Robert Emmet ventured from his hiding-place and returned to a cottage near Dublin in order to be near her. One night he left his house by way of a secret passageway to the garden of Sarah's house and Sarah fell, half fainting, in his arms.

SARAH. Robert! You should not have come here—but oh, how glad I am to see you!

ROBERT. Sarah, my darling, you are so pale, and wasted. Oh, what suffering my love has brought you and I once hoped to bring you nothing but happiness! You who deserve all the joy and happiness in the world.

SARAH. I have worried so much about you—I tremble every time my father comes home, for fear lest he bring word that you have been discovered.

ROBERT. Sarah, my dear, please think of me kindly when I am gone—

SARAH. When you are gone? Why do you say that? When you leave Ireland I shall go with you.

ROBERT. It is too late now, dearest—I shall never leave Ireland.

SARAH. Robert! What do you mean?

ROBERT. Sarah, my hiding-place has been discovered. When I left, soldiers surrounded my house, and by this time are following me here. I escaped by a secret passage, but this time I cannot reach the mountains.

SARAH. Robert! They will throw you in jail and then—Oh, no! . . . They won't, they can't!

ROBERT. Yes, it is true—I shall be hanged. . . . But let us not think of that—we have so few minutes to be together.

SARAH. Hanged! Robert! Say it is not true! . . . You are not a criminal—you are a hero! You tried to help Ireland—tried to make our countrymen independent.

ROBERT. Darling—I can remain here just a few minutes longer. Thank God you have not been implicated! Your name has never been linked with mine—I pray you may be spared that!

SARAH. Robert—they cannot hang you like a common thief!

ROBERT. Sarah dear, can't we forget for these last few minutes everything save that we love each other? Shall we pretend that we are happy, that we are planning our future home? I should like a cottage by the side of the river!

SARAH. [*Weeping.*] Oh, Robert, don't! . . . I can't pretend—Oh, they can't take you from me—there is not so much injustice in Ireland—

[*Sound of hoof-beats fades in.*]

SARAH. Robert! Hark! The soldiers!

ROBERT. Yes, dearest, they must not find me here. You must not be involved in my trial. Farewell, my darling! Oh, I had hoped to bring you happiness and my love has brought only sorrow and misery!

[*Hoof-beats come nearer.*]

SARAH. [*Sobbing.*] Robert! Oh, Robert! Don't go! They can't arrest you—oh, they will kill you!

ROBERT. [*From distance.*] Good-by, sweetheart!

SARAH. Robert! Robert!

[*Hoof-beats fade out. Irish music.*]

NARRATOR. A letter which Robert attempted to send from jail to Sarah Curran was intercepted. Soldiers broke into her house, but she was finally declared innocent of conspiring against England.

Mercifully, she suffered a complete nervous breakdown and did not learn until weeks later that her lover had been hanged for treason in September, 1803.

Robert Emmet died bravely, and the tomb of this "child of the heart of Ireland" became a revered national shrine.

CLOSING ANNOUNCEMENT:

(*Theme song is played.*)

The central characters of next week's romantic sketch will be Andrew Jackson and his wife Rachel.

This weekly series of Natural Bridge Romances, based on "Famous Loves" of history, is presented by the distributors of Natural Bridge Arch Shoes for the smart feminine foot. These moderately priced shoes are designed to protect

---

the natural loveliness of dainty feet—naturally. Natural Bridge Arch Shoes come in all sizes and in all widths. Their slogan is “Good to the foot—good to the eye—good to the pocketbook.”

As a souvenir of this program, its sponsors would like to send you a beautiful picture in full color of the Natural Bridge of Virginia, so attractive that many of you will wish to frame it. To receive this picture, address a post-card or letter to the Natural Bridge Shoemakers at Lynchburg, Virginia, or in care of the station through which this program reaches you.

The “Famous Loves” program has come to you from the New York studios of the National Broadcasting Company.

### SCRIPT III

"HARBOR LIGHTS," written by Burr Cook, has been on the air for more than two years and is one of the most popular of the "adventure" broadcasts. The author makes excellent use of sound-effects and the production itself is a splendid example of such effects.

The script also illustrates the radio practice of "a play within a play." Each week, the broadcast opens and closes on the ferry-boat scene. The program runs thirty minutes.

#### HARBOR LIGHTS \*

BY BURR COOK

OPENING ANNOUNCEMENT. The "Harbor Lights!" Once again we go aboard the old New York ferry-boat, to meet white-haired Captain Jimmy Norton and his young friend Joe, and hear another of the captain's famous stories of the days of the clipper-ships and high adventure. All aboard!

#### THE PLAY.

[*Ferry-boat pulls out. Music.*]

JOE. Hello, Captain Jimmy!

CAPT. Howdy, Joe?

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JOE. [*Short laugh.*] All square to the wind?

CAPT. Aye—K-see K-saa, as the French sailors used to say. I got a note from Helen, Joe.

JOE. Yes. [*Steamer whistle in distance.*]

CAPT. Aye—said she liked that yarn last week, 'bout the Devil's Sink, and old Peter Levitt.

JOE. That was a good one. . . . Haven't got any more like it, have you?

CAPT. I was just thinkin' 'bout it, son. . . . I heard many a yarn in my day, 'bout the old swamp.

JOE. The swamp?

CAPT. . . . or the Devil's Sink—or the Horse Latitudes—or the Sargossa Sea—'er whatever ye want to call it. Down where the nor'east and sou'east trades die out, at the end o' the world.

JOE. [*Short laugh.*] Well, Helen'll be listening in to-night. . . . let's have another one, if you feel like it. [*Toot of tug-boat.*]

CAPT. But it's queer, too, Joe—there's gen'rally tragedy stalkin' that slimy green ocean, in the calm and quiet of it.

JOE. It doesn't seem so queer, Captain.

CAPT. Aye, but when Death puts down its hand, there's gen'rally a gale blowin'—inside or out. And there was nothin' but the swish and roll of an old derelict and the silence of eternity to keep 'em company—the time Jim Lewis and Fred Hathaway met the Stranger.

JOE. Death? . . . [*Bell-buoy ringing.*]

CAPT. Aye . . . death. Though they'd invited him o' their own accord and only one of 'em took his hand, at the last. And I'll leave ye to judge which one it was, Joe.

JOE. Well, who were they—Jim Lewis and Fred Hathaway?

CAPT. [*Chuckles.*] Aye . . . I've got ahead o' myself. Jim Lewis was first mate o' my schooner the *Carib*, sailin' out o' Boston for 'Frisco—back in the eighties. A hard-case old seafarin' man . . . 'bout forty-five at the time . . . and he had a daughter named Bella—Bell Lewis, folks called her . . . and I reckon she wasn't all she shoulda been.

JOE. What do you mean, Captain?

CAPT. Oh—a pretty gal, 'bout eighteen, but wild and hot-tempered—wantin' things she couldn't have. Got goin' round with the young sprigs and carryin' on . . . pretty and full o' life . . . but sort o' coarse, she was. [*Faint steamer whistle.*] I recollect, the day afore we set sail, Bell Lewis ran away from home—left her pa a note, sayin' not to trouble lookin' for her.

JOE. How did her father take that?

CAPT. He never said a word—dour unorgivin' sort, he was—shipped aboard the *Carib* like he'd planned, and put to sea. But I had a notion it had struck deeper'n he let on.

JOE. And . . . Fred Hathaway?

CAPT. [*Reminiscent laugh.*] Aye . . . Fred was a feller

'bout twenty-six or seven—son o' Preacher Hathaway. He'd been in Cambridge, studyin' to be a lawyer, and was home that summer. I calc'late the lure o' the sea got into his blood and all on a sudden, he decided he'd be a sailor. I took him as a hand afore the mast.

JOE. And you were bound for 'Frisco.

CAPT. Aye. We put in at Pensacola for lumber and then laid our course sou'-by-sou'east for the Horn. First day out a Florida gulf squall hit us—tore a whole suit o' sails off the yards and had us wallowin' helpless. I'll never forget that blow. I was in the cabin, fakin' barometer bearin's, when the door busts open and in comes Jim Lewis, draggin' Hathaway after him.

[*Sea sounds—whine of wind—splash of water—thunder in distance.*]

NORTON. What's the meanin' o' this, Mr. Lewis?

LEWIS. Meanin' enough, Cap'n Norton! Tryin' to keep afloat in this smoker with a short-handed crew—and this lubber refusin' to lay aloft!

NORTON. Refusing? . . .

LEWIS. Aye—just that! He's got the whole watch grumblin'. If he ain't made to stand to like a sailor, I won't be responsible for what happens 'mongst the men.

NORTON. What about it, Hathaway? Are ye afraid to go aloft?

FRED. I'm not afraid, Captain Norton. But I know perfectly well—with the ship pitching like this—I couldn't make it.

I'd be thrown into the sea. I'm not used to the ratlines and my hands are full of blisters.

LEWIS. Fine talk out of a sailor!

FRED. [*Hotly.*] You know that this is my first time at sea, Mr. Lewis! I haven't objected to all the double duty you could find for me, so far, but I'm not a fool. I have no desire to commit suicide.

NORTON. If ye expect to be a sailor, Hathaway, it's all part o' the business. What ye *have* to do, ye'll find ye gen'rally can do—blisters or no blisters.

LEWIS. It's the kind they're breedin' ashore now! Soft sprigs with no stomach for work!

NORTON. I'll deal with this, Mr. Lewis. Till the blow lets down a mite, I'll keep ye on deck, Hathaway—this time.

HATHAWAY. Thank you, sir.

NORTON. But get it clear—Mr. Lewis here gives orders that I expect to have obeyed. Aside from layin' aloft, ye'll do what he says.

FRED. I've been doing that, sir.

NORTON. How do ye make the weather, Mr. Lewis?

LEWIS. It's gatherin' again to loo'ard. I got a squar o' tarpaulin from the aft hatch lashed to the mizzen—keepin' her head into the wind—but the sea's gettin' higher.

NORTON. Aye . . . it looks bad . . . barometer droppin' fast. Best call all hands up.

LEWIS. What am I to do with this . . . water-lily? Lock him under the booby-hatch?

FRED. I'll stand my share of work with the rest. But I'm reserving a little common sense about my abilities.

LEWIS. Judgin' by yer abilities, ye might be some help to cook in the galley—though that's doubtful! [*Rising whine of wind.*]

NORTON. Enough o' this now! We got more serious business at hand! Call up the second watch, Mr. Lewis!

