

THE RAPE
OF RAPID

THE RAPE OF RADIO

by

ROBERT WEST, PH.D.

DIRECTOR, RADIO ARTS GUILD OF AMERICA

AUTHOR OF

"SO-O-O YOU'RE GOING ON THE AIR"

RODIN PUBLISHING COMPANY

205 West 57th Street

New York

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
BY J. J. LITTLE & IVES COMPANY, NEW YORK

1777
W51.2 MY NAME IS RADIO!

BY ROBERT WEST

My name is RADIO! My influence shall abide!
I, Magic Box, am something years ago
The wizards dreamed of in the Arabian Nights.
Science has conceived and brought to birth,
More wondrous far than legends' figments wrought
By the ingenious bards of long ago.

Use cannot make me stale nor custom pale
The glamor of my march of offerings.
The world now needs me every day and night
To fill its every want and appetite
For news, for music and sweet conversation,
For comedy that wreathes society in smiles.

I feel like a spirit medium that can bring
The listener what'er he wishes from the void.
Do you want multitude of thoughts, all types?
Full measure comes with the revolving dial;
The masters wait to pour out symphonies
That rock the world and set your soul on fire.

Do you want messages of happenings
About this troublous world? You surely may.
Do you seek sympathy, companionship?
Then I am ready to respond and give
You all the fullness of my complex chords
To shake you out of selfish isolation
As you glide on from station unto station.

For I am RADIO! Forward tomorrow,
I shall strike out for rich new worlds to conquer
Making the present television faint.
A shadow of the glories that will come
In fullness of the real in shape and hue.

Life shall be more bounteous for my task!
'Tis mine to enlarge your reach and view and ear
To the utmost bounds, making man great
As could be wished when a young Alexander
Did set to conquer the whole habited world;
Only my means persuasively are unfurled.

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MIKEPHOBIA

BROADCASTING brought into the mental picture a new species of hysteria called "microphone fright."

The microphone creates in many individuals an extraordinary fear and a nervous reaction that often defies analysis. Jane Froman, the singer once expressed it: "The most nerve-racking moment is thirty seconds before you go on the air."

The human nervous structure is a complicated switchboard. The microphone is entirely unrelated to the average person's mental path. When this new instrument is plugged into the psychical nervous center, the individual "sees" new things which do not exist. The nerve currents tend to reverse. The whole system is overcome by a blockage. This produces symptoms of speech paralysis for no physical cause.

The very presence of the microphone brings about changes in the vasomotor system, the respiration system, the viscera and certain peripheral changes such as perspiring and muscular contractions. In addition to these primary reactions, there are other reaction-patterns which depend upon the cerebro-spinal nervous system. These involve such reactions as facial expression and vocalization, and also flight. Many a man would like to flee from the microphone once he's before it.

Note the reaction of Gargantua. The circus gorilla was to have roared and beat his chest (just as Johnny Weismuller does) before a wire mike. Bob Carter was engaged to coax the beast to perform his vocal daily dozen. However, like many a prima donna and operatic tenor, the sight of the microphone frightened our jungle friend, and for the duration of the broadcast he remained mute.

How shall one avoid the "fidgets" when one comes before

the microphone? The only way is to organize intellectually the emotions to accept the studio and the microphone as a very ordinary situation. Thus, control over the emotion fear represents a certain intellectual control and balance.

Only by experience can the emotions be intelligently organized to accept the microphone as a very ordinary gadget like the telephone. One should talk into the microphone with the same sense of composure that one talks into the telephone.

Will Rogers complained that the first parts of broadcasts were never as good as the last parts, so five minutes before his contribution to the program, he started speaking into a dead microphone. Edward G. Robinson is somewhat nervous in the first five minutes of his program. Alton Cook reports that it takes Robinson those five minutes to get into the melodrama's spirit, after which he swings into full tilt.

Many programs are broadcast successively to the West Coast as well as to the East. The rebroadcast in every instance is more improved. Practice, in radio, makes for smoothness and ease of manner, control in voice, naturalness.

John Barrymore, himself, is not immune to microphone fright even after rehearsing diligently. Ed Sullivan reports Barrymore's first appearance before the little metallic filter through which he was to make one of his passionate speeches. "Gentlemen," said John, "I am not a cowardly man, and I have looked into the eyes of cold and sullen audiences in theaters, but there is something so completely impersonal and so sneeringly eloquent about the microphone that I feel an immediate urge for a drink." The studio attendants were not astonished at the request, for the drink was produced immediately.

Dr. R. E. Lee is authority for the statement that Lou Holtz always starts his broadcast with a swig of sherry, to ensure a clear throat. Zasu Pitts, in order to get the mood for her broadcast, rode up and down all afternoon in the

subway. Such a method is as good as any other for focalizing your own sense of sensibility and self-control.

The broadcasting studio itself represents an unusual setting. The unnatural hush upsets even the most poised persons. The program director, with his eyes glued to the clock, with his arm ready to signal that you are about to go on the air, looms up as a sort of Jack-the-Giant-Killer. There is a grimness about the studio even in the bright white lights. The microphone itself seems to look at you with metallic grimaces. The whole area seems hostile. Even no well-wishing audience that stares at you intensifies your uneasiness. And the lynx-eyed man in the control room seems to peer right through his glass window right into your very soul. All this sounds fantastic to the experienced broadcaster; but these are often very genuine reactions to the beginner. Hollywood stars who unflinchingly face the batteries of cameras suddenly get the jitters when they enter the broadcasting studios and face the mike. Experience before the moving picture machine does not always imply an easy attitude before the microphone.

In radio circles, the term "snerk" is used in describing mike mannerisms. The personal "snerks" of performers play a large part in establishing self-assurance. Many a performer clings to superstition. Ella Fitzgerald, a swing vocalist with Chick Webb, always wore gloves during a broadcast. The Andre sisters could not go on unless their father was sitting in the front row directly in front of the mike. Every radio artist has his own distinguishing set of microphone mannerisms. Before and during a broadcast Kitty Carlisle bites her lips. Rudy Vallee keeps fingering the bridge of his nose, as if in deep thought. Kate Smith keeps tugging at her skirt. Dick Powell rearranges his handkerchief a half dozen times. Jeannette MacDonald wears glasses while broadcasting, and either has one foot or both hands on the chair before the microphone. This allows a sort of physical ease and creates

assurance and steadiness. Joan Crawford broadcasts seated at a table, because she cannot trust her quivering knees. In the spring of 1937 during the Lux program she forsook her customary manner, stood right up center stage and braved the mike. Publicity announcements state that her husband, Franchot Tone, planted a kiss on the courageous little woman, for this successful evidence of self-control. For six years Walter Winchell stood up when before a mike. Now he remains seated but always wears a hat. Lee Wiley always takes off his shoes. Lawrence Tibbett is a foot tapper when he sings. Because a battery of mikes causes him to stammer, only two microphones were allowed in front of George VI, both gold plated, when he toured Canada.

Lupe Velez made her first broadcast on Ed Sullivan's program some years back. As she finished her song, Lupe stepped back and quite unaware that the microphone could pick up her voice as she retreated from it, said: "That was lousy." There was a horrified silence from the CBS engineers as her "lousy" remark shot out on the air from coast to coast. Sometimes this nervousness is due to the fact that one is pinned down to a script. George Raft is ill at ease when pinned down to a script. He talks much more freely when he is permitted to ad lib. The new experience of coordinating reading with appearing before the microphone is disturbing. Mary Livingstone's hands shake like a leaf. She gets very nervous. A columnist who mentioned this to Eddie Cantor reports Cantor as remarking, "Mary is the only one in radio with a Sunday broadcast who starts getting nervous the previous Wednesday." This is no attitude of mind with which to approach the microphone.

Conditions in the studio sometimes jar the nerves of performers. Thoughtful producers make every effort to make things agreeable. The successful performance, they know, depends upon the performer's peace of mind. It is said that Jessica Dragonette used to complain about the air in the

studio frequently. The program director, to appease her, would pick up a dead studio telephone to go through the elaborate pretense of severely reprimanding the ventilation engineer. On the authority of Alton Cook who tells this story, "the air was fresh then."

Ed Wynn at one time was quite exigent. He wanted three microphones so he could turn around as he spoke. The engineers gave him two extra mikes, one on either side connected to nothing. A most satisfying hoax was played upon Leopold Stokowski. The conductor insisted that he and not the control engineer should operate the control board. They gave him a dummy board and he turned the dials with the delight of a baby. The actual control operation was performed by an engineer in another part of the building. In the early days a glass curtain was installed across the front of the studio stage. Studio acoustics have improved to such an extent that an orchestra with a glass curtain deflecting its sounds would sound terrible. Programs no longer try to cut out the sounds an audience makes.

For some speakers the first appearance before the microphone is their final appearance. Nothing can be done to improve their temper. Their fears are deeply rooted. Damon Runyon had one trial before the microphone and called it a day. On the program with him were Gatti-Casazza, Gloria Swanson and the late Arthur Brisbane who was making his first appearance. This was in 1926. Sobol reminisces in his *New York Cavalcade*: "Brisbane was to precede Runyon and the latter watched and listened off side. There was something about Brisbane's deadly earnestness that chilled Runyon, and two minutes before he was to speak he slipped out a side door and made the elevator in nothing flat. No broadcasting studio has been honored by him since."

Jo Ranson tells the story of the late Ray Long, magazine editor, who possessed all the poise in the world. When asked to appear on the WABC's "Going to Press Hour,"

Long wrote a beautiful speech, but was so struck by mike fright that he fell completely off the chair and pleaded that he could not continue.

Candid microphones have the effect of minimizing nervousness. Candid microphones that masquerade as silver vases and bowls of flowers are replacing the "forest" of ugly microphones that used to surround the speakers at a banquet table. The audience wants to see and hear, but it does not want to be distracted by a battery of "mikes." One of these "candid mikes" is a decorative vase-like piece with silver handles and a silver rod as antenna. For it is not only a microphone but a complete short-wave transmitter requiring no wire connections. Covered with flowers, it becomes a floral centerpiece for the table.

How to Stand Before the Microphone

Richard Crooks stands well back before the microphone, because his voice is full and round. Margaret Speaks stands much closer. That makes their duets *look* very odd with the soprano standing a foot or two in front of the tenor; but these relative positions, in the blending process create a perfect union of their voices.

Choirs often sound loud and robust on the air. A splendid effect can be obtained with only seven voices. Before beginning accompaniments for the choir songs, Alfred Wallenstein, oboe and clarinet players bend down and come up with the saxophones, to give the proper reception. All these tonal effects must be steady and much depends upon the relative positions of the players before the microphone.

Edward G. Robinson often is a problem to the engineers. He makes sudden dramatic changes in his voice, modulated from a soft tone to a sharp, loud voice. The engineer must be prepared at all times to adjust his volume levels, else his

station would be knocked right off the air. Transmitter tubes are limited in the volume they will carry.

There is a general impression that the sound engineer through some electrical wizardry can make a voice or an orchestra sound better than it really is. The truth is that a microphone can report nothing except what goes into it. All the engineer can do is to reproduce the qualities of the sound with the greatest possible fidelity.

Position before the microphone is everything. NBC once built an iron fence waist-high around the microphone to keep the actors at a proper distance. The director must judge the positions of the players before the microphone so that the sounds will be natural for those positions. Distance from the microphone to the origin of any sound changes it, in volume and in quality. The whole subject concerns the study of sound perspective. When Helen Hayes appeared for her air production of "Jane Eyre," the director had to figure out how high to place the microphone as Miss Hayes stands five feet one inch, while her supporting star, Bob Montgomery, was just one foot taller. Douglas Shearer, recording director of the M.G.M. studios, calls attention to the attention-factor in listening. The brain subconsciously selects what it wants to hear and discards the rest. The microphone has no attention-factor because it has no brain. The engineer supplies the brain by calculating to what extent it is necessary to reduce extraneous sounds to give the feeling of naturalness, not to intrude on the presentation.

During a Ripley-WJZ program in April, 1937, "Shipwreck" Kelly was one of the guests. Everything was done to make the champion flagpole sitter feel at home. A flagpole was erected in the studio and Kelly was to broadcast from the top of it. Let Alton Cook tell the rest: "Time came for his first line, and Kelly sat paralyzed with mike fright, couldn't utter a sound. Ripley and Ozzie Nelson filled in

with remarks to cover the difficulty, hoping their man would recover. Finally, Ed Gardner, a director, began shouting Kelly's lines from the foot of the flagpole. That worked well enough except for one line. Kelly recovered enough to read that one right after Gardner had finished it."

Programs like Jack Benny's employ several microphones. The control man tacks little signs all over the switchboard, which keep track of who is using each individual mike. One sign says "Benny," the second, "Baker," etc.

Sound effects require special attention. When the sound of a door slamming is to get put in, the sound man's microphone is turned on to catch the slam and then it is turned off again. Control men are careful not to leave an unused microphone open, because someone might sigh and say, "My God, I wish this pesky business was all over." Or, as is reported of one announcer on a children's program, "And that will be all for you, little——."

The voice is sometimes too small for concert or opera, but is excellent for radio work. A good musician is more and more in demand in this field where facility in reading and general musicianship are required. The policy of the Juilliard School of Music is to discourage all from entering the field as professionals unless their talents justify their belief that they could make a living as musicians.

Microphone "Technique"

The word "technique" involves the notion of something highly technical. The dictionary will tell you that it is the method of performance or manipulation in any art peculiar to any field. Method of performance before the microphone consists of a few elementary rules of position, and the use of the voice. The microphone technique of a performer or speaker may be perfect; yet his voice or his playing may be devoid of expression and fail to express intelligently his own

ideas or the ideas of the composer. Many erroneously believe there is something mysterious about microphone technique that requires exhaustive study. The truth is that attention should be focused on *performance* rather than upon that grandiose term, microphone technique, which gives the speaker or artist a feeling that he must study engineering in order to appear before the microphone.

Mastery at the microphone by the President is often illustrated as an example of microphone technique. Franklin D. Roosevelt knows how to direct his words effectively to both the visible and the invisible audience. The technique in this instance merely implies that he has been trained in obeying those physical positions before the mike which effective transmission requires. Surely when a man is told not to cough into the microphone he would not regard it as a piece of microphone technique.

As a piece of engineering skill, studio engineers assembled a pygmy-size microphone for the exclusive use of Johnnie Roventini, the page boy of the Philip Morris program, WEA. There was no more need for the box which lifted his 43-inch frame to the microphone level. The individual mike painted a bright red on a low stand is for his exclusive use.

Irving Reis, once of the Columbia Workshop, when asked if it had been his experience whether actors unfamiliar with the microphone had any difficulty in adjusting their art to the new medium, replied: "I believe that any intelligent actor can learn all about the technique of broadcasting in an hour, especially if he has had any experience in motion pictures. I would say that it is much easier to learn the technique of broadcasting, than for a stage actor to learn the mechanics of the screen or a film player to become initiated in the technique of the theatre.

"But in making his debut in the radio studios the actor is merely taught the mechanics of broadcasting; he is told

to keep within certain range of the microphone. A line may be chalked off to indicate his position, and if he becomes confused by the physical movements, he is told to stand still and to leave the entire matter in the hands of a radio engineer, who is expert in regulating the tone level. It has been my experience that when an actor begins to worry about the microphone 'distances' to the detriment of the part he is playing, it is better to let him forget about the mechanics altogether and to let the control men do the regulating in their glass-enclosed booth."

In the Clutch of the Engineer

The control engineer exercises sovereignty over everyone in the broadcasting studio. By a twist of his dials he can shut out the sound, or soften it down, or make it swell in volume. His duty is to see that there isn't too great a volume. From his control room, the voice goes to the master control board, where the master control engineer corrects any errors in sound volume overlooked by the studio engineer. From the master control the voices travel over wires to the station transmitter where they are sent out over the ether.

These engineers always keep guard at the station transmitter where they are converted into radio waves traveling with the speed of light. If the volume is too heavy at the transmission point there is great danger of destroying the sensitive transmission tubes, blowing the station off the air.

The studio control room man cannot afford to take chances. His judgment of the dial is checked and double-checked. An easier control, they insist, is to have the performers control volume by moving toward or away from the mike. It is this insistence upon a fixed position that makes performers self-conscious and often prevents them from giving their best performance.

Andy Sanella expresses his control of fear in this way:

"Well, I sort of get set as a runner at a track meet does just before the gun goes off, but after that I am perfectly at ease."

Sometimes microphone fright is induced by a lurking fear of a tongue-twister. Tongue-twister fear or the fear of some blunder in song or speech is common to all artists. This fear of making an error is a form of self-consciousness and indicates a lack of concentration. You may be overcome by fear in the beginning, but after a while broadcasting becomes a lot of fun, and you never think of mistakes.

Rehearsals tend to make a performance perfect. Some performers do worse during the informal atmosphere of the rehearsal. It requires the "real thing" to bring out their best abilities. The transition in mood to the final broadcast is thus expressed by David Ross: "While I prefer the informal surroundings of the rehearsal I believe the tense atmosphere of the actual broadcast induces a proper nervous excitement to call for a more spirited performance."

Presence of mind in the studio is always important. Things happen that cause the heart to beat faster. There is the case of Amanda Snow. A group of folding chairs was piled a few feet away from the microphone into which she was singing. In the middle of the song Amanda swayed back a pace or two and caught her heel in one of the chairs. She glanced back quickly. The singer instantly knew that if she tried to pry her heel loose, the pile of chairs would topple down and come over the air with the explosion of an earthquake. Pity her! She continued singing in this uncomfortable position for twelve minutes, her foot paining her more by the minute. The program over, she quickly released herself.

It is important that the band director know his microphone technique, in the sense of placing his instruments. Every instrument must be placed in the best relative position to obtain balanced prominence. For this reason the

director should know how his music is coming through the loudspeaker.

Don Bestor spends a good deal of time listening in. This is Don Bestor's placement routine. The guitar is placed exactly two feet away from the microphone; the violins four feet away, sometimes three feet. Saxophones are drawn up close together, with the alto sax slightly to the foreground for tonal effect, some five feet from the microphone. The brass section has a variable spread changing their stance from nine to eleven feet, except during special interludes when the mutes are brought close to the microphone. The bass instrument is furthest from the mike about fifteen feet; the drums, thirteen feet. The piano is equidistant with the drums.

Chalk marks indicate the position each musician is to take. Vocal choruses come best over the air when the strings and the guitar move closer to the mike, and the brass is double-muted. After much experiment with four microphones to mix the tones, Don Bestor found results most satisfactory with one microphone elevated to a height of eleven feet from the floor. Music is always soft and subdued to conform with his style of dance music.

Rudy Vallee calls the instrument "Poor Old Mr. Microphone—as primitive as the man with the wooden plow. The former is at the mercy of the control engineer."

"We who use it," said Rudy, "no matter how skilled through years of trying to get strength of receptivity (mind you, it gives no indication or sign as to whether it is even alive or dead) are often as surprised as individuals on the listening end to find we have ruined almost a whole program. . . . And when we have trios and quartettes—then I give up! Here the difficulty is to find out *which voice or voices are too close or too far away.*" The engineer's reply is quite fair. "*You should know your distances and the strength of your voices,*" he says. He's right, but many of

us don't, and oftentimes we feel a little stronger than at others, and sometimes the monitor himself changes the gain or strength of the current and *we* have no dial to indicate the receptivity of the microphone.

To show just how helpless the networks are, let me tell you about a broadcast in which a girl-trio sang. To us, in the studio, they sounded fine. They sang for three minutes. These three minutes cost the sponsor, in radio time, seven hundred and fifty dollars (this on the basis of \$15,000 for sixty minutes). Then after the broadcast someone happened to ask the engineer (he didn't volunteer it, mind you!) how the girls came through. Rather nonchalantly he said that the harmony was too close and that the girl who was singing the melody was overshadowed. This engineer was a very reticent man and, since most of them are paid to watch a dial and not to make suggestions, we would never have known that the girls were poorly balanced unless we had asked. The poor listener-in probably dialed out to find something more pleasing to the ear, but the unlucky sponsor, who paid the bill, was more sinned against than all of us. I've asked the engineers for *something* to tell us just what was going on—even to lights over the microphones to signal: GREEN—move in closer; RED—move further away; BLUE—fine as it is.

The control engineer is no miracle worker of voices. He cannot be expected to beautify your tone by increasing the amount of current. There are at least three factors involved. First, the distance of voice from the microphone. Second, the amount of current running through the microphone. Lastly, the voice volume of the speaker or singer.

If your distance from the microphone is correct, but your voice too strong in volume, the control man turns the gain down to prevent blasting. This manipulation makes the voice sound unnatural, with a far-away quality.

In her revealing biography, "Such Sweet Compulsion,"

Geraldine Farrar speaks soothingly of the efforts of Marion Talley. "This charming, but tenuous soprano's voice," she says, "was pushed to the amplified limit of large sound and the tonal beauty suffered in consequence, sacrificed to noisy volume."

On the other hand, if the voice is just correct in volume but the stance is too far away, any attempt on the part of the control man to bring it up by increasing current will magnify all the imperfections and generally produce a tinny quality.

The control man informs the production man by telephone or signals from his control booth how things are coming through the wires. He may signal the following blunders: (1) You are too close; your voice reaches the listener with a volume that may be blasting him out of his chair. (2) You are too far away (the poor listener strains his ears and wonders if old age is on him and if he needs an acousticon). (3) You are in bad balance (the harmony so far above the melody or the rhythm smothers both).

An over-zealous publicity man once swore that Alex Weichew, the Fordham center, was so frightened by the microphone before he started to speak that he kicked off his shoes, gloves and threw imaginary passes to shake off his nervousness.

Many performers throw themselves into an energetic pantomime. Presence of mind is a gift. Gertrude Lawrence forgot the lyrics of the song in the middle of a chorus. She was magnificently equal to the occasion. She merely stopped the orchestra and asked them to play the song over again. She then hummed back into the chorus as it should have been in the first place.

Radio has its unaccountable mishaps. Mrs. Roosevelt rehearsed a program with Hendrik Willem van Loon on the WJZ program for an hour before they went on the air. Everything went smoothly until the bottom of page eight.

Then Mrs. Roosevelt turned over to page nine. She was in consternation. Page nine had disappeared entirely from her script. She mumbled in obvious distress. Someone rushed up another page nine, and the broadcast went on smoothly again. Subdued whispers. She went right on reading and started through the top of page ten.

The Engineering Department

The engineering department is responsible for the coverage of the station and the entire technical transmission of the program. The same is to provide the listeners with the highest degree of fidelity and accuracy of reception.

In the studio, the studio engineer is in charge. He checks every microphone equipment. He opens the microphones and closes them as they are needed. He may blend them by opening the announcer's microphone simultaneously with that of the orchestra in order that the announcer's voice may be heard above the musical background. His particular duty is to "ride game," which term is defined as the maintenance of proper value,—a volume sufficient for the ear of the listener and yet not so loud as to destroy fidelity of reception.

The master control engineer has a duty which corresponds to that of a railroad dispatcher in a signal office. He sees that the programs are sent to their proper destination. He throws the switch which opens the wires for every new show, and allows for station breaks. This is a highly technical job, which requires an expert knowledge of the members of their associated stations and their facilities.

The transmitting engineer operates the highly sensitive radio unit, the transmitter, which actually sends the program out on the air. He is the last one to check on all broadcast matter and must hold a license from the federal government.

The NAB, in its booklet, "Your Hat's in the Ring," issues the following injunctions to the speaker before the mike:

1. Do not cough or sneeze into the microphone. Kate Smith once reminded an audience that two weeks back she had sneezed while on the air and within three days she received 5,000 post cards and letters saying, "Gesundheit."

2. Avoid clearing the throat.

3. Use your voice to reflect your sincerity, intimacy, knowledge, of the problem.

4. Be friendly. That is radio at its best. Be sincere. Nothing is more convincing.

5. You are speaking to people at home—not in the convention hall. Do not yell your lungs apart. A conversational tone will win you listeners,—a rasping expression will turn them away.

6. When you are before the microphone relax.

7. If you are one who needs a few interested people around to register reactions, ask friends to come in.

8. Keep your lips moist. This avoids speaker's "dry dust."

9. Have your voice checked (well in advance of your radio period) by the engineer.

10. Speak into the microphone. Take a distance (at the start) of not less than two feet. Be guided by what the control room engineer tells you. He is there to help you.

11. If your voice is muffled and indistinct no one will hear you. Cultivate distinctness of articulation, without appearing too pedantic by an over crispness.

12. When you hold your written speech up, don't let it come between your lips and the microphone.

13. Check your script-reading habits with the engineer again.

14. As you finish speaking each page, drop it to the floor so it will cause no sound. The WOR research has perfected a soft paper that will not rattle.

Microphone Positions

A few simple directions constitute the actor's code of conduct before the microphone: 1. For average effects the radio speaker stands about a foot from the microphone. 2. For loud speech beyond that of the conversational level—step back from the microphone. 3. Entrances are made about eight feet away. The level of volume is raised from very low to natural conversational tone as you approach the microphone. When approaching the microphone for this "entrance" effect, keep on talking while you're moving because if you pause and your voice is heard from a greater distance, it will sound like that of another person. 4. Various modes are accomplished by changing the position or varying the delivery. In moments of excitation, stand at some distance from the mike, raise the pitch of the voice and speak more rapidly. For sympathetic effects, come closer to the microphone and lower the voice to a murmur. For the hollow quality of the ghostly laugh, "Ha-ha-ha," start some feet from the microphone and come up to it. Loyalty and self devotion—speak quietly with kindly intonations close to the microphone.

THE CULT OF ANNOUNCER

“ANYBODY can announce!”

A This is the happy belief that has buoyed the hopes of an army of applicants from the earliest days of the microphone. Youth fired with imagination lost no time in exploring what seemed an easy way to fame. An alarming supply of announcers shifted from station to station. Nearly twenty years passed before the cult of the announcer was raised to the dignity of an organized profession. Today the networks employ about three thousand announcers.

October, 1938, marked an important date for the announcer. It was then that the American Federation of Radio Artists signed an agreement with NBC which removed the announcer from the class of over-exploited radio employee. The contract provided that the senior announcer should receive \$250 per month, while juniors should start at \$110 per month and be raised within two years to \$175. Instead of exacting long hours covering a seven-day week, the contract called for a 44-hour week with two weeks' vacation after a year's services.

An applicant for the post of announcer is often rudely shocked to discover his way barred by new standards and requirements. One no longer enters announcing as upon a lark. In truth Patrick Kelly, supervisor of announcers at NBC, warned that “announcing is one of the most exacting jobs in radio.”

Networks today will not consider an announcer unless he is a college graduate with at least two years' experience at a small station. He must be adept in ad libbing as shown by a test ranging from a five to a fifteen minute talk on some

topical event. A knowledge of continuity writing and production will be expected of him, and he must speak at least one foreign language. It is not everyone who, like André Baruch, can speak fluent French, Spanish and Italian, and in addition, creditably strike the native ear in Dutch, Flemish, and Portuguese.

And if standards of announcing have become high, opportunities have become narrower. The National Broadcasting Company has perhaps six openings for announcers a year. For these six openings hundreds of trained announcers audition and the competition is naturally keen.

The British have their own troubles in selecting announcers, especially these war days. John Snagge, an official in charge of testing applicants, complained as late as May, 1940, "Out of more than 2,000 heard only one man has thus far been chosen, and no woman has made the grade. Not one person in a thousand can read a news bulletin as it ought to be read—it is too fast, too slow, too flat, or too hearty."

The smaller stations have become the training schools for the announcer. At the smaller station, the announcer has an opportunity to be on his own as in the early days. He may be called upon not only to announce, but to create entire programs, assume charge of production, do the work of the engineer, display his gifts as a singer, double in brass, and carry on under difficult conditions.

In the search for experience the applicant is faced with the stark truth that only by actual performance under the exigencies of the studio can the announcer be trained. Many colleges give courses in voice production and microphone technique, but theory alone will not avail. There is no solution for the personal problem of getting that announcer's job on the small stations, which constitutes the experience that the networks demand. The problem remains much like

that of the actor or the opera singer trying to get his first start.

The English with some sense of humor have finally concluded that when the announcer has passed through the first experience he will emerge. He must be:

1. Six feet in height.
2. Acceptable to Hollywood standards of good looks.
3. Possess a 24-carat voice.
4. Speak eighteen languages.
5. Be able to act as stand-in at a moment's notice in the program.
6. Radiate charm, dignity, elan, verve, savoir faire, Je ne sais pas quoi.
7. Have a brilliant individual touch in spontaneous talk while putting on transcribed records.

From Anonymity to Fame

The old announcer was as free as the air. He went off on his verbal rounds uncensored, impersonalized, bound by no restrictions and regulated only by his own sense of the fitness of things by the initiative of his own choice. Milton J. Cross, in the earlier days, announced himself as AJN. It was he who introduced Lindbergh on the air, and served as Mrs. Roosevelt's first host.

The modern announcer is fortified with scripts, stop watches, assistants, and engineers. In the early days he was a factotum who had to struggle with every situation and emergency. He was station manager, market expert, political commentator, engineer, narrator of bedtime stories, lecturer on any and all subjects, program director, continuity editor, and host.

Graham McNamee introduced himself as a concert singer when he applied for a job at the studios of the infant WEA

in 1922. He would broadcast a whole football game, rest for an hour or two and do a concert in the evening.

Bill Hay, the perennial Amos 'n' Andy announcer, once taught piano and ran a radio store. For two years he read and announced his own program, with potato sacks for sound-proofing and open windows to admit the air on the now extinct KFKX of Hastings, Nebraska.

Even as late as 1930, the age of specialization for the announcer had not yet begun. Ford Bond recalls the routine of that period: "When I first started announcing for NBC," he narrates, "I came to work in the morning with no idea where I might be by night. We might be ordered to Florida or Canada without five minutes' notice, and we never knew whether we were going to announce a baseball game, a concert, or an endurance flight. But that's all changed now. We know every morning exactly what's lined up for us all day. The special events are all turned over to special announcers who are authorities in their respective fields."

The world's pioneer radio announcer was H. W. Arlin, an electrical engineer employed by the Westinghouse Electric & Mfg. Co. of Pittsburgh. In 1917 he made his debut on the air on the company's pioneer station KDKA. Arlin had no precedents to guide him. Fortunately he was gifted with precise diction, and a resonant voice, sharp enough to clear through the imperfect conditions of transmission and receiving sets. The KDKA transmitting room was located on the roof of a nine story building. The studio in effect was a tent. In the spring the sides of the tent were rolled up so that the broadcast was actually an open-air affair. A bright light above the microphone illuminated the area. It was a test for any announcer to know what to say when a moth hovering around the flame flew into a tenor's widely opened mouth at the peak of a high note.

The announcer soon emerged from anonymity. Listeners learned to identify the voice characteristics peculiar to the

speakers. An audience for the intimate life of public performers had to be satisfied. A curious public wanted to know more about a man with a voice as friendly and as earnest as Milton J. Cross. When the true and full name of the announcer was released, he rose on the crest of publicity and became definitely associated with the station.

The British clung more doggedly to the policy of keeping announcers entirely out of the limelight. It was only in 1936 that the BBC relented and divulged the names of their leading announcers with a few details about their personalities.

And there are those with us today who prefer that certain types of announcers remain forever in a state of oblivious anonymity.

The Free Lance Commercial Announcer

Both station and sponsor were slow in realizing that the experience, knowledge and foresight of the announcer play a large part in the success of the radio production.

The free-lancer usually has established his name and vogue on the networks and in some way called attention to his voice personality. In employing such an announcer the sponsor avoids taking chances with an unfamiliar vocal style.

Announcers for the big commercial programs are not chosen because of their meticulous enunciation. The qualities sought are voice timbre, and an ingratiating style that is called "ear-arresting." Such announcers as André Baruch, Ken Carpenter, Don Wilson, Jimmy Wallington, and Ben Grauer, make themselves doubly valuable to their sponsors as actors in various roles.

By virtue of emoluments alone, the free-lance announcer is in a class of his own. Removed from the routine of studio announcing, he is free to accept screen and transcription work, as well as offers from any sponsor.

Sometimes accident plays a part in the discovery of an announcer. A man or a woman might be gifted with a voice personality that is exactly suited to a specific program, and that quality transmitted over the air makes him a "natural." Take the believe-it-or-not story told about Johnny whose monotoned "Call for Philip Morris" is familiar to all listeners. In 1933, Johnny Roventini was a page boy in the New Yorker Hotel. The traditional story is that a man came into the lobby, sat down in a chair and asked Johnny to page a friend. For five minutes the page boy paced the corridors and chanted his call. When he returned after failing in his mission, he was told by the man in the easy chair, that he had passed an audition for radio. That man in the chair was an agency man for Philip Morris.

Let there be any new program advanced by a sponsor and the agency will be on the lookout for the voice whose timbre conveys a geniality and warmth,—a voice quite natural and yet with the touch of persuasiveness. Jimmy Wallington reflects the sponsor's viewpoint in this way: "Before an announcer can get a commercial program, he must build up on his sustaining broadcast a feeling of what I call 'good will' between himself and the public. His next duty is to sell the good will of the station he works for, and then, through the faith the public has in him he can sell his sponsor's product."

The free-lance rise of Harry von Zell is ascribed to Paul Whiteman. Von Zell began his career as a full-time announcer for a Hollywood station in 1930. Paul Whiteman at that time was making a picture and broadcasting at the same time with Ted Husing as his announcer. When Ted was called East to broadcast sports, Whiteman had to fill the vacancy. Three hundred announcers applied for the job and the task of auditioning seemed formidable. Harry von Zell, with heartiness and zest in his voice, led all the rest. Whiteman brought von Zell to New York where he gained

popular recognition as a CBS staff announcer. So the agencies lured him from general announcing to the job of free-lance announcer for the important programs of Fred Allen, Phil Baker, Walter O'Keefe, Helen Hayes, and the March of Time.

A background as varied as that of Kelvin Keech would stand the announcer in good stead. He graduated as an engineer, became entertainer on the Continental stage, directed his own jazz band, and broadcast over the BBC. From general announcing he was called to preside over such programs as Warden Lawes, Pop-eye, Fireside Recital and Billy and Betty.

Beginning at WJZ in 1925, John S. Young joined NBC as staff announcer in 1928; was selected "all-American" announcer in 1929; gave the first course in radio technique at New York University in 1932; was the first announcer to be heard in experimental trans-Atlantic broadcasts and the first exchange announcer between England and the United States. He stepped out of the announcing ranks to supervise all radio activities of the New York World's Fair. As an announcer, John's voice is internationally known. In the early days of broadcasting, he was heard on programs sent out by powerful short-wave stations to Europe. When Pope Pius appeared before the mike for the first time, Young was the announcer on the American side. As for talents, he plays the violin, piano, guitar, banjo, ukulele and vibraharp; speaks French, German, Italian and Spanish.

Voice Culture

Radio is slowly building up the tradition that the announcer shall unmistakably impress the listener as a man of true culture. The listener becomes conscious of the presence or the absence of the sign of refinement and good breeding. The sign is the voice.

Carlton Andrews in a blasting letter to the radio editor of the *New York Times* flays those stations that employ announcers who lack the fundamental qualifications: "If we grant these invaluable licenses for no fee to commercial broadcasts, we are at least entitled to full assurance that their professional spokesmen in our homes shall be gentlemen of actual education and some degree of true modesty, whose manners are unfailingly courteous and considerate, and whose English is trustworthy and genuine and a fit model for the young."

Announcers must at least speak one language and that is Standard English, which cannot by its nature display the warmth of a homey local dialect. In the selection of their announcers, the networks have settled the mooted questions of standard speech more decisively than the phoneticians who have never ceased to wrangle about it. It is safe to say that standard speech before the radio is speech which is intelligible to the larger units of population. In this sense it is not cast in a rigid linguistic mold. It is the compromise of the common tongue amongst hundreds of localisms and dialects.

American speech is not a local speech. It is the composite tongue of a country whose borders stretch three thousand miles east and west. Many regions have their own peculiarities of speech. There is the sharp twang of New England, the gusty style of the West, the languorous open vowel drawl of the South. An announcer whose speech smacks of the peculiarities of any region may be perfectly understood in that region. It is standard for that region. If his voice is flung over the networks, the dialect may be unintelligible in many sections of the country, however picturesque.

The British have their own problems with variations of English. Prof. Lloyd James, linguistic adviser to the BBC, once declared that if he were dictator of the English language, for announcer he would choose "the educated Scot-

tish person, perhaps President Roosevelt, as an international standard for the English-speaking world. When I hear the voice of any announcer, I notice (partly consciously and partly subconsciously) four things about it. One is the actual quality of the voice; the second is the rise and fall of the voice; third, the pronunciation of the words; fourth, manner and style."

Radio announcers may be divided into three classes: (1) cultured; (2) pseudo-cultured; (3) under-cultured or vulgar. The pseudo-cultured announcer gives the listener the impression of a superior soul who never quite releases himself from the role of a star performer. Sentences roll out with rich rhythms and requirements of sense give way to cacophonies. Carlton Andrews ascribes this manner to the ham tradition which radio has fostered. To the ear of the radio fan such pretense and affectation are often accepted as comedy effects. The announcer who talks as if he had a monocle in his throat is growing rare.

The cultured announcer is more impersonal in delivering his message. He does not call attention to himself because of his peculiarities in speech or a manner unsuited to the occasion. He stands out as a man of culture because his culture does not obtrude. His diction is neither over-precise nor slurred. He knows the living language. He affects neither elocutionary airs nor vulgar deflections.

Radio directors have stressed the importance of flexibility in the voice of the announcer. The most agreeable voice is adapted to the spirit of the occasion. A formal and dignified program will call for a just decorum in voice, but the announcer will have to change his vocal manner at a hilarious Al Jolson get-together party. If he puts crepe over his voice, he would soon hear from the fans.

The aim of the BBC has been to create a sort of standard accent which would be dignified, understood by every one, and strike a happy medium between all the dialects spoken

in the country. An advisory committee has been set up to decide on the pronunciation of difficult words. All the members of the committee speak good English, yet they can muster at least six dialects amongst them.

It is no easy task to decide which pronunciation is the correct one. One of the words about which there was doubt was "capuchin." Listeners suggested there were fourteen different ways of pronouncing the word.

Occasionally even the best announcers exaggerate the vocal touch. It is quite easy to influence people to tune you out by the use of the wrong vocal qualities. Howard Claney who introduced Toscanini at the first of the NBC Philharmonic Broadcasts almost accomplished this result. He spoke in a hushed and awed voice, as though the program were too stupendous for human ears. All this requires an intuitive understanding of the situation and an ability to use the voice to express the feeling and the meaning of the written word.

Airing Your Personality

Far more important than the mastery of studio rules, and the possession of a good voice, are the subtleties of personality which the microphone reveals. The personality of the announcer is measured by his natural and acquired gifts. Education and experience are important but there are certain characteristics which seem to be born with the announcer.

A director may be favorably impressed with a man's voice when he talks to him face to face, but when the candidate tries to get that voice through the loud speaker, it somehow loses its quality. It comes over dead and flat. It lacks the sparkle that makes microphone "voice personality." Surveys indicate that the lower tenor and baritone voices of the male register most agreeably. Occasionally a bass manages to capture popular fancy.

The announcer's most important natural gift is his "voice personality." No exact definition of this term can be given. It might be described subjectively as a certain kindly and friendly tone which impels the listener to meet the living possessor of the voice.

The United Press on March 28, 1939, reported one item that classically illustrates the power of the radio voice. A certain Mrs. Agnes Mae Watson of Dorchester, Mass., died and left \$500 to Bill O'Connell, an announcer for the Yankee and Colonial networks. The attorney who contested the will on behalf of relatives claimed that Mrs. Watson had hallucinations and that "she had acquired an overwhelming passion, affection and love for Bill O'Connell." Counsel for the beneficiary countered that she was not mentally unsound but "merely a radio fan."

The affection with which an announcer is held by his public may not go so far as to induce his listeners to leave him money bequests, but the regard is none the less genuine.

Sponsored programs brought into being the "free-lance announcer." In a special sense, the free-lance announcer is a commercial attaché, a super-salesman acting for the sponsor. Today he is in the preferred class. The life and death of many a program depend on him. The station always provided the announcer for each commercial program at no extra cost, but the Agency accustomed to assembling its own talent, began to engage its own announcers and treated them as though they were performers or artists. The "guest" announcer soon became a fixture.

Atmospheric Announcing

The most difficult task of the master of ceremonies is to establish the proper atmosphere for special programs, or extravaganza productions like the "Show Boat." Frank McIntyre who assumed the role of Captain Henry of the

Show Boat had to adapt himself to the art of the em cee. He gives this close-up of his method in *Radio Guide*:

"I have to be master of ceremonies, announcer and actor. The master of ceremonies on a program like Show Boat must lend color to the whole hour, blend it together, with only his voice to help him. Here is the method I use. The band plays a hot number and finishes. I chuckle, and say: 'So that was the King of Swing, eh Gus? I reckon that makes you the power behind the throne.' The next number is a romantic solo to be sung by Lanny Ross. My job is to make a transition from the mood of the band number to the mood of the solo. The orchestra begins the faint background music to introduce Lanny. I temper my voice to the mood and say, in a gentle dreamy tone:

"'Just sit back in your seats for a minute folks. Close your eyes and think of the things we all love to dream about—springtime—romance—stars—youth and moonlight. These are the things our dreams are made of—and they are the things our handsome leading man is singing about, right now! Lanny Ross, folks, singing "A Rendezvous With a Dream,"—Introducing Tim and Irene, I use a tone suited to the worthy and dignified number which the "Liebestraum" is. This is how you blend the parts of the program together and prepare the audience for what is coming."

Beware the Diction Award!

The American Academy of Arts and Sciences endeavored to aid and abet a better diction in radio announcers. In 1929 the Academy established an annual medal award. By the time the fourth annual award came around the committee was ready to show its influence: "We have found the decision more difficult for the reason that the general level for announcers has risen."

Hamlin Garland, Chairman of the Committee for the

Radio Diction Award, made known the criteria: "It is a mistake to assume that the medal for good diction over radio is for the best announcer. It is given for good diction on the radio. After all, we can hear only a few of the thousands of announcers scattered all over the States. What this medal means is that the winner has the highest markings in articulation, pronunciation, freedom from local accent, freedom from strident or nasal tone and for general effect as to taste and scholarship. There may be announcers somewhere in America superior to the winner, but our committee is not concerned with hypothetical cases.

"We are not concerned with mere popularity. Fluency, humor, picturesqueness of phrase, are all right in their way, but they do not enter into the competition."

Formality Versus Informality

The cult of announcers whose fetish was over-precision and exaggerated tonalities had succeeded in establishing a class distinction. In 1935 came a shift to the left in the campaign to inject more friendliness and naturalness into announcing. The radio editor of the *New York Times*, Orrin E. Dunlap, Jr., recently analyzed this trend: "Announcers have endeavored to sail a straight line between formality and informality in broadcasting, but have generally found it difficult to get away from the formal side. Listeners strongly favor the informal approach, which they testify affords a welcome relief from the staccato, 'dramatized' blasts of the errorless, trained announcer.

"Today the trick is to handle the program with a natural flair that makes the unseen audience feel that it is almost present in the studio. To do that by reading what some one else has written is not easy, but there is evidence that it can be done."

No announcer who has employed a formal manner to

excess has long remained on the air. The listener is averse to the elocutionary skills of one who is using the microphone to show how pleased he is with his own voice. An over-smart precision which cuts consonants as if with a scalpel destroys the proper pace of conversation by the unusual and unvarying stress on single phonetic elements.

Even the learned Professor Lloyd James takes a sharp critical attitude toward the over perfect announcers. As linguistic advisor of the British Broadcasting Corporation, and supervisor of announcers, he is in a position to understand the popular ear.

"The chief point about the announcers is that they are all too slick—they all sound too respectable," said Professor James. "I think one of the great problems is to reduce this over-refinement. There is no person in this world who sets his face against this so-called Oxford accent more than I do."

The early success of Norman Brokenshire was due to his folksy manner. The audience was taken in by his jovial greeting, "How do you DO, everybody, how DO you DO." His voice had an intimate touch, a breezy quality that was intriguing,—a manner imitated by scores of announcers without success.

No one will deny that despite the arguments of the pedants, radio listeners really do not like the academically perfect speakers. They prefer an informal and "human" approach, even if the delivery is slightly defective. No one is advised, however, to set to work to become "slightly defective." It is all part of a natural manner.

Clyde Fitch Harris, the pioneer manager of WHAS, evaluates the announcer in his "Microphone Memories":

"The greatest gift of the announcer is an ability to create within himself a fourth dimension, without which a man may have mastered those other requirements, and by stopping there remain perhaps an acceptable announcer, but never 'tops.' Ears perceive with great acuteness and register

upon minds a picture of the man himself. Listeners sometimes call it personality, magnetism, or charm. Basically it may be any or all of these. But transcending them is that which in lieu of a better word, I call the fourth dimension."

The first recipients of this award were: Milton J. Cross, Alwyn Bach, David Ross, John Holbrook and James Wallington. In 1934 the Academy skipped the award because of failing interest, which was again revived the following year, when the coveted medal was conferred upon Alois Havrillas.

Critics have complained, however, that the effects upon speech instead of being salutary have definitely veered toward standardization. The whole clan of announcers imitate each other's style and in a sense have become the standardized medal voice of America.

A note of protest comes from Columbia University. "American radio announcers who win diction prizes are poor models for speech students," says Prof. George W. Hibbett, of the English faculty. "The prize winners usually have an artificial mode of speech not characteristic of any section of the country."

The temptation of the announcer to ape his successful fellow announcer is berated by Basil Ruysdael, who for years was a basso at the Metropolitan Opera House before he became a top-notch on the networks. He unblushingly submits the routine of "how announcers get that way": "Eight or ten or twelve hours a day talking about everything from Iceland's fish to the latest war; copy handed them at the last minute; no knowledge of any product that they may be trying to sell; a parish class catching a boot from the president of the station down to the page boys; struggling with a limited vocabulary to encompass the simple pronunciation of the toughest language on earth—What is the result? A 'style' developed from a core of contingencies and dismal, unrewarded monotony.

"If an announcer is a 'weak sister,'" continues Ruysdael,

“he will attempt to imitate the style of some more successful brother, and that is fatal, for unless a man is himself he is not sincere, and if he is not sincere he will not convince, he will not sell goods, including himself.

“Unless a man has an analytical mind he will not get too far announcing, for there are no books to guide him, and no teachers to be had. This is written to try and make the new year a more tolerant one for a really fine class of men. I hold no brief for the style boys, the imitators and the pounders. Their stay is brief enough as it is.”

Blame for formalism in speech cannot wholly be placed on the diction awards of various private and public institutions. If they have set false norms for over-ambitious announcers, they at least have done much to raise the standards of broadcasting. Deciding prize awards in the arts is always a matter of great difficulty, and at least as John Erskine says: “The result of such awards is helpful and stimulating because they are likely to help discussion. Discussion that follows the award probably does more good than the prize.”

Small wonder was that the receipt of the diction medal became somewhat of a jinx. The point was reached where announcers dreaded being selected for the citation, and Dinty Doyle recalls that every announcer who ever won it subsequently suffered reverses: “Milton J. Cross, Alwyn Bach, James Wallington, John S. Young, John Holbrook and David Ross, all were doing all right, until the diction award was bestowed on them.”

Adaptable Announcing

The announcer may not be master of his own voice. The sponsor may demand that he employ certain inflections and take on a vocal quality that is agreeable to the sponsor. Experiences show that the manner of voice may depend

upon the type of copy. The classifications of voice styles we give are not intended to be complete but are intended to be merely suggestive.

1. *The punchy type: The staccato voice of high pressure in salesmanship.* The effect is that of the pounding of a hammer. Each successive blow of the voice rivets the matter home. The punch copy generally consists of short snappy sentences. André Baruch heard in such programs as "Just Plain Bill" and "Evening in Paris" is master of this style, in spite of which he advises: "I always visualize one or two people sitting in a home and talk directly to them. The more conversational an announcer can make his delivery, the better." What Baruch probably means is the conversation yell.

2. *Smooth rhythms in voice:* This style belongs to the intimate copy. The announcer gently and kindly insinuates that the listener's life is not complete without buying the product and that for his own sweet sake he must give it a trial, since it costs no more than the other kind and is much more effective. Think of the smooth voice of Ben Bernie gently high-hat, agreeably superior.

3. *The effusive and gushing type:* This is affected mainly by women announcers—beauty and cooking experts, fashion advisors, home makers. The same is true of many male announcers who have been air salesmen of women's wear and accessories.

4. *The rollicky laughter type:* This is the most difficult trick in voice. Announcers generally do not feel funny enough to make their efforts seem real. The comedian who laughs at his own jokes as an air salesman often fails dismally.

5. *The reverential tone:* The tone is exalted, sometimes hushed and awed, but always winds up with the manner of one who will save our souls if we will only but let him.

6. *"You-dont-have-to-believe-me" intonation:* This is the

announcer who puts on the pretension of fairness permitting the listener to apply his own judgment. Such mannerisms are not the rule because sponsors usually prefer the dogmatic approach.

7. *The sentimental quality*: The voice takes on the flavor of wooing rhythm. Generally the announcer speaks to a musical background. Such dreamy quality is not justified by a sales message void of imagery.

8. *Over-precise, over-pedantic, over-careful approach*: Such speakers articulate consonant sounds and separate their syllables as if they were proving they knew how to spell. To get the effect of such, announcers place particular stress on each syllable in the words: *in-sti-tu-tion, of-ten*. The average listener gets the feeling that such announcers are going "high-hat" and will fall over their furniture in their haste to tune them out.

9. *The corny, "Hello folks!" type, in the manner of Bob Burns*.

10. *The thundering announcer*: The sponsor hopes to give his program distinction by having his announcer talk louder than anyone else in radio. "You can't blame the announcer for it," said Peter Dixon in one of his commentaries in the *New York Sun*. "Usually the announcer is acting under orders from the sponsor who seems to take great delight in having his sales message shouted." They hold the center of the stage and chew the scenery while they tear a commercial pattern to tatters. Eddie Thorgersen was probably the first of the bellowing school—and through no fault of his own. Under orders, Thorgersen shouted forth the merits of a certain brand of cigarettes until he was christened "Thundering Thorgersen." Eddie grew to hate his job. He even worked long hours over-time in order to do another type of announcing on another program—and a very pleasing job he did too. Though his bellow paid him well for a

time, there was no job waiting for Eddie when he had finished with that cigarette program. Finally he left radio, though you still hear but may not recognize his voice behind some of the news-reels.

An Examination for Announcers

Under Mayor LaGuardia of New York City, the municipal broadcasting station WNYC placed its entire announcing staff under the Civil Service. Applicants were required to take an extensive written test and the practical test before the microphone. In 1938 over a thousand candidates applied for the position and they sat down to a six hour written quiz from which a few of the questions follow:

The best way to evaluate a radio program is to count the number of its listeners. Is this a valid statement? Why or why not?

Every radio program should be an entity which is complete in and of itself. Do you agree?

Radio action must be concerned with that which is familiar to the listener. Do you agree?

Silence is one of the best of all sound effects. Is this a valid statement? Why or why not?

List the methods of scoring used and the parts or intervals into which each of the following is divided: Football; hockey; basketball.

Write a fifty-word announcement in introduction to the radio presentation of a typical Army-Navy football game.

Can any radio program be entirely devoid of propaganda?

State the nature of three amendments to the New York State Constitution which were approved in the recent election.

Name three functions of the Federal Communications Commission.

Write a fifty-word announcement on the purpose of the

Lima Conference in introduction to the radio presentation of a talk on Pan-American relations.

Write a fifty-word announcement on the extent to which New York City has developed a public housing program in introduction to a talk on housing in New York City.

Write a fifty-word announcement on the provisions of the new Wages and Hours Bill in introduction to a talk on industrial legislation.

Explain briefly the following musical terms: Oratorio, concerto, fugue, symphony, sonata, tone poem.

Write a fifty-word announcement on Liszt suitable in introduction to the radio presentation of the Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2.

The second part of the examination tested the candidates' knowledge of English. The candidate was asked to define a list of words such as: Diapason, bucolic, spoliata, succinct, etymology, etc.

A Test for Announcers

A large part of broadcasting deals with music. You will therefore be asked to read material dealing with composers and their compositions. In an instant your familiarity with the foreign languages can be determined. Below is a sample audition given aspiring announcers by the Columbia Broadcasting System.

"Among other prominent musical directors you will hear are Gustave Haenschen and his orchestra, the Detroit Symphony under the direction of Ossip Gabrilowitsch, featuring Jascha Heifetz and Fritz Kreisler as guest soloists. Ignace Jan Paderewski will accompany a concert featuring the phenomenal youngster, Jehudi Menuhin, while Ernestine Schumann-Heink will sing the Erl King of Franz Schubert.

"Among the other composers you will hear are Jacob

Ludwig, Felix Mendelssohn, Johann Sebastian Bach, Ludwig von Beethoven, Charles Camille, Saint-Saens, Richard Strauss (the famous Till Eulenspiegels)—Richard Wagner, Moszkowski, Cesar Cui, Giacomo Meyerbeer, Guiseppe Verdi, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Carl Maria von Weber, Christoph Willibald von Gluck, Gioachino Antonio Rossini, Vincenzo Bellini, Gaetano Donizetti, Arrigo Boito and Amilcare Ponchielli, closing with Hector Louis Berlioz, Friedrich von Flotow, Charles Francois Gounod, Ambroise Thomas and Alexandre C. L. George Bizet. We regret that we will be unable to present the works of Giacomo Puccini as they are at present under restriction.”

And finally try this bit of stuff judiciously prepared for aspiring announcers. Bob Cunningham, program director of KIOL, Omaha, devised a paragraph not intended as a standard test, but used mainly on staff announcers:

“Some aspirants regard an announcer’s audition as a chance for a coup; others with all the apparent symptoms of the ague. However formidable it may appear to be, it is best to enter into it with all the savoir faire at your command; much as an Irishman enters a melee—to be enjoyed, win or lose. A bona fide announcer will do the best he can with words he doesn’t know, and will try sincerely, even though he misses.”

Announcers might take lessons on tongue twisters from Harry von Zell. Every week a script writer pores through the dictionary hunting up tough words for Harry to read in introducing Fred Allen Wednesday nights. This is one sample: “Presenting that lackadaisical leviathan of laconic lampoon, laughter loving lullabies and ludicrous linguistic leap-frog and legerdemain, Fred Allen in person.” Or try to race through this at the von Zell pace: “That rip-roaring rococo Romeo of ridiculous roguish rigmarole, rhapsodic repartee and romping roundelay.”

This has been going on all season, a new one each week,

and so far Harry hasn't tripped once. The script writer swears he'll get Harry before the season is out.

Try This on Your Enunciator

(A sample of the type of test given to aspiring announcers by the Columbia Broadcasting System. Columbia says that the man who can handle it without mistake is a rare one and a well educated person.)

“Judging by the demands made upon the modern radio announcer, that unfortunate individual must, indeed, be a perambulating encyclopedia or the ancient curator of some Atheneum, for whom the entire subject of belles-lettres has become the sine qua non of the intelligent citizen. What is more, he is expected to air his profound knowledge with the terseness of an apothegm and with the easy grace of a romantic caballero. He must deliver himself of bromidic clichés with the same facility as of the profundities of the bel-esprit; perhaps, too, he must accede to the demands of the etymological efforts of some client who has used the roots of several classical tongues in the concoction of some bon mot with which to dub his superlative product. Although it has not been our aim to discourage the applicant, we might warn the esthetic aspirant that many months of the life of a broadcast announcer might easily hurl him into the very depths of asceticism.”

The Art of Ad-libbing

Announcers are divided into two groups, those who read prepared scripts and those who are thrown upon their own resources on the instant. The announcers who broadcast the dispatches of the United Press and other news associations are mere copy readers.

Many well-known studio announcers, and among them David Ross, admit that their routine never requires them to ad-lib a single sentence. Jimmy Wallington shows ready talent as an ad-libber, and Ben Grauer of CBS has been tested in every situation requiring facile speaking without script.

An important test is your ability to think fast on your feet. At any moment, you may be forced to speak extemporaneously or to fill in a "wait" or a gap. An announcer may be able to read from a script perfectly but prove to be inept when faced with a special problem. The networks prefer those announcers who do not grope for words during an emergency.

Through habit and experience an announcer should learn these rules of action: 1, Think fast. 2, Speak smoothly. 3, Speak accurately. 4, Do not lose your head.

In a Chicago studio Jean Paul King is announcing a homemaker's program in which Grace Gray is talking on home decorations. The lady commences to talk. She talks for about three minutes and then becomes faint. She sways and is about to fall. Well,—what to do?

This is what Jean Paul King does. He catches hold of Miss Gray's limp form with his left arm, and clings to the script with his right hand, speaks directly into the microphone, "As Grace Vial Gray was going to say . . ." At this point the control man rushes from his booth to carry the fainting lady away from the microphone.

The average staff announcer on the networks has been deprived of the privilege of ad-libbing. He has been reduced to the status of a mere reader. He may not even mention his name at will. He is furnished with a script and from that script he must not depart. Any variation from the script comes under the head of emergency announcing.

Experience has made it possible for the networks to cata-

logue the usual breaks. The announcer is provided with a manual which contains the exact words to be used for emergency announcing. Let us presume that the program fails to start within its allotted forty-five seconds of the scheduled time: the CBS announcer, to meet this emergency, has but to turn to his manual which reads: "We regret that due to operating difficulties, we are unable to present immediately the program —. In the meantime, we offer —."

Each broadcasting station has its own set of rules for the announcers but the regulations are much the same. Announcers must not attempt to be facetious. No puns, no wisecracks about song titles or situations. Analysis shows that the average announcer is very apt to become boring if he attempts extended ad-lib descriptions. The commentary furnished him is, therefore, limited to brief and concise statements.

It is regarded as poor showmanship to call attention to the closing of the program. Announcers are warned to avoid introducing a concluding number with phrases such as: "Finally the orchestra presents—," "In conclusion," or "Closing the program—," Better leave such finishing impressions alone.

Certain other regulations might also be mentioned. The networks frown on the frequent use of "Ladies and Gentlemen" or the abuse of such trite phrases as "This time we bring you," "Now we hear" and "Now we present." Even during multiple-point news broadcasts, the announcer is urged to avoid such phrases as "Thank you, Mr. —." Announcers must refrain, wherever possible, from referring to the period of the day. A New York announcer might be saying, "We present this afternoon," when it is still morning in California. The public for some unexplained reason is presumed to resent being reminded of this difference in time.

Enter—The New Radio Ringmaster

The variety program brought into being a super-announcer known as "Master of Ceremonies" which radio abbreviates as "em cee." The radio em cee is just a new version of the interlocutor of the old minstrel show, the chairman of the English music-hall, the compère of the continental music revue and the toast-master of the banquet hall.

Radio has established new duties for the em cee. He tells the listener everything that in the theater can be seen with the naked eye. He describes the numbers, identifies the performers and sets the stage with the right verbal touch which enables listeners to "see."

Earlier routines of the em cee were baldly to introduce the singer or performer and give the title of his selection: "Next Al Jolson will sing 'Mammy'." Someone conceived the notion that announcements in themselves might be couched in an entertaining fashion. Something brilliant and scintillating could be conveyed in a few words of introduction. A new routine required a line of patter and thus the em cee became a definite part in the pattern of entertainment.

Translated into his new role under the exigencies of the variety program, the em cee became the suave butler of the air who ushers guest performers into the home with the happiest approach. Deems Taylor finds that the variety program affords the widest scope to the talents of the em cee because of its admixture of performers.

The Discovery of the Em Cee

Sponsors at first experimented with members of the regular announcing group. Many of these announcers schooled in the artificial manner, utterly failed to vitalize the program. It was necessary to go outside the announcing field to discover new voices.

Let us glance backwards a few years. The sponsor was slow to encourage his advertising agency to enlist the literary man. An unusual gift of geniality and culture was found in John Erskine as emcee on the series of guest star programs inaugurated by Katherine Hepburn over NBC. In 1936, radio turned to Cecil de Mille, Rupert Hughes, and John McCormack, whom we shall consider briefly.

The Lux Radio Theater and the Hollywood industry placed the toga of emcee on the shoulders of Cecil de Mille. Here was a man to be respected. Indeed the giant of the movies has a sincerity of voice, a quiet and calm that "gets" the listener. However, de Mille can make his words sound silly when he is constantly gushing over the charm of his performers, who in turn pay him the same fulsome compliments. Radio has fostered this oleaginous introducing of stars who call each other tenderly by their first names. All of this business is written into the script. This induces an overdone "folksy" attitude, and the emcee is soon suspected of playing false with the listener.

Rupert Hughes in the role of emcee was not blessed with what radio producers call a good radio voice. But on the Camel program he made up for his lack of resonance and fresh quality by the fatherly manner of a genial host who is glad you are listening. Even when extolling the virtues of a cigarette, he has a genuineness, and that is what counts most.

Let us identify a few prominent exponents of the art. Jimmy Wallington first came into national prominence as a dignified master of ceremonies presiding over short wave programs broadcast to Admiral Richard E. Byrd on his first voyage to the South Pole. In 1930, when recalled to New York by NBC, Wallington swerved from his duties as emcee to the career of straight man for Cantor, Chevalier, Benny, Jessel and other comedians.

As for Rudy Vallee, he won his radio spurs as a crooner.

He established a new personality as em cee on his own Variety Hour. Quite seriously, he cultivated his speaking voice until every word carried a sense of friendly intention. Every leading performer is identified by the phrase of greeting with which he opens the program. The first words must carry that warmth, the warmth which listeners would expect of their friends.

In the free and informal manner of the em cee lies the danger of cheap wit, vulgarisms and undue familiarities with the performers. It is difficult to trace this tendency but Ted Husing in "Ten Years Before the Mike" ascribes it to the first attempts of certain radio characters to throw comedy into the bored American home. These were essentially parlor entertainers, amateur comedians and philosophers and neighborhood celebrities. "Even New York City had one of them," explains Husing, "'N.T.G.' of Station WHN, an ex-preacher named Nils Thor Granlund, and known to his friends as Granny. He clowning, read poetry in exaggerated ham fashion, insulted performers at the mike, and started the first phoney radio feud—with Harry Richman, whom he introduced to the air."

Not every species of em cee humor is understood by the radio audience. There are those who would be offended by Alan Courtney's manner as em cee on a WNEW program called "Din at Eight." Instead of following the old custom of praising all his artists lavishly, Courtney jovially insults them, brings them to the microphone in a shower of what is meant for good natured abuse and warns the audience. The masterful em cee like James Melton can sing, act in any role, make himself the foil for guest stars or comedians and build up the unfailing verbal bridges that link the performers.

The average radio program is a pretty heterogeneous affair, frequently deserving the name "Program" only in that it begins and ends at a specified time. It usually manages to offer, in the space of forty-five or sixty minutes, an

assortment of strange bedfellows that makes politics look like an amateur. Mix together an opera singer, a crooner, a jazz band, a few minutes of melodrama, a comedian, and a violin virtuoso, to say nothing of two or three sales talks, and you have something that brings to mind Stephen Leacock's immortal hero who "Mounted his horse and rode rapidly off in all directions."

The task of the em cee is not simple. He must definitely blend all the numbers on the program with appropriate transitions so that the show builds up with a unified spirit and plan. Each and every part somehow becomes integrated with the entire production. The trick is achieved by racy dialogue between em cee and the performers. All this helps produce the "company" effect which intrigues the listener into the belief that its members are one family of entertainers.

The Genius of Geniality

What makes a successful em cee? The first and most important asset of an em cee is geniality. His manner gives the audience the impression of the good fellow who will pat you on the back as if he had known you all your life, then will introduce you to the people with easy assurance. He somehow manages to say the right thing at the right time. It is for this reason that Bing Crosby with his lackadaisical witticisms quickly "gets the audience." He blends the parts of the program by the use of quick repartee skillfully studied to end in a gag line. When there is a comedian on the program the continuity is woven about the personal characteristics of the performers. It has become the custom to impress the em cee with the job of straight man. In such case, the problem of the em cee is to relate his method to the comedian's style and to adapt himself as a stooge.

A program which may be otherwise quite creditable is made ineffably dull by an em cee who is a third rate co-

median. Instead of keeping the movement lively and animated such an em cee succeeds in making it limp. The em cee who essays the comedy role must be to the manner born.

A number of band leaders have climbed into public favor as em cees of their programs. Everybody remembers "Heigh, ho! Everybody, this is Rudy Vallee!" There is Horace Heidt, and Ben Bernie, and Paul Whiteman. Bernie and Heidt interrupt the music with repartee. Dorsey is a jovial conversationalist. Chatter unless it is pointed soon annoys. The average band leader should confine himself to his baton. Kay Kayser as a talking band leader has become one of the network's better comedians, but his quiz formula may soon fade. A band leader must decide whether he is a comedian or a musician.

Humanizing the Program

Today the em cee carries the burden of humanizing the musical classics of the world. This type of em cee is an added feature of even the most important musical concerts. The aim of such announcing is to take the great and near great in music and bring them down to the common level. The script calls for familiar joking, calling celebrities by their first name, and exposing them to a merciless badinage. A few of the mighty like Arturo Toscanini are spared this personal approach. Imagine what would happen to Bing Crosby if he congratulated Toscanini with a familiarism like: "Attaboy Arturo!"

Al Jolson calls Deems Taylor "Deemsie" and Bing Crosby hails Toscha Seidel "Toscha" and the distinguished Ernest Schelling is dubbed "Uncle Ernie." This is an invitation for the musically great to cut capers around the microphone.

The familiar attitude of the em cee has been referred to as a "humanizing method." In reality it often dehumanizes and at best is a vulgar kind of condescension that stands for

humor and is supposed to make the masses feel at home with the artist.

The sponsors defend such a method: "Dialers want to know the performers as real folks, and they enjoy them because they are 'regular.'" The sponsor formula of making a performer "regular" usually consists in taking the artist off his high and mighty throne by having the em cee lash the performer with gags in a way that only radio will permit. For the moment dignity is surrendered and the artist is on the sponsor's level.

The Em Cee as a Musical Commentator

The very name of a music commentator should carry weight and authority. This implies that the commentator has not only an extensive technical background, but in addition is able to interpret for a large public the significance of important creative works. Critics like Deems Taylor and Lawrence Gilman had already established themselves through their writings before the advent of radio. The new medium enabled the critics to spread musical appreciation to a new listening public that never bothered its head to read musical press notices.

The music commentator can be most boring or most fascinating. Much will depend on his approach in voice and the selection of his material. It may be too much of an ideal to expect that he make his talks as enjoyable as the orchestra itself.

Deems Taylor, Chotzinoff, Damrosch and Black have essayed the role of em cee with distinction. Deems Taylor is Director of Serious Music at NBC and Samuel Chotzinoff occupies a similar position at CBS.

Dr. Walter Damrosch, Director of NBC's Music Appreciation Hour, proved that technicalities could be reduced to the level of children and the most initiated listeners.

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Dr. Frank Black who once became commentator as well as conductor of his string symphony concerts declared: "I will not be technical, because I don't think music lovers like to be bored by the fact that triplet figures enter into the descending theme in juxtaposition to the inverted chief melody. I would like to tell them that in this spot, the composer tried to ape one of the good composers of jazz or that he may have gotten a little beyond his depth."

The music commentator as em cee is setting new standards in music criticism over the air. The critic's judgment should be finely balanced. Criticism should not be synonymous with fault finding, as Deems Taylor puts it. He says, "He doesn't blame a waltz for not being a symphony and he doesn't abuse a street fiddler for not being a Mischa Elman." He emphasizes the merits rather than the faults of a composition. In short, the music commentator must know the structure of criticism so as to make the radio audience feel that he is just and fair in respecting everyone's taste.

The method of Deems Taylor, ever since he appeared on the very first broadcast CBS aired in 1922, might be studied to advantage. He is perhaps at his best when he interprets the selections of the Philharmonic Orchestra from Carnegie Hall in New York.

First, Taylor is a model of restraint. He abounds in information without being pedantic. He gets down to earth, but never condescends. If he were to talk as a high and mighty critic he would fail dismally. It is a subtle art to spread the canons of good taste and yet leave the listener free to exercise his own judgment.

Second, Taylor writes every word of the script himself, and from the deep fund of his knowledge he can draw on the right sources. He employs light material for his introductions and then swerves into more serious discourse as the nature of the subject demands. All this implies the gift of selecting material that will both instruct and entertain. Tay-

lor may spend from five to six hours on a twelve-minute script. *Newsweek* quotes him as saying that during these hours he "practically lives with a dictionary because 'the minute one makes a slip over the radio there are thousands who don't wait a minute to write about it'."

Third, the fact that Taylor writes his own script enables him to adapt his style to his own mannerisms in voice. He may repeat a sentence forty times before he is sure it sounds completely casual and natural. Instead of hearing a learned man reading an encyclopedia extract, the listener catches the friendly voice of a man who neither poses as critic nor superimposes himself as commentator.