LEWIS. Aye, sir. [*Door opens and shut to whirl of wind.*]

VOICE [*In distance.*] All—hands—on—deck! [*Ship's bell—six.*]

VOICE. [*Distant.*] Watch sharp, astern! There's a big followin' sea! [*Wind and storm increase. Thunder roars. Crash of wave on deck. Cries of crew.*]

NORTON. Cut away that riggin'! All hands look lively! Mind your helm, there!

VOICE. [*Excited.*] It's smashed off the rudder-head, Cap'n!

NORTON. What! Rudder-head gone?

LEWIS. [*Distant.*] We're fallin' off! . . . [*Whine of wind.*]

NORTON. [*Calls.*] Unlimber—the—boats! [*Thunder roar.*] Every man—for himself! [*Cries of crew. Swirling and hissing of mountain of water approaching astern.*] Here . . . she comes! [*Crash on deck—thunder—fade out.*]

[*Ferry-boat. Music—agitato.*]

CAPT. Well, sir, that big green mountain o' solid water swept the *Carib* from stem to stern—tearin' off boats and men and all else that stood in its way. Last I recollected was holdin' to a section o' the quarter-deck rail . . . and rail and all smashin' off and bein' swallowed up in the sea. Some half-hour later, me and four men was hangin' to a overturned dory and the *Carib* had vanished from sight.

JOE. Gee! And how about Lewis and Hathaway?

CAPT. I'm comin' to that, Joe—comin' to it, by way o' what one of 'em told me, long afterwards. Myself and three o' the men was picked up a day later by a freighter, bound for New York. But the *Carib* hadn't gone under. She was a staunch schooner and the hull of her stayed afloat, but nothin' much else but the hull.

JOE. And Lewis and Hathaway?

CAPT. They was left aboard her, Joe—the two of em—only livin' souls that hadn't gone by the board. And the *Carib* was a derelict, driftin' helpless down into the swamp latitudes, deckin' herself with seaweed and leakin', bit by bit, down to the water-line. Second day, the weather calmed and Jim Lewis went about takin' stock o' their predicament. He come forrard toward evenin', to where Fred Hathaway was sittin' on the slopin' fo'castle deck.

[*Only slosh of hull rolling from side to side.*]

FRED. Well, what's the verdict, Mr. Lewis?

LEWIS. The verdict's food and fresh water to last a week

. . . a leak under the aft bulkhead that there's no way o' pluggin' . . . but the lumber'll likely keep us afloat. Enough headroom in the cabin to bunk the two of us . . . and a drift sou'east-by-east that's takin' us the Lord knows where.

FRED. Well . . . there's something to be thankful for.

LEWIS. Aye . . . a week more o' bein' alive, maybe.

FRED. Isn't there a chance that we'll be sighted by some passing vessel?

LEWIS. If ye had a thimbleful o' sea-lore in that fancy skull, ye'd know we was driftin' far out o' the trade-routes. Felt the last o' the trade-wind this mornin'.

FRED. Yes . . . I noticed. It's getting quiet and still as death, all about. Uncanny.

LEWIS. We're driftin' with a slow, deep current. Here! Look over the starboard side . . . see how we're smoothin' the water . . . a starboard wake . . . sou'east-by-east.

FRED. [*Shudder.*] Agh! I've . . . often . . . wondered . . . how it might feel.

LEWIS. Here!

FRED. [*Pause.*] What are these for?

LEWIS. The cap'n's two pistols—loaded with one shot apiece.

FRED. I—I don't understand—

LEWIS. By the end o' seven days ye may understand a heap o' things ye know nothin' of now. Aye, ye may know the wild cravin' for water . . . fear o' the dark and the filthy critters that creep out o' the deep . . . and the fight to keep yer senses. So—take the pistol and keep it by ye!

FRED. Hmm! I've always felt this was . . . the coward's way out, Mr. Lewis.

LEWIS. [*Sudden flare of anger.*] Then it might be a good way for you . . . mightn't it?

FRED. [*Some spirit.*] What do you mean by that? It's your idea, Mr. Lewis—not mine.

LEWIS. And ye can thank yer stars I've put it in your way. [*Gruff laugh.*] I've watched green lubbers like ye afore—breakin' to pieces under the strain. Aye . . . with all yer big talk!

FRED. [*Quietly.*] You won't see me break, Mr. Lewis.

LEWIS. Aye, I'll be watchin' ye each day—and I'll tell ye when yer time's due! It'll be a show worth lookin' at!

FRED. [*Short laugh.*] It'll be a pleasant way to spend the time—watching for each other's . . . lapses from the normal.

LEWIS. Ye can do as ye like.

FRED. It would seem saner, to begin with, if we dropped this apparent ill-feeling. You—you act as though you hated the sight of me.

LEWIS. And so I do!

FRED. May I ask . . . why?

LEWIS. Ye'll know that, afore we're through. I'm turnin' in now. Stand till the middle watch, and I'll relieve ye.

[*Ferry-boat. Music—reminiscent.*]

CAPT. So they drifted on for days . . . the old *Carib* be-ginnin' to smell fishy and ancient, with weeds and barnacles clingin' to her sides. Sun got hot and the sea was green and glassy, full o' strange fish that blinked at the sun out o' starin' pale eyes—a reg'lar pasture-ground o' the Devil's own brood.

JOE. Gee! . . . I should think that was enough to drive anybody crazy.

CAPT. They had a sort o' routine o' livin', by then—though the unbroken quiet and the endless driftin' and lappin' o' waves against the sides began to frazzle their nerves. Got to be a ritual each mornin'—the one sizin' up the other . . . seekin' some signs o' breakin'. But Hathaway was a cool-headed cuss, and he kept his mind busy, while Jim Lewis watched the sea and the sky . . . took his bearin's each day . . . and bided his time.

JOE. Well . . . what happened, Captain?

CAPT. One evenin' they was squattin' on deck, after their meal o' hardtack and a sip o' water, and somehow the talk shifted to . . . home.

[*Slosh of water.*]

FRED. . . . and I dreamed last night of the quays, off the point, back home . . . and Broadacres . . . and that cottage cheese Mrs. Evers used to sell in the Turnpike Creamery. [*Nervous laugh.*] Back home. . . . Do you think we'll—we'll ever get back?

LEWIS. Partikler anxious to get back . . . are ye?

FRED. [*Wildly.*] Gad! This endless drifting nowhere! It blots out everything—even the hopes and longings of those

first few days! I feel as though I'd grown in on myself—like a crab with a shell—and all that's left of the world, is just . . . you and me . . . and the *Carib!* Stuffing in a hole—to stop a leak!

LEWIS. Why were ye leavin' Boston in such a rush . . . to begin with?

FRED. Why? . . .

LEWIS. Aye . . . why? I asked ye that yesterday and ye gave me no answer.

FRED. Is it of any . . . great importance?

LEWIS. Aye, it may be—twixt you and me!

FRED. What—what do you mean?

LEWIS. [*Sharply.*] What ails ye? Can't ye look a father in the eye?

FRED. If you'll stop getting . . . dramatic . . . and say what you mean—

LEWIS. I mean just this—and I been bidin' my time to tell ye: My gal Bella skipped out o' town . . . day afore you took it into yer head to do the same.

FRED. What of it?

LEWIS. Just this of it—I think my gal's got into trouble—account o' you!

FRED. [*Low.*] Fool!

LEWIS. Aye . . . maybe. But you was hangin' round all

summer—you and your Sagee and other good-for-nothin's! [*Growing a trifle hysterical.*] I tried to raise her to be a decent God-fearin' woman! Tried to bring her up the way her ma had gone afore her . . . respectin' the things o' the spirit . . . holdin' herself clean and upstandin', for some decent man to marry! [*Half to himself.*] Was it my fault she was weak as water—gone loose and wild, in the face o' my prayers and my pleadin'? [*Pause.*] Aye . . . I know the talk and the talkers! Who's to blame for it? Me? That guided her on a fair course? Or spaverin' young swine like yerself—and the rest of 'em! Agh!

FRED. [*Nervous high-pitched laugh.*] Lewis!

LEWIS. Stow it, I tell ye!

FRED. Put down . . . the pistol. You're breaking! You're breaking!

LEWIS. What!

FRED. [*Nervous laugh again.*] If you could see yourself . . . staring like a madman . . . trembling like a leaf on a tree! Your senses are leaving you . . . Jim Lewis! And you're talking crazy!

LEWIS. There's still time to find out . . . who's talkin' crazy.

FRED. . . . Because I spoke to Bell now and again, or walked out with her, to Morey's and the Park—what's that? You're—you're accusing me without a shred of proof.

LEWIS. I don't ask fer proof! I'm tellin' ye what I think. God's got the proof, right enough! And if ye deserve it, he'll

burden yer conscience with it, 'fore ye're through! [*Voice breaks.*] I keep seein' her in my dreams . . . the little blond-haired gal I used ter know . . . and I keep wonderin' what's become of her . . . if I'll ever see her again. . . . Aye . . . I'd be willin' to forgive her . . . any shame and disgrace . . . if I could see her . . . again.

FRED. [*Nerves strained to the utmost.*] Cripes! Stop snivelin', can't you! [*Hysterical cry.*] Look! Off there on the horizon! A sail! A sail! [*Lowers voice on realization.*] A sail! . . . upside down!

LEWIS. You and yer blasted mirages! Stop yellin' that way! Move yer hairy thin face away . . . ye shrunken skeleton!

FRED. [*Odd laugh.*] It's good you can't see yourself, Lewis—blotched with scurvy and crawling like a brother of the slimy things overside. He! You're a squid! All arms and legs and a round head—no body! Get back in the water . . . where you belong! Get back!

LEWIS. [*Quietly.*] Who's breakin' now? Steady! Stand back!

FRED. Gad . . . leave me alone! . . . What—what are you listening for?

LEWIS. [*Husky whisper.*] It's the . . . Kraken!

FRED. No!

LEWIS. Aye! . . . Give me the axe! . . . He's climbin' up the taffrail, aft.

FRED. Kill him, Lewis! Chop off his long, slimy arms! Kill him! I can't bear the sight of him again! [*Distant sound of axe-blows and scuffle.*]

LEWIS. [*Approaching—eerie laugh.*] Aye . . . I killed him. Here's part of a tentacle for ye! Look at it—still clawin' and wigglin'!

FRED. Throw it off, I tell you! [*Low moan.*] Water! I'll go crazy without a touch of water. Water . . . Lewis!

LEWIS. [*Pause.*] I gave out yer share this mornin'—o' what water's left.

FRED. [*Stunned.*] My share . . . of what's . . . left?

LEWIS. Aye, just so—the last drop—this mornin'!

[*Ferry-boat.*]

CAPT. And so—two days later—barely able to stand . . . water and food gone . . . Jim Lewis and Fred Hathaway sat on the slopin' deck o' the fo'castle and stared off across the green, lazy water. There was a taint o' decay in the air, and the sun was sinkin' down in a yellow ball behind the western horizon. Long streamers o' seaweed floated from the lee side o' the wreck, risin' and fallin' with the slow heave o' the tide.

JOE. Had she sunk any lower, Captain?

CAPT. A mite, maybe—though the lumber in her hold was what kept her afloat. Lewis finally turned toward Hathaway. He'd pulled the pistol out of his belt.

[*Slosh of water. Both men are weak and emaciated.*]

LEWIS. . . . are ye listenin'?

FRED. [*Low, weird voice.*] . . . Listening to strange voices . . . people singing . . . a wind . . . a wind blowing in

the sails . . . and Captain Norton calling his orders. [*As though in answer, faintly.*] Aye, sir! But I can't go aloft, sir—not used to the ratlines—and my hands are full of blisters. [*Fast and delirious.*] And my feet are blistered, and my tongue and my throat and my lungs and my soul! Rotted out of shape! Never alive again—any part of me! Never!

LEWIS. [*Weak laugh.*] Breakin'—breakin', by Harry! Plain daft, ye are!

FRED. No! No! [*Steadying himself with effort.*] No. . . . I'm still . . . seeing straight . . . Mister Lewis—straight as a die.

LEWIS. Aye . . . like me . . . maybe. [*Tense.*] There! She's comin' now, across the water. Look at her—my gal Bella! Walkin' the greasy water, searchin' for me—callin' out to me. [*Pitiful cry.*] Somethin's happened to her! [*Change of tone.*] What are ye starin' at?

FRED. Nothing . . . nothing . . . nothing . . . always nothing, but the sea and sky! Sea and sky! Sea and sky! And great fountains of fresh water—ice-cold—tin cups full of fresh water! [*Maudlin laugh trails off.*]

LEWIS. [*Quietly.*] Look here . . . Hathaway . . . we're both . . . far gone. It's no more . . . use . . . hopin' and waitin'. Take out . . . yer pistol.

FRED. Here—

LEWIS. Can't ye . . . hold it steady?

FRED. Why—

LEWIS. Look at mine . . . pointin' at ye!

FRED. I can hold it . . . steady . . . pointing at your—Lewis! What's the . . . drama . . . all about?

LEWIS. To-morrow, this time . . . you and me'll be dead, or dyin'.

FRED. And that . . . won't be so . . . bad.

LEWIS. Aye, but this is a decenter way to go . . . without the last agony of it.

FRED. [*Slowly.*] Yes . . . I guess . . . you're right. What then?

LEWIS. [*Pause.*] I'll count three. Like this—one . . . two . . . three!

FRED. Yes? . . .

LEWIS. When I say . . . "Three" . . . we'll both fire. That suits ye?

FRED. [*Pause.*] Go ahead! I say it!

LEWIS. Cock yer pistol, ye fool!

FRED. Aye . . . it's cocked.

LEWIS. God forgive us for the evil we done! . . . Amen.  
[*Pause.*] Ready?

FRED. [*Nervous.*] I told you . . . to go ahead! Count! Count!

LEWIS. I'm . . . countin'—*One . . . two . . .* [*A single loud report—followed by gasp of pain, evidently from HATHAWAY.*]

[*Ferry-boat. Music—recitative.*]

JOE. [*After pause.*] Well . . . gee, Captain . . . what happened? Who was it fired?

CAPT. Who would ye say, Joe? Which woulda been most likely to break, at the last?

JOE. Gosh, I don't know! They were both— Maybe it was Hathaway?

CAPT. Well, that was the funny part of it, son. 'Twas Hathaway that fired.

JOE. Yes?

CAPT. But 'twas Hathaway that was killed.

JOE. I don't understand.

CAPT. Fred Hathaway broke at the last—but for more reasons than appear on the surface. He shot himself—committed suicide—and toppled over on the deck, in front o' Jim Lewis.

JOE. Oh!

CAPT. That afternoon an American gunboat, comin' over from the Tripoli coast, picked up Jim Lewis and the body o' Hathaway and brought him to Boston to stand trial for murder.

JOE. Murder?

CAPT. Aye . . . 'twas all in the papers at the time. Made quite a lot o' talk. One o' the sensational features o' the trial was the presence o' Bell Lewis, with a new-born babe in her arms. Cute little trick with red hair and sky-blue eyes . . . looked a heap like . . . Fred Hathaway. She took the

stand and swore her pa had reason to kill Fred Hathaway—whether he did or not. . . . Aye . . . she was brave, with all her weakness and wildness. Jim was acquitted.

JOE. Well, that was some yarn! [*Ferry whistle.*]

CAPT. And now we're comin' across, Joe.

JOE. Yes, sir. See you next week, Captain.

CAPT. Tell Cap'n Barlow, if ye see him, I'm still waitin' to beat him that last game o' checkers.

JOE. I will—though I understand he's been sick a couple of days.

CAPT. No! Find out, will ye, Joe and let me know tomorrow?

JOE. Sure I will, Captain Jimmy.

CAPT. I . . . wouldn't want anything . . . to happen to Ned Barlow.

JOE. I guess it's just a cold or something. Good night, Captain.

CAPT. Good night, Joe. . . . Take care o' yerself!

JOE. I will.

[*Ferry-boat docks.*]

CLOSING ANNOUNCEMENT. And so the "Harbor Lights" fade out and the mists of memory close around the figure of old Captain Jimmy Norton and we return once more to everyday scenes.

Cast of to-night's sketch  
Captain Jimmy Norton    Joe  
(In the story)

|           |               |
|-----------|---------------|
| Norton    | Fred Hathaway |
| Jim Lewis | A voice       |

Our "Harbor Lights" program comes to you from our New York studios as a presentation of the National Broadcasting Company.

## SCRIPT IV

"STATION KUKU," written and directed by Raymond Knight and broadcast by the National Broadcasting Company, is considered the most popular humorous program on the air. It is a burlesque on broadcasting and illustrates that the pun is not the lowest form of humor broadcast.

In casting the production, which is a weekly program, Knight uses actors and actresses with wide ranges of voice characterizations.

The following script is a typical "KUKU" broadcast and is an outstanding example of radio comedy as written. The broadcast runs thirty minutes.

### STATION KUKU \*

BY RAYMOND KNIGHT

OPENING ANNOUNCEMENT. And now comes the hour when brave mariners at sea take their port to starboard and sit down to listen—not to the wild waves but to their radio sets—when flag-pole sitters cock an attentive ear to near-by aërials, when the denizens of the underworld emerge from the dens to gather in front of the loud-speakers of radio stores, and when all really intelligent people shut off their sets and go to bed.

\* Copyright, 1931, by National Broadcasting Company, Inc.

Yes, ladies and gentlemen, the Cuckoo Hour is upon us again, and we are about to hear Raymond Knight in his radio character of Ambrose J. Weems as he tells the world from Station KUKU—America's newest and worst radio station.

This is your last chance to get away—all right, it's your own fault. We now turn you over to Station KUKU.

THE PLAY

[*Break.*]

Cuckoo—Cuckoo—Cuckoo—

WEEMS. Ready—aim— Fire!

[*Bang.*]

The Cuckoo is dead.

ALL. Long live the Cuckoo!

WEEMS. Good evening, folksies—this is Ambrose J. Weems, the voice of the diaphragm e-nun-ci-a-ting. Before we begin the day's broadcasting I want to stoop to business. I mean—get down to business. As you know, Station KUKU is not run for profit—and that reminds me of that old saying about the judiciary, "His Honor is not without profit save in his own country." . . . Now where was I? Oh, yes—KUKU is not run for profit, it is conducted for the people, for the people, and for the people.

[*Applause. Orchestra, "Stars and Stripes Forever."*]

And if elected I promise— Ahem, as I was saying, we are constantly striving to improve our programs. Nobody pays us a cent and we are trying to give them their money's worth.

Now folksies, to-night we are giving you a new feature—an extra service. Ladies and gentlemen of our vast unconscious audience, you have heard of jokes funny enough to make a horse laugh—well, that's the kind of jokes we want on this program, jokes funny enough to make a horse laugh, and in carrying out our policy of service to the people, beginning to-night we are bringing a horse into the studio to try our jokes out on. What other radio station would go to such lengths for its public? Of course there are certain embarrassing features attendant upon this—I mean, suppose the horse should forget what its duties are and laugh all during the program? But I think there is no danger of that. [*Calls.*] Bring in Molasses! . . . We call her that because she never runs.

[*Hoofs fade in. Note, use wooden hoofs.*]

Come here, Molasses—whoa—whoa—all ready for work!

[*Snort.*]

Good! Now, Molasses, I am going to tell you a joke.

[*Snort and run away.*]

Hey, bring that horse back here!

[*Hoofs in.*]

Whoa! Molasses, you misunderstood me.

[*Snort.*]

I am going to tell you a joke—and if you laugh then it's good enough for the radio audience. Now listen, Molasses—it seems there was a Scotchman and an Irishman and—

[*Voice lowers to whisper.*]

[*Snort.*]

No? . . . Well, let's see. . . . Ah, yes—this sailor went to Hawaii and met a girl and— [*Voice lowers.*]

[*Snort.*]

No? . . . Dear me! This is embarrassing, but not the way I thought it would be. . . . Molasses, listen to this one. This boy and his girl friend went out to ride on a tandem bicycle and— [*Voice lowers.*]

[*Snort.*]

Say, look here, what's the matter with you? You're supposed to laugh at a good joke. Molasses—*look at me!*

[*Horse-laugh.*]

POTHER. By Jove! . . . He *did* laugh!

WEEMS. Go an' take that horse out of here! . . .

POTHER. Come, Molasses! . . . Giddyap! . . . Come! . . . She won't budge—giddyap! . . . By Jove, I can't move her!

WEEMS. You can't, eh? . . . Watch me! . . . Here, Molasses—

[*Horse-laugh. Hoofs fade out.*]

POTHER. By Jove, Weems, old chap—what did you give her?

WEEMS. Five dollars.

---

POTHER. Five dollars?

WEEMS. Certainly—money makes the mare go.

[*Orchestra—music.*]

And now KUKU presents Mrs. Pennyfeather's personal service for perturbed people, in which Mrs. Pennyfeather gives little recipes for making light housework heavier.