What is the secret of this colloquial touch that seems somehow to engage the willing ear and confidence of the listener? In a recent issue of *Stage*, Deems Taylor himself discloses: "We don't talk as we write," he explains. "We use broken phrases, unfinished sentences, repetition. When I write my radio script I always talk it along. If I just wrote the thing it wouldn't sound right over the microphone. I can't sound convincing reading someone else's words."

The Em Cee in Audience Anticipation

Programs requiring audience participation demand the services of a director who at the same time must be a masterful em cee. His success depends upon his spontaneous gift of humor, his play on words, a sparkle of sentiment, and above all on an understanding of the psychology of the individual. In this type of program is included the Amateur Hours, the best exponent of which is Major Bowes' Original.

Not every announcer can go through the school of experience which J. E. (Dinty) Doyle calls attention to in a program which originated at KFRC, San Francisco, some ten years ago. Each Monday night a two-hour show was staged known as Blue Monday Jamboree. The announcer who pre-

sided over this Jamboree had unequalled opportunity to test his talent on a program which was composed of community singing, spelling bees, bridge games, an amateur department, questions and answers, knotty problems, interviews with movie stars and people prominent in the news, and of remote controls which sent men with mikes to gab with people in front of the entrances to San Francisco's famous hotels.

The em cee should be cautious in the use of his adjectives especially if he is ad-libbing. Adjectives like *great*, *magnificent*, *extraordinary*, carry great weight. Audiences resent such exaggerations in the face of a mediocre performance. It is a mistake to suppose the public is neither wise nor critical when the em cee builds up a very ordinary performer into a commanding artist. If such exaggerations are written into the script the em cee is in danger of losing popularity. You can't fool the people all the time.

The humanized tone of the em cee should pervade the entire program. It keeps the microphone warm and glowing. The problem is to speak with enthusiasm and wholesomeness so that what is being spoken becomes entertainment in itself.

The Em Cee as Comedian

The abundant use of gags by the em cee follows the device of vaudeville. In the theater the em cee filled the unavoidable gap between numbers when the scenery had to be changed. He kept up a steady stream of patter to keep the audience in good humor. Today the radio em cee is obliged to fill a similar function for the listener. While there is no scenery to be changed, often a new setting or mood must be created for the next performer. An artful touch by the em cee can provide the necessary contact between music numbers or various types of performers.

The stock method of perfecting this transition is to fill in

waiting moments with a mouthful of gags. Hence there has grown up the species known as the gag-type em cee.

Radio Quizzes

The unconquerable urge of a considerable proportion of the American populace to display its ignorance over a nation-wide hookup is one of the most mysterious phenomena of our time. It is comparable only to those little animals who insist on swimming out to sea and drowning themselves en masse. However, there seem to be more and more quiz programs, with more and more people appearing on them.

Listening to these broadcasts at home is well enough in its way, but most people suffer from a good deal of curiosity about these lambs going to their self-imposed slaughter. It is an experience to get some tickets and actually see the broadcast taking place.

Some of it is pretty peculiar. On one quiz program an announcer comes out and explains that when he raises his hand he wants the studio audience to chatter "just like children in a school room," and when he wriggles his fingers he wants quiet. Everybody politely does as he asks.

The contestants look calm or sheepish, or completely unhappy. There is generally one self-possessed man who doesn't know anything much but makes a lot of wisecracks at which the studio audience is encouraged to laugh hysterically. There is also usually one little Miss Smartypants who knows everything and doesn't make a spectacle of herself by giggling. The women in the audience view her with approbation.

Professor Quiz picks out a man from the crowd unaware of the man's communistic tendencies. Professor Quiz asks him rather grandiloquently: "And you sir—what do YOU thing of the busses?" The answer brought gales of laughter

from the crowd. It was: "De bosses—de bosses—you esk me about de bosses—vell, I say quick—DOWN with de bosses!"

As an exercise it would be well to invent embarrassing moments like these and supply the quip or remark that will take the edge off any overbold or untoward utterance which is the taboo of radio.

The men who handle the currently popular audience participation programs must think and talk with swift response. They are presumed to be masters of ad-libbing.

Be prepared to meet this criticism of John B. Kennedy, the NBC expert announcer, which he made in a recent issue of *The Commentator*: "Half the quiz-program boys would astonish the listeners by their bewilderment if an awkward question upset the routine of their specious ad-libbing which is largely rote."

Summarizing

A master of ceremonies should truly be master of the program. This sense of command is conveyed to the listeners by factors which are almost intangible. Listeners are moved by an easy, familiar manner in voice. Something about the speaker seems alive, sincere, delightful and refreshing. Everything he says springs from the spirit of the performance and gives the effect of closely co-ordinated entertainment. An over-assurance or cockiness will be immediately detected by the knowing ears of the listeners.

Much of the persiflage that sounds so brilliantly spontaneous on the Kraft program are the sentences that Carroll Carroll, the writer, puts into the mouth of Bing Crosby. This good-natured banter is the stuff the public gloats upon and if entrusted to another might sound rather terrible.

Every type of program has its problems and situations. The born em cee easily adapts himself to the spirit of the occasion. Test your flexibility as an em cee by this exercise. Assume that you are Milton Cross. You have just been as-

signed as the em cee of two children's programs. One is a nursery rhymes broadcast; the other is a Sunday morning's children's hour. Study your voice manner and your attitude in your approach to children in the studio with full regard to the listening audience.

Circumstances alter cases. The eyes of the em cee must be everywhere. He must be alert while the program is going on, make allowances for "spread." Spread is the difference between running time at the dress rehearsal and the actual running time on the air. He may be obliged to cut his prepared announcement or ad-lib to fill in the extended moments.

Frank McIntyre, who succeeded the unctuous Charles Winninger as Captain Henry of the Maxwell House Coffee Hour, offered this test for quick verbal counter: "One may drop a script, or read the wrong line. Then you'll have to cover it up. The script may have been corrected, and the new page thrown away instead of the old one. In fact, this is a way to test yourself to see if you have the makings of a master of ceremonies."

The em cee who is also a leading performer on a variety program requires a specialized technique that cannot be trifled with. He must be magnetic enough to dominate a whole show and yet hold himself aloof at the right moment. He must be exuberant enough to capture interest and hold the interest until the program is over. With the authority of an honest performer he keeps the stage warm and glowing for the invisible audience.

"Ideally," says Deems Taylor whom we must quote again, "the perfect radio announcement is one that is simple, clear, brief, amusing, conversational and persuasive. And try to write it!" But Taylor might have added, "Try and speak it!" for the perfect radio announcement must sound as if it were glibly rolling off the lips.

The latest discovery is Clifton Fadiman, the man of in-

finite jest, who propounds weighty questions to experts on "Information Please." Recruited from the book critic page of the *New Yorker* he won instant acclaim with all classes of listeners. Such men are naturals because they exhibit culture, refinement and agreeableness without obtrusive sophistication. Since its inception Fadiman has remained the interlocutor of the show.

Fadiman's gift is the gift of voice plus intelligence, wit and a communicating sense that catches the audience. He keeps talking about twenty minutes of the thirty minutes of the show, propounding a series of trick questions to several powerful minds whose ignorant responses create a giggle all over the country. That is a task by itself.

A program like "Information Please," affords the chance for spontaneous skirmishes, light, quick, cutting comments and flowery phrases. Consider that evening on which John Gunther knew at once that Riza Pahlevi was Shah of Iran. *Fadiman*: "Are you shah?" *Gunther*: "Sultanly."

RADIO DRAMA ADVANCES

THE first radio drama was produced in 1922. There followed a succession of broadcast plays, amateurish and abortive. Producers projected playlets or short dramas in the regular stage manner without respect to the limitations of the microphone. Over a period of eighteen years experiments have been made to achieve a new art form.

Broadcast plays today may be classified as (1) adaptations of stories, (2) stage and screen plays and (3) scripts written especially for the air. The earlier productions were almost exclusively adaptations.

Borrowing a leaf from film playwrights, the radio adaptors turned to established writers for their material. They constructed air dramas out of episodes taken from such writers as Conan Doyle and Sax Rohmer and fell back upon the motion picture device of a "dissolved" in the form of a musical cue to link their situations together.

Radio laid its clumsy hands upon the work of playwrights for inclusion in radio variety shows. Louis Reid said of Rudy Vallee that it took only fifteen minutes of radio boola boola to massacre the popular dramas of the stage. Condensation consisted of lifting some little scene and presenting it for fifteen minutes without preliminary action and characterization in the dialogue upon which it was based. It has been proved conclusively that radio cannot do justice in brief sketches of such stage plays unholily as "Dodsworth," "Valley Forge," "Laburnum Grove," and "Farmer Takes A Wife." The results were theatrically futile. It is difficult for the listener to warm up an imagination when a fifteen minute excerpt is flung on the air. An hour program permitted

the adapter to include practically all the dialogue and scenes of the play.

Established authors were reluctant to enter the field of radio drama. Octavus Roy Cohen was among the first magazine names to compete for air laurels. A few distinguished writers, intrigued by the new medium, tried out their inventiveness. Booth Tarkington wrote a radio script entitled "Maud and Cousin Bill." Tarkington considered radio as "a new way of painting pictures in the mind of an audience," and that is what the playwright and the novelist try to do with their other mediums.

In 1934 radio drama became the new vehicle of T. S. Stribling, whose novel "The Store" won the Pulitzer Prize. He approached the problem with curiosity. The result was a radio series known as "The Conflict" which was an adaptation of an earlier novel of his dealing with the struggle of the ship lines. Stribling added nothing revolutionary to the radio drama form but recognized the necessity for serious study of the problem. He left the field with a solid prophecy: "I look forward to the time when radio drama will run for an hour or two hours, letting radio develop its own style of radio technique."

The dramatist is just beginning to shake off his indifference to radio. Today many a well-known literary name is found appended to the script of a radio drama. Radio has added to its roster such names as Sherwood Anderson, Clifford Odets, Irwin Shaw, Stephen Vincent Benet, Norman Corwin, Alfred Kreymbourg, and Archibald MacLeish.

Writers have been tempted by social problems of the day to do bits of propaganda drama. For "The Mobilization for Human Needs" campaign Fannie Hurst was prompted to write for the networks a playlet called "Society's Business." Irwin Shaw, in 1937, wrote a drama for the air entitled "Supply and Demand," a half-hour production over the

WABC network. The play ventured into biting and ironic commentary on the food situation in the United States.

The era of "pure" radio drama begins with the Columbia Workshop in 1936, under the direction of Irving Reis. This was the first experimental theater of the air which guaranteed writers that their scripts would neither be revised nor cut. Reis began his career as a log engineer, but soon attracted attention as the author of a psychological script called "Split Seconds." An earlier work, "St. Louis Blues," produced in 1934, was a forerunner of the techniques he employed in "Meridian 7-1212." Reis has been called the apostle of drama through sound. His experiments demonstrated that the microphone could convey sound effects to build up drama in a way never before achieved.

Sponsors are not interested in experimental drama. They discovered very early that it was far safer to use tried and tested Broadway shows that could be easily adapted for radio. The Lux Radio Theater, from its eastern stronghold in New York, swooped down upon the hits of Broadway, placing its reliance upon the lure of a smashing success and only upon actors who had the highest box office attraction, who were engaged to star in these productions. Attempts were made to cast the radio play with the original star, and as many of the original cast as it was possible to gather together. Plays were cut down to the conventional radio formula and adapted to the one hour commercial program. Only fine acting saved these chopped-up plays. Walter Huston did a memorable bit of acting as Nifty in "The Barker," Leslie Howard set a high standard as Peter Standish in "Berkley Square," Paul Muni lost none of his vigor in "Counsellor-at-Law," and Pauline Lord and Walter Connolly were just as intense as in their stage roles in "The Late Christopher Bean."

To a larger extent than any other country England has developed the aesthetics and technique of radio drama. Writ-

ers of the stature of T. S. Elliot and James Hilton have written several experimental dramas. The British have been on the search for a new art form and were the first to conclude that stage plays are not radio plays. Early in 1937, NBC was so impressed by the new creative methods that it bought four English plays for radio production.

The old theory that radio drama was bound to accept limitations far more rigid than those that apply to the stage and screen has been abandoned by the English. They have achieved success in comedy and in historical and serious drama. Poetic plays like "Romeo and Juliet," romantic plays like "Hassan," epigrammatic plays like "The Importance of Being Earnest," character plays like "Doctor Abernathy—His Book," biographical plays like "Goodbye Mr. Chips," war plays like "Journey's End," sentimental plays like "Ann and Harold," all have proved successful on the air. There is seldom a common factor in treatment or presentation, each play offering special problems.

Radio as a means of presenting the classic dramatists has made a decided advance. The networks began to consider the classical and modern dramatists. In 1937, the Shakespearian cycle marked the beginning of the trend. A cycle of Eugene O'Neill plays, followed by George Bernard Shaw, indicates the agreement of distinguished playwrights to lend their plays for the culture and understanding of vast audience groups formerly untouched by the influence of the theater. These plays are, however, at their best, condensed versions. A play is cut and revised on the Procrustean bed to get it within radio's time limits.

Can Radio Actors Act?

Radio acting demands a higher degree of skill and art than does the legitimate stage. The radio actor is beset with special difficulties that often phase the most capable per-

former. In the studio, chalk lines and arrow marks around the base of the microphone serve as a guide to stance and distance. Seats along the side of the wall are occupied by the dramatic cast. Actors stroll to their assigned microphone positions only when their lines are reached. Such conditions break up the actor's mental approach in character and mood. On the stage actors have learned to sustain a mood all the while whether speaking or not. When the actor resumes his place at the microphone there is danger that his voice may sound artificial and unrelated to what has been spoken before. Even the most seasoned actor is influenced by lack of audience, applause, and surroundings of the legitimate stage. He must submerge himself in character regardless of studio "setting" and sound effects.

The whistle of the siren and the clanking of chains may throw him off mood. In addition, he is obliged to keep his eyes on the clock, and the man in the control room. There often arises in the mind a terrible consciousness that he is not being effective, and this feeling is often correct. One listener complained to the *New York Times* that actors bring about strange effects on the air. Weeping to him seemed like a waterfall, and laughter like a sound effect, and a whisper like a string of pauses surrounded by mumbling. To this general charge it might be said that everything depends on the actor. Some actors play havoc with any emotion; the real artist achieves results in voice that are unmistakable reflections of the mind and spirit.

Nearly every important actor has his own set of microphone mannerisms. Many of them go through the same pantomime and gestures before the microphone as they would on the theater stage. Gesture before the microphone helps in overcoming nervous tensions and mike consciousness. Lillian Gish in an O. Henry play had a line in which she announced: "Wait 'till I take off my hat. There!" Her long

training in stage realism impelled her to raise her arm and yank off her own hat.

If the script of *Bambi* directs Helen Hayes through a revolving door of a restaurant, she half whirls around the mike. She carries on through her entire program with gesture, facial expression, and pantomime, always keeping her eye on the printed page, following the script lest she lose her lines and the proper cues.

No exact formula can be given for successful acting on the air. The actor's art is bound up with his personality and each part that he plays becomes a special study in achievement. Stanislavski in his work "An Actor Prepares" has evoked a psycho-technique which implies an excellently trained physical, mental and vocal apparatus. A seasoned radio actor, Clyde North, once advised: "In a true sense, the radio actor projects character over the air waves as he does over the footlights. When he transfers his training from the footlights to the microphone he may be forgiven for those first blunders which are common to first appearances."

Certain principles of acting perhaps can be gleaned from the reactions of actors who have been called from one field to the other. Paul Muni, when called to do the lead in "Counsellor-At-Law" found radio a serious piece of business. "I didn't know what to expect," he confessed. "When I first saw the script and noticed how much of the original had been left out I was apprehensive as to the final result. All the nuances and all the embellishments that I had known on the stage were absent. I suddenly realized that there would be no facial expressions, no gestures, to lend it reality. But I soon got into the swing of it, thanks to the help of everyone who had a hand in the broadcast. It is just a matter of submerging one's self in the material and remembering nothing else while acting."

Dialogue must have an intimate and conversational touch, if it is to sound honest. The radio actor must convey to

listeners the illusion that they are eavesdropping upon a scene right out of life. This thought was summed up by Walter Huston when he said: "You can read a line one way and it will be honest. You can read it another way and it'll be a lie. You've got to be honest." The successful actor always gives the impression that he hasn't quite learned his part, and is ad-libbing as he goes along. Heywood Broun called this faculty "the illusion of the theater."

Radio acting commands a quick, alert, and flexible mentality, together with those physical gifts of voice which can interpret character in any situation. Character is made plausible if the actor thinks, feels, and strives in unison with his role. This requires talent and technique.

Timing and cuing are vital. The smallest details become significant; the difference in two or three seconds in the length of a pause, a slight change of tempo, a highly nervous pace, a lagging or let-down, anything unnatural in expression may mar a scene.

Radio broadcasting stations are still crowded with the amateurs who have had no opportunity for professional growth or experience. For this reason George Abbott, the producer, holds that it is best for the networks to cling to the old saying that "the worst professional is better than the best amateur."

The trained actor brings a power of interpretation that is totally lacking even in the best radio reader of scripts. Courtney Savage, former CBS director of plays, found that "in the creation of new roles, the actor with stage experience far excels the person without legitimate training. Actors of the legitimate stage slip into microphone technique with indigenous ease. The rising stars of the air waves attack their programs with their individual personalities centered solely in their vocal chords."

There still persists an "elocutionary" school of acting which the microphone has especially fostered. Walter Win-

chell urged that Katharine Cornell quit trying to sound like a diction tutor. George Jean Nathan calls attention to the great difference between exact pronunciation and enunciation and obviously painstaking exact pronunciation and enunciation. "The former is of course to be demanded," says Nathan. But the latter with its air of a student proudly and self consciously reciting a heavily learned lesson, will destroy the naturalness, ease and effect of any performance, however otherwise good. It is better, so far as the audience goes, to mispronounce and even badly articulate a difficult word than to speak it like a diction teacher giving a lesson in facial and dental calisthenics.

In June, 1938, Orson Welles said before the National Council of Teachers of English: "The Mercury Troup has concentrated on delivering lines with as much clarity and as authentic inflection as possible. Emphasis has been placed on infusing the language with as much beauty as the actress can lend through voice and expression. Language never lives until it is spoken aloud."

Shall Parts Be Memorized?

Television may put an end to the reading of lines from a script. Actors will be forced to memorize their parts and carry on as on the stage. There are many old-timers like Jane Cowl who wish radio would permit them to memorize, but the microphone has no time for such proceedings. Why memorize for a single performance? Reading from the script has the virtue of saving the energy of actors and cutting down the time of rehearsals. Radio actors do not take seriously the announcement by the networks that they must memorize their lines, since such a rule, if enforced, would require greatly increased salaries.

Maude Adams spoke her lines from memory, just as she did in the theater. There are few actresses so ably prepared.

It is notable, however, that NBC tried to preserve the short dramatic phrasing of Maxwell Anderson's "Second Overture" by insisting that the actors memorize their lines so that they were allowed complete freedom of gesture while their speeches were picked up by microphones suspended over their heads.

The custom of reading scripts brings with it the usual results of unintelligent reading. Somehow, when actors read from scripts, the effect becomes mechanical or too strenuous. Reading requires a full dimensional immersion in character. The capable radio performer with script in hand rarely gives any suspicion that he is reading from a script. Acting has been termed nothing more than re-acting. In reading a script, the actor never abandons the conversational contact which is the secret of realism.

Many careless directors permit their casts to fit their lines together rather than to fit their expression into the scheme of the action so that these actors do not really talk or listen to each other, but merely read to one another. Listeners become aware that there is no contact between the mind of one actor and the mind of the other. To avoid these mechanical impressions requires constant practice in ear-training, so that the actor can give the listener the illusion of honest-to-goodness dialogue.

A trained actress can adapt herself to her role under special stress. Helen Hayes was called to the microphone to take the part of Margaret Sullavan in the leading role of "Peg of My Heart." She had never played that part before and went on the air without the benefit of any rehearsal and only one script reading. "Frankly I was never so frightened over a performance before," she said. "Please realize that for my previous radio theater role in 'What Every Woman Knows,' I had six days and sixteen solid hours of rehearsal."

William S. Gillette was a master of naturalness in acting. He always gave the impression that he had not quite learned

his part, ad-libbing as he went along. This is what is called "the illusion of a first performance."

The test of naturalness lies in timing and the use of rhythms, inflections which strike the listener as "sincere." It is the natural reaction of the stage actor to protest against reading from a script. When Ina Claire appeared in three plays over NBC in 1937, she complained about the difficulties of translating her art from the spoken stage to radio without benefit of memorizing: "It is so difficult reading from a sheet of paper. I can't see why radio casts are not rehearsed as we rehearse in the theater. They could give a better performance."

Janet Gaynor, who made her debut on the microphone in the same year in a radio adaptation of "A Star is Born," suggested, like most air novices, that she memorize her part instead of reading from the script. This suggestion is generally vetoed by the director. Players who have memorized lines become confused when necessary last-minute cuts are made. In addition there is the danger of a fumbled line, which while forgivable on the stage is fatal on the air.

Voice of the Radio Actor

The loud speaker does terrible things to the actor's voice. Even the most distinguished stars, who are the best examples of traditional acting, have failed dismally on the air. Often a false theatricalism creeps into the voice. The touch of unnaturalness is immediately detected by the listener when the actor seems to struggle to achieve unusual tonalities. Ethel Barrymore found it difficult to adapt her stage technique to radio. Her throaty attempt at over-emotionalism had much of the effect of the elocutionary art.

Sometimes an artist tries too hard to put every nuance into boldest emphasis. Mary Pickford's over-explicit emphasis succeeded in turning comedy into farce. Tallulah Bank-

head, a personality in the theater and on the screen, brought to radio a voice that was regarded as hard, unfeminine, and lacking in the finer shades of interpretation.

Many air failures arise from miscasting radio plays. The actor is lost in a leading role unsuited to his type. Mary Pickford's attempt in "Coquette" proved that heavy acting was unsuited to her. The seduction-murder theme was too much for her artistry and unsuited to her type. Her first offering, "The Church Mouse," was a sentimental comedy more agreeable to her manner, but her voice was undistinguished and critics commented on the slight fuzz in her enunciation, something just this side of a lisp.

The microphone holds no guarantee for the revival of the reputation of an actress whose name was spoken in hushed whispers as a genius of the spoken stage. Maude Adams strove to weave the veil of enchantment that she had so successfully created on the spoken stage over the air. Something about "Peter Pan," however, could not be successfully translated in sound, and the fantasy of the play did not get across. One critic called "Peter Pan" on the air tragically unsuccessful and although Maude Adams achieved something of the elfin whimsy, refined and genteel atmosphere, her efforts were not impressive, and after eight weeks on the air, her sponsors did not renew her contract. One likened her reading of "The Kingdom of God" to the vocal hullabaloo at the Grand Central Station in New York just before the Yale-Harvard Special pulls out.

Lionel Barrymore, radio's leading impersonator of old men, has escaped from a stilted, artificial, and exaggerated style in delivery. For a more flexible and more interpretative rendering, he advises: "We can't deliver a one-tone monologue on the air. No matter how dramatic the material, a pulse that is hammered too hard, even with drama, finally becomes impervious. Even horror loses its blood-curdling

power if it is overdone. We have, therefore, to assimilate all of our being, all of our lights and shades into the voice."

In spite of the best intentions of Orson Welles, his impersonations became too dramatic and noisy. A certain pomposity in his actors created the feeling that they were trying to be arty.

In spite of all the ballyhoo accompanying the production of Shakespeare and Shaw, there has been little change in the average run of plays on the air. The work of these playwrights is born of the theater and not the radio. The next stage of development in radio drama is the creation of a repertory written especially for radio plus television requirements to come. The poetic drama has taken on a new stimulus through broadcasting. That trio of poetic experimentists, Maxwell Anderson, Archibald MacLeish, and Alfred Kreymbourg, have added much to the stability and maturity of the microphone plays.

Many programs still deal with excerpts from the current successes. This vogue was introduced by both Rudy Vallee and Kate Smith, who included scenes from play hits as features of their Variety Programs. When all the excitement of the presentation of some important plays is past, the networks go back to the same dramatic and comedy pattern as they had before. Trivial serials seriously hinder the appreciation of finer things in radio drama. Script shows like "Pepper's Own Family," "Big Sister," "Betty and Bob," are far more popular than Shakespeare and Shaw.

The experimental theater has diagnosed most of the ills of radio. It is now up to the playwrights to apply their remedies. Radio drama will suffer from pernicious anemia as long as it continues to offer a surplusage of serials.

The performance of Drinkwater's "Abraham Lincoln," displayed Orson Welles as a Lincoln who had a deep-sea-going voice that was trying to rival a fog-horn. The true humility of the Emancipator was missing in voice. The

danger in such characterizations is that the narrator, who is also the protagonist in the narrative, misses true characterization. It is as if a man were in love with his own voice and did not care to change it when stepping into character.

Barrymore made the mistake of trying to double as the ghost in "Hamlet." As a result Hamlet sounded like the ghost, and the ghost sounded like Hamlet. Doubling in radio is a stunt even for the best actor. Jimmy Scribner as the full cast of "The Johnson Family" enacted thirty-two characters, but not without strained and curious voice effects.

To fit into the picture the actor must give diligent attention to his spoken lines through careful rehearsal. Even more care is necessary for microphone delivery than for the spoken stage. Leslie Howard, on his own admission, was a total failure in "The Minute" on the Vallee Hour because he appeared without rehearsal. His rendition, indeed, was just a bit of unadulterated elocution. Some stars believed that rehearsing before the microphone was just a lot of fuss, but experience soon convinced them that the microphone is the most unerring instrument for determining their humanity in acting.

Today the actor does not have to worry about his personal appearance when he comes before the mike. Burns Mantle, with brilliant irony, bespeaks the opportunity which Shakespearean revivals offer to players who can triumph by virtue of their voices alone: "A Falstaff who doesn't have to wrestle with a stomach pad to look the part of the barrel-shaped knight! A Rosalind who does not even have to be shapely! A Kate Smith, given the voice and feeling, could read Juliet as confidently as a Cornell or a Cowl. An angular ZaSu Pitts or a Flora Finch could do as nicely as Rosalind, other talents being equal, as an Ada Rehan, or even a Marlene Dietrich."

A monologist like Ruth Draper represents the acme of radio ability. In her repertory there are thirty-five monologues. Each calls for the delineation of a distinct character,

and each one is different from the rest. This means that she has to adapt herself to thirty-five speech personalities; her rhythm, inflection, and general quality of voice must vary with each impersonation. It represents the highest degree of adaptation of the human voice. If the purpose of monologue is to make subacid but still polite comment on superficial manners, Ruth Draper heads the field. She has no rival. Her variety of tone, her technical control, her tactful lightness of touch adroitly suggest to the audience that even a scorpion may be tamed as a drawing-room pet.

Writing for Radio

A new deal seems to be in the offing for the radio writer. For nearly twenty years, with few exceptions, he was forgotten in the fanfare of the programs he helped to create. Names of announcers, bandsmen, transient Hollywood stars, and other supernumeraries were exploited continuously over the air while the men and women who pounded out all the sketches, playlets, skits and dramas were left to toil in complete obscurity. The status of the writer was not that of a literary creator, but of an anonymous producer of advertising copy.

With the entrance of recognized authors into the field of radio, and with the growing development of specialized writing technique, the radio "by-line" will become an actuality not only as a deserving accolade to the radio author, but also as a direct encouragement to better efforts.

The time still is when radio plays are dashed off in a day or two. In some instances it is reported that the copy has been furnished hot from the office pen while the actors are still standing before the microphone. How is it possible for an author to provide dialogue while on the run? Walter Huston, who appeared in the radio performance of "The Barker," claims that the power of the production lay in its

perfected dialogue since the author had spent a year perfecting the play, traveling with a carnival and learning every quirk of the traveling tent. "The radio drama penned in a few days," he says, "fails to paint the picture. The imagination doesn't have a chance to work," and Elsie Ferguson protested "It is a shame that actors are held back by dialogues that are thrilling as a timetable." The author, then, should give close attention to dialogue that rings true and is very real.

No amount of technical ingenuity can save a poorly written script, or the telescoped continuities that ignore character and hurry the action with almost unbelievable speed. The construction of a radio play demands an intimate knowledge of the author's chosen materials, and a careful selection from them. They aim to bring about a special friendliness or a temperamental kinship with the characters, as they are shown by their speech. In some way the drama brings a mental picture before the listener and words become translated into feelings and emotions. If the author does not provide the actor with dialogue that has this quality, a radio play cannot hope to be more than a dull affair in reading.

Tradition has grown up that radio drama demands mysterious techniques which are beyond the average writer. It is true that certain tricks of method have been applied to this art, but radio need not frighten away the playwright. The field is open to experiment. The principles of radio drama have remained the same from the very beginning. Radio merely takes these fundamental techniques and applies them in a way different from stage or screen technique in which the physical element played a most important part.

The veteran Owen Davis, author of over one hundred stage plays, and creator of the radio "Gibson Family," became a radio recruit without fear or trembling. "Radio," he advises, "is neither more difficult nor easy than writing a stage play. It all simmers down to what you say and how

you say it. Radio has the same problems as Hollywood. There is no established formula for writing plays for stage and screen. There is none for radio. It is merely a question of knowing how to perform certain tricks."

The old screen melodramas of 1900 involved techniques peculiar to the silent screen. The writer of continuity for the silent film sought to make the audience "hear" by sight. The problem of the radio dramatist is to stimulate the listener to "see" by sound. Film playwrights clung to plots which emphasized action, such as "The Wild Chase," "Rex," or "Burning Houses." When the talkies were introduced, the screen began to call for plays of character and situation rather than those of mere physical movement. In the same way, action and physical motion have been overemphasized in radio, while plays involving character development and emotional tendencies have been neglected. Many authors believe that the most unconvincing thing on the air is violence, such as gun shots or fights, on which the success of the old melodramas depended. The deeper feelings such as tenderness and affection, are more easily visualized than those climaxes depending upon sound effects. Effective dialogue paints a better mental picture than violent sounds. The whole business of radio drama technique is not elusive, but remains, first and last,—*theater*. The technique of radio script writing, radio drama writing, is done by simple rules, but they require a deep understanding of human nature and what is appealing to the average man and woman.

A situation or a character is more easily visualized when the listener is touched by the deeper emotions,—monologue, self-sacrifice, jealousy. The imagination plays the most successful part in any broadcast. De Mille calls the proper use of dialogue the fertilization of the imagination.

Radio plays, like the movies, sought their success by adhering to their "young boy meets girl" formula. At their best, they remain glorified stories of "hot" writing. It is for

such a reason that Arch Oboler, sickened by the mechanical production of his sketches for Irene Rich's show for nearly two years, finally resigned.

Special Problems

Early radio dramatists were faced with the problems of indicating a division between scenes. The three methods of bridging in use today are (1) the use of sound effects which give the listener a notion of change of scene through synchronized sounds; (2) the method of the commentator who lays the scene; (3) the narrator who is, in effect, something of the Greek chorus; (4) musical bridge which employs background music appropriate to the action.

The musical curtain, now employed practically universally is attributed to Dana Noyes and Howard Barlow, formerly Columbia's musical director. Noyes and Barlow introduced a brief musical interlude between scenes in "The True Story" broadcast to indicate the passing of time and the change of setting. Variations of this device are to be found in the Eno Crime Club Series, where a gong is slowly struck three times between each scene.

The modern playwright has the advantage over the Elizabethan dramatist. The theater-goer today is provided with a program which tells him of the changes of scene and of the passage of time and of anything else which the playwright regards necessary for him to know. Elizabethans had no programs. Radio drama can take lessons in technique from the technique in transition out of Shakespeare. Shakespeare used devices for conveying information about lapses of time and shifts in locality by means of dialogue. In the same manner dialogue serves to identify characters, anticipate or recapitulate events in order to make the action clear, stress the significant, show the responsiveness of other characters in the play, one to the other, bring in testimony and

messages of ghosts, and provide the narrator with the function of chorus prologue and epilogue.

The radio playwright should be guided by certain principles which experience has proved:

1. Writing for the masses requires a theme which will strike the widest appeal. An author must express himself in terms which will be understandable by the greatest possible number of listeners. In theme and in treatment, therefore, he will aim to touch what is immediately satisfying to the mass mind. Specialized treatment of plays as found in the experimental drama cannot hope to reach the minimum audience of approximately two million people listening in constantly. A play that attracts only one hundred thousand reaches out for only one-twentieth of its potential audience.

2. The most complicated problem of writing radio drama is that of identification. The legitimate stage employs lighting and scenic effects which impress the audience through the eye. The radio dramatist relies solely on visual images created solely by the dialogue spoken by the actors and the sound effects made to order by the technicians. Hence, the radio dramatist should deal in images which are easily recognized. The author indulges in swift, quick characterization and can fasten this characterization on the listener by the selection of simple characters and situations. The first five minutes of a radio drama are regarded as vital. It is generally considered that if an audience cannot picture a character and catch the drift of the action within these five minutes a radio play will drag along in a muddled and confused way.

3. Irving Reis calls attention to the "here-comes-so-and-so" school of exposition, which should be avoided. He warns, "It is dull and sloppy to establish a character in this obvious fashion. The writer must be inventive and devise in his scripts fresh and arresting methods of starting off the character's locale and plots."

4. Experiments prove that a writer may use as many char-

acters as he likes in a radio drama. The important principle is never to have more than three characters bear the brunt of any scene. Listeners can hold only so much at one time. Voice is the only guide by which the audience can see a character, and if that particular voice comes into the scene infrequently, it places a strain on the listener to identify it. Many plays are ruined by a babble of voices, none of which is fastened to a particular personality.

A character may be perfectly clear to the writer and yet be perfectly obscure to the listener. Dialect helps establish a character. It is by this element of the voice that the radio dramatist must rely upon the actor, but he must provide him with that mental stuff which can engender the highest form of expression and interpretation. John Erskine evaluates voice in the radio drama thus: "One loves voices, voices that convey the suggestion of pleasant personalities—voices full of character, that bespeak a whole page of description."

The author must spend some time in justifying and explaining his characters before they seem real to the radio audience. Put yourself in the listener's place, and see what sort of reaction your character creates. After that, the story can begin to move. Epithets, voices tender and ennobling, voices that stand apart by intense contrast from the gruff, mean, savage and violent speech of the villains,—voices clashing in battle or intertwined in love.

Suggestions

Not any one can write radio drama. Even the established writer must give ear to the radio and use his critical faculty in analyzing serials, one-act plays comedies and dramas from the standpoint of sound. The beginner in this field will profit by a good course in narrative and dramatic techniques which are fundamental to plot construction. The crux of the whole question of successful radio writing lies in the

ability of the writer to think in terms of sound. George P. Ludlam, continuity writer for NBC advised: "The best place to learn how to write is beside a radio set. The playwright who keeps that in mind is in little danger of going wrong."

Transitions, effects, climaxes all depend on sound. If the writer can hear his show in his mind and is satisfied with it, the chances are that he has something worth while. It does not matter how dialogue looks in print, it's the sound that counts. A few bars of thematic music transport the listener through time and space in a second or two. A few bars of thematic music span the centuries or transport the listener into another world. The writer takes advantage of the swift and sweeping transitions in time and place that radio affords. It is a matter of training to establish for the listener, the time, the place and the characters. George P. Ludlam also offers this injunction: "The listener must never for a moment be left in doubt as to the scene of the action or the identity of the characters engaged in conversation." Although this takes deft writing, it's quite simple when one understands the requisites.

Adaptation

Instead of an art, the work of adaptation was regarded as an unimportant hack job. The work truly calls for the best skills of the trained playwright and an intimate understanding of the reaction of the listening audience to characterization and dialogue. The adaptor has a special task of reducing the short story or novel to its elements and then analyzing and reassembling its separate parts. He has the special problem of keeping the tone of the play consistent with the original story and at the same time so construct his dialogue as to convey the impression of real people.

Some critics regard the adaptation of a play to radio as a trick in method rather than as an art. Condensing requires

the nicety of a surgeon who can extract a heart from the drama without destroying its unity. There are several principles in adapting that are almost uniformly practiced: (1) The radio script is shorter than the average stage script and is comparable to the one-act play; (2) Radio will permit unlimited flexibility in play form since it places no limitation on the length and number of scenes. It can enlarge on or compress any situation and the scene can be disposed of in a few lines of script. Change of time and place become almost instantaneous; (3) The most popular adaptations are those of stories or plays depending mainly on plot and action. Plays which depend upon sophistication of dialogue offer special difficulty in adaptation. It is easier to handle frank melodramas whose guiding motto is "Twelve minutes and a scream"; (4) The adaptor must turn the very limitations of the microphone to good advantage. To this end the adaptor should be familiar with the unusual effects in voice that give the illusion of reality.

Many presentations have been ruined by the extreme compression of plays within a period of thirty minutes. A two-hour play cannot be cut successfully to twenty-five minutes and still retain the flavor of the original. The high tempo and rapid fire dialogue common to most adaptations only succeed in emasculating the originals.

The adaptor has the task of switching scenes, cutting and pruning the lines, making changes in the action to employ proper sound effects and create the illusion of time and place. The principle followed in cutting is to highlight the main theme and gloss over the improbable and probable sub-plots. Burns Mantle criticized the Shakespearean streamline performances as being not even directly or remotely compared to the stage plays. "But," he adds, "they were certainly a great deal more than platform reading."

Max Wyle, continuity editor of CBS, in his lectures on radio writing at New York University stresses the principal

errors in script writing: (1) deficient story interest; (2) failure to develop a story after getting it started; (3) the abuse and improper use of sound effects; (4) writing about situations with insufficient knowledge. Radio technique in his opinion is not as important as story technique: "Most people who can write the story can be taught to write radio," explains Mr. Wyle. "If it's a good story, even though the script be spotted with technical mistakes, we can turn it into a good show and usually without very elaborate repair work."

The tendency for most amateur writers is to write about situations they have observed only in the movies. The precipitate young writers who live in Alaska create stories about Florida night clubs, and innumerable young people fresh from the colleges weave their stories in settings about which they know little. The young girls of the middle west essay the gangster problem of New York. Geographical areas of course have no bindings on the imagination, but the aspiring writer is urged to avoid distorted pictures by handling material with which he is unfamiliar. Wyle continues his injunctions to the amateur:

"We might say that if sound does not clarify a piece of stage business; if sound does not emphasize or fix a spoken line; if sound does not intensify atmosphere, it does not belong in the script. Never use a sound cue to indicate the physical action of a character unless the action is already under way or the intention already known.

"We can set down another rule too: Never use adverbs or adjectives in a sound cue unless those adverbs and adjectives qualify either microphone perspective or sound volume. Never use the word 'denote' in a sound cue. If the sound, of itself, does not denote what it is intended to denote, it is no good."

The outlook field of writing is growing brighter. Writers who have earned their livelihood in all the other branches of writing, are now turning to radio to try their luck. In

the past glaring and scientific errors were committed too often. Today elaborate research departments are maintained to assure authenticity. Specialists like Raymond Ditmars, the zoologist, and Paul de Kruif, bacteriologist, have been called upon to eliminate blunders.

The space of an hour is required as the norm for the presentation of radio plays. An hour permits time for practically all the dialogues and scenes. In most instances, the stage business and intermissions can be omitted. A listener can make sense out of a play that runs an hour. It is difficult for him to warm up an imagination when a fifteen-minute excerpt is flung at him. Many of the hour-long programs have been extraordinarily appealing to the listener.

Streamlined Experiments

During the summer of 1937, both NBC and CBS engaged in the experiment of producing Shakespeare. This period is known as the Monday Evening Battle of the Bards for both networks chose the same hour and the same day to educate the masses in the less familiar plays of Shakespeare. The rarity of Shakespeare on the air is due to the belief that the multitudes could not endure Elizabethan drama. The networks decided to enter upon this artistic venture in spite of the limitations of the twelve-year-old mind audience. It was estimated by Alton Cook that the Fibber McGee and Molly Program, commanded a fifty per cent larger audience than the two Shakespearian productions on the air at the same hour.

Columbia executives estimated over seven million five hundred thousand listened to Edward G. Robinson in the "Taming of the Shrew." NBC offered a series with John Barrymore and his wife in what has been termed streamlined Shakespeare. The plays offered by CBS brought a number of principals from Hollywood who had their first

opportunity to play Shakespeare. Burgess Meredith, hailed by the critics as the Hamlet of 1940, essayed the role of Hamlet. Edward G. Robinson became Petrucchio. Lionel Barrymore wept with the pathos of the venerable King Lear. Leslie Howard brought wit and ardor to Benedict.

To Cut or Not to Cut

Streamlined Shakespeare is the term by which Barrymore characterized his cutting of the plays to fit the exigencies of the microphone. "Hamlet," as penned by Shakespeare, runs five hours on the stage. For the stage, Howard and Gielgud, cut it to three. For radio, Barrymore reduced it to forty-five minutes. In effect, Barrymore's condensed versions were merely tabloid impressions of the action. There was much dramatic slicing and with more than two-thirds of the text lopped off, only the genius of Barrymore stepping in and out of monologue saved the experiment. Sound effects and musical embellishment painted the psychological background.

Barrymore employed the Greek device of a narrator who sets forth to the radio audience the argument of the play before reading the lines. Only the more dominant scenes were selected, and these were enacted in full with appropriate music, to form tonal backgrounds equivalent to visual action.

The rival network, CBS, entrusted to Brewster Morgan the eight Shakespearian plays. Even the most expert playwright would be phased by the job of telescoping the parts of "Henry IV" to fit into an hour's entertainment on the air. Mr. Morgan succeeded in compressing six thousand seven hundred and sixty lines of the original folio into one thousand six hundred lines for a one-hour production. All this had to be done skilfully without injury to the heart of the drama, with a clear understanding of the

listener's response to movement, clearness, and unity of action. Shakespeare is ideal for radio. The playwright had all the devices for conveying information about lapses of times and shifts in locality by means of the dialogue.

Another experiment of note is the First Person Singular method of Orson Welles. Orson Welles, a youngster with an amazingly big voice, rapidly rose to importance in the theater by his experiments in classic plays like "Julius Caesar." Radio had already known him by his eerie, vibrant voice as "The Shadow." In the summer of 1938, Columbia Broadcasting Company offered him its Summer Theatre of the Air for nine weeks' dramatic experiment. And so the Mercury Theatre transplanted itself from the stage to the microphone.

Let us engage ourselves to the method of Welles: Welles decries the use of talk to set the stage. He says, "There is nothing that seems more unsuited to the technique of the microphone than to tune in a play and hear an announcer say, 'The curtain is now rising on a presentation of . . .' and then for him to set the stage, introduce the characters and go on with the play. The curtain is not rising at all, as everybody well knows, and this method of introducing the characters and setting the locale seems hopelessly inadequate and clumsy."

This conventional technique of radio drama has nothing of the personal approach of the true theater. The First Person Singular technique provides for a narrator who as the storyteller is presumed to bring more intimacy to the dramatic broadcast. The listener responds with a close intimacy when the narrator immediately makes himself part of the action and begins: "Now this is how it happened." Welles made no undue claims for his innovation. He regarded the new technique as merely an experiment in microphone drama and experiments are better than consistency to old forms designed for the stage.

Welles made a startling impression with "Dracula." His adaptation of novels suffered from the crowding of too much plot into a single hour. On occasion, as in "The Thirty-nine Steps," the drama was told almost entirely in the first person, which makes the program referred to as, "I, Orson Welles."

The Grip of the Serials

Radio serials are called script shows or strip shows. The first title implies that actors and actresses read their lines from carefully prepared manuscript. The second name is fastened to such programs because they adapt the technique of so-called comic strips printed each day in the newspapers. The inspiration for plots and ideas comes from popular novels, plays, motion pictures and cartoon strips which are already familiar to the public. On the air such characters as "Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch," "Alias Jimmy Valentine," "David Harum" and "Stella Dallas" carry on from the point where the book or play left off. Their adventures appeal with added interest to those listeners who already know the central characters.

Chicago holds the honor of mothering the first day-time serials sometime in 1928. By virtue of the fact that soap manufacturers of the Windy City fostered them, the serials to this day are called "Soap Opera." And for this reason too, one listener suggested that the networks are certainly cleaning up with their oleaginous productions.

Infinitely various are the emotions which the serials play for the purpose of amusement. One type develops stories which stimulate a sense of power. Such serials invite their listeners to identify themselves with a gallant, successful criminal or with the detective or hero who thwarts him. Other stories deal with terrible adventure and give pleasure to the listeners through the emotion of fear. To this class belong the thrillers. Another large group stimulates the

listener's desire for adventure and the hope of taking part in scenes as unlike as possible his own dreary formula. The serials constantly unearth certain emotions of the listeners. They arouse and discharge these emotions in make-believe situations.

Mrs. Elaine Sterne Carrington is one of the outstanding serial script writers. "All my scripts," she confides, "are written so that listeners can imagine themselves in the same situations as the people in the cast. The daytime serials fill a tremendous hole in lonely people's lives. Listeners take the characters to heart and suffer, live, love and laugh with them."

Such synthetic sorrow and suffering pour from the microphone as to render the heart strings and loosen the purse strings for a wide variety of products. About the only thing missing is the moustached villain who holds the mortgage "poipers." On a given day it is possible to hear the anguish of a crippled lad suffering a beating from a strong brat, the tearful pleas of a patient begging a doctor to operate on a hopeless case, and the hysterical cries of a woman on the verge of a nervous breakdown. Intermingled are shattered romances, innocents charged with murder and pitiful eternal triangles.

The serials constantly spur the emotions and the listener thus aroused discharges them in make-believe situations. Most listeners are worried about love, money and business. As a type of "escape fiction," the serial carries them out of the humdrum through the triumph of character in tight situations. The listener may shed tears and have his heart wrenched by the course of events, but always he will in some way feel appeased by the enactment of the episode.

Radio serials are the re-embodiment of the serials of silent films. They follow the same laws of interest and suspense. In the early screen days stalwart heroes such as Eddie Polo and Charles Hutchinson invariably triumphed over das-

tardly villains. A heroine such as Pauline met peril from week to week unflinchingly, as she was left hanging from a cliff, or rescued from a burning building. Here the appeal was to the eye, and the visual representation of each episode was measured with gripping suspense so as to bring the movie fan back to the theater for the next episode. Similarly, the plot of the radio serial is left hanging day by day. The imagination, bestirred by the ear and not by the eye, has its foundation in the personal interpretation of the characters, each of whom is keenly etched on the mind of the listener as to appearance and surroundings. The radio serial has gripped the attention of listeners with amazing hold. Millions enjoy that vicarious thrill of romance and drama which comes within their personal measure of experience.

From twenty-two stations alone twenty serial stories pour into the ears of the listeners every week over the networks. The primary effort of such programs is to sustain interest through suspense and climaxes which challenge the listeners' solution.

From the brain of Carlton E. Morse, a former writer of blood and thunder radio dramas, sprang the case study of "One Man's Family," the Barbours, an average American family with adolescent children. In April, 1932, the program made its debut on KGO, San Francisco, and the following year came to the ears of listeners as the first West Coast serial to have nation-wide sponsorship. Today it remains in the front rank of the hundreds of flimsy little playlets heard on the air.

The Script Formula

The formula for air serials has been tested by time and not been found wanting. First, the characters must be distinctly lovable and human, and awaken broad sympathy in the listener.

Most of these scripts are success stories of the unsuccessful. "Just Plain Bill," for instance, in his humble calling of barber, is always in financial difficulties. "Lorenzo Jones" is an inventor whose efforts while practically futile, through continued zeal, command the listener's warm regard. Serial characters make a real success of their lives by endearing themselves to the folk around them.

Second, their actions should be believable. To this end nothing illogical or inconsistent with character may be dwelt upon. Hummert, the idea expert for many serials, explains why. He says:

"The listener has a way of placing himself in the boots of his 'mike' favorites and looks for a definite line of action to which he would respond under certain situations. It is really uncanny how the fan who follows the radio serial will detect any inconsistency or flaw in character."

The hero must retain high principles and can not suddenly turn into the villain. If drastic changes are made in character, protests pour into the broadcasting studio. Even the death of a character may be regarded as inconsistent. The death of Clifford's wife in "One Man's Family" brought down the wrath of hundreds who regarded her decease as unjustified by fate.

A less objectionable form of the serial is the comedy script which brings joy to many a masculine heart. Among these are the perennial "Amos 'n Andy," "The Goldbergs," "Myrt and Marge," "Easy Aces," "Vic and Sade."

The story of the Goldbergs is the story of the great American melting pot with all its early scenes set in New York City. Molly Goldberg has a clinging philosophy developed in girlhood which helps her through the years as she and Jake, her husband, climb to a near-affluence which pulls them through the depression. Gertrude Berg, creator of the Goldbergs, in 1937 reputedly entered a million dollar contract with the Procter and Gamble Company of Cincinnati

to star in the series over a period of a year, five quarter-hour episodes weekly.

Almost at any hour of the day you can pick out a dramatic serial from comedy to melodrama to mystery designed to appeal to mothers and wives while they do their household chores. Often the commercial demands for serials is so great that they are put on the networks.

"Vic and Sade" who began their air career in 1932, is one. In the Gook family, Vic is the boyish minded father. Sade is the typical small-budget housewife, who has her hands full with her man and her inventive, chattering semi-spoiled son whose name is Rush. The family lives in a "smart" house half-way up the block, and America's heart can throb with arguments about "Beef punkles" and "Limber Scharm" cheese.

Third, the serial should convey a representative picture of everyday American life situations that are realistic. The essential "realism" of the Barbour family impels listeners to remark: "I am sure the author must be someone who knows our family. That very thing happened in our home."

Once when Alice Frost, who plays the leading role in "Big Sister," caught cold in one of the episodes, her personal fan mail reached new proportions. Her radio "cold" was so real that listeners sent their favorite cold cures to her. Nor is it uncommon for stations to receive gifts to be forwarded to the members of the "Barbour family" on their "birthdays" or for Christmas.

The Blacket-Sample-Hummert Advertising Agency specializes in serials and has established a "script factory" for their production. The headquarters of the "script factory" is situated in Connecticut at the home of Frank Hummert and his wife, Anne, where both dictate their ideas to a battery of stenographers. A large force of writers whips the ideas into dialogue form, and every line is carefully edited

by the Hummerts to guarantee that speech befits the character.

Before the advent of the Radio Writers' Union, Mr. and Mrs. Hummert claimed authorship of most of the scripts, although they were written by anonymous hacks whose average pay was the pittance of \$5.00 per instalment. The Hummerts dictate to their string of authors exactly the type of cheap tabloid fiction which they have found makes the most money. Any initiative or imagination shown by a writer is quickly destroyed by such a plan since a successful program pays the same wages as a mediocre one.

The Hummert mill produces 50 serial scripts a week, a total of some 6,500,000 words a year. In their Greenwich, Connecticut home Frank and Anne figure out the trends of their serials four to six weeks in advance, dictate outlines to stenographers. Outline for an episode (*Backstage Wife*) may read something like this: "*Suspecting that Cynthia Valcourt murdered Candy Dolan with Ward Ellman's gun, after Tess left the flat, Mary, Larry and Ward rush to Tony Valcourt's penthouse to have a talk with Tony and Cynthia, having sent Tess Morgan to her apartment. Arriving at the penthouse, they are refused admittance by the butler. . . . If Cynthia gets away, Tess may take the rap for the crime. Can they save her? . . . What will Tess do?*"

When a script is finished by the ghost writers it goes to an adjunct of the Hummert mill known as Air Features, Inc., for production. No Hummert ghost may even stick his nose inside Air Features' production studios.

By hiring dialogue writers, and not creators, the Hummerts save lots of money. Most serial writers in radio command \$200 to \$400 a week. For *The Goldbergs*, Gertrude Berg gets about \$2,000. The Hummerts pay a minimum \$25 per 15-minute script.

Among the serials they have conceived and produced for radio are "Just Plain Bill," "Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage

Patch," "Our Gal Sunday," "Lorenzo Jones," "Stella Dallas," "Second Husband," "Alias Jimmy Valentine," "John's Other Wife," "David Harum," "Popeye," "Mr. Kean, Tracer of Lost Persons" and "Backstage Wife." Their success is measured by the seventy-five million letters received from fans each year. The Hummerts' shows have been on the air for as long as eight years without a change of sponsor.

Crime and law enforcement are vital themes to attract male listeners who go beyond the homey and folksy appeal of the afternoon serial. The "Gang Busters" dramatizes actual crimes in a semi-narrative and dramatic method. Law enforcement officers, such as Lewis E. Lawes, of Sing Sing Prison, have been enlisted to lend an authoritative touch and moral tone to such programs as "Twenty Thousand Years in Sing Sing."

In his more recent broadcasting, Edward G. Robinson is cast as a hard-boiled newspaper editor in "Big Town." He has an audience among the thirty-minute entertainers exceeded only by Jack Benny. Robinson is the protagonist who exposes the rackets and cracks down on the malefactors. So credible is his script and his acting, that he has actually stirred up civic responsibility of officials in many communities. "Big Town" is one of the best examples of the three requisites of serial writing. First, each episode is complete in itself. Second, the story is credible. Third, the dialogue is fast moving. The authors of Robinson's serials have been Courtney Ryley Cooper, Arthur Caesar, Arch Oboler and Art Holden.

Many popular novels have furnished the basis for the serializations of the five-times-a-week broadcasts. Their emphasis is mainly on the psychological approach rather than on violent action. The best artists have consented to appear in the serializations of novels, even though critics have deemed the vehicle unworthy of their art. Helen Hayes was

engaged for "Bambi" which was chosen not for the millions in the big cities but for the vast scattered population of the rural areas. In the hand of a lesser actress the words would have been less meaningful, but Helen Hayes did the best possible with none too engrossing situations.

An actress in radio is not concerned about the vehicle which is provided for her. Helen Hayes justifies her appearance in serials thus: "This serial is literate," she said. "It has clever lines and its characters talk like people. Besides, who is Helen Hayes except to a group that follows the Broadway theatre?" The theory is that if the sponsors are willing to lavish the talents of one of the greatest actresses of our generation on a trivial playlet, the public ought not to be ungrateful enough to object.

Once a show catches on, the loyalty of listeners is almost beyond belief. They will send in box tops by the thousands to insure the continuation of their serial drama.

Helen Menken is the serial queen of the air. Her adventures in "Second Husband" are more dangerous emotionally than physically, but the same pattern of climax is followed as is found in the more hectic gangster episodes. Always the question is asked at the end: "Well, what will happen next time? Tune in again on Monday, and . . ."

The plot element and dialogue have something of the nature of the pulpwood type of printed fiction, and the slushy analysis of frustrated women plays on the heartstrings of a world of feminine listeners.

"Second Husband" is homey and leisurely paced. The story concerns a young widow, dressmaker of a western mining town, who with her two children bravely faces the world, wins the love of a rich easterner, and becomes Broadway's most celebrated actress.

Helen Menken describes her first appearance in the role as akin to groping in the dark without knowing what reactions she would create. She need not have had any qualms

about the sure-fire success of a serial. The whole affair has been characterized as kindergarten stuff for an actress of her attainment. Without her subtle coloring of voice, the conventional characterizations would have fallen flat.

Serial writers are guided by one injunction: "Take care of the climax!" Every device known to drama is employed in the effort to sustain interest through suspense. If the climax is weak the episode must be bolstered up. Many writers first fix on the climax. The climax can always be made hair-raising. The "suspense" formula is easily handled by the writer. A dilemma is introduced on Tuesday and is solved on Monday. The climax is reached on Friday, for the listener must be left in a dither of excitement on that day so that there will be sufficient interest to carry over the week-end recess.

A radio serial fan was impelled to pen this complaint to his radio station: "Carroll Kennedy has been kidnapped. A burning house has fallen on 'Big Sister.' 'Aunt Jenny' leaves a poor girl in a vacant house with a drunk. 'Helen Trent' is shot at, and 'The O'Neils' lose a crook through an open window. And nothing can be done about it all till Monday!"

Often the climax may present a psychological crisis. Sketches like "One Man's Family" and "The House of Glass" disclose the intimate soul-reactions of familiar types. We are regarded as a nation of eavesdroppers, ever alert to find out what our next-door neighbor is saying.

The more popular serials are stories about everyday people who are forced into quandries that awaken the listeners' keen sympathy, and appeal to the common liking for that which seems genuine and thoroughly human. Unusual events and experiences strikingly out of the ordinary have their appeal because they take the listener away from his own humdrum existence. Many serial programs have captured the daily expectancy of a laugh through their

subtle touches on humorous situations enhanced by smart dialogue, and unexpected complications.

A strong protest is being voiced against the cluttering up of the air with these serials. The charge specifically is 1. These shows are too commercialized. 2. There are too many of them. 3. They are too much alike. 4. The daylight stretch is out of program balance.

The average time for commercials on a fifteen-minute program is two minutes, forty-five seconds. The average time for the actual plots in the sketches is eight minutes, forty-five seconds. The rest of the time is consumed by synopses, summaries, theme music and contest announcements.

The National Council of Women and the General Federation of Women's Clubs organized a "We're Not Listening Campaign." The agitation soon blew over. It was stated that women of superior financial and cultural advantages were assuming a crusading role on behalf of the "D" and "E" grades who had no desire to be saved from the serial menace. They wanted to be left alone to sob in peace, and not be regaled by talks on book reviews and dramatic criticism. Radio answers the hue and cry of the club women by asserting that the pulpwood fiction is the natural mental level and proper showmanly approach to the homes of two thousand dollars and less income, or the mass market for soap, and boiled fats.

Mrs. Wilfred Winans, President of the Woman's Club of New Rochelle, expressed it: "We would like more good music, book and play reviews, information about health, child care, gardening, home decoration, a balance of the practical and intellectual. Health should have a definite place on programs where the listeners are home makers." So the struggle goes on. Women may cry out for discussions on domestic and international affairs, health, nutrition and the like, but they continue to be served with the maudlin

drivel of the serial. They will stand for light skits like "Vic and Sade" to help them view their own domestic problems.

The American family, according to Mrs. Elaine Sterne Carrington, has five big problems in common. And they are here set down, because they are based on the mail she received from all parts of the country:

1. Should the sixteen or seventeen year old boy or girl be permitted to use the family automobile?
2. Should children be given an allowance or be paid for chores, such as cutting the grass, shoveling snow or milking the cow?
3. Should youngsters be given a latchkey or should the family sit up and wait for Johnny to come home?
4. How late should the sixteen or seventeen year old Mary stay out in the evening?
5. Why cannot a boy decide for himself whether he is to go to college or go to work? For example, if a young man wants to be an airplane pilot why should his parents insist that he follow another career?

The Radio Debut of Poetic Drama

The failure of the average poet as a poetic dramatist arose from his isolation in his Ivory Tower, far removed from the lives and language of the masses. Radio compelled the dramatist to get down to earth, because it deals with mass entertainment. It remained for Archibald MacLeish to create the first play in verse for air productions. Produced in the spring of 1937 under the direction of Irving Reis of the Columbia Workshop, "The Fall of the City" was acclaimed as the first real dramatic classic of the air.

The plot of the play is significant. It portrays the coming of a dictator to a free city and his enslavement of its population. A dead woman speaks from her tomb to warn of the coming of the conqueror. An announcer from a high

strategic post above the city square, bespeaks the fear and panic of the multitudes below him, and communicates the news of the conqueror's impending arrival. Other voices utter forebodings—a statesman, an old general, and a priest, each in his own way. Dawn draws near. The masses are terrified, obsessed by the fear of the loss of their liberty. The conqueror enters. The crowd casts away its weapons and grovels in the dust. Only the announcer sees through the emptiness of the conqueror. There is nothing inside the armor of the conqueror, his brass headpiece is empty, and the crowd has been vanquished by its fears alone.

In MacLeish's scheme of poetic radio drama, the announcer becomes the most useful dramatic personage since the Greek Chorus, whose function was and is to anticipate events, to interpret events, and to excite the emotions.

Written dramas for the stage have always felt the necessity of some sort of commentator. "The commentator is an integral part of radio technique," said MacLeish. "His presence is as natural as it is familiar, and his presence without more, restores to the poet that obliquity and perspective, that three-dimensional depth without which great poetic drama cannot exist."

MacLeish believes that the radio techniques are perfectly adapted to the poetic method. Writers of prose plays for radio have practically ignored the tools which poetic drama affords. They write for radio as they would write for the stage. MacLeish regards the absence of television as an added opportunity for the playwright: "With the eye closed or staring at nothing, this has every power over the air. The air accepts and believes, accepts and creates. The ear is the poet's perfect audience, his only true audience, and it is radio and only radio which can give him access to this perfect friend."

Although "The Fall of the City" was heralded as a milestone in the art of broadcasting, many manifest faults

marred its understanding. Orrin E. Dunlap, Jr., described the play as "sing-song literature of the air with a narrator who had something of the Shakespearean flavor plus the manner of a McNamee describing a football game." This is an aspersion on Orson Welles, who played the part of the announcer. Actors rushed through their lines so quickly that the listener did not have time to see the scene. Even the poetic drama required pauses necessary to grip the imagination.

MacLeish sought for simplicity in the use of words and restraint. The problem of the radio play is the same as for all creative mediums. The playwright was mindful that radio characters must be etched. He was also mindful that radio drama is still reliant on sound. The voice of the announcer, ringing with dramatic foreboding, "Smoke is filling the valleys like thunder heads—the sun is yellow with smoke—the town is burning—let the conqueror have it, the age is his—masterless men take a master—men must be ruled—he tramples his shadow—the people invent their oppressors."

Archibald MacLeish repeated his first success in "Air Raid" performed by the Columbia Workshop in 1938. The ominous drone of the planes, the shriek of the sirens, all recur like a sinister theme in a turbulent symphony. John Mason Brown regards it as a "little masterpiece, so bruising in its irony and so terrific in its suspense and so moving in its unadorned and lovely language that I for one, only wish the theatre could claim it as its own.

"It is studded with characters who are quickly and unforgettably established as symbols of sufferings—old women, gossips, and young lovers whose every speech is a cry from their hearts that stabs its way into ours."

Using the same device as in "The Fall of the City" MacLeish made his narrator a radio announcer, stationed on a tenement roof, awaiting an enemy bombing raid:

Strange and curious these times we live in:
You watch from kitchens for the bloody signs:
You watch for breaking war above the washing
on the lines.

The feeling of terror and dread is dramatically projected. There the tension is increased by stressing the time element. The number of minutes that have passed are announced with regularity and so, too, are the number of minutes that must be endured before the dreaded arrival of enemy planes. The populace refuses to believe that when the bombing planes arrive they will be the first to die. The planes swing into strategic formation. Women shout their defiance. But Death sweeps the towns.

The genius of Maxwell Anderson turned to original radio drama in "Feast of Ortolans," presented over NBC's network in 1937. The action begins at the dinner table in the chateau of a French noble on the eve of the French Revolution. Here are assembled a group of famous writers, intellectuals and noblemen such as Beaumarchais, Lafayette, Condorcet, and Philippe of Orleans. Anderson tried the experiment of having no individual protagonist of the action. Instead, the individual emerges from the group as a representative of that group. Thus Lafayette speaks not only as the idealist of the gathering but for idealism. At various times during the half hour of the play the radio audience may not know who is talking.

Another special radio play written by Anderson, "The Bastion of St. Gervais," is the story of four young Americans who went to Spain to fight on behalf of the Loyalist forces. The action takes place on the ruins of a Bastion hillside. Here is a play built without sound effects except for the defiant shots of a sniper, the rat-a-tat-tat of a machine gun, the moan of a dying Moor calling to Allah, and in the finale, the foreboding climax of the enemy soldiers closing in on the ruined castle where the Americans faced their fate.

Anderson's productions have been termed "voice plays," ingeniously dialogued. "Dialogue is my paint brush," he says. In Anderson's plays, every sentence is significant of pathos, suspense, the tensities of the scene. Nothing but tragedy marks the lines, and the comic spirit is suppressed.

Alfred Kreymbourg was prompted to turn to radio because he deemed it a medium which makes a most direct appeal to the imagination. In his poetic play, "The Planets" (CBS, 1937), he demonstrated the theory that radio dialogue need not be highbrow. Withal the language of the plot is so simple. No over lengthy speeches impede the action. Kreymbourg holds that poets must write on the level with the people on the level of radio.

The central figure of Kreymbourg's allegorical drama is an old astrologer who on seeing the earth threatened by invading armies makes an effort to save the human race by mirroring the horrors of past wars. He points his glass toward the heavens and searches for peace. In the course of his starry adventures he meets the planetary gods, Mars, Mercury, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, who roamed the earth as in the days of Greece.

Kreymbourg's drama proved that in radio, not only can the scene be shifted without scene shifters but it is possible to jump from planet to planet. Kreymbourg's management of over thirty characters makes it difficult for the listener at times to know who is talking. Voices cut in abruptly and "for sixty minutes," says one critic, "the listeners were suspended in space."

Such a treatment of radio drama indicates a startling resourcefulness which the medium holds for the ingenious author. Kreymbourg himself says: "While 'The Planets' can be performed on stage or screen, its prime consideration is the ear, and its background unhampered space. Furthermore, radio sets a limit on the time people can act or tune in. In this case it is one hour. This restriction has the

virtue of forcing an author to concentrate his energies, and to employ (whether he knows it or not) the Greek dramatic form—the short play without intermission.”

Perhaps the use of ornamentalizing radio drama through verse has for its chief value the illusion of world removed from reality. The poetic level impels listeners to attune themselves more easily to that state of feeling to which the author wishes to make them most susceptible. W. Somerset Maugham deplored the demand for realism in the theater because it led the theater to abandon the “ornament of verse.” The use of the verse, he found, had specific dramatic value due to the emotional power of rhythmic speech.

Sound Effects

Radio turned to sound effects for realism and its stage sets. Sound effects create picture effects, and help create that illusion upon which the imagination of the listener feeds. Radio sans television has no scenery except the scenery of sounds. In the Elizabethan drama, the audience was obliged to imagine a forest by reading a sign on the stage, “This is a forest.” The radio audience sees the forest through the ear by catching the swish of the wind and the falling of leaves.

The use of sound effects has made possible a kaleidoscopic movement in drama. The play may concern a heroine in a terrific struggle with her husband. She leaves the house, grabs her suitcase, jumps into a taxi and orders the driver to speed to the pier. She wants to catch the first boat out. On the legitimate stage dramatic action such as this would require the choice of one of these scenes to expound the plot. The scene selected might be the woman’s home, the taxicab, or the pier. In radio drama, sound effects make possible a swift sequence of this action, cinema-like in its rapid transition. We hear the noise of the scuffle in the

home; furniture thrown about; panes of glass broken. We catch the roar of the city traffic while the taxi honks; on the docks the siren of the boat sounds a shrill warning.

Sound effects may be divided into five sections: vocal, manual, electrical, recordings and acoustical. NBC has over twelve thousand sound recordings in its library. Records take care of about seventy-five per cent of the effects heard over the air. Radio has created a new group of specialists in this field. Manual effects include those which cannot be recorded, but must be created by the sound man. Windows and doors, telephone noises, door bells do not require any special ingenuity in creating. Here the real thing is the thing.

Today audible vibrations are picked up at their source and recorded for instant use on the turntable cabinet. The cabinet contains electro-phonograph pickups, amplifiers, and loud speakers. One operator can handle as many as six records at once, all of which requires the utmost skill for mixing sounds to get the right effects. NBC has thousands of sound effects on disks recorded at their natural points of origin, ready for instant use, and these effects can be tripled or even quadrupled in number by running the disks faster or slower, or by combination. Like a chemist experimenting with new mixtures, the operator is always experimenting with new sound mixtures.

The first sound effects in radio drama went on the air in 1922, over WGY, Schenectady, during a broadcast of "The Wolf," the drama of Eugene Walter. The director of the play slapped two pieces of wood together to simulate the slamming of a door. From this point on, sound effects emerged as the triumph of art and engineering. Among the pioneers in this field are Walter Pierson, sound-effect director at CBS since 1933, and Ray Kelley who has held the same position at NBC for over a decade. Kelley instituted

the sound effects library and solved sound puzzles which seemed beyond solution.

Animal sounds are still produced by the human voice, and many by experts who know how to handle their vocal chords. It is simple enough to simulate hoof beats by tapping the chest with plungers, and a good villainous stabbing can be established by thrusting a knife into a watermelon.

In the studio a kiss remains a kiss, but in this instance the lips always meet the kisser's own hand. Squeeze water alternately from two rubber bulbs and you hear yourself milking a cow. The buzz of swarming bees comes from a little horn. A battle is a complicated piece of sound-effect business. For the big guns they use tympani and thunder gun. The rattle of musketry is nothing else than short sticks beaten rapidly on the leather bottom of a chair.

When Gertrude Berg's script calls for the frying of eggs, she actually fries them in front of the microphone, but she could achieve the same sound effect by crumpling a piece of cellophane.