MRS. P. Dear perturbed people of the radio audience, to-day is our last broadcast before Christmas and right in the middle of the Christmas season, when everything is gay and festive and unrestrained, so to-day I am going to give you a recipe in the nude—I mean in the mood. H'm, yes. . . . Because I think that the mood counts for everything in life. . . . H'm, yes.

I thought that I should give you a *Christmas* recipe, so I went through my recipe-books and I found one entitled "Spirit of Christmas" and I said to myself, "That's just the thing to give my dear radio friends, 'Spirit of Christmas.'" Now this is going to be just as much a surprise to me as it is to you, because the recipe doesn't say whether it makes a cake or a pudding or a sauce. . . . Won't that be fun, to make it and not know what the result will be? H'm, yes.

I have brought the ingredients into my studio-laboratory and I shall mix them together right in front of the microphone and then we shall all see what it makes. . . . Isn't that intriguing? Now first it says some of this red liquid. I shall pour that into the mixing-bowl.

[*Pour.*]

And now next—I've got on my old glasses, I dropped my

new ones last week and I do have a little difficulty in seeing—next—oh, yes, this nice clear white liquid. I shall pour that in.

[*Pour.*]

Now let me taste it. [*Taste.*] Um—yes—that's very nice—quite refreshing, as a matter of fact. It has a familiar taste—let me see if I can tell you what it tastes like. . . . There, I've poured out a small glassful. [*Drink.*] That's funny! It's very familiar, but I can't just place it. . . . Well, let me see what's next—oh, yes, this bottle here. I'll pour that in.

[*Pour.*]

And now for next—next—next—now what was I talking about? Oh, yes—I'll just taste this again to see what it's like. . . . [*Taste.*] Yum—very nice. . . . Now the next ingre-ingre-ingre-indegrient is—I can't pronounce its name—Now I'll pour that in.

[*Pour.*]

There, now let me taste that. . . . [*Taste.*] A little bit more, I think.

[*Pour.*]

H'm, yes—now let me taste this. . . . [*Taste.*] Very desh-deshl-de-shil-us. . . . H'm, yes. I wonder if this is a pudding or . . . a pudding? Be funny if it was a . . . pudding. Yes—I just love Christmas rec-rec-recipes—of all sorts—[*Giggles.*] Little recipes—big recipes. . . . I'll just taste this and tell you if it is a little recipe or a big recipe. [*Taste.*] It's a *big* recipe, a *great big* recipe. . . . H'm, yes.

. . . Well, I was doing something, I forget what—I must go and see. . . . [*Fade out.*]

WEEMS. Folksies, my eyes are a bit better than Mrs. Penny-feather's. Let me see what this recipe really is. . . . Aha! I thought so. . . . It was not the spirit of Christmas but a recipe for "Spirits for Christmas"

We now give the incorrect time—when you hear the musical note it will be exactly one-half tone flat—get ready—mark time!

[*Sour trombone note.*]

Exactly 7¼ lbs—Mother and child are doing well.

Now, folksies, comes one sports broadcast. To-day we send you a bristle by bristle description of the annual pigskin contest between the Florida College Lemon-pickers and the Alaska University Walruses.

This is the post-season game of post-season games. We now turn you over to Eddie McGurk, America's premier sportscaster and Percival D. C. W. Pother our English guest-announcer at Igloo, Alaska.

[*Break. Crowd noise.*]

POTHER. How do you do, everybody? This is Percival D. C. W. Pother speaking. By Jove! This is positively ripping—you know I've never been to a football game before as you play it here in America. . . . You see, in England we play Rugby, and it's evidently quite different, but I shall know for certain before the game is finished. . . . I'm informed it's customary to give the schedule of the persons participating in the contest.

MCGURK. The line-up—Percy.

POTHER. Oh yes—the line-up at this time— Here it is. “For Alaska University— I. Kayak, R. E.”—What does R. E. signify?

MCGURK. Right End.

POTHER. Quite so—quite so—you know in England that would indicate—Royal Engineers. Rather confusing—er—Murphy R. T. Now what’s that?

MCGURK. Right Tackle.

POTHER. Quite so. By George, here come the teams! [*Band faintly, “Boola-Boola.”*] That’s strange—they’re marching on the field. . . . And why do they carry instruments?

MCGURK. That’s the band.

POTHER. The band—and what has a band to do with a football contest, Mr. McGurk?

MCGURK. Aw . . . they play.

POTHER. But I thought the football teams played. . . . Well, no matter, I daresay it’s the American rules. Now in England—

[*He is interrupted by a cheer.*]

“Rah Rah Rah—Rah Rah Rah!  
You ask her—I’ll ask her—  
Now we’ll all—aska  
Alaska—Alaska—Alaska—  
Yi Yi Yi—Walruses!”

POTHER. Well, by Jove! . . . I don’t quite understand

what's going on—it's not at all like football in England.  
. . . Over there—

[*Cheer.*]

“Pick 'em sour,  
Pick 'em sweet,  
We play football with our feet!  
Poo-poo-pa—doo,  
Vo—do—de—o,  
Pick a lemon and watch it grow!  
Flo—ree—da,  
Flo—ree—da,  
Flo—ree—da.”

POTHER. Just a moment, every one—I feel there's some mistake. I was under the impression there was going to be a football contest of sorts here—

MCGURK. Hold it a minute, Mr. Pother. This is Eddie McGurk speakin', folks. I'm goin' to give you a short description of the local color here. This is the end of the first quarter and the score is Walruses nothing, Lemon-pickers nothing. It's a great contest—all the Eskimos in their furs and the Floridians in their bathing-suits. . . . Here's the whistle—Mr. Pother will continue.

POTHER. Well now, really—this is all rather confusing. . . . I'm not quite sure whether the bands or the people in the stands are competing.

[*Band fade in “Fair Harvard.”*]

They're all performing queer evolutions in the field now and marching up and down—

MCGURK. Eddie McGurk again, folks! Alaska 6, Florida 0 at the end of the first half. The crowd is going mad as the Florida band, 683 strong, forms the figure of a baked alaska on the field. There's the whistle.

[*Band out.*]

POTHER. I'm informed that this is the second half, but I'm not quite sure *whose* half of *what*. . . . There seems to be some sort of game going on *in the stands*.

[*All sing—tune, "Our Director."*]

"Here's to old Alaska,  
Long may she wave!  
We're all Alaskans  
And we never shave.  
We're original tough guys,  
Don't give a hoot—  
Three cheers for Alaska  
And down with Fruit!"

[*Applause.*]

POTHER. As far as my limited knowledge goes I am broadcasting a play-by-play description of the intersectional contest between the—

MCGURK. Eddie McGurk again, folks! Score at the end of the third quarter, Florida Lemon-pickers 13, Alaska Walruses 13. Boy, this is a great game! Looks like the goal-posts are going to be torn up to-night. . . . There's the whistle. I turn the microphone back to Percival Pother.

POTHER. I'm not quite sure why you should, old thing. I

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don't seem to be able to follow the game—as a matter of fact, I'm not sure there is a game.

[*All sing—tune “Tipperary.”*]

“It's a long way down to Flo-ri-da,  
It's a long way to go—  
It's a long way down to Florida  
Away from ice and snow.  
Good-by, Old Alaska,  
Don't you be afraid,  
It's a lemon that we will hand you,  
For you need Lemon-aid! Rah—Rah—Rah!”

POTHER. I'm still endeavoring to give you a play-by-play description of this football game and if you will grant me a moment I will—

MCGURK. Much obliged, Percy. . . . Well, folks, this is Eddie McGurk about to sum up the game—final score 20-13 in favor of the Alaska Walruses. The Florida Lemon-pickers have lost the twenty-third post-season intersectional contest by seven points. The Lemon-pickers lost out on the last song of the game, as they missed a high note with ten seconds to play. Gus Kayak was the star for the Walruses, as he led the cheering section down the field in the last quarter and was not tackled before he crossed the goal-line with the old megaphone tucked safely under his arm. The Lemon-pickers made eight first downs on marching evolutions, but—

[*Orchestra fades in with jazz number.*]

WEEMS. And now, music-lovers everywhere, draw your chairs up to the window and prepare to leap out at any min-

ute, for we present KUKU's Symphonic Razz Orchestra in a decomposition especially suited to its present stage of decay.

To-day our orchestra toys with the "Light Cavalry Overture." It will be played somewhat lighter than usual.

It may finish it, or it may not, depending upon weather conditions.

The 100% American conductor, Robert Armbruster, known to the music world as the Three-Blind Maestro, will follow the baton. Ready, gentlemen!

[*All argue—"No"—"No"—etc.*]

My mistake, they say they're not gentlemen. Anyway, here we go—

[*Police whistle. Orchestra burlesque.*]

And now, folksies, KUKU's Contribution to Dramatic Research, the "Nickelodean" in which, each week, we re-create the old movie-theater and the days when a nickel would give you six short reels from the thrillers and one long reel from the bad air.

To-day's movie is a story of how love came to the underworld during the holidays, entitled "It Isn't the Past That Counts at Christmas—It's the Present." The Nickelodean is open. . . . Overture!

[*Piano.*]

REEL ONE. Society knew that there was an underworld in the great city of New York and it suspected that there might be a sub-underworld, but little did it know of the existence of a sub-sub-underworld. In the midst of this sub-sub-

---

underworld one Gorilla Ginsberg lived, moved, and had his being, for he was known as King of Vice and with him was his henchman One-Eye Louie, his vice-president. It was a cold December night, Christmas Eve, to be exact, as the Gorilla and One-Eye Louie sat plotting within the house they called—home. . . .

GORILLA. Now look here, Louie, here's the plans of the house—see?

LOUIE. Yeah, I getcha, Gorilla.

GORILLA. Now the church is next door, see—

LOUIE. I getcha.

GORILLA. And when the bell strikes ten—I start down the chimney, see?

LOUIE. I getcha.

GORILLA. Now I'll have on me Santy Claus suit, see?

LOUIE. I getcha—Santy Claus suit.

GORILLA. 'At's it. Now I stop here on the third floor and get the money out of the servants' pocket-books, see?

LOUIE. Servants' pocket-books—I getcha.

GORILLA. Then I come out of the fireplace in the second floor and get the jewelry—see?

LOUIE. I getcha—jewelry.

GORILLA. Then I come out of the fireplace on the first floor and get all the silver, see?

LOUIE. Silver—I getcha.

GORILLA. An' if anybody sees me—I tell 'em I'm Santy Claus, see?

LOUIE. Santy Claus—I getcha.

GORILLA. Now accordin' to schedule I should be at the front door with the swag at 10:15, see?

LOUIE. I getcha.

GORILLA. And when the clock strikes one—that's quarter-past—you come drivin' up to the door in your sleigh with your Eskimo suit on and I come down with the bag full of stuff and we drive off—see?

LOUIE. I getcha, Gorilla.

GORILLA. Now you got the four reindeers?

LOUIE. Yeah—I swiped 'em from the zoo last night.

GORILLA. Good! An' if anybody sees us they'll think we're Santy Claus and an Eskimo, see?

LOUIE. I getcha. Gee, that's the berries!

GORILLA. Remember when the clock strikes quarter-past—you be at the door with the sleigh and the reindeers.

LOUIE. O. K., Chief. . . .

[*Music.*]

WEEMS. Was ever more fiendish and cunning plan conceived?  
We leave the two scoundrels and go to the house of John

D. Rockyford—the melon king—where in a bedroom on the second floor, little Gwendolyn Rockyford, the apple of the melon king's eye, was being put to bed.

NURSE. Now, darlin', take off the pearl necklace—there's a good girl.

GWEN. Yes, Nursie.

NURSE. Now the gold bracelets.

GWEN. Yes, Nursie.

NURSE. Now off with the little diamond garters—that's it.

GWEN. Yes, Nursie.

NURSE. Now slip the little platinum and emerald shirtie off.

GWEN. Yes, Nursie.

NURSE. And now—

[*Film breaks.*]

WEEMS. There will be a brief pause while Gwendolyn is being put to bed—I mean while the film is being repaired.

[*Piano interlude. Audience stamps feet and whistles. Film repaired.*]

NURSE. There! Now into bed with you, and let me pull up the gold-embroidered sheets around your little expensive neck and there you are! . . .

GWEN. Thank you, Nursie.

NURSE. You're welcome, darlin'. . . Bless your little trusting heart!

GWEN. Nursie!

NURSE. Yes, darlin'.

GWEN. How did the market close to-day?

NURSE. It was a good firm market, darlin'.

GWEN. Goodie! . . . Now I can go to sleep happy.

NURSE. Ah, how simple—how sweet—how unaffected!  
. . . Good night, dear.

GWEN. Good night, Nursie.

[*Snores. Clock strikes ten. Noise of descending.*]

GORILLA. Ah—the second floor! . . . Good! . . . Now where is—ah—jewelry—a pearl necklace—gold bracelets—diamond garters—swell loot! . . . Now to make my getaway.

GWEN. Ooh! . . . Are you Santa Claus? . . .

GORILLA. Curses! . . . Oh, it's only a little girl. . . . Think fast, Gorilla, think fast! . . . Yes, little girl, I'm Santy Claus.

GWEN. I knew you because of your red suit and your white whiskers.

GORILLA. [*Aside.*] The disguise saved me—good!

GWEN. My name is Gwendolyn Rockyford.

GORILLA. Hello—er—Gwendolyn.

GWEN. May I sit on your lap?

GORILLA. Er—yes—come here.

GWEN. Now talk to me, Santa Claus.

GORILLA. [*Aside.*] I must play a part. . . . Well, well, Gwendolyn, and what do you want for Christmas?

GWEN. Nothing.

GORILLA. What?!

GWEN. No, I am very happy and I want other little boys and girls to have my presents.

[*Applause from audience.*]

GORILLA. What—er—well—

GWEN. Yes—you will give them my presents, won't you?

GORILLA. [*Aside.*] This is unbelievable. Why, yes, Gwendolyn, I will give them to other boys and girls.

GWEN. Goodie! . . . I love other boys and girls.

GORILLA. [*Aside.*] A daughter of the rich—and how simple and unaffected!

GWEN. I love you, too.

GORILLA. What!

GWEN. Yes.

GORILLA. [*Aside.*] This is the first time any one has ever said that to me. . . . Thank you, Gwendolyn.

GWEN. Why, Santa Claus—there are tears in your eyes!

GORILLA. Er—it must be perspiration, dear—this fur suit is very hot.

GWEN. Poor Santa! . . . But you must be happy because you do so much good.

GORILLA. [*Aside.*] I do good? I, who have stolen and robbed all my life!

GWEN. You have restored my faith in life.

GORILLA. I?

GWEN. Yes. . . . You see, I never believed in Santa Claus—until to-night.

[*Applause.*]

GORILLA. [*Aside.*] Curses on you, Gorilla Ginsberg! . . . You who have never done a clean thing in your life—but wait—here is my chance.

GWEN. I love everybody.

GORILLA. Gwendolyn, to-night you have done a wonderful thing. . . . I cannot tell you what, but you have changed the course of a man's life—

[*Clock strikes one. Sleigh-bells fade in.*]

Hark! Now, Gwendolyn, there is my sleigh—I must go. . . . I will leave my bag here. . . . You—you may open it in the morning—and now . . . little girl . . . will you—will you—will you give me a kiss?

GWEN. Of course, dear Santa Claus. [*Smack.*] There!

GORILLA. Ah, I am a new man! Good-by, Gwendolyn!

GWEN. Good-by, Santa Claus!

[*Applause. Music. Sleigh-bells full up.*]

LOUIE. Whoa, there, Donder! Whoa, Blitzen! Ah, here he comes!

GORILLA. Drive, Louie, drive like mad!

LOUIE. But where's the swag?

GORILLA. There ain't no swag.

LOUIE. What? . . . No swag?

GORILLA. No—I'm a new man! Drive, I tell you, drive!

[*Sleigh-bells fade out.*]

BOTH. [*Argue, fading out. Applause. Music.*]

NURSE. Why, Gwendolyn—are you awake?

GWEN. I'll say I am.

NURSE. What have you there, dear?

[*Jingle of metal.*]

GWEN. Presents.

NURSE. Presents?

GWEN. Well, sort of—

NURSE. A gold watch, a knife—a key-ring, a silver cigarette-case, a flash-light—and \$500 in cash! Why, Gwendolyn, where did you get these?

GWEN. Santa Claus.

NURSE. Santa Claus?

GWEN. Yes, he was just here and I found them in his pockets.

NURSE. Oh! . . . How simple, how sweet, how unaffected!

[*Music up to close. Applause.*]

WEEMS. And now comes the Kiddies' Hour. . . . Yoo-hoo, Kiddies, Uncle Ambrose has a story for you.

ALL. Yah.

WEEMS. It's all about Santa Claus.

ALL. Who cares?

WEEMS. Come over here to the microphone so the little children in the radio audience can hear too.

AMBROSIA. Gee, the little children in the radio audience are lucky.

WEEMS. I'm glad you think so, Ambrosia dear.

AMBROSIA. Yeah—*they* can tune out, but *we* have to listen to you.

ALL. [*Giggle.*]

WEEMS. That will do, Kiddies. . . . Now to-day I have a story for you about why Santa Claus' reindeers have horns on their heads.

AMBROSIA. I know why.

WEEMS. Do you, dear? Why?

AMBROSIA. 'Cause they look like the devil.

ALL. [*Giggle.*]

WEEMS. Ambrosia! Now once upon a time when Santa Claus first started bringing presents to you—

AMBROSIA. Started what?

WEEMS. Bringing presents to you.

AMBROSIA. Say—are you trying to kid us?

ALL. [*Giggles.*]

WEEMS. Why, children, of course not.

AMBROSIA. O. K. Then shoot!

WEEMS. Well—once upon a time Santa Claus had eight deer to pull his sleigh, and when it came time for him to build a new house he had to figure out stables for the deer to live in, so he had a bright idea. He built in the house a hunting-room or a trophy-room.

AMBROSIA. I know what a trophy is.

WEEMS. Do you, dear? What is it?

AMBROSIA. A trophy is what you get when you have hardening of the arteries.

WEEMS. Yes, dear. . . . Education is a wonderful thing. So Santa Claus built his trophy-room and hung up his guns and his snowshoes, but he didn't have any heads to hang up.

AMBROSIA. Any heads?

WEEMS. Yes, darling.

AMBROSIA. Did you hang up the one you got at the *party*, night before last?

WEEMS. The one *I* got?

AMBROSIA. Yeah, I heard you say yesterday morning you had an awful head that you got at the party the night before.

WEEMS. Yes, dear—ha, ha! so Santy Claus—

AMBROSIA. You didn't say anything about hanging it up—but you *did* say something about a hang *over*.

WEEMS. Here, Ambrosia—here's a nickel for you—now keep quiet.

AMBROSIA. Ooh, gee!

WEEMS. Well, so Santy Claus wanted some heads to hang in his trophy-room—you know, animals that he had bagged while hunting.

AMBROSIA. Like you make bags out of alligators?

WEEMS. Roughly, dear, roughly.

AMBROSIA. Do you know what kind of fruit two alligators would make?

WEEMS. No, dear—they don't make fruit.

AMBROSIA. Yes, they do—two alligators make an alligator pear.

ALL. [*Giggle.*]

WEEMS. But then Santy Claus got his idea and he built the eight stables for the eight reindeers around his trophy-room,

and he cut eight holes in the walls, one into each stable, and around each hole he put a frame, and then the eight reindeers would stand in their stables and put their heads through the holes in the wall, and so he had eight mounted deer-heads all around the trophy-room at no extra expense.

ALL. Ooh—dear!

WEEMS. But the deer had only two ears on their heads, and they could pull back their heads at any time and leave a hole in the wall. You see if Santy had made the holes so small that they *couldn't* pull them back, they couldn't get them in to begin with.

ALL. Oh—

WEEMS. And it was very embarrassing for Santa Claus to have one of the local Eskimos in to dinner and to take him into the trophy-room and to point to one of these reindeer and to say, "Now I shot this splendid specimen in Africa in the fall of 1899," and then find he was pointing to an empty hole.

AMBROSIA. Holes are usually empty, aren't they?

WEEMS. Yes, sweetheart! So there Santa Claus was . . . if the holes were too *small*, the reindeer couldn't get their heads into the frames, and if they were too *big* they pulled them back at the wrong time. He was on the two horns of a dilemma—but he solved the problem.

ALL. What did he do?

WEEMS. Well, you see each reindeer presented a dilemma, so he took two horns of each dilemma and fastened them

on each reindeer's head and they couldn't pull them back—and that is why reindeers have horns to-day!

[*Music.*]

WEEMS. And so, folksies, we leave you with a smile—a tear—perhaps—perhaps a touch of nausea. We are just doing our bit, and may we remind you of our motto? You can fool some of the people some of the time and you can fool some of the people some of the time but you can't fool some of the people some of the time.