Washing dishes is easier over the air than in real life. A seltzer bottle squirted across the microphone produces this effect. James Lyons, NBC sound effects man at San Francisco, was not to be outdone for realism. During a Death Valley Days broadcast, to simulate the sound of a prospector washing clothes, he washed two pairs of socks and five handkerchiefs before the microphone.

A commercial client who wished to give talks on poultry wanted to get the realistic effects by bringing a coop of hens and a lusty rooster to the studio. A plentiful supply of corn was scattered around the microphone. The microphone was connected to a recording device. The rooster began to crow in his best fashion.

Many calls are made upon Bradley Barker, specialist in animal noises. Barker has given years of his life to the perfecting of his art. He spent many seasons with the circus,

learned various grunts, growls, whines and roars of animals so accurately that he could differentiate between the roar of a female and male lion.

For realism one would have to blow up a mine, but why go to this sorrow? Get a pile of cardboard boxes filled with stones and permit them to tumble before the mike.

Vocal effects today are uncommon. They are used when a unique animal sound or baby cry is required. There is a certain young active Dorlore Gillen who emits such life-like baby cries that one would swear that there was an infant in the studio who plays the role of baby Davy in "The Story of Marlin."

The sound which the listener hears most often in drama is the whizz of the automobile; next in frequency is the noise of the airplane; third, the beat of horses' hoofs. Sounds require the most exact cuing. Improper timing will make a scene sound ridiculous. Certain sounds, like the closing of a door, are best effected by the real thing. Realism demands a variety of doors—automobile doors, front doors, gates, iron doors.

There may be as many as a dozen different noises on one side of a record. When records of sounds are used it is important that the operator count the grooves as the needle revolves around so as to stop it exactly at the right moment. Sound records are timed to the lines of the actors.

Sound Effects in Voice

Irving Reis found that crude sound effects marred radio drama and defeated its purpose by presenting insufficient or wrong images. A toot on a whistle might be sufficient to convey the effect of a water-front scene, but only a limited effect. The listener has a subconscious feeling that something is lacking. A single artificial sound effect may be enough to make the play unreal. Faithful sound bestirs the mind in

a manner beyond the vocal skill of the average actor. It was the aim of Reis to employ sound as the strongest stimulant to the imagination and to arouse emotions in an abstract way, to convey definite impressions of mood beyond the familiar type of background noises such as hoof-beats, automobile sounds, shots of pistols and the like. A single cello note on an electric oscillator changing in pitch and in tone adds impressively to the dramatic action and carries what has been termed an "awful psychological wallop." In "Tell Tale Heart" Reis used an electrical stethoscope and magnified the human heart beat ten million times. When "Gulliver's Travels" was produced, four studios were used to reduce some voices and magnify others, and keep still others normal. The giant was pictured by a huge, booming voice and the little fellows by small voices.

The Columbia Workshop has given strong impetus to the study of new effects in vocal acoustics. "On the Columbia Workshop," said Irving Reis, "we have to take the wrinkles out of a voice. Through the use of an electrical filter, we add or subtract a rasp, a lisp, a growl, at will. We have learned how to enlarge a sound until, like a closeup in the movies, it occupies the entire space of our drama. We know how to pinch a sound down until the man's voice becomes no louder than the scratching of a pinpoint on ivory. We have learned to make sound more gruesome and distant by throwing it through an echo-chamber. We have even invented new sounds to express things unheard—or added a strange sound to a normal one to get an exotic effect—like gold dust powder over Marlene Dietrich's hair. We have learned that on the air the tonal quality of an actor's voice is as important as his diction and expression to express personality."

Radio drama still overdoes sound effects, and like the old-time melodrama, relies upon brutal noises, like gunshots. Unless a sound effect clarifies a piece of stage business, it

is useless. The ideal radio drama is scenery-less. Maxwell Anderson attempts to achieve realism by the marriage of realistic sounds within the dialogue. The radio dramatist can pull on the heart strings of the listener by making sound effects an inherent part of the action so that the listener emotionalizes with the characters in moments of tenderness, kindness, and love.

Instruction for production of a recent chapter in one of those serial thrillers included this direction: "Do not give sound effect of arm being torn from socket. Just imply it."

Radio Drama Goes Hollywood

Radio drama in 1936 took flight from the East to the capital of the movies. The alliance of the networks with the film-producing companies was strengthened when both NBC and CBS built palatial playhouses and broadcasting centers in the very heart of Hollywood.

Rudy Vallee helped put Hollywood on the radio map. Rudy went to the Coast in 1928 to make pictures, but managed to fulfill his broadcasting contracts at the same time. His program went on the air from a barn-like studio on the movie lot with the most primitive monitoring booth and sound effects. It was a far cry from the Columbia Playhouse with its acoustically perfected studios.

Experimental programs by NBC originating in New York dispelled the fear that the box office would be hurt if movie stars were permitted to play on the air. For these programs the stars had to come by plane to New York for a weekly Hollywood program on the networks.

No programs of a network nature came from Hollywood before 1932. Commercial programs had switched into Hollywood occasionally to present movie stars like Clark Gable or Ginger Rogers, who made their bows with "Hello, Everybody!" followed by a few minutes of chit-chat. No

one dreamed of casting a movie star in a preview or a post view of a movie play.

When MGM finally became convinced that the tabloid dramatic presentation of their film stories would be an important means of building up box-office patronage, the stars of the cinema were enlisted, and radio drama began to emanate from Hollywood. Many sponsors sought MGM, Ford Motor Cars, Palmolive, Socony Vacuum, Lucky Strike.

Louella Parsons had already introduced the system of getting movie stars to exploit scenes from their new productions without pay. As the first newspaperwoman to devote herself exclusively to movie gossip, she used to "invite" the stars to be interviewed before the microphone. Few refused the proffer of publicity which she controlled though many grumbled at being asked to perform for nothing.

The drama productions of "Hollywood Hotel" were heralded in 1933 as great contributions to the radio arts. In effect, they were capsuled versions of the latest motion pictures, heavily incrusting with plugs for the sponsor. Their popularity was proved by the increase of the sponsor's sales by thirty million dollars in the two and one-half years that William Bacher took over their direction.

After four and a half years on the air, "Hollywood Hotel" passed into oblivion and gave way to Orson Welles' "Mercury Theatre of the Air." A change in method has been going on gradually. "Hollywood Hotel" made its first switch by dropping previews in favor of completed stories, on that part of the program known as "Campbell Playhouse." Welles' choice of plays was distinctly modern, with plenty of romantic interest, nothing of the thriller or intellectual stuff.

The largest part of Hollywood's air policy has been to present scenes from forthcoming pictures. The Lux Radio Theatre, with the producers of "Seventh Heaven" starring Miriam Hopkins and John Boles, began its Hollywood cycle

under the advertised direction of Cecil B. De Mille in 1938. There were hopes that the master producer of movie drama might infuse radio drama with new impulses and techniques. No such miracle happened. De Mille merely lent the aura of his name. The actual producer of these productions was Frank Woodruff who, with a passion for detail, did what was possible with telescoped drama.

The De Mille plays follow the familiar formula: A narrator, who sets the scene, a movie drama cut into three "acts" to fit the time limits, the usual complement of sound effects, the trick of recalling the feature players to prattle about the product, the commercials that clutter up the kilocycles between the acts.

The era of Hollywood drama has established certain principles in the creation and in the acting of scripts which seem germane to the methods of the movie. Movie scripts within the conventional formula are more easily adapted to radio than a stage play. The scenes of the movie scripts are shorter, changes in locale more frequent and the pace more varied. The film scenario offers a simple task for radio adaptation.

Hollywood movie plays converted to radio, however, suffer from compression. The Lux Radio Theatre uses forty-three minutes for the play and gives over the rest of the hour to the ingratiating and pompous between-the-acts effusions of De Mille, curtain speeches and plugs for the sponsor. The effect upon the listener is that of receiving a slice of the pie instead of the whole pie. Intelligent listeners are tantalized not only by the snippy excerpts from movie stories, but by the glorified plugs for the pictures.

The myth that Hollywood could produce bigger and better drama than the East has been exploded. The problem involves not geographical locale but, rather, good plays technically constructed for radio and competent production. Vigorous, powerful and brilliant drama can be built up and produced in California just as it can in New York. In spite

of all propaganda about the advantages of Hollywood, radio drama coming from Hollywood and New York sound about the same as they emerge from the loud speaker.

Whatever virtues Hollywood drama may have, it has also served to show how radio drama should not be produced. Hollywood can not point with pride to many of its tabloid radio dramas undone by actor, producer and writer unfamiliar with the demands of the microphone. When producers insist on certain stars who, because of other assignments, can not be present at rehearsals, the results are bound to be sloppy and inadequate. Hollywood drama often has the earmarks of a hurry-up job.

The networks have attempted to build up the personality of radio performers to such an extent that when they do appear on the screen they will find an audience that is thoroughly familiar with their personalities as disclosed by voice alone. What sounds good on the air can be made to sound better when cameraized. For some reason, however, Amos 'n Andy never fared well in pictures. Their first experiment was not repeated.

A picture version of a successful serial story thrives upon an established radio audience that is already familiar with the setting, the characterization, and the plot of the story. Radio brought to the pictures "One Man's Family" and "Hollywood Hotel." The time may come when it will be necessary to develop players who are not steeped in the Hollywood tradition.

The roster of actors on Hollywood programs consists almost entirely of pure movie names. Hollywood drama has fostered the star system. The radio actor is assauged by the hope: "Don't cry! You may be a Don Ameche by and by!" With a start at the radio helm, sponsors feel more secure about their advertising investment. A twenty-four carat movie-name eliminates the sponsor's difficult task of developing stars of his own. Clark Gable, for example, may come

high, but he involves no gamble. On the air the movie star has an immeasurable advantage over the player whose features and temperament and type are unknown to the listeners. Hollywood glamour remains irresistible to the radio fan. Listeners have already been touched by the glamour and the romance of their favorite Hollywood stars in their screen performances.

When sponsors began to ask for big names, salaries began to soar to fantastic levels. The price war was on when Danny Danker of the J. Walter Thompson Agency went to Hollywood to put on shows for Lux Theatre. Picture people who had been previously cajoled to work for nothing were amazed to be offered a salary. Hollywood Hotel ran up a total talent bill of seventeen thousand dollars. Several programs ran as high as thirty thousand dollars a week. In 1938, some six hundred film actors took in five thousand dollars average for radio work. It must be remembered, by way of comparison, that hardly one of the hits current on the Broadway stage cost as much as a single half-hour program in radio's high brackets.

The Hollywood motion picture talent market for radio has something of a scale of prices for various classes of players, from three hundred and fifty dollars up. For instance, the "asking" price for a single radio performance is three thousand five hundred dollars for Joan Crawford, Claudette Colbert, Jeanette MacDonald, Lily Pons, Frances Langford and Ginger Rogers. About two thousand five hundred dollars is asked for Jack Oakie, Lionel Barrymore, George Raft, Edward Arnold and Herbert Marshall. Ann Sothern, Alice Faye and Zasu Pitts may be had for one thousand five hundred dollars, while Joel McCrea, Jane Withers, Edmund Lowe, Pat O'Brien, Barbara Stanwyck, Fred MacMurray and Victor McLaglen demand one thousand dollars per air show. Such luminaries as Grace Moore, John Barrymore and Fredric March command higher fees.

The employment of Hollywood stars has been estimated to have added ten per cent to the cost of radio talent, bringing up the talent charges for the average national network program to forty per cent of the program's production costs.

There are signs that the picture star in radio is regarded by the listener more critically than on the screen. Sponsors have discovered that it takes more than a glamorous name to make people listen. "Star studding" of a program is no substitute for sloppily produced plays. Surveys have shown that many listeners decide not to see a picture because they were not impressed by its broadcast version or by the efforts of the star before the microphone. Hence, there is a genuine danger to the box office if a scene from a current picture is badly handled on the air.

Many "guests" from the screen often fail dismally in the interpretation of their lines. The fault may lie in inadequate preparation and the nature and quality of the dialogue. The microphone performance of Marion Davies and Joel McCrea in "The Brat" suffered from a stumbling rendition that had no semblance of art.

Norma Shearer's performance in "Marie Antoinette" was nothing like her screen work. She gave the script a light once-over on the Thursday before going on the air, and failed to rehearse with the cast the night before the program. Lack of rehearsal failed to give the radio producer accurate timing of the script, and caused the program to be cut by NBC when it ran overtime.

Recent developments indicate that the film industry is beginning to change its policies with regard to radio. The producers do not wish to lose control over their featured players. They established a "secret" committee of production experts on the Coast to observe the stars' radio activities. It was supposed to "regulate" them, in principle at least. Twentieth Century Fox proposed in February, 1939, to buy back the radio contracts of certain of its stars.

The star is now tied up by the clauses in his contract that reserve to the film producers radio and television rights. In addition, the practice of certain film companies is to put on their own radio programs and, under special contracts, the star is no longer made available for other sponsors.

Paramount has a distinct leaning toward radio because its stars originally came from that media, among them being Burns and Allen, Jack Benny, Bing Crosby, Bob Hope, Martha Raye, Bob Burns and Dorothy Lamour.

Variety recently reported that for every star subject to anti-radio pressure from the film studios, the advertising agencies can turn to dozens who are free agents either because of the terms of their film contracts or because of their free lance standard.

A big star such as Edward G. Robinson can strike out for himself unfettered. Robinson had no radio clauses in his contract and went on the air in spite of the disapproval of Warner Brothers. The success of his new program, "Big Sister," put new life into the waning Hollywood-Radio relationship, and was mainly responsible for his big salary jump for pictures he made for producers other than Warner Brothers. He used to get forty thousand dollars per picture, and now it is a minimum of one hundred thousand dollars. Now he gets five thousand five hundred for each radio program, and this is radio's top for dramatic stars.

The Future of Radio Dramas

The networks may pride themselves on some notable drama achievements. Several historical cycles have been done with great art and distinction, but drama still remains in its experimental stage, and even though the stage took thousands of years to reach its present form, it is hoped that radio may round out for itself perfected norms and techniques.

It is generally known that intelligent listeners regard with abhorrence the general run of radio plays. Most of these are poorly written affairs, hastily slapped together by inexperienced writers and given haphazard production. The average radio play seldom departs from a slush formula.

Signs are that the radio audience is slowly being educated to appreciate good drama. America is going through the same experience as England in this business of weaning away the listener from competitive programs. Val Gielgud, the dramatic director of BBC, calls attention to the changing attitude of the public: "In England about 1930, radio drama was regarded with a mixture of contempt and faint amusement by press and public alike. At best it was regarded as a dismal *pis aller* for the benefit of people who were unable to go to the theater owing to the factors of distance and expense. It soon became clear that the main obstacle to be surmounted was the unfamiliarity of the medium to the average listener."

American audiences, at first attracted by big names, will some time come to insist on good plays. The broadcasting of plays is beginning to grow in authority and public interest, and just as the BBC is regarded as the National Theatre of Great Britain, so our big network systems can satisfy the public convenience and necessity by providing listeners with a national theater of the United States.

Important impetus can be given to the radio drama movement by drama guilds operating in separate communities, affording both the writer and the actor a field for presentation of original or adapted works. Orson Welles had this idea in mind when he said: "I think it is time that radio came to realize that no matter how wonderful a play may be for the stage it cannot be as wonderful for the air. We plan to bring to radio the experimental techniques which have proved so successful in another medium, and to treat

radio itself with the intelligence and respect which such a beautiful and powerful medium deserves."

Radio has been charged with being voracious with its material. A program is produced once and probably never again. Music is the exception. There is no doubt that great plays can be done over and over again with success. Radio can build up a repertory of classic and popular drama that would vie with music in appeal. The radio audience at the present time is not a theater audience, but once the ardor catches on, radio will be way ahead of the stage.

Gilbert Seldes called attention to the fact that radio has now only one backlog—the repertory of musical classics. Adding a second, in the repertory of classic drama, he claims would give radio drama a solidity which it requires. "Great plays," wrote Seldes, "can be played over and over again with great success. Shakespeare can be made a permanent feature of broadcasting if new players are cast in the principal roles." And Heaven knows America has a plentiful crop of new players.

In the experimental dramas instituted by CBS Workshop under the direction of Irving Reis, a new impulse was given to radio drama. Here was a pioneer, an engineer experimenting with sound and voice able to create new effects in composition. The Workshop first came into prominence when Reis produced his own "St. Louis Blues" in 1934. The play deals with the reaction of various people to the wailing of the saxophones. It scored a smart hit and won Reis recognition. It has been done eight times in this and other countries, and it should be done once a year, just as a lesson to production men throughout the country.

Reis's next offering was "Meridian 7-1212," the number dialed by New Yorkers who desire to know the time of day or night. The drama written around it was a thriller, the climax coming when the operator on duty announced midnight. Her brother went to the electric chair at midnight.

You can imagine the gripping finale as the girl told the time and collapsed.

Radio has the power to shift scenery in the twinkling of an eye. In "Meridian 7-1212" the author deals with dramatic material essentially suited to microphone production. The plot concerns the editor of the paper who is in desperate need of a story. He sends a reporter to see if there is any human interest stuff in the lives of the telephone girls who give the exact time. The listener is shown, in a number of powerful flash-backs, how important the exact time may be in the lives of people. The protagonist is the telephone operator in the Meridian exchange who has a brother in the death house at Sing Sing. At midnight he is to be executed. She watches the big clock. She continues to announce the time. The climatic moment arrives. Her nerve bears with her while she utters, "When you hear the signal it will be exactly twelve o'clock." Then follows a dull thud, the telephone girl has collapsed. The futility and irony of the drama is concentrated in the report of the reporter to his editor, "The only people who call Meridian 7-1212 are those whose watches have stopped, or those who are too lazy to go into the next room to find the time."

"Radio drama is still hackneyed," Reis told the writer in an interview. "After a long period of continuous listening for my log engineering sheet, I realized that the script authors were not taking full advantage of the medium of radio. It is possible that they were more concerned with the way their scripts looked on paper than they would sound over the air. But it's the ear and mind that the programs had to be written for, and that's one fact I always remembered."

Sound effects have played important parts in all of Reis's radio creations. He terms them as important, if not more important, in some cases, than the actors. But when Reis speaks of sound effects, he doesn't mean the usual type of background noise, to wit, horses, hoofbeats, automobile

horns, pistol shots, etc. He means such abstract sounds as a single cello note or an electric oscillator hum, changing in pitch and tone along with the dramatic action. In addition to cello and oscillator background, the young engineer-author has used other abstract sound effects, notably human voices.

"I haven't perfected radio drama by a long shot," Reis remarked. "There's still plenty of room for improvement and I expect to do much experimenting."

The new director of the Workshop, William N. Robson, hopes to broaden and deepen popular appreciation of the theater, and hopes in particular to elevate the standards of radio drama—about which, from time to time, there have been cries of despair both from critics and from listeners.

Directing the Play

The ideal director of a radio drama should be a master mind. "A director," said Margaret Webster, "needs just about everything." The earlier radio productions were thrown together by amateurs in directing without regard to the limitations imposed by the microphone.

The function of the director of radio drama is first of all to understand the meaning and methods and message of the play. He senses the mood of the script, in terms of the spoken word. The director then searches for a suitable cast. Upon his judgment will depend the total effect in voice characterization without benefit of the eye. A play that is miscast in voice had better not be done at all. Vocal interpretation must show plausibility, be it the voice of the grandfather, the child, or the lover. When the voice goes far off the mark, the listener grows incredulous and blots the actor off the air as an impostor.

The director chooses his actors with an ear to specific tonal effects in voice. Players are selected whose pitch range

fits the scheme of the character. Irving Reis showed extraordinary judgment in selecting actors whose voices were flexible enough to lend themselves to experiments in tone. "In radio," he declared, "we now cast the roles as an orchestrator of music selects certain instruments to obtain a particular emotion. We have even experimented upon the similarity of certain voice qualities to musical qualities and found they could be made much alike."

Air directing, Mr. Stanford has found, comes straight back to the theater. Timing, pacing, tempo, showmanship, all have the same relationship to producing a good show that they have on Broadway. His first care has been to throw microphone tradition out of the window and make his actors feel comfortable and authentic in their characterizations. Wallace Beery played "The Old Soak" with his shirt open at the neck and his suspenders hanging down. Paul Muni had a coat rack put beside the microphone so that he could actually grab his coat, jam on his hat, and rush away in "Counsellor-at-Law." Mr. Stanford, when it is possible, always has his players do their own doors, having learned from long experience in the theater that sometimes the way a door is closed can make a telling dramatic climax.

Walter Huston thought all the fuss was a little unnecessary. But when he did "The Minuet," as blank a bit of elocution as ever went over the air, on the Vallee hour a few weeks later without rehearsal, he had to admit that the Lux people were right.

Next comes the rehearsal. A director's hardest work comes at rehearsals. A successful play must have enough rehearsal time to make a finished production and not a script-reading. Inadequate preparation has killed off many dramas on the air. It is an easy temptation to cut down rehearsals since the play never goes on for over an hour, rarely to be repeated.

Producers are slowly realizing that a radio play demands

just as much consistent rehearsal as does a stage production. Indeed, it takes much more practice and patience to coordinate the actors in an air drama. Leading stars of the theater, anxious to retain their reputations on the air, seriously devoted themselves to rehearsal. Even though Jane Cowl had appeared before the footlights over a thousand times in "Smilin' Thru" she spent two solid weeks rehearsing her part, prior to her microphone debut. Some actresses throw themselves just as strenuously into rehearsal as for the final performance. During rehearsal Elsie Ferguson wept bitterly while enacting the pathetic roles of "Madame X" and "Camille," affecting her fellow-performers in the same way.

It takes more than a stop-watch and familiarity with studio routine to make a dramatic director. Many directors lack the necessary background of the theater. The Lux Radio Theatre always employed professional directors. It was the custom of Mr. Stanford, the director, to give out his scripts on Monday, work for five hours at his task of getting the play jellied. He rehearsed on Wednesday and Thursday. On Friday, he held the first dress rehearsal. On Saturday, the cast rested. On Sunday, everybody was in the studio by eleven and worked right on until two. The show went on at two-thirty.

The director's prime requisite is an ability to listen, to imbue the play with its finest personal element, to make mere sound emerge as the spiritual embodiment of the author. After repeated criticism and rehearsal, instead of an empty reading, the production will be filled with the breath of life. Long hours of rehearsal are behind broadcasts such as "The Fall of the City." To achieve the proper sound effects, the program was staged in the Seventh Regiment Armory in New York. Its vast drill area made possible acoustical effects that approximated the square of a big city in tumult. Four microphones were placed to get the right balance, and the echoes of a mob of one hundred and fifty added to the

realistic effect. A simple trick of engineering was used to augment the noise of the crowd. During the rehearsal the crowd noises of one hundred and fifty participants were recorded, to be reproduced during the actual performance through loud speakers at each end of the Armory. Such a device gave the effect of depth because of the lapse of a fraction of a second between the recorded voices and the actual voices of the shouting mob.

Dr. William Bacher (D.D.S., L.L.D., M.A) formerly practicing dentist of Bayonne, New Jersey, began his producing career by accident. He attracted attention by his sharp criticisms of programs produced and was given a chance to do better. As the director of "Hollywood Hotel," he was a continually erupting volcano of energy and temperament. He occupied a low stand during a broadcast and directed his players as a conductor leads a symphony. Such earnestness stimulates the actor.

Bacher gestured frantically for sound effects, pleaded by the movement of his hands for more emotion from the actors during a dramatic scene, crouched, spun upright, and displayed an earnestness that would do justice to a Toscanini. His discipline was exact so that when his clenched fists struck the air the knocking by the sound-effects assistant was exactly synchronized.

The practical work of a producer makes his radio factotum. His duties are manifold.

1. He co-ordinates the actors and exercises executive control in the studio.
2. He makes changes and deletions in the script to fit and discover fresh qualities in the text to meet time schedules.
3. He suggests microphone techniques and placements best for each actor.
4. He balances music and sound effects to the best advantage.

5. He cooperates with the control engineer during rehearsal over the monitor speaker in the control room.

6. He gives clues to the announcer, cast, sound man and orchestra leader.

One has but to attend a rehearsal to catch the important phases of direction. Such a picture is furnished by Martin Gosch, Assistant Director of the Columbia Workshop. In a personal interview with Alton Cook he confides: "In this play it took much longer, with a blend of sound effects, music and voices. We spent an hour and thirty-five minutes for all the rest of the play, and out of that time had to come a half hour for dress rehearsal."

Until dress rehearsal is over the director is never sure whether the play is going to run the exact twenty-nine minutes and forty-five seconds allotted. Radio permits no deviation either way. The situation is handled (by Gosch) in this way. "There have been times when, ten minutes before broadcast, we had to cut two and a half minutes out of the script, a few seconds from one scene, a half minute from another, and so on, always being careful to cut around the lines vital to the action."

4

MUSIC

GLOOMILY it was predicted ten years ago that the broadcasting of jazz would corrupt the public taste and that good music would be abolished from the earth. Good music has an immortality and the electrical arts could only perpetuate proving that it takes all kinds of minds and all kinds of people to make a world. The truth is that musicians have completely captured radio and stimulated popular response to good music undreamed of in this generation.

Samuel Chotzinoff pays acclaim to the popular school of music. "I happen to know my Stravinsky, Berg, Sessions et al and I know, also, Kern, Rodgers, Berlin, Gershwin, et al and while it may be said with truth that they are separated by a gulf, as I see it, that gulf is the void between sterility and inspiration. It happens to be a caprice of nature at the moment, that our serious composers are sterile, and our Tin Pan Alley songsters fecund."

Elie Siegmeister, the music critic, wonders who is to determine what is "good" and what is "bad" music, and furthermore, the question arises, "good for what?" To some, the music of Stravinsky (or Shostakovich or Schönberg or Gershwin) is stimulating, vivid, challenging, "good," because it reflects the forces of contemporary life; to others it is discordant, ugly and depressing.

The infiltration of music culture was hastened beyond wildest dreams by the advent of phonograph and radio. Through these devices millions of people were exposed to symphonies for the first time. The trouble was that they were supposed to take them and *like* them. Or else, to pretend.

If a man expressed an honest preference for "Dinah" or "Star Dust" and not for Tschaiowsky's Fifth, he was classified as hopelessly lowbrow. So two camps arose—the low-brows and the highbrows.

There is no definite measuring scale by which to determine how many people want jazz music and how many prefer the higher forms. But it is certain that there is a vast audience for both types of music and the lover of the symphony may turn to jazz for comfort depending on the time, the mood and the variety of personal adjustment.

It was a source of immense satisfaction to the great musical critic, Lawrence Gilman, that within "the last decade or so, the average man has discovered chiefly through the agency of phonographs and radio broadcasts that the art of music is not the province of a few incomprehensible specialists, but a vast and boundless continent of the mind, inexhaustible in its richness for the spirit."

The masses were denied the music of the masters and barred from participation in its beauties until radio suddenly swept away the barriers and admitted all the people to the charmed circle. In the early days many artists were afraid to broadcast. They were not sure that the microphone would do justice to their tonalities. Today there are only a few of the notable artists who have never broadcast. These include Rachmaninoff and Kreisler. Radio broke down certain theories. First was that mass audiences were fatigued by long pieces like symphonies. Today some of the broadcasts which present great music unabridged are the most popular programs. Second, the notion that unsophisticated listeners disliked modern music. John Barbirolli, conductor of the Philharmonic Symphony, said at a recent meeting of the Contemporary Club of Philadelphia, "I am inclined to think that prejudice against a certain musical idiom is occasioned by having been brought up as a child on too restricted a musical diet, and that the radio public knows its own tastes

very well merely because it has been allowed to sample scores of all periods without undue emphasis on any one century.

"The delight in sharing an artistic experience with hundreds of thousands of other listeners who are present and who applaud with you cannot be replaced by a private reaction detached from a gregarious occasion." And this after a study of twenty-five thousand letters received by the Philharmonic in one year.

Arranging

The band leader, Al Goodman, calls this the "Age of Arrangement," "We are living," says he, "in an arrangement age, musically speaking, because people are no different today than a generation ago in their love of melody. They want melody and they want it so presented that they can recognize it."

Arranging means taking the theme and making a musical production of it—creating introductions and perhaps codes and so on. Orchestrating means the making of orchestral versions for a given tune.

Music of the older masters does not have to be adapted for radio. There is no need for adaptation. The music is well orchestrated and should be played as written.

Bandmasters are compelled to create new arrangements. They must insert new harmony here, a new rhythm there, shift the chorus from the trombone to the saxophone or from the saxophone to the trumpet. The purpose of arrangement is to get a "zip" to music that identifies it, whether Dvorak or Schubert as a conductor. When a radio maestro wants plenty of flash and feeling in his music, he tells his men to play with more "Schmalz." The term is a by-word among musicians. According to Benny Goodman it comes from an ingenious old-time arranger, named Schmalz.

Staff and independent arrangers are a vital adjunct to every band leader. It is not unusual for a top band to pay out one thousand dollars a week for special arrangements. Paul Whiteman is lavish in this respect, employing a chief arranger on a straight salary of five hundred dollars a week. His total expenditures for arrangements over a period of twenty years are said to amount to over a million dollars.

Arrangements are the order of the day. Al Goodman asserts that arrangements are almost seventy-five per cent responsible for the success of an orchestra. The arranger is master of the art of counterpoint, and counterpoint, he explains, consists of playing different melodies simultaneously on an orchestration or arrangement. "Radio is full of arrangers," said Goodman, "who write counterpoint without ever having studied it. It's instinctive with them, and they get some effects that your serious European musicians envy."

Ferde Groffe was probably the first to make arrangements for a jazz band. In 1925 he was working with a band in San Francisco, and he attempted to revise the impromptu style of the band into a fixed creation of his own. His efforts have been termed "musical sauce a la Groffe."

Paul Whiteman, ushered in a kind of renaissance in orchestrated jazz. In his orchestration, Whiteman attempts to bridge the gap between hot jazz and serious music. "More than any other man, Paul Whiteman is responsible for the present method of orchestral playing of popular music," so says Ted Husing. "Before his day, a broadcasting band played melodies exactly as they were written. Whiteman took jazz and dance music and made them symphonic, besides putting in variations in rhythm. This development kept on until all the best orchestras were playing in what is now called "advance style"—that is, the melody oozes out against very simple but intricate-sounding rhythms in the accompaniment, and rhythm contrasts are used to supple-

ment the classical beauties of contrasts in key modulations, and between major and minor."

Because of radio, grand opera is no longer the prerogative of the wealthy intelligentsia. It takes its place in strict competition for favor with the latest "torch" song. Opera was a matter of social prestige. Humble people were scared away and still are by one good look at the box-office prices. Radio has done much to arouse interest in the opera. The pioneer broadcast was made on January 10, 1910, when Caruso and Emmy Destinn sang arias from "Cavalleria Rusticana" and "Pagliacci," which were trapped and magnified by the dictograph directly from the stage and borne on the Hertzian waves. NBC broadcast Humperdinck's "Hansel and Gretel" the first entire opera, from the stage of the Metropolitan on April 30, 1931. Within ten years radio has established a nation-wide familiarity with opera.

The networks paid the Met one hundred thousand dollars a season for the privilege but it was worth more than that in terms of prestige to the company, and the sponsors like Lucky Strike and Listerine. Opera thus became established in the listener's taste. In 1939, the Directors, faced with a deficit, threatened to close down the performances and sent out an SOS to the listeners for contributions. Previously, the Directors of the New York Philharmonic Society, threatened with financial destruction, made a similar SOS (Save Our Symphony) to the public which responded with five hundred thousand dollars. The Met boxholders who had been assessed annually four thousand five hundred dollars announced that they would no longer contribute the money and a million dollar fund became necessary. Listeners contributed the sum of \$326,936. It is estimated that ten million persons listened to a single performance of "Lohengrin."

Music form depends on three things: (1) the advancement of our musical understanding; (2) the quality of the music we hear; (3) the excellence of the receiving set. With final

judgment Hendrik van Loon says: "If you are musically ignorant and are content to listen to trash on a radio set that gives imperfect reception, then get all the fun out of it you can, but remember you are very much like an old myopic gentleman trying to read a cheap paper by candlelight."

Sponsors of Music

Music today is said to be the by-product of advertising agencies whose influence is considered a factor more discouraging to the art than is any other. Benny Goodman himself in an interview in the *World Telegram* decried the trend. "Music," says the bandleader, "has become industrialized by the sponsors, many of whom know nothing of music which can be proved. I mean that they appraise a song from their own viewpoint, forgetting that tunes played ten thousand times on the air in two years, like 'Sylvia' and 'The End of a Perfect Day' and 'Liebestraum' may indicate a worn-out welcome rather than a tendency to listen."

A sponsor has often forbidden his bandmaster to play good, tuneful harmonies of the great composers, especially if the movement is slow. Benny Goodman once complained that he was balked in his desire to play the slow movement of a Mozart quintette, as a stunt, after his Carnegie Hall swing session.

Pity the poor sponsor. In 1933, he tried the classics on the people. Beethoven and Bach had a real trial when three sponsors laid out huge sums for programs that vied with the quality of the New York Philharmonic Symphony orchestra. The millennium seemed at hand. It seemed that radio was making America a nation of music-lovers. Too good to be true, or to last. In 1934 all of the three sponsors went back to the dance bands and the light classics. And, as Alton Cook observed, "every radio season since then brought an abundance of good orchestras on sponsored programs, nearly all of

them with announcements written in symphonic talk and playing music just a step above that which you get in a good beer garden."

In the past great music was inaccessible to the public. Radio programs and radio performances which are developing taste are gradually forcing sponsors to improve and yield to all tastes. The sponsor will claim that he knows how to manufacture and sell his products, but that it has become his business to attract listeners to those things they prefer as proved by experience. If necessary he will offer skimmed milk instead of the heavy cream of music if the public taste is such. It's cheaper in the long run.

The sponsor is the new patron of the Arts comparable to kings and emperors of the middle ages. He oversteps his mark often in his advertising talk but he brings great music into the home and widens artistic appreciation of the best. "Music is not a language unless it is played," said Deems Taylor. "How many people can read music? To enjoy music you must hear it. A symphony is limited in time—a symphony concert must appeal to a large number of people. To make place for new music you must leave out a piece of old music and as a result a conductor examines a new piece more critically than a curator of a museum ordering new art work."

There is no question but that the sponsor has contributed enormously to the diffusion of musical culture among wide masses of people never reached by the concert. Yet, much as they have done, their utility is seriously limited, and, even negated by (1) the lack of any serious, systematic educational program to relate the music to the lives of the people, and (2) the planless, crazy-quilt mixture of "classical," "semi-classical" and "popular" music (often on the same program) dictated by the commercial sponsor's philosophy of "appealing to every taste." As a result, while much fine music is played, it is often bogged down and lost in a

morass of mediocrity and musical pap. Many of the best programs of unusual and valuable music are presented at hours when they cannot be heard by the majority of people who work.

There was a day when the showmen of radio thought they had to surrender the summer microphone to dance bands, because they believed the listeners favored "music in a lighter vein." But that theory has changed. The radio people have discovered that warm weather does not necessarily mean the public has put the love for good music away with the furs and overcoats.

Music has always held first place in broadcasting because it is the one act that has universal appeal. Radio music today can mould the taste of tomorrow. The destiny of music lies largely in the hands of the dictators of broadcasting. Music has penetrated every section of the civilized and uncivilized globe, because music expresses emotions which are felt by the general run of people everywhere.

Music has an important place in the education of the emotions. Aldous Huxley finds reason to believe that more people are able to participate in the experience of the music-maker than in that of the painter, the architect, or even the imaginative writer. Music is an educational outlet, for widening the consciousness and imparting a flow of emotion, in a desirable direction. "Music," says Huxley, "may be used to teach a number of valuable lessons. When they listen to a piece of good music, people of limited ability are given the opportunity of actually experiencing thought-and-feeling processes of a man of outstanding intellectual power and exceptional insight. Finest works of art are precious, among other reasons because they make it possible for us to know, if only imperfectly, and for a little while, what it actually feels like to think subtly and feel nobly."

The late Ernest Schelling once said: "Music is a habit." A person can accustom himself to needing music or doing

without it. He can accustom himself to a taste for good or bad; and since habits are mostly acquired in early youth when the mind is elastic and impressionable, the best way to lay the foundations for music in a nation is to induce good musical habits in the children.

There was once a judge versed in radio lore who was called upon to rule in a divorce suit partly growing out of complaints by the husband that he preferred light music on the radio and by the wife that she preferred opera. The husband threw the radio set out of the window, smashing it. The judge decided that they should buy two radio sets, to be equipped with earphones so each might listen without annoyance to the other. There is reason to believe that after this judgment, the couple are living happily ever for radio.

Deems Taylor makes it known that musical education has a long way to go in the recognition of new music. He quotes the English critic, Newman, who says that music of every period lacks melody when compared with the past. The familiar is the accepted. Hence, Taylor's plea to the listener not to reject the melodies of the new if they clash with the understanding. "Listen again, if it annoys you or makes you angry," he says; "or if it bores you. If a composer furnishes enough personality to make you recognize new style, give it a chance. Hear it again."

Musical democracy tolerates no snob. A snob is one who by dictionary definition "makes birth or wealth or superior position the sole criterion of worth." Those who insist that the world listen to inferior music represent the same dangerous snobbery as those who insist on only the classics. Who is it that knows the taste of the millions and dares to set standards for them on the basis of a mediocre musical diet?

A "Back to the Masters" movement all began with a few self-appointed radio prophets telling us our taste in music was terrible and that we should go for symphonies and operas. The cry was taken up by the public schools which

began installing courses in "music appreciation," purporting to inculcate the student with a love for the old masters by studying their lives and works. Colleges, the press, and radio began to rally to the uplift cause.

Radio has its time limitations however, for opera broadcasts. "Pagliacci" is ideal for radio, covering only one hour, but "Parsifal" would require four and a half hours. Hence the networks went scouting for creators of opera who could keep the performance within time limits. Tabloid versions of opera seem to be the vogue. If Shakespeare can be streamlined, so can Bizet. Carmen was telescoped to sixty minutes. This is an opera which would consume some four hours or more of stage time.

Erno Rapee, in 1938, conducted a festival of tabloid opera for the Music Hall of the Air, taking care not to omit a single aria duet or ensemble of musical significance.

Under commission from CBS, Vittoria Giannini wrote a twenty-nine minute and thirty seconds opera entitled "Blennerhasset," the libretto of which dealt with the escape of Aaron Burr.

NBC commissioned Gian-Carlo Menotti to write an original opera for radio. This was produced in 1939, under the title "The Old Maid and the Thief." The performance in fourteen scenes occupied one hour, and tells the escapades of a young roustabout who imposes on an old maid who befriends him and he finally makes off with all her worldly possessions.

Sponsor Conflict

The battle between the highbrow and the lowbrow in musical taste continues. The lowbrow is ready at all times to wield the cudgel against the artist and the sponsor, not knowing where to place the blame. The lowbrow cries out that the artist is prostituting his art when he condescends to sing "Danny Deever" instead of "Lucia."

Marcia Davenport voicing the plaint of the highbrow believes that the artists do not sing their best on the radio programs. They all sing what they are asked to sing. Most of what they are asked to sing is tripe. Lawrence Tibbett includes in his popular classical songs such ballads as "Old Man River," "Annie Laurie" and "The Last Round-Up." Reinald Werrenrath never allows his music to get beyond the understanding of his audience. He clings to songs of a popular nature such as "On the Road to Mandalay" and sponsors who study audience interests see that the stand-bys are included in the repertory of Rosa Ponselle, Nino Martini, and John Charles Thomas. Lawrence Tibbett takes issue with those who take him to task for "wasting" his fine voice on popular selections. When he feels he should sing a simple melody for those of his listeners who do not appreciate classical selections no one can change his mind. Simple melodies require as much artistry as the arias of the opera.

Subjective reactions evidently tell us less about what is "in the music" than about our own attitudes towards life and towards music as a part of it. Undoubtedly when we attempt to judge the nature of music and its place in the world solely on the basis of subjective reactions, thrills, pleasure and pain, we are led into endless contradictions.

Marcia Davenport complained of the lack of variety and balance of sponsors' music programs. There is such a congestion of "good" music over the week end and such a concentration of plugged jazz daily in the week, that you get a surfeit of both things just when the choicest programs of each type come. She suggests a Radio Utopia where somebody with the best of musical judgment, commercial and entertainment value would act as general arbitrator of time and distribution over the air like the movie and baseball czar. Miss Davenport forgets she is dealing with an art. Her plan smacks of dictatorship over public taste.

Arthur Bodansky answered the question of "shall there

be a musical dictator?" in no uncertain terms: "You cannot build a musical nation from the top down. You cannot turn out a handful of professionals and cry, 'People, these are your leaders. Follow them and be musical!' It works the other way about. When you can point to a nation of musically interested citizens and say, 'These are your leaders!' the professionals will take care of themselves."

Review Your Technique

The microphone is a mechanical electrical ear, and has no sense of discrimination. It faithfully reproduces all the sound that reaches it. The listener at an orchestra concert can focus attention on musical sounds and exclude extraneous noises such as sneezes, coughs, reverberations. Not so with the microphone. It hears all and tells all. **IT MUST BE PLACED WHERE IT PICKS UP ONLY THE DESIRED SOUNDS.** The primary rule is to place it near the orchestra. If it is placed near the orchestra, the next problem is: Does it pick up the right amount of sound from each instrument? Balance is the picking up of the right amount of sound from each instrument.

The more desirable qualities of voice are those of richness, flexibility, smoothness and mellowness. To achieve such effects depends on the power and quality of the voice, the acoustics of the studio, and the correct position before the mike. Rules for the guidance of singers include:

1. Do not be subject to the temptation to huddle the mike unless you are a crooner. Center up on the microphone; stand twenty or thirty inches away.
2. Get the right mental attitude by assuming an easy stance. An easy balance is secured by placing one foot ahead of the other.
3. Move closer to, and farther away from the mike as

you graduate in voice volume. On high notes, move away, on soft tones, come closer.

4. In group singing, as in quartette, best effects result if each singer stands the same distance from the mike. If one voice stands out too prominently when this is done, a better balance is obtained by moving that voice farther from the mike than the others. If one member of the quartette sings a solo, it is important that this member move closer to the microphone than the rest.

Lawrence Tibbett keeps the control men on their toes every minute. He is likely to "blast," especially when singing such a selection as "Glory Road" which is full of dangerous peaks and ejaculations. Richard Crooks sings less turbulent selections and therefore he is much more placid at the microphone.

If the prima donna stands in one place when delivering a bravura, the engineer's task is simple, but if she walks around the stage and shifts from one mike to another, the mixer gets busy. The microphone is kindest to the naturally beautiful, smooth voice. The singer who knows how to adjust her own instrument need not fear the engineer.

On the air, crescendos built up with impressive effect by the singer, must be doctored by the engineer else they will be received by the ear as distorted sounds. As the voice increases in volume, its dissonant harmonic content grows in proportion, while at the same time the fundamental harmonic content does not increase correspondingly. The average ear refines or mixes these two tones. The microphone does no mixing but merely transmits what it hears. If the listener were seated at the Opera House he would be unaware of any such distortion, but at the receiving end of the radio the ear would tell him something is wrong.

For dramatic conquest of the audience, there is a decided tendency among prima donnas to employ too much voice on

the upper notes. Sopranos on the top tones, especially, force. The singer must carefully watch his climaxes. He should tone them down considerably lower than he would on the concert stage. Otherwise the listener will be knocked over by one of those blasts that mar even the best recitals.

Success on the concert stage does not necessarily mean success on the radio. A voice may carry across the nation but not be strong enough to reach the far end of a small auditorium. The man in the control room remains master of volume and crescendo.

Musical Self Control

The fate of many a radio singer rests on the sensitive fingers and ears of the engineer who manipulates the controls. He is virtually the "conductor-engineer," who is able to ruin the career of the prima donna or bring her to super-human heights. The adjustment by the engineers of the relative amount of the different elements of the sound to be transmitted is a matter far more subtle than it appears. It taxes both the knowledge and the taste of all concerned.

Howard Traubman has given us a picture of "opera, front and back" during broadcasts. At the Metropolitan Opera House eight mikes are used, four of which are suspended over the orchestra and four placed in the footlights, in pairs about one quarter length of the stage rim from the sides. Each pair of footlight mikes consists of a close perspective and a long perspective mike; the close perspective picks up tones from a singer standing by. The long perspective catches the singing in the background. The overhead orchestra mikes are placed at two levels, one pair close to the orchestra. Thin tones come in on the close perspective mikes, crescendos and fortissimos on the long perspective mikes. All of these eight mikes are connected with the control board known as the "mixer" housed in one of the boxes on

the grand tier. From this box, the engineer can watch the singers and the conductor.

An interpretative artist, Charles C. Gray, manipulates the control at the Metropolitan. He has a sensitive ear, can tune in on any or all the mikes, and create the blend of tone which makes the listener glory in opera. He can make a bleating soprano out of a Flagstad by tuning in the closest mike and stepping up the juice. He carries effects of balance, quality, and dynamics, in the interplay of voice, chorus and orchestra. At his side is his production man, Herbert Liveridge, who reads the score some six bars ahead and keeps the control man posted with hand signals on who or what is coming,—a thumb-forefinger for female soloists, a single raised finger for men, two for duets, all five for choruses, a clenched fist for the whole works. The control man watches the signals ready to take out squeals from coloraturas, distortion out of tenors and ear splits out of ensembles.

The man at the controls is the ear of millions. He should be an artist in his own right. The man at the controls came to the rescue of many a prima donna whose voice bogged down in a series of florid passages. The three thousand of the radio audience may suffer but the radio fan remains unaware of the difficulty. The mixer simply pulls up the orchestra and obscures the cracking voice. He could, of course, let the singer do her worst, or make her worse than she really is by increasing the power at that point where her voice begins to crack.

In the case of duets, the male voice is best heard if it is placed behind the soprano. If Lawrence Tibbett does not take a position behind Lily Pons, his baritone would stand out in greater prominence. The control man more easily blends the tones and makes for more agreeable quality over the speaker.

When a vocal ensemble sings as part of a radio orchestra, the chief problem is "miking" in such a way that the mixing

of voices with instrumental music doesn't become confusing—in other words, so that they blend, yet at the same time are separate and distinct. As a rule the whole arrangement is made by one man, not by specialist assistants who work from a general sketch. The style of arrangements changes frequently and it is necessary for a radio orchestra to have large music libraries.

“For a singer with a smooth voice, the engineer or control operator can make the voice sound on the radio just as he bids,” says the noted tenor, Richard Crooks. “He can make the voice of little volume ring with the boom of a Caruso or can muffle a voice of stupendous proportions. I have seen the man at the controls put the pedal (soft) on Martinelli to such an extent that he sounded like a lyric tenor.”

Orchestra Set-up

The problem of picking up the right amount of sound from each instrument is what the engineer refers to when he talks about “balance.” The loudness of any instrument as picked up by the microphone depends upon three things: (1) distance from the microphone; (2) its position relative to the sensitive face of the microphone; (3) the loudness of the instrument itself; (4) the directionality of the instrument. The violin radiates tone equally in all directions. The volume of a trumpet as it affects the ear depends upon whether one is in front of it or behind the bell.

The first violins are at the extreme right and are easily picked up because of their penetrating sound. Violas and cellos are in the center and give a rich middle tone to broadcast music. The horns and woodwinds are favored next to the stringed instruments. On the outer edge of the circle are the horns, trumpets, and percussion.

The proper height of the microphone can be determined by experimentation. For a small orchestra try it at a height

of five feet. For a larger one try it at a height of six to eight feet. In a live studio, the microphone should be lower than in a dead studio in order to cut down reverberation. When there is much reverberation, the microphone should be placed closer to the orchestra. The microphone is usually placed between the orchestra leader and his musicians but to one side.

Radio is guilty of sugar coating music and adopting famous symphonic melodies to song forms as did Sigmund Romberg when he wrote "Song of Love," Franz Schubert's "Unfinished Symphony." No crime, say the Modernists, to present great melodies in simple form so that larger numbers of people may enjoy them in dance and song. How was this effected? Philip Kerby in the *North American Review* pays tribute to radio. "First," he says, "simple melodies are played which later are interpolated as themes from some of the greatest symphonies. It suddenly becomes a game in the mind of the youthful listener who acquires his three musical B's—Bach, Beethoven and Brahms—with much greater ease than the three R's. Desire to imitate sounds coming over the air accounts for the child's sudden interest in picking out the opening bars of the Chorale of Beethoven's Ninth on the family piano . . . when wild horses could not have dragged him to practice his five finger exercises."

This and other similar programs have undoubtedly had a cumulative influence over the music appreciation habits of the nation during the past decade. For certainly the attitude of the public toward the standard classics has undergone a complete turn-around and the blatant jazz of 1920 is laughable today. Whatever you may think of swing, Benny Goodman has brought to popular music a virtuosity on clarinet which many symphonic instrumentalists envy.

"Musical education," says John Erskine, "ought to reach three classes. It ought to reach the highest talented artist, the amateur who, according to the measure of his ability,

will try to be an artist, but who will sing or play for fun, and a still larger class of men and women, who, without taking an active part in music, love it, and can listen to it with intelligence."

Josef Hoffman will not play down to his public. Albert Spalding and Stokowski have never departed from standards of highest excellence in the selection of program numbers.

This alliance of the popular with the classic on popular programs even went so far as to suggest an appearance of Bing Crosby with Leopold Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra.

There is no guarantee of the consistency of an important series of concerts. Program policy veers with the wind over the seasons. Spring and summer may find it devoted to classics, and then in fall instead of symphonic programs the leader falls back upon ballet music, light songs, and hackneyed material.

Commercial programs or orchestral music such as General Electric hour under Walter Damrosch occasionally include a single movement of a popular Symphony but chiefly numbers like Rubenstein's "Melody in F," Massenet's "Elegie," Handel's "Largo," Delibes' "Sylvia."

"Only gradually can ears become more and more capable of perceiving and enjoying combinations of musical tones," said Walter Damrosch. This is the philosophy that moulded the efforts of the director of NBC's Music Appreciation Hour. Dr. Damrosch, through his musical series, has done much to overcome indifference that marks the average attitude toward music. It has been estimated that he reaches more than six million listeners in schools alone. Children have been enabled to learn the difference between clarinet, flute, oboe, and trumpet.

Children, who at one time heard nothing but common place songs indifferently played upon tinny pianos, have

now been introduced to the masters. The musical taste of this country is rapidly developing to a demand that desires the very best.

Children's Musical Taste

If parents would begin to acquaint their children with the language of music at the same time and in the same way that they are developing familiarity with actual language, that is, by ear, the eventual work of the music-teacher would become far simpler. It can be done either through phonograph records and the careful selection of radio material, or by personal performance on the part of the parents. "Music," according to Gertrude Atherton, "rushes in where intellect fears to tread."

Some of our broadcasters are beginning to discover a way of simplifying the formal complexities of music in a highly entertaining fashion. The trick is to take a well-known melody and develop it with all the technique of a serious composition. Since the tune is already familiar, the average listener has little difficulty in following it through various elaborations.

Sigmund Spaeth, the tune detective, has traced some of the most popular music to the classics. The theme of Chopin's "Fantasia Impromptu" was used as a tune for "I'm Always Chasing Rainbows" which radio established as a vogue. "Yes, We Have No Bananas" had its origin in the mighty "Hallelujah Chorus" of Handel's Messiah. Radio has made classic tunes familiar thru the popular mold without the classical tag. There are those who trace the improvisation of swing to the time of Handel in the eighteenth century and call modern "hot" selections merely dime novel interpretations.

Leading composers have long used syncopated rhythm. Witness Debussy's "Golliwog's Cake-Walk." Stravinsky's "Petrushka," Satie's ballet "Parade," the second movement of Ravel's violin sonata.

Hillbillies

The hillbilly seems to have taken permanent root in radio. Hillbilly songs predominate on the air.

The term "hillbilly" in its purest sense refers to the poor whites, who, by choice or necessity, till small farms in the hill lands of North Carolina and other states. Economic disadvantages keep them illiterate but they have a rustic keenness of a sort and a philosophical outlook on life that makes them an object of admiration to the thinkers.

Hillbilly music has come to be regarded as strictly American folk music. The range includes negro spirituals, mountain songs, cowboy songs, lumber-camp jingles, adaptations of popular songs and once-current hits, and paraphrases of old English ballads. In the strictest sense the mountaineer ballads are old English folk songs, some of them even traceable to old Gregorian chants; and as such they are not strictly American products.

Hillbilly songs cover the gamut of human emotions. They tell of "Innocent Convicts," "Train Disasters," "Delightful Murders," "Mother Love," "River Tragedies," "Misunderstood People," "Died-for-love People," "Charming Bandits,"—in fact, every subject under the sun is covered.

Successful hillbilly singers sing in phrases, regardless of the melody; and will stop to breathe whenever they darn please, even though it means adding several more beats to a measure. The average hillbilly singer sings by ear, plays about three chords in a key, becomes "class" if he plays four chords, and is a positive genius when he masters six chords. He will invariably change a melody just so he can inject some of his fancy chords.

Certain songs like "The Last Roundup" become hits because of sheer melody or novelty. "The Last Roundup" was a haunting variation from the blue songs and the torch songs of the period. Whether the words have more to do with

the song hit than the music, there is a question answered with vigor on both sides. Some singers give the melody everything and mumble the words. The hillbilly tune is destined to remain with us. Radio has been enriched by a wealth of songs.

In the Ozark region, without movies and without a radio, the mountaineer finds a means of expression in the homely melodies he plays. Most every cabin contains at least one guitar, and on this instrument, which is as common as the hoe or shovel, every member of a mountaineer family can strum, easily carrying a tune in the minor key.

The Crooner Arrives

The appeal of the lullaby melody led to the development of the crooner. The crooner generally has a flexible and well-controlled voice. To accomplish those warm, resonant and intimate vocalizations, the crooner sings across a microphone a few inches away from his mouth. At such close range every breath in-take, every pitch variation and the very gasp of the singer permeates the room of the listener. To cloud the sibilant sounds, a simple device is tried: The crooner opens the mouth slightly wider than usual to produce the "s" sound and then sharply chops off the sibilant. Singers of the blues, "torch songs," heat songs, and hillbilly numbers often need generous amplification of their voices. The control man is their best friend.

The word "crooner" has become a somewhat jocular term to denote mournful or unpleasant noises. The injection of this type of song into dance music was taken very seriously by a large number of listeners. One dictionary defines "crooning," as low, monotonous manner of singing. Another emphasizes its "moaning sound, as of cattle in pain."

The best exponents of crooning are Rudy Vallee and Bing Crosby. The secret of crooning lies in its intimate per-

sonality singing. The untrained voice generally retains endearing qualities. People react more sensitively to singers who are trying to do their best and the very crudities of the voice greet the listener with a surprising effect of sincerity.

Bing Crosby's voice personality might have been destroyed by vocal training. From the technical standpoint his voice is said to have remarkable range covering the tenor and the baritone. His adaptability is surprising. He can shout out volume in a fast swing number, croon a slow, sentimental tune, or render a Robeson spiritual "straight." The word, "crooning," is inseparable in meaning from lullabies hummed by negro mothers. Some psychologists believe that crooning lavishes maternal instinct upon those who listen, and that male listeners find female crooning has the effect of a sedative in addition to its protective embrace. The haters of crooning are the cerebrotonics who like their emotions underdone. Many listeners are annoyed by sentimentality that seems unworthy of the intellectual spirit.

Experts call attention to the subtoning used in crooning. The simplest example of this technique is found in the much maligned crooner who whispers into the microphone so softly that nobody in the studio can hear him above the orchestra, yet his voice is clear and strong to the listener at the set. This same principle is employed in the use of muted instruments. A heavily muted trombone, trumpet, or clarinet, is brought up close to the mike, playing so softly that even the conductor cannot hear it, yet on the air its gentle tone predominates over the fortissimo of the accompaniment.

The crooner is in the same category as certain subtone instruments that carry only ten feet without a microphone. When sound vibrations are turned into electrical frequencies, it is only a matter of amplification to change a sob into a roar. "It isn't the crooners' voices that are bad," it was once said apologetically, "it's their style. If only they'd stop

sobbing." Crooning gives the sound color. Color has been defined by Harold Barlow, the conductor, as "the difference between Lawrence Tibbett and Bing Crosby singing the same note."

Blue songs must be added to the gay and frolicsome tunes to lend that contrast which the ear craves. The doleful note was struck by "Stormy Weather" and "The Last Roundup." The maudlin ballad with its insistent repetitious note creeps into the hearts of hosts of listeners.

American crooners refuse to identify themselves with the word crooner. The British are more sensible and admit there is such a thing as soft singing.

There are crooners and warblers of the "Bird Song" from "Pagliacci"; heroic interpreters of "Home On the Range"; tender voicing of "Who is Sylvia?"; robusto roars of the "Toreador Song." Musical literature is literally ransacked for the melodies that can tickle the popular ear. The older the song, the better. Ethel Waters was the first to achieve stardom as a radio singer. Her voice crooning "Stormy Weather," cleared away the clouds of heartbreak and disappointment. Her powerful suggestibility in voice found echo in the minds of many listeners. The vogue was continued by Ella Fitzgerald, a negro vocalist of Chick Webb's Band, who, having exhausted Stephen Foster, took to nursery rhymes. Amongst her most popular renditions were, "A Tisket, a Tasket," which clung to the senses like some breezy perfume.

Maxine Sullivan, a colored girl, in 1939 conceived the idea of singing "Loch Lomond," to swing time. Her rendition was a colossal success and she established a vogue of swinging Scotch ballads on every radio station in the land. She got the idea as a waitress. When she cleaned up she would sing softly in order not to attract attention.

There are isolated groups in all sections of the world pre-

pared to fight to the death to prove that Maxine Sullivan, from the Onyx Club, is a greater artist than Lily Pons.

Singing

Before 1912 the popular songs were simple, straightforward songs. Choruses linked the verses that told some sort of human story, or episode. The thing called Ragtime sped over the land about 1912. Its fever crossed the Atlantic to England. Its rhythms were novel and audacious, jerky, staccato. This was the era of "Alexander's Ragtime Band," "Everybody's Doing It," and "Hitchy Koo." Ragtime survived the war and developed into jazz. Jazz shot up the thermometer and became hot, and hot music became swing.

Radio widened Tin Pan Alley into vast avenues of new exploration. Tin Pan Alley proceeded to raise the roof from orthodox forms and musical prejudice. Radio has had very little effect on popular music in the last fifteen years. The lyrics of popular songs tend toward more sophistication than in 1920. There are still thirty-two bars to the chorus of the average popular number. Ballads have swerved from generalized philosophy to a particular philosophy. The torch singers' plaint is now a tale of personal woe.

Love is a perennial theme. And as most motion pictures are about love, most songs follow the theme. There is a plentiful sprinkling of moons and hearts, and kisses, and somebody's arms. The trouble is that America is turned into a land of melancholy women whose love is unrequited; an epidemic of Helen Morgan's wail in minor chords that they "Can't Help Lovin' That Man." Libby Holman started a mode with her "Moanin' Low" manner of singing "Body and Soul" that ushered in the era of the torch singer.

Bing Crosby admits the torch songs are popular especially with the youngsters. They serve as an outlet for the emotions of boys and girls or for a love affair. "The kids," says he,

“going through a love affair can wreath themselves into songs about ‘you and me’—they are really imagining themselves making love to the particular Somebody when they sing ‘I Surrender, Dear.’ The era of depression brought forth such songs as “Who’s Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?” “Happy Days,” and “Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?” which became popular because they reflected the state of mind of the vast masses of the people. Humanity likes to share its common experience with the key words and the key melodies of its representative singer before the microphone.

“The world tendency today,” prophesied George Antheil, “is toward music that is simple, more melodic and tonal. Songs must have something so simple and fundamental in them that they never get out of the ear once they are in.” In this point of view he is seconded by that prolific writer of hits, Irving Berlin, who says: “There will always be the lasting appeal of the straight popular song. Here, however, there is nothing new either, at least lyrically. Only the words are new, and the words of a song are all-important, for the melodies linger on, but it is the words that give the song the freshness and life. It is only once in a while that someone comes along with a new tune; they all follow the same general pattern, but the words are what really count.” For radio then, there is no formula for writing a song that will appeal,—from jazz to sentimental ballads, to sophisticated musical comedy compositions.

The microphone pounces on a new tune and within six weeks exhausts it for the popular ear. Writers cannot hope to satisfy the demand. Radio can never kill songs that have a right to live, songs that have found a warm spot in the heart. Such productions as “I’ve Got Rhythm,” and “A Japanese Sandman,” remain endearing, though mellow with age.

Bands

The most active unit of radio is the dance band. Day and night it is on the air to lull the country into contentment or rouse it from its lethargy with the persistent drum beat or whoops of saxophones.

Most of the band leaders owe their success to broadcasting. Until the advent of radio their popularity was confined to the areas of the honky-tonk dance hall. Today they have become household gods from one end of the land to the other, slowing up or quickening their tempo to satisfy an admiring public.

Radio invariably demands a distinctive style of its favorite bands. Guy Lombardo has throbbing saxophones; Wayne King, sentimental, slow waltz tempo; Ray Noble, "collegiate hot," Madriguera, tango music; Louis Prima is "high priest of the trumpet"; Hal Kemp, the staccato type of music, reminding you of the rhythmic clicking of railroad wheels. The search for novel effects reaches far and wide.

Tom Dorsey specializes in "sweet" music, but his band can swing into frenzied tempo to match the others. It is the trombone of the leader that lends its mellifluosity to the calmer and more sustained rhythms which characterize his style.

Benny Goodman "Apostle of the Swing" continues to be the most popular and highest-salaried exemplar of that art. The Harlem rhythms are too intricate and too brutally rhapsodic to attain a strong radio appeal.

Paul Whiteman made a drastic change in his orchestra in 1938, cutting out a portion of his string section and putting in more saxophones and woodwinds to take care of the swing. It is possible to make a saxophone laugh and play and weep.

Lovers of soft music altho' passionately devoted to the style, may, as a sort of concession, listen to the swingsters.

The jitterbugs, however, close their ears to the seductive strains of the "schmaltzers."

For over ten years no bands have threatened the supremacy of Guy Lombardo and Wayne King.

In the last decade, from 1927 to the present day, these famous names musically affected the dance taste throughout the country: Paul Whiteman, Rudy Vallee, Will Osborne, Guy Lombardo, Bing Crosby, Russ Columbo, Wayne King, Richard Himber, Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway, Shep Fields, Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey and Glen Gray.

In 1929, Rudy Vallee emerged as the radio idol. So did Will Osborne. Both initiated "crooning" styles in song and ushered in the "cheek to cheek" dancing trend. Guy Lombardo's syncopated rhythms added sprightliness to the dance step. In 1930 and 1931 Richard Himber, disciple of Rudy Vallee, was the first to employ a harp in a dance orchestra. He abolished announcement between musical numbers played on the air.

The "rippling rhythm" of Shep Fields was hailed as a newcomer in 1936. A staccato, pulsating rhythm, it is said to have brought into being the "shag." Guy Lombardo employed the flute as an obligato against the trumpet.

The jazz craze lasted so long that it gave its name to an age. It was the war and post-war age. Damon Runyon says: "There was a period between jazz and swing when our national nuttiness simmered down to novelty bands and soft symphonic dance music. It was the calm before the swing storm and though the musicians tell you that swing is really older than jazz, there is a newness to the violence of the current craze that is more violent than any other similar craze we have ever known."

Doctors of symphony are generally too optimistic in appraising the power of radio over the musical tastes. In 1938, it was the "June" and "moon" types that sold any number of copies. "Chapel in the Moonlight" was at the head of the

list, with four hundred thousand copies. Amongst the fifteen best sellers was, "Moonlight and Shadows" and "Sailboat in the Moonlight." The sure-fire ingredients of a popular song seemed to be the moon and a boat. Not one song by such sophisticated writers as Rogers and Hart, Jerome Kern and Irving Berlin equalled in sales the corny ditties.

Band leaders have made significant attempts to make serious music out of swing. Ferde Groffe's "Grand Canyon Suite," achieved popularity some years ago. George Gershwin was child of the age of radio and mass entertainment. He caught the spirit of America in his "Rhapsody in Blue," and made music fascinating to the masses because they could understand it.

Hot jazz grew out of spirituals, blues, ragtime and work-songs of the Southern negro. Geographically it appeared in Memphis, Mobile and New Orleans where the Original Dixieland Jazz Band was organized in 1900. Young white men caught the spirit of jazz in Chicago. Bix Biederbecke, master of the cornet and piano, became the evil genius of the new medium. Benny Goodman at the age of thirteen was an apostle at the feet of Louis Armstrong, one of the pioneers of the jazz movement. The Chicago style of hot jazz is a style which has a contemporary feeling as exemplified in Bix Biederbecke's "Davenport Blues."

Each artist excels in his own special way and appeals to a following which worships his special technique. A debate on the relative merits of Berlin and Beethoven is like a debate on the relative merits of the apple and the pear. Each is as you like it.

Tommy Dorsey once produced on the air a laboratory demonstration of the history of the development of swing in modern music. The program was aptly called "The Evolution of Swing." Representative numbers illustrated the life cycle.

The first period was one of crude improvisation. The

middle period found jazz going through the expert refining processes of orchestration. Trained soloists began to flourish as part of the entourage.

In this, our modern day, comes the return to the period of free improvisation added to the background of well-defined orchestration. The year 1900 found many orchestras, white and colored, playing jazz. These were small bands of the "dawn-age" of swing, great ragtime jazz orchestras like the Original Creole Band and the Olympia Band. Every man in these outfits played as the spirit moved him, and the final effect was often a wild cacophony of violins, mandolins, smaller wind instruments and percussion instruments. The Dixieland Band organized in 1909 exercised an important influence on the jazz impulse of modern music. It evolved a highly individualistic style—the Dixieland style—which is still employed. Their style is semi-harmonic.

Pass now to 1920. Paul Whiteman dominates the middle age of jazz shortly after the World War. This is the period of the refining influence when the raw materials of old-time jazz, high degree of musicianship and orchestration become evident. Whiteman turns to the symphony and transmutes it into new rhythms which win applause from serious critics.

Now, 1930. A new outburst of spontaneity is contributed by colored bands which resume their original leadership. The solo technique is more reckless than that used by white bandmen. Stylisms identify a performance.

We are definitely in the age of swing. Swing is divided into two classes: (1) 'le jazz grande,' which may be defined as orchestral swing; (2) 'le jazz intime,'—swing music created by a smaller group, free to improvise to their hearts content, without being chained by manuscript.

Swing has been defined as "a manner of spontaneous improvisation around a given theme with a special regard for rhythmic contrasts." This presupposes a simple basic melody that appears often enough to have been established in mem-

ory. Over this pattern of basic rhythm the players are permitted to weave inventive interpretations that stand out in melodic contrast.

“Ad lib playing,” is Artie Shaw’s description of the music he or Benny Goodman play on their clarinets. “You may call it swing, if you wish,” says Shaw, “but what does it mean—jazz and not swing.”

Benny Goodman has let out some of the secrets of his method in the *Pictorial Review* article entitled, “Jam Session.” He reveals that although most of the organization’s work is improvisation, he holds frequent rehearsals and makes constant demands on his large library. He reveals: “The pianist is playing a solo. He is giving out the melody. I pick up my clarinet and play some figure on it which shows the band the kind of background I would like. I may then play a solo, while all the men accompany me in full harmony. Then one of the trumpeters signals to me that he is ready for a solo. I nod, and after a short interlude the trumpeter plays his variation on the melody, while all of us accompany him. So it goes until the possibilities of the tune are exhausted—or the audience is.”

Chamber Music

Music, one of the most stimulating of the arts, can also become one of the most interesting and most fatiguing as evidenced by chamber music. Radio music is pretty well out of the knee-pants stage and is giving concerts of chamber music for those who can stand them. The taste for chamber music is of the highest and most eclectic form of music appreciation. The reason lies in the intellectual and deeply serious quality of the string quartet as a musical form. When the listener sits down to a festival of chamber music, it is not so much entertainment for him as spiritual sustenance. And oh, how he likes to be fed with the best!

There is a scarcity of radio broadcasts of chamber music. No music presents a greater musical intimacy or a more closely related expression of ideas. No other music outside of unaccompanied religious chorals can attain the spiritual eminence that chamber music offers.

A farsighted initiative in radio has been taken by the NBC in establishing the Music Guild of Chamber Music. In this ensemble playing the very nature of this type of music is to reduce the element of vain virtuosity to a minimum and to increase the element of team work which is essential to an ensemble.

The Guild has given opportunity to comparatively little known musical compositions. Such musicians keenly enjoy the chance given them by invisibility and comparative isolation,—to forget themselves.

Although there has been a recent heightening of interest in choral music, radio has generally neglected this form. The piano has come back into its own—two, four, and eight hands provide sufficient novelty. George Gershwin showed himself at his best before the piano. His "Jazz Concerto in F," is something more than an abundance of notes laid on with an over-generous hand.

THE CHILDREN'S HOUR

BERTON BRALEY

Between the dark and the daylight,
There comes from each radio tower
A series of gentle broadcasts
That are known as the Children's Hour.

And the girls and boys are gathered
To listen with bated breath
To educational programs
Of murder and Sudden Death.

Then the air is athrob with sirens,
As the ears of the Little Ones
Tune in to the soothing echoes
Of "gats" and of Tommy-guns.

And the eyes of the kids are popping,
As they listen and wait, perplexed
By the educational problems
Of who will be rubbed out next.

Grave Alice and Laughing Allegra,
And Harry and Dick and Tom
Hear music of sawed-off shotguns,
Accompanied by a bomb;

And quiver and shake and shiver
At the tender and pleasant quirks
Of a gang of affable yeggmen
Giving some "punk" the Works!

And they listen in awesome silence
To the talk of some mobster group.
As they're opening up a bank vault
With nitroglycerine "soup";

Oh, sweet is the noise of battle
To the children's listening ears,
As the guns of the detectives answer
The guns of the racketeers;

And these educational programs
Will make the youngsters cower,
And the night will be filled with nightmares
Induced by the Children's Hour!

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LISTEN MY CHILDREN!

IN THE scheme of radio, children have been overlooked. Poor and forgotten orphan of progress, the child is at last coming into his birthright. Comprehensive studies are being launched to find out what kind of entertainment he enjoys, the number of hours he listens, and the effect of specific programs on manners and habits. The problem will always be with radio as long as there is a sharp division between what parents think about radio programs and what their children think about them.

While children's radio programs have not yet reached the stage of international discussion, many illuminating surveys have been made in this country. Just as in the case of the movies, it has been found futile to force children to feed upon educationally and scientifically planned programs which their elders believe would be good for them. Children automatically practice selection in entertainment and they know what they like and what they dislike. The judgment of children stands out in sharp contrast to that of their elders. Parents are put on the defense. Children glow about programs which are condemned as harmful in the formative years. Interests and the tastes of the parents, when fostered on the children, create civil war in the household.

In recent surveys an attempt has been made to study the following problems: (1) What shall be the type and choice of programs? (2) How do their quality and character affect the growing personality? (3) Do children's programs conflict with the other activities of the child? (4) How shall members of the family adjust themselves to the child's interest?

The type and choice of programs, if decided by the parent,

arbitrarily stirs resentment. The motives for supervision and restriction cannot be easily explained to a child who exults over his favorite program. Radio programs have a superior interest to the exclusion of other interests and activities. The parent begins to view with alarm the fact that the loud speaker has made a slave of the child. Family conversation is suddenly cut down. There is no time for reading, group games, creative play. The child may even escape from music practice and singing.

The Child's Study Association of America was a pioneer in the attempt to secure thoughtful judgment on the subject. Its results were obtained through questionnaires submitted to mothers all over the country. Some attempt was made to calm down the hysterical grievances and to provide constructive analysis for ideal programs. In recent surveys the mothers made definite conclusions that radio was an unqualified menace, made children nervous, developed fears, and created a taste for sensational nonsense. More than a quarter of those answering the questionnaire looked upon radio as a family boon that prevented quarrels, and gave children of varying ages enjoyment. Almost unanimously the mothers concluded that radio interfered with other activities, even bathing and taking meals.

Surveys indicate that forty out of a hundred tune in for a half hour or more daily. Genuine and fairly sustained interest begins at the age of six. A conservative estimate makes twelve to thirteen out of a hundred confirmed radio fans.

The Director of The Child's Study of America, Mrs. Sidonie Matsner Gruenberg, is fair-minded in her judgment of children's programs. "It is beyond dispute that many of the programs are objectionable because they convey false or misleading sentimentalities, or because they murder the king's English or play too recklessly with elemental fears and horrors."

Can't children be trained to exercise nice discriminations?

When one program is rejected, to what substitute shall the child glue his ears? Even if the child could obey the fiat of his parent, radio might not have anything better to offer. The child seems to be the neglected orphan of the radio. The Women's National Radio Committee has entered the line of battle on behalf of the child. It has set down a definite scale of judgment before it will lend the seal of approval to a children's radio program. Consider these demands: (1) Dignity of presentation; (2) freedom from objectionable slang; (3) no talking down to children; (4) no stilted language; (5) genuine informational material which stimulates the mind; (6) freedom from too exciting incidents which are likely to arouse a nervous reaction; (7) freedom from objectionable advertising, box-top and premium offers.

It is agreed that there is something fundamental beneath the child's craving for exciting episodes, gangsterism, terrifying, unreal and impossible adventures, ghosts, blood and thunder melodrama, sentimental love, and harrowing mysteries. Increased nervousness, fingernail biting, and general discord were also blamed on this "blood-curdling bunk" by parents who felt and hoped that it would soon be permanently tuned out of young America's auditory reach.

One program of "The Shadow" had a demented doctor draining blood from his patients so that he could sell it at a neat profit. Nice sound effect on the children!

The parent may disapprove of these excitements: the psychologist regards them as forms of vicarious adventure and substitute experiences for which the child feels an inner need. An analysis of the reason why The Women's National Radio Committee rejects certain broadcasts as unfit indicates that there is something rotten in the state of children's radio. These sore spots might be summarized as follows: Material too exciting to the nervous system; too much action crowded into a fifteen minute period; speech of the characters unrefined, bad models, too rapid; abnormal situations

beyond the range of children's activities; coinage of slang phrases deliberately introduced; a condescension in the general tone of the program that insults the intelligence of the average child; a climax that carries over, leaving the child in an over-excited state at the close of the broadcast.

Irene Wicker has consistently won honors as one of radio's finest story tellers for children. Her art lies in her ability to make entertaining what most radio performers make dull. Her speech is mingled with songs of which she has composed several hundred. No one can hold the air so long without combing the field for interesting subject matter. The Singing Lady's research has taken her into the realm of nursery jingles; true stories based on historical facts; dramatizations of fairy tales; imaginative journeys to the sun, the moon, the stars; travel adventures of real children; true stories of famous characters; stories about man, and dogs that point out their devotion one to the other.

The secret of Miss Wicker's success lies in her personality. She has the gift of a born story-teller. She seeks to capture the child's heart. Above all, it is the voice and song that carry sympathy, sincerity, warmth. Her power comes from an enthusiasm which children feel. Her words come as eagerly as a child's.

In the early days of the radio flocks of uncles, aunts, sandmen, big brothers and sisters took possession of the microphone to tell fairy tales and bedtime stories. Most of these programs were amateur mold. Radio soon discovered a more violent approach through blood and thunder sketches, adventure tales, and serial yarns that made the heart leap.

In London uncles made their early appearance. Uncle Jeff would sit down at the piano and reel off tune after tune, while many of them invented out of their own heads as they rattled along the keys. Uncle Rex would join in with songs, and Uncle Caractacus told stories of his own devis-

ing. The three uncles were very shortly joined by Miss Cecil Dixon who became known as Aunt Sophie.

Uncle Don is regarded as the Dean of children's programs. He began broadcasting in 1927 and is still on the air. He estimates that he has broadcast some five thousand programs. His manner is quite the antithesis of The Singing Lady. His formula is generally that of a Director of a club which the radio listeners may join. His hearty laugh is synthetic which is a polite word for "phoney."

Captain Tim Healy who appeared over NBC, spun fascinating spy yarns which attracted the imagination of the youth. By means of his radio club he enrolled over three million boys and girls in his Radio Stamp club. He told the story "behind the stamp." His voice was fresh and hearty. His gusto impressed boys as well as girls that he was a he-man. "Youngsters resent being talked down to," he explained. "They are dead set against announcers overdoing their sales talk. They dismiss extravagant statements with a terse, 'just a lot of hooey'."

The clamor for better children's programs has at last aroused the broadcasters. They could not afford to ignore the organized appeal from all parents' organizations. The net-works undertook experiments to derive a more happy formula for children's programs. Both NBC and CBS offered prizes in a national competition for the best children's script.

The public realized that children's programs, if left to the haphazard plan of sponsors, cannot hope for sudden improvement. It is vicious in principle to impress children with an obligation to buy merchandise in order to keep alive a program they enjoy.

Opposition forces have already resulted in the formation of committees to evaluate programs, to engage in research, carry on psychological studies, and to present the experimental programs. It is recognized that the problem of chil-

dren's programs is interlinked with our social life, making the closest co-operation necessary. A joint committee formed in 1933 is a forerunner of this new approach which takes the parenthood of America into consultation. This body consists of representatives of the American Library Association, Progressive Education Association, and The Child Study Association of America. Its first aim is to crystallize public interest, in the recommendations of parents' groups, educational boards, civic institutions, and other organizations concerned in the welfare of the child.

There will be a tough time ahead, trying to educate the sponsor by way of the advertising manager. Broadcasting companies are more amenable and cannot ignore the demand for experimental programs that represent the best thought of the educator.

Sponsor programs for children in which children perform at best offer poor models for the youth to emulate. The Horn & Hardhart Sunday Morning Hour is just such a slap-happy medley of kid specialties in which children evidently can do nothing more than indulge in taps, accordion and sax specialties and ape the sexy torch songs of their elders. People write in, vote for the child whose performance they liked best. The next week that child gets the cake.

The Question Bee conducted for CBS by Nila Mack is a model of propriety. Children make up the audience. Milton J. Cross performs in the role of em cee for a kiddie program entitled "Raising Your Parents," and displays his native gift for bringing out the best in children. Here he considers with the youngsters such problems as inferiority complexes, over-active imaginations, comic strips, co-operation with brothers and sisters in the same household. What a wise papa to take these problems off mother's hands!

One of the oldest children's programs is Madge Tucker's "Coast to Coast on a Bus," directed for NBC since 1924 and still running strong. The peculiar charm of "The Lady Next

Door," as she is called makes Miss Tucker an actress in the roles she originates, writes, and directs for the juvenile artists she has on her roster.

Irving Caesar, the song writer introduces a new note in his Songs of Safety, written in the ballad idiom of children. He has done altruistic work in this field.

In July 1940 was inaugurated over NBC a "Quiz Kids" program in the manner of "Information Please" in which the experts are children from five to fifteen, vying for Alka Seltzer's prize of one hundred dollars worth of U. S. Bonds. The trio of youthful experts attracted the attention of the nation, spelling "heterogeneous," "bourgeois," and "antimacassar" with definitions and identifying, "hog butcher to the world," and recounting in full the myth of Arachne. Normal kids exciting the admiration of man, woman and child. And do children love it!

Experiments to determine whether or not young school children enjoy music that has an educational value were conducted sometime ago at the Lincoln School, Columbia University, by members of the Junior Program Department of the National Music League. Music educators met for a round-table discussion after the concert and agreed that children have an "innate ability" to appreciate the finest in music, but must be educated to it gradually. The charge is made that this "innate ability" is neglected by the neutrals.

Leonard Lieblich, the distinguished editor of the "Musical Courier" is of the opinion that "Some of the major symphony orchestras give special broadcasts for children, but such concerts are few and far between. As the music-lovers of the future are the youngsters of today, it would seem that more attention should be paid to their tonal education.

"There is, of course, the Damrosch course, but it comes during school hours and figures as education rather than enjoyment. The period between five and seven o'clock usually

finds children at home, when they are furnished with one or two exceptions chiefly with mystery and other thriller programs, silly serials, trashy songs that are discounted by even infantile intelligence, and in fact with nearly everything except the best music."

And Now the Drama

Sufficient study has not been given to children's plays as an educational medium for radio. A great many failures of children's theaters of the air have been based on the false notion of the mentality of their audience. The plays have wavered between two extremes of the fairy-like type, and the attempt to make sermons of what should be pure entertainment which the child resents. Programs should be of interest to boys and girls between the ages of four and sixteen. No one can cover the age span of such an audience, but a varied program could have mass appeal. The plays may have an adult cast, a juvenile cast, or a mixed cast. The one hundred and twenty-seven theaters of the Junior Leagues can well give thought to radio as a medium for their expression.

What to Do

Angelo Patri, the educator, advises parents to share the radio with children: "Listen with them. Don't impose grown-up's programs on children under twelve years of age because they do not understand them. Turn off the programs which seem to harm the children and write to the sponsors immediately. Don't expect the Government to do for you what you can do with a movement of the finger, a note with a stamp."

It has been established by many studies that children can be trained to exercise nicer discriminations, and that the way to this end is not by direct fiat of the parent whose

tastes are mature. The fault lies with the sorry alternatives that children's programs at present offer.

An eight-point formula was presented for children's programs at a meeting of the Radio Council on Children's Programs and the representatives of the NAB in 1940. It provided that children's programs be entertaining, dramatic with reasonable suspense, possess high artistic quality and integrity, express correct English and diction, appeal to the child's sense of humor, and be within the scope of the child's imagination, as well as stress human relations for cooperative living and intercultural understanding and appreciation. Some task!

The Council was formed to bring about better children's programs, and is composed of the representatives of five of the largest women's organizations in the country with headquarters at 45 Rockefeller Plaza, New York.

Upon whom does the responsibility for children's programs rest—parent, broadcaster or sponsor? There has been a good deal of passing the buck. The *Ladies Home Journal* reports that a majority of the women of America believe that "It's up to the radio stations, not to the parents to protect children from programs that are too exciting or overstimulating." With radio so accessible to children outside as well as inside homes, mothers find it impossible to supervise children's habits.

Responsibility rests with the networks and the managers of local stations. The FCC should exercise a measure of control through its power to refuse to renew the broadcasting license. Best of all is the crystallized public opinion that affects the public interest.

Carrie Lillie who directs WMCA'S juvenile programs claims that children have been brought up on blood and thunder tales for centuries, and points out the horrors contained in nursery rhymes about horrible giants, persecuted princesses, the unfortunate wives of Bluebeard, without any

particular ill-effects. She opines that the young American listener could not be thrilled by any milder variety after an acquaintance with America's own system of gangsters, kidnaping and lynching. If the children had the power to know the right from the wrong, this might be all right.

A new type of fairy tale is being evolved in the United States, in which the characters jump in rocket ships from planet to planet, use death rays and other creations of super science, says Clemence Dane, the English writer. Buck Rogers makes it possible to be projected into the twenty-fifth century to the planet Jupiter.

Always "The Lone Ranger" is the hero of mystery adventure. He follows the ranchers, villains, outlaws, spies and dynamiters across the prairies and into secret caves. Parents approve the program because there is no boy in trouble, left tied up by the cannibals. (The boy projects himself into the role of hero and cannot sleep.) "The Lone Ranger" is on the side of the right and never fails to help the underdog. Few programs have had the success of "The Lone Ranger." Nightly he rides the kilocycles hurrying toward virtue and trampling crime and criminals under hoof.

Shirley Temple has admitted that "The Lone Ranger" is her favorite program and Mrs. Roosevelt, wife of the President, wrote in her column: "The other evening I offered to read aloud to Buzz until bedtime, but there is a program on the air called 'The Lone Ranger,' which seems to be entirely satisfactory." But to whom, Mrs. Roosevelt did not say.

Remember that adults take to the juvenile stuff. "The Lone Ranger" started as a show for the youngsters, but the grown-ups are probably just as ardent listeners. The wide appeal of "The Lone Ranger" for children is not a matter of guesswork. Before a program is taken to the studio, Fran Striker, the author tries it out on his two sons, eight and six.

"Superman" comes on the air with a shrill, shrieking edict (the combination of a high wind and a bomb whine recorded during the Spanish war. Voices hail him: "Up in the sky—look! It's a bird. . . . It's a plane. . . . It's SUPERMAN!" Mothers have their eye on him. His occasional rocket and space jaunts are too improbable for the Child Study Association of America. Superman has a sound effect about every four lines.

The new Dick Tracy program went on the air endorsed by the Clergy League of America. The Minneapolis College Women's Club, a branch of the American Association of University Women, went so far as to petition "those people responsible for the production of the radio skit called 'Orphan Annie,' praying that the sponsor remove objectionable features in the overdrawn dramatic crime episodes, the raucous, unnatural voices of the actors, and the coarse vocabulary, or better still to substitute therefore programs to stimulate the children's imagination in the right direction." An identical petition was drawn up concerning the "Skippy" program. The sponsors turned a deaf ear to these petitions and the programs went gruesomely on.

Educational Solutions

Kurt London, in his highly revealing analysis of radio in the USSR, makes the claim that the quality of children's programs in Russia is very high: in fact, it is relatively higher than the "wireless for adults."

The guiding principle of children's programs is the influence on education by artistic means. Programs are varied to measure up to the appropriate stages of childhood. The first group includes children from five to eight years of age. Imagine synthetic pieces composed of dramas, readings and noises especially made for such youngsters. Take a typical

program by which natural science is taught in a naturally amusing way, by the use of animal stories, or in dramatic sequences.

Single themes such as the "Adventures of a Potato," permit the child to catch a revelation of the natural world. The second group of programs is meant for children from eight to eleven years of age. Each program lasts about twenty to forty minutes and covers a wide variety: reading from books, children's operas lasting about twenty-five minutes, dealing with the life and experiences of the young. The third group is designed for children between the ages of twelve and fifteen. Here the field is widened. The radio authorities collaborate with the children's section of a composers' association. The best composers create special music for children. Broadcast by the literary and dramatic departments they offer specially dramatized versions of such works as Dickens' "Pickwick Papers," and Longfellow's "Hiawatha" interspersed with music. True, the programs are not free of the idealism of a Soviet scheme. The life of the pioneers is vividly portrayed in fifteen broadcasts every month. And the children themselves are drawn upon as participants. They sing songs before the microphone and give readings.

The growing generation of Soviet youth is thus favored with programs whose influence is artistic and cultural, and even though sugared with propaganda at least represents a distinctive appreciation of the needs of youth.

In 1937 "Wilderness Road" won the award of the Women's National Radio Committee as a model children's program. It was regarded as an ideal dramatic serial but remained unsponsored. The work of Richard Stevenson and Charles Tazwell, it was a serial that had its locale along the old "Wilderness Road" formerly known as Boone's Trail. The serial followed the life of the Weston family—father, mother, three sons and a daughter, negro servant, a carrier who brings mail and news from the outside, and Daniel

Boone, friend and protector. The thousand first-prize serial of NBC was entitled "The Bravest of the Brave," selected as the most outstanding of seven hundred and forty scripts in 1937. The action revolves itself around the valiant acts of men and women. With Daniel Boone as the protagonist not a single Indian hit the dust. The only Indian hurt slipped on a log.

It is difficult to find the common denominator of children's interests. An exciting thriller which plunges one boy to the verge of hysterics will create, in another youngster, visions of power and success. Program reactions therefore are of a strong individual nature.

Children do not think much of children's radio programs. The youthful listener is seldom interested in specially prepared programs for children.

Sigmund Spaeth, the music critic, finds that the natural inclinations of children run towards fairly obvious music. The survey conducted by Azrial Izenberg questioning 3,445,000 children in New York City schools reveals that as for music learned over the air eighty-five per cent of the children learned dance songs; seven per cent picked up cowboy melodies; three per cent theme melodies; three per cent general melodies; and only two per cent classical and semi-classical music.

A recent survey was conducted by the Children's Aid Society of New York among the ten thousand members of its juvenile clubs in seven centers. The survey was made among boys and girls between the ages of eleven and sixteen years. Ninety-two per cent of the boys and eighty per cent of the girls gave the adult programs as their first choice. Of the children's programs the youngsters picked the thrillers. And if it is feared young America has no sense of humor, it should be recorded that of the adult programs Eddie Cantor topped the list, followed by Burns and Allen, Jack Benny and Dick Powell.

6

MAJOR BOWES, CHIEF MOGUL OF THE AMATEUR HOUR

THE Amateur Hour has its root deep in human psychology. It captured the imagination of youth, stirred the vanity of countless microphonic aspirants long past youth. For a time it commanded the largest radio audience. Why? Because it gratified man's sadistic sense for the incompetent, self-deceived, self-punishment meted to artists. It inflated the hopes of an army of crooners, tap dancers, one-man bands, whistlers and musical eccentrics of every variety.

Major Bowes was a real estate operator in San Francisco at first interested in a small chain of theaters. He soon became a producer of plays. In 1918, he built the Capitol Theatre in New York, at that time the world's largest motion picture theater, of which he became director. Appreciating the power of radio publicity, the Major planned the Capitol Family broadcasts, which commenced on November 19, 1922, with the late S. L. ("Roxy") Rothafel as its master of ceremonies. Major Bowes, himself, took over these duties on the radio on July 25, 1925. After his entry into radio, the Major continued his directorship of the Capitol Theatre and became vice-president of the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer pictures. As part of his duties for MGM, he was director of their local station, WHN, and when an amateur hour was started, Major Bowes undertook direction.

The idea took some time to catch on before it reached the networks. It has its prototype in the amateur hour of the vaudeville theater where audiences could view their brassy judgment by crying out "Get the Hook." With the assistance of Perry Charles, Bowes hit upon the idea of

subjecting the amateur performer to a razzing that would send the audience into peals of laughter. Whenever a bad amateur spoiled the show, Perry was inspired to use the same device heard at the ringside,—the gong. Major Bowes invested the proceedings with the qualities which at the end of a year made it the dominant program in the New York area. A local station, one-fiftieth as powerful as the competing network station in Greater New York, commanded an audience estimated at 80 per cent of the listeners in the metropolitan district.

Let us look to the elements that made the Amateur Hour of Major Bowes rise in the enviable scale of listener-interest. In 1935, the Chase and Sanborn Company angled for the program as a radio feature to be aired over the networks. They looked to Major Bowes, who resigned the management of WHN and took his Amateur Hour to the portals of NBC on an offer of five thousand dollars weekly. Thus, Major Bowes' Amateur Hour was ushered into national prominence along with the insistent plea that the purchase of Chase and Sanborn's dated coffee made good samaritans out of the purchasers because the program held out the helping hand to native American talent.

The rest is history. Major Bowes' Amateur Hour rose to stellar heights as Number One program of the air, a shining example which brought into being hundreds of lesser lights. It began the stampede of youth from every corner of the land into the citadels of NBC, where once admitted, they waited in a long narrow corridor, the chance for the microphone audition which would decide their fate. Under the aegis of the Bowes banner this broadcast leaped into national fame. Late in 1936 Chrysler took over the sponsorship and the broadcasts were moved to the CBS radio theater.

The dignified and pompous old Major reached his high peak in 1937 when radio surveys indicated that about 40 per cent of the nation's radio sets were tuned in on his

programs each week. From that time on, his Crosley rating began to dwindle down to about half, and yet remained high enough to belie the prediction that the amateur program would snuffle out.

Network broadcasts of Major Bowes' Amateur Hour began in 1935. Up to the middle of October, 1937, the listeners made over two and a half million telephone calls in voting, according to statistics compiled by the American Telephone & Telegraph Company. Tampa, Florida, delivered the largest voters to any one amateur. Listeners in that city cast 45,273 votes for a local boy singer. In New York more than one hundred and fifty telephone operators are busy recording the votes during the hour. The American public is afforded the right to vote for the best performers by telephone, and a special key city is honored by having a local telephone number put on a trunk line leading direct to the NBC studio in New York.

The sponsor works in his exploitation and advertising. The three or four top performers at every weekly broadcast were employed to tour the country from Maine to California. These vaudeville units were known as "Major Bowes Amateur Hour." The minimum pay was fifty dollars per week and transportation; the maximum pay, one hundred and fifty dollars. *Variety* estimated that Major Bowes cleared for himself and his personal organization over a million dollars out of these units in 1935.

When a city is selected to be the honor city, a representative of the sponsor's advertising agency contacts the local exchange in advance and makes the arrangements. The honor cities are selected by the sponsor's advertising department each week. It is usually done according to population. One exception has been made to this rule. New York has never been on it. The city selected is linked by direct telephone long distance wire to the switchboard under the stage of the Columbia Playhouse in New York where the

votes are tabulated and sent up to the Major for announcement.

There were more than two hundred other amateur hours scattered over the country, but none directed by such a genius of voice as that of Major Bowes. When the Major transferred the Amateur Hour from WHN to the networks an amateur hour was retained at the local station. It was necessary to find a substitute. Even with Major Bowes at his side Norman Brokenshire was quite inadequate in voice and spirit to be a Master of Ceremonies in such a program.

The Major starts with the right premise—an appeal to sympathy. *Variety* intimated that his agents scanned local amateur talent for the value of their sob story build up even before they were auditioned for their specialty. The dialogue is thus consistently written to bring out the peculiar talent in voice that drips with sympathetic timbre and is enriched by fatherly resonance. He chats with an informal ease. He shows an extraordinary precision. He knows all about the music-masters, the population of Katonah, the great in history and story.

Major Bowes, in defense of his program, speaks of “this new and higher-type of serious amateur added to the steady stream of self-taught and underprivileged amateurs.” His point of view is that of the showman who seeks to give improved balance to the program, rather than from the altruistic standpoint of one nurturing real talent.

Michael J. Porter, former aircaster for the *American*, said: “For every one of the scant two dozen amateurs who set foot on the road to glory, hundreds have turned their weary steps homeward or to the breadlines or to the Travelers Aid. Practically all of them took the cure. The amateurs seem to have made the astonishing discovery that there was practically nothing to write home about even after the impresarios supplied the stamps.”

There were dark rumors that many of the contestants

were actually professional actors, singers, instrumentalists who appeared under the guise of amateurs for less money than they would receive for professional work.

A statistician figured that the chance of acceptance on the Hour is one in seventy thousand, and at the end of it all lay the only certainty of a five dollar bill and one performance. The *Literary Digest* estimated that the chances that any amateur performer would click professionally as a national find was two hundred thousand to three.

The abnormal influx of amateurs into the City of New York taxed the relief authorities and made it necessary for the Major to restrict the applicants.

It is a kindly voice that greets the amateur. The speech pattern is that of a loving uncle whose solicitude is enlivened by a chuckle. The voice kept under restraint warms the heart of the amateur with the glow of newly discovered sympathy. But alas! the gong of the Major often strikes chords of despair. Major Bowes has achieved a manner that to the uninitiated sounds informal. To the practiced ear, his folksy and ingratiating approach is synthetic. It is all part of the show business to sound humanly interested in your charges.

In thirty seconds, avuncular and bland inflections establish a relationship between the performer and the listening audience. This is indeed an art in itself. Listeners receive the impression that it is an unrehearsed program. Amateurs have glib answers, and the repartee appears deftly dovetailed. However, these programs represent most careful showmanship and preparation. The amateur never reads his lines, and the Major sits behind a table with a box-like edge which effectively hides his cards and memoranda from the visible audience

New technique covers up the sadism by a sentence or two of kind-hearted encouragement after getting a laugh by

kindly ridicule. "What are you going to sing?" asks Major Bowes. "It's a sin to tell a lie in A flat," is the reply.

A slender girl reveals that she is a prize-fighter by profession—forty-seven knockouts to her credit. And she adds, "I weigh a hundred and thirty stripped." "I'll take your word for it," says the Major graciously.

There are many variations of the amateur hour. The recent trend sought the dramatization of authentic and exciting adventures of everyday people. Their best form was the command appearance program of Kate Smith, who combed the agencies of the land to discover men and women who had performed heroic deeds and had not received public recognition. Thus, she dramatized the heroism of one, Martin Wolgamuth of West Orange, a bus driver who risked his life to save his passengers from a mad dog. The program would stand by itself as a piece of dramatization, but when Kate Smith hands the hero or heroine five hundred dollars a touch of humanity is added.

The Metropolitan Opera House found a rich field in the auditions of amateurs. Sponsored by Sherwin-Williams Paint, many candidates found a means of being heard. In 1938, these auditions began and have continued ever since. The Metropolitan is genuinely or half-interested in the affair. Meanwhile the amateur singer keeps knocking at the door of opportunity.

The great success of the Amateur Hour has been a puzzling phenomenon to the English. It was initiated over the British system, but did not survive long.

The Outlet for Talent

The larger stations readily receive for airing such programs as are prepared by quasi-public or endowed institutions. It is part of the public service the broadcasters are presumed to offer as a condition of their franchise. Since

these programs carry an endorsement of the institution, the performers generally are types selected by the faculties of music, drama, and the allied arts of composition.

In similar fashion, the Radio Arts Guild of each community could serve as an examining committee, for the amateurs without formal training in schools or academies. The local stations which air these programs can have faith that definite standards have been followed in their selection. The promise of lucrative contracts should never be held out alluringly to the amateur. Talent has a way of rising to the surface, and in the same way that Hollywood has its agents scouting for talent, so the extraordinary choice in separate individual communities might be heralded by appearances over the networks.

Such a system requires altruism on the part of broadcasters. The broadcasters cannot afford to resent the suggestions of Radio Arts Guilds as obtrusive. Public sentiment once organized has a potent way of making itself known to the commercial broadcasters who are on tip-toe to please their public.

The listening public, through its organized committees, might meet in convention at least once yearly in Washington, D. C. A Central Listeners' Bureau might be set up in the National capital functioning through the local bureaus. The rights and privileges of the amateur might well be an important agenda in its discussions.

Better yet, if the Central Listeners' Bureau could acquire the license and funds for maintenance of a model broadcasting station, it could indulge in experiments to its heart's content, blazing a trail for the commercial broadcaster to follow.

Directing the Amateur Show

There is a trick in showmanship in running an amateur show. Much depends on the director. The director must

know how to spot and spread his acts over the bill so that the hour is consistently diversified.

Jay Flippen entered into the breach as em cee with an appropriate stir of low-boisterous comedy. This was the traditional atmosphere of all amateur shows. Any attempt to make it genteel robbed the show of its caste. Alton Cook calls Jay Flippen a "great wit, a veritable encyclopedia of what great wits have been saying for generations." The em cee propounds a question. While the amateur racks his mind for an answer, the em cee grabs a gag or two from his bag and jovially sends the audience into mirth and the amateur into song.

The amateur hour has reformed its old habits. Pointed and embarrassing questions are avoided. The personal approach has more smoothness. The flow of wit is more merciful. Solemnity, it was discovered, is not germane to amateur shows. Radio itself is responsible for the growth in critical feelings of audiences and audiences are barometers of successful performance with harmonica, bazooka, xylophone, tap-dancing, and top notes.

Radio pioneers usually result in a flood of imitations. Imitation becomes the sincerest flattery. The amateur hour soon became the greatest vogue in radio.

Eddie Cantor once went into an amateur night when he was unknown and got the hook. In an interview with Morris Markey, in *The New Yorker*, Major Bowes told how he protected himself against those angry lads who, when they heard the gong, might cut loose his resentment into the mike. "To protect ourselves, I have a good strong-arm man who hustles them up to the mike and down again. They always signal before letting the bell go, and he is ready to grab the poor boob before he can say anything about it. We've never had any profanity yet."

Major Bowes springs a surprise by having famous personalities in the audience take a bow before the mike. It's

fun for the public to have an industrial nabob step up and play the harmonica, or rip a tune out from an old saw.

The Feen-A-Mint National Amateur Night was captained by Ray Perkins. The money prize was alluring. Fred Allen's first prize was a fifty dollar bill with a week's contract for a stage appearance at the Roxy Theatre in New York, and a second prize of twenty-five dollars.

Mutual Broadcasting System developed a national amateur night. They soon abandoned amateurs in all but name. Fred Allen's "Town Hall Tonight" followed suit by throwing over its amateur portion of the program to professional talent as well, but Major Bowes program remains the only practically one hundred per cent amateur program on the air.

Fred Allen made it known that many of these amateurs are more temperamental than the stars. "For sheer ripsnorting temperament, I'll take the amateurs any day. Some of those lads and lassies, singers, pianists, imitators, etc., could give a matinee idol tips on artistic bombast." He tells the story of an Irish tenor who got mad because Fred called him 'Eddie,' acidly insisting that his name was Mr. So-and-so. An applicant who had been successfully auditioned, wired at the last minute that he would not allow himself to appear on a program that featured such acts as a "singing rooster."

The amateur has been lured on by press-agent yarns of sudden fame and fortune. Amateurs like to learn that Kate Smith time and time again was told that she was merely wasting her energies by trying to get into radio, or that Lily Pons was once refused after being auditioned.

The variation of the amateur hour was Haven MacQuarrie's program, "Do You Want to Be an Actor?" The candidates were chosen from the letters of application. They were put through an audition and the impossible types were dismissed. The survivors were told to come to the studio

just before broadcast time. They were then put through their paces in a hypothetical drama before the mike.

The main object of this program was farce-comedy. The aspiring amateur actor was made the target for cheap wit as he was interrupted with small jokes, to keep the pace lively. When one young lady said her name was Betty C. Green, MacQuarrie sallied, "Did you see anything else?" Jokes like that popped up during the program. The program had some virtues because many aspirants, after hearing themselves, usually decided that acting was not their right career.

The number of those who have traced their fame to the radio amateur hour is almost zero. One points to Doris Wester who went into the films and changed her name to Walton.

Radio can become the promised land of our younger, gifted performers, composers and conductors. Up to now their opportunities have been meager. The commercially-sponsored amateur programs have exposed them to contempt. Sponsors have ruled them out in favor of old-established names. Newer candidates are looked upon with suspicion. One cannot blame the sponsors for setting their sails to popular consumption. They are primarily business men—not philanthropists interested in developing the Arts. Radio must break away from the position that has put the amateur hour into the field of comedy. The artistic impulse of any community can best be expressed through radio art guilds whose influence on radio programs can wield mighty influence. These radio art guilds can take the radio amateur out of the Slough of Despond, can bring him out with a new impulsion to the hearts and the minds of the youth of the land who are trying out for self-expression.

Radio cries out for new personalities, but its method of talent scouting through the avenues of amateur programs has besmirched its efforts. Radio's greatest service to the

art impulse of America will be the promotion of new talent irrespective of its origin or formal training.

These radio art guilds should not "rush in where angels fear to tread"—their course should be guided by slow and judicious selection, and represent some sort of compromise in tastes. When the community begins to realize the potency of radio in its cultural aspects the time will not be long before it calls into consultation those experts who have given a life study to the art of self-expression.

Our radio conferences, instead of being the voice of a few representative bodies, can embrace a larger sphere of local organizations which, in a cross-section, truly represents the national voice. It is the moral duty of those in the know to contribute those forces in the community sphere which will build up popular agitation for a right to air-time or experimental programs that will do credit to the nation.

The professional auditions of the Metropolitan's "Auditions of the Air" program might well serve the radio art guild as a model in the discovery of new talent. The auditions of the Metropolitan Opera House permit the public to enjoy the privilege of hearing trial tests formally conducted in strictest privacy at the opera house. Its director, Edward Johnson, is a model emcee of the air, with a suave and subtle way of boosting the opera.

In a private way, the concerts broadcast by the Curtis Institute of Music, the Eastman School and the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music represent distinct advances in the methods of radio audition. Their student orchestras chamber music groups, composers, vocal soloists and instrumentalists have a dignified opportunity on the air.

The rising "Musical Star" hour invites performers to compete for the weekly cash prize; the successful contestant also winning solo place on the current program. Its important contribution to the formula of the amateur in radio is the jury of well-known musicians who officiate in selecting

the winner of the substantial money reward, which goes to the artist whom it considers best during the entire period.

Leonard Leibling, the editor of *Musical Courier*, stresses the problem of the newcomer in radio who is told to go out and get a reputation and is left up against a stone wall.

"Where shall we get it if you won't give us a chance?" was the usual sensible question.

"That's your affair, not ours," came the final crusher.

It is hoped that radio will change all that to a large extent. Leonard Leibling holds out hope for the amateur. "Microphone hour is the chief discoverer of new talent and establisher of new name values. The reasons are simple—a regular opera debut is a rarity, owing to so few prominent lyrical organizations. Solo concerts offer an ominous expense for debutantes. Radio developed its particular public consisting of many millions of listeners. These changed conditions prove their own merit when it is remembered that a number of young performers first achieved popularity over the air before they became regular features of the concert, stage, and opera houses. To mention those most prominent, there are Helen Jepson, and Nino Martini at the Metropolitan and Deanna Durbin in the films."

Radio's Cinderella.

CBS instituted a series in 1938 known as "Columbia's Chorus Quest." This was a contest open to amateur choirs, choruses, and glee clubs whose members were not twenty-five years of age. The prizes offered were a cup and a concert tour arranged by the Columbia Concerts Bureau. Contestants were judged by Deems Taylor, Davison Taylor, director of the music department of the CBS program division, two members of the Columbia Concerts Corporation, and Mr. John Finley Williamson, founder of the Westminster Choir School of Princeton, New Jersey.

The pronouncement of Davison Taylor is significant of a high aim in amateur encouragement. "This chorus quest," said Dr. Taylor, is intended to promote through radio the healthy interest in song which is evidenced throughout the country. It does not matter how large or small the community from which the choruses originate, nor what type of music they may be interested in. What is most important is that rich talent is hidden in the amateur song-circles of the United States, and radio can help uncover and encourage some of this. Besides the formal winning of a cup, and a concert tour, the winning group will enjoy the equally satisfying reward of a public hearing and popular approval, a vital and necessary stimulant for development. There is only one basis on which this may be earned and that is merit."

CAN A MIKE TEACH?

EVERYONE talks about education. Dr. Robert M. Hutchins, President of the University of Chicago, said only recently: "Except for the weather, education is the most popular topic in America, not excluding money, murder, baseball and sex."

Innumerable conferences have been held to determine the role of radio in the scheme of national learning. The problem remains unsolved. The keenest minds have failed to answer how education shall be fashioned to compete with Charlie McCarthy and the "Singing Lady." Radio education is new. Classroom teaching is a vast business, involving expenditures of over two and a half billion dollars, and employing over one and a half million teachers, administering to thirty million human beings, almost as many as listen to Charlie McCarthy on his Sunday hour.

In proportion to the vast sums spent on commercial programs, the investment in radio education is as millions to pennies. Let us engage the problem of radio education in answer to five questions: (1) What are the general aims of radio education? (2) How shall teachers be trained? (3) Can radio provide education for all different kinds of people? (4) What subjects shall be included in its curriculum? (5) Does radio education demand new pedagogical methods to be effective?

1. *What are the aims of radio education?* The word "education" must be used guardedly on the air. It is the better part of discretion to refer to education as "popular talks," as do the British. Dr. James Rowland Angell, President Emeritus of Yale and educational adviser to the NBC,

advocated that air education be labeled as "public service," to avoid frightening invisible listeners with some graybeard lecturer. Sir John Reid, formerly director of the BBC, stated the case of the British: "The British have a more definite plan and policy in educational broadcasting than has ever been set forth in America. The British hold it proper that school pupils should receive training over the air, which will enable them in later life to listen critically, to form judgments and build up the habits of mind that expect significant matter—be it music, news, drama, from broadcasting."

The announcement for school broadcasts for the year 1937-38 included the following dictum: "The new medium has proved a tremendous enrichment in the lives of many, opening up new fields of knowledge and inquiry, developing new interests and mental attitudes.

"The school wireless set brings to the classroom the riches of scientific and historical research, the masterpieces of literature and music. Able commentators on economics and current affairs—a varied assortment of interests and topics, which should set the child's mind roaming along many paths of knowledge.

"It is an axiom of educational practice that the teacher should take advantage of the inherent curiosity of the child's mind. Broadcasts to schools using this same curiosity can add their peculiar contribution to the practice of the teacher."

2. *How shall the teacher be trained?* How shall the teacher be trained to endow the microphone with pedagogical sureties? Whose is the master voice that can combine the virtues of Will Rogers, Socrates, and Benjamin Franklin? Such an individual, it has been suggested, would make an ideal director of the University of the Air.

Many colleges today give only theoretical courses in broadcasting. The teacher is often hurried to the microphone with scant understanding of what it is all about.

Provisions should be made for experiment; practice broadcasting should be as common as practice teaching. In association with professional broadcasters, the teachers should study the interrelation of writing, production and delivery. They should combine writing with the study of the drama. Instead of a perfunctory approach to the subject the teacher should give intensive study to the art.

Time will come when there will be specialized schools for the training of teachers for broadcasting. It is the problem of the universities to develop directors gifted in the origination of program ideas. It is the special province of the educator to breathe life into the textbooks and to provide education over the air to many adults deprived of full educational opportunities in their earlier years.

"Broadcasting is an art," said John Erskine, "and the broadcaster is either an artist or a failure. Radio demands a special use of the voice, and a special conciseness of language. But otherwise, as an art it is governed by the same principles of aesthetics as all the other arts."

Aldous Huxley boldly answers the problem: "Most of the professors broadcasting are professors of the old type. They have been educated in such a way that even when they broadcast they think in terms of the language and the methods accepted by the scholastic groups of which they are members. *Quis custodiat custodes?* Who will educate the educators? The answer is obvious. Nobody but the educators can educate themselves, broadcastingly speaking. It may seem like going around in a circle, but the professors will be obliged to look for themselves."

The noted educator, Dr. Hutchins, maintains that despite the fact that the United States has the most extensive and elaborate system of education in the world—its people, even those who take the highest degrees, are still uneducated. "They may have acquired a good deal of information, much of which is useless to them because changing conditions have

rendered it archaic, but they have not learned to think, as their pitiful efforts to read, write and speak, make flagrantly evident."

Radio cannot hope to perform what the common schools have fulfilled. Acquisition of information by microphone lessons is often confused with knowledge. Massy information has very little to do with education, except for exercising the memory. Radio education at present is designed to present information. Its highest aim lies in cultivating the listener's thinking processes. Some say that is impossible of achievement without the presence of the teacher, the one teaching and the other learning. Learning does not occur easily or casually. It requires careful direction, and hard work. But when work is related to learning, the result is a motion toward something definite and of discipline.

The modern conception of education emphasized the training of the thinking processes. Can it be said that radio will make listeners think? Can radio do what the printing press and the classroom have failed to do?

3. *Can Radio Provide Education for All Kinds of People?*

Real education, it has been determined, can never be a mass product. The very size and variety of the radio audience which includes all ages and conditions offers a challenge to the educator. He is compelled to invent a new type of adult education, that will make scholarship fascinating to listeners in all sections of the country, especially in areas isolated from the big cities and centers of learning. Radio can only boldly attempt to supply the listener's need for information in his special field or in related fields. If the listener finds such a service useful, he will turn to successive broadcasts with delight.

The highest aim of the educator is to stimulate and sustain the interest in the listener's love for a subject, which grows through the things that he does by himself under the power of suggestion the radio educator can wield. This

power to instill self-initiative in the listener is the most vital influence of the radio educator. The "radio professor" has a bigger job at the microphone than in his class room. With students directly under his eye he can lecture for half an hour or so and, whereas they may squirm inwardly, they have to sit and endure it. Not so out yonder in the air! The moment he becomes prosaic they say to themselves, "Rats to you, prexy," and turn to a dance tune. If he can't hold them he has failed, and failure of that sort is worse than no effort at all.

4. *What sort of curriculum shall radio offer?* "Radio education covers a multitude of broadcasting activities, anything from a Metropolitan Opera House broadcast to a classroom lecture by a professor of geology. Although over forty per cent of the programs on the networks are labeled "education," most school men are dissatisfied and frustrated by the achievements of radio as an educational medium. Commercial broadcasters and educators are in complete agreement that radio can provide a vast amount of general information for the average citizen. Radio education can thus open up the mental vision of the world's activities, whet the curiosity, and stimulate the instinct for factual knowledge. In extending this realm of general information, the broadcaster is warned not to expect miracles.

Not all subjects are adapted to radio teaching. The more accepted educational programs are music appreciation courses, drama, current events, history, geography, political education, literature and science. Geography lessons, especially in the form of travel talks, rank high in satisfaction, probably because along with history they can be dramatized picturesquely; these subjects lend themselves to the show business. Events and places can be re-created and visualized when a traveler or explorer reveals his personal experiences. Such talks leave an imprint on the youthful mind far different from a textbook. Youth's sense of hearing is sharp.

School administrators, in summarizing, have rated the subjects which best lend themselves to broadcast teaching as follows: Music appreciation, geography and travel, English and literature, health and hygiene, history, current events, civics, nature study and science, foreign languages. This line-up seems to be about the same in all countries, although each subject's place on the list may vary somewhat from country to country. Music is universally at the top of the list.

The earliest form of education by radio seems to have been through the cultural impact upon the masses of truly good music. Grand opera, for instance, that had never before reached the common people except through phonograph records presently became available to radio listeners. To be sure, there was a transition period in which public reaction was tested. Among the pioneers in this field who are still occupying a responsible relation to radio is Franklin Dunham, now educational director of the National Broadcasting Company.

The Music Appreciation programs of Dr. Walter Damrosch come in that class of educational programs which are "naturals." Dr. Damrosch estimates that his audience for musical appreciation runs close to seven millions scattered from coast-to-coast. He, as the outstanding teacher and pioneer in this field, has received thousands and thousands of letters from the listening public and from school teachers to prove that radio carries education afar and reaches a vast assembly, which displays "an amazing musical intelligence, unswervingly classical." Many schools, especially in the less populous areas of the country, use these courses as a basis for teaching, and the classics have been made meaningful to the masses who have never before enjoyed the glory of Bach or Beethoven. Another earnest educational attempt is WABC's "School of the Air." History or geog-

raphy woven into light variety entertainment and drama, painlessly conveys fact and information.

Two important problems always face the educator. First, how can the audience be persuaded to listen? Second, how can that interest be retained so that listeners will not tune out?

The school, rooted in tradition, develops and adapts teaching techniques slowly. Radio, if it is to teach at all, must first master the problem of attracting and holding an audience. Educational programs have not had the advantage of the same experimenting as commercial programs. When educational programs are built up, rehearsed, and promoted for results, they may begin to rise in the popularity polls to the same heights as Jack Benny.

Educational broadcasting therefore presents the lure of entertainment. The listener can be beguiled into becoming educated willy-nilly. The subject must in the first place have some bearing on the listener's own problems and experiences. This awakens a primary interest. At this point, the educator must keep up with the work and take advantage of the listener's curiosity and natural interest. If these interests are killed, the broadcast has done more harm than good.

The process is a painless one. When Max Eastman initiated the "Word Quiz" program for CBS he frankly told his audience, "I must manage to make your brain have a good time. If you manage to learn something, please keep it a dark secret, and don't call me an educator."

Radio education however must stand on tiptoes. The invisible pedagogue strives to inspire self-initiative in the listeners. And self-initiative is the basis of all learning. The creation of a National Education Radio Commission, appointed by the President and supported by a federal tax on time devoted to advertising, was advocated by Dr. Jerome Davis of the Yale Divinity School. He expressed the belief

that the British system is preferable to the United States' broadcasting setup.

The educator needs encouragement; otherwise he stands on the outside lines, inept and uninspired. The educator has been accused of inefficient planning, preparation and delivery. But remember, he is expected to work for little or nothing in the school of the air. Hendrik Willem van Loon, for example, spends a day in the preparation of what he regards as an educational talk. For this effort he is paid twenty-five dollars—a paltry sum compared with the stipend of a low-grade comedian.

5. *New Techniques*—The radio educator who feels the importance of his mission must not scorn the methods of the entertainer, nor consider himself divorced from all other departments of radio. Educators, ignorant of the techniques and the approach to broadcasting, fail dismally. Dr. Studebaker, Commissioner of Education, frankly admits: "The history of educational broadcasting is strewn with the bones of dry lecturers because education went on the air without mastery of the art of teaching by radio. Equally ineffective have been the efforts of broadcasters who knew radio showmanship, but did not know what or how to teach."

The three types of presentation fall into the dramatic, interview, and lecture methods. Dramatization is most effective when listeners are not acquainted with the subject supplemented by sound effect and varied voices. The interview is most useful in presenting an authority who is skilled in radio speaking. It is taken for granted that the interviewer is equally facile. "The straight talk is most effective when the listener has been made interested," says Professor H. E. Ewbank, of the University of Wisconsin.

Anyone can read off a lesson. But listeners are made only by enthusiastic teachers who have something to impart close to their own hearts and minds. Let the stigma that educators are "bum showmen be removed."

When Hendrik Willem van Loon quit the radio early in 1938 with a chip on his shoulder, he culminated against following old ideas unadapted to such a new medium that calls for new technique and modern methods. Van Loon protests: "It seems to me that in applying radio to teaching we have been following school room and university tactics, as long as the horse is pulling the buggy and not the engine. The motor calls for an entirely different style of carriage. And so in radio I think we have reached the point where teaching methods in educational institutions should be remodeled for an unseen audience instead of a visible. The programs or lessons must be designed first and foremost for radio, and in doing so they may be quite contrary to school room technique, where the teacher, the book and the blackboard are all present."

The Future of Radio Education

What does the future hold for radio in education? Are educators following the will o' the wisp? Frank E. Hill, the author of "Listen and Learn," looks ahead to 1947. In the first of a series of studies on adult education, sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation, Hill avers that most of the good educational broadcasters in schools and colleges are still in hiding. Education by air is more an art than a profession. Those gifted in that art should be discovered and put to work for the benefit of a tremendously large classroom.

Many of the future radio educators, it is predicted, will come from the ranks of dramatists, writers and actors. A vast number of learners need both sound as well as sight to comprehend instruction. Radio does not offer a multiple appeal, which is the peculiar province of the teacher. Until television comes, radio education may be regarded as only half-teaching.

Up to now radio broadcasting has been a novelty. The

novelty is beginning to wear off. The new radio education will include fundamental instruction, as well as supplementary work, and visits to the homes of the listeners. School programs of the future will be broadcast over the short wave frequencies from a central point since commercial stations cannot surrender sufficient time to the schools. The teaching staff, instead of being reduced, will be augmented. Radio will demand a specialized group with agreeable voices. Until students have a way of talking back to the radio, no device can take the place of the teacher.

The late Glenn Frank, former President of the University of Wisconsin, regarded radio education as in constant flux. "Radio has given education a new medium," he declared. "Education must invest radio with meaning."

Success in educational broadcasting will depend upon the finest in quality and in content, presented by the best minds in such an entertaining manner, as will lead men and women to turn to the radio for cultural guidance and information.

At the present time educational broadcasting in the United States is not established on a sound financial basis. In a number of instances, the radio station has furnished time, and educational agencies have built programs. Among the proposals that have come to the attention of financing educational broadcasting are: (1) federal state aid for local school funds; (2) listeners' license fees; (3) sales tax on radio sets; (4) sales tax on radio tubes; (5) broadcast license fees; (6) taxes on radio advertising; (7) taxes on electrical transcriptions and foundation grants. The public has some responsibility also. Possibly the federal government should assume more responsibility than it has.

The government is responsible for the creation of every station. That responsibility should include certain safeguards for the public interest. Shall it abandon all safeguards? Dr. Studebaker, Commissioner of Education, is the proponent of three important responsibilities which should

be exercised by the government. The first of these is the responsibility to safeguard the radio frequencies to insure the maximum of public service. Nearly ninety-seven per cent of the frequencies within the regular broadcast band have been handed over to commercial companies.

The second of these responsibilities of the federal government is to acquaint the public with the work of the government and thus contribute to national well-being. This will smack of propaganda, but Dr. Studebaker recommends forum discussions as a powerful force in the diffusion of information. The third responsibility of the government is to educate the public concerning the services which should be expected of radio and to persuade and assist broadcasters to improve the use of the air in the public interest, convenience and necessity. This indeed is a noble ambition. If the public is made wise to the limited fare they are offered, the public howl may have some effect.

Dr. James R. Angell, former President of Yale, now educational Counsellor for the National Broadcasting Company, calls attention to the diversity of interests, which characterizes this nation of one hundred and thirty million. Because of this diversity he would shift the educational problem to local stations. "So far as I have been able to determine," said Dr. Angell, "a regular day by day service to the schools, of matters directly related to their normal curriculum, can be best supplied at local stations, whether commercially owned or owned by the State University."

In 1937, Dr. Studebaker announced before the first national radio education conference held in Washington, the six goals which it was hoped would be achieved within ten years. It is important to consider these principles to determine whether the goals are mere matters of a ten year ideology or whether progress can be assured.

1. Development of competent educational radio produc-

ing groups in schools and colleges to broadcast on both local and educational stations.

2. Further cooperation between educators and broadcasters through the Federal Educational Committee.

3. Further experimentation and demonstration in radio in education by the Office of Education and expansion of the service to other agencies interested in the problem.

4. Development of practical training facilities for educators charged with creating radio programs as well as for those using them for instructional purposes.

5. Establishment of short wave stations by local school systems.

6. More adequate support of existing educational radio stations with increased power and time to enable them to serve a larger clientele.

In 1938 WEVD's University of the Air assembled a group of important educators to discuss the problems of radio in education. Among them were the versatile Hendrik Willem van Loon, Director of the New School for Social Research; Dr. Alvin Johnson, Dean of New York University; Dr. Ned H. Dearborn, executive director of the New York Adult Educational Council; Miss Winifred Fisher, and the Director of Ethical Culture Society, Dr. John Lovejoy Elliott. Here are the highlights of their radio conversations which succinctly analyze the problem of education over the air.

Hendrik van Loon: NBC and Columbia are hunting for educational programs. Do they have any ideas? They have come down to Professor Quiz. Anything more elevating they won't listen to. WEVD has had all the great scientists and teachers and has pioneered.

Dr. Alvin Johnson: My first notion is that we don't have enough respect for American people to really deserve to put educators on the air. People show a lot of reluctance in listening to us. So many educational programs are a lot of

patronizing stuff that my children would turn off the radio the moment they heard it.

Mr. van Loon: We give it away for nothing. That's the trouble. They don't care a damn. That's been true from the time of Jesus to Hitler.

Dr. Johnson: We look around for some one who will produce the stuff for nothing, make him feel that he has a wonderful privilege in talking to eighty million people over a hookup when the fact is, they haven't given him the conditions to do a thing worth the time of eight people, let alone eighty million.

Dr. Ned H. Dearborn: We have not been able to get together on anything that is good for education in radio. Committees have been scrapping for a place in the sun. The industry has been arrogant. A leading executive in a recent speech said: "Any attack on the American system of broadcasting is a fundamental attack on democracy itself."

Dr. Johnson: There is no objection to the system. I am a member of Columbia's committee on education, a fairly representative organization. We are given one half-hour and two fifteen-minute periods of evening time worth a million dollars. But what does anybody give for producing material for an educational program? Our education programs should be worked over to the same extent that a Fred Allen show is. Then we would have good educational programs.

Miss Winifred Fisher: I don't listen to radio. I have been disappointed because of their assumption that you are so stupid and that education must be sugar-coated and diluted over the air. I would listen to radio if more substance and less pap were put into educational talks.

Mr. van Loon: You can't tell that to radio stations who are afraid of advertisers.

Miss Fisher: It's the fault of the people who don't write and complain to the stations.

Dr. Dearborn: You can't expect men with lots of money to have a social-minded approach.

Dr. John L. Elliott: We have a way of passing our interest to another country. There isn't anything our people can do for the people in Vienna. Why not begin with the problems

at our door? Unemployment is the problem in this country. There are people who can discuss the question without propaganda. Get people who are working on the job of democracy in this country and in our city.

Mr. van Loon: In other words, discuss economic problems, social problems.

Visitor: When you discuss relief you cannot do it from a non-partisan point of view. Discussions should take the form of debates. They are listened to.

Dr. Johnson: More time must be spent on a fifteen-minute program than on an article in a magazine. You must make a living from it to do as good a job as Vallee does with his program. When radio takes education seriously it will give not only one million dollars of its time, but it will give enough money to people who will really work their heads off to get something done. Then what is put on the air can be a priceless piece of art. Something on which no amount of patience should be spared.

The Correspondence School of the Air

The Board of Education of New York City conducted courses on the air which were a distinct advance in method. The project was the teaching of English by remote control to Italian, Jewish and German residents, the city's dominant racial groups. The schedule calls for radio programs of fifteen minutes each in which the teacher translates back and forth in English to the native language of the listener. The course is conducted along classroom lines with the students doing homework and sending it in for correction. Advice and criticism are given by six traveling tutors, who visit them in their own homes.

Honors are even awarded to those pupils who regularly mail in their homework and show the best progress. There is even a *summa cum laude* for those showing outstanding improvement, which takes the form of an invitation to visit a radio station and participate in a broadcast.

Women predominate among the registrants. A housewife, who must send her children to school, prepare dinner, market, and mend, has little time to attend the neighboring WPA schools for adults. As she stands in the kitchen, she may turn on the radio and listen to an instructor, who speaks her own tongue. She is thus taught the elements of a language she has really never had time to learn. The instruction is based upon a textbook which, though based upon the fundamental principles for children, has been brought up to adult level.

Education on the Air

The ideal to be aimed at in propagandist efforts would seem to require a frank avowal of the purposes and interests represented when a broadcaster seeks to win support for his position; also an honest presentation of all the facts which the reader or listener has a right to know in order to form an intelligent judgment. So safeguarded, propaganda over the radio, as elsewhere, is a form of the normal effort of human beings to influence one another's attitudes.

Many persons insist that no commercial program can possibly be educational. Yet some commercial programs may be more truly educational in the sense of developing new interest and providing cultural enrichment than some of those provided by educational institutions. Advertising, in connection with the broadcasting of a symphony concert or the Metropolitan Opera, is highly displeasing to many listeners, yet very few would deny that to make grand opera or symphony music available to listeners all over the country is to provide a genuine education in musical appreciation to many who otherwise could never hope to hear more than short excerpts from such works on phonograph records.

Educational broadcasting, in the narrower sense of the term, includes stimulating interest, providing specific in-

formation, and teaching new skills. Many educators feel that the first is the task for which radio is best adapted and that the emphasis should be placed there. Others point to the success of the land-grant colleges in broadcasting information to farmers about improved methods and to the popularity among housewives of home economics talks. Still others point to the teaching of arithmetic by radio in the Cleveland schools to the lessons in the playing of band and orchestral instruments broadcast for more than five years by Dr. Joseph E. Maddy, of the University of Michigan.

Some educators believe that the lecturer who is popular in the classroom is equally interesting to the radio audience, and that the hour or two-hour lecture is not too long for the listener who "really wants education." Early in 1937 Harvard University began to broadcast certain classroom lectures and other programs over WIXAL, a short-wave, noncommercial station. The experiment, the first attempt to broadcast classroom lectures internationally, was so successful that it has been continued.

The difficulty is not only the fact that a large proportion of listeners will tune out "heavy" lectures, but that they will fail to tune in again for later programs in which they would be interested. Thus, the station fears, it will lose its audience for commercial programs—and on that its income depends. Yet this problem is not one for commercial broadcasters alone, for an audience is essential in any case.

School Broadcasts

In 1937-38 the American School of the Air was broadcast for thirty minutes every school day by ninety stations affiliated with the Columbia System. During the same year the National Education Association, the Progressive Education Association, the National Council of Teachers of English, the National Council of Teachers of Geography, the Na-

tional Vocational Guidance Association, and Junior Programs cooperated in the programs. Professor William C. Bagley, of Teachers College, Columbia University, is chairman of the Board of Consultants.

The Communications Commission has formulated engineering requirements which school systems preparing to install stations must meet. A maximum of one thousand-watts power and a minimum of one hundred watts are required, although the latter may be modified for schools which can show that lower power is better adapted to their needs.

Educational Stations

From 1921 through 1936, two hundred and two broadcast licenses were issued to one hundred and sixty-eight educational institutions. In January, 1937, there were thirty-eight stations owned by educational institutions, and one short-wave educational station which is not owned by an institution.

More controversy has centered in the question of educational stations than in almost any other aspect of broadcasting. When licenses were given to all applicants, many institutions secured licenses. But many made little or no use of their stations. Gradually, many of these institutions either gave up their licenses or leased the stations to commercial companies.

In the fall of 1934 the Federal Communications Commission held a series of hearings on the question of allocating definite frequencies to educational stations, in accordance with a provision of the Federal Communications Act. The commercial broadcasters brought forward an impressive amount of testimony to show that educators were not making use of the opportunities offered, while the National Committee could not prove any great public interest in its proposal.

All the educational stations which are operated on a non-commercial basis have very limited budgets. WHA in Wisconsin, which is described as "the largest of the educational stations in physical plant, one of the largest in transmission power, the richest in financial resources, and probably the most outstanding in the quality of its programs," had a budget of twenty-five thousand dollars for 1937-38.

Co-operation Between Educators and Broadcasters

After the Federal Communications Commission decided not to recommend the allocation of specific frequencies for educational stations, the Federal Radio Education Committee was set up in 1935 by the Commission to "eliminate controversy and misunderstanding" and to "promote cooperative arrangements between educators and broadcasters on national, regional, and local bases." John W. Studebaker, Commissioner of Education, is chairman. The committee includes prominent educators, religious and labor leaders, representatives of educational stations, and commercial broadcasters. With the appointment of this committee the importance of the problem was definitely recognized by the government. A series of studies which, it is estimated, will require two years for its completion at a total cost of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars has been approved. Educational foundations have promised two-thirds of the necessary funds, and, it is expected, the remainder will be contributed by the broadcasters. Among the projects for study are "a survey of successful efforts by local stations to secure cooperation with civic and other nonprofit groups in their respective communities," a study of teacher-training courses in the use of school radio programs, the creation of a clearing house of information on educational broadcasting, a study of methods of publicizing radio programs, a survey of "organized listening groups here and abroad," the develop-

ment of techniques for evaluating radio programs (this is being carried on by Ohio State University on a grant from the General Education Board), a study of cooperation between local stations and local educational institutions, a survey of experience in network educational broadcasting, an analysis of public opinion in regard to educational broadcasting, and a study of radio listeners (this is being carried on by Princeton University on a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation).

One of the most interesting developments in the local field is that of the University Broadcasting Council in Chicago, a nonprofit corporation under the laws of Illinois. Three universities—Chicago, DePaul, and Northwestern—each appoint two of its six trustees. Thus it functions essentially as the radio departments of the universities. It cooperates with five stations in the Chicago area, including the key stations of BBC, Columbia and Mutual. Nearly half its budget of fifty-six thousand five hundred dollars for the year 1938 was met by contributions from the universities and the stations and the remainder is furnished by the Rockefeller Fund.

Perhaps the most impressive statement of the charges of the educators is made in *Four Years of Network Broadcasting*, issued by the Committee on Civic Education of the National Advisory Council on Radio in Education. As a result of numerous changes in hours, the shift from one network to the other, cutting the time of the programs in half, failing to provide lists of the stations carrying the programs in time to send out publicity, and failure to keep the stations in line for the whole series of programs, the committee concluded by 1937 that "it is useless at this time to attempt systematic education by national network broadcasting at hours when it will be available to large adult audiences." "Educational broadcasting," the committee complains, "has become the poor relation of commercial broadcasting, and the pauperization" of the former has "increased in direct proportion to the growing affluence" of the latter.

It seems that both networks and stations may be becoming aware of the seriousness of the problem. In 1937 the NBC appointed Dr. James W. Angell, president-emeritus of Yale University, as its educational counsellor. In the same year WBEN of Buffalo appointed B. H. Darrow, well-known for his work in the Ohio School of the Air, as educational director. It may be noted that since 1933 the position of educational director of the NBC has been a subordinate one. For the first time a network has a really prominent educator formally appointed as counsellor. Mr. Darrow is the first one appointed by an independently owned commercial station "exclusively for educating." On January 10, 1939, the Columbia System announced the appointment of an Adult Education Board of educators and publicists with Professor Lyman Bryson, of Teachers College, Columbia University, as chairman. The board is studying the scope and purpose of adult education over the air to meet the needs of a democracy, seeking to perfect techniques for this type of broadcasting. All educational series presented by the System's department of education are arranged with the counsel of the board. Late in July, 1938, the NBC announced that an educational division would be established in the program department, in accordance with suggestions made by Doctor Angell.

It is assumed that such local control enables the fullest adjustment to the peculiarities of a particular school system. The school officials and teachers are enabled to work out the programs most appropriate to the local needs. The plan allows for greater flexibility and freedom to adjust programs to changes suddenly precipitated by any one of the unforeseen accidents which afflict a school system.

This sounds as if the great change could do nothing directly for the schools. Dr. Angell disavows this belief. "It does mean," he says, "that with forty-eight states and four district time zones to be served, each State having its own pe-

culiar problems and prejudices, it is humanly all but impossible for the great change to furnish a regular day by day routine service to meet the needs and the complete school curriculum.

"They can from time to time offer brilliant supplements of the school program which a local station could almost never demand. And in certain fields, such as music, literature, social science and health, they will probably for a long time to come be the only source to which the schools can look for the best."

The networks loftily and frequently exploit the "great" educational "value" of radio as a new and far-reaching medium. An analysis of radio programs leads one to suspicion that the overlords of radio do not mean what they say. There is precious little of what may be termed "education" in radio, but with tongue-in-cheek the networks have from time to time really been moved to do something about it.

Visionaries see in radio the end of all blackboards, textbooks and even the teacher. Other observers know that radio can never supplant the discipline of the classroom and the guidance and inspiration of the teacher. The teacher was at first inclined to believe that radio was a labor-saving device that would pre-empt her place in the classroom. All this is a fallacy. Eighteen years of educational broadcasting have proven that radio is merely a supplementary branch of the classroom, and not a revolutionary method in instruction.

Only a few educational programs are outstanding. Educational theory has been tested by listener demand, and the dry-as-dust formula has proved a flop.

Sustained Programs

Back in 1930, when the CBS American School of the Air started, juvenile education by radio was a novelty. Adult

education by the same medium was virtually nonexistent. But the educational possibilities of the microphone were plain, and leading radio interests began experimenting with the idea until the tide started flowing. It has been brought to a crest in the CBS's Adult Education Series.

This CBS series is noteworthy because: (1) It engages top-flight authorities in their fields; (2) it is divided into three departments of instruction, with weekly programs in each; (3) it is not a trial balloon but a permanent schedule.

The first department, "Americans at Work," went on the air April 28; the second, "Living History," May 4; the third, "Adventures in Science," May 6. Other departments have followed.

"Americans at Work," is a close-up picture of industry; it catches workmen of all kinds—sandhogs, steelworkers, locomotive engineers—right at their jobs in their overalls. "Living History" dramatizes famous movements of the past and, where possible, draws an illuminating parallel with the present. "Adventures in Science" presents scientific views of important discoveries and theories in modern medicine, endocrinology, atomic research, and so on.

"THE POSSIBILITIES OF EDUCATION THROUGH RADIO"

By Prof. Henry Pratt Fairchild, Chairman, Sociology Department, New York University Graduate School, over Station WEVD, Tuesday, June 14, 1938. The first in a series by members of the Advisory Board of the WEVD University of the Air.

There is no doubt that the American people is profoundly education-minded. Our whole tradition, our whole national philosophy, induce us to lean heavily on education as a solution of all problems, an avenue to all happiness. Whenever any new invention or discovery is made available almost immediately some one begins to ask how it can be made useful in the field of education.

It was to be expected, therefore, that as soon as the marvellous instrument of radio broadcasting had demonstrated its practicability the eyes of educators, publicists, moral leaders, and perhaps some less objective representatives of special interests should focus themselves upon it in the effort to discover its latent possibilities. It was natural, also, that the first line of thought should link it up with existing educational agencies. It was considered as a new implement to be added to the equipment of the public schools, colleges, and universities. The question was how the existing teaching staffs of these institutions could be mobilized effectively for this new attack on ignorance, and how the conventional techniques and processes of instruction could be adapted to reach a new type of pupils.

One of the early ideas was to achieve the maximum of economy by simply broadcasting regular courses from the class-room. I believe I was the first, at least one of the two first, teachers to be invited to participate in such an experiment. The administration of New York University was much interested, and facilitated the experiment in every way. I shall never forget the thrill of the first occasion, or the sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach when I saw, in addition to the familiar group of student faces in front of me, that strange-looking little instrument set up on my desk, and realized that the responsibility was on me to deliver a coherent and intelligible presentation of the subject to an unknown number of unseen auditors. Of course the students loved it—the students there in the class-room, I mean. This was many years ago, and radio was very new. To see a little group of important looking men come into the room and set up an elaborate and impressive lot of equipment, and then to listen breathlessly for the first words of wisdom to go floating off into the ether gave them a tremendous kick.

There were obviously technical difficulties on the me-

chanical side. I could see that things were not always going smoothly. One night the transmission wire broke down and I don't know how many hundreds of thousands of eager learners were deprived of their evening dose of priceless wisdom.

There were also technical difficulties from the pedagogical side. The regular class period was an hour and three quarters, while the radio spot in those days was twenty minutes. The class met once a week. I was therefore under the obligation of keeping two independent but connected lecture series going. The first twenty minutes of each session had to be continuous and consistent for the sake of the radio audience, while the remaining hour and twenty-five minutes had also to be a consistent unit in itself without so much padding as to strain the conscience of a fairly seasoned instructor. It wasn't too easy. More than this, the subjection to the microphone seriously cramps the style of a teacher who is at the same time trying to deal fairly with a corporeal group of students. He wants to be free to move about, to sit down or stand up, to turn his back and put something on the blackboard. I very soon became convinced that the two types of instruction required quite different techniques, which would not be well mixed. Apparently the superior powers came to a similar conclusion, for the experiment was discontinued after a run of six or eight weeks. I never took the pains to inquire into the reasons, nor did I give much weight to the suggestion offered by one of my fan mail correspondents that my lectures contained a little too much sound radicalism to be acceptable in all quarters.