This is Ambrose J. Weems thinking only of you.

[*Break.*]

CLOSING ANNOUNCEMENT. And so ends the Cuckoo Hour from Station KUKU. You have been listening to the Cuckoos under the leadership of Raymond Knight in his radio character of Ambrose J. Weems, and consisting of Adelina Thomason, Eustace Wyatt, Elsie Mae Gordon, and others. This is Alwyn Bach going out to do his Xmas shopping.

The Cuckoo Hour has come to you from our New York studios as a persecution of the National Broadcasting Company.

## SCRIPT V

EACH week "Hank Simmons' Showboat," a feature of the Columbia Broadcasting Company, presents one of the old melodramas. The play is enacted aboard the showboat and the actual melodrama is preceded by scenes before and after the production aboard the floating theater. The series is written and adapted by Harry C. Browne, who also plays the rôle of *Hank Simmons*.

The program series has been very successful. Extracts from the showboat production of "Ingomar the Barbarian" are given here to illustrate this "play within a play" technique.

The production runs an hour.

### HANK SIMMONS' SHOWBOAT \*

BY HARRY C. BROWNE

#### INGOMAR THE BARBARIAN

OPENING ANNOUNCEMENT. To-night Hank Simmons' floating theater, *The Maybelle*, lies moored along the levee of a Mississippi River town, actors and stage-hands are making final preparations for the evening performance, while outside along the levee the crowds are beginning to gather, attracted by Hank's band, which is giving the customary eve-

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ning concert before the big show begins aboard the showboat.

*[Band march once through allegro—no repeats.]*

**BARKER.** This way, folks! This way to the big show! See the Hank Simmons Dramatic Comedy Company, playing the popular classical drama, "Ingomar the Barbarian." Four acts, with specialties between, no waits, show going on all the time! The first performance of this delightful comedy drama ever given aboard the showboat. Act one: The capture. Act two: The hostage. Act three: The conversion. Act Four: All's well that ends well. See Hank Simmons in the greatest part of his showboat career as Ingomar the Barbarian! See Maybelle as Parthenia, the beautiful Grecian maid! Special scenes and costumes for this beautiful Grecian play! This way, folks! Remember the prices—no advance for this great performance. 10—20—30 cents. Box-office in the gangway yonder. Come one! Come all! See the great Hank Simmons Quartette and don't forget charming dainty Jane McGrew in their delightful specialties between the acts! This way, everybody!

#### IN THE GANGWAY

*[Repeat announcement until music stops.]*

**BILL.** Keep in line, folks. Have your money ready. 10—20—30 cents. Box seats a half a dollar. Don't block the gangway, please.

**HANK.** Well! Well! If this isn't a big surprise. Bill, look who's coming in the gangway.

**BILL.** Hello, Jack, how are you?

JACK. Never better.

HANK. Jack Allen!

JACK. Hello, Hank! Gee, but you're looking fine!

HANK. Well, we have to these days. But I don't see you running into any decline either.

JACK. Gee, it's been eight years since I quit you.

HANK. You didn't quit. I fired you.

JACK. Ha, ha, yes, you did not! You know I gave you a week's notice.

HANK. Yes, and you remember I said I never let an actor leave me for a better job. I always fire 'em, and why shouldn't I? I hate to lose good actors.

JACK. Thank you, boss, for those kind words. How's Ma Simmons, Maybelle, and the rest of the show?

HANK. Everybody's fine. Got a few new faces since you were with the show.

JACK. Think I know any of them?

HANK. Well, we got a new quartette—a corker. They all double in the show and two of the boys double in brass.

JACK. Remember when I joined the show you asked me if I "doubled in brass," and I said "Yes," and you said, "What brass instrument do you play?" And I said, "Cymbals."

HANK. Yes, and I said, "I can't hire you, my cymbals are German silver."

BOTH. [*Laugh.*]

JACK. Gee, those were the days—\$15.00 a week and cakes!

HANK. Yes, and you got your money every week.

JACK. Some weeks. [*Laugh.*] Who else you got with the show?

HANK. I got a great heavy man. Dewitt Schuyler.

JACK. He took Percival Longstreet's place. Oh, yes. He used to be with Larry Grattan in the Rep business.

HANK. That's the same fellow. Then we got a new ingénue soubrette, Jane McGrew.

JACK. Specialty artist?

HANK. Yes, songs.

JACK. What you playing to-night?

HANK. "Ingomar the Barbarian."

JACK. "Two souls with but a single thought, two hearts that beat as one."

HANK. I see you remember the lines.

JACK. Why shouldn't I? I played in the bill three years when I was with Daniel Ryan up in New England.

HANK. Yes. Ryan used to be a ball-player—pretty good actor, Dan was.

JACK. You said it. Well, Hank, you haven't asked me what I'm doing.

HANK. You haven't given me time. [*Laugh.*] Well, I suppose you're still in the show business.

JACK. Yes, but not trouping as I used to do. No more one-night stands.

HANK. No?

JACK. I'm putting on "Damon and Pythias" for local Knights of Pythias societies. I stay about three weeks in a town, live like a prince, and associate with the best folks in town.

HANK. That's all good, Jack, but I'm afraid one week in a town and I'd have to be on the move. I guess I've trouped too long to stay in one place any longer. Well, Jack, I've got to get into the make-up. Go right into the show—and will I see you after the play?

JACK. You bet. Well, so long, Hank. It's good to see you again.

HANK. Same here, Jack.

BILL. Come right along, Jack.

JACK. Bill, you look the same as you did eight years ago.

USHER. Seat-checks, please!

BILL. Put this gentleman in a box, Charlie.

USHER. This way, sir. Box B.

JACK. House is filling up pretty good, isn't it?

USHER. Yes. Saturday night, you know.

JACK. Well, if here isn't Bill Potter just going to make his song-book special!

[*Crowd noise stops.*]

**BARKER.** Ladies and gentlemen, there are still a few minutes before the big show starts and I want to call to your attention the only original Hank Simmons Showboat Song Album, containing the words and music to twenty popular songs, several pages beautifully illustrated with scenes taken along the rivers, and a handsome likeness of each and every member of the company. As a special inducement Mr. Simmons has asked me to make a reduction in the price of the Song Book, so this being the last night in your city, I shall close them out for a dime, ten cents, the tenth part of a dollar. My agents will now pass among you.

*[Crowd ask for books—five seconds.]*

**BARKER.** Here you are! Thank you—your change, madam. Don't forget your change. Remember, no books sold during the performance!

*[Applause and cheers. Tuning instruments. Overture—three minutes. Applause and cheers.]*

**HANK.** Howdy, folks! *[Applause.]* Everybody happy! *[Laughter.]* I can tell by your smiling faces you expect us to give you a good show to-night. Well, we'll do our best. The play is by Maria Lovell, and is called "Ingomar the Barbarian." It tells the story of a beautiful Greek girl who offers herself to a band of barbarians as a hostage for her father, who had been captured. I'll not tell any farther what happens. I only explain the idea in general. The scenes take place in and around the Grecian city of Massila about 400 B. C.—in ancient times. The principal characters in the story and the actors playing them are these: Polydor, a merchant and miser of Massila, played by Dewitt Schuyler. Myron,

Parthenia's father, and armorer of Massila, played by Joe Carroll. The Timarch of Massila, played by George Morris. Ingomar the Barbarian, leader of the Allemani, played by me, Hank Simmons. Alastor, Ingomar's lieutenant, played by Happy Jack Lewis. Lykon, a fisherman, played by Frank Miller. The ladies in the play are: Parthenia, a beautiful Greek maid, played by Maybelle; Actea, her mother, played by Lettie Simmons; and Theano, a widow, Myron's neighbor, played by Jane McGrew. The first act shows a street scene in the ancient village of Massila. It is late afternoon, the scene shows the market-place in front of an archway. Down to the left is Myron's house—a spinning-wheel and stool are in front of the house. Opposite on the right stage is the house of Polydor, the old miser. As the curtain rises Parthenia is discovered at her spinning-wheel. Her mother Actea enters a moment after the curtain rises. Well, folks, this is a fine play, and we hope you'll enjoy it as much as we do playing it for you. We're all ready, so I'll leave you and get the curtain up.

[*Applause.*]

HANK. Clear stage! First act! Lights, turning to purple. Flash the orchestra! [*Medium rise eight bars.*] Take it away!

[*Applause.*]

ACTEA. The sun is nearly set—the city gates will quickly close. Your father comes not home . . . Parthenia . . . daughter . . . child.

PARTH. Well, Mother dear?

ACTEA. Listen, wild one—so now sit thee down. This neigh-

bor Polydor is rich—a widower indeed. He asks thy hand.  
. . . 'Tis time to think of marriage.

PARTH. Oh . . . he is old . . . gray-headed . . . gouty  
. . . coarse . . . with a hyena's heart . . . and a monkey's  
form. . . . Young, am I, Mother, joyous, happy too . . .  
no, dear Mother, not him . . . not him.

ACTEA. Perhaps thou thinkest the man in the moon would  
be a fitting spouse. . . . What waitest thou for, I say?

PARTH. I am waiting, Mother, till my heart doth speak. . . .

[*Note: Here the play continues. . . . Between each act  
HANK SIMMONS steps in front of the curtain and explains the  
scene to follow. His introduction to Act II follows:*]

[*Applause.*]

HANK. Now, folks, we come to Act Two of our play. This  
scene shows a spot in the mountains where the barbarians have  
made their camp. These wild barbarians, clothed in skins,  
are gathered about the evening fire awaiting supper. Armor,  
spears, shields, helmets, are scattered about the grass. Ingomar  
is asleep. As the curtain rises Myron, the prisoner, is at the  
kettle, the barbarians are gambling away their ill-gotten  
gains. Well, in a minute we'll have the curtain up. So long,  
folks!

[*Applause.*]

HANK. Clear stage! Second act! Barbarians ready! Flash the  
orchestra!

[*Agitato till cue.*]

Take it away!

MAN. [*In anger.*] Dog . . . dog . . . down!

ANOTHER. Murderous villain! The stake is mine.

MAN. Your blood or mine!

ANOTHER. Who dares? Ingomar . . . leader . . . see!

[*And so on. The following excerpt illustrates the manner in which the play is ended.*]

INGOMAR. Hush, my swelling heart has but one thought, for one word—*Parthenia*—mine! Forever mine! To love I owe this bliss. [*Kiss.*]

PARTHENIA. To love and honor!