But at any rate, this venture demonstrated that whatever the possibilities of radio education may be, it is hampered by certain limitations that do not affect ordinary class-room teaching. Radio instruction is, by its very nature, a one-way process, and it is an open question how much real education can be achieved when the flow of human relationships is all

in one direction. Heaven knows that there is all too much of the one-way business in a great deal of our current college and university teaching. The size of classes, and other pedagogical considerations, compel the use of the so-called "lecture system" in a large proportion of the courses in many of our institutions. Many of my present listeners have undoubtedly been subjected to this alleged educational procedure, and I am sure that most of them will agree with me as to the validity of a definition offered by a certain undergraduate student. This young man said that "The lecture system, as developed in our American colleges and universities is a system whereby ideas pass from the lips of the instructors to the note-books of pupils without passing through the minds of either." Now you see, just to illustrate my point, I have no way of knowing whether that got a laugh or not. I have always thought that the reference to ideas in that definition was a trifle optimistic, but aside from that I think it comes very close to the truth.

But even at its worst, the system of class-room lectures has many advantages over talking to an unseen audience. The teacher who has his class actually before him can tell to some extent, by the looks of his auditors, whether he is putting his points across or not. At least he can tell whether he is keeping his class awake. If he finds that he is not to a full hundred per cent he may be rather pointedly reminded that it is his own fault. I heard of one college professor who noticed that one of the men in the front row was slumbering soundly, and he called to the man in the adjacent seat and said, "Brown, wake up that man next to you." "Wake him up yourself," said Brown, "you put him to sleep." Of course there are some teachers whose soporific talents are so great as to affect even themselves. I was told the other day of a certain professor who dreamed that he was teaching a class and woke up and found he was.

But if the teacher is really worth the name there is

unquestionably an influence exerted by him upon his pupils, an intangible something that emanates from him and produces an effect upon them that can not possibly be achieved by the heard voice alone, even though the speaker may be peculiarly gifted with that indefinable ability to put his personality across over the air. And even in courses that follow the lecture method, there is usually an opportunity for individual students to raise questions or interpose objections in special cases.

But I believe I am expressing the convictions of almost all true teachers when I say that the soundest education must always be a two-way process. This does not merely mean that the teacher must have a chance of testing the student's preparation, or finding out directly how much he has learned from his studies up to date. In many subjects, at least, it is much more than that. Genuine education is much more than the simple presentation and apprehension of facts, or even of truth. There is always a question of interpretation, of analysis, of emphasis, and these matters vary greatly according to the character of the personalities involved. One of the most scholarly men I ever knew, a person of true eminence, told me that in his teaching at one of our old New England universities, when dealing with controversial political and economic subjects he felt compelled to express views and opinions much more radical than he really held, because he knew that his students would discount whatever he said so heavily that in order to produce the correct impression on their minds the actual statement had to be exaggerated. It is a truism to say that real education is a growth process, and growth is always affected by the environmental conditions. In the class-room the intellectual environment is provided not only by the teacher, but the students themselves. Frequently more is learned by a given student from listening to the questions and comments of other students, and the interchange between them

and the teacher, than from his own direct relations with the teacher. It is doubtful whether any satisfactory educational substitute can ever be found for the small, face-to-face group of learners, including the nominal instructor, who participate jointly in the pursuit of that development of personality which is the great aim of all education, and which can be no more standardized and depersonalized than can human beings themselves.

All of the foregoing is true of education in general, regardless of the specific subject. Obviously difficulties increase in the case of these subjects, particularly various sciences, where laboratory experience and practice is virtually necessary. Clearly, ordinary laboratory instruction and experimentation can not be conducted over the air. There is, indeed, a very interesting and important point as to how far conventional laboratory experience is really essential to the mastery of such subjects as chemistry, physics, and biology. A very significant series of educational researches could well be undertaken in this field. It would be an exciting task to discover to what extent a radio audience could be instructed and assisted to perform for themselves, with such equipment as the ordinary household could supply, such experiments as are absolutely essential for the grasp of the elements of the physical sciences.

For the present, however, almost by tacit assumption the field of radio education has been limited to subjects requiring no special laboratory experience. This tends to narrow it down to the humanities and the social sciences. Here is a broad enough field, to be sure, to occupy the attention of existing educational radio facilities for some time to come. And perhaps it is the field where radio education is most vitally important. For it is particularly in the field of the social sciences that the linkage of behavior to sound intellectual competence is most vital to the individual and society. Very few persons have to practice chemistry, or

physics, or biology to more than a very limited extent, unless they choose them as a career. But everybody, particularly in a democracy, has to practice social relationships, and if he does not practice them intelligently and wisely he must perforce practice them stupidly and blindly.

In my talk thus far I have laid particular stress on the difficulties and limitations of radio education. These can never be ignored. But it is equally important to recognize that radio instruction has many distinct and peculiar advantages. These are so numerous that they can be hardly more than mentioned in the remaining minute or two. First of all, and most obvious, is the vast multiplication of the number of students made possible by the broadcast method. In a single evening a given teacher can reach many times more pupils than he could hope to influence in a lifetime of ordinary teaching. And if he has a significant message to deliver this is of vital importance. In the second place, radio education is far less responsive than study in any of the conventional institutions. It can be done in the pupil's home, no extra expenses for travel, residence, food, etc. It is a temptation to point out in addition that the expenses of instruction are further cut down by the fact that in many cases the teacher gets no pay for the instruction he does over the air—but I won't go into that. In the third place, as radio education is developed, it will become more and more possible for the student to adjust his learning activities to the requirements of his regular job or occupation. There is already an effort to schedule educational programs at hours when workers of all types are most likely to be at leisure. Again, a radio educational agency is likely to be able to call on a more diversified, and possibly more competent, list of instructors than is ordinarily found in any single institution. There is also less subjection to formalized curricula, sequence of courses, departmentalization, etc.

Whatever the balance of advantages and disadvantages

may be, there can be no question that radio education has come to stay, and is destined for a development far beyond anything observable at present. Whether it is possible, or even desirable, to perfect in radio education devices for checking on the progress of the student through examinations, reports, and papers such as are used in standard education is a matter for study and reflection. But we can be thankful that radio has already blazed a trail into the wilderness of popular ignorance and lack of information, and that such institutions as the WEVD University of the Air are even now building up the sound foundation of popular intelligence and understanding on which all true democracy must forever rest.

“GIVING EDUCATION THE AIR”

By Dr. William E. Bohn, Educational Director, Rand School, in the WEVD University of the Air series, Tuesday, June 21, 1938.

There has been a lot of talk about giving education the privileges of the air. Not much has come of it. Not much will come of it until we boot out of our studio all conventional educators and conventional ideas. Intelligent people have been trying for a generation to cut loose from the old schoolmasterish methods. Here we have the chance of the ages. We are free from the schoolroom, the blackboard, the textbook, the outline, the examination—the whole miserable paraphernalia which has kept us in a straightjacket. We have a new medium, the air. The whole world is at our command. We can get the teachers we want, use any method which we have wit enough to devise. And—so far—we have done just about nothing.

Of course, there has been a good deal of learning around the receiving set. But there has been, too, much improvement of the human mind at Coney Island. All of life is educational. Horse-races, and prize-fights have probably

pointed many a man the way to a better life. If you look at it broadly, every radio program probably teaches someone something. The endless swing music, the synthetic jokes, the obvious Hollywood exhibitionism—all are education. Life itself is a great school. And the radio gives us life distilled through a microphone.

But what we mean by education is something different. It is a specialized part of life designed to help us find the meaning of the whole. It usually consists of lessons, drills, activities, lectures, books, examinations, marks. Schools, colleges, classes, libraries, correspondence courses are conducted to furnish it to mankind. Now comes the radio, last and most engaging daughter of the sciences. The schoolmaster catches glimpses of himself instructing the millions. Sometimes he has had the chance. But his pedagogical voice has been drowned by the click of countless receiving-sets being turned off.

So—the use of radio in education is a problem. Nobody really has an idea how to go about this business. Nobody cares much. The time is being satisfactorily taken up by Benny Goodman and Ed Wynn. But consciences are uneasy. We have an idea that something should be done.

I am in luck about the main point. Dr. Henry Pratt Fairchild has given me my text. And Leonard Carlton, radio editor of the *New York Post*, has challenged me to cut loose about it. All right. Here goes. Professor Fairchild was discussing the students of the University of the Air: “Whether it is possible, or even desirable to perfect devices for checking on the progress of the students through examination, reports, and papers . . . is a matter for study and reflection.”

I don't need to reflect for two seconds about this business. Of course it's possible to perfect the devices of the class-room for use over the air. We can even tell little Willie to stand in the corner or give him permission to get a drink of water. But who wants to? In the name of John Dewey and

Ichabod Crane, are our brains paralyzed? Here we have a chance to start something big—and we just naturally putter round with thoughts of little class-room stuff. Radio's job is the education of cities, states, and nations of adults. The test of accomplishment will be no meticulous examination questions—acrobatic performances which show nothing but the student's ability to jump through the pedagogical hoop. There will be the tests of life. If the University of the Air teaches citizenship to the people of New York, the test will be New York's government. Cities that pass will have good government—and will be marked A—not by the school-master but by history. If we teach health, the test will be the figures published by the Department of Health during subsequent years. And when we get this thing going—listen, Mr. Carlton—we'll give school boards and superintendents something to think about. If we have sense enough not to follow them, some of them may have enough sense to follow us.

I would not advocate shooting all professional teachers. They have their uses. Let's be fair. What I am getting at is a very simple thing. Radio educators must make a fresh start, a start from scratch. If we carry the class-room with us to the studio, we are damned in advance.

I know that the radio has been used successfully as a substitute for the correspondence course—or as an adjunct to it. Courses in Agriculture, in Foreign Languages, in Economics have been given over the air. That may be all right—for a few specialized stations. But it must always be a limited thing. It is not what we are talking about. The big job of radio in education must be done by new people in a new way.

There are three great fields which are open to the innovators—and only one of these has been cultivated sufficiently so that we have more than an inkling of its possibilities. These three fields are: 1. The Fine Arts; 2. Public Affairs;

3. General Intelligence. A University of the Air should have these three departments. Its program for a given period should do justice to all three. But—God forbid!—the announcers should never breathe a word to the customers about departments. Life isn't divided into departments. That is part of the old university machinery which we shall be well rid of.

The one art which radio listeners have learned something about is music. There are fellows whose appreciation never rose above "Sweet Adeline" who now ask for Mozart and Brahms—and who know the numbers, recognize, distinguish, discriminate. The program directors never thought of musical programs as education. That is why they have done pretty well in this field. I am leaving out of account the really swell job done by Walter Damrosch and others in the field of musical pedagogy. The symphony concerts—even with the current awkward and mispronounced comments—have raised the cultural level of the entire country. Programs of songs have given infinite pleasure and have widened the musical taste of millions far from concert halls. The few operas composed for the air—what great possibilities there are in this field.

In the field of drama we are just making a start—though the progress made during the past season is enough to show that there is practically no limit to future achievements. Here there must be much experimentation. Without the visible stage all the conditions become different. New plays must be written for this medium, and the stage-plays must be intelligently rewritten. We need a Shakespeare of the air. In the fields of poetry and story-telling we have hardly made a beginning. Yet radio seems just made for the cultivation of these arts. We used to mourn over the loss suffered by poetry and tale through enforced dependence on cold type. Well—we can now have again the warm and flexible human voice as our medium. The poet can speak again as Homer

spoke. It may mean a great revival. Freed from print, the human spirit may soar anew.

The greatest of all fields for the University of the Air is Public Affairs. The arts of citizenship can be taught only tentatively and provisionally in school and college. What little is given in the realm of Civics, Politics, and Economics is so unreal that it hardly sticks. The radio teacher gets his student in the midst of affairs—while he is making up his mind how to vote, how to make his living, how to solve his problems. His listener has the hottest possible motive for taking seriously anyone who has help to offer. And what the student receives can instantly be put to the touch of experience. He can build it into his life as he goes along. Here we have the field lying wide open for the most realistic education in the world.

And here, especially, we must cut loose from academic notions. If the President gives a fireside chat, or Governor Lehman addresses the citizens, or Louis Waldman discusses the state constitution—that is education in the deepest sense. People are learning what they need to know from the best teachers—from the men who are in the midst of affairs. The professional teacher is—at best—but a substitute for the real thing. Men and women of action bring the learner in direct contact with reality. Thus—while the so-called educational work of the broadcasting stations has been pretty bad—a lot of good work has been done—and has not been labeled education. Politicians, business executives, labor leaders, professional men have done a first class job.

Then why not let well-enough alone? Because the field has been by no means covered. Program directors should ask themselves the question: "What do American citizens need to know? What do they need to know in order to vote? In order to find their way out of the depression? In order to educate their children? In order to select their professions? In general—radio can give them the necessary in-

sights into the community life—can give what college students should get out of Economics, Sociology, History, Politics. And the students will take it easily, vitally, from people to whom they listen gladly.

This means that directors must have programs, ideas, schemes. They must be ingenious in finding men and women who can put over the things which should be presented. If they depend on professional teachers to put over a university course, they will be defeated in advance. Suppose, for example, that we want to teach Economics. We will not outline a course beginning with Adam Smith. We will start with the depression. Perhaps we will be even more realistic. We will start with unemployment. We can get even closer to the ground than that. We can start with the listeners of one station who are unemployed. We will get the facts. Then we will get the best men from trade unions, from the U. S. Department of Labor, from the research bureaus. We will get a picture of the situation from them. Then will come human-interest writers to give their picture. The greatest authors will be glad to help. Then will come the social engineers to describe the working of our industrial system and to tell just what happens as a depression goes on. Then we will bring on the theorists and politicians, the New Deal men, the conservatives, the Socialists, any distinguished man or woman who has a right to be heard on the cause and cure of depressions. Then will come the experts on special phases, on child-labor, on unemployment insurance, on vocational training and guidance, on purchasing power, wages, markets, profits. People will get the inside facts on this whole business of economic living. We will not have a speaker who is not an authority, not one to whom people will not listen gladly. The addresses need not follow a prescribed order. The sequence may be altered to follow the current of events, or to bring in a speaker who is in the headlines. In

the course of one season students can learn Economics more vitally than most students ever learn it in college.

Radio developments during the past season prove that people are hungering for what may be called general knowledge. All of these questionnaires, in the magazines, all of the question-and-answer periods on the radio, all of these fool games that people play at parties—they prove something. A lot of people can get tired of being ignorant. They want—at least—to have a little knowledge to show off with. They can't take courses in physics or chemistry. But here is this magic world. They are curious about radio, about cosmic rays, about strange lands, about climates, jungles, strange beasts. Consider how many tuned in on Admiral Byrd when he was in the Antarctic. This thirst for knowledge can be satisfied much better than the radio is even trying to do it now. Here the popularizers may well be called in to supplement the great scientists, inventors, explorers. In the course of a year a program can swing pretty well round the circle of the sciences.

I am conscious of the fact that in some of these fields we are dealing with dynamite. The propagandist is always at hand to give his own twist to the facts. The program builder is in a position of public trust. If—in a field like Economics, Medicine, or International Affairs—there are vital differences of opinion, it is his business to hold the balance true, to see that the listeners get a true picture. In the course of weeks or months all important points of view must be presented. Educational radio cannot accept the limits which seem to be binding upon commercial radio. We shall not be trying to sell the listener something. We shall be trying to give his mind every chance to use the facts.

But—for the University of the Air—the one unforgivable sin is dullness. It is wicked enough in all radio programs. The great complaint which the American people have a right to make against the current fare is that it is monoto-

nous, unvaried, unimaginative, drab, unspiced, tasteless. It has a good deal of artificial snappiness, but not much real verve. It lacks—especially—humor. Men who are funny as Mark Twain or Bill Nye at a party become drab as village parsons the moment they face the microphone. To explain this curious fact in a nation that would sell its soul for smartness we would have to go too far back in the psychology of this business. All that I can say now is that the University of the Air must break away from the tradition of dullness. It must speak with a genuine and human voice, with the lively accents of real life. Reality must flow out over the waves sharply, quickly, vividly. The minute a speaker grows dull he must be shot. The crack of the revolver ringing out of the receiving sets will serve as a guarantee to customers that they can learn without being bored to death. Thus radio will make a supreme contribution to educational theory and practice.

RADIO COMEDIANS ARE SUCH
UNFUNNY PEOPLE

FROM time to time critics have predicted that the ether clown would sound his own death knell on the air. No such obsequies have come to pass. Today entrenched before the microphone, the radio comedian sits securely on his sponsored throne.

Test the comedian's power by his high-bracket income. Jack Benny, in 1937, signed a three year non-cancellable contract involving close to three million dollars. According to Walter Winchell, Bob Burns' income in 1935, before he won acclaim on the air, was exactly three thousand seven hundred dollars. By 1937, Burns' income was over four hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Eddie Cantor topped them all with sixteen thousand five hundred dollars per broadcast.

Let us cast a glance backward at the reason for the rise of the comedian. Radio comedy owes more to the late David Freedman than to any other writer. He was the alchemist of wit who popularized the method of compounding jokes drawn from huge files. He knew more jokes than any other man of his time and constantly refreshed his memory from a working stock of nearly seventy-five thousand. He became the first "write-hand" man of Eddie Cantor when the goggle-eyed comedian first went on the air in 1931. Until the time of his death in 1937, Freedman was the most prolific compiler and writer of radio skits, regularly supplying the comic pabulum of Cantor, George Givot, Joe Cook, Helen Menken, Block and Sully, Jimmy Durante and scores of others.

Freedman made the first attempt to give radio comedy

form and structure. He was the first to prophesy that there would come about a famine in gags, the first to seek an approach to humor in the events of the day. He died while in the midst of a lawsuit which asked for a verdict of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars for jokes, gags and dialogue which he had furnished Cantor for programs over a period of years.

Freedman's skill in adapting sound and sense is instanced in this specimen of dialogue produced for Eddie Cantor, entitled, "When you lose at Bridge—and When you Win":

Cantor: I'm going to give you my impression of a husband and wife coming home after losing at bridge. (Music—Three O'Clock in the Morning.)

Wife: You're gonna drive me out of my mind.

Cantor: That's no drive—that's a putt.

Wife: You're so bright they named a town after you—Marblehead.

Cantor: You're such a good card player they named a game after you—Rummy. (Crash of milk bottles.) Did you put those bottles in front of the door so I'd break my neck?

Wife: No, but it's a good idea. You're sore because we lost at bridge.

Cantor: I'm not. I'm sore because your mother came to spend a week-end and has been here for a year and a half. I'm sore because you gave me a veal chop that sprained my jaw.

Wife: Why, whatever I cook I put my heart into.

Cantor: No wonder it was tough as steel. (Baby cries.)

Wife: Now you woke up the baby.

Cantor: What's he always hollering about?

Wife: He's teething.

Cantor: Teething? What does he need teeth for at his age?

Mother: What's that racket?

Cantor: What's your mother hollering about—she teething too?

Wife: Mother's been nursing a grouch for two weeks.

Cantor: I didn't know your father was sick. Listen, I'm hungry. What happened to that roast duck in the icebox?

Wife: Mother ate it. She's so fond of duck she'd give half her life for one.

Cantor: Oh Yeah? Tomorrow night, I'll bring two!

* * *

Cantor: Now I'll show you what happens when the same couple wins at bridge.

Cantor: Good old sweet home! Let me open the door for you, Toodles.

(Happy laughter)

Wife: Oh, did you hurt yourself, dearest?

Cantor: No, Poopsy. Gee, it was awfully sweet of your Mother to come and mind the baby.

Wife: Darling, you're so sweet when you win at bridge.

Cantor: Why Snooksy, I'm the same whether I win or lose. I'm just happy because I'm married to the loveliest little wifey in the world.

(Baby cries)

Cantor: Oh, I woke up the baby. What a shame. How is the little angel?

Wife: He's teething.

Cantor: Poor little man! But won't we be proud of his first little toothy-woothy?

Mother: Is that you, Tessie?

Cantor: Your dear darling mother is up. Mother, Tessie played divinely.

Wife: No, mother. It was Eddie who played like a master.

Cantor: No, Lovey-ducky, it was you. When you played that Kingy-wingy on the Jack-wacky and won the tricky-wicky, we made a grand slammy-wammy and that won the gamey-wamey for us, sugar pie. Look, honey, I'm hungry. Is there anything to eat in the housey-wousey? What about that nice roast ducky-wucky?

Wife: Mother ate it.

Cantor: Oh, she ate it, huh? Didn't she leave me a teeny-wingy?

Wife: You know how mother loves roast ducky. She'd give half her life for one.

Cantor: Oh, Yeah? Then tomorrow night I'll STILL bring two ducky-wuckies.

The writer of radio comedy is loath to admit his leaning on Joe Miller who, if not an "original" punster, at least supplied the spirit and the method of the wisecrack.

Joe Miller, long dead, may never have cracked a pun in his life. When he passed away on August 16, 1738, he was but an obscure actor who played small roles such as the First Grave Digger in Hamlet. A "lamentable friend and former companion," as he describes himself, one Elijah Jenkins, Jr., saved Miller from oblivion. He made arrangements with a London publisher to print a seventy-two page book under the title "Joe Miller's Jests, or the Wit's Vade-Mecum." Being a collection of the most elegant bon mots and the most pleasant short stories in the English language, first carefully collected in the company and many of them transcribed from the mouth of the facetious gentleman whose name they bear. . . ."

The volume, successively issued over the centuries, contains a typical classic quip of the man who saw people sneaking out of church and remarked, "The minister is giving us a moving discourse." And again, the smart protest which has a modern flavor, "He couldn't have died insolvent, because he died in England."

The New Comic Glossary

The comic writer plays safe and respects tradition. He collects, revamps, reinterprets, readapts the seven basic jokes that have been allocated to mankind. He must make the old joke taste savory. He lards the joke with current reference, and then bakes it under the comic heat. When all the wrappings and trimmings are plucked away, the new joke is the old joke over again.

The pilfering from ancient joke files has been prodigious. The quality of greatness in a radio comedian is to put his "steal" of approval on a joke and so disguise it that someone

else will steal it. Bob Burns uses a lot of revamped Joe Miller jokes, and once told Dinty Doyle that he has been telling the same yarns for ten years and that he hopes to continue for ten more. A joke that is so old that it is forgotten is automatically regarded as "new." Fortunately, we quickly forget. We come upon the same incident time and time again and barely recognize it. We forget what made us laugh and somehow look to the system of ideas that the comedian is using for the moment.

A brief glossary must include the idiom devised by Dave Freedman: A "technocrat" is a great gag that cannot be fitted into a script; a "dragola" is an off-color joke; a "buf-faroo" is a powerful gag almost sure to evoke a belly laugh; a "weakie" is a feeble jest that goes in a script until a better one is found; "ti ti mi tita" is a sophisticated Park Avenue gag; a "hup cha de bup cha" is a sure-fire laugh; "dynamite" is material that can't miss.

New additions to radio's joke vocabulary are constantly born. Certain jokes are called "cheaters." A "cheater" is a joke written into the script but omitted during rehearsal in front of the orchestra. By holding it back until the broadcast, the musicians are surprised, laugh very heartily, and the comedian gets the support of fresh loud laughter close to the microphone. The "running gag" is a hangover from vaudeville and burlesque. The same joke recurs persistently in each of a series of comic sketches. From week to week the comedian refers to some physical characteristic or personal trait of a member of the cast. Jack Benny kept wisecracking weekly regarding the spats worn by Don Bestor, his orchestra leader, and Gracie Allen made continual quips about Jack Renard's "tummy."

Once A-Pun a Time

From its inception, radio comedy consisted mainly of straight monologues or dialogues. A dozen or more puns

and gags were the comedian's stock in trade. The comedian entered wholly into alliance with his joke books, and was equipped to start on his merry-go-round.

The simplest form of humor is the pun, which is a play on words. The play on words is endless, and is common to all languages. The technique consists of directing attention to the sound of the words rather than to the sense of the word. Through similarity in sound, words are twisted out of their original meaning; one word is made to do the duty of two words. It all seems so easy and senseless, yet the world laughs at such things as this:

Jimmy: Say, Eddie, did you ever make any money out of that chicken ranch of yours? *Eddie*: Oh, just a few poultry dollars.

Or, such a notion as was heard on a Georgie Price Amateur Comedy Writers Program in 1937, the script about Louis and Farr: *Question*: "Did you ever box?" *Answer*: "Yes, I used to box oranges."

The gag is generally based on exaggeration upwards or downwards. Things are enlarged to grotesque proportions or dwarfed until they seem ridiculous. We are offered a new and surprising pattern of life to which we are unaccustomed. Men do not put acetylene torches to help one light a cigarette, as does Groucho, nor do women powder their faces with marshmallow as Schnozzle Durante would have us believe.

The listener, who sees the true relation of things, is tricked into laughter by the attempt at hoodwinking his senses. If the gag achieves this triumph, it is a "good" gag, though it bears the mark of antiquity. In 1931 every radio comedian was following the "straight" routine. This consisted of line for line business. Jimmy Wallington would feed Cantor the "straight" line and Cantor would snap back with the punch line. A series of gags was hooked together without any particular system or continuity, or, like Ed Wynn's early "opera

programs," were nothing more than gag monologues. No matter what pattern comedy takes on, the despised gag still holds forth lustily. Fred Allen claims that in this decade the radio comic has risen from "gags to riches." However skilfully disguised, always there must be the funny line.

Mort Lewis, who wrote comedy scripts for Ed Wynn, Ben Bernie, Burns and Allen, maintains that the gag is not going out of style. "The gag," he says, "is still the backbone of nine-tenths of radio comedy. And that goes for Benny, Baker, Cantor, Wynn or Pic and Pat. Unless you're a mimic or a dialect slinger, it's the gag that pays off. As for the gag man becoming extinct because most comics are writing their own material today—that's bunk. Most of the radio comics can't write. Even those who do, for the most part, require assistance. And they'll continue to require it, script writing being the high pressure racket that it is."

The Comedy of Situation

Comedy on the air was compelled to seek new techniques in order to escape annihilation. The formula of a string of he-and-she jokes had become decrepit. A new schemata was devised, a new framework which has been termed the comedy of "situation." Every variety of episode offers grist for the comedian's mill. The theory is that the comedian could never run out of jokes if he clung to human situations, and topical events. The world keeps moving. The comic is squeezed out of any scene: A domestic squabble in the kitchen, a visit to the World's Fair, or to the circus, high jinks at the opera, at the race track, or wherever you are. The dialogue creates a definite picture of the locale and gives a swift impression of the situation involved.

In vaudeville, the jokes were built up on front of a drop that helped establish the locale—say Times Square, Main Street, or a woodland retreat. The radio comedy of "situa-

tion" makes its locale quite as definite. A brief twenty words or so gives the listener the setting and the locale. The dialogue is brisk and involves heckling the comedian by all the performers. Every phase of the situation exposes a human failing open to smart interchange of the quip. Such a treatment of comedy demands an informal style. Here is where the skill of the writer must remove all traces of the mechanical unfolding of a joke. In the Burns and Allen episodes the effect is that of "nut" comedy, and repartee seems to flow from the situation without effort.

Eddie Cantor started his radio career with a recital of funny stories. For a long time he remained the disciple of old gags coddled into being by a straight man or a dialect stooge. In January 1938, he began to pattern his program after the informal conversational style of Jack Benny. Occasionally he makes an abrupt switch back to his old habit of using straight men and stooges. It is the spirit of Eddie Cantor that pervades each of his programs and, though his material is quite the same, he surrounded himself with a whole set of familiar people—Parkyakarkus, Jimmie Walington, Bobbie Breen, the mad Russian, each of whom represented a distinct personality.

Eddie Cantor's change in style is quite noticeable. He is leaning toward the Jack Benny style; shows three significant changes of method in getting across: 1. He speaks a little more casually. 2. He does not utter his punch lines with the same yell as heretofore, and generally subdues the emphasis on climaxes. 3. He escapes from the routine of feed-line jokes.

Jack Benny—Radio's Funnyman No. 1

The most successful exponent of "informal" comedy is Benjamin Kubelsky, renamed Jack Benny, who was born in Waukegan, Illinois. His style deserves study.

Aside from Franklin D. Roosevelt, Benny, forty-six year

old Funny Man, is regarded as the biggest voice in radio. With a Crossley rating of 42.4, an estimated audience of eleven million families gives him ear every week. He is aided and abetted by his wife and former vaudeville partner, Mary Livingstone. He plays a timorous and boastful character to the delight of an audience that understands.

Since 1934, he has held his place as America's Funnyman No. 1, and ace salesman of the air outranked in popularity only by Charlie McCarthy. At a cost of twelve thousand dollars a week for personal salary, and at an additional expense of fifteen thousand dollars for time and co-talent, his sponsors regard him as perfect investment in entertainment. For, with Benny at the comedian's helm for the past four years, the Good Ship Business rides straight to port, and brings home General Foods.

Benny reached radio by way of the vaudeville stage on which he was not a great sensation. He did a monologue and kidded his audience with punch lines while toying with a big cigar and a fiddle which he did not play. Encouraged to apply for an audition, he got together a string of jokes and was impressed into radio by General Tires in 1932. Canada Dry and Chevrolet successively sponsored him until Jell-O claimed him in 1934.

Harry Conn is responsible for many of the prevailing methods of informal comedy. He wrote nearly two hundred and fifty shows for Jack Benny and originated the notion of involving the whole cast in the act. He was the first to write travesties on literary classics. He can take credit for making it possible for Jack Benny's wife to become the comedienne. One of Conn's scripts called for an extra part, and Benny induced his wife to play the role under the name of Mary Livingstone.

Like most writers of radio comedy, Conn's versatility did not last, and when he essayed a comedy role on the air himself, he proved to be a failure. Moral: Comedian, stick to your last!

First Principles of "Informality"

The following principles guide the writing and production of "informal" comedy:

1. The aim is to take any experience or situation and develop it with the hearty exchange of little quips and puns. The listener is led on to successive ludicrous surprises, without any attempt to trouble the intellect.

2. To unify the "situation," members of the cast are included in the "plot." Benny is verbally torn to shreds by his associates and is led into a debacle from which there is no escape except in the inevitable laugh. The pattern of the comedy is the "skit" or pure farce.

3. The dialogue (a) sets the scene; (b) lends picture effects; (c) vivifies the situation; and (d) provides those descriptive touches which instantly provoke the imagination.

4. Benny is the target for most of the jokes, and so his mild and ineffectual protests and explanations make him the object of sympathy.

The formula calls for the use of "eye and ear" gags rather than what might be termed "ear" gags. "Ear" gags cause a laugh because of double meanings or some distortion in sound. The "ear and eye" gags involve a swift logic of situations which enables the listener to picture the scene, give a fleeting glance backwards and enrich the whole concept of the relationship of the characters.

The comedy of "situation" involves a slower unfolding of the joke without impeding the speed of the action. A certain groundwork must be established to ensure the "picture." Repetitions and timing are part of the success. Instead of striking the ear as a "plant," the joke flows intimately from the situation and appears to be a logical part of the pattern. The gags are never an end in themselves. If the listener suspects the gags have been forced to fit the situation, the device would destroy the "natural" scheme of things.

Commercials are placed in the script so that they seem an integral part of the comics. When Benny counters with Don Wilson, the announcer, the sales message becomes the pretext for banter that elevates the laughing spirit with Jell-O and its six flavors.

The Coming of the Stooge

The history of the radio stooge is wrapped in controversy. There are many claimants for first honor of inducting the stooge on the air.

S. J. Kaufman, in the Drama Mailbag of the *New York Times*, casts enlightenment on the development of the stooge. He turns to the days of early vaudeville when teams got their laughs when one of them twisted and tortured the English language. "The twister was the comedian," says Kaufman. "The other talked 'straight' and in the trade was called a 'straight man.' It was the duty of the straight man to feed the comic in such a way that the laughs were certain and definite. The straight man of old vaudeville days now has the radio name of 'stooge'."

The "straight man" or "stooge" ordinarily would be the one who did not get the laughs. Today the comedian snares the laughs. The peculiar development of radio comedy often makes the comedian "straight" man for his stooge. Kaufman sets this test for deciding which one of the team is the comic: "The one who is abused is the comic." Thus, when Al Jolson clowns with Parkyakarkus and acts as "straight" man for Martha Raye, his status as comedian varies with the nature of the treatment accorded him by his partners.

Originally the stooge was planted in the audience for the special purpose of doing his best to heckle the performer on the stage. For many years Phil Baker's act in vaudeville included a stooge who sat in a box and constantly interrupted his efforts on the stage. Baker discovered that the audience

sympathized with the heckler and gave the interrupter the greatest amount of applause. The heckler was soon introduced to radio in the person of a stooge whose malevolent voice broke in on the program with the command: "Get off the air!" at which Baker sprang to the defense: "Pay no attention to that scorpion!"

Today, surrounded by satellites who have full freedom to heckle, the comedian makes humor out of human situations. Fred Allen, in his early routine, packed Town Hall with a group of annoyers; Gracie Allen used as her foil the orchestra leader, Jacques Renard, and the announcer, Ted Husing; and Bob Hope provided a feminine stooge in the person of Honey Chile.

The radio stooge is coming into his own. The old-fashioned stage comedian used to abuse his stooge by knocking him on the head with a bladder. The radio comedian has altered this tradition. Today the stooge has his comeback of free speech and the right of self-defense. He has risen in popularity because the listener finds in him a champion and a spokesman against grievances and abuses under which the listener ordinarily is compelled to remain silent. The stooge is thus the vicarious master of words that sting and provoke. He picks up the gauntlet and flings it at his tormentor. He becomes the supreme heckler who shows up the foibles of one who pretends to be his master.

The radio comedian who knows showmanship no longer monopolizes all the smart lines by making his stooge a mechanical feeder. It was Cantor's intention to develop Rubinoff into a stooge, but the violinist was sensitive about his thick Russian dialect, and Wallington fell heir to the job in "straight" talk, Rubinoff remaining a silent stooge. Cantor ascribes his own success to his willingness to become the recipient of his stooge's sting. He advises: "I could take his lines, but I don't want to. Why? Because when he heckles me, I'm the under-dog. If we reverse the situation, I'm on

top, and the listeners resent me. They don't like the wise guy."

It is claimed that Groucho and Chico Marx were the first to use the stooge in radio comedy style. They stumbled on the broadcast formula in 1933. The practice of Groucho was to heckle Chico. As a result, the under-dog commanded the sympathy of hosts of listeners. Chico was getting ninety per cent of the fan mail and applause.

The success of the single stooge soon provided the inspiration for programs with multiple stooges. The stooge progeny has become prolific. Writers are called upon to create hecklers, and the obscure stooge was endowed with distinct character. The stooge is often given dialect to add to his stock-in-trade, and to identify his peculiarities.

The very success of the comedian is due to the mock defiance of the persuasive stooges that surround him. "This business of being funny on the air has gone beyond the talents of any two performers," says George Burns. "The clown on the air today is like a baseball pitcher; he merely hurls and curves the ball across the plate. He needs plenty of team-play and support."

Framing the Comedian

The tendency today is to unify the comedian's efforts about some framework or central theme. This framework is a sort of main trunk with spreading branches to which the gags may be attached. Phil Baker edits a newspaper; Jack Oakie assumes the presidency of Oakie College; Stoopnagle and Budd become "inventors" who conceived such fantastic devices as wigs with hair that stands on end for bald men reading mystery stories.

The comic writer is at his wits' end for some theme which will bear serial repetition and at the same time be entirely refreshed at each performance. Once the background is es-

tablished, the routine is more easily understood and more eagerly followed by the listeners. Sometimes the "situation" seems forced, as was Eddie Cantor's effort to squeeze humor out of an interview with an engaged couple each week. The bride-and-groom-to-be were presented with a check of one hundred dollars for their appearance. They deserved it.

The framework of the comedian changes from time to time. Fred Allen uses a variety of basic situations: (1) "Town Hall News, Sees Nothing, Tells All"; (2) Interviews with The Man You Did Not Expect to Meet, a comic appraisal of the work of extraordinary personalities unearthed by Uncle Jim Hawkins, assistant to Allen; (3) the Portland spot; (4) Fantastic burlesque sketches by the Mighty Allen Art Players.

During 1937, Ed Wynn introduced the style not only of introducing guest stars, but making them allies in his comedy scheme. The comedy develops from the absurdity of Wynn playing opposite a noted Ophelia, or attempting a duet with a musical artist, either vocally or instrumentally. It is almost an insult to true artistry, to make a great artist become the foil of Wynn's wit, but dignity descends to comedy. And a singer permits herself to be interrupted in the middle of an aria while Ed soars into the comic ether with lisping ecstasy. The scheme might be termed a species of subdued burlesque, which would defeat its purpose in inexpert hands.

The standard radio style is to alternate band and comedy. Some critics claim both elements do not really belong together. "The comedian," says Alton Cook, "tries his best to get an audience into a high spirited whoopee mood. Then comes the band leader who wants to play a ballad and change the whole spirit of the program. If he succeeds, the comedian has difficulty in getting audience attention for his second spot."

To establish and hold the proper mood, the band should

play atmospheric music. Some comedians attempt a liaison between the comic and the music by giving cues to the band leader. "Play Don!" says Jack Benny to Don Bestor, and the band plays on.

The Radio Family

To create the feeling of ease, smoothness, and naturalness, it became necessary to create an entire radio "family" whose dissensions made them stand out as familiar characters with the radio audience.

As distinguished from the variety show, the unit comedy program devised by Conn generally follows this routine: (1) The comedian exchanged insults with the announcer; (2) the various stooges, including the orchestra leader, insult the comedian; (3) topical material treated in a comic light; (4) a sketch with high-pressure comedy effects.

Relatives indeed come in mighty handy on the air. They have furnished many comedians with the major portion of their programs. Each week brings a peep into the private lives and intimacies of real or mythical kinsmen. Listeners react as if they knew each member personally. Bob Burns built almost his entire routine around his Arkansas kin. Burns' uncle furnishes him with his best wisecracks: "My uncle is so tough, he filled an enemy so full of lead that when he sat down he made marks like a lead pencil." As to his aunt: "Aunt Peachey has no more meat on her than a vegetarian's vest."

Eddie Cantor, of course, always mentions Ida and his daughters. Most listeners would recognize Gracie Allen's "brother" if they met him on the street, and Ed Wynn would be at a loss without his "uncle." It is our sympathy with these characters that is the secret of humor. Their trials and habits become as familiar to us as if they were constantly at our side.

The radio form of the pseudo feud between musicians and comedians was first introduced by Eddie Cantor's razzing of Rubinoff. Another phase of the feud exists between fellow comedians on rival programs, as when Fred Allen challenged Jack Benny to play a virtuoso selection on the violin.

Feuds come and go. Some are real, however. Kate Smith didn't like the way Eddie Cantor teased her about her avoirdupois when he was on the Chase and Sanborn Hour. Kate resented his continuous harping on this theme as questionable taste. Nearly all the feuds are based upon similar cause. An open rupture begins when rival stars steal from each other some professional trick or style or program method such as a peculiar voice or dialect.

The Feud Reaches Its Climax

(The Jack Benny Show moved to New York. Fred Allen was already broadcasting from that city. The following Sunday night, during the Benny broadcast, there is a loud knock.)

Mary: Come in.

All: Why, it's Fred Allen.

Benny: Well, as I live and regret there are no locks on studio doors, if it isn't Boo Allen. Now listen, Allen, what's the idea of breaking in here in the middle of my singing?

Allen: Singing? Well, I didn't mind when you scraped that bow over my suitcase and called it "The Bee," but when you set that croup to music and call it singing . . . Benny, you've gone too far.

Benny: Now, look here, Allen, I don't care what you say about my violin-playing on your own program, but when you come up here, be careful. After all, I've got listeners.

Allen: Keep your family out of this.

Benny: Well, my family likes my singing and my violin-playing too.

Allen: Your violin-playing! Why, I just heard that a horse

committed suicide when he found your violin bow was made from his tail.

Benny: Hm. Well, listen to me, you Wednesday night hawk, another crack like that and Town Hall will be looking for a new janitor. How did you get in here without a pass?

Allen: I made one at the doorman and you're next.

Benny: Oh I am, eh?

Allen: Listen, cowboy, why didn't you stay out in Hollywood where you didn't belong?

Benny: Because I heard you were coming out there to make a picture, that's why.

Allen: Well, I saw your last picture, and maybe you didn't start bank night, but you certainly kept it going.

Benny: Oh yeah? Well, three states are waiting for your picture to be released. They're going to use it instead of capital punishment. Wow! Where are you going to live in Hollywood, Mr. Allen? At the ostrich farm?

Allen: I may.

Livingstone: (Starts to laugh loudly.)

Benny: What are you laughing at, Mary?

Livingstone: He'll show those birds how to lay eggs.

Benny: Mary, that was marvelous. I'm going to kiss you for that.

Livingstone: Then I take it back.

Benny: Oh, you do!

Allen: She'd rather kiss an ostrich and so would I.

Benny: Well, Allen, that's going a little too far. When you make that kind of remark it means fight where I came from.

Allen: You mean your blood would boil if you had any?

Benny: Yes, and I've got just enough to resent that. If you'll step out into the hallway I'm ready to settle this affair, man to man.

Allen: All right, I'll knock you flatter than the part of this program I wasn't on.

Livingstone: Hold on there, Allen, who touches a hair on Jack's gray head has to find it first.

Benny: Never mind that. Come on, Allen, let us away. (Muttering) Hm, I'm sorry now I sold my rowing machine. (The two stamp out. There is long, suspense-filled silence.)

Then we hear heavy footsteps approaching, the door opens and Jack and Fred enter—(laughing.)

Benny: Ha, Ha, Ha. Gosh, Freddie, those were the days, weren't they?

Allen: Yes, sir! Remember that time in Toledo when you walked in the magician's dressing-room and stole his pigeons?

Benny: Do I? They tasted pretty good, didn't they, Freddie?

Allen: You said it, Jack.

Benny: We didn't make much money in those days, Freddie, but we did get a lot of laughs.

Allen: We certainly did until we walked on the stage. (They both laugh again.)

Livingstone: Jack, what happened to the fight?

Benny: What fight? Say, Freddie, remember that time in South Bend, Indiana?

Phil Harris: No kidding, fellows, what happened to that fight?

Benny: Why, Phil, we were never serious about that.

Livingstone: Then how'd you get that black eye?

Benny: Oh, this? Well, I was just writing a letter.

Allen: And I dotted his eye.

Benny: Now wait a minute, Freddie. I slapped you more than you did me. Look at your wrists. They're all red.

Allen: Well, I made you say "Uncle" when I pulled your hair.

Benny: Uncle isn't the word, but let it go.

Livingstone: Well, I'll be darned! After what you guys said about each other.

Allen: Listen, Jack's the whitest guy I know.

Don Wilson: But you said he was anemic.

Allen: Listen! Don't let anyone tell you Jackie Benny's anemic. He stays white on purpose just so everybody else will look healthy. Don't you, Jackie boy?

Benny: I sure do, Freddie.

Phil Harris: But you said he had so little hair he sprinkled popcorn on his shoulders for false dandruff. You even said he was stingy.

Allen: Jack Benny stingy? Why, his heart is so big you can put a stethoscope on him any place and get action.

Don Wilson: Say, Fred, here's a package you dropped on your way out to the hall.

Allen: Oh yes, that's a box of candy I was going to give Jack.

Livingstone: Candy! Can I have a piece?

Allen: Sure, but take the square ones, Mary, they're not poison.

Benny: Hm, I see. By the way, Freddie, when you get home if that box of flowers I sent you is still ticking, just put it in water.

Allen: I will. Thanks for the tip.

Livingstone: Gee, this candy is swell. What's it filled with, Fred?

Allen: Ipana.

Benny: Oh well, she was going to brush her teeth anyway.

Allen: For that I'm going to brush mine with Jell-O.

Benny: Why don't you have them put Ipana out in six delicious flavors?

Allen: That's a great idea, but I have to go now.

Benny: O.K., Freddie, thanks for your kind visit and apology?

Allen: What apology?

Benny: Never mind, let's not start that again.

Allen: By the way, Mr. Harris.

Phil Harris: Yes, Fred?

Allen: You lay off my pal, Jack Benny. That's all. Good-bye everybody.

Benny: So long, Freddie. (Fred goes.) Play, Harris. And watch your step. You heard what Freddie said!

Phil Harris: Why, you sawed off little punk! I'll take you and tear you limb from limb.

Benny: Oh, Freddie—Freddie—Freddie—Freddie!

Fitfully, the feud continues. Wednesdays and Sundays give each comedian an opportunity to fan the flames higher. For most listeners, though, the night Fred Allen walked into the Benny show remains just about their best broadcast.

Touching the Heart Strings

Some of the best comedy on the air strikes the more serious note. Many comedians endeavor to touch the heart strings and make a tear flow along with the laugh. This follows the dictum of Aristotle, that it is the business of comedy to lay bare the vices in all its shapes, so that cowardice, vanity, thieving, gluttony, conceit and the like may be exposed.

The sympathies that the comedian creates are sometimes indefinable. The appeal is built up by a character, a personality who, for better or for worse, and many times for worse, all the world loves. The most popular of all comic radio characters is the sap, the under-dog. In the movies he is epitomized by Charlie Chaplin and Harold Lloyd. On the air the crowning male example is Ed Wynn, the perfect fool; the female version, Gracie in *Blunderland*.

It is the aim of the comedian to create characters that are at once odd and lovable. This explains the willful imbecility of the late Joe Penner, the lying propensity of Jack Pearl, the comic cantoring of Eddie Cantor. Their queer responses to life, we may thoroughly disapprove, but always contempt is balanced by affection. In the end we surrender to the laugh, grateful for their entertainment, even though they leave us with a sense of frustration.

Sentimentality plays a large part in a comedian's offering. Radio insisted that Al Jolson stick to his sentimentality. For this reason, his rise in radio was slow. Eddie Cantor offers no apology for indulging in a forced pathos and a rudimentary philosophy. With a woman's intuition, Nina Wilcox Putnam, the novelist, says in his support:

"I think that Eddie is miles ahead of any other star on the humorous air. You see, his jokes are not only funny, but they are sensible. Behind all his humor is a genuine philos-

ophy. You not only laugh at what he says, but under your breath you instinctively comment, 'By gosh, that's true!'

An overwrought sentimentality is dangerous to the average comedian. Such themes as mother love, heroism, self-sacrifice, sympathy for animals and the down-trodden, when introduced to comedy must be handled without overdoing the maudlin. Cantor espouses a hundred causes,—camps for kids, scholarships and the like. Occasionally he employs an effective slogan, such as a plea for careful driving: "Drive slowly. We love our children."

In many teams the male monopolized the snapper line and the joke exploded around the woman. Many listeners resent the humiliation of the woman at the hands of a man, even in comedy. Burns, as the partner-husband, may be outraged by Gracie's inanities, but he is always tolerant and patient. He is the pattern of the smooth lad who holds the admiration of the audience of women. Because of this ability to create universal types, George Burns and Gracie Allen enjoy the unique distinction of having the act translated into French every week. The scripts are broadcast there by a French couple. "Grace et Georges" get three hundred dollars a week in royalty for that.

Burns employs a battery of from three to four writers who, while engaged on any one program, never see each other. The next task is to select the choicest morsels from each product. The gags are assembled and Burns makes sure that every line of repartee, no matter how familiar, is in complete harmony with Gracie's character. She never says a word that is unbecoming to the world's greatest nitwit. She is not consciously the witty lady handing out smart lines, or thumbing her nose at men, but shines as a lovable character.

It is important in comedy to create a type. Bob Hope uses as a stooge a dumb girl, always Honey Chile on the radio.

Women find her amusing because she makes them feel so much smarter by comparison.

What Gracie Allen says is peculiarly absurd and we know that she is going to say something absurd. We never really admire her traits and, in fact, may actually resent them. But our opposition is broken down by the rush of the delightfully ridiculous, and we find ourselves laughing willy-nilly. Paul Douglas, the announcer, once said boastfully over the air: "George and Gracie have taken pains to prove that some people can live without brains." Such is the essence of a great art, and it is no wonder that Gracie has been voted by the students of the University of California the most intelligent actress in America.

Much of the laughter which mankind has enjoyed is the joke pointed at women and marriage. Gracie Allen's Housewives' League had as its principal plank: "All men are born free and equal, but wives are changing that."

Her silly blurbs often carry the sharpest sting. "Oh!" she cries out, "I always say if a man wants to break himself of the habit of forging checks, he should make sure when he gets up in the morning to fill his fountain pen with water."

Shall It Be the Comic Monologue?

Apart from those who essay dramatic character monologues, as does Miss Cornelia Otis Skinner, the comedian who stands before the microphone alone has a difficult time of it on the air. There is scarcely anyone except Will Rogers who has achieved distinction working alone. It is too much of a virtuoso stunt to do a thirty-minute program alone. Frank Fay's solo attempt in the role of a worldly gentleman proved to be a struggle to amuse, in spite of his singing offered as relief to his leisurely comments.

The shining exemplar of the monologue today is Bob Burns who was aired into national prominence, aided by his

bazooka. Not only did he achieve personal fame, but he helped put his home town prominently on the map. The official stationery of the city of his nativity states simply: "Tom English, Mayor of Bob Burns' Home Town, Van Buren, Arkansas." In a manner that suggested Will Rogers, Bob Burns clung to his native idiom, weaving his yarns about his folk in Arkansas. He is the essence of colloquialism—his easy-going dry and resonant drawl captures the ear because the manner is unforced. In the following situation he confides to Bing Crosby and to listeners everywhere:

"You know, Bing, all my kinfolks down there in Van Buren ain't like me. I talk a whole lot—I know that, but most of my folks are very quiet and peaceful. I know one time I was comin' home from a trip and standin' in the woods, quite a way from the house, I saw my uncle standin' out there and I says, 'What are ya doin'?"

And he says: "Nothin'."

And I says: "Are ya huntin'?"

And he says: "No."

And I says: "It's gittin' dark—it's time to git in the house."

And he says: "Yes."

I says: "Come on and go in with me."

And he says: "No."

And so I says: "Well, dinner'll be ready pretty soon—ain't ya hungry?"

And he said: "Yes."

"And so I started on towards the house and went about half a mile and I went back and I says: "Come on and go home with me!"

And he says: "No."

And I says: "Why?"

And he said: "I can't," he says. "I'm standin' in a bear trap!"

The radio monologist remains in peculiar need of a studio audience. Bob Hope, in an interview in the New York

Sun, claims that without a studio audience the monologist is helpless to react to mood or to gauge studio laughs. "My solo bits are patterned exactly after my stage style," he says. "True to vaudeville formula, I attempt to make my topics breezy and seasonal."

The fault of the monologist generally lies in his material. Writing a program of jokes that are sure-fire and unfamiliar is a rarity. The second danger lies in a false vocal approach. The voice betokens too great an effort at being whimsical and the comedian's chuckles betray him as too obviously self-gratified. Even well-dressed jokes can not save him.

The Phenomenon of Charlie McCarthy

Charlie McCarthy was born into radio on December 17, 1930. On that date Rudy Vallee introduced Edgar Bergen, sitting before the microphone with his dummy on his knee. This was an experiment and an amusing novelty, presumed to be good only for a few radio programs. Ventriloquism before this time was a program feature classified with jugglers and acrobats and confined to the theater, Chau-tauqua platform and vaudeville.

Within the space of three months the ventriloquist's dummy was ironically proclaimed by Sinclair Lewis, in a lecture before the Brooklyn Academy of Arts and Sciences, as the head of our "national heroes." Northwestern University recently conferred upon him the degree of "Master of Innuendo and the Snappy Comeback." Edgar Bergen was similarly honored by Dean Dennis.

What explains the phenomenon of Charlie McCarthy? Here is a wooden creature, jockeyed on the knee of his master, and yet never quite under control. The fellow winks under his monocle, opens his hinged mouth and utters more impertinences than any other actor would dare throw off his chest. No one would suspect him of an evil thought, yet his

utterances have a devilish tinge. He says what he thinks and emerges triumphantly from situations which the average listener would not know how to combat. He can take a whack at the foibles of men and women, puncture their pomposities, jeer at their false pride, and set humanity in its proper place. It is because Charlie is beholden to no man that he becomes the lovable hero. When Adolph Menjou is extolled as the most perfectly dressed man in the world, Charlie says with a quirk: "His pants are pressed—so what?"

Psychologists might explain the vogue of Charlie by proving how, through mass stimuli, the multitudes come to love symbols rather than reason and reality. Myth and fact become merged into symbols. Charlie McCarthy typifies the braggart; his throaty, haunting chuckle voices the mockery of a spiritual soul that is all fed up with the frailties of human nature. He is a blustering blockhead with an extraordinary brain under his wooden skull. His brassiness is a compound of wisdom and lampoon. His unusual and unexpected candor awakens the listener's surprise and admiration. It is the militancy of Charlie McCarthy which made Ned Sparks turn on him furiously, calling him "a slippery elm lothario, a hickory version of Pollyanna and a wood weasel."

The distinguished psychologist, Dr. A. A. Brill, who subjected Charlie to careful analysis, finds a Freudian complex in the reaction of mass listeners. Says Dr. Brill, "Behind it all is Mr. Bergen, the ventriloquist, the gifted wag who uses Charlie as a facade to express contempt, aggression, and sexual allusion in a witty way. The radio audiences, who are there because they are sadly in need of such outlets, are put back by Charlie McCarthy into that early state of childhood when they, too, were permitted to think and talk as they pleased, regardless of inhibitions exerted by parents and society."

The appeal of Charlie is universal. His wisecracks have

been food for optimists and pessimists. He is regarded as the enfant terrible whose naive chatter betrays the closest family secrets. Some wag said, "Charlie McCarthy has been getting laughs since he was knee-high." In spite of the fact that the radio audience knows that Charlie is only a dummy, speaking with the voice of the ventriloquist, listeners react as if Charlie were a human entity. Hearing is believing.

The illusion is created through ventriloquism. From time immemorial the ventriloquist has excited admiration. The ancient Chinese had talking dummies which spoke only at the insistence of priests. The priests held the dummies against their stomachs and the dummies would answer questions in the voice of ventriloquism. The trick of ventriloquism is not easy. Normal speech is changed by compressing the glottis so that sounds seem to emerge from the lips of the dummy. The successful ventriloquist must make his dummy's voice quite differentiated from his own. Bergen manages a varied range for Charlie. An editorial in the *New York Times* thus describes the emotional touches that Bergen puts in the voice of his dummy:

"Basically it is arid. Although Charlie is apparently still in his teens, his little voice is aweary of the world. It has the infernal fatigued assurance of a lad who has been too much in the company of his elders; it is suave, condescending and impertinently familiar. Charlie has a bland tone for throwing an adversary off the track. When he feels that he is stumbling into an awkward situation his voice can make a disarming plea for sympathy; it drops away into a choking tone of self-pity, impossible to believe or to resist. When he is in a wooing mood beyond his years, his voice fairly coos with insincere rapture."

Much of the success of Edgar Bergen is due to his ability to write a great part of the script himself. No comedian has ever been able to stay in the top ranks of radio for more than a season or two without the aid of a script writer.

Bergen employs a writing staff, but he uses shrewd judgment in revising the work submitted.

Here is a typical quip inserted by Edgar Bergen:

"My father was a big stick out in Michigan," boasts Charlie. "'Whitey Pine,' they call him." To which Bergen counters: "From the timbre of your voice, people would know you came from the woods."

Charlie's creator says: "Many ventriloquists have made the mistake of making the dummy first and then trying to fit the voice to it. Their acts flop because the words that are put in their mouths do not seem to fit them." The image of Charlie seems to flash on the retina of the listener the moment he opens his mouth. Listeners have already been made familiar with his insolent face on the screen and they have caught sight of him in the drug store window. Over the air that impertinent face must bespeak itself in a manner reflected in his features.

Kidding the Sponsor

In the search for new comedy forms, someone discovered that the commercial plug could be made a subject of hilarity. This new device, known as "kidding the sponsor," was not without its merit. Most sponsors regarded their dignity at stake if comedians twisted jokes to fit their products.

Ben Bernie is said to have started this vogue of comic camouflaging. Sometime in 1924, he persuaded his sponsors, the Pabst Brewers, to permit him to indulge in a mild play of words: "The old Alma Malta, preferred by the multitudes. Blue Ribbon Malta is the *mosta* of the *besta*."

The language of the comic soon became more emboldened. In 1931, Ray Perkins began to employ understatement to create the laugh and the sale for Jergen's lotion. "It is of no use whatsoever in improving poker hands." "It will not remove wrinkles from the inside straight." "You

gentlemen who have trouble with your golf remember that Jergen's makes it easier to get out of the rough."

Eddie Cantor was given leeway with Pebecco. He tells of his loyal cow: "I've taught her to brush her teeth twice a day, and now she gives dental cream."

Even Pepsodent permitted this by-play: *Amos*: "Did yo' really love Susie?" *Andy*: "Well, prepsodent and prepsodid."

The kidding formula received fullest development at the hands of Jack Benny. Benny discovered that he could forestall the irritation of the audience by getting in a rage with the announcer: "I can go ahead now. How Wilson made that fit in, I don't know."

Ed Wynn's notorious heckling of Graham McNamee on his first Texaco program was an advance on the conventional plug. "Always, Texaco, I'll stick to my horse, Graham. Personally I hate automobiles. If my horse runs over a nail in the road, I don't have to stop and pump up its leg." And then another protest. "Don't talk to me about gas, Graham. If a doctor ever operated on you for appendicitis, he'd find himself opening a gas station."

The art of "kidding" the sponsor requires a masterful use of voice to soften the comic thrust. This involves subtle nuance instantly recognized as spoofing. Today the form of "kidding" has gone beyond mere gags. The product is also subject to humorous treatment in doggerel verse, smart dialogue covering a unique situation, and in comic song.

Radio's Only Sophisticated Comic—Fred Allen

A natural evolution of the gag toward a more coherent form leans toward burlesque. Here the art consists of treating a serious subject ridiculously or in making a trifling affair appear quite solemn.

Fred Allen is perhaps the best exponent of this method. He is the philosopher-comic and satisfies the best definition

of humor by "thinking in fun and feeling in earnest." Baring the taboos of broadcasting, Allen spares nothing in the contemporary scene. The method of making travesty of events of the day is as old as civilization. There was a time when Egypt built jokes about the building of the Pyramids and Aristophanes of Athens held Corinth up to ridicule.

Fred Allen's comedy springs from burlesque of things he reads about in the newspapers. Men and women, he claims, are too busy with their own problems to dig up their laughs as they skim through the papers. "That's my job," says Allen.

"To begin with," he once told Louis Reid, "I read nine papers a day. I look for items that'll lend themselves to kidding. I clip such items as I want. By the end of the week I may have fifty items collected. I go through them and figure out what I can't use because of the broadcaster's 'No.' I am not allowed to poke fun at the Townsend Plan and a lot of other censorship things. By the time I've sifted through the batch of fifty, I'm lucky if I have four I can josh!"

He continues, "Oh, yes. I have a joke book collection. I own some four thousand joke books, but I haven't used a joke book for years. It's too much trouble to worry about whether the gags were used recently by another comedian, so I forget about them. I just go along and get jokes and situations that I think original."

Perhaps the method is best illustrated by an example he himself gives in *Radio Guide*:

"I ran across an item to the effect that the Hartford, Connecticut, Motor Vehicle Department had started a novel safety campaign.

"Cops stop motorists and, instead of arresting them, discuss the safety campaign. It's a push-over for me. I open my scene with an officer yelling the usual 'Pull over to the curb.' Instead of bawling the driver out, he's as nice as pie—compliments him on 'Nice pulling over, brother,' exchanges

reminiscences of Woonsocket, Rhode Island, and ends up offering to race the motorist to Stamford. That is as sure-fire as comedy can be. It has universality. Everybody knows cops are tough. Everybody has been bawled out for speeding. There's a sure-fire laugh in the idea of the cop racing the motorist. Yet, the whole thing came right out of the *New York Times*. All I did was put a twist on it to make it play."

It all appears so easy. Fred Allen had already written vaudeville sketches for about a dozen years before he entered radio. A former vaudeville juggler, he was practically unknown to most of his listeners when he made his radio debut in 1933.

Allen is, first of all, the analyst. He reverses the method of creating the situation first and then fitting jokes to the situation. "Some of the boys who write comedy material get four or five gags and then try to think up a situation that they'll fit into. That's what I call the hard way. I gave it up long ago." And so, without benefit of joke books, Fred Allen looks on the contemporary scene and exposes the foibles of mankind and turns the laugh of mankind on itself.

Allen, who once billed himself as "The World's Worst Juggler," might be termed "Radio's Only Sophisticated Comic." He makes men laugh more heartily in order to make them live more happily. His genius lies in topsy-turvy thinking. He satisfies the test of universality in a comic ability to provoke the laugh of the intelligentsia and the hoi polloi.

Will Rogers, Master Satirist

No one has appeared to take the place of Will Rogers, master satirist and disrupter of the political foibles of the nation. He was unique in that he employed the art of satire unmercifully and uncensored. Satire is entirely a weapon of defense and originally was used in personal quarrels.

Will Rogers unassumingly took the role of the defender of a Public against those who, in some way, stood for anti-social policies. Instead of using political harangue and vituperation against offenders like Andrew Mellon, he let loose shafts of satire. He aimed at the very heart of the shams and rascality of the day, while we laughed with him.

That arch satirist himself, Gilbert K. Chesterton, held that to preserve the comic spirit "one must have a certain respect for his enemies." Rogers was a master of this reserve. He did not assume that those whom he attacked were despicable characters. He knew that an unqualified attempt to degrade does not result in laughter.

It was Will Rogers who succeeded in establishing what Theodore Dreiser calls a "democracy of the funny bone." The novelist would have us believe that this part of the American anatomy is constantly exposed, always at elbows waiting to be tickled or rapped.

"Where else in the world," says Dreiser, "can one get on equal terms immediately and almost magically with whomsoever else simply by appealing to that underlying susceptibility to laughter? The wisecrack is our national form of introduction. It does not mean that all inequalities are abolished or that you are going to be friends for life, but that in all forms of social difference are seen to be the ultimate uncertainties that they really are."

Consider this Rogers' gem: "Americans are not worrying about the League of Nations. What they want is somewhere to park their cars." Or, the way he twitched the politicians' noses: "Well, folks, as I was saying, I ain't never been elected much 'cept Mayor of Beverly Hills. Politicians amuse more people than they interest. And—uh—I guess this is not an election of parties or policies. It's an election where both sides need the work. I think if you would split the salaries between every two candidates runnin', they would call off the election."

And this broadcast appraisal of the English and Americans on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of the King and Queen on May 6, 1935: "We both have manners and customs that drive each other pretty near crazy, and an American with a mouthful of chewing gum can get on your nerves almost as much as an Englishman, with only one eye full of monocle can get on ours. But, after all, neither commodity contributed to the success the nations have made.

"We will never have trouble with each other, England, you or us. We both have humor. If we started to fight, we would have to stop in the middle and start laughing at each other. I don't know—you are naturally funny to us and we are like a mickey mouse cartoon to you."

The first radio talks of Will Rogers were not too successful. All his life he had been accustomed to swinging his rope, wandering about the stage, and carrying on a running chatter. He was able to gauge his place according to the response of the audience while he chewed gum and indulged his peculiar mannerisms. His early manner showed that he did not quite realize whether he was talking to a few invited studio guests or to the "great unseen" audience. Soon he became fully possessed before the mike and "learned to stay put." His peculiar monologue idiom fell refreshingly on ears accustomed to the twaddle of comedian and stooge.

What he had to say he said in his "patois" He sounded the true cowboy from Claremore, Indian Territory. Complaints poured in from college professors who protested that if Rogers was going to comment on the affairs of the country, he ought to speak good English." He took liberties with the rules of syntax, and was ready to justify himself. "Syntax! What's that? Sounds like bad news." When he found out it meant grammar, he laughed and replied: "Didn't know they were buying grammar now. I'm just so dumb I had a notion it was thoughts and ideas."

The secret of Will Rogers' appeal lay in his easy intimacy

with his audience. To achieve this personal and direct approach, one must appear wholly extemporaneous. On rare occasions Rogers read from a script. He employed no ghost writer, no gag specialist. He considered the questions of the day and made a trademark of the confession, "All I know is what I read in the papers." His method was to fill himself full of a subject—let us say Russia. A week before his broadcast he would be constantly talking—talking Russia to his friends or in private rehearsal with himself, always ready to apply a satiric touch.

He would think out a line or a joke and then spring it in the right place as if it just came from the forehead of the Jove of Satire. When the time came to broadcast, Rogers had already built up by conversation those sharp-edged and taunting sayings which he delivered with spontaneity.

His spirit was kind yet stern. He mixed humor with a pungent philosophy. He belonged to the crowd because he spoke their language and could interpret the popular mood. By the irony of fate, Rogers met tragic death by crashing to earth in Wiley Post's plane. And there was lost to radio the man whom Homer Croy called "Radio's Best One-Man Show."

How to Become a Radio Humor Writer

Radio is determined to keep us amused. The writer of radio comedy has the world before him, and begins with the thesis that everything can be made laughable, ludicrous, ridiculous.

Language has specialized use for the humor writer. Grammar need not deter him. He has but to indulge in funny images and use words to create ludicrous pictures in the mind. He can employ his fancy in puns and phrases, in strange twists of meaning, of affinity of sound, in smart questions and sly quips, in clever repartee, tart irony, laughter-provoking hyperbole, intelligent nonsense, distorted

speech, and the representation of persons, things, and events in their contradictions to fact and truth.

For the writer in training we shall set down here only a few guiding principles and methods in illustration.

1. Above all, exercise an original turn of mind. Contrive to turn things topsy turvy, see people reflected in concave and convex mirrors, and garner the laugh from the most sober aspect of things. Look under the surface of things and be ready to uncover hypocrisies and shams of everyday life. All this sounds easy. But as a second thought, you must reduce the laugh to the simplest terms. It is the average listener who must be amused, so your comic stuff must not only be palatable, but swallowed entirely.

2. Get a collection of gags, fresh ones if possible. This may take many years of grinding effort and a perusal of thousands of jokes from anthologies and magazines. Be warned that so prolific has become the flood of bad radio comedy that nowadays when a youngster begins to save old humor magazines, one suspects he plans on opening a dental office or becoming a comic.

3. Provide yourself with the published anthologies of jokes. Good sized collections are *Five Thousand World's Best Jokes*, edited by L. Copeland, (Blue Ribbon), *The World's Best Humorous Anecdotes*, (Harpers), and *The Cream of the Jesters*, (Boni). Your study of the history of humor can cover an enormous bibliography, but Constance Rourke's invaluable *American Humor* and Eastman's *Enjoyment of Laughter* belong first on your reading list. Your mind may be a storehouse of ancient gags, but the trick is to bedeck them anew. Beware the charge of plagiarism.

Groucho and Chico Marx were convicted in a Los Angeles Federal Court of plagiarizing a copyright skit entitled "The Hollywood Adventures of Mr. Dibble and Mr. Dabble," written by Garrett and Carroll Graham. On appeal to the Circuit Court, Judge William Handy upheld the

decision on the ground that the Marx Brothers had read the script before they broadcast it in September 1936, and so could not have forgotten about it.

4. Try to turn an epigram at ease. You may not reach the skill of Augustine Birrell whose "birrelling" included such a classic as: "The House of Lords is a group representing nobody but themselves and enjoying the full confidence of their constituents."

5. Study historic witticisms for salty phrase. Make applicable such a one, quoted by John Gunther in *Inside Europe*: "Once Poincaré remarked to a group of friends, 'I smell war.' Leon Blum said simply, 'Let him disinfect himself.'"

6. Try your hand at pungent, witty, pithy and lively sayings. Fred Allen dusted off a quip from "Jumbo": "An elephant never forgets, but what has he got to remember?" Analyze this witticism. He is a self-made man and proud of his creator. Or the one which Edward Everett Horton let loose on a program: "A bachelor is a fellow who never makes the same mistake once."

Walter Winchell calls those who create the informal comedy stuff for Benny and the rest "insult writers." To qualify for this title, you must let humor flow from the taunts your characters hurl at each other. Radio comedy does not envisage the old custard pie throwing days, or squirting grapefruit into a lady's face in the manner of Cagney, but it permits a merciless exchange of savage and insane patter.

7. Give attention to the derided pun, so that you can qualify as a "pun-gent" writer. It may be low-type humor, but the radio audience thrives on puns. Mort Lewis, with some apology for being its author, quotes a pun he created for a Maxwell House Program: *January*: (Restaurant customer): Does you make good coffee? *Molasses*: Good coffee! Boy, I make swell (Maxwell) coffee.

8. You should welcome the genesis of new words in the

manner of Walter Winchell. Slang may be the epitome of humor. He strikes out with this one from his "Things I Didn't Know 'Till Now" Department: "Disraeli wore corsets. Of course, it's true."

"The battle of depression has been won," says one speaker. "Good!" replies Fred Allen. "Now the employers can cease firing."

9. Exaggeration has its values. When W. C. Fields moans that "wine flowed like glue," we catch an immediate picture. And so, too, we know the predicament of Bob Hope who complained: "My fan mail has been so heavy these past few weeks, I've had to get another cigar box."

10. Try your hand at comedy playlets. This form requires the highest degree of compression. Fred Allen follows certain definite principles in creating the action for the Mighty Allen Art Players. "What I do in these playlets," he says, "is to present a boiled-down version of what might have been a real play, and then make it funny. It takes plotting, but in the end you have two points of interest, the story and the comedy."

Women writers seem to have neglected the field of radio comedy. There is nothing to prevent them from providing the comic with the nourishing gags. Mabel Anderson is one of the few women writers to venture into radio comedy. She ascribes the lack of comic creativeness on the part of women to an emotionality that is less stable than that of men. Submit this jest of Miss Anderson's to the laugh test:

M.C.: Hello, Mabel, what's that big book you're carrying?

Mabel: Oh, this? It's a book of my family pictures.

M.C.: Family pictures? They call them family albums.

Mabel: That's my family all right. All bums!

And another of Miss Anderson's:

Baker: I thought your father was rich.

Mabel: Say, my father has so many gold teeth in his mouth he has to sleep with his head in a safe!

11. Collaborate,—if you can find a comedy partner. Writers of comedy generally work in collaboration with the comedian. Jack Benny uses the conference-collaboration method. Mary Livingstone and his writers gather around him, and together they decide on a “situation” that has humorous possibilities. If Christmas or Mother’s Day is not far off, they may decide on a theme to fit the holiday. This is what is called making the program “timely.” Now comes the test of the writers’ imaginations. The situation must be milked for its laughs.

The writer may delve into his file for appropriate jokes, but without an inventive turn of mind he may turn out the average pattern of drivel. Turn loose your ingenuity in adapting jokes to new situations. For new and brilliant flashes of wit, trust to your fancy which is the highest form of imagination. The “idea” behind your sketch serves as the main stem from which floriate your gags, witticisms, puns and comedy thrusts. How easy to adapt this one of Byron Spaun to a restaurant episode: “I was in a restaurant yesterday, one of those with a sign ‘Not Responsible for Articles Stolen,’” said Byron, thumbing his suspenders. “I watched my hat, and someone stole my soup.”

It is such casual talk that made the comedy script of the “The Circle.” Every Tuesday Madeline Carroll, Groucho Marx, Lawrence Tibbett, Basil Rathbone and Robert Dolan met “at home,” and started the ball of conversation a-rolling. A secretary took down every word they were saying. This casual talk was the basis for the script. By the time they met again for rehearsal, Groucho had injected enough gags in the script to lift it into sheer travesty. He picks up a pun not only with his fellow actors, but deals devastatingly with his own comment. This implies an easy gift of steering conversation to comic destruction.

Most of the writers of radio comedy began their work in other fields. Wilkie Mahoney, writer for Ed Wynn, was a

contributor to the humorous magazines like *Life* and *Judge*. Harry Tugen was in the show business, took to writing for the stage and was eventually hired by Fred Allen as a special assistant on the "Town Hall" program. Harry Conn was a tap dancer. Sam Perrin, who writes for Phil Baker, played the trap drum. John R. Medbury, who writes thousands of gags from which Burns and Allen collect their material, started as a newspaper columnist.

So, let not your calling deter you from making a try at the deadly stuff one calls radio humor. From an altruistic standpoint, you may prove to be the comedian's salvation. And you might suddenly wake up and find yourself famous or rich.

Harry Conn reached the all-time high in salary for "humor writers." His contract with Jack Benny provided for payment of twenty-five per cent of the comedian's salary. This was in 1936 when Benny was getting seven thousand dollars a broadcast. Conn was subsequently under contract to Joe Penner's sponsors at a salary equal to that of Joe Penner—one thousand five hundred dollars a program.

The average weekly salary for a good gag writer is five hundred dollars, less than one-tenth of a good comedian. The highest paid gag-writer is Don Quinn, sole writer for the Fibber McGee (NBC) at three thousand seven hundred and fifty dollars a week.

The Comedian's Taboos

Pity the poor comedian, tied down by the taboos and decrees of radio. The presentation of humor by the human voice alone has created the unwritten laws of "good taste" and "public decency." The comedian is at the mercy of sponsors, agencies and networks and the regulations and rules must be followed no matter how cruel they appear.

Fred Allen finds the restrictions on comedy style cramp-

ing and oppressive. "Radio comedy," he says, "will remain in its infancy as long as network executives see fit to censor and blue-pencil scripts for the silliest reasons. They are holding back program progress by exercising editorial powers for the most absurd reasons."

A more direct internal censorship has been discovered by Mort Lewis which he claims works to the disadvantage of writers of comedy. "There should be no favoritism in censorship," he urges.

And further: "Various censorship restrictions are interpreted by the network in different fashion, depending on the importance of the comedian. W. C. Fields uses types of jokes which are on the banned list—though in the theater they wouldn't even be milk toast-mild. However, when another writer attempts to merely approach the Fields standard of rough-house humor with a lesser comedian, the script is completely censored. No wonder a radio comedy program is likely to be bad, when it must be entirely rewritten the day of the broadcast."

Let us take some of the major restrictions with regard to topical events and personalities.

President Roosevelt: It is not regarded in good taste to lend the president to the ridiculousness of a comedy program. Gags that favorably portray the Chief Executive are also generally shunned. Ed Wynn once used a joke about President Roosevelt, who could be known as the greatest lover of all time because of his supreme "courting." This piece of witticism was ruled out.

President Roosevelt is reported to have stated his favorite joke of the year as the one recently aired on a Fibber McGee program. Against a background of "My friends . . ." chatter, a woman listener said, "Oh, Frank, get another station." The response that cheered Roosevelt was: "Myrtle, when you hear 'my friends' on the air, you can't get another station."

Congress and American Politicians: Leave both groups severely alone. These topics cause hysterics with sponsors similar to the conniptions over Roosevelt gags. Ted Husing recalls a sponsor who forbade any gags "about that Delta of the Mississippi, Huey Long." The sponsor didn't love Huey but feared that the Senator, if offended, would sock a Louisiana state tax on the advertised product.

Supreme Court: References to this august body are discouraged. Sponsors have been known to clip out the jokes mentioning the "nine old men." When issues are strongly divided in the public mind, the sponsor plays safe.

Potentates of state, and ex-rulers still alive: Certain subtleties might pass, but comic references to General Franco, Hitler, Mussolini, when overdrawn are undiplomatic and would involve immediate protest from nationals. The networks rigorously banned quips about the then Mrs. Simpson during the abdication period of the present Duke of Windsor.

Other actors: Here the test is the possible injury the joke may bring to the victims. References to Garbo's feet or Mae West's figure are approved because of their semi-advertising value for these ladies. The subject of Peggy Garcia's breach of promise suit against Rubinoff was not in the mentionable class. Nor was Jack Benny's smuggling venture with the United States Government.

Fred Allen once complained that, "just because NBC happens to be sponsoring a symphonic series headed by Toscanini, no one can even mention the maestro's name. I wrote Toscanini's name into a script in a most complimentary manner, but it was ruled right out. I had to change the line to include Stokowski's name, but even then they urged me to substitute a fictitious take-off like Kotowski."

Language Taboos: Here the laws of good taste prevail. Words that might provoke "trouble" are generally cut out. One seldom hears phrases such as "you're crazy," or "you're

out of your head." Expressions like "dope," "hell," and "sex," are to be used with extreme caution.

In the recent Allen-Benny feud, the comedians hurled the term "anemic" at each other frequently and with as much ferocity as the bloodless word could stand. The station was in receipt of many letters which complained "anemic might be a funny term to you, but it isn't so funny to a lot of people who are that way."

When Jack Benny and Fred Allen make a joint appearance before the microphone they make a high spirited departure from the script. Jack Benny had a line about water over the darn. "Over the darn?" asked Fred. "Yes, you know how careful we have to be on the radio." A few minutes later WEAJ received an angry phone call from a woman who said she represented the "League of Decency." "We caught the full implication of those 'over the darn' remarks," she said. "The National Broadcasting Company will hear from our organization tomorrow. You may count on it."

Jokes involving long sequences: These are watched very carefully. In a long sequence joke, a listener tuning in during the middle, without having listened to the full context, might put a dirty meaning to what is being said

Strikes: The sitdowners afforded many a wise crack, but to mention specific parties was not allowed. The WPA worker came in for his share of jibes, and it is indiscreet now to lampoon the man on relief. This is a sample of the kind of jokes that flourished: "Just read that a WPA worker broke his neck. Termites ate through his handle."

Embarrassing incidents in the News: Public opinion splits on these matters, and the side favoring the victim will make vigorous protest.

Laxative, diseases, bodily functions of any kind: Under the ban completely. Never try to ring in products like "Lydia Pinkham" or "Sloane's Liniment" or anything similar.

While such products are not laxatives, there will be a notation on the blue-pencilled joke stating that mention of other products is not countenanced.

Smells and odors: Discouraged, unpleasant. In times past it was possible to use the word "skunk." Now it's generally crossed out.

Religious matters: Absolutely taboo. Even so general a term as the word "church" has to be handled carefully. Phil Baker worked up a gag once about a skunk going to a very crowded church. "So you had to stand?" asks Bottle sympathetically. "Oh, no," says Baker, "he brought his own pew." A blue pencil was drawn through "church" and the phrase "animal temple" substituted. That's how it went out.

Blue and Off-color jokes: These are slashed unmercifully as on screen and stage. Because of the mixed audience, air must be kept pure from suggestive smut, and sexy innuendo. A comedian who tells a joke that can be interpreted as offensive does immeasurable harm. Where to draw the line? Here the censor must use the nicest discrimination. Mrs. Freedman instanced this dialogue as the type that did not pass: *Patient:* "What does that sign down the hall say?" *Doctor:* "Please refrain from making a nurse."

Human deformity, illness, disease, death: It takes a trigger mind to devise jokes along these lines that will not be considered in bad taste. Even stuttering has fallen into the discard as a phase of radio humor.

Industries and occupations: Jokes about insurance men and bankers are frowned upon, although vaudeville thrived on them for years. The story of the radio comedian who made the wise-crack about a pharmaceutical student who won his degree of Doctor of Philosophy because he was a whiz at making mayonnaise, won protests from drug stores all over the country.

Ed Wynn was once asked not to use a joke referring to a million dollar baby and a five and ten cent store.

Peoples, religions, creeds: The growth of intolerance has forcibly reflected itself in racial or dialectic humor. Certain races resent being burlesqued on the air, even if the kidding or story telling is done by a member of the race involved. The Scotch, with a super-developed sense of humor, are most tolerant of jokes at their expense.

Comedians and other mike performers might think that they are getting a tough deal, but the strain that censorship puts on the network is infinitely tougher. At NBC, the task of censorship falls upon Miss Janet McRories, Continuity Acceptance Editor.

The Comedian's Vocal Manners

The voice guides the destiny of the radio comedian. Even gags that are dead in print can be prodded into hilarious life by the right vocal touch. Ideas can be made ridiculous by unusual pitches, sudden changes of inflection, exaggerated emphasis and unusual vocal coloring.

Each comedian has a distinct vocal manner which identifies him with the radio audience. Bob Burns, for example, is uniformly rhythmical in speech. He rambles through his hill-billy stories with a sing-song monotony. Two arrangers found that his talk could be fitted to a musical time signature of 4/4 with an occasional lapse into 3/4 time.

Phil Baker reflects the wise-guy, know-it-all tonality; Fred Allen dispenses nonsense nasally with sardonic overtones; Eddie Cantor builds up the punch line with high pitches and the exuberance of the "gee-whiz" school. In a lesser degree Al Jolson also carries on with youthful glee and swagger, and seems to have an endless amount of vitality. Jack Benny employs the drawl and wins a laugh even with a feeble gag. George Burns symbolizes the indulgent husband with a quality of voice that is half-kindly and half reproving.

Gracie Allen's success in character is, in no small measure,

due to her voice. The giggling high pitch of comic hysteria makes our ears act as the antennae of the ridiculous. Her tones match any answers.

Beatrice Lillie was introduced to radio on Rudy Vallee's program. For twenty-six weeks as Beatrice Borden she presented a type of humor that was unique on the air. She could no longer rely upon the mute eloquence of pantomime, the flash of her eyes, the twist of her mouth, or the unexpected stumble of her feet. She had to rely upon her rare gift of conveying subtle double meanings. Her peculiar off-pitch intonations lend the quality of superb travesty to her spoofing.

The most important asset of the comedian is to maintain an authenticity in voice that is his own peculiar impersonation. The slightest suggestion that the comedian has stepped out of "character" vocally, will break the rapport of the listener. Comic realism requires consistent portrayal in voice.

The radio audience has come to expect that the comedian's vocal manner be effortless, spontaneous and natural to the character portrayed. This apparent ease of manner is usually the result of hard years of trial and error on the stage. The successful radio comedian has worked out and perfected every mannerism in voice calculated to catch the laugh. The individual quality of voice in the comedian springs from the imagination. Without the ability to throw himself into "mood" the unconvincing rendering of lines will be fatal to any comedian.

Ed Wynn, who galloped up to the microphone hysterically whooping life into many an embalmed joke, lays down this condition for the comedian's success: "Creative clowning must have an air of complete conviction on the part of an actor to achieve any success at all. To be a zany on the stage, a player must convince himself twice a day that he's as mad as a hatter, a trick which has come to be second nature

when you've dabbled in lunacy as I have." The spirit of the comedian's performance often depends upon proper timing. All this is a matter of experiment, for what is good timing in vocal method for one comedian will be dismal for another. Ed Wynn reminds us that his stuff would sound terrible if some one else spoke his lines.

George Jessel, piqued at not being able to get a start in radio, once observed that to succeed as a comedian "you must be able to make funny noises." As a supreme test for the comedian, someone suggested that he try to simulate the sounds which come from an oyster shuddering under a sprinkle of tabasco sauce. The tradition that funny noises are best suited for radio comedy is not likely to pass soon. There is always some new way of making a noise.

Joe Penner started the "hollering" style of the simpleton that gave children and adults the idea of having a lot of noisy fun. It was a vogue—this blatant manner of being comic—sheer noise, pop bottle gurglings, gags, and bedlam, ending with a blast of catch phrases: "you naaasty man," "don't ever dooooo that," and "wanna buy a duck?" all intoned in what Cyrus Fisher once called "a gloss-epiglottic" laugh and loose-nut delivery.

Much of Phil Baker's success was due to the hollow malevolent voice of his stooge "Beetle." The ghostly voice of the heckler belonged to Henry Arthur Ladd. The voice went through a filter and emerged from a radio loud speaker with a metallic quality that was the engineer's idea of how a ghost should talk.

Words, too, have a way of tickling the ear. Fred Allen finds the word "puss" the surest comic word in the English language. Whenever he wants to be sure of a laugh on a line, he just calls someone "crinklepuss" or something like that at the end.

Dialect is an important aid to the radio comedian. Here the comedian moves on dangerous ground, for dialect must

be so convincingly real as to make us believe it is not dialect at all. It was generally believed that gags sounded funnier if they were presented in dialect rather than in normal voice. Those who have achieved distinction as dialecticians owe their success to their ability to build up a distinct personality through voice. Through the dislocation of English sounds the laugh is achieved by phonetic burlesque.

For many years Jack Pearl and his stooge Hall Cliff, kept alive on the vaudeville stage the Weberfieldian tradition. On the air for Lucky Strike, Pearl instituted the vogue for dialect with the same "Dutch" distortions, this time in the role of that master prevaricator, Baron Munchausen. Many were his followers who branched out into other dialects.

Teddy Bergman first came to radio as "Joe Palooka." He can expertly break into an imitation of a Swede, Jew, Dutchman, and a score of other nationalities. One of his early brain children was Blubber, a big, helpless, overgrown boy of nineteen with nit-wit stuttering instincts when things went wrong. To achieve as a dialectician, study the dialect. Bergman tells how he tutored with a German butcher whose accent was so thick you could hardly cut it with his own cleaver. Next he picked his Italian iceman.

The imaginative figure of Schlepperman which appeared in radio in 1933, was so clearly defined to his listeners that his creator, Sam Hearn, refused to write lines in his script that would seem alien. Hearn definitely fixed the vogue for dialect.

A recent recruit to radio comedy via the Rudy Vallee program is Lew Lehr. His special talent lies in the use of a splutter of dialect which soars into subtle imitation and sophistication. For comedy effects he employs a broad lisp. His catch phrases "s'marvelous!" and "monkeys are the cwaziest people!" are enough to provoke visions of the man who grimaces for all Movietone News fans. He is at home

equally in Jewish, Oxford, and Cockney dialect. For French he employs a horrible concoction of half French and half Jewish, because he says French dialect is not funny.

The laugh of the comedian can indicate every sentiment from a gushing haw-haw to the most refined chuckle. The stooge who acts as assistant in lunacy, often contributed to comedy effects by the character of his laugh. When Don Wilson guffaws, he actually enjoys the show no matter how many times he has heard it, and Harry von Zell is classed as one of the most honest laughers in radio.

There is something of the laughing streak that Graham McNamee and Ed Wynn had in common. When Wynn went to a rival network he was forced to do without McNamee. Over a hundred announcers, lesser comics of the air, and actors were called to try out for the post of McNamee. They were asked to listen to transcriptions of Wynn's programs to see if they could copy McNamee's expert stooging style and his vocal manner. It was essential that the stooge selected not only know pace, and the adroit art of build-up, but also possess a microphone voice that carried dignity and could explode in a laugh. John S. Young was finally selected, but could not give Wynn that special lift that McNamee offered.

Every radio comedian wishes there were truth in Ella Wheeler Wilcox's familiar saying: "Laugh and the world laughs with you." Let the comedian try a merry, spontaneous laugh and he will soon find how hard the technique is. It is amazing how the ear of the listener catches the slightest false giggle or laugh.

Timing

Timing is the comedian's sixth sense for the precise dialogue pace which vitalizes his humor. If he applies himself at too swift or too slow a pace, the comedian's attempts may be tragic. Almost instinctively the comedian must anticipate the reaction of the listener. He may choose to burst the

comic bubble with swift thrust, or indulge his comic fancy in slow feints and passes.

All this implies that the comedian establishes a pace that is appropriate to his material and style. Only practice can determine how the audience will react. Timing for the comedian is not merely measurement by the clock of his rate of delivery. Timing also involves the use of appropriate phrase, pause, repetition, the laugh, and those nuances of intonation and delivery which are the life pulse of the jester. You must know when to pick up a joke and when to let go of it. Phil Baker has remarked that a radio comic, like a billiard champion, is lost without his cue.

The first task of the radio comedian is to adjust his timing to listener reaction. Without a visible audience, it is difficult to gauge the tempo. Ed Wynn and Eddie Cantor used to establish mood and tempo by wearing burlesque costumes. Comedians, one by one, fell in line with the practice of carrying on with studio audiences present. From the audience they got the feel of the split second where laughs will register.

Many laughs in the studio are infectiously whipped into being by a laughing clique. Many believe that the uproarious laugh of the audience has only a nuisance value for the listener. Surveys will probably show that if the listener in the privacy of his home exults in the jokes of the comedian, he will join in the chorus laughter of the studio. If he finds the witticisms dull and labored, he will mentally berate the studio audience for blowing up into a laughing gale.

With Edgar Bergen, timing is the thing. Bergen not only has a split-second register of cues and rejoinders, but he also uses dialogue which is a semi-continued story around a character. Timing techniques vary with comedy styles: Allen—dry, ironically nasal, moving along quickly with beautiful precision in word twists; Amos and Andy—reflective; But-

terworth—vacuous, optimistic, owl-faced; Wynn—boisterous, raucous, fire-alarmist; Bob Burns—measured, confidential, in sing-song drawl.

On a Lanny Ross-Charlie Butterworth program, Groucho and Chico Marx once slowed down in deference to radio tempo, on the theory that radio listeners can not keep pace with the rapid flow of wit. The result was flat and lagging because their straining for effects seemed too obvious. At a second trial, the zany went back to the headlong pace which is their successful and natural manner. The chief problem of comedy is to keep the tempo high. Fred Allen has been criticized for a delivery too fast for the ordinary ear. He refuses to retard his tempo, having found it successful during five years of experiment.

Each member of a radio comedy must coordinate in timing according to styles of playing. A stooge, for example, feeds a forceful line to Jack Benny, one calculated to irritate the vanity of the comedian. Benny might miss the point entirely; Mary might let out a nervous giggle; the dialect stooge or the conductor might pick up the subject with a "slow-burn," reaching the height of comedy as the laugh dissolved into the next part of the program. If timed exactly right, and timed to give each of the actors a chance to register, the scene should successively garner the expected "spot laughs."

To keep a program moving at a rapid pace, experiment has proved that there must be at least four "sock" gags a minute. This means sixty jokes for one fifteen-minute program. On a thirty-minute program, Wynn and Graham had some seventeen minutes of comedy between them. Wynn clocked his sure-fire laughs accurately, three to a minute, a laugh for every twenty seconds. The rest of the time was spent in building up for the laughs and feeding. Graham was the perfect "yes man" for the perfect fool. His timing

was skilful and Wynn relied on him for his spontaneous chuckling.

Laughs are graded as "fair," "good," and "belly." The rounds of applause are carefully measured. It may seem like a Baron Munchausen tale, but it was accurately estimated that the best that Jack Pearl ever did was one hundred and twenty-six laughs and twenty-six rounds of applause in sixteen minutes, and that was a record.

We may best illustrate these principles by a study of an actual broadcast of Ed Wynn on the A & P hour.

Wynn: I've got a friend who is a boxer. Once he hung up his coat in a restaurant, but he was afraid someone would run off with it.

This was the beginning of the joke, but since the audience began to titter the pace became slower.

Graham: They do that. *Philosophically.*

Wynn: What do you mean, "They do that?" *Wynn is stalling now.*

Graham: They run off with them. I recognize that coat you've got on. *Pause for laughs. Continues giggling. Then Wynn continues with the joke as he started.*

Wynn: This friend of mine was afraid someone would run off with his coat so he put a sign on it. He hung a sign on it saying, "This coat belongs to the champion boxer of the world and I'll be back." *Here Wynn slows up in pace and makes funny noises, then continues.*

Wynn: Do you know what happened, Graham? Do you know what happened? *Pause until the audience grasps the full meaning of the repetition.*

Graham: No. *Chuckling, which is an accepted device in timing.* What happened?

Wynn: When he came back, Graham, he found another sign hanging where the coat had been. This sign said—the sign said, "This coat was taken by the champion runner of the world, and I won't be back."

The audience roars with laughter, but Wynn, listening carefully, decides he is not getting quite the laugh he wants. He waits for the first lull and then swiftly adds:

Wynn: You know, Graham, I'm really surprised they laugh at some of these. At the finish laughter breaks out again. The unexpected touch makes the joke seem twice as funny.

Any comedy program may be similarly analyzed as to timing. The slightest error in timing, the tiniest over-development spells ruin. If the gags are climaxed successfully, they mount up with increasing gales of laughter. It is evident that gags piled one on top of each other without regard to listener response will kill each other off.

Holding Comic Control

Analyze the technique of your favorite radio comedian. Observe how effects are gained by surprise ending, or by some misuse or twist of phrase, or by some incongruity which captures the mind. The personality and style of the comedian vary, but there are definite principles which guide both the comedian and the writer. We may here briefly set the important rules for holding comic control.

1. The first device employed by the radio comedian is that of speed. Listeners who are kept on the run have no time in which to be analytical. There is a certain hypnotic control that follows with the swingier and swifter pace.

2. The second device flows from the vigor and animation of the performer. It is a vocal manner that infects the listener irresistibly. The whole scene is suffused by the personality of the comedian whose superior strength is unquestioned. It is his duty to sustain this *rapport* with the listeners until the end of the program. The principal characteristic of Ed Wynn's style has been its speed, no joke longer than a line or two, and one gag piled on top of another. He avoids the long story. The full measure of joy in life seems to come tumbling forth in an endless torrent.

3. Under-emphasis in comedy is another trick of timing.

Ken Murray explained under-emphasis as rising toward the climax with zest and then throwing the punch away by letting it down with a mumble as if they had lost interest.

4. The building of a gag requires craftsmanship. The comedian works up to his climax, without overdoing it. A long-drawn-out gag is generally fatal if the expectancy of the listener is not fulfilled in the laugh. Avoid unnecessary detail. Only by a means of a suppression of considerable and even essential part of the action, is an effect of wit or humor obtained. The trick lies in leaving the actual progress of events to the imagination of the listener. We laugh when we are forced to a delightful inference.

5. In wit which involves a play on words, the listener's attention must pause twice, on meaning and on sound. If the effort, however swift, is not regarded as worth while, woe to the pun! A good gag must have a conclusion that is perfectly obvious to the average listener. They must see through it at once. Humor is delightful when it explodes, dismal when explained.

6. The "punch" line stirs the laugh. In a series of laughs, the comedian crowds one stimulus on the heels of the other, and leads the imagination back and forth with a swiftness that sets the listener wondering what is coming next. The laugh gives that moment of relaxation for the listener to adjust his interest for the next "punch" line. For twelve minutes of talk, a comedian generally allows a spread of fifteen minutes.

7. The comedian may laugh with us, but is a failure if he is suspected of laughing at his own jokes. The true comedian makes us feel he is laughing at laughter.

8. If a pun or a gag misses fire, four things must have happened: (a) The audience has failed to imagine the situation; (b) the situation when imagined does not turn out to be a laughable one; (c) too much effort has been made in picking up the similarity in sound on which the pun is

based; (d) the listener is already familiar with the gag or pun which has been previously done to death on the air.

The Future of the Radio Comedian

Radio comedians suffer from the obsession that the kilocycles were made to kill them off. The depleted stock of gags constantly threatens them with starvation. Few of them have had long microphone life. Those that survive have their week divided into seven nightmares. Such is the dismal side of the comedian's career.

Because of this intense strain on the comedian, Groucho Marx turned down a sponsor's offer with the plea: "They wanted to sign us up for two years but I held out for six weeks. This sounds a little crazy, but the thought of getting twenty pages of jokes together—even old jokes—every seven days was too much for us to contemplate."

But let us fully consider some of the ills of radio comedy. Max Eastman in a radio interview with Rudy Vallee asserted that the making of jokes has become the world's most difficult labor. He offers no panacea for the comedians' plight, but warns them not to overexert: "This business of turning out forty thousand jokes a week for the radio market has become a serious business," suggests Eastman; "that's the trouble with it. The speed is too high, competition too strong. The play is out of it and that's why humor is stiff in the joints. I can't see any cure for it except to get more comedians and not work them so hard—not let them work so hard. Bring up the chairs and force them into a sitdown strike."

Radio, however, cannot be held entirely responsible for the dearth of new jokes. "Men cannot always be inventing new jokes," says Aldous Huxley, "any more than they can be inventing new religions or new styles of poetry."

The comedian cannot be blamed if he relies on certain

venerable laughter-provoking traditions. Always his task is formidable. He must keep abreast of the times. He must show folly at its height. He must expose the prejudices and caprices of mankind and account for the incongruities in a world which is topsy-turvy. He must give the mind a swift holiday from the severities of life. He must release laughter, and let us look at our fellow beings in some sort of caricature. He must contradict our very senses.

The presentation of humor by the voice alone has forced the comedian to create new techniques. He is just beginning to discover himself. Stephen Leacock reminds us that the nineteenth century took its humor through books, the printed page stimulating the mind to create pictures. "Presently," predicts Leacock, "the perfection of television and the invention of talking books will further alter conditions."

Many would provide the future comedian with a training in his art; instead of serving his apprenticeship by crude imitation of others, he would get a basic understanding in first principles before being turned loose on the air. Mort Lewis, himself a prolific writer of radio skits looks to the colleges for such instruction. He seriously proposes:

"There should be courses started by colleges or the broadcasting chains to train writers in the art of radio comedy. In spite of the tremendous amount of junk perpetrated on the programs, and I plead guilty to being responsible for some of it—there is an art or definite technique to comedy program construction which must be learned. It is exceedingly difficult for the beginner to break in, so a prospective writer, no matter what his talent, has little chance to learn the trade. A practical course could be initiated in charge of some comedy writer or production man, with lectures once in a while by some of our more articulate comics such as Fred Allen. After all, there are college courses in scenario writing and play writing."

Already courses in "humor" have been established in some colleges. In 1937, Professor W. E. Moore of the University of Florida announced: "The university is going to have a course in Humor, but it won't teach how to be an end-man or a radio comedian." This in itself is a supreme wise-crack, that would bring chuckles to those comedians who get five thousand dollars a week and over without benefit of university studies to wit.

Character portrayal has never reached great heights in radio comedy. Comedians are searching for a formula as certain as that of Amos 'n' Andy. This saga of the air has gone through over three thousand episodes in its more than eight years of life over NBC. And each episode epitomized in some way, the comic spirit that envelops the hopes and frustrations of mankind. Charles Correll (Andy) and Freeman Gosden (Amos) have always written their scripts themselves. "We never could get anybody who could write what we needed. Writers always came to us with a lot of jokes."

Radio is beginning to take its cue from written comedy. The enduring humor of the world is fashioned about characters like Don Quixote and his English cousin Falstaff. And so, comedy writers have realized that audiences like to ally themselves with some personality who can mirror their own foibles. Who knows but that some great radio Mark Twain shall arise to create comedy figures that will endure because they typify for all the world the escape from the burdening formula of our lives?

Sophisticates who sneer at radio humor will never be satisfied with our present comic fare. They forget that radio comedy must be mass humor. All men differ about the laughable. A man is born to see a particular joke or he is not. A radio comedian cannot educate him into it.

Radio cannot hope to regenerate comedy as long as every radio joke is subject to censorship, and must run the gauntlet of prejudices, reformers, educational groups and every

variety of taboo. Comedy is based on the common denominator for laugh in all sections of the country, covering all ages and all conditions.

Critics may continue to clamor for smart dialogue and sophisticated comedy. Experiments with studio audiences have proved that the listeners react best to the simplest puns and to the most obvious situations. Radio has not produced great writers of comedy who have produced wit that is robust and endearing. Specialists in this medium prefer the stereotyped forms that can be turned out with least effort. The best writers fight shy at writing original skits for air production.

Radio comedians employ a writing staff, highly specialized. The "situation" writers create the locale and the plot. The gag men weave their jokes in and about the story. It is left for re-write men to polish up the script. Because revue sketches are as difficult to write as plays, the technique calls for the condensation of inflated anecdotes within the scope of a few pages, instead of over three acts. And from first to last it must be calculated to hold the listener.

In the good old vaudeville days, comedians could, with safety, stick to their one act year after year. Once the comedy offering is flung nationwide over the air, the thing is dead. Every radio skit thus has a short life and perhaps a merry one. If it were humor of the eternal kind, it would survive on the printed page.

Benjamin de Casseres finds the greatest danger that confronts this country today is the absence of a national humorist "to inspect three-fourths of the things the country takes over-seriously and loosen them up with gales of laughter." The time is ripe for the arrival of a national humorist like Will Rogers who will throw bombshells of wit to perpetuate our democratic ideals. "Nothing," adds de Casseres, "takes the sufficing out of a curved shirt like a well-aimed guffaw.

No wonder Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin fear those that make fun of them more than they do the assassin's bomb."

Mort Lewis holds little hope for the future of radio comedy unless the writer is left to his own devices without undue sponsor interference. He gives a true picture of the conditions that confront the writer of comedy:

"There are a few sponsors, thank heaven," says Lewis, "who have sufficient confidence in their writers and production men to leave them more or less alone. But a great many sponsors insist on injecting elements which appeal to the sponsor alone, and bore the audience. The writer, being on the payroll must comply, or lose the program. A competent, established comedian and his comedy writer should have full sway on what comedy elements go into a program.

"There should be one boss on the program. There is one well known program that has six or seven bosses. The rehearsal is a mad house, and the script writers don't know whom they have to please. They get four or five different suggestions for the week's script, each one contradicting the other."

Comedy will continue to be of gravest importance on well balanced programs. Radio today faces the enormous task of the New Deal in Comedy.

THE CHURCH OF THE AIR

RADIO has been called the "Handmaid of the Churches." The microphone now spreads far and wide the doctrine of the moral life to multitudes who never have visited churches or opened a religious book.

Services over the air began inauspiciously. On January 2, 1921, for the first time anywhere in the world, a minister's voice spoke into the microphone. The voice was that of the Reverend Edwin J. Van Etten, Rector of the Calvary Episcopal Church of Pittsburgh, pronouncing the vespers service over Station KDKA. Listeners heard a homely parable from the second book of Samuel, which called forth the Rector's admonition: "When you are lost in the woods, follow the rule of the open road—choose the better road at every fork." Only a few hundred were privileged to hear the broadcast through crystal sets, but bundles of appreciative letters encouraged the minister to repeat the service. The powerful appeal of the radio pulpit was just beginning to be realized.

Ten years passed before the Church of Rome adopted the new medium. Through the munificence of Marconi, Station HVJ (Holy Vatican Jesus) was established on Vatican Hill. Pius XI was the first in history to pronounce over the microphone a papal benediction to the faithful all over the world. The pope sat at a draped desk in a tiny room and through a golden microphone, came the quivering voice of His Holiness in alloquy to all creation: "Qui arcane Dei consilio succedimus loco Principis Apostelarum . . ."

The early history of radio preaching is the record of violent denominational battles on the air. Sunday thundered

his doctrinal preaching and critical attacks of the faiths one upon the other. A high degree of sectarianism sought to fulfill its mission of gathering in converts. Conditions grew more and more discordant. No outside power had as yet evolved any method to control the situation.

To-day the pulpit of the air is not regarded as a means of inculcating dogma and creed, but is linked with education as a social process and product. The authority of the radio sermon lies in its emphasis on universal truths rather than upon special doctrine. The minister becomes the special reformer and the educator when he fights every form of social wrong.

The National Broadcasting System, upon its organization in 1927, gave impetus to a sort of voluntary code of religious broadcasting. Shortly after the formation of the network, the company took steps to place religious broadcasting on a plane of greater dignity.

A standing committee consisting of representatives of the Protestant, Catholic and Jewish faiths was appointed to consider the question of the national dissemination of religious doctrine over the radio. As a result of these conferences, the National Broadcasting Company formulated the policies to which it now holds:

1. Only such faiths are served as are the central or national agencies of great religious bodies, as, for example, the Protestant, the Roman Catholic, and the Jewish faith, as distinguished from the individual churches of small group movements where the national membership is comparatively small.
2. The religious message should be non-sectarian and non-denominational in its appeal.
3. The religious broadcast should be of the widest appeal, presenting only the broad claims of religion, which not only aid in building up the personal and special life of the individual, but also aid in popularizing religion and the church.

4. The religious message broadcast should interpret religion at its highest and best, so that as an educational factor, it will bring the individual listener to realize his responsibility to the organized church and to society.

5. The national religious messages should be broadcast by the recognized outstanding leaders of the several faiths as determined by the best counsel and advice available.

The Columbia Broadcasting System adapted a policy similar to that of NBS in the fall of 1931, announcing that it would not sell time for religious broadcasting. The issue was brought to a climax by the vituperative sermons of Father Coughlin, which up to then had been broadcast over the networks under contract. This forced Father Coughlin to engage the facilities of an independent network of twenty-seven stations.

Free time is given in rotation to the major faiths. A half hour each Sunday morning and afternoon is turned over to the Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Christian Science, Mormon and Dutch Churches. No discrimination is made against other religious bodies, but time is offered only when time is available and if the broadcast comes within the meaning of public interest. Like NBC, the Columbia Broadcasting System makes the provision that all broadcasts shall be constructive in character and free from attack on members of the clergy or lay members of any denomination.

Personality in Radio Preaching

The greatest problem of the Church of the Air has always been the selection of religious leaders whose personality would stand the test of the microphone. Failure in this field has made possible the aspersion that radio is the graveyard of many a preacher. In principle, the responsibility of selecting preachers and religious programs is shifted by the networks upon lay or religious bodies, such as the Federation

of Churches of Christ in America for the Protestants, the National Council of Catholic Men, for the Catholics, and the United Synagogues of America for the Jews.

The measure of the preacher's power over the air lies in those elusive qualities that make up the "radio personality." All the native endowment and ability of the minister is evident by his manner of speaking. The minister may observe all the rules of his art, but be "faultily faultless, icily regular, and splendidly null." Some divine has said that a man of small personality cannot preach a great sermon, and a man of great personality, though he may preach a small sermon, will yet put behind it such driving power that it will seem great and have a great effect. Radio has a way of disclosing the master qualities in preaching.

The Sunday radio pulpit found a preacher of powerful personality in the late S. Parkes Cadman, who established an enormous following. Dr. Cadman was the innovator of the question and answer period as a regular feature of the radio religious service. He carried over this method from his unbroadcast hour which he had conducted for many years at a Brooklyn Branch of the YMCA. At these meetings, members of the audience at the close of his address were privileged to ask questions affecting their personal problems. Dr. Cadman answered these questions impromptu.

The vogue of Dr. Cadman attracted the attention of NBC. The minister was finally persuaded to broadcast over the national network every Sunday afternoon. The first broadcast was conducted only as an experiment, but Dr. Cadman virtually remains the first preacher in the United States to have been heard regularly over the air. In 1928, he became radio pastor for the Federal Churches of Christ in America. He, himself, was the son of a minister who for forty years had occupied the pulpit, but in one hour's sermon Dr. Cadman reached more listeners than did his father during those forty years.

What secret lies behind Dr. Cadman's extraordinary appeal? "Broadcasting was very difficult for me in those days," he confessed. "In addition to the tremendous responsibility of trying to preach so that everyone, regardless of his faith, would receive some spiritual guidance, I had the problem of altering my entire technique. As a minister, my oratory was of the fiery type; I gesticulated, walked up and down the platform while speaking. With only a microphone to catch my speech, I could no longer do that. If I walked away from it, the radio audience would be tuned out. At the beginning my friend, Halsey Hammond, secretary of the Y where I conducted my weekly get-togethers, sat on the platform with me. If I began to walk away from the microphone, he gently tugged at my coat; if I was forgetting the invisible audience, only considering the visible one, I got a tap on my leg with his toe."

It was thus in the first instance that Dr. Cadman was able to adapt himself to the microphone. Secondly, Dr. Cadman was prompt to realize that the radio ministry is compelled to speak with a tolerant attitude toward workers in denominational fields other than his own. In many ways he disliked sectarianism. With an unwearied enthusiasm in humanity and no hesitation in attacking social problems in a militant way, he had none of the scheming political approach of Father Coughlin. Prizefights, jazz, tabloid newspapers, the United States Senate—every phase of the contemporary scene came under his analysis.

The "Question and Answer Period" of Dr. Cadman's broadcasts established a relationship with his audience that no other preacher had accomplished. Indeed, he anticipated the audience participation programs by nearly ten years. If the question echoed the listener's own problem, the listener felt as if he were an active participant at the meeting. He came to grips with their everyday situations.

"How can a father save his boy from being spoiled by an

over-indulgent mother?" . . . "Shall I marry outside my faith?" . . . "What should a girl do who got mixed up in a mess by taking advantage of this new freedom?" . . . "Should I take military training in a school where it is compulsory or shall I refuse pointblank?" . . . "How can I get a job?" . . . "How can I make friends?" (This was in the days before the good Dale Carnegie.)

The technique of question and answer was unconventional but required some control. Questions were written out on slips of paper by members of the audience and read aloud by an assistant immediately after the formal address. The discussion took on something of the nature of a lively conversation. The secret of Dr. Cadman's art lay in that easy charm which was his special gift—the ability to talk to people and not at them. Although booming in his tone at times and inclined to sharp stress, his resonant voice imparted to his words a vigor that it is difficult to parallel in our present-day radio preachers.

Let us submit one of the typical questions and answers. *The question:* "Why do men demand so much of women today without being willing to give them the protection of marriage. What shall I do?" *The answer of Dr. Cadman:* "Any man who claims he loves a woman and wishes to degrade her personality and destroy her self-respect is a humbug, unworthy of one's friendship. Does the young man revere you as the prospective mother of his children, does he regard you as God's co-partner in creating life? If he does not, have nothing to do with him."

The market crash of October 1929 lifted Father Coughlin into national fame as the voice that spread hope and promise of a new order. He began to preach politics and found a ready ear in millions of Americans who, broken and crushed by the economic tornado, were wondering where to flee for shelter. Father Coughlin seized upon the mass emotions of the people and provided them with the answer. He sought

out the villains who were responsible for the economic debacle, the "international bankers," "the money changers in the temple," "the wolves in sheeps clothing who want to shake hands with Soviet Russia."

During the years 1929, 1930 and 1931, the Catholic minister loomed up largely as the tribune of the people ready to bring comfort to an outraged citizenry. He was even mentioned as a possible dictator. He declared over the air, "When the ballot becomes useless, I shall have the courage to stand up and agitate the use of bullets."

Father Coughlin's attacks on the administration of President Roosevelt were bold, merciless, and marked by vituperation. At the Townsend Old Age Pension Convention at Cleveland in July 1936, he flayed the President as a "liar," "double-crosser," and "betrayed." His intemperate remarks are said to have called forth the rebuke of the Vatican, and compelled a full personal apology in an open letter to the President. He claimed that his words would have been restrained had they not been delivered extemporaneously "in the heat of civic interest and in righteous anger."

The fall of Father Coughlin was heralded by the overwhelming vote of confidence the American people gave to Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1936. Struck by the futility of his appeal to the American electorate, Father Coughlin announced that he was leaving the air "forever," but in spite of this announcement he continued as the critic of the administration and the oracular voice of the National Union for Social Justice which he had created.

At the outset of his career Father Coughlin's sermons dealt largely with moral problems. More and more he began to show his ability and courage in handling the social questions of the hour. Dr. John Haynes Holmes, a severe yet impartial critic of Father Coughlin, ventured to say in 1934 that Father Coughlin "has done us all a service in preaching politics and herewith vindicating the mission of the church

to save society as the condition of saving men and women. Indeed I would go so far as to assert that there is not a Roman priest, nor a Protestant clergyman in America today, who is not a freer man, in his preaching and public service as a result of Father Coughlin's superb example of plain speaking at the microphone."

Dr. Holmes appraised Father Coughlin's radio sermons as an amazing personal performance that showed up the peril of radio to the nation's life. "The mixture of good and bad in this latest, most miraculous of man's inventions, and the exclusive potency of this mixture, appeals to the imagination. In the Sunday afternoon addresses of Father Coughlin, we see the radio at what may speedily become its worst and certainly its most dangerous stage."

Father Coughlin used all the tricks of oratory to arouse passion. He called the president a "liar," but later expressed his sincere "apology" for his language. He knew how to vary his effects so as to give the mind of the listener a chance to recover. He led up to climaxes through artful periods of calm. It was the manner of the earnest orator—the man who carries the torch of propaganda into the very midst of the enemy, winning hosts of adherents. His words came with a soothing cadence and then changed to booming tonalities that lifted the listener from lethargy to a fury of protest. Father Coughlin's remarkable appeal required elaborate preparation. He himself made no secret of it. He was well-primed before he began to talk to his vast congregation of the air.

"I write the discourse," he confided, "first in my own language, the language of a cleric. Then I rewrite it, using metaphors the public can grasp, toning the phrases down to the language of the man-in-the-street. Sometimes I coin a word to crystallize attention. Radio broadcasting, I have found, must not be high hat. It must be human, intensely human. It must be simple, but it must be done up in meta-

phors. It must deal with something vital to the life of the people. It must be positive."

An examination of his method shows that he is direct and apparently factual, giving names, dates, figures, particulars. It is one thing to call Will Rogers "The millionaire court jester of the billionaire oil men"; it is quite another to name the bankers and describe the abuse. At one time ironical and at another time suggestive, Father Coughlin turns to such images as these:

"Capitalism is a conspiracy against the immortal soul of mankind. Marxian Socialism and Capitalism are Siamese twins and both are blind. Shall it be Karl Marx or Jesus Christ to lead us? The NRA is like a fine motor car but equipped with flat tires. A capable driver is in the seat." And there you have the personal method and philosophy of a man who was likened by a woman biographer to "the modern Savonarola stripping bare the vices of a materialistic age."

Father Coughlin's sudden rise to prestige and power and his swift dwindling of influence were equally phenomenal. Multitudes regarded him as a fearless public leader, and multitudes looked upon him as the "most vicious single propagandist in the entire United States."

In 1926 Father Coughlin was an unknown Catholic priest when he stepped before the microphone at the local station WJR in Detroit. Only a few hundred people heard him then, but from the first he showed a complete mastery of the peculiar technique of radio. Soon he was to engage the facilities of a national hook-up at a cost of fourteen thousand dollars an hour. In 1933 he stood before a battery of microphones at the Hippodrome in New York and preached currency inflation to an audience estimated at over thirty millions.

In answer to a single radio appeal he received one million two hundred and fifty thousand letters. By virtue of his

radio preaching he was able to erect the Shrine of the Little Flower at an expense of more than a million dollars contributed by his admiring listeners.

Time will appraise Father Coughlin in the right perspective. Those who called him "repetitious" and tiresome failed to appreciate his talents. Severer critics look upon him as possessing faults, which sooner or later were sure to be exposed. In the first place, Father Coughlin spoke with prophetic zeal on political and economic problems to which he had not given extensive study. Secondly, he abandoned reason for mass emotion, appealing to the prejudices of the crowd, invoking their manias, and siding immediately with the popular side of every issue. "It is from such wild winds of fury," says Dr. Holmes, "that the storms of Fascism spring."

Microphone Injunctions for the Minister

The Minister who wishes to be kind to the microphone should heed certain injunctions:

1. Don't read in a ministerial tone. Some ministers are accustomed to the "holier than thou" attitude when preaching from the pulpit. On the air this approach is exhibited vocally by a "ministerial whine." Every utterance rings with exaggerated emotion. The pitch takes an habitual upward slide at the end of sentences. Instead of deeply sincere religious appeal, the effect is one of mock seriousness. Ministers should have records made of their sermons and study them with a view to remedying this defect.

2. Don't deliver a sermon too "dramatically." Many ministers read Bible passages as if they were putting on a show. There is such a thing as an excess of art. The ministers should be concerned with ideas, not with words. The mental attitude should be that of communicating directly to the hearers as one does in conversation.

3. An habitual over-use of strong stress jars the ear. The

effect is often brutally sharp and dogmatic. A good sermon should be like a wedge, all telling and to the point, but the hammer strokes of heavy emphasis without subordination destroy the feeling for communication. The conventional touch is more effective for radio.

4. Over enunciation on the careful bits of consonants has a cutting effect on the listener. Certain words demand more precise pronunciation like: *repenteth, thy, thine didst, Whithersoever*. To carry this over-precision to every word is to mar the rhythm of conversation.

The radio preacher who draws attention to his vocal performance defeats his purpose. He will lose the sense of "gentleness" which is the gift of the masterful radio preacher.

Language That Lulls or Inspires

Radio preaching often loses force and character because the minister has tied himself down to language and diction that is obscure. Ideas become obscured in the dark clouds of rhetoric. Noble and reverent sentiments are weighted by Latin phraseology. Abstract prepositions, rolled out with solemn declaration, leave the listener in an abstract mood.

The difference between a successful and a mediocre radio preacher often lies in his choice of words and in his power of imagery. Concrete words that suggest the visible object, always are better than abstract concepts. Every word can be made to tell the lively effect. The radio preacher should study his sermon from the standpoint of its picture-making influence on the listener. Suggestive words and phrases call up images that are vivid and alive to the listener's experience. Great moral truths are often riveted upon the mind by illustrations that linger in the memory long after the sermon is forgotten. The deepest and most abstract things in theology can be made understandable over the air, by this art.

Monotony is the bugbear of all religious preachers on the air. This is due to a persistent abundance of strong stress; a cadence that is over lofty; a quality of voice peculiarly tinged with super solemnity. It is a species of elocution, long accepted and practiced in the leading theological seminaries. Sepulchral tones of exhortation miss true warmth and spiritual quality. If this speech pattern is continued over a quarter of an hour, the voice lulls the mind to drowsiness. Organ music or sacred songs that follow the sermon come as a welcome relief.

Does Radio Cramp the Preacher?

Many ministers believe that preaching is losing its power and vitality because of the microphone. The Reverend James M. Gillis, C.S.P., editor of *The Catholic World*, in an address before the Institute of Human Relations, expresses the opinion that broadcast sermons in most cases lessen the effect of the minister's personality by half. "Personal magnetism," he said, "is required in preaching the word vastly more than in any other form of public speaking."

It is recognized that preaching to a visible congregation and preaching to unseen listeners are two different approaches. Not every minister can become efficient in both arts. Many a preacher, like many a public speaker, becomes demagnetized in the presence of a microphone. Radio preaching imposes definite restrictions which binds the minister down to the regulations of the network. Father Gillis protests: "Religion is a flame, a fire, a battle. In such a world as this the message of true religion should not be polite, inoffensive. Quite naturally radio corporations and sponsors don't want disturbers on their program. They deprecate conflict of religious opinion. They demand that radio preachers shall not give offense."

The radio minister can bring about a baptism of spiritual enthusiasm by studying the correct methods of appeal over the air. He should have something to say and say it with appropriate voice. The voice that preaches the message of the Church should be the noblest voice that it is possible for the denominational body to secure. His spirit should carry over the microphone with warmth and sincerity. He should have something of the inspirational touch so that his words are impounded with ideas rather than sound.

Radio demands a more personal manner in religious preaching from the vocal standpoint. The approach should be in the more direct tone of conversation, varied by such emotional changes as the thought inspires. If keyed in the same pitch or exaggerated in melody, the religious message often palls when it should exalt.

Empty Pews and Dialed-out Sermons

Successful preaching is never associated with empty pews or with dialed-out receivers. The success of the radio minister depends not only on how he speaks but what he says. The problem of writing the radio sermon becomes the most perplexing of the minister's tasks. Some sharp criticism on sermon composition has been made by the ministry itself. Recently, the Rev. Dr. Frederick S. Fleming, Director of Trinity Parish, startled the church world by suggesting a moratorium on preaching for a period of one or two years. "The sermons of today," he declared, "are for the most part a very poor addition of topical homilies, a brand of religious pep talks sailing forth for a transitory popularity under the guise of being inspirational. There is practically no preaching worth the name to be found."

If this be true radio offers the most powerful medium for preaching of the higher type. So great is the influence of religion and so powerful the influence of men who speak from

their privileged position, that both the context and the manner of speaking should be above the commonplace.

What is the predominant quality of successful preaching? The answer given by the leading divines uses the one word "interestingness." "Our obvious trouble," avers Dr. Fosdick, "is that the mediocre sermon, even when harmless, is uninteresting. It could as well be unsaid."

The minister has the task of selecting an interesting theme, and enriching it with illustration and application for the personal lives of his audience. Dr. Fosdick urges these precepts on the minister who would aspire to the wider field of broadcasting: "There is nothing that people are so interested in as themselves, their own problems and the way to solve them. The fact is basic. No preaching that rejects it can raise a ripple on a congregation. It is the primary starting point of all successful speaking, and for once the requirement of practical success and ideal helpfulness coincide."

The Bishop of Bristol in a broadcast before the war took a hopeful view of radio preaching. Religious broadcasting, in his opinion, spreads an atmosphere of greater spiritual reality. Radio has not provided something in the nature of a brand-new religion, but it has exercised a harmonizing influence upon denominational divisions within the Christian Church. The formula in England for religious broadcasting is much as in America. Both countries are confronted with congregations of the air, varied in tastes and different in opinion. How shall radio meet the situation? This is the answer of the Bishop of Bristol:

"The form of service provided must be such as will satisfy older worshipers, who long to hear familiar melodies and to receive traditional exhortation and yet, at the same time, attract younger worshipers who need to have religious values re-stated in terms of the New World in which they are growing up."

What's the Matter with the Radio Sermon?

The application of homiletics to radio preaching appears quite simple. Perhaps the most successful radio preacher of today is Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick whose Sunday message over the air is a guiding light in the spiritual lives of hosts of listeners. He has laid down several principles that will be helpful to the radio preacher. "A sermon," according to Dr. Fosdick, "may begin in any one of three ways. Two of these ways are wrong. If the sermon begins with a text, or the exposition of an idea, dullness and futility result. The other way to failure is to have the genesis of the sermon in his own interests."

Fosdick explains this type of minister as one who plays Sir Oracle. "He is dogmatic, assertive, uncompromising. He flings out his dicta as though to say to his hearers, 'Take it or leave it.' He has settled the matter concerning which he is speaking, and he is telling us." Father Coughlin often assumed this manner, indulged in unrestrained, violent and irresponsible statements. He gave the impression of a cleric who easily becomes intoxicated by the sound of his own voice.

The third and *successful* way to create a sermon is what Dr. Fosdick calls "a cooperative enterprise" between the preacher and his congregation. This seems the most desirable method with the congregation of the radio audience.

The radio preacher who is thinking of a real difficulty in the lives of his listeners finds himself removed from dogmatic thinking because there is a cooperative thinking between himself and his audience. Fosdick's definition of preaching emphasizes the personal relationship of the minister with the individual listener's own problems.

Successful radio preaching holds a powerful interest for the listener when it is couched with persuasion. Fosdick's

preaching is aimed at a transformation of personality. Any preacher who can convey this subtle understanding to a listener far removed from the cloistered walls of the church is a master of the word of God.

“Preaching is wrestling with individuals over questions of life and death, and until that idea of it commands a preacher’s mind and method, eloquence will avail him very little and theology not at all.” Fosdick believes his technique works. “People have literally come up after the sermons not to offer some trivial complaint but to say, ‘How did you know that I was facing that problem last week?’, ‘I think you understand my case. May I have a personal interview with you.’” The real test for any radio sermon should be “How many listeners are impelled to wish to see the preacher alone?”

The method of the Master, measured in terms of our complex age, serves today as a model. He spoke to the people in their everyday language and made religion as plain and practical to them as farming and fishing. His sermons were always picturesque, besprinkled with humor, and made realistic by the use of the parable and illustrations, drawn from all sources.

Such a method is best adapted to the condition and needs of the hearers whose attention and interest was at once captured. This is precisely what radio sermons today demand. In the ancient days, the Pharisees and the scribes taught in a way that has small relation to human affairs and needs. “The fossilized ecclesiasts,” says Dr. James H. Snowden, “were droning away over hairsplitting questions of orthodoxy that were not of the least human interest or use. The simple, charming teachings of Jesus came like a fresh breeze. The people knew what he was talking about and were surprised that it took hold of them with such fascinating interest and power, exclaiming, ‘A new teaching!’”

How the Radio Preacher Can Lead

There are few great radio preachers today who are outstanding prophets of this generation. Among the more distinguished leaders are the Reverend Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick, the Rev. William J. Finn, Rabbi Stephen J. Wise, and the Rev. Daniel F. Poling.

The way lies ahead for improvement in microphone preaching, so that the personality of a great mind impresses itself on the listener with faith and understanding, with sincerity and depth of conviction, with liveliness of emotion that is in tune with common experience.

Radio religion can never take the place of public worship. The words "synagogue" and "congregation" come from the Greek and Latin words meaning "assembly." The radio listener is external from the group that listens in the church. The radio listener is not subject to those same influences which may be possible in the House of God. A broadcast, talk, or sermon may serve as a signpost to point out the way to faith, but the minister's personal influence is wanting. "Preaching is not a mere verbal communication," said the Rev. James Gillis. "It is a ministry; but how can you minister to a man when you don't see him and when he is lolling half-dressed on the couch smoking his pipe, his attention diverted from your discourse now by the family chit-chat, and again by the alluring Sunday supplement?"

The undeniable benefits of the radio ministry, however, are many. It has strengthened the spiritual teachings of the church. It has supplied religious services in localities where the churches were closed because of the depression. It has provided a spiritual anchor to great numbers not connected with any specific faith. It has increased religious tolerance. Its ministrations have come to invalids, shut-ins, and those in remote places who would otherwise lack the opportunity of partaking in religious worship.

PROPAGANDA RULES THE WAVES

PROPAGANDA is as old as the ages. The new thing about it is the agency of broadcasting. Radio is the almost universal vehicle of politics, nationalism, business and trade, the world over.

Propaganda defies exact definition. It is ideology, a principle, a mode of action. There is no morality in propaganda. The sole test is whether it succeeds. Propaganda is acting, the doing of things. Education is long range work, propaganda is immediate: Education is slower.

Radio is believed to provide greater propaganda values than the movies or the printed page. Leaflets and printed matter may be showered on the people and never read. The spoken word is more effective than the printed word. A propagandist on the air rushes on, deals wholly with emotions, and stays away from cold facts as far as possible. Listeners are not trained to study the form of an address nor to analyze its separate elements. He cannot study the argument as from the printed page. His emotions are fused by the power of oratory. The listener cannot heckle a speaker nor talk back at him. He has the option of turning him off, but the effective speaker weaves a spell, slows down the thinking processes, and makes men and women behave like sheep.

The persistent repetition of doctrine infiltrates swiftly everywhere. Governments and communities, through radio, crystallize opinion before the public has had a chance to rationalize the issues.

Propaganda on the air is here to stay. National preparedness includes not only plans for battleships and aircraft but

also super-power broadcasting stations that reach targets across the seas. Nations have turned to radio propaganda for the coordination of their activities both within and beyond their borders. Without radio the course of empire may be held in the balance.

H. V. Kaltenborn once answered a hypothetical question about radio as an instrument of propaganda. Said the commentator: "If Ethiopia had been equipped with radio, Haile Selassie could have drawn his empire together; could have talked to all his different chieftains. Perhaps the outcome would have been different."

Multi-Branched Radio Propaganda

Little study has been given to the matter of classifying propaganda programs on the air. The following groups are merely suggestive and are not mutually exclusive:

1. *Promotion or publicity propaganda.* Every hour on the hour, there is a specialized promotion on the air which brings the listeners the pet policies or special views of a wide variety of organizations. These include public service corporations, boards of commerce and trade, public and quasi-public institutions. Such propaganda bespeaks every variety of vested interest. Special relations counselors are employed to create the persuasive type of radio appeal.

2. *Civic propaganda.* These appeals are general and emphasize the advantages which come to the community through public action or civic enterprise. Thus the State of New York Milk Control Board uses the air in a health program designed to boost the sale of milk and help the farmer. Appeals may be made to civic, patriotic and community pride and lead to some specific form of participation such as cooperating in the New York World's Fair. One typical example: In 1939 Carl Byoir made an appeal for the A & P stores in defense of the chain store system on the

General Electric WGY (Schenectady) Farm Forum, frankly announcing himself as a paid propagandist. In every City Hall and State Capitol, propaganda is operated by every conceivable vested interest.

3. *Profit propaganda.* Such programs are directed by business enterprises, organizations and individuals who hope to reap a profit directly or indirectly by a commodity or service offered for sale. Included in such programs are those designed to win markets and trade control. Special utility companies, organizations like the National Electric Light Association and the National Association of Manufacturers find radio the best medium for their special propaganda. They have ample funds to devote to radio which cannot be matched by the consumers' and workers' groups. In 1937, the NAM publicity fund grew to be over eight hundred thousand dollars. The money spent for propaganda included radio features such as "The American Family Robinson" heard over two hundred and seventy stations. The MMA spent over two million dollars in 1940 on public information for a study of text books throughout the nation so that the members might move against any that might be found prejudicial to our form of government. Vice-President Wallace said, when Secretary of Agriculture: "They (the business men) have been led by their plutogogues (propaganda men) to believe that government rules of the game should be loaded in their favor.

Commercial propaganda is more of a science than ethical and political propaganda. Sponsors have become experts at selling goods over the air. They know the value of repetition. They play on the snobbish instincts of humanity, emphasize the importance of buying to meet the demands of social conformity. They play on fears of every kind,—fear of halitosis, fear of obesity, fear of financial loss, and disease.

Commercial propaganda is agreeable to the masses be-

cause it encourages people to satisfy their cravings and offers them a possible escape from their physical pains and discomforts. When listeners are asked to buy luxuries or to choose between two brands of a necessary commodity, there may be nothing serious at stake. Danger may arise if the listener allows himself to be influenced by sales propaganda when physical cures are concerned.

4. *Friendship and peace propaganda.* This is an institutionalized propaganda undertaken by some associations to create friendly relations and mutual understanding or to explain the causes of discord. The coat of arms of the British Broadcasting Corporation displays the idealistic slogan, "*Nation Shall Speak Peace Unto Nation.*" Under this classification comes the exchange of programs of the British Broadcasting Corporation and those of the American networks. Other types of friendship broadcasts are those that seek to lure the tourist and extend a sort of personalized welcome to the prospective traveler. Such programs play upon the imagination of the listener by means of enchanting songs, romantic tales, adventure dramatization and talks that extol scenic beauties and delightful living conditions.

5. *Reformist propaganda* works for limited changes in the social order. It seeks primarily to modify conditions to conform to a better standard of morals. Thus an attack may be made over the air on bad housing conditions, the abuse of WPA funds, neglect of education and the like. Reformist propaganda is concerned with bringing about some change in the existing political, economic or social structure.

6. *War propaganda.* This is necessary in wartime to arouse and intensify animosity against the enemy and to attract mutual support. The national hatred is mobilized by pressure groups, and the enemy is represented as menacing, aggressive violators of moral and conventional standards. Even music is enlisted in the cause of war propaganda.

Totalitarian leaders order only heroic and martial strains be played,—no dance or comedy programs.

7. *Peace propaganda.* Advocates for peace exercise powerful radio propaganda campaigns. In the event of war they would probably be silenced. Network stations are not prone to refuse requests of organized peace societies for free time on the air. The National Peace Conference reports that during the first five months of 1937 local stations carried one thousand three hundred and eighty-six peace programs. Both NBC and CBS carried the regular peace broadcasts over the networks. From one hundred and fifty to two hundred local stations broadcast a weekly service for World Peaceways and the League of Nations Association.

8. *Revolutionary propaganda.* New regimes are particularly dependent on the use of radio for the acquisition and consolidation of power. Radio as a medium for political and military propaganda is effective when one group within a country seizes control of a government from another group.

The first goal of all revolutionists is to capture the radio station of the party in power. The Spanish revolutionists seized the throne and Alfonso's wireless station at the same time.

In a recent address in Berlin Dr. Goebbels, Minister of Propaganda, frankly exposed the "capture of the wireless" in 1933 by the Nazis—who had previously been vigorously excluded from its use.

"When the Führer was called to power in the midday hours of January 30, 1933," says Dr. Goebbels, "the historic fact was communicated to the German people by wireless. An historic event had occurred. A revolution had begun. Only a few hours later the revolutionary masses rolled through the streets of Berlin and passed through the Wilhelmstrasse before the Reich President and the Führer. All Germany was in turmoil. Only Broadcasting House in the Masuren Allee lay still—far from the noise of the city, with-

out light, not, indeed, without staff, but without leaders. The latter, after closing down, had gone home in the accustomed belief that they had done their duty."

And further: "At that point revolutionary National-Socialists, without office or permission, entered the Broadcasting House, loaded microphones and apparatus on to taxicabs, motored to the Reich Chancery, and from there enabled the German people to share through the ether in the capital's national upheaval. Broadcasting had become for the first time political."

The political control of German broadcasting has remained complete. All radio transmitters are owned and operated by the German post-office, with programs supplied by the German Broadcasting Company, itself government-owned. From his Berlin office, the Minister of Propaganda dictates.

In his autobiographical work, "The Struggle for Berlin," Goebbels coldly states: "Propaganda in itself has no fundamental method. It has only one purpose,—the conquest of the masses. Every means that serves this end is good."

German propaganda includes the organization of the population into a listening machine. In 1935, the government issued millions of "Peoples Receivers," cheap receiving sets which the industry was compelled to build. A "Labor Front Receiver" was installed in factories and in business premises for collective use. Each of the thirty-nine Nazi party *Gaue* (regions) has a *Gaufunkwart* or district radio officer. The one thousand districts of Germany are each under the direction of a subordinate radio official. When the Berlin office makes a decree of community reception, this army of radio lieutenants gets busy and every factory, public square and school is provided with receivers and amplifiers. It is estimated that about three-quarters of the German people listen in.

Government Propaganda

The administration's use of radio for propaganda is a necessary part of any democratic system. Public questions must be presented to the people with information and argument. The President and his Cabinet constantly use the air. The NRA was "sold" to the people by the aid of the loud-speaker in the home. Various government departments have exploited their achievements through dramatizations and addresses by key officials. The use of the networks is freely offered to members of Congress, to fortify administration appeal or to set in motion opposite points of view.

The President's "fireside chats" are regarded as quasi-propaganda, quiet, amiable, and pervasive. Some publicists like George E. Sokolsky, believe that the President by the use of radio developed a mass pressure upon Congress, which made the seventy-fourth Congress a rubber stamp. Radio exerts its powerful pressure upon the public which in turn forces pressure upon Congress.

It is difficult to determine whether government officials speak as private individuals or as servants of the State. Elected or appointed officials often step into the domain of propaganda. Critics of the administration may fight back with counter-propaganda, but this is only possible if they are granted access to the microphone.

Serious measures were taken by the Federal Communications Commission to expand radio programs directed from the United States to Latin America. The means were at hand. Four channels had been set aside for the use of the Americas by international agreement in 1931. It was not until February 19, 1938, however, that the hearing was held which allocated two of these short wave frequencies to the General Electric Company over Station 2WXAB, with powerful one hundred kw. broadcasts. The other short-wave frequencies were allocated to the Worldwide Broad-

casting Corporation of Boston, whose Station WIXAL is also high powered. Rigid conditions were laid out for the use of newly allocated frequencies. Commercial and advertising announcements are completely banned.

General Electric Company's station began its Latin American programs on March 4, 1938, the major portion of its broadcasts being in the Portuguese language.

The programs of the World Broadcasting Corporation are directed to Latin America five times a week. It is a non-profit organization subsidized by a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation and its charter indicates its altruism: "To produce and broadcast programs of a cultural, educational and artistic and spiritual nature and to arrange for the interchange of constructive radio programs throughout the world."

The Latin American programs of the National Broadcasting Station and the Columbia Broadcasting System both operate under an experimental license. These experimental programs cost the companies over \$100,000 yearly. The expense is charged off to prestige, public and patriotic service and good will in Washington. Besides there was always a hope that the FCC may toss a juicy plum into the lap of the networks by allowing short wave advertising.

Frank E. Mason, vice president of the NBC, testified at the FCC investigation in 1938 that the networks' Latin American broadcasts exceeded those of other nations. In 1938 they totaled sixty-three hours a week, compared with fifty-six for Germany, nine hours and fifty-five minutes for Italy and seven hours for Japan.

The United States disavows propaganda by radio. The FCC would have all programs cultural and educational. Carleton Beals, however, finds our broadcasts larded with propaganda and a steady drone for the Hull reciprocity treaties. "Our broadcasts," he says, "even if truly educational, inevitably become propaganda for a way of life, the

American way of life. They seek a purpose to create friendship, to sell goods to bar other foreign competition."

The danger is that the Latins in the long run may become inimical to our propaganda as we are to the foreign propaganda dinned in our ears. "For Latin America," warns Beals, "democracy is still a revolutionary concept, capable of tumbling down governments. To advocate it is propaganda. It is propaganda, far more revolutionary there, far more an alien doctrine than either totalitarianism or communism."

Shall the Government Step In?

In the war of propaganda, fears grip the broadcasters that the Government will erect and maintain stations of its own. Many publicists urge that the Government take active measures to meet propaganda by propaganda. The efforts of private companies to cooperate with the government in sending of programs to South America is deemed commendable, but the government is put in the position of asking favors from the stations which owe their very existence to its licensing.

What the networks fear most is the first opening wedge into the system of private control of broadcasting. Bills for the establishment of government stations have been introduced into Congress. One of these measures directed the Secretary of the Navy to construct a government radio station at Washington with the Commissioner of Education in charge of programs. Congressman Celler in 1937 urged the passage of his bill which provided that a government station be designed for national and Pan-American service, for the use of the President, members of the Cabinet, bureaus and departments, and for the interpretation of the various governmental activities by bureaus and departments.

The handwriting of the government is not yet on the wall, but cold chills run down the spine of private stations. They

paint a sad picture of the mess we will get into when broadcasting at Washington becomes the tool of politics. There are hosts of supporters for a government station who claim that a government station in reserve, would take the haughtiness out of those private broadcasters who show the slightest sign of discriminating against the party in power.