INGOMAR. Ah! Now, forever we are joined—"two souls with but a single thought, two hearts that beat as one."

[*Applause. Cheers.*]

VOICE. Curtain!

[*"Segue March."*]

VOICE. Show's all over! This way out, everybody!

CLOSING ANNOUNCEMENT. You have been listening to Hank Simmons' Showboat Company playing the classical melodrama, "Ingomar the Barbarian." Next week you are invited to attend the performance of the Western drama, "Triss, or Beyond the Rockies." Your announcer is Harry Von Zell. This is the *Columbia* . . . Broadcasting System.

## SCRIPT VI

THE following script is one in a daily series. It was written by the author of this book and is reprinted here because it is an example of an "action" sketch. Reports received from listeners after the broadcast indicated that the illusion of Kenneth Lee's climbing the pole, to capture the turkey, was created satisfactorily. The actual playing time of the sketch was twelve minutes and the opening and closing announcements ran three minutes. A sketch of this type requires careful direction and production and the sound effects must be thoroughly rehearsed.

### RAISING JUNIOR \*

(SULTANA ESCAPES)

BY PETER DIXON

OPENING ANNOUNCEMENT. "Raising Junior," the Wheatena serial story, comes to you at this time every evening except Monday through the courtesy of The Wheatena Corporation . . . maker of Wheatena . . . the delicious wheat cereal—sun-browned, roasted, and toasted.

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How frequently you have that hungry, empty feeling around eleven o'clock in the morning! Too early for lunch . . . too late for a "snack" . . . so you just put up with an hour or so of discomfort. But try this interesting experiment! Get a package of Wheatena—the toasty, nut-like wheat cereal—from your grocer to-day . . . and enjoy a steaming, fragrant dish of it for to-morrow's breakfast. Then observe results around eleven o'clock. How much more alert and energetic you feel! How much better, without that empty, hungry feeling! For Wheatena supplies plenty of vital strength and energy to carry you through the long period between breakfast and lunch. Just ask your grocer for this delicious, nourishing cereal in the familiar yellow and blue package.

And write in this evening for your copy of "Feeding the Child from Crib to College." This little book, you know, was written especially for The Wheatena Corporation by an eminent authority on diet. It contains information on family feeding that every mother should have at hand. And besides, it provides many attractive menus and delicious recipes to lighten the burden of meal-planning. Just send your name and address to The Wheatena Corporation, Rahway—R-a-h-w-a-y—New Jersey, and you will receive your complimentary copy by return mail.

Yesterday, Ken decided to make a study of baby foods, not only in the interests of Junior, but because his firm is anxious to obtain the account of a firm manufacturing such products. To-day was a half-holiday for Ken . . . and he had all afternoon to spend at home . . . so let's drop down to the Lee's little apartment and see if he's putting his time to good use.

## THE PLAY

JOAN. Ken! . . . Wake up!

KEN. Mmmmmmm . . . ugh . . . won't take less than a hundred thousand . . .

JOAN. Ken! . . . It's after six—you've been asleep for two hours.

KEN. Gosh . . . gee, I must have been dreaming!

JOAN. What did you dream, Kenny? . . .

KEN. S'funny. . . . I was dreaming three big advertising agencies were begging me to work for them. . . .

JOAN. Oh, I see . . . and you were demanding a salary of a hundred thousand dollars a year . . .

KEN. Yes . . . that was it. . . . How did you know? . . .

JOAN. I heard you make the demand. . . . Well, darling . . . you're awake now . . . and it's time to feed Sultana. . . .

KEN. Back to earth! . . . Gee . . . and turkeys must be fed. . . .

JOAN. And Junior has to be fed, too, pretty soon. . . . Sultana's food is in the kitchen . . . and, Ken . . . you put on a coat before you go outside. . . .

KEN. All right. . . . [*Fades.*] Gee . . . a hundred thousand a year . . .

JOAN. [*Humming.*]

Lady moon . . . lady moon . . .  
Sailing high above . . .  
Lady moon . . . lady moon . . .  
Watch my little love. . . .

Now come on, Junior precious . . . Mother's going to fix you up for the night. . . . Getting sleepy, baby? . . . Pretty soon you can have your bottle. . . . [*Sings.*] Lady moon . . . lady moon . . . Sailing high above . . . Lady moon . . . lady moon . . .

KEN. [*Calling.*] Joanie! . . . Joanie! . . . Come here quick!

JOAN. [*Calling.*] What's the matter?

KEN. Come here! . . . Hurry up!

JOAN. All right. . . . Junior . . . you stay right there. . . . What's wrong, Ken? . . .

KEN. Sultana got away. . . .

JOAN. Where is she? . . .

KEN. Look . . . there she is . . . up in that tree. . . . Sultana, come down here . . . come down! . . .

JOAN. Ken . . . what happened? . . .

KEN. I opened the pen to put her food in and she jumped out and flew up in the tree. . . . Sultana . . . come on down here! . . .

JOAN. Oh, dear! . . . Now what are we going to do? . . .

KEN. I'll have to climb the tree and get her, I guess. . . .

JOAN. Ken . . . that tree isn't strong enough to hold you . . . and Sultana is away out on the end of a limb. . . .

KEN. Hey . . . turkey . . . come on down here! . . .

JOAN. The poor bird . . . she'll freeze away up there. . . .

KEN. Well, if that darn turkey hasn't enough sense to come down . . . she ought to freeze. . . . And you'd better put on a coat if you are going to stay out here. . . .

JOAN. Look, Ken! . . . She's stretching her wings. . . . Look . . . here she's coming down! . . .

KEN. Good! Now I'll catch her. . . . Come here, Sultana . . . nice Sultana . . . come on and get your supper. . . .

[SULTANA *gobbles.*]

JOAN. Grab her, Ken! . . .

KEN. Nice Sultana . . . come here . . . There! . . . Ugh . . . doggone that turkey!

JOAN. Catch her, Kenny! . . .

KEN. [*Running.*] Come here, Sultana . . . come here . . . Doggone it! . . .

JOAN. Look out, Ken! . . .

KEN. [*Falls.*] Ugh . . . ouch . . . doggone it! . . .

JOAN. Ken . . . did you hurt yourself?

KEN. No . . . but if I hadn't tripped and fallen I would have caught that turkey.

JOAN. Oh, you looked so funny chasing Sultana! . . .

KEN. Well, you chase her a while and give me a chance to laugh.

[LOBO enters the scene and barks.]

JOAN. Lobo . . . come here! . . .

KEN. Joan . . . grab Lobo! . . . Don't let him start after that bird, we'll never catch her.

[Sounds of turkey and LOBO all mingled together during following scene.]

JOAN. Lobo . . . come here, sir! . . . Lobo! . . . He can't catch that turkey.

KEN. No . . . [Panting.] . . . but if I don't catch Lobo we'll never get that turkey. . . . Lobo . . . ah . . . I got you! . . .

JOAN. I'll hold him, Ken.

KEN. Here . . . and don't let him go. . . . Sultana . . . nice Sultana . . . come and get your supper. . . .

JOAN. Oh, dear! . . . Now she's on the fence. . . . Catch her quick, Ken! . . .

KEN. If she ever gets over that fence into the alley . . . good-by, Sultana! . . .

JOAN. Ken . . . there she goes . . . there she goes! . . .

KEN. Gosh . . . look at that turkey fly! . . . Gee . . . she must be partly wild. . . .

JOAN. Now look at her . . . on top of that old light-pole . . .

KEN. Gee . . . if I only had a ladder we could get her!

JOAN. It would take an awfully long ladder to reach the top of that pole . . . and she'd probably fly somewhere else by the time you got up there.

KEN. Gosh . . . what a mess! . . . Joanie . . . what are we going to do?

JOAN. See if you can coax her down. . . .

KEN. Sultana . . . nice turkey . . . nice turkey . . . come on down here! . . . Hmmm . . . looks like she's settled down here for the night. . . . Hey . . . what do you think you are . . . a flag-pole sitter?

JOAN. Ken . . . we've got to do something. . . . She'll freeze to death up there to-night. . . .

KEN. Maybe we'd better call the police. . . .

JOAN. No . . . I think we'd better call the fire department. . . .

KEN. Gosh . . . nothing's on fire! . . .

JOAN. I know . . . but usually the fire department rescues cats and things when they climb up poles and won't come down. . . . Oh, dear! . . . I left Junior in there . . . I've got to see how he is. . . .

KEN. Wait! . . . I'll 'phone the fire department and see what I can do.

JOAN. All right. . . .

[*Pause as they reënter the apartment.*]

KEN. Operator . . . I want the fire department. . . . (Is there a fire?) No . . . nothing on fire . . . but I want the fire department. . . . (What's the trouble?) Something is wrong with my turkey . . . (I'll connect you with the right party.) . . . Joan . . . she said she'd connect me with the right party. . . . Oh, hello! . . . What's that? . . . Why, my turkey is up on top of a pole and I can't get him down. . . . What? . . . Oh . . . I'm sorry! . . . Good-by. . . . Gosh . . . what a dumb trick!

JOAN. What's wrong, Ken?

KEN. The operator connected me with the poultry inspector's office . . . and he said he didn't inspect any poultry on top of a pole. . . .

JOAN. Ken . . . maybe you'd better call the police department. They usually know what to do in emergencies.

KEN. I guess I'd better. . . . Joan . . . will you take a look out back and see if Sultana is still there? . . .

JOAN. All right . . . I left Lobo watching her. . . .

KEN. Spring three one hundred. . . . She still there, Joan? . . .

JOAN. Yes, and Lobo is watching her—he won't let her get away.

**KEN.** Hello! Police headquarters? . . . (What do you want?) Listen . . . my turkey got away. . . . (Just a minute.) . . . Hello, who is this? . . . (Lost and Found.) Listen . . . this is Kenneth Lee at sixteen Charles Street. . . . My turkey got away . . . (Your what got away?) My turkey. . . . (Spell it, please.) Turkey . . . t-u-r-k-e-y. . . . You know . . . what you eat for Christmas . . . turkey . . . (Oh, a turkey!) Yes . . . it was a turkey and she got away. . . . (Describe the turkey, please, Mr. Lee.) Oh, there's no use to describe her—you can see her. . . . She's roosting on top of a pole. . . . (She isn't missing, then?) No . . . she isn't missing . . . but I can't get her to come down off the pole. . . . (Sorry, can't do anything for you. . . . If you know where she is she isn't lost . . . and this is the Lost and Found Bureau.) Well, if you can't help me . . . who can? . . . (Call the telephone company.) . . . All right . . . good-by. . . .