Sponsor Propaganda

Propaganda has crept into commercial programs with alarming frequency. The policy of the networks, it is true, is not to sell time for propaganda of any sort. Sponsor propaganda is voiced by a spokesman who may be a newspaperman, an ex-minister, a news commentator, a public relations counsel—a plutogogue as Prof. T. V. Smith of the University of Chicago chose to call the hired voice.

The crowning example of suave and subtle propaganda is the Ford Sunday Hour. William A. Cameron, one time editor of the Dearborn "Independent," takes to the air between symphony numbers to bespeak the mind of Henry Ford.

Advertising is the oldest form of propaganda. It has developed concurrently with the rise of the press and the expansion of commerce, but the methods of propaganda are employed in other fields today, especially in politics. The devices are borrowed from commercial advertising. The newspaper advertisement, the placard, the demonstration, the political speech with all the new methods of advertising, are all employed to persuade the consumer to buy new goods or services which have been offered to him.

On the NBC network, the "Voice of General Motors" has been heard not only extolling automobiles, but venturing forth into matters of employment, wage levels, and the "American system." On the CBS network, the Chase National Bank, cooperated with forty-five affiliated financial

institutions, provided a business forum enlivened with orchestral music.

John T. Flynn in the Town Meeting of the Air in April, 1938, described the insidious effect of such programs in this wise: "On Sunday evening the family is gathered in the living room when into their midst float the strains of music from a great symphony orchestra . . . then as the strains of some well-loved old song fade from the air and the family sits around, thoroughly softened up, there floats into the room and into the unguarded chambers of their minds the voice of the propagandist. For five or ten minutes the planned infection flows into the monster. It tells of the romantic sage of business, the great achievements, the massive wisdom, the matchless courage, the civilizing alchemy of the great business man as distinguished from the selfish and narrow ignorance and wickedness of the Government—the great-souled business leader compared with the small-minded and vicious senator."

Let us examine a typical passage from a recent "sermonette" of William A. Cameron. In reviewing the historical progression of America's fears, Cameron said:

"The uncurbed mobs, the wild-cat money, the plagues, the sectional divisions, all have passed away. They were temporal. The schools, inventions, liberties, the social progress have remained,—they are spiritual. And that is what is occurring today if we had eyes to see. The best is yet to be, the last for which the first was made. Here is the factual foundation of our faith in the ever-dawning future."

The average listener will not submit such utterances to analysis. He will be overcome by generalities. The thinking person will closely evaluate. He will want a definition of such lofty words as "liberties," "social progress," "spiritual." The underfed and unemployed will hardly share Cameron's concept of "our faith in the ever-dawning future."

John Vernon in *New Masses* has noted that Cameron

never comes out openly against anything but takes many a backhanded slap at the present administration. "For instance," says Vernon, "on March 13, 1938, Cameron asserted 'Leg irons must be taken off the nation's productive forces.' In other words let's take the country out of the hands of Washington and entrust it once more to the tender mercies of the bankers."

Belligerent Short Waves

The dream of radio as a powerful force for international good will is engraved on the legend over the portals of the British Broadcasting Corporation: "Nation Shall Speak Peace Unto Nation." Yet the "Radio War" goes on incessantly, day and night. Impartial observers estimate that more than half the programs sent out by the totalitarian states are open or veiled propaganda. The air is belligerent with polyglot communication.

The entrance of the United States into Latin American broadcasting can be traced to radio propaganda by foreign countries. Italy has consistently used the radio to sway the sentiment of the Moslem world of North Africa, Egypt, Arabia, Transjordan, Iraq and Palestine. Broadcasts came in Arabic from the Bari station. Their purpose was to undermine Britain's prestige and influence among millions of Moslems who had hitherto looked upon the King of England as the defender of the faith. Mussolini boldly proclaimed himself as the Protector of Islam. Radio "news" was invented, falsely accusing the British of using poison gas on the Arabs.

Britain sprang to its own defense with a radio counter-offensive. A new language policy was instituted. Previous to 1937 the British had insisted on talking to the world in English. Close study was given to the problem by the Ullswater Committee which reported that "in the interest of

the British prestige and influence in world affairs, we think that the appropriate use of language other than English should be encouraged." And so on March 15, 1937, the British put into practice the propaganda language policy of European states. "Say it in the language of the country you are aiming at." The forty million inhabitants of Brazil were regaled in Portuguese and the other forty-five million inhabitants of South America in Spanish. Special announcers handled the programs in Arabic to the fourteen million Moslems of the Near East.

The British, learning from experience, sought to make their programs attractive. Italy's crooner called Abdul Wahab held public fancy as the Bing Crosby of the East. It was necessary to employ showmanship and match him with a Picadilly dance band and various Moslem singers. As an escape from the usual practice, the British decided to introduce a straight news service in several languages.

British officials lean to the opinion that programs aimed directly at propaganda defeat their own purpose. A recent report to the International Broadcasting Council at Geneva frankly admits: "The reactions of the listener to what he suspects to be propaganda or sectarian views are not only negative, but fundamentally detrimental to the cause to which it is desired to attract or force his opinion."

Italy and Germany were the first to beam their short waves to South America in order to "entertain" the republics. The German strategy is to arrange with the South American nations to intercept the short waves rebroadcast so that the program comes over the local station loud and distinct. Carlton Beale in "The Coming Struggle for Latin America" makes the astounding revelation about ninety per cent of Guatemala's programs are Berlin broadcasts. Germany, Italy, and Japan followed up its broadcasts with offers of free books, pamphlets, news service, radio sets, actors and exchange professors. German directional transmitters in

operation since 1934 have the greatest clarity of reception and represent most advanced technical improvement.

The purpose of these broadcasts is an open secret. Their primary aim is to prove that republics are decadent and that society is depending on the new totalitarian order for its salvation. The lure of trade and security is held out with "Sure Fire" programs that suit the taste of the South American Republics. As a groundwork for the sale of goods, the Germans first sell ideas to Latin Americans. The German voice solemnly declares that Germany leads the world in cultural and industrial achievements.

Propaganda boldly emphasizes the thesis that "Democratic nations are crumbling." Nazism is the salvation of the world. America is honeycombed with strikes. We have no strikes in Germany. If you order goods from us you will not only get a superior product but you will be sure to get them. Take no chances."

In addition, German propaganda is designed to reach German-speaking people within foreign territory. Germans in the United States and Latin America are cajoled to organize to perpetuate the Nazi creed. Contact is made with the foreign representatives of the Führer in each country.

Wooring Latin America

Our country has felt uneasy about the invasion of Germany in the Western Hemisphere. To this end our enormous defense program has been instituted. The Germans believe that the Monroe Doctrine is just a paper barricade against radio programs that bounce through the loud speaker with seductive music.

How to Be a Radio Propagandist

Propaganda on the air is not an exact science and so the propagandist is not always sure that he is following the right

path. However, experience has evolved certain new radio techniques. The subject is being delved into by new various organizations.

The Institute for Propaganda Analysis in New York City under the direction of Prof. Clyde R. Miller has made clear many of the major devices of radio propaganda. We select from radio's bag of tricks a few of the more widely used methods, some of them morally indefensible.

1. Take advantage of the psychological principle that people in the mass are poor judges of their own interests. They are ready to flitter from one proposition to another without reasoning. Radio is seductive. It can hold out promise to lure men and women with a siren song. On the promise of a new security they are tempted to fling away the old to which they have clung with fears. For quick results, search for signs of preferences of your listeners which do not require deliberation. Aldous Huxley thus analyzes the weakness of men: "Dictatorial propaganda, which is always nationalistic, or revolutionary propaganda, is acceptable because it encourages men and women to give free rein to their pride, vanity and other egotistical tendencies and because it provides them with psychological devices for overcoming their sense of inferiority."

2. Attach to your appeal some slogan which in words is equivalent to a goal symbol. The slogan becomes indelibly written on the mind. The Spanish Loyalist, "La Pasionaria," during the siege of Madrid, brought in thousands of volunteers with her plea, "Better to die on one's feet than live on one's knees."

3. Repetition is the mother of success. Keep on repeating your slogan or goal symbol. This will not only realign your listeners to a new scheme of behavior but will create in them a zeal that is infectious. Dr. Goebbels lays down this formula: "The intellectuals say that the more often a theme is repeated the less interested the people. This is not true.

When I possess the talent to find even more Draconic and sharper arguments, then the public will not lose interest. On the contrary, the interest will increase.”

4. Broadcast news in the language of the country to which your short waves are directed. Germany uses a cultured Oxford voice to get its point across. Remember that Italy broadcasts regularly in fifteen languages including Hindustani, Arabic, Portuguese, Hungarian and Japanese.

5. Broadcast lessons in your native language to the country to which your appeal is directed. Brazil can tune in on lessons in the Italian language coming from Rome; and on German lessons from Berlin.

6. Minimize. Exaggerate. Interpret a local strike in the United States as a symbol of a major revolution; the draining of a swamp is evidence of the “restoration of the grandeur of the Roman Empire.”

7. Make your news broadcasts misleading, by sending them out incomplete and with omissions. Newspapers in Latin America which cannot afford the expensive wire service regularly pick up German and Italian broadcasts of the news free. Hence it is important to add Hitler’s sauce and Mussolini’s spice to the tidbits that are offered. There is no way to stop the static from “frying” the waves unless the transmitter is destroyed.

8. Attack the middle from both ends at the same time. The journalist, Chester T. Crowell, in a survey of air propaganda for *Collier’s Weekly*, gives this example: “The German Broadcast represents Uncle Sam as a raging and dangerous imperialist with sinister purposes toward Latin America but he is also a very sick man with the virus of Russian Communism in his veins and sometimes he is suffering from incipient death.”

9. Blanket foreign broadcasts that smack of counter-propaganda. Both the Russians and the Germans delight in this game. Broadcasts from Moscow in the German language

are blotted out by Berlin, and Russia does the same to programs in Russian coming from Berlin. Germany has been accused of putting the damper on American programs directed to Latin America.

A German trick is to fudge a bit toward the frequency of an English channel, just as an English news broadcast is coming to a close, and pick up where the Englishman stops. The voice of the German broadcaster will be as English as that of the original speaker; consequently the listener might readily assume that he was still listening to Daventry.

10. Mobilize national hatreds for war propaganda. This is the "name-calling" device which appeals to hates and fear. Represent the enemy, actual or menacing, as a murderous aggressor, a violator of humanity and international morals. Maintain this hostility by an assurance of ultimate victory and represent all of your allies strenuously aiding in your course and protecting common values. This will help in preserving friendly relations and will keep the fire of zeal burning in those countries that lend a helping hand. Broadcasting is often the one means of the mobilization of sentiment that is cheaper than bribery, violence or other control techniques. War propaganda calls for cooperation of the whole population as a military unit in action. Radio appeals along these lines emphasize the need for the physical and moral support of the masses for national self-preservation.

11. Make use of the "card-stacking" device of Dr. Goebels which makes it impossible to have anything said over the air except what the Government wishes to have said.

12. Make use of the "plain folks" strategy. Hitler and the Nazi leaders are represented as "men of the people" and the Nazi ideals are portrayed as the salvation of the masses.

13. Employ the "testimonial" subterfuge. Nothing is right which Hitler does not approve and whatever he sanctions cannot be wrong.

14. At the proper moment, resort to the "transfer trick"

to confer reverence and glorify esteem upon the leader of your principles. Thus Hitler, the former sign-painter, is the "man sent from Heaven."

15. Appeal to the historic traditions and the racial purity of your people. Denounce the former government as instituted by communists, radicals and Jews.

It is thus seen that the task of the radio propagandist is to achieve a goal by fair means or foul. The goal need not immediately be exposed. The unchanging aim of such propaganda is to intensify attitudes favorable to his purpose, to reverse attitudes, to win the indifferent or at least to prevent a group or section from breaking out in antagonism. This is the point where the creative genius of the radio propagandist is tested. He must be a producer in the strictest sense and be able to create those programs that will best accomplish his ends.

The Battle for Thought Control

The Japanese prefer to call their combination of censorship and propaganda "thought control." Because radio propaganda works adroitly on human nature in the raw, it has become an important agency in thought control of whole populations. The love of power, according to Bertram Russell, is a normal part of human nature responsible for this inordinate use of propaganda.

Dr. Goebbels holds the thinking capacity of the average man in contempt. He justifies any means to the end: "The people think primitively. The intelligence is subject to a thousand temptations, but the heart beats with its steady beat. The ordinary man hates nothing more than two sidedness when called upon to consider this as well as that. The masses think simply and primitively. They love to generalize complicated situations and from their generalizations to draw clear and uncompromising conclusions."

Can this virus of radio propaganda be counteracted? Liberal thinkers believe that youth should be trained in propaganda-analysis so that they will not succumb to the first blasts of the radio orator.

Several courses in propaganda have been introduced experimentally in twenty-five high schools of New York. The subject is inter-related to civics and the social studies take this approach: Examples of propaganda, both foreign and domestic, are brought into the classroom, Radio speeches, newspaper editorials, current motion pictures, are dissected under the glare of "truth and accuracy." Students are taught to search for motives at every step.

At Evander Childs High School in New York City, the study of propaganda analysis has been dramatized to capture the interests of the youth. A play entitled "Snow White and the Seven Propaganda Devices," presented by the pupils, challenged all types of propaganda. Beautiful Snow White (Gullible Public) is unable to make up her mind about the Neutrality Act. Pulling her in every direction are the seven little dwarfs of propaganda—Glittering Generalities, Bandwagon Trick, Transfer Device, Testimonial Trick, Plain Folks, Name Calling, and Card Stacking. After a severe buffeting, Snow White is saved from utter destruction by the charming Prince (Critical Thinking).

As they come upon the scene, the seven Propaganda Devices chant in unison:

"Oh, we are the seven devices,
We turn up in time of crisis;
We play upon your feeling,
We set your brain a-reeling.
We are seven active contrabanders,
We are seven clever propaganders."

Then the master propaganda device of all—Name Calling—sings suggestively:

“Of course when problems are appalling
We employ device name-calling.
If you don't know how to reason why,
Just tack a label on the other guy.”

Professor Clyde R. Miller, Director of the Institute for Propaganda Analysis, believes that there may be an answer in this method: By having people approach controversial problems not as antagonists or protagonists but as students of the propaganda which flows from the conflicts these problems represent. It must be remembered that propaganda is nothing more than the opinions and actions of special individual groups which affirm opinions and notions of other individuals and groups.

A student may ask the following: (1) What does the statement say? (2) What does it mean? (3) Who says it? (4) What are his interests? (5) Why does he say it? (6) Does the channel through which it appears, newspaper, newsreel, radio, give it added emphasis or does it distort itself by color or censorship? (7) Which ones do I believe? (8) Why do I believe them?

In brief students approach the controversy from the scientific angle, they strain out emotions, they will get the facts in pretty much the same fashion as a scientist gets at facts. By this method, we can check against our own prejudices, biases, convictions, ideals, as well as those of others.

Many point to the success of consumers' organizations educating the public to detect fraudulent commercial claims. When people discover the means by which they have been duped, they are likely to be on their guard. In the same way, it is possible to teach people to be on their guard about the motives and methods of those who would control their thinking.

The Group Leaders Guide to Propaganda Analysis is an experimental study project prepared by the Institute of

Propaganda Analysis. Courses in propaganda analysis have been extended experimentally to five hundred and fifty schools and colleges throughout the country.

Dr. James Bryant Conant, president of Harvard University, speaking on "Defenses Against Propaganda," over CBS, said:

"By considering the pros and cons of historic debates of previous generations, a student can exercise his own judgment on matters of political importance relatively unhampered by the propagandist. Every citizen should be taught fundamental principles of American constitutional government. Youth should be made acquainted with the psychology of public opinion and the methods of manipulating this opinion commonly employed. There should be instilled in him the importance of due process of law and the meaning of justice and liberty under the American constitution. These broad principles are to be taught by social, scientific, and literary history of this country, as well as a mature study of the historical problems of the past."

Members of the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues meeting in Berkeley in 1939, decided to analyze war propaganda in the hope of persuading Americans to weigh facts. Dean Carl Ackerman of the Columbia School of Journalism holds the same point of view. "The People of the country are not boobs," he declared with fervor. "They have sound common sense and are ready to reach honest American conclusions after they have listened to or read news dispatches and comments, considered facts and applied discrimination of judgment to the facts and opinions as presented by the different sides of the European war."

Professor Robert K. Spear of New York University only recently advised setting up in each high school and college "a unit of instruction on propaganda analysis to provide some means for a cool evaluation of the propaganda playing upon our prejudices, loyalties and free disquisition." Train-

ing in listening and rapid analysis of the substance of the speech and the style of oratory should be part of the curriculum. In addition speeches given over the air as they appear in print should be subjected to a more careful analysis for logical content and proof. The cold print will dissociate facts and logic from vocal tricks and hysterical oratory.

As a second means of heightening resistance to propaganda, Aldous Huxley suggests that people be trained to subject the devices of the propagandist to critical analysis, and to examine all metaphors, personifications, and abstractions to the most searching analysis. Empty words will not fool the listener so easily because they will be instantly translated into the real thing. Noble verbiage will not get by so easily.

The politician, the churchman, the statesman, the dictator, will not indulge in flights of hokum when he is made to realize that listeners will not accept them unless they make their meanings clear by the use of concrete terms. The tendency to be tyrannized by exalted words will remain one of the anomalies of human nature.

Stuart Chase, in the *Tyranny of Language*, made it plain that words can have meaning only in specific context, only by limited definition or in relation to immediate referents. The trick of the propagandist is to use abstractions and personifications and a lot of meaningless generalizations.

As an example, the economist analyzes such lofty platitudes as this, uttered by Goebbels: "The Aryan Fatherland, which has nursed the souls of heroes, calls upon you for the supreme sacrifice . . . which will echo forever down the corridors of history."

The same, subjected to Chase's semantic translation, is exposed as nonsense: "Blab . . . blab . . . has nursed the blab of blabs, calls upon you for the blab-blab . . . which

will echo down the blabs of blab." For the effectiveness of this style try it on yourself.

Thirdly, as part of the education against propaganda, the listener must be taught to dissociate the idea intended from all slogans and catch-words. Radio has a way of fastening a slogan in the ears of the public. Once the slogan is ripped off the argument, facts become more patent, and reason instead of fancy and passion rule.

Some one has suggested that if radio propaganda were seeking a slogan of its own it might choose, "Don't think! Listen, Believe."

The Voice of Propaganda

The propagandist is often the perfect trickster in the use of the voice. Experience teaches the speaker just what vocal effects bring the desired responses. Hitler had seventeen years of speechifying behind him before he attained his high post. The future was to be devoted to the time-tried tricks he had learned during his *kampf*. Dr. Goebbels has more faith in the superiority of the spoken word over all forms of propaganda.

A study of the propagandist should include his system of rhetoric and management of the voice. The propagandist is prone to indulge in endless repetitions and sweeping generalizations. Arguments are clinched by platitudes and the rhetorical question frequently indulged.

The agitator over the air must give evidence of strength and confidence by strength and confidence in voice. He is a master of exhibitionism in voice and plays at theatrical changes to achieve results. He even weeps. "We can always get Adolph to weep," Goering was supposed to have said about the Feuhrer.

The propagandist gathers vocal momentum from phrase to phrase. The voice surges to emotional heights. A series

of climaxes marks his appeal. The ending is often a scream of defiance. Hitler's vocal cords break under the strain of his "guttural thunder." As the tumult of words tumble from his lips, the voice ends in the frenzied shriek, "Heil Deutschland!" or "Sieg! Sieg!"

The quiet and reflective type of orator is least effective as a propagandist. The mob is more easily affected by a display of emotionalism evidenced by dynamic changes in pitch and volume and qualities of voice that echo the strongest inner feeling of anger, courage, revenge, sorrow and the like. The voice of a radio propagandist should seem inspired. The listener is whipped into line by appeal to the crudest emotions and common hatreds.

Huey Long indulged in crude shouting when he promised salvation for all on the "share the wealth" plan, but he had that colloquial touch which brought the mob within his fold. Father Coughlin plays on the entire gamut of his vocal gifts but his flights of oratory betray him as a flamboyant demagogue rather than a thinker.

The Radio Newspaper

Time was before the printed word, when news spread only through gossip. The age of oral communication has returned in the form which H. V. Kaltenborn has called the "Fifth Estate." Millions today would rather get the news through the ear than through the eye.

Spot news was once the monopoly of the daily press. The swift progress of radio in the dissemination of the news forced the press to yield the crown. The birth of spot broadcast began with the election returns of the Harding campaign of 1920. For over ten years after that, radio stations freely helped themselves to the news. As soon as it appeared in print, they passed it on over the air. The common prac-

tice was to sell news programs to advertisers of soaps, laxatives, depilatories and every variety of produce.

Two influences brought about the battle of the Press with the Fifth Estate. First came the depression of 1929. Advertising revenues of newspapers suddenly dropped to low levels while radio, by contrast, was waxing fat on profits. Secondly, radio had created the news commentator whose stylized news reports captured an enormous audience avid for the news.

The newspaper looked with alarm at this invasion of their property rights. The situation demanded a restraining hand. There is an absurd monotony in the oral presentation of news. Major events as well as trivialities in the news are treated on the same level.

The dispatches and commentaries during the European War crisis proved the whetted eagerness of the public to read the printed statement of the news. There is a class of listeners that does not fully believe the news until it has been set up in print. This may explain why many listeners write in for a printed copy of a speech or report.

In the early days the commentator loomed up as a dangerous enemy of the Press. The cry arose that commentators were filching the news. A few cents dropped on the news stands and they could walk away with the latest editions and the cream of the news. They had developed the art of emphasizing the human side of the news; they knew how to condense the news to fit time allowance; they could stylize ideas in impressionable language, more interesting than the printed page. And then there was the voice to conjure with. The speaking of the news brought not only information but entertainment to a new audience,—people remote from centers of population, the blind, the illiterate, and half-illiterate, and those more ear-minded than eye-minded.

The Press fired its big guns in 1931. The Federal Courts were invoked to establish a property right in the news col-

lected by the newspapers. Newspapers as a tactical measure clamped the lid on all radio publicity and refused to publish listings unless paid for at space rates.

The Press, however, had reckoned without its public. Circulation dwindled when readers stopped buying newspapers which did not include radio programs. The Press capitulated and restored listings. This was merely a temporary truce for the battle was renewed in 1933 when the American Newspaper Publishers Association issued the edict which forbade the broadcasting of news unless the stations did their own news-gathering. Radio felt the stab but did not surrender meekly. The public appetite and clamor for news had to be appeased. Some of the stations created their own news staff, others obtained or bought the news from the Associated Press, the United Press or the Hearst services. The publishers at once brought pressure to bear, and the AP left radio flat. The UP likewise soon reneged.

The networks were then left to their own devices. In the summer of 1933, CBS organized its own news agency,—the Columbia News Service. It set up bureaus in key cities here and abroad and contracted for foreign news from a British agency. The service was beginning to thrive on the revenue from the commercial sponsorship of such news when dis-sension broke out in radio's ranks. The NBC chain had no newsgathering bureau of its own. Instead of striking out boldly in competition, it was inclined to make terms with the publishers.

A general fear suddenly struck the networks. The press might, like some monster, retaliate and lend its powerful influence for government ownership, and that would be the end of them all. A variety of other reasons led to the death knell of the Columbia News Service. During 1941, the radio press rallied to the cause of the national emergency. At any moment its powers may be taken over by the Government and its franchise forfeited in the public interest.

Birth of the Press Radio Bureau

The two networks and the press associations finally agreed to cooperate. The result was a truce signed in 1934 and the creation of the Press Radio Bureau. Upon the council board of this Bureau were to sit the representatives of the United Press, the Associated Press, and the International News Service.

Competition, however, was not so easily stifled. Over four hundred independent stations were not bound by the Press-Radio agreement. Up in New England, the Yankee network, a group of nine important radio stations, took up the cudgels for the public, and established its own newsgathering service.

Quietly, too, another newsgathering bureau was planning to take the helm. It threatened to set up a sort of "Associated Press of the Air." This was the Transradio Press, Inc., which was actually ready to begin business one week before the Press Radio agreement went into effect. The editor, Herbert S. Moore, now thirty-three, had been associated with UP, and sought to build up an independent news service, free from restrictions for commercial purposes. Transradio began with the principle that newscasting should not be a mere rehash of stale items listeners had already read in the papers. It sought to present accurate spot news in a concise, colloquial, yet dramatic manner.

Moore established the policy that radio must tell the story in the "way a man would break the news to his wife that his boss had given him a raise." It managed to be first on the air with flash news of major importance, such as the Hauptmann verdict. Within a year Transradio news was broadcast over more than ninety stations. Today Transradio goes by teletype and radio telegraph to two hundred and ninety stations and boasts of an unusual number of "beats."

The Press and Radio Bureau has been attacked from many

angles and at present the opposition in a few major indictments:

1. The Bureau has set itself up as a sort of general protecting agency for the broadcasters when it has no such right. Edward H. Harris, former Chairman of the Radio Committee of the American Newspaper Publishers Association, denied any station had the right to establish its own press bureaus. "No agency directly or indirectly under government license should function as a newsgathering organization."

2. The system establishes a personal censorship over the news, since representatives of the press alone determine what news should be broadcast and what news should be omitted, and how the news should be written. Ironically enough, the Bureau claims that such news is furnished free to the broadcasters as a public service.

3. The Bureau robs the public of adequate treatment of the news. Its first regulations limited the broadcasts to two five-minute periods during each twenty-four hours and confined the news reports to a maximum of fifteen hundred words. In addition, the time during which these five-minute reports might be broadcast was so fixed that the news reached the listener after it had been printed in the newspapers. "For further details see your daily newspaper" became the slogan for news that was often stale.

4. Press associations have destroyed public interest in the radio press by the manner of treating the news. Vital happenings of the day are reduced to sketchy statements, written in a style often weak and uninspiring. A consistent effort is made to make it appear that radio is but a beggarly substitute for the newspaper. The presentation of facts does not mean a bald, commonplace style, even though Radio demands condensation. The making of such reports should command the attention of writers skilled in the oral graces

of English and unhampered by too stringent external control on their words.

5. Press bulletins as they reach the broadcasting stations are naturally stereotyped in form since they are meant for common consumption all over the country. There is an absurd monotony in the oral presentation of the news. There is also a gruesomeness in details of crimes and accidents such as the description of mutilated bodies or unusual methods of physical violence. The reader, ravenous for these details, can find them with illustrations in his newspaper, or he may skip them entirely.

Without giving undue exaggeration to the news, it is possible to lend color and variety to the reading of the news. What news reporting on the air needs today is something of the spontaneity and liveliness that characterize the commentator.

The British news-caster reads more deliberately, in marked contrast to the American style of delivery. He pauses to indicate any change of topic—from general news to sports results and from sport to the price of tin in the Straits Settlements.

"We don't believe in the golden voice," explains W. M. Shewen, the BBC's senior announcer of programs broadcast to the British Empire on short wave, whose voice is heard by many American radio fans.

These bulletins are handed over to an announcer to read. He can play the news up or down just as the typographical spread. In the olden days the airing of a press bulletin by Graham McNamee tingled with the tenseness and excitement of the city room. There was a glow to his voice and he made you *see* an event in larger proportions. The reader of news bulletins is confined to an agreeable reading of his script. Whether it be catastrophe or romance, political disruption or national revolution, triumphal flight of aeroplane or break of stock exchange, the announcer is a convention-

alized reader,—the very phraseology of his script is processed. A John Barrymore, if handed a script of this sort, could do justice to it in terms of emotion, but let the announcer try it and he would be fired the next minute!

In 1938 the French Government decreed that news programs be reduced from ninety to fifteen minutes a day on both government- and radio-owned stations, on the plea of the newspapers that they could not stand the radio competition.

Competition or Cooperation?

The difficulties between radio and the press appeared to be smoothed out, but actually they have grown more complex. Both are slumbering giants, ready to get after each other. In a special sense they are not truly antagonistic. Radio and the Press each has its own distinct place in the spreading of the news. The line of demarcation is indeed well marked. Wickham Steed maintains that "broadcasting may get its blows in first, and if the blow is shrewd and true it will command increasing confidence." He continues: "But newspapers can strengthen and deepen the impression made by the spoken word if the news they give is equally true and straight, and if their comments upon it are such as commend themselves to listeners who may have reflected overnight upon what they have heard before reading interpretations of it the next morning."

The newspaper can cover reams in its detailed reports; radio is forced to treat the news briefly. The newspaper will always retain its function as a depository of the news even after spot news has lost its pulling power. The news which reaches us out of the loudspeaker is ephemeral and of no use for reference. There must be a special reason why a man would want to read a speech of the president after he had heard it on the air. The radio dispatches and commentaries during the European war crisis in 1938 proved

the public's eagerness to read the printed statement of the news keener than ever. This may explain why many listeners write for the offered copy of a speech or report. The printed matter is a safer guide than the ear, for the mind in reading has a chance to ponder over the news.

Certain events grip the mind while they are happening and are best described over the air. These include sports, races, celebrations, speeches, civic ceremonies and the like. In this respect, radio is a neutral and unbiased news transmitting agency. The newspaper retains for itself its right as a protagonist as well as a disseminator of the news.

The principal objection to the joint control by press and radio is the fear that it is not sound policy to give a single agency control of the two means of reaching the mind of the American public. The danger lies in a possible conspiracy of press and radio to control the news and so control public thinking.

A monopolistic invasion of journalism would be a mighty wedge to totalitarian mass thinking. The surest guarantee of free speech lies in competition between the newspapers. Perhaps no one has put the matter more sanely than Sir Wickham Steed, the British journalist:

"In a word, the contest between broadcasting and the press needs to be judged from the standpoint of what is most conducive to public welfare and to the safeguarding of that freedom of public opinion which is a condition of every true civilization. Should broadcasting ever become an agency for the dissemination of one set of ideas to the exclusion of others, should any official or semi-official taint permanently disfigure it, or should it lend itself to other propaganda than that of making known from day to day, facts and views which the nation ought to know, it would in turn be required to be opposed, criticized and even denounced; and in opposing, criticizing or denouncing it, dependent newspapers would render a public service."

The Future of the Radio Press

What does the future hold for the radio press?

Imminent developments in television and facsimile, it is predicted, will make it possible for country newspapers to operate their own facsimile broadcasting stations using low-power ultra-high-frequency transmitters. Silas Brent envisages impending changes: "When one can see news happen while listening to it, the newspaper, as such will receive its *coup de grace*. One trembles to think what will become of the newspapers, so far as their present capacities and appeals are concerned, when this time arrives.

"I believe the daily will go by the board and that we will have weeklies blessed with some of the qualities of the 'Manchester Guardian,' yet containing summaries of important happenings with documentary material, with interpretations of political, economic and social events, with fewer pages devoted to the comics and advice to the lovelorn. In this way, the ill wind of radio may blow the press some benefit."

Publicists are naturally impatient with predictions. H. V. Kaltenborn would not venture a statement until he had looked in on the television of George VI's coronation. "Television is so near that it is high time to give it a little thought in connection with the news."

Both radio and the press live in glass houses. The press supplies the readers with whatever their owners think they have the right to lay before them, and radio is equally guilty of its share in propagandizing. This was the thesis of a vitriolic debate between Secretary Harold L. Ickes and Frank Gannett, newspaper proprietor.

"To preserve freedom of opinion, we must tolerate even an abuse of that opinion," declared the Secretary in a later analysis of the danger of reckless license unscrupulously used on the part of newspaper and radio.

"I would not, if I could," he conceded, "prevent the

expression in the columns or over the air, of any views on public affairs, provided only that the public is not denied an equal opportunity to hear the other side."

Constructing the News Script

The preparation of the news report is in the hands of skilled writers who have learned the art of radio style and presentation. It is an easy trick of adaptation, and the principles we indicate are about the same with all news bureaus.

1. Style is important. A newspaper written entirely in broadcast style might strike readers as unreadable just as a broadcast "talk" prepared in the style of a newspaper article would not receive the same degree of attention as if it had the marks of a personal style.

2. The news as spoken furnishes the "picture paper" of the air, hence bulletins should have their share of impelling phrases and words that provoke immediate images. This makes the news far more entertaining to the ear than the reading of short headlines, and the condensed lead which is the practice of the daily papers.

3. Each item covered revolves around one incident, and all unnecessary details are omitted. This leaves the listener with a single impression, aided by significant "color" details which require careful choice.

4. Statistical figures, in general news reports, bore the average listener and are generally omitted unless they concern matters of national importance such as WPA appropriations, the Draft schedules, Red Cross collections and the like. Figures expressed in generalizations of round numbers are more easily rationalized.

5. Certain special taboos apply to radio news. Transradio Press Service includes in this list unpleasant stories that deal with crime, unless they are of compelling national interest and are already of pulling effect in papers throughout the

country; also, gruesome details of crimes and accidents, such as the description of mutilated bodies or unusual methods of physical violence. The listener has no choice, he is at the mercy of the broadcaster and cannot stop the tale of horror unless he turns off his dial, and then it may be too late. The message may have already come through the loud speaker to the assembled family.

6. The brief five-minute resumé of the news contains from eight to ten fast moving items, each of which is datelined.

7. The punch sentence consists of seven words or less and impacts the ear with a force analogous to the black headlines which arrest the eye.

8. The use of the exclamation "Flash!" is no longer countenanced by the FCC. Announcers too often shrieked out "Flash" for the most trivial items already widely circulated in print, or as a preface for bulletins that had not actually just come over the wires.

9. Variety should characterize the items chosen for broadcasting. National news should be balanced by local news that affects the community within the range of the transmitter. Local Boston news may not have the slightest import in Seattle or Tennessee. The items chosen are of front-page importance dealing with fresh news or latest developments and so writers persist that if feasible, no two items on crime or politics should follow one another. If broadcasts cover more than five minutes, proportion requires that a longer treatment of a subject follow a shorter one. Here the rule requires study of better listener attention.

10. At least one news story may be featured and should run between one hundred and fifty to one hundred and seventy-five words. The average fifteen-minute talk, whether it be news or advice on health, contains about two thousand two hundred and fifty words although some of the veteran commentators cover more ground. For example, Lowell Thomas figures about two thousand four hundred words for

thirteen minutes, and others of the more rapid-fire variety, microphone from two thousand five hundred to two thousand eight hundred words in that length of time. The speed in every instance is naturally gauged by the speaker's style, therefore, there can be no definite rule for news broadcasts anymore than for teaching, spellbinding or preaching. Speed depends upon the material and voice personality of the individual broadcaster.

11. For immediate effect, start with "colorful" news items of human interest, and instead of the date line, play up the news in a "headline lead." The locale of the story must however be clearly indicated in the first sentence.

12. The most timely and important items may be placed where they will make the strongest impression. The biggest item will usually come second, but practice varies. The end item requires careful selection. Study the news for the features that can be played up entertainingly. The final paragraph lends enhancement to the broadcast and rounds things out. Lowell Thomas is master of the anecdotal item which is remembered long after the news items are forgotten.

13. The favorite news-time period is between six and eight P.M. with an additional summary at eleven P.M. which covers events since the last evening edition of the papers.

14. Special bulletins of transcendental importance may be "flashed" immediately and may interrupt a regular program or be inserted between programs. Emphasis on stories that appeal to women should be stressed from morning until late afternoon during their peak listening hours.

15. Bulletins of disasters such as aeroplane wrecks or ships sinking should be specific as to locale. A generalized news report worded: "Twenty people died in an aeroplane crash in Ohio this afternoon," would create undue alarm among listeners who have relatives flying at that period.

16. War news from reporters on the scene in foreign capitals is becoming of great importance, and should be accepted with a view to European censorships.

The Rise of the News Commentator

The first commentators of the news over the air were the announcers who gave to a listening America, the election returns of the Harding campaign of 1920. Only journalism was thus ushered in on the air with an event of national importance. All this is past history. The News commentator came into the radio field actually only when transmission and receiving sets became perfected. In 1922, H. V. Kaltenborn was the first and only editorialist on the air.

News programs reached their improved form in 1930. Led by H. V. Kaltenborn, Lowell Thomas and Floyd Gibbons, the news commentator established himself firmly with his public. Later, radio recruited Boake Carter, Edwin C. Hill, John B. Kennedy and others whose talents lay in the newspaper field.

The background and experience of the news commentator are of vital importance in his approach to radio. Lowell Thomas was on the staff of more than a dozen large metropolitan newspapers before he came to radio as news commentator for the *Literary Digest*. His life had been replete with action and adventure. An unquenchable thirst for travel had carried him to the far corners of the globe where he had seen history in the making. He has been a gold miner, cowpuncher, football player, law student, reporter, editor, college professor, explorer of the Arctic, India, Malaya, Burma and Central Asia; special plenipotentiary to Europe during the World War, war correspondent, world traveler, and author of many books on adventure. He has been an intimate friend of Field Marshal Viscount Allenby; of Sultans, Prime Ministers and Kings; friend of Princely Emirs of the East; close companion of Lawrence, the mystery man of Arabia; confidant of Carl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, acquaintance of princes and beggars of Jerusalem and Mecca, of London and Rome, of Paris and Singapore.

Lowell Thomas has been called the "Dean of Radio Commentators." He had capitalized on his experience by lecturing to more than four million people who paid close to a million dollars to hear his adventures. When first heard over the microphone his series of broadcasts, "Topics In Brief—The News Behind the News," Thomas pinch-hit for Floyd Gibbons. He was described as Radio's Newest Voice. Something in his rich and modulated tones conveyed a genuine friendliness to a vaster audience than he had dreamed of on the public platform.

The busy commentator may need assistance in compiling his stuff. Lowell Thomas maintains a private staff, which includes Prosper Buranelli and Louis Sherwin, both astute, brilliant and competent journalists.

Floyd Gibbons, before his microphone debut, was the newspaper reporter whose one journalistic object in life was to scoop the news. Indeed, he has been called the greatest "first news reporter" on the contemporary scene. In his earlier broadcasting, Floyd Gibbons edited the "Newspaper of the Air." He was the first newspaperman to leave an impress of his personality on his listeners.

Most fast talkers slow down once in a while but Gibbons developed a rat-atap pace of some two hundred and seventeen words per minute that held listeners spellbound. He translated newspaper experience into microphone experience. Eagerly and briskly he commenced: "Hello, everybody, bushels of news today, things popping up all over the map."

Floyd lost the sight of one eye by a machine gun bullet at Chateau-Thierry. John B. Kennedy recalls that Floyd used to have his scripts typed in jumbo type so that he could read easily. "With that big type he would come to the studio with forty or fifty pages of stuff, almost four times as many as the rest of us used!"

Floyd Gibbons' manner was to lean toward the mike, his

torso out-spanning the back of the chair by six inches on either side. He shot a quick glance over his shoulder at the studio visitor. The full lips of a rugged ringside face curled into friendly smile and foiled the glint of his one blue eye.

Occasionally radio makes a discovery in an outsider like General Hugh S. Johnson. The former ruler of the NRA on the air in 1939 established himself as a personality among the commentators. He scorned the academic style, and huskily expressed his opinions with dogmatic authority interspersed with Americanisms. If listeners differed from him, it was a warm colorful manner that listeners seek. Here is the man who is of the salt of the earth. His contract calls for delivery of a script two hours in advance of broadcast time, so that the network executives could look it over to remove any potential dynamite. His custom was to deliver it exactly two hours in advance, seldom an extra minute. There is a minimum time for argument.

Don Harold lets loose a satiric shaft in *Judge*: "And the headaches which you get from listening to General Hugh Johnson's news commentaries over NBC can be assuaged (perhaps) by using Bromo-Quinine, which sponsors him."

Edwin C. Hill tries to analyze the major events of the day, but not too philosophically. His aim is a dressed-up picture of events. He is not profoundly analytical. His broadcasts conform to the promise that people like to listen to colorful, dramatic stories instead of a mere factual presentation. His preparation is painstaking yet facile. It takes him a full day of research and about four hours of solid writing and revision to prepare his one broadcast.

"I have worked out a formula for my broadcasts," Hill explains. "First I hit the audience with some topic which is both timely and of general interest, after which I tell about some amusing angle, followed by a touch of sentiment or an emotional appeal, and conclude with some intensely dramatic item." For three years in succession, Hill was

chosen by the radio editors of the United States and Canada as the most popular news commentator.

Gabriel Heatter is relatively new to radio. For many years he was a free-lance writer. He owes his radio career to Donald Flamm, the president of WMCA. An article by Heatter in *The Nation* so intrigued the young radio executive that he invited the author to speak about it over the air. After Heatter's initial broadcast in 1932, the invitation was extended indefinitely. He ad libbed for fifty-one minutes waiting for the "flash" of the confirmation of the execution of Bruno Richard Hauptmann, the murderer of Lindbergh's child.

Whose Mouthpiece is the News Commentator?

The news commentator is fast becoming the mouthpiece of public opinion. If he confines himself to a mere recital of the news, he is on safe ground. If he imposes his personal judgment on questions of politics, national policy and economic affairs, he will be accused of "propaganda."

The news commentator always is presented with a dilemma. If he is to make any money at all, he must be employed by some corporation or other interests. It is but natural that the sponsor will choose a man with views that coincide with the views of the corporation that pays his salary. Even with the best of intentions, the best of the commentators are bound to be biased.

Boake Carter was born in Baku, South Russia, the son of a British oil man. When Carter began his broadcasts, his English accent grated on many. His energetic voice somewhat pompous in tone was nevertheless friendly enough to command respect. A. J. Liebling who "examined" Boake Carter in *Scribners* found that his "scripts are full of factitious heartiness like 'by-golly' 'great Scott,' and 'by-Jingoes'." They also abounded in pretentious premises: "that's a very

significant fact." He took leave of the listener with a "Cheerio!" invitation to his next serial broadcast.

The episode that made Carter was the fortunate break at the Flemington trial of Bruno Hauptmann for the kidnaping of the Lindbergh baby. In the early stages of the dramatic court room pageants, Carter departed from the conventional straight news broadcast. Instead he launched a phillipic against the forces of crime. CBS, which thought the public could not stand such strong stuff, erased him from the air waves. A deluge of protests made CBS reverse itself. Carter came back. In his heyday, Boake Carter's nightly audience was estimated as from ten to sixteen millions.

He was accused of cloaking his accounts of daily events in the tone of dark menace. His attack on labor unions became bolder. CIO pickets marched in front of Station WCAU (Philadelphia) where he did his broadcast and declared a boycott on the products of his sponsor, Philco Radio. Carter studied the radio technique provocative of Father Coughlin whom the commentator declared "always titillates his listeners."

Carter always wanted to go out on the limb, and soon talked himself into a lot of trouble. The parting of the ways was soon at hand. His five year contract with the Philco Radio and Television Corporation ended early in 1939. He was immediately signed up by General Foods to broadcast for Huskies and Post Toasties. Promptly the CIO counsel of Philadelphia passed a resolution of boycott against General Foods' products. A meeting was arranged between Carter and the union leaders. He agreed he would refrain from any direct comment on labor. "It takes two to make an argument," he said, "and I won't argue."

On August 26, 1938, General Foods said "Cheerio!" to Boake Carter failing to renew his contract. The man of the hour was off the air! How are the mighty fallen! Under the impact of censorship applied by pressure groups, the great

Boake was silenced. One catches something bitter in his complaint against his sponsors:

"I have always expressed my views," he said in a *Variety* interview, "but this butting in on the part of the sponsors gets worse with passing months. The unhampered radio commentator is a thing of the past. He is no more and there is no real free speech on the radio. It is absolutely impossible today to be a genuine radio commentator on a sponsored program. The sponsor we will say manufactures soap, and then let the commentator say something about the Germans and the sponsor objects because the Germans buy this soap. You mention the Italians and he gets jittery for the same reason. Everybody uses soap, and he sells soap everywhere, so there is nothing to talk about except the weather."

In 1940 Carter staged a comeback sponsored by the United Airlines, a much chastened man.

Heywood Broun unloosed a shaft against some of his fellow newspapermen. "I trust that nobody will insist that Boake Carter is an economist or Ed Hill an authority on contemporary labor relations. Both gentlemen do excellent and exciting jobs. Give either of them no more than a headline and he can make the invisible listener see troop ships upon the tide and watch the Derby horses in the stretch or thrill to the mental sound picture of a coronation band. This is an art. But it is not in any precise sense the craft of reporting. For the effect is produced almost entirely by elocutionary effort. We may see the happenings of the world, but we see them darkly as reflected through the particular personality of Mr. Hill or Mr. Carter."

H. V. Kaltenborn carries in his radio message that note of integrity and impartiality that has made him known as a "Good Will Ambassador of the Newspaper of the Air." Withal, he is not lukewarm and unopinionated. He speaks his mind with courage, and his judgment on many of the social and political issues is trenchant. He has made listeners

marvel at the truth of his predictions. Example: He foretold the fall of Dolfus and the acceptance of Hitler's ultimatum by the Czechs. His motives are humanitarian and constructive. "With radio," he says, "I have a new weapon with which to drive home my belief in world integration and world understanding."

Kaltenborn keeps his program up to the minute by reading, interviewing the great and near-great, and spending several months each year in those countries which are seething cauldrons of news. He speaks English, French, German and Spanish with facility.

Kaltenborn was always interested in foreign doings, and in 1922 WJZ asked him to conduct a quiz on foreign affairs. About the same time, he began broadcasting over the government station on Governor's Island despite a constantly recurring fear complex when facing the microphone. "It required four months of regular radio work to put me at my ease."

Some of the broader methods of maintaining strict impartiality may be noted.

1. Listeners will have more faith in the commentator if he gives his answers to questions of politics and national policy, emphasizing that the judgment is his own.

2. He must not lead the audience astray. In giving an opinion he must be honest. If information is not available, it is best to say so. It is better to admit that an opinion is a mere hazard or a guess, and is not founded on facts.

3. Every question has two sides. The light should be turned to the right and to the left if even for a brief moment to illuminate the subject. It is important to show that you have considered both sides of a case before announcing your own conclusion.

4. Reinforce any generalization by supporting details. A mere say-so is not enough. The radio audience has its critical groups as well as those who accept any assertion.

5. To increase respect for your own opinion, use quotations from authorities.

6. The news commentator must not presume he knows it all. No commentator can long hold his public if he carries an air of self-pretension.

7. If it is in your power, avoid a contract which compels you to kill your commercials with your news comments. It is a fatal practice which may bring you more money but which will eventually leave you poverty-stricken with the radio audience. Gabriel Heatter pours on Kreml so thickly that he succeeds in getting into the listener's hair.

Heywood Broun made the charge that the commentators who expound the news every evening are so busy doing scripts or having them prepared that they seldom get down to earth from their pent houses. Few of the news commentators make any pretense of gathering news. For the duration of their contracts the men who are first class news reporters have ceased to be good newspapermen. Vocal production has become more paramount than factual representation.

Interviewing the Great and the Near-Great

The work of interviewing comes within the scope of the news commentator. This is a particularly difficult art and involves a distinctly personal style. One must understand the man to be interviewed, as well as the subject matter of the issues to be discussed.

H. V. Kaltenborn has shown a special genius for interviewing. His easy facility of phrase, and spontaneity of speech, and his ability to make the man or woman interviewed feel at ease before the microphone, makes Kaltenborn a model interviewer. He knows how to extract information from the great and near great. His colloquy with Governor Landon during the Roosevelt campaign is a gem of its kind.

There is no more difficult problem in radio than that of the impromptu interviewer. The commentator will at least show some insight into the subject to be discussed. Ofttimes he will select the subject. He will stress the highlights and create something of balance—a coordination in a program crowded into fifteen minutes or less. The interview will be as much an exposé of the interviewer as of the interviewee.

Important interviews require scripts in the hands of both parties, prepared in advance. This allows for very careful editing. All this is a matter of agreement between both parties and requires the most tactful approach, especially if the person to be interviewed is ticklish about any change in his diction. Everything depends upon the reaction of the interviewee to the microphone. The commentator should always retain a speech manner that is colloquial. He may likewise employ those ad lib touches that remove the interview from the odium of a mere reading lesson.

The commentator must judge his man with certain purpose in mind. First comes the approach. He must gain his trust and respect. This personal relationship will solve the day. The interviewee himself must be actuated by a desire to satisfy some need. The commentator has the delicate task of persuading his speaker that Radio is calling.

There are many devices for gaining the support of the interviewee. The broadcaster should not touch on sensitive topics. His manner should be informal. The one who is to be interviewed will be sure to closely scrutinize the radio broadcaster to determine how friendly he is and how far he can be trusted. Sometimes the little laugh, or a preliminary conversation, helps create the feeling of "rapprochement." The manner of the radio interviewer contributes much to the success of the broadcast. The commentator's cheery word of greeting tends to break down the reserve and restraint which may overcome the interviewee. Praise often elicits the

most immediate response. It certainly is the easiest way to make your subject "thaw out."

It seems perfectly obvious that the broadcaster should learn something about the person to be interviewed *before* the interview, and yet this principle is more often observed in the breach than in the performance.

Cultivate an easy conversational tone instead of the District Attorney prosecuting manner. Such a course will mean a smooth performance, pleasant to the ears and comforting to the sense. Remember your interviewee is not on trial. His answers will flow agreeably, if you do not pound at him.

Many a commentator fails dismally in interviewing because he cannot adapt himself to the point of view of the person interviewed. The interviewer should not sit in judicial appraisal, upon what is said. He should see things through the other man's glasses as early as possible in the interview. The program is not a debate, but the drawing out of opinion without rancor or dogmatic rebuttal.

Broadcasters who hope to succeed in the field of interviewing must master the technique of questioning. Some of the silliest interviews come over the air in a series of questions that require "yes" or "no" for an answer. Questions which are likely to bring about a response unsuitable for radio ears are taboo. Ask one question at a time. Dorothy Thompson errs in this respect when she gets so excited she keeps on interrupting. Another blunder made by broadcasters is to repeat ad nauseam what a person has just said. This is a cute device for stalling for time and exposing the weakness of the interviewer. An interview is expected to contribute to the stream of thought. It is permissible to summarize, to clarify the thought and verify statements.

Radio is terribly exacting in the matter of pauses. A person is expected to shout out an answer without time to think. If the microphone practice is revised in this respect, the interview will seem more natural, certainly reach the ears of the listeners more agreeably.

How to Play Up the Press

Each commentator has his own particular slants in selecting his material. An analysis discloses, a formula or method that is common to them all.

1. Select some topic of general timeliness which will capture the interest of the listeners.
2. Follow with a theme which has its humorous angles, and make a "direct hit" by virtue of your witty interpretation.
3. Next, by contrast, play on some emotional theme that will invoke the sentiment.
4. Return to the more serious note of an event of dramatic values.
5. Wind up the broadcast with a return to a less serious theme, re-establishing a more pleasant frame of mind.
6. Finally, end on some cheerful little earful like, "So long, until tomorrow," or "Until tomorrow, Toastie and I will say, Cheerio!" Some end on a wisecrack, a quotation, an aphorism or a rhetorical sentence like that of a Walter Winchell broadcast: "Your country had a secession, a depression and a recession, but it never had an oppression."

Speaking the News

The successful news commentator must have the ability to write the news, but also to speak the news. Harlan Eugene Reid epitomized his own experience as a commentator in this way: "The news commentator reads, studies and writes all day. Then he delivers his stuff in fifteen minutes at night and tries to make the world think that it is extemporaneous. If he has written poorly, he may save the day by an excellent delivery. If he has a poor delivery, God help him."

The commentators have the additional problem of re-writing the news in their own peculiar radio style of speech.

The staccato sentences of Walter Winchell are suited to his brand of sensational news thrusts. H. V. Kaltenborn carries more dignity and weight in his discourse. His sentences are varied, well balanced, and allow for smoother rhythms in speech.

Lowell Thomas has a freshness and simplicity of style that can be easily understood. Boake Carter's manuscript might sound pretty silly if read by another. Some critic clocked Carter during a fifteen-minute broadcast and discovered that he began sixty-eight sentences with "and" and besides Carter interlarded his sentences with repetitions of "so's" and "but's."

A few rough notes is all that Kaltenborn brings with him to the studio. He picks out the most important news stories, and the rest is left to his magnificent gift of diction and his power to picturize.

Sterling Fischer, Director of Talks for CBS, presents this picture of Kaltenborn: "He speaks entirely from scribbled notes scrawled on old envelopes, or a couple of scraps of memo paper spread out on the table. This will give him specific material for a half hour talk."

Raymond Gram Swing, a serious liberal, has had various posts with newspapers. In 1936 he became commentator for WOR and rose to public favor as a sincere and unaffected speaker who relied on the factual rather than the hysterical. He never faces the mike without a script and avoids the error of talking down to his audience.

Arthur Hale was tried out in New York, months before his radio debut. As "Confidentially Yours," he is supposed to have the scoops of Trans Radio ready for delivery. About one hundred correspondents supply items, and are paid anywhere from five dollars to one hundred dollars for the news they provide and are said to be located all over the country. Some of them are ex-cabinet officers, ready to supply choice items.

The news commentator as a rule does not seek for literary effects. His art is that of colloquial speech. Too much formalism would destroy that intimate touch of the commentator with the listener. The commentator appeals to the audience as a living personality close to the heart of things. A pedantic style removes him from the popular sphere.

Guiding Rules for the News Commentator

The successful commentator who has mastered the details of his art can readily adapt his experiences to radio.

The Editor Emeritus of *The New York Times*, the late John H. Finley, set forth in an address before the Southwestern Journalism Congress shortly before his death: "The editor must have a glimpse into all fields of human knowledge and achievement. He must also be aware of the great abysses of human ignorance which no editorial Marcus Curtius can close, however sacrificially noble his purpose. He must not only know something and everybody, but know where to get the everything that is known about anything."

The editorialist of the air must follow the same rules. The news commentator must know the truth as well as it can be known, and then know how to tell it. It is more and more to the vocal newspaper and less and less to be a propagandist. To appraise the news in terms of human values is the great task of the radio news commentator.

The following summary is meant to be merely suggestive of the requirements that mark the more successful broadcasting:

1. A wise selection of the headlines in the news that will strike the average interest. Everybody cannot be interested in everything. The trained newspaperman does not find it a formidable task to select from the UP and foreign cable reports those items that will command attention. This means that some fifteen thousand words must be boiled down to

approximately three thousand words that will count with the radio audience, spoken at the rate of one hundred and seventy words per minute for about fourteen minutes.

2. The telling of the news quickly, clearly, completely and accurately. This is problem enough.

3. A style that is individual, with a vocabulary not forced or stilted.

4. An *interpretative* touch in affairs, that is notably free from prejudice.

5. Explanatory details that will increase the interest of the listener and help him to understand what is being pictured.

6. The trick of condensing without missing important and interesting details.

7. An ability to select the less important items that reflect the human side of the news. These are equivalent to the features of a printed newspaper. The bare, brief terse paragraphs of the printed newspaper often become the lead article of radio. The long, dry, routine stories may demand very brief mention.

8. A sense of proportion in the news. The general news commentator does not harp on any one field to the exclusion of others. He speaks for a large audience whose varied interests may not be denied.

9. A sense of humor. The successful commentator is able to glean the laugh from the foibles of men and women as indicated by their doings from press reports. The radio commentator is the accurate reporter plus the genial commentator. Lowell Thomas said, "Talks should be sprinkled with nonsense, with here and there a thrill, perhaps a sob. My talks are planned as entertainment, not education."

10. A sense of timing is important to fill the full period assigned. Some commentators make their scripts the right length by having a couple of pages of short fillers for use at the end.

11. An understanding of the taboos of radio news reporting. A newspaper man can say things in print which as a commentator he would not dare discuss on the air. All this is a matter of good taste. A radio audience consists largely of women and children, the husband and other members of the family. The listeners exercise a definite censorship. If any class of listeners are offended, they are bound to make a protest. Gabriel Heatter recommends: "There are ways of handling stories with the edge of scandal. Never let it get out of hand. Treat it from an inoffensive angle. People are divided. The broadcaster must exercise finesse in dealing with such scandals as that of Mary Astor and George S. Kaufman, the escapade of Eleanor Holm Jarret, or the adventures of Jimmy Walker. There is always a way to tone down the vicious element in the news."

12. Flexibility of voice. The newscaster should be master of modulation. The ear is sensitive to changes in melody, volume and emotional color. The news can be recited in a calm, matter-of-fact way and it may also be spoken to lead you up dramatically to the climax in such a way that when you get there your pulse will be up around one hundred and twenty. By the tone of his voice, the commentator may tone down or exaggerate the import of the news in the same way as the headlines in the press.

The New School of Gossip Commentators

Walter Winchell is the father of the school of gossip commentators. His enormous success is based on the human instinct to pry into the intimate affairs of people and live vicariously on the experience of others. Winchell was able to prove that even the most trivial facts hold an extraordinary fascination for the listener.

It is in the expansive hinterland of America, away from the big cities, that Winchell has his greatest vogue. His

words are literally eaten up in the sticks. His comments touch on all classes of society. No one is safe from his ferreting examination, sports champions, gangsters, actors, motion picture stars, the playboys of society, bubble dancers, the social climbers and the debutantes, the literary lights and the politicians.

All of this gossip comes over the air with unquestioned authority. Tradition has grown up that if Winchell says it, the thing must be true. A lawyer skilled in libel practice, bluepencils everything Walter broadcasts before it goes on the air and, like a man who hates to keep a secret, permits America to look in on everything that he sees or learns about everybody's life.

No one has estimated the number which constitutes Winchell's radio audience. His listeners probably measure up to that abused adjective, "vast." His venture in radio parallels his success in journalism. He is credited with drawing a third of the circulation of the *Daily Mirror* (six hundred thousand) and his syndicated column appears in more than a hundred newspapers which have an estimated circulation of seven million two hundred and fifty thousand. His Jergen's Journal now in its tenth year, is one of the oldest on the air under one sponsorship. Its current Crossley rating is twelve which is the top for newscasters as compared to Lowell Thomas' Summer Time rating of seven.

Winchell speaks as he writes, tersely. The air is arrested by his crisp flash of: "Good Evening Mr. and Mrs. North America and all the ships at sea." A slightly nasal tone mixed with breathy quality impels the listeners' excitement over the disclosure of hitherto dark secrets. A personal style, arresting, with answers to those who write to him personally.

"Earth shaking announcements," William P. McAvoy calls them. "A lot of them have been printed, most of them have little significance and you can read any of them next morning without raising either your temperature or blood-pressure."

Winchell talks about two hundred words a minute when he broadcasts.

"Do you know why I go so fast?" he once confessed as though he enjoyed the joke himself. "If I talked slowly, people would find out what I was saying and remember how dull it was."

At times Winchell's style is too obviously clever and affected. He forces epigram and overdoes his balanced sentence. "Americanism is not using a flagstaff as a blackjack." "America is not playing 'The Star Spangled Banner' and drowning out the voice of reason." "Americanism is not talking of justice when your fellow American needs justice."

His peculiar genius is in giving his "air column" the touch of dignity by espousal of social causes, his respect for the downtrodden and the abused; scallions for the villains and orchids for the heroes.

How does Walter act before the microphone? An intimate study of him was made by his friend, William P. McAvoy: "With his hat on the back of his head, his coat off, his shirt open, his tie loosened, he works his sound effects for telegraph and wireless messages while he shouts into the microphone his 'dots and dashes with lots of flashes from border to border and coast to coast.' His nervous excitement exhausts everybody around the studio, and after twelve minutes of this machine-gun delivery, he collapses like a rag doll."

Winchell has a long way to go before his radio decline. He has a straight fifty-two week contract at four thousand dollars per. It may be that time will come when it will be possible to use the epitaph prepared for Winchell by a critic and approved by Walter himself: "Here lies Walter Winchell—At last the dirt's on him."

In the field of movie-gossip Jimmy Fidler has attained a vogue which reflects the era of movie-star worship. His catch phrase "And I do mean you!" has become a by-word

to approximately twenty million listeners. He babbles about men and women on the screen, opens up the scandals of Hollywood and releases the choice bits of human frailty to which Hollywood is subject. Twice a week for fifteen minutes he is on the air for Proctor and Gamble. His tongue is full of sharp rebuke, a tendency which his sponsors have softened.

Here are the other items which made his competitors in the key-hole peeping business sad and unhappy:

"Flash! I am about to reveal that Clark Gable and his wife will announce their intention to secure a divorce tomorrow and I will not only divulge that but I will name the place where they will meet to settle their financial affairs and the lawyers who will represent each."

Jimmy Fidler is one of the more than five thousand professional gossipers who keep the world informed about the doings of Hollywood's greatest. He broadcasts over NBC each Tuesday evening, writes a daily news-and-gossip column in the interests of a cough sponsor, and spends the balance of his time making his competitors' faces an apoplectic hue by scooping them with astonishing regularity. Where and how he gets his information is his own secret. Rumor gives him a spy organization second to none in Hollywood.

Women gossipers of the air are represented by Hedda Hopper, the fifth wife of the oft-wedded and now deceased De Wolf Hopper. Hedda is rated less accurate than most of the gossips, and is famed for her rough talks. In 1939 Hedda was signed up on the recommendation of the M. G. M. publicity office and lost no time in delving into the careers of the Hollywood stars. She is the successor of Louella Parsons, but much more vigorous in method. "You can't fool this old bag," she says impulsively.

And so women remain the target for man's inquisition. The world is ever ready to probe into the inner secrets of their neighbors and thus satisfy the human instinct for gossip and personalia held sacred.

Radio Foreign News Correspondents

Radio has brought on an insatiable demand for expert commentaries, interviews with men in power, eye-witness accounts and the direct speeches of dictators, foreign ministers and men who rule.

When technical improvement made possible instant transmission of the news across the seas by the human voice, the Radio Correspondent came into being. The dean of them all is Caesar Saerchinger who earned for himself the sobriquet of "Radio's First Ambassador." For seven years he served NBC as European representative, to resign in 1937 only because the job seemed to offer no future. Had he waited another year, he would have found his position greatly augmented in importance and responsibility.

He was succeeded by Edward R. Morrow. As a radio correspondent Morrow had three great advantages over newspaper reporters on the scene: 1. He beat the newspapers by hours; 2. He reached millions who depend on provincial newspapers for their foreign news; 3. He was able to write his own headlines since he emphasized what he wished.

The broadcast of speeches from America to England during the period of 1930 was practically nil. The actual speech that inaugurated speeches west and east was the first inaugural address of Franklin D. Roosevelt. His voice captured the imagination of the British.

On the initiative of the British Broadcasting Corporation, arrangements were made for a series of talks by prominent Americans to be relayed to England alternately by CBS and NBS. The first of the series, "American Points of View," included such speakers as Secretary Perkins and Pearl Buck.

An exchange series dealing with the interpretation of the news was also organized by CBS under the title of "Transatlantic Bulletin." The import of these broadcasts was to convey an impartial analysis of political trends and

developments both of England and the United States. On this side of the water we began to hear distinguished British journalists and commentators like Raymond Gram Swing, Vernon Bartlet and Sir Frederick Whyte.

International news broadcasting reached its highest peak during that tense fortnight when the world felt itself on the brink of new cataclysm. The speed and thoroughness with which radio brought to America complete news of the duel between Chamberlain and Hitler, remains one of the marvels of news communication.

One has but to study the chronology of events to understand the complexities. Those hectic days, stations stayed on the air twenty-four hours. The story of the crisis first occupied the foreign radio correspondent when in July, 1938, the British government decided to mediate to break the deadlock between the Czechoslovak government and the Sudetan Germans. Lord Runciman was sent to Prague to stave off German intervention.

The second chapter of the swift moving radio narrative was laid at Berchtesgaden whither the British Prime Minister had flown to find out directly from Hitler if there was any hope of saving peace. By September 14, 1938, it must be remembered, the German troops were already at the Czech border threatening invasion.

The trials and tribulations of a radio correspondent cannot be underestimated. *Newsweek* (December 17, 1939) gives a detailed report of William L. Shirer of the strenuousities of the work: He traveled two thousand nine hundred and fifty miles (practically the distance between New York and Los Angeles) by air, train, truck, bus, car, and horse-drawn army carts. He averaged two hours sleep daily, mostly in his clothes, and ate sandwiches, hot dogs, and coffee until—"I'd rather starve than face them one more day." He had his best meals with the Czech and German troops in the field: "It was warm and wholesome (and) trading my American ciga-

rettes against their food was a fair bargain. American cigarettes were worth their weight in gold to them." German was the universal language.

Despite these difficulties, Shirer managed to contribute his part to the two thousand eight hundred and forty-seven minutes of European broadcast carried by CBS: "I've belted so long into the microphone and bad telephones that my doctor says that if I don't keep my mouth shut for a few days my voice will be gone entirely."

Max Jordan similarly went through rigors. Although he suffered from a cold he made forty trips by plane throughout Europe and was obliged to hire a substitute to speak for him.

Jordan disclaims any inside track on his scoops. The four power pact was signed at seven P.M. New York time and forty-five minutes later, and a half-hour ahead of CBS, NBC had the news on the air. This is the impartial attitude which should characterize commentators who, in the phrase of Caesar Saerchinger are merely "eavesdropping on history."

The third chapter covers the events at Godesburg where Hitler handed Chamberlain a map indicating the territory he intended to occupy and announced his intention to march on Czechoslovakia.

The next period is crowded with events that led to the pact of Munich. Hitler unconditionally rejects the ultimatum of the Czechs; Britain declares her purpose to associate with France and Russia in resisting invasion of Czech territory; Hitler makes a violent speech of denunciation; France and England begin frantic preparations for war; the Little Entente, Rumania and Jugo Slavia mobilize; President Roosevelt makes a fervent appeal; the "last, last" efforts are made by Sir Horace Wilson to halt the German armies and finally a plea is made to Mussolini to use his influence on his fellow dictator.

During that fitful period from September 10th to October 1st the networks were put on twenty-four hour duty and on many occasions remained open throughout the night. From the executive standpoint the situation demanded the marshalling of experts both here and abroad. Programs were frequently broken into with bulletins. As the international crisis increased, NBC and CBS broadcasts spread over wide points of origin. On some succeeding days the news bulleting and resumes were coming from as many as five places on the European map.

America became accustomed to the cue spoken by Kaltenborn: "Calling Ed. Morrow . . . Come in Ed. Morrow." Kaltenborn phoned Prague periodically and enumerated first hand reports from Maurice Hindus on the man-in-the-street reactions.

The man of the hour was H. V. Kaltenborn. The gray-haired veteran of the airways practically lived at the studio during this period. He spoke about two hours each day.

In this marathon of achievement, Kaltenborn is regarded as one who taught Americans more about European events in those twenty days than most of them had learned in a lifetime. Kaltenborn's analyses, while not always brilliant, were facile and illuminating. A man cannot always be a prophet. His occasional lapses are to be forgiven. He believed until the last that Chamberlain was a man of honor. He interpreted Hitler's final broadcast as a plea for peace instead of the pronouncement of doom on President Benes of the Czech nation. This slip-up caused Kaltenborn to change his opinion on his very next talk.

The burden for European broadcasts rests largely on the representatives of the networks stationed abroad. With London as his headquarters, Morrow was acting as European Director for CBS, and in a similar capacity in Berlin was Max Jordan of NBC.

The post of European Director requires more than usual

gifts and experience. Some brief biographical notes may be permitted here.

Morrow is a South Carolinian born, still in his early thirties. He got an insight into European affairs as Assistant Director of the Institute of International Education. In 1935 CBS enlisted him as Director of Talks which afforded executive training in apportioning time space for political broadcasts during the Presidential campaign of President Roosevelt. The toga of Saerchinger fell upon Morrow when the dean of European radio correspondents resigned in 1937.

William Shirer, assistant to Morrow, is a former Chicago *Tribune* newspaperman who came to CBS after service with Universal News.

Max Jordan, a former INS correspondent, holds the degree of Ph. D. from the University of Jena, and is accredited with keen political understanding of contemporary Europe. His headquarters are in Basle. Fred Bate, established as the London agent for NBC brings to his work the background of twenty years' experience in business and newspaper enterprise. He was formerly secretary for Owen D. Young's Reparation Committee.

The Mutual Network Representative is John Steele, who was formerly chief of the Chicago *Tribune*, London Bureau, from 1919 to 1935.

The Director's assignments are not restricted, for he must be wherever he can serve best. His is no sinecure, making jumps from city to city with a suitcase, making arrangements for open circuits, breaking down the barriers of officialdom, consulting radio-director generals, interviewing the man-of-the-moment, contacting foreign chancelleries, engaging the best available commentators and always keeping in touch with New York office by Transatlantic telephone and prepared at any moment to step into the breach.

Allocating all his forces on the continent, Morrow arranged to have William Shirer at Geneva. John Whittaker

of the Chicago *Tribune* was stationed in Paris. Kenneth Downs of the International News Service. In Berlin, White-leather of the Associated Press and Pierre Huss of INS, Mathew Halton of the Toronto *Star*, the distinguished British Sir Frederick White.