**JOAN.** Can't they do anything?

**KEN.** No . . . the man says if we know where the turkey is it isn't lost and so the Lost and Found Bureau can't do anything about it. Now what are we going to do?

**JOAN.** Didn't he make any suggestions?

**KEN.** He said to call the telephone company.

**JOAN.** But that isn't a telephone-pole—it's an old light-pole.

**KEN.** I forgot to explain that. . . . Joanie . . . look and see if Sultana is still on that pole.

**JOAN.** All right.

KEN. [*To himself.*] Now let me think . . . there must be some place in New York where you can get some one to get a turkey off a pole. . . .

JOAN. She's still there, Ken. . . .

KEN. Joan . . . I know . . . I'll call up a newspaper.

JOAN. Why?

KEN. Newspaper men are smart. . . . Maybe they'll know what to do or where I can get somebody who'll recover Sultana.

JOAN. I guess it's worth trying.

KEN. I'll call the "Gazette." . . . Hello, operator . . . give me Park Place two five hundred. . . . Yeah . . . that's it. . . . Anything is worth a chance, Joanie. . . . ("Gazette.") Hello . . . "Gazette" . . . give me the city editor, please. . . . (City desk.) Hello . . . city editor . . . listen . . . this is Kenneth Lee at sixteen Charles Street. . . . My turkey got away . . . (I'll give you the want-ad department.) No . . . I don't want to insert a want ad. . . . The turkey is up on top of a pole and I can't get him down . . . (Say . . . are you trying to kid me?) No, I'm not trying to kid you—this is serious. . . . (You say your turkey is on top of a pole and won't come down. . . . How high is the pole?) Oh, the pole is about twenty-five feet high. . . . (Good! I'll send a photographer around right away.) . . . What? . . . I don't want a photographer! . . . Hey, wait! . . . Gosh . . . he hung up!

JOAN. Now what?

KEN. He said it sounded like a good picture and he'd send a

photographer around right away. . . . But how are we going to get Sultana off that pole? . . .

JOAN. Ken . . . do you think you could climb that pole and catch Sultana? . . .

KEN. I could try.

JOAN. Have you got your old clothes on?

KEN. Uh-huh.

JOAN. Sounds like the only thing you can do.

KEN. Well, let's get going. . . . You don't have to come out with me, though—it's cold outside.

JOAN. Wait! . . . I'll put Junior in his crib. . . . Perhaps I can give you a boost. . . .

KEN. I had some old gloves around here some place. . . . Gee, I wish I had some climbing-irons! . . . Joan . . . do you think I ought to call up the telephone company and see if I can borrow some climbing-irons?

JOAN. And Sultana might freeze before they got here.

KEN. Well, let's go. . . .

JOAN. Just a minute . . .

KEN. Here . . . I'll help you with that coat. . . . There!

JOAN. Now, Daddy . . . let's see if you've forgotten how to climb.

*[Pause as they exit.]*

KEN. Well, she's still up there. . . . [SULTANA gobbles

faintly.] Sultana . . . here's your last chance. . . . If you don't come down I'm coming after you! . . .

JOAN. Look, Ken . . . she's trying to fly! . . .

KEN. Gosh . . . we'll never see that turkey again. . . .

JOAN. Oh! Her foot must be caught up there—she can't seem to get off the pole. . . .

KEN. Gee! . . . Then maybe I've got a chance of getting her. . . .

JOAN. Ken . . . what are you going to do with that piece of rope?

KEN. Tie it around my waist and around the pole—that's the way the South Seas natives climb cocoanut-trees. . . . Maybe it'll work in Greenwich Village—hope so, anyway.

[LOBO barks.]

JOAN. Lobo . . . keep quiet! . . .

KEN. Well, honey . . . here goes! . . .

JOAN. Wait! . . . [Kisses him.] That's for good luck.

[During the following scene KEN's tones are what might be expected from a young man attempting to climb a telephone-pole after the manner of a South Seas native.]

KEN. Ugh . . . this is going to be hard work! . . .

JOAN. Take it easy, Daddy—it's a long way to the top.

KEN. Ugh . . . don't I know it? . . . Ugh . . . I hope this rope doesn't break. . . .

JOAN. Ken . . . when you get up there will you be able to get down?

KEN. What's that?

JOAN. I said, when you get up to the top will you be able to get down?

KEN. Gosh . . . I never thought of that! . . .

JOAN. I mean with Sultana to carry. . . .

KEN. Mmmmmm. . . . Wait! . . . It's all right, Joan—I've got a piece of string in my pocket. . . . I can tie Sultana's legs and drop her down. You'll have to catch her, though. Ugh . . . gee, but it's cold! . . . Ugh . . .

JOAN. Take it easy, Kenny—you've got plenty of time. . . .

KEN. Ugh . . . ouch! . . .

JOAN. What's the matter, dear?

KEN. Doggone it! . . . Got a splinter in me. . . .

JOAN. In your hand?

KEN. No . . . but it hurts just the same. Ugh! . . . this is work! . . .

JOAN. To think that my son's father would turn out to be a pole-climber!

KEN. Listen . . . this isn't funny . . . and if you think it is . . . you try climbing this dod-gasted pole. . . .

JOAN. Gee, Ken, you're almost half-way up!

KEN. I think I'll rest a minute. . . . Joan . . . what have you got for supper?

JOAN. Ken! . . . This is no time and you're in no place to discuss that.

KEN. Well, I hope it's something hot—this is cold work . . . and I guess it'll get colder as I go higher. . . . Ugh! . . . might as well get it over with . . . ugh . . . ugh, dad-blame it! . . .

JOAN. Ken! . . . Ken! . . . Look out! . . . You're slipping! . . .

KEN. Ugh . . . there . . . gee! . . . I hit a slippery place on the pole. . . .

JOAN. Oh, you scared me! . . .

KEN. I'm all right—the rope stopped me. . . . Well . . . here we go! . . . Ugh . . . ugh . . . ugh . . .

PHOTOG. Hey, Mr. Lee, just hold that pose, will you?

KEN. Say . . . who are you? . . .

PHOTOG. I'm Martin . . . photographer from the "Gazette." . . . Hold it! . . . [*Boom!*] There . . . gee . . . that'll make a swell picture! . . . Say, Mr. Lee . . . how do you spell your last name? . . .

KEN. Listen . . . what's the big idea anyway? . . . Who told you you could take a picture of me? . . .

PHOTOG. Aw, say, Mr. Lee . . . didn't you 'phone the office and tell 'em you were going to climb a pole and catch a turkey or something? . . . Gee . . . that's a swell news picture! . . . Greenwich Villager Climbs Pole to Rescue Turk from Icy Blasts . . .

KEN. Ugh . . . ugh . . .

JOAN. Do you think it's nice to come here and take a picture of my husband in such an undignified . . . uh . . . position?

PHOTOG. Gee . . . lady . . . this is a swell picture! . . . Why, he's a regular hero—I bet the S.P.C.A. give him a medal or something for saving the boid.

JOAN. Well, now you're here . . . can't you think of some way of helping him?

PHOTOG. He's doing pretty good. . . . Say, he'd make Shipwreck Kelly jealous—honest he would!

JOAN. Well, you'll have to help me catch the turkey when he drops it down.

PHOTOG. Sure lady . . . sure . . . and then can I have a picture of you and Mr. Lee and the turkey all together?

JOAN. Oh, anything . . . just so's you'll help us.

PHOTOG. Look, lady! . . . He's almost to the top. . . . Atta baby, Mr. Lee! Say . . . can you hold that pose just a minute? I want to get another shot.

KEN. [*Away.*] Listen . . . forget about that camera, will you?

JOAN. You're almost there, Ken—keep it up! . . .

KEN. Ugh . . . gee . . . I'm tired! . . . I don't think I can make it.

JOAN. Rest a minute, Ken—you're almost at the top.

PHOTOG. Encourage him, Mrs. Lee! . . . Gee, if he doesn't make it, I'll lose the best picture of the day.

[SULTANA *gobbles.*]

KEN. Ah . . . now I got you!

[*Following scene fast and excited.*]

JOAN. Be careful, Ken—don't slip!

PHOTOG. Grab her, Mr. Lee! That's it! Oh, boy, what a picture!

KEN. I got her! . . . Hey . . . Sultana, hold still!

JOAN. Look out, Ken! Look out!

PHOTOG. Gee . . . he's slipping! Where did I put those extra plates? Hold it, Mr. Lee, hold it!

KEN. Look out below!

JOAN. Kenny . . . Kenny . . . Look out! . . . Look out! . . . Oh, he's slipping!

[*There is a crash . . . many exclamations . . . LOBO barks . . . the turkey squawks.*]

JOAN. He's falling! . . . Oh, grab him! . . . Save him!

KEN. Somebody grab this turkey! . . . Here I come!

JOAN. Oh, Kenny—are you killed?

KEN. [*Pained.*] I don't know yet.

JOAN. Oh, darling, you aren't hurt, are you?

KEN. Oh . . . I guess no bones are broken. . . . Ouch! . . .

JOAN. Where does it hurt, Ken?

KEN. Everywhere . . . splinters.

JOAN. Oh! . . .

PHOTOG. I got the turkey, Mr. Lee. . . . What'll I do with him? . . .

JOAN. Will you put him in that pen there, please? . . . Now, Kenny . . . come on in the house and we'll see what we can do about the splinters. . . . Can I help you? . . .

KEN. No . . . I'm all right—just sort of knocked the wind out of me . . . and I collected the splinters on the way down. Wait . . . I can get up.

PHOTOG. Wait a minute, Mr. Lee—don't get up.

KEN. Oh, I can walk all right.

PHOTOG. Yeah . . . but I got to get one more picture of you . . . just as you are. . . . Now hold that pose! . . .

CLOSING ANNOUNCEMENT. If that had been a roast turkey instead of a live one, we could even better understand Ken's efforts to get it. Anyway, his feats of heroism are worthy of real commendation—even if they did end in a rather undignified manner. But Ken ought to be all right by to-morrow morning. If he isn't, Joan knows from experience just what does pep him up in the morning. A piping-hot bowl of delicious, fragrant Wheatena may not remove splinters, but it certainly goes far in helping one's mental attitude. If you want to put new cheer in your family, try Wheatena at your breakfast-table to-morrow morning.

And, until to-morrow evening at this same time, Wheatena bids you all good night.

"Raising Junior" has come to you from the New York studios of the National Broadcasting Company.