The rival networks were not to be outdone in their preparations. With indefatigable skill, Max Jordan and his assistant Bate made arrangements to broadcast: from Prague, the commentary of Karl von Wiegand, correspondent of INS; also from Prague, Walter B. Kerr, correspondent of the New York *Herald Tribune*; from Berlin, Walter Deuell of the Chicago *Daily News*; from London, Gordon Lenox of the London *Daily Telegraph*.

Morrow himself up to 1935 participated personally in some thirty-five broadcasts and arranged a total of one hundred and fifty-one short wave programs from European centers. It is difficult to realize the strain of making a personal broadcast at seven a.m. and working throughout the night until the next morning at six a.m. Yet this was precisely the routine of Morrow on September 28, 1938, when from London he connected CBS with Frank Grandin in Paris, introduced commentator from the House of Commons, arranged a pick-up from Prague, induced Pierre Bedard to interpret the speech of Premier Daladier, swung to Berlin to give William Shirer the outlet to America, returned once more to Prague for the comment of Vincent Sheean, and then introduced the Archbishop of Canterbury and Stephan King-Hall and finally wound up his day with summaries from Paris and Czechoslovakia.

The influence of the foreign radio correspondent is not yet quite determined. Some believe that his influence on America's reaction to foreign news is more vital than all the newspaper editorial judgments combined. A certain amount of discretion is necessary in broadcasting from Europe. If the network does not keep itself persona grata with the

foreign offices, it will find itself in hot water. The radio foreign correspondents must be mindful that there will be other days when they will need cooperation. They must beware of prodding the sore spots.

Such a post requires utmost diplomacy without a surrender to the lie. Otherwise the commentator would be just a tool for foreign propaganda. In times of crisis the voice of the foreign correspondent may be constrained by government officials. The news broadcasts from foreign governments in themselves cannot be trusted. During the Czechoslovakian crisis, WOR made recordings of foreign short wave broadcasts from foreign governments and then rebroadcast them side-by-side. There can be no more eloquent evidence of the difficulty of getting at the truth.

Special Events

Special events are divided into four groups:

1. Sporting events.
2. News coverage.
3. Civic enterprise.
4. Novelties in special events broadcasts.

In times of emergency the microphone reporter is on the scene to perform a public service. The networks have performed a signal service in sending calls for blood donors, making appeals for food and medical supplies during emergencies and advancing the campaign for safety in driving. Under this head, too, come the broadcasts of speeches of celebrities including those of the president of the United States. These programs generally can be arranged for in advance. Novelty broadcasts are always extremely appealing because they break through the familiar routine and bring to the listener a sense of the ludicrous. In addition, they do not cost much, and yet command the largest audiences.

The networks have performed a signal public service in

the organization of a special News and Special Events Division. Included under this general title are news reports at the scene, descriptions of significant local, national and international happenings and broadcasts of the speeches of men and women in the public eye. In addition this division concerns itself with the announcing of major sports events.

Let us glance at a typical network set-up to handle the news. At NBC the work is co-ordinated by a Director who commands the services of division officers in San Francisco, Hollywood, Denver, Cleveland, Chicago, Pittsburgh, Schenectady and Washington. The Special Events Department of a network functions like a metropolitan newspaper. Teletypes provide them with the sending apparatus and a power plant. A pack transmitter that fits on a man's back is used at such spots that the truck cannot reach. The engineer straps the transmitter on his back, runs to the scene and short-waves his story back to the truck where it is re-broadcast and short-waved to the big station whence it is relayed to the world.

The newspaper man has an advantage over the radio reporter. He has only to be on the spot, find out what goes on and then telephone, or telegraph the City Editor. The radio reporter must have his portable short-wave equipment, for he is forbidden by the FCC regulations from phoning his headquarters from the scene or to have his voice put over the air by the ordinary phone circuit. An exception was made during the Hindenburg explosion at Lakehurst, N. J., when a radio announcer rushed into the only available telephone booth and held his ground until NBC's sound equipment was rushed by plane and truck from Philadelphia.

The "Seeing Eye" and "Hearing Ear"

Many special events announcers have not advanced beyond the primary stage in the art of oral description. A

trained newspaperman, able to write vividly about an event he observes, may fail utterly in his oral style. For the broadcaster, oral skills indeed are more important. Once he is on the spot the special news broadcaster is on his own. His problem is complex. He is to convey a moving picture in words equivalent to the motion picture camera. The commentator is as good as his words. Such an effort requires a vocabulary which kindles the imagination.

A sparse vocabulary cannot stir a spark in the listener. The piling up of hackneyed adjectives, and continued repetition of the same word, defeats its own purpose. The commentator cannot overcome the lack of his own imagination by the abuse of superlatives such as "grand," "wonderful," "glorious."

One would not suspect a British announcer of being deficient in the King's English. Yet the broadcast of the Coronation of George VI found the British announcers hopelessly obsessed by such favorite phrases as "You wouldn't believe!" "This is all perfectly wonderful!" One annoyed American counted some dozen utterances of "This magnificent spectacle!"

The British are accustomed to long pauses. Our ears are used to swift continuity, no breaks, plenty of ad libbing, and a pause of more than twenty seconds leads the listener to believe the wire has gone "dead."

Nothing more easily exposes the emptiness of a news reporter than his groping for words at a time when the listener is keyed to the situation. The spot announcer should be guided by the adage: "Words are like parachutes—they are of no use unless they open up." The elementary principles of description are more often ignored by the broadcaster. Only a few of these principles are here set down in their application to broadcasting.

1. Oral description requires accurate observation. The primary function of the special talents announcers is to in-

form. The "seeing eye" translates the scene to the "hearing ear" who, what, where, when, why. The broadcaster's mental impression must be clear before he talks into the microphone what he sees and feels, so that the listener gets an accurate picture of what you read over with clarity and the rest is easier.

2. It is best at first to present such a picture or impression as one would get from a first glance. One gives attention to the mass. From general impressions, pass to the most striking, interesting and significant details. Almost by intuition the trained observer decides which are the more commanding things worth talking about. Emphasis requires that important matters stand out and that minor details be kept in the background. Too many details will make it difficult for the listener to hold the parts of the story together.

3. The order of observation is generally the space order: foreground to background, top to bottom, center to circumference, right to left. Specific references such as "on the right, just beyond, in the distance," will help the listener to visualize special relations. As an aid to this impression, it is important to indicate the point of view as fixed, changed, or moving.

If the broadcaster is to remain in one fixed spot, it is important to select the most favorable point of view. If a switch is made from one position to another, say from the limb of a tree to the balcony of a house, the listener must be reminded of the change to the new point of view. If the announcer is in a plane reporting army air maneuvers in a supposed foreign attack on our Atlantic seaboard, the point of view is constantly changing and the panorama is continuously indicated.

4. A unified description of the scene requires an appropriate ending. Many broadcasters leave the report of the scene literally in the whole air. The ending should convey

the dominant mood of the broadcaster, with the emphasis on some important detail.

5. If you feel you have exhausted your powers or want your own point of view augmented, turn the microphone over to an assistant. This is called "bouqueting," in radio parlance.

It pays to tell the truth. No need to exaggerate and fall into melodrama of your own creation. Floyd Gibbons once tried this in a broadcast of the Ohio River Flood, falsely indicating that sensational happenings were taking place when they were not taking place. He was sued by the script writer for two hundred and fifty thousand dollars damages who held that his reputation had been marred. Subsequently the suit was withdrawn.

Military Analysis Commentator

A new class of commentators grew up out of the war. These are military analysis commentators who study the military tactics and moves of the powers and report their observations over the air. Army and Navy experts are not permitted to air their views during their active service.

These experts are generally former military men or retired officers in the aviation, land or sea forces of England or America. For a time General Hugh Johnson was NBC's military observer. Major George Fielding Eliot speaks for WABC, makes summaries of the evening European short wave round-ups. He brings coherence to conflicting claims and outlines the probable course of action. Most of the commentators are poor in voice, speak in monotones and punctuate their remarks by heavy breath. Nevertheless they remain popular with the listeners.

The radio war reporter has come to stay. Who knows whether short wave transmitters may be set up near battle-

fields. The time may come when war authorities will grant the privilege of broadcasting the actual combat.

First attempt to convey war news from the scene of battle is credited to Floyd Gibbons. In 1932 he was assigned to the Manchurian war zone by NBC. The zest of Floyd's voice brought to America the sound of big Japanese guns booming over the Chinese masses.

H. V. Kaltenborn was in the heat of the Spanish conflict. Making his headquarters at Hendaye, he dashed into the Loyalist headquarters and then rushed into the Insurgent territory. He sought interviews with the leaders on both sides and got material at first hand.

The battlefield approached the frontier town of Irun. From the rooftop of his hotel, Kaltenborn was able to report the actual process of the fighting. He made a running commentary of the horrors of the conflict just as a football commentator does, with the battle on the gridiron. Kaltenborn was on the scene of the bombardment at Fort Guadalupe by two Insurgent men-of-war. He was able to report the attack even while the machine-gun fire and the whirring aeroplanes roared.

His report: "In a moment or two, when the machine gun which has been barking intermittently all evening sounds again, I will stop talking for a moment in order that you may get something of the sound of this civil war as it continues through the night. This farm is the one most near to the fighting scene . . . located some three hundred yards from the lines where rebels and government soldiers are fighting it out tonight. (Sound of rifle fire.) Those are isolated shots which are being exchanged by the front-line sentinels on both sides."

"The value of such broadcasts is being questioned," says Caesar Saerchinger. People are affected by hearing the first hand account of the battlefield, with realistic sound effects

of explosion and groans. This realistic impression arouses peace loving instincts or stirs up animus and hate.

Oral Styles in Description

Radio is not always impartial to styles of oral description. One style in giving facts, is a precise statement of happenings. The other might be called "impressionistic description." It plays upon the listener's imagination and conveys something of that emotion which the speaker himself experiences.

The impressionistic method is less concerned with description as such. It emphasizes mood and emotion rather than the physical point of view. If the broadcaster is oppressed by gloom at the sight of destructive flood, he must attempt to convey this mood to the listener. If he is thrilled by the sight of deeds of courage and darings, his choice of words should reflect those sensations and emotions.

Consider those announcers who were assigned to Lakehurst, New Jersey, to broadcast the arrival of the giant dirigible "Hindenburg" on that fatal afternoon. The dirigible circles the mooring mast and suddenly bursts into flames. Should the announcer be constrained to a mere recital of the facts, or shall he convey the pathos and tragedy of the episode?

The networks do not strait-jacket their special events announcers to any one method. Where freedom is permitted, the ideal broadcast embraces both factual and impressionistic style. Word pictures do more than record, as does the eye of a camera. External things, even if faithfully reported, are sufficient for the listener. A good oral description centers the attention of the listener on one emotion and makes every detail add to the effect.

The reign of George VI will be noted for the first Coronation broadcast in history. The commentators who were as-

signed to report the ceremonies, were warned that they must evoke neither admiration nor humiliation. They were to regard themselves as the "eyes of the empire." It is estimated that out of four hundred million British subjects, fully two-thirds of the number listened in. Instead of visualizing the pageantry with color and enthusiasm, the British announcers did themselves proud by clamping the lid on their impulses. The announcers acting under restraint, can never fulfill their job perfectly. Such solemnity was seldom heard on the air, and at six-sixteen a.m. of the broadcast an announcer coughed. Alton Cook reports that this was the broadcast's first slip from schedule.

The act of the announcer joins narrative and description with moods, emotions, interests and subjective states of mind. First of all, the announcer himself must be stirred. The listener can best test the values of a broadcast by determining to what degree his primary senses are touched. If mere words can conjure up sight and provoke a memory of sound, smell, taste, touch—the announcer has achieved something.

A Few Workout Exercises

You are ordered to talk through your hat.

Imagine you are George Hicks, of WEAf, wearing a top-hat transmitter, mingling with the crowds on Fifth avenue during the Easter Parade. Describe the scene as you talk through your hat. Your hat contains a portable compact microphone station inside. A tiny feather-like aerial sticks from the brim of the silk topper, and a little microphone is in your coat lapel. A mobile transmitter is in the street and will intercept your broadcast from your miniature outfit and relay it to Radio City headquarters of NBC for transmission over the networks.

A special events announcer never knows the precarious spots from which he will have to broadcast. Suppose you

were assigned to traipse the eight-inch catwalk of the unfinished dirigible, Akron, and had to walk sixty feet above the hangar? Jimmie Wallington, on this occasion, suddenly got dizzy and fell, but saved himself by being fortunate enough to straddle the narrow metal plank.

WJZ's Sunday afternoon variety program of October 20, 1937, arranged a pick-up from a submarine making a quick dive to the bottom of the Atlantic. You are the first of the volunteers called for from the announcing staff to make the "crash dive." Describe the proceedings through a mike.

The sun is shining on a perfect day on June 18, 1937, in New York. On the top of the Andes in Peru the sun is about to fade out in a total eclipse. You are standing at an elevation of ten thousand feet on the crest of a mountain. Describe the phenomena so that listeners all over the globe can "watch" the spectacle in the eerie darkness.

It is the longest total eclipse (1937) in twelve hundred years. It was Bill Perry, the WABC announcer who made this ascent up the Andes in Peru for the broadcast. He characterized the place of vantage as "a point where modern science and ancient superstitions meet." We quote here a portion of his broadcast.

"It's getting frightfully dark now," exclaimed Perry. "The shadows are creeping up this valley, and from our perch here in the churchyard of a quaint old adobe church, which must have been built goodness knows how long ago, we are looking toward the sea and the eclipse.

"We're almost near totality. Like a huge dim—oh, look at the prominence—those flame-like things shooting up. Listen a moment to the people—all the children are crying. Look at that gorgeous corona. It's beginning to appear. You know the shape. Well, it's almost round. Over there is Mars. Yes, in the twilight, on the western horizon.

"Look at the yellow comet. There's a bat just flying directly overhead. There's a very interesting sight just over

on the western horizon. It looks like the last tinge of a dying sunset over there—salmon color, fading off into a greenish yellow on top before fading to a dull gray of the entire—that's almost violet, isn't it? The stars are such tiny but very far pinpoints in this very thin air out here. Looking at the sun itself now. Oh, see that prominence brighten out from the bottom of the sun. I can think of only one word—gargantuan. The totality is over. The sun is coming back. Now it's flashing out and something of light has begun to appear. I think it certainly grips you and oh, it is the greatest spectacle on earth!"

Imagine yourself at Juneau (Alaska). One afternoon, the outgoing tide leaves a whale stranded high and dry. The manager of the radio station rigs up a microphone and runs close out to the whale, announcing: "Hello, everybody. You're hearing the first actual broadcast of a live whale on the beach. The next sound you will hear will be the whale thumping the ground. Listen! Smack! And now listen to him blow: 'Whhooooooooo-ish!'" (Juneau, Alaska, 1937).

You are at the base of one of the great pyramids. By arrangement with the Egyptian State Broadcasting Service, do your stuff before the microphone (NBC, February 7, 1938).

Another workout: You are the NBC representative in Italy. Take your portable transmitter and fly into the crater of Vesuvius. Report all of the noises, the virtual inferno, including the whistling steam jets, the roar of flowing lava and what have you.

Novelty Reporting

There is a thrill for the announcers and listeners alike in novelty reporting. These are the stunts of radio. A few examples: Jump from a parachute giving your impressions during the leap. John Read King, announcer, and Gwen McCleary, interviewer, had barely time to laugh before

they were on the ground in an attempt made for WABC in July 1939. All is not so rosy, however. In another test, a jumper was injured in landing because of the heavy pack transmitter strapped to his back.

Think of the swallows who every year unfailingly never miss swooping down upon Juan Capistrano Mission, California, from the Pacific for their bow before the microphone. Tell the story of the wandering swallows and give them a chance to send out tidings of their arrival under the eaves of the church.

The talking bird that stayed silent on Fred Allen's program for six weeks ought to have been a lesson enough, but broadcasters have sought animals and birds to go through their stunts none the less. NBC shipped crickets all the way from Vermont, but the crickets did not let out a chirp and the announcer was apologetic.

Graham McNamee once rose to heights of great eloquence when Kuda Bux actually ran through a pit of glowing embers for the Bob Ripley program on WEAJ, and emerged apparently unscorched.

Not to be outdone by noises of animals on the air, Abe Schecter thought up the novelty of a broadcasting singing mouse contest. Everyone, it seemed, had a prima donna mouse in the house. To solve the problem of superiority, an eminent jury of voice critics judged which was the best mouse. This was won by Mickey, a five-inch American specimen.

The special events division produced twelve hundred candidates of the animal speaking world for the edification of its listeners. Among the performers, were a talking crow, a Toulouse goose, two cockatoos, a magpie, a macaw, and many African Grays. Parrots are judged by diction, originality of expression, vocabulary and voice quality. The smartest parrot of the 1938 crop was the pet of Carl Carmen of New

York. With vigorous enunciation he kept repeating: "This is the National Broadcasting Company." Oh, wise bird!

Snakes are the most reliable radio performers. Rattlesnakes have been on several programs and a bang or two on the side of the cage never failed to stir the reptile into audible protest, heard round the world.

In June 1938 Bill Ware of WKRC was assigned to hold a heifer's tail in one hand and grasp the microphone with the other as fast as he could and tell listeners all about it. But this happens only in Texas where the announcers learn a few radio tricks.

RADIO ERA OF SPORTS

SPORTS has remained the one department of the news in which broadcasting is supreme. No other method is swifter while athletic events are in the making. No one has accurately estimated the number of listeners who tune in during the sports programs. The figure would be at least approximate to that huge army of readers who avidly turn to their favorite sports columnist.

The selective draft emphasized the relation of athletics to physical fitness. It has given enormous impetus to sports, and increased the aggregate value of athletic and sporting goods manufactured in the United States.

Radio in sports merely followed the trend of the newsreel and the newspaper. Every newsreel traditionally contains at least from twenty to fifty per cent of footage devoted to sports. So keen is America's interest in the news that no metropolitan paper could exist without catering to the fan. If the newspaper dropped its sports pages it would probably lose from one-half to two-thirds of its circulation. Sports programs have a definite spot on the networks. No sooner is an important athletic event advertised than the broadcasters negotiate to get the radio rights. These programs include every variety of sport including turtle-catching and hog-calling.

Treatment of every game from the broadcaster's viewpoint would be encyclopaedic. The radio list of games is formidable.

Games Out of the Loudspeaker

General: Baseball; football (association and rugby, college and professional); softball; tennis; golf; boxing; wrestling;

croquet; hockey; handball; polo (water, bicycle, horse, air); cricket; billiards and pool; ping-pong; squash rackets; lacrosse; fencing; and archery.

Racing: Horse; automobile; motorcycle; aeroplane; greyhound and whippet; six-day bicycle races.

Track and Field Athletics: Mile; marathon and cross-country races; hurdling; hammerthrow; javelin and discus-throwing; broad and high jumping; pole-vaulting, etc.

Young People's Games: Marble contests; soapbox derby; aeroplane and glider contests.

Swimming and Diving: All styles, heights and distances.

Winter Sports: Skating (figure and racing); ice-hockey; skiing; tobogganing and ice-boat racing; curling.

Nautical: Sculling; canoeing; rowing; yachting; sailboat; motorboat; life boats.

Endurance and Other Contests: Marathon dancing; flag-pole sitting; hog-calling; corn-husking; milking, etc.

How to Become a Sports Announcer and Win Friends

Sports broadcasting holds out fascinating prospects to the announcer. More often the preparation and actual effort is perspiring. Your attempts are subject to the sharpest critical judgment of listeners who may know more about the game than you do. They will set you down as a rank amateur who had better stay at home, if you are not careful.

The task, however, is not so heroic as it seems. Try cramming upon Frank G. Menke's "Encyclopedia of Sports" which covers over one hundred sports from rollo poly to aviation, the result of research of over two thousand books. A sports broadcaster should have a feeling for amateur and professional attainment. He must follow the day-by-day reports and lend ear to gossip and chatter. He must be familiar with every angle of the game, and know the statistics and the literature on the subject. Experience as a writer or

newspaper reporter is helpful training in accurate observation and the use of sports English.

It is a fiction that one must have been somewhat of an expert player to be a successful sports broadcaster in any special field. True, actual practice in baseball, football, boxing and the major sports will give you added confidence and understanding. Such experience offers no criteria that you possess the gifts of voice and imagination and those other intangible qualities which will make you a national radio personality.

Every sports broadcast has its peculiar complexities as may the game itself. There is no particular trick or open sesame that belongs especially to this field. A contest is always going on before your eyes. Always there is drama. Two forces are opposed to one another, and one must win or lose or both come out even. The important attributes of a sports commentator can be measured in a general review of his own abilities along the lines of these questions:

1. Have I a sense of dramatics sufficient to appreciate the dynamics of a sports contest?
2. Can I evaluate skills and measure the abilities of one team or individual against the other?
3. Have I originality of thought and expression in the vernacular of the game?
4. Am I facile and varied in the use of words? The announcer should have at his command a wealth of adjectives and phrases. The maudlin repetition of "What a fight! Boy, what fight!" is an admission of verbal weakness. Don Wilson almost ruined his broadcast by the ceaseless repetition of the adjective "stalwart" to describe Stanford's players and Ted Husing's reference to his ears as "auricular appendages" ceased to be humor. Sam Taub, during the Brad-dock-Farr encounter, clung to the phrase "the crowd is going haywire" until the listener fell into a similar state.
5. How does my broadcast stand up under the test of the

three specific virtues of simplicity—clarity, liveliness, variety and dramatic flavor?

6. Have I gathered all the available news for future reference? Bill Stern averages four hours of broadcasting weekly but spends some seventy hours preparing.

Golf, Tennis and Yacht Races

Golf has limited possibilities for the announcer blessed with imagination or with descriptive sensibilities. Golf gives little scope to the announcer's gift of language. An acute observer of the game once said that the only part of the golf broadcast that is not a yawn is one about five minutes long summarizing the results. What excitement is there in hearing "Hagen is now addressing the ball. Ah, he's sliced into the rough?"

Golf announcers used to stay within a wire's length of the clubhouse or carry a pack transmitter on their backs. When Ted Husing covered the National Amateur Golf Championship in 1936 he had to stand on the edge of the green during the puttings and speak in a hissing whisper so as not to disturb the players. His new invention is a periscope affair which can be planted behind the crowd. It magnifies the ball, cup and player ten times and at that distance from the players Husing can swing out with his usual gusto.

The broadcast of the National Open Golf Tournament at Philadelphia on June 10, 1939, employed new devices in accurate and swift reporting. The broadcast was made from a mobilized unit equipped with a short wave system. Equipped with wheels of aeroplane size the vehicle could be rolled over to the field without hurting the grass. The slight hum in the phone was the purr of the motor or generator which received signals from the clubhouse.

Ted Husing, working in conjunction with an assistant, took the microphone to verify reports or to analyze the

plays. In addition a runner brought in fresh news from the scores. The changes of voice helped break up the monotony of reporting. Here was a game regarded as the classic of Golf—the play off of a triple in a National Golf Championship.

The top of a mobile unit is a precarious perch at its best. “Your commentator,” said Husing apologetically, “is speaking from the top of a mobile unit. Perhaps you will understand. I want to catch my breath. People are trying to jump up on our wagon.”

Occasionally he carries on a conversation with Harry Nash, in semi-interview fashion, asking for verifications.

“The ball is like a soap bubble.” “It stopped as though there were a magnet on the green.”

“She’s rolling straight. We’ll watch the cup . . . and here comes Craig Wood . . . wait a minute—hits a tree—bounces off at right angles . . . not a tree but a person . . . let’s go right up . . . hit somebody on the head . . . the police are out there . . . move out all these wires . . . Jimmy, most amazing thing, while I fix these wires . . . talk about that, Harry.”

At the eighteenth, Wood reeled off a two hundred and eighty yard drive down the middle, with Nelson fifteen yards in the rear. Nelson’s finish is regarded as one of the gamest exhibitions ever seen in golf.

Such a game is an unusual test of physical stamina for the broadcaster. For over three hours he was continuously on the air, with moments of rest only when his assistant, Harry Nash, broke in to air a collection of notes. The commentator’s task is to make the radio audience throb with the excitement that infects the gallery. He observes the terrain, the traps, the condition of the wind, indicates the players’ position at each stroke and summarizes. Sometimes he waxes eloquent “That is what we call ‘Golf Divinity.’ Shot making has been exemplary.”

Automobile racing, from a radio viewpoint, is not the

sport of death-defying thrills that it is for the spectators. Here is the demon Speed, toying with tragedy. Will man or machine be victor or victim? Try as hard as they may, broadcasters have never conveyed to listeners the thrill of the scene. In the three hundred mile Vanderbilt Cup race at the Roosevelt Raceway in Westbury, Long Island, on October 13, 1936, McNamee attempted to convey the impression of speed and excitement by shouting,—which is a futile substitute for the real thing. Ted Husing, who held sway over the CBS microphone, wasted a lot of time spouting meaningless phrases about track layout.

Least interesting is the microphone story of the automobile races in Indianapolis. A rumble, a roar, a “here he comes” and “there he goes” is about all the broadcaster can make of it. At least that is all they ever have made of it.

The broadcaster must convey the duel at all angles, the changes of pace in speed. Paul Gallico expresses the impulse of the view which “artistically as well as emotionally is satisfied. A good player increases the length of his drives shot after shot the way an artilleryman lays a creeping barrage forcing an opponent beyond his own base line and then suddenly finishes with a drop shot and falls just over the net or reversing the procedure tees his man toward the center court and then angles him.”

Alton Cook observes that basketball and hockey broadcasts can easily slip into confused verbal jumbles.” These two sports are difficult for an announcer to picture because the action switches from end to end of floor or rink with bewildering activity. With the added handicap of not knowing which team is doing what these broadcasts become affairs exclusively for the fans of the expert class. The listener is obliged to memorize a few dozen names in advance to keep track of who has the ball or puck.

Polo may be the aristocrat of all sports . . . but compared to hoi-polloi baseball, the game lacks loudspeaker

thrills. Even Ted Husing, who described the championship contest between Greentree and Old Westbury, failed to make it interesting.

Tennis broadcasters have the air of addressing themselves to other tennis experts. Casual listeners are made to feel that they might as well wait for the final announcement of the score and let it go at that. Vincent Richards, who reported at the Bill Tilden-Perry game of 1937, belongs to the calm and straight-forward school of announcers. He does not bother to make things seem more exciting than they really are. Richards skips the less important shots in the rally. He uses surprisingly little tennis vernacular. The trick in such a broadcast is to summarize as the game progresses and describe the final coup in detail.

Broadcasters do scant justice to the speed and daring of sport's most thrilling event, the Memorial Day speedway races. The least interesting is the broadcast of the five hundred mile classic race at Indianapolis which is regarded as the most dangerous, richest, longest, and fastest in the United States. One listener sums up his impression of the broadcast: "Calling 'a rumble,' 'they're off,' 'there he goes' is all the broadcasters can make of it." And this in spite of the fact that the broadcasters use the latest short wave equipment in order to be free from the necessity of working on one spot on the track and are thus able to cover four hundred and forty-three acres of the ground on any part of the two mile track with complete mobility.

International Cup Races call for a battery of announcers along the thirty-mile course. On land and sea and in the air are stationed the vocal reporters of the scene. In practice the networks engage special yachting experts to lend authority to the broadcast. Ted Husing, for example, in the 1937 races, was assisted by Sherman Hoyt and Edward P. Foster, American yachting experts, and John Hughes, British authority. WOR engages Cameron to assist the regular

Special Events broadcaster, David Driscoll, with the technical aspects.

For CBS, George Hicks and Professor Kenneth M. Davison follow on the Coast Guard cutter "Sebago." From a plane overhead, Bill Stern relays his impressions of the race. At the finish line in a patrol boat is Arthur Feldman, ready to complete the picture with a recital of closing events. The race begins. Two sleek yachts,—the defender, "Ranger," entered by Harold S. Vanderbilt; the challenger, "Endeavor II," sponsored by T. O. M. Sopwith.

The start of each day's race is broadcast from twelve-thirty to one p.m. A report of the progress of the race is given from one-twenty-five to one-thirty each day and at intervals throughout the afternoon. And in addition to these eye witnesses, one of the experts is heard in a daily resume of the races between six-fifteen and six-thirty p.m. There are dreary gaps that need filling in. A fog settles on the water. The announcer cannot describe what he does not see. The listener is left to the mercy of the announcer who, if he lacks wit and authority, may become as dreary as the weather.

At Poughkeepsie Ted Husing had a terrible time battling the elements, and he was further hampered by the low barometric pressure which lowered the smoke of the observation-train engine and formed a screen between the announcer and the crews hurrying down the Hudson. With vision obscured by mist and rain it is no easy task to call the winner.

The Fight Is on the Air!

The super magnet of all radio programs is a heavyweight championship fight. All the suppressed and primitive savagery of man is stirred by the combat. Statisticians estimate that ninety-six percent of all the radio sets are tuned to

the fistic battle. The nation, moved as if by mass hysteria, becomes one huge listening machine. The championship fight indeed has more listeners than the broadcast of President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Heavyweight championship fights make the generators hum to supply a "tidal wave of current." The electrical meters begin to show an increased consumption about a half hour before the bout due to the snapping on of thousands of radio "on switches," and electric lights.

The first sports event that was broadcast was a heavyweight championship, the first million-dollar gate. The historic setting was laid at Boyle's Thirty Acres in Jersey City on July 21, 1921. To the martial strains of the "Marseillaise," ninety thousand men and women rose from their seats to greet "Gorgeous" Georges Carpentier who had come fresh from war laurels from the heart of Paris to wrest the title from Jack Dempsey, the Manassa Mauler.

Major J. Andrew White did first honors before the microphone. To him may be accredited the title of "Pioneer Sports Broadcaster," who convinced the skeptical officials that a championship bout was an event of national interest that deserved the air.

Technically, the plan seemed simple enough, and station WJZ at once undertook the work of installation. The rest was left to fate.

Equipment was hastily set in place; a wire line linked to the ringside microphone with a transmitter; an aerial strung between the wireless towers of the Lackawanna Railroad near Hoboken; radiophone housed in a galvanized shack near the yards. The fight is on the air! A brief color story: the frightful humidity of that July afternoon; aeroplanes overhead, the Manassa Mauler seated in the arc of a huge floral horseshoe, and the expectant throng awaiting the bell. Major White, huddled close to the resined canvas was to chronicle the slaughter blow by blow. His voice came over

the air, mixed with static and noises from the scene of the conflict. Dempsey swings upward to the jaw. . . . In the first half minute Carpentier hits the dust. . . . Four rounds . . . The Frenchman is down . . . for the count. Hysterical mob.

The public received this broadcast as a revelation of radio's possibilities. Listeners got the result instantly and did not have to wait for the next morning or evening edition to digest a newspaper yarn. Where else would the microphone be carried in reporting sports events? Broadcasting was then but one year old. Remember, too, that this was the era of the crystal set and earphone. Yet this broadcast was the beginning of the period when the blare of radio was heard in the public streets. Such was the demand for the fight result that shopkeepers rigged up old phonograph horns outside their windows to magnify the sound. It was all done by the simple expedient of clamping the earphones of their radios to the horns. Thus the voice of Major White was blared to the crowds on the street who were in the same throes of excitement as the seventy-five thousand who paid \$1,789,000 to watch the struggle. The radio audience for this broadcast is estimated at some two hundred thousand.

Advance the time a little more than five years, to September 23, 1926, and change the scene to the Sesqui-Centennial in Philadelphia. Here Tunney takes the measure of Dempsey in a torrential rain, when within a half hour he batters the supposedly invincible champion beyond recognition. This is a historical battle for radio because it is the first to be broadcast by a network (WEAF), and also because it is the first championship fight to have an international radio hook-up. Shortwave brought the fistic battle to Europe, South Africa and South America. This time approximately fifteen million people abroad cupped their ears to the voice of Graham McNamee and Major J. Andrew White.

Fight broadcasting over the years became a prized feature. The Louis-Braddock fight of 1937 helped to bring about a strong competition for the right to broadcast major bouts. Both networks bid for the privilege, each hoping to find a sponsor to take over the financial burden.

Yesterday's Fight Broadcasts

Older fans will remember fight broadcasting as an extended and exciting affair. The listener was permitted to revel in the full noises of the arena. He caught the clamor and frenzy of the crowd. The preliminaries were on the air at least a half hour before the major battle. The announcer was on the spot to interview celebrities and to pick up the sidelights. He packed the minutes with quick verbal pictures that lifted the emotions to high pitch.

Ringside broadcasting has greatly changed since the days of the Dempsey-Tunney bout. The Schmeling-Louis bout of 1936 ushered in a new routine. Today the sponsor pays for time, and the time is limited to the sponsor's contract. The sponsor of the Louis-Schmeling fight of 1938 figured on clearing the wave lengths of over a hundred stations for sixty minutes, but the program was ended almost before it started. He was billed only for the time consumed which in actual fighting was two minutes and four seconds.

Many look back with regret at the changes in fight broadcasting. Much of the atmosphere of the early days is omitted. No longer is the fighter followed in his picturesque journey down the aisles from the dressing room to the ropes of the arena. Now the announcer often reads from a prepared script which is presumed to add color to the scene. Background noises are coldly cut out of the perfected microphone of today, or else the roar and excitement are filtered to a point that makes the arena sound like a tranquil gathering at tea time. There were days when listeners got the real

thing in excitement, and could catch the shrieks of entreaty from the crowd.

Today the listener catches faintly the hollow echoes of a Joe Humphreys introducing the contestants and calling their weights. And during all this, the radio announcer in control of the mike may be reading from his script. The gong rings. The mike passes from the announcer who has just "colored" the scene, to the expert who describes the blow-by-blow action. Words fly faster than fists, but only once in a while can the listener catch the thunder of the arena crowd. Seldom is heard that atavistic cry, "Fight, yah yellow bum. You're layin' down on me. Fight, yah tramp!"

Fights no longer live on the air a half-hour after the bout. In the early days, the fan was regaled with running commentary from fight veterans or celebrities who had seen the fight. Radio time permits neither postlude or post-mortem. The fight once ended is ended.

Can a Fight Broadcaster Be Honest?

Except for a few one-sided matches, almost every major fistic battle has launched furious arguments about the honesty of the commentator. The broadcaster's view is often at total variance with the facts as disclosed by the camera and newspaper accounts. One caustic critic has remarked that if the listener were to attempt to see eye to eye with the broadcasting description of a fight, and the newspaper accounts, he (the listener) would be apt to become cross-eyed.

Announcers should be impartial, and their judgment uncolored by prejudice or favoritism. Trouble is caused by people who insist on knowing right at the moment whether the punch is a hook or a right cross. "Blows are not always what they seem," said McNamee. "A dramatic roundhouse swing that should fell an ox often seems to have no effect.

The damaging blows and frequently the knock-out punches are never seen. In the interest of accuracy the blows cannot be called as they fall." As a rule, McNamee, who originated the "excitement" school does not bother much with these details.

What some critics call frantic to the point of the ludicrous may bring very powerful sensations to the listener. There was Clem McCarthy on the night of the historic Louis-Schmeling battle. A second after the decision he was able to corral Louis to the microphone. But Schmeling, temporarily dazed, remained inaccessible guarded by his seconds. "Max!" cried Clem, "Max!" The cry was hysterical. "Max come over here . . . Max . . . Officer . . . get Schmeling . . . I can't get him . . . a badly beaten man . . . never saw any other fighter look so badly."

Calm and conventional commentary would have lent dignity to the broadcast, but not drama. Listeners by mere tonal suggestion caught the pathos of the scene, and Clem redeemed himself for his previous omissions.

After nineteen years of fight broadcasting, Radio is still seeking the ideal announcer who is able to sit at the ring-side and give a lucid, lively and accurate picture of heavy-weights in action for the championship.

Clem McCarthy's broadcast of the Louis-Baer contest was notable for shrewd, wise summaries of the strategy as well as a graphic, understandable account.

Graham McNamee earned for himself the title of "The Irremovable Big Fight Announcer." Many think that McNamee is too picturesque and not technical enough to be at the ringside. Others prefer spontaneity, color and a dramatic voice to the calling of uppercuts, and the varieties of jab. He admits he misses a lot of the details in his ringside descriptions. He keeps up a running chatter and is frequently behind the bell. Occasionally he gets tangled up in telling who landed what and when and where.

“But I don’t think that makes an awful lot of difference to the great air audience,” explains McNamee. “It’s my opinion that the audience often doesn’t know or doesn’t care what a left hook or infighting is. The listener wants a dramatic picture of the scene, he wants to follow the progress of the fight. I try to get to him the information as fast as I can and I get excited like anyone else while I’m doing it.”

Charles Francis Coe is the master fight commentator who reported with Ted Husing the Louis-Sharkey battle. Socker Coe follows the mixed style in broadcasting. He explains his way in a specific instance: “You see a fighter comes out of his corner and jabs with his left a few times, each time a little short. Instead of saying, ‘Short with a left, short with a left, short with a left,’ you don’t know whether he really intended to land those or was just trying to make the other man lead. You say so.

“Follow the offensive. Usually, from the man’s position, I can anticipate what he’s going to do and keep right up with the action when he does it. It sounds easy. Of course, sometimes they don’t do what you expect. You have to develop a glibness to cover this.”

Voice and Diction for the Fight Broadcaster

Listeners have become accustomed to the sparkle and spontaneity in voice that mark the successful broadcasters. One critic calls this the genius of making the listener feel that something tremendously stirring was always just a sentence away. When the sponsors of the Baer-Carnera fight sought to replace Graham McNamee, they auditioned scores of candidates for the post. None of them came through with the same vigor and liveliness of McNamee. And McNamee was retained in spite of the growing complaints regarding his inaccuracy.

There is no one who in a few minutes can create and

maintain suspense as skilfully as Clem McCarthy. With a keen sense of the dramatic, he combines a sharp eyesight, a fast and authoritative tongue and a voice tensely toned.

Fight broadcasting requires stress on significant words without straining. Excess emphasis will convert the best intentions into sheer noise. "Socker" Coe commands attention because he is gusty, hearty and emphatic. At times he is crisp, but never monotonous.

Overemphatic delivery covering a period of a fifteen-minute broadcast tends to become sing-songy. Clem McCarthy errs in this respect. A more distributed stress on key words would relieve the regularity of the accent. Clem is the son of an auctioneer and is deft of tongue by inheritance. His speech record is some two hundred and forty-four words a minute, a pace which strikes the ear with bewilderment.

It is easy to portray a fighter as putting up a better fight than the actual results show. Socker Coe in his broadcast of the Sharkey-Louis bout gave the impression that Sharkey was putting up a better fight. Clem McCarthy made the Farr-Louis fight about even. The truth is Farr never stood a chance. Sam Taub, we believe, would not have erred in this respect, because he has habitually shown a more accurate judgment.

Resolutions of a Fight Broadcaster

Suppose you find yourself in a state of nerves while waiting for the bell which will send the heavyweights into action. Your mind is set on doing justice to the occasion and your very anxiety makes you more tense. How shall you acquire that balance which is necessary before you talk into the microphone strapped from your shoulders? You might indulge yourself in a brief monologue in some such resolves:

Resolve 1. I will lose all worry about my bias of judg-

ment. I will step into my character as an impartial expert and lose my character as a prejudiced individual.

Resolve 2. My own mind cannot bribe me to distort the facts. I must report to my listeners those things that they would see with their own eyes under the glare of those white lights were they transported to the scene. "The toughest part of broadcasting," says Sam Taub, "is the fact that you are intimate with all the boys in the game. Tell your story adhering to the facts and not permitting personal feelings to enter the picture.

How easy a prescription this seems. You will have made a terrible oath to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Suddenly you have a shaky feeling. Your heart and sentiment yield. You see your favorite struck with vicious blows, and you make no mention of them, nor report them as light taps. Your man is weakening, yet you build him up as possessed of endless strength. You lose your sense of proportion, and before you know it you are overcome by your own prejudices. You are no longer useful as a broadcaster. The public finds you out when the first extras reach the street.

Resolve 3. I will not make any positive predictions as to the winner. Anything can happen as in that historic long-count when Tunney arose from a state of stupor and gave Dempsey a merry chase around the ring, finally to be hailed the victor.

Resolve 4. I will call the blows as I see them, and I shall do my best to see them as they happen with one respect to certain taboos. The spilling of blood is tabooed under the ruling of the New York State Boxing Commission which decrees that listeners shall not be unduly roused by description of the carnal side of any bout. Hence, do not linger on the picture of Braddock, blinded by his own blood in his gory battle with Tony Galento, or commiserate Tony hacked by Max Baer. Read about it in print if you will. The New

York *Times* recorded James D. Dawson's description of Galento's face as "red as a piece of raw beef."

Resolve 5. If in doubt I shall call the close rounds even.

How to Quicken Eye and Tongue

Few realize how strenuous is the business of broadcasting a fight. Talk into the microphone, and you will realize the extraordinary amount of mental concentration required. The cycle of nerve impulses is swift and continuous. Messages flash to the brain by way of the optic nerve. The speech centers are excited. The nerve impulses are sent to the organs creating articulate expression. In a blow-by-blow description the broadcaster must perform the impossible feat of synchronizing speech with what is going on. He soon learns that even the shortest sentences fall behind the speed of the punches. No other sport more completely demands flexibility of tongue.

Sam Taub surprises you with his glibness. He even manages to make extraneous comments when the two fighters are making onslaughts on each other with lightning rapidity. Consider that a trained newspaperman finds it possible to dictate three or four hundred words to a round, if he has a fast, experienced and cool telegraph operator at his side. The commentator talking into the microphone can go far beyond this number of words—say six hundred. He calls the blows out as he sees them, and he must see accurately.

Two men are trying to do one another as much injury as possible within an allotted space of time, and the broadcaster's task is to report how the punishment is meted out. Many a specific problem must be solved instantly with a glance of the eye. Carnera is down! You must get that over with first. Which hand of Baer struck? Left or right? Hook or cross? This is not the time for reflection. The experienced commentator watches the stricken fighter. Is he out

like a light, or is he taking a comfortable rest up to the count of nine? Watch him as he leans on his elbows, struggling to get to his feet. Will he collapse? Pick up the count. Watch Baer, see what he is doing, whether he has retired to the neutral corner. Keep your eye on the referee as Carnera attempts to rise. Will the referee stop the fight?

The 'Tween-Rounds Announcer

In practice it is the duty of the 'tween-rounds announcer to shrewdly summarize the action of the preceding round. Such commentary must be crowded into less than two minutes. This calls for a swift survey of the scene, quick judgment, making rapid notes, and perfect timing. It is often the duty of the secondary announcer to squeeze in the "commercials" as deftly as possible.

Bill Stern has the sponsor's tough job of making Adam's Hat fit the heads of as many listeners as possible. The commercials are often left to commercial announcers like Ben Grauer who, as in the Louis-Galento bout, can frequently inject the keen edges of the Schick Injector Razors.

Everything must be co-ordinated so that the sponsor will not be blotted out of the picture. In a few short sentences, the action of the round must be summarized. Ten seconds before the next round, the buzz at the ringside will remind him that he must release the microphone to his blow-by-blow partner.

It is an art to call the blows expertly and at the same time add word pictures. The commentator has little time for extraneous descriptions. The between-rounds announcer may slip in things left unsaid by the commentator, and round out the picture with some deft word touches.

During the Louis-Schmeling bout of June, 1938, Ed Thorgersen, the secondary announcer, lost his opportunity. Instead of mentioning the throwing of the towel into the

ring, which Clem had failed to note, Ed, who was inexperienced, went off into generalizations: "Louis has culminated one glorious victory. You have a feeling that he believes himself the undisputed champion. The beating he handed Schmeling tonight dispelled any doubt as to who was the best fighter. Everybody has been taken by surprise and bewilderment. Here's Clem."

This inter-rounds job requires quick colloquial speech. The 'tween-rounds announcer, like his partner, should be a master of ad libbing. Bill Stern who works sometimes with Sam Taub, is not fast. The broadcast follows a definite routine. The best rounds announcer becomes the color announcer, describes the setting, calls attention to the preliminary bouts, delves into the history, garb, and weights of the fighters, brings celebrities to the microphone, and permits the name of the time keeper, knockdown counter, and referee to seep through the loud speaker.

Bill Stern provides himself with large pieces of heavy cardboard on which is pasted the miscellaneous information he has tested for reading within the period of fifty-five seconds. When a round has become full and uneventful, Bill can take refuge in his notes as Sam Taub calls: "End of Round Two . . . Take it, Bill."

William C. Hill, who was Clem McCarthy's announcing partner, was guilty at one time of reading a prepared-in-advance script on the primal killing instincts of man. This shows a weakness. The sponsor may decide on a cordon of announcers. Thus for the Louis-Galento fight, Gabriel Heatter provided color and between-round commentary, Bill Stern, the blow-by-blow account, and Ben Grauer went off on a roving assignment around the ringside after the fight.

Broadcasts are more effective when there is a difference in quality of voice between the blow-by-blow announcer and the 'tween-rounds commentator. When working with

Clem McCarthy during the Louis-Schmeling fight of June, 1938, the higher-pitched voice of Ed Thorgersen was in marked contrast to the hoarse, tense, dramatic tones of McCarthy. Other characteristics of speech help in establishing the identity of the two commentators. The clean-cut and precise diction of Brooks Temple offered a distinguishing mark to the less elegant and less precise diction of Sam Taub.

Styles in Fight Broadcasting

Broadcasters themselves are in conflict as to the best styles for fight broadcasting. The camps are divided into the blow-by-blow stylists and the newspaper commentary stylists. The conventional method of blow-by-blow description has its difficulties. It is no small miracle to get in a word about every blow. Such detail makes the rights and lefts to the head sound alike and the listener is left wondering whether some of them were not harder than the others.

The experienced broadcaster can group a series of punches into a single phrase. He spends more words on punches that have an immediate effect or that might have a later effect.

Fight enthusiasts who listen in at home complain that radio announcers at the ringside try to say too much. They strive to tell about every incident, great or small. As a result of the lack of selectivity, words become tangled, for example, "Max hit Max"; or one announcer reports Max's left eye closed, while another claims it is the right optic that is battered and useless. These frequent slips in big broadcasts are due to incoordination between the eye and the mind. Only experience can correct this failing. Among the pioneer broadcasters who have specialized in boxing, Sam Taub remains unsurpassed in straightforward, crisp and detailed description of several fights a week in the smaller metropolitan fight clubs.

The broad descriptive method in fight broadcasting pays

less attention to details. It permits pauses in which to point out strategy and fighting style. Instead of a continuous report on blows, the listener gets a quick flash of meaning and purpose behind these dynamics of action.

The incisive tone is best for marshalling facts into rapid summary. Shorter sentences allow for stertorous effects that are gripping. The voice can be made to give the shading in volume that anticipates the climax of the big blow. Words are not enough. It is the tone in which ideas are conveyed. An "Oh, Boy!" carries more weight than fancy descriptions of a flock of punches that hit nothing. The use of the present tense makes for vividness.

Sam Taub is a native of the East Side of New York like ex-Governor Al Smith of rad-dio fame. As a reporter of outstanding boxing events for the *Morning Telegraph* over a period of twenty years, he acquired an ease of penchant for description. Covering a span of fifteen years he has described in the air some seven thousand ring contests which include championships in every class. On small stations he often remained at the microphone for twenty rounds at a stretch with no relief of a between-rounds announcer. Sam is spoken of by Alton Cook as working himself into a lather of excitement hunched at his microphone with his hat on. He never takes his hat off during broadcasts. "It helps me sweat," he explains.

Fight broadcasters should be at home with the vernacular of the ring. Sam Taub, who for many years broadcast locally, in 1937 was assigned to the networks. He is a past master of fight "lingo." There is something vivid and picturesque in his terse descriptions. It is said, however, that Sam did not get his chance on the networks earlier because the fight fans prefer a more cultured tone. An intonation pattern that is too racial seems to call attention to the tone and other phonetic variations rather than the thought. But Sam Taub suffers from want of crispness and sharp enunciation.

On March 28, 1938, during the broadcast of the Ursell-Polika fight at a local club, some characteristic inaccuracies were recorded coming over the air in this fashion:

"Center of the ring" becomes "*Cenner* of the ring"; "left to the body" becomes "*lef* to the body"; "coming back with a short uppercut" becomes "*comin* back *wid* a short uppercut"; "just moves in there" becomes "*jus* moves in *dere*"; "*clinch*" sounds like "*kglintch*."

Whatever Sam lacks in precise speech, he atones for in his images. He strikes home with the suggestive phrase, the picturesque image, the trope which is immediately understood. For instance: "He works like a smooth and well-oiled machine . . . he must have a pretty concrete jaw to stand those blows . . . he is dodging a flurry of blows . . . Polika is a pretty good sharpshooter connecting with his target . . . Polika is praying for a knockout."

Blunders in Fightland

Radio chronicles abound in blunders in fight broadcasting. Sports announcers who make the greatest percentage of boners naturally broadcast without a script amid scenes of great excitement. The blood goes to the head. Judgment becomes ill-timed. Time and space become merely relative. The scene becomes merged into a composite picture of human flesh coalescing. Visualize such a situation as recently described over the air by a fight commentator: "The boys are in a corner slugging away at each other in the middle of the ring."

In the Dempsey-Firpo fight of September 14, 1923, the announcer, carried away by the excitement of the fighters knocking each other down alternately, broke into a chant, "He's down, he's up, he's down . . ." That announcer was Major Andrew White.

Graham McNamee, once the dean of all sports announcers,

is used to taking it on the chin from the critics. In broadcasting the Baer-Carnera fight he inadvertently reported Baer as delivering a crushing uppercut to his own jaw. And a little later in the match he had Carnera swinging at himself in a similarly destructive way. It was a short battle McNamee had to report—a brief two rounds—which, until the Louis-Schmeling debacle of June, 1938, was regarded as the most dramatic fight in fistic history.

The broadcaster who lacks originality or is troubled about strengthening his verbal pictures should provide himself with a sheaf of appropriate images. It is often difficult to spring the right phrase on the spur of the moment, especially under the hectic conditions of the ring. Even the most hackneyed comparison is better than none. There are about two hundred sports writers in the press section during a championship bout and their reports lend comparative study. Subscribe to a clipping bureau and revel in the sports lingo and picturesque phrases unleashed by master columnists like Joe Williams and Grantland Rice. Study them in advance for immediate use. Try these dozen culled from the daily press: "The blow was not a feeler,—it was a cannon shot." "He goes haywire with his blows." "He found a flaw in his defensive armor." "He is springing on him with the instinct of the jungle." "Louis is continuing his blasting operations." "Max dropped like an anchor." "Blows with appalling lethal power." "He unleashed his double-barrelled barrage." "It is a one-sided slugging festival." "One great arm shot out like a piston rod." "It must have been like hailstones hitting him." "He was spread out like a carpet bag."

Critical Blows of the Listeners

The man who reports the blow-by-blow account of a fight must be prepared to meet the critical blows of his audience at home. As the bell clangs at the end of the last

round, comes the interview with the fighters. The announcer clambors toward the ropes carrying his microphone into the ring. The experienced broadcaster has learned to be wary of those whom he calls before the microphone. Joe Jacobs, manager of the German challenger, abused this privilege when, in lieu of Schmeling, he shouted into the microphone, "We wuz robbed!"

Radio fans have learned to expect a panting post-fight statement from the winning battler. The announcer's task is to get into the ring before the winner is hurried to the dressing room. He has often to fight his way through a mass of police, photographers, pressmen and handlers and drag the mike to the fighter's corner, and at the same time keep up a running stream of comment so that the mike will not go "dead." Sometimes the invited one suddenly becomes dumb and the announcer must be prepared to cover for him.

Networks and sponsors sought good men for such an important battle as the Louis-Schmeling bout held at the Yankee Stadium on June 22, 1938. The choice fell on Clem McCarthy, specialist in blow-by-blow; and Ed Thorgersen, whose announcing was to provide the "color" and between-rounds commentary. Clem was the veteran; Ed had never before participated in a fight broadcast.

Louis measured his man. Seven seconds elapsed before a blow was struck. The onslaught was swift and within two and a half minutes Louis battered Schmeling into unconsciousness with a relentless fusillade of lefts and rights.

One should first consider the factual report of the battle as presented by James P. Dawson in the *New York Times*:

"Three times under the impact of Louis' right hand the German hit the floor. The first time Schmeling regained his feet at the count of three, laboriously. The second time Schmeling was knocked down, he got up dazed and game, bounced up instinctively before the count had gone beyond one. On the third knockdown, Max Mahon, Schmeling's

backer, hurled a towel into the ring—European fashion—admitting defeat for his man. The towel went sailing through the air when the count on the prostrate Max reached three.”

Referee Arthur Donovan, before he had a chance to pick up the count in unison with knockdown timekeeper Eddie Josephs, who was outside the ring, gathered the white emblem in a ball and hurled it through the ropes. Returning to Schmeling’s crumpled figure, Donovan took one look and signalled the end of the battle. The count at that time was five on the third knockdown. All this took place in two minutes and four seconds. Surely the sudden climax would test the most experienced broadcaster.

The commentator must be prepared for any contingency. Here was a situation unique in the history of championship battles. Clem failed, to a degree, as the reporter, that was all. He seemed in his manner to be as much stunned and surprised as were the eighty thousand patrons whose roars were let out into the night air at the Yankee Stadium. It is an admirable thing to convey the excitement of the battle by breathy and excited tone, but this emotional touch must be matched with reportorial sense. On this occasion Clem missed.

His tongue, it is true, moved glibly. The screaming of the crowd was all the more reason for his eyes to be sharper. But throughout the pandemonium he was missing some of the vital drama. Clem failed to mention the towel of surrender that had been thrown from Schmeling’s corner. He failed to mention that Schmeling’s trainer, Machon, climbed into the ring when the third knockdown punch landed and that Donovan pushed Machon back as the knockdown timer counted “. . . eight.” Had Clem continued for a minute he might have completed the picture, but he called for his “color” announcer with a tone of relief, “Come in here and describe the scene, Ed.”

Some critics complained that Clem could not keep pace

with the blows which Louis shot to the head, jaw and body of Schmeling. This is too exacting a demand. Twenty-nine vital blows were delivered by Louis with lightning rapidity. The German's feeble effort at retaliation was easy to report. The ex-champion got in exactly two right hand punches: one of them timidly short; the other blocked by Louis. The over-critical fan should try to report each blow for himself.

The tale of the battle was told coherently enough: "Louis stabbed Max with a left jab . . . Louis then cracked him high at the temple . . . a left to the head; a right . . . Schmeling is down. The count is three . . . and he's up. And it's a left to the jaw . . . Donovan is watching . . . Schmeling is down, down . . . the count is . . . seven . . . eight . . . Max Schemling . . . Schmeling is beaten in one round!"

Paul Gallico, in his classic on sports, "Farewell to Sports," calls attention to the fight decisions that were so bad around New York for a time that a current gag was to imitate a fight broadcaster who announces in a crazily inconsistent way:

"Ooooh, White is down again . . . He is up and staggering around the ring . . . he is bleeding. Oh, there goes White down again . . . he gets up again but is helpless and Black batters him all over the ring. White is helpless . . . he is bleeding from cuts over both eyes and the nose. He goes down again . . . he won't get up again . . . he won't get up this time . . . White is out . . . no . . . the bell ending the final round saved him. The bell rang at the count of six. Poor White never stirred . . . Well, folks, here comes the official decision. Flash! White wins!"

Football

Football entered into the field of high finance when broadcasting took it under its wing. Many a college which

found itself on the rocks during depression days turned to broadcasting like a foster-mother. The college had but to invest in a strong team. Radio could be relied on to spread its prestige far and wide. Many a son of Alma Mater was induced to make heavy donations to the endowment fund because through radio he followed the crowning successes of the football team. Funds poured into defunct college treasuries, new stadia dotted the land, and enrollment lists swelled. Today a meeting between topnotchers and unbeaten rivals will pack any stadium and monopolize the radio dial.

From some curious sense of idealism, universities hesitate to offer their games for sponsorship. The first of the big games to be broadcast was the Princeton-Chicago meet of 1932. It was not until 1937 that Yale University decided to sell its six home football games to a sponsor for the modest sum of twenty thousand dollars. From that time on, major college football teams went definitely "commercial." Colleges at last openly accepted the declaration of the Rockne-Anderson period of coaching at Notre Dame: "Give any college a good football team and three or four Saturdays a year of national broadcast games, and that college can declare dividends."

It's a reminder of what a giant business football is in the United States. Some figures: American college football's total take in a bad year has never, in recent times, gone below forty million dollars. In 1936 the figure was over seventy-five million dollars. The major professional league games bring out over a million and a half spectators in nine cities. Attendance at three hundred and eighty-seven games at seventy-five representative colleges in 1937 totaled seven million seven hundred and fifty thousand. Fourteen colleges in 1937 built football stadiums that seat more than fifty thousand spectators each, four of them, eighty thousand and more. There is a potential weekly gate of one hundred

thousand dollars to three hundred thousand dollars for each big game.

Collegiate football has definitely gone commercial. Heard over seventy-five stations and voiced by over fifty-two play-by-play and commercial announcers and in addition to twenty-five spotters or observers, the Autumn plans of one sponsor include the complete home line-up of twenty-seven colleges located on the Eastern Seaboard from Massachusetts to Florida as far west as Columbus, Ohio.

Princeton and Harvard are the standouts, and traditionally refuse to sell radio rights in order to aid their own budgets.

Consider the extent of football broadcasting today. Strong teams with national ranking command national attention. Traditional rivals like Yale and Harvard and Army and Navy are always certain to command the airways. The football game crowds drama and entertainment into one, and affords distraction to millions of listeners.

Nearly two thousand games are annually played on the gridirons of America; over sixteen million spectators lend their voices to cheer the players of over six hundred colleges. Each Saturday in the East alone fifteen or twenty games are on the air.

Network broadcasting of football games is rapidly on the wane. The day of the Ted Husings and Graham McNamees as football announcers is nearly at end, according to Ted Husing himself. "We're the last of our clan," he prophesies. Local stations are taking over the broadcasts in their own territories and instead of one or two key voices among the big games of 1937 nearly a hundred breathless commentators were heard.

Football represents a certain savagery of play. America lends an ear because the game stimulates the primitive sense of combativeness. The football stadium is the replica of a battle arena. There in the circumscribed space marked off

by yards, eleven men in armor, with hard leather helmets, heavy cleated boots and shock protectors, face eleven other men similarly equipped. Men are deployed. They go into huddles. They charge at each other at full speed with strategy and complicated running. The game calls for exacting physical courage, and expressiveness. Above all, it demands a certain type of intelligence.

Modern football games remain the most difficult of all sports to broadcast accurately. The work tests the co-ordination of the trained observer. Many are called to try out for this work but few are chosen. The audition is a tell-tale which sharply exposes the lack of talent. During 1936, NBC went on a vain search for a new crop of material. The network assigned various applicants to describe the home games of the Fordham and NYU teams on recording machines. The records were played back later in the studies, but not one of the candidates tried out qualified for an announcer's post at a broadcast game.

Football broadcasting, like the game itself, exacts much of the physical self. The game itself covers only sixty minutes, but the announcer, if working alone, is often obliged to talk for three and a half hours, almost without interruption, at the rate of two hundred words a minute. No wonder Ford Bond complained that after a football session at the microphone, his face muscles were so tired from talking that they ached for twenty-four hours.

Each commentator in football has developed his own peculiar style and system. The objective is the same: to convey the drama of the game, to stir the imagination and to make the listener yell when the crowd in the stadium yells. One critic declares that such is the thrill of the game for actual spectators that football is the one great reason for television to hurry up so that fans may participate with their eyes.

A fan once complained: "You ought to be ashamed: I

caught the sound of joy in your voice when the touchdown was scored." The announcer need not put a damper on his enthusiasm. When the crowd is thrilled by a brilliant play, stimulate the listener in even greater measure.

Ted Husing is a tried and true man in football broadcasting. Occasionally he mixes up the teams, and keeps skipping from figure to figure as to which down it is, and how many yards to go. But he manages to convey a vivid picture so that the listener understands what is going on. There is something of a complete formula in his own analysis of his method:

"I'd really like to tell you what we have found the public wants, and how it ought to be done. But each man has a trick for intriguing listeners, and I hope I have mine. One thing I know is that football needs a recreation of each scene—and a lot of fast chatter to tell about it. Each play presents these things—where is the ball resting, how far out from the side of the field, who has possession of it, what down is it, who got it, how did he get it, what did he do with it in trying to mask it, was it a fake, a spin, a reverse, a buck, a crash, a shove, or what, where did it finally go, who led the interference, why was he hit, who hit him, who stopped the play, where did it stop, was it a good play, and then do it all over again, analyze the importance of the play, and then sit back and telephone Berlin for a chat with Hitler,—bah!"

The conscientious football broadcaster devotes considerable preparation to the work, visiting camps far in advance of the event in order to absorb the atmosphere. He reads, crams, absorbs. Then there are interviews with the coaches and captains of the rival teams. About two hours before the game, the commentator goes over the situation with his "observers." Such research is of the highest importance. It gives that confidence without which a commentator seems lost for words and ideas. He dips into the store of his in-

formation when the occasion arises. Instead of gaps, pauses, repetitions, the speaker commands every situation. The voice then takes on the tone of easy authority, which commands the listener.

The "color announcer" must have enough fill-up material to keep talking entertainingly. Consider: 1. the weather; 2. the wealth; 3. the bands; 4. line-up; 5. coaches; 6. umpires; 7. field judges; 8. celebrities present.

Football broadcasting is too much of a task for any one man. It is almost an impossible task to build up each play to the split second. Most of the announcers call on the aid of at least three assistants in addition to the control engineer. The first assistant keeps a record of all plays for reference and review. The other two are extra "observers," each of whom is generally a detached member from the opposing teams. These are the extra "spotters" who are swift to catch the plays and who can instantly identify the members of their own teams.

The engineer sits alongside the announcer and by manipulating the knobs of the control equipment, keeps the picture realistic. The "color" story is left to a special events announcer. His task is to select those values in the scene that convey mass action in every mood. And here is where humor must be alive.

Sound effects come to the rescue of many a humdrum recital of the announcer. The listener who has lost contact through dreary talk, suddenly is stirred by the cheer of the crowds, the rollicking songs of Alma Mater, and the marching melody of the bands. The networks generally have four pick-up mikes which are placed in front of the rival cheering sections. The mikes are numbered and by a previously arranged signal system, the operator stands ready to switch the mikes on or off. No. 3 microphone may be in front of the Yale section. An injured man is being assisted from the field,—the Yale cheering section has risen as one man and is

giving him a tremendous hand. The announcer holds up three fingers and the operator switches on mike 3. The engineer's task is to see that the "color" comes through loud enough to be distinct, but not loud enough to drown out the commentator's voice.

Through all the turmoil of the game the broadcaster and his assistants, as a rule, present a co-ordinated picture of what goes on before them. Their inaccuracies are unimportant and must be overlooked. Paul Gallico, the veteran sports writer, pays tribute to the football announcer as the chief reliance of the average newspaper reporter present at the game. He says authoritatively:

"Except for descriptive passages that come through viewing the scene on the field, the manner in which scoring plays are executed, the football reporter may just as well sit down at home by his radio and prepare his report. It would greatly shock his managing editor and his public if it became widely known, but to all intents and purposes, he does it anyway, except that his radio happens to be located high on the rim of some concrete bowl or horseshoe, in a glass-enclosed pressbox if the game is in the Middle or Far West, or exposed to the elements if it is in the East."

A commercial announcer handles the "plugs" spotted in non-play periods to reach the ear pleasantly. Blurbing that is repetitious and unrestrained is likely to fall on deaf ears. The commercials should never be thrust on the air during action on the field.

Announcers never mention the no-hitter unless the hitless stretch is over, or until the game is over. The superstition holds that such mention prematurely will break the jinx.

Shall It Be "Pigskin Lingo"?

Less than ten per cent of radio listeners have any definite knowledge of the game. The uninitiated merely catch the

drama of two forces pitted one against the other, in the struggle over a pigskin ball. The average dialer is not sitting before his radio pouring over a book on football rules.

The problem in broadcasting is to determine how the game shall best be conveyed to the listener. Shall it be a series of technical explanations meant only for the initiate? Or shall the language and style of broadcasting be framed in simple terms that are easily understood by the average listener? There are those who are not partial to either method as long as there is variety and dramatic flavor to the description.

Nationally famous coaches like Chick Meehan have been instrumental in developing a jargon which is foreign to the average person. There are hardly any synonyms or simple terms for football technicalities. Such terms as "fake," "lateral," "reverse," "spinner" are not wrapped in mystery by the expert. The average listener wants his game presented in understandable language. He has job enough getting entertainment from his radio. The announcer who wishes to command a large following avoids a terminology that confuses.

Dramatic situations are conveyed by picturesque words and images. This gift for the use of the right word spells the success of many an announcer. Instead of saying, "Doakes is tackled by Smith," a more definite picture is presented by "Doakes is spilled by Smith." The game abounds in a specialized vocabulary which should be on the tip of the tongue.

Two schools of broadcasting now flourish. One thrives in the Midwest, the other in the East, and each has its peculiar wrinkles. No one has yet ventured to explain how these regional variations crept into practice. The majority of Midwestern announcers are more precise. They wait until the play is complete before describing it. The Eastern an-

nouncers are keyed up to speed. The announcer is right on top of the ball. He may thus be fooled by a trick ball. In such a case he must frankly contradict himself.

The eastern technique is preferred, because background noises are appropriately blended and timed to the "talk." Parabolic microphones like huge searchlights pick up the roar of the crowd while the announcer tells what is going on. Under the midwestern plan there is danger that the listener wonders what is going on while he hears the roar of the crowd.

Football Credo

The ideal sports broadcaster has command of himself and of the scene at all times. There are some special considerations which apply to football which we here set down:

1. Indicate the line-up with brief thumbnail sketches of the players, allowing for sufficient time for a balanced treatment of both sides.

2. Endeavor to put the play on the air while it is happening. A delayed description is apt to confuse the listening audience. The meaning of the yell on any climactic turn is totally lost if it comes while the previous play is being described.

3. Concentrate on what you are saying, not the manner of saying it. An honest participation in the game will provide words that have the appropriate zest and emotional touch. Most commentators grow nervous and repetitious. They suffer from the strain of keeping fresh.

4. Establish a fixed point of view. Ford Bond advises that if you are placed on the south side of the field, give the listeners a layout of the field with the east goal and the west goal. This fixity keeps you from being confused and it makes it easier for the listeners to follow the action play, and to make a chart of the field if they desire.

5. If you go "technical" you must be absolutely accurate

every second. An analysis of defensive plays will lead you into the purely technical side of the game.

6. The commentator must maintain an attitude of impartiality. He is the eye of the radio audience which represents a divided allegiance. Be polite to both sides—no irony, no name-calling.

A listener to the broadcast of the Harvard-Princeton game objected to the announcer's repeated reference to "the Bengals" and "the cats" to describe the Princeton players on the ground that it made it difficult for one unfamiliar with such vague identification to follow the play.

7. Suspense requires that the audience be intermittently reminded which team is ahead and by what margin.

8. The trend is toward the technical report on plays. There are hardly any synonymous or simple terms for the football language like spinner, reverse through the line, lateral, and fake. But the judicious use of broad description will help to relieve the mass of technical phrasing so befuddling to those not versed in the lore.

9. There are three types of blundering gridiron broadcasters. The first is the admittedly inexperienced commentator who knows little or nothing about the game. The second is the "know-it-all" type who presents an inaccurate picture in the attempt to give the intimate details of every play and to pronounce criticism of players and officials. The third, and more common type is the "exaggerator." He presents every scrimmage sensationally. The audience is led to believe that each game is a succession of thrills. He does not discriminate. Every dull play becomes vital, and climax is built up where there is none. One critic suggests that their manner is dictated by the fear that they or their stations might lose their audience for the afternoon, or for ensuing programs if an uninteresting game were portrayed as it was played.

The exaggerated style of announcing is called the "high

style of gabbing." *Variety* criticized Tom Hanlon in a western match: "It's all the same to him whether they're digging in under the goal posts or falling asleep in midfield."

Headaches and Heartaches

A conscientious broadcaster will visit the training camp and meet the players personally. Ten minutes of confidential talk with the coach will give the broadcaster plentiful dope. On the day of the game he will be at the scene of the game a few hours before the kick-off. In a final conference with the coaches of each side he will be advised as to any new formation and trick plays likely to be used. He will become familiar with the nicknames of the players and know which men especially to watch. It must be remembered from year to year the basic system of each coach remains the same except for a few names.

Some announcers are prevented by the pressure of their studio assignments to get out and study the teams first-hand before the game. But they manage to read fully on the subject, and on the morning of the game do a lot of cramming.

Husing is in his sixteenth year as a football announcer. His first football game was Penn-Cornell game of 1925. Ted used to take a two-week swing around the major camps before each season. Now he has two scouts on the road gathering the data and impressions. When the opening whistle blows, Ted will have material on fifteen hundred different players of the squads that will see action during the season.

Observers who know their men will be able to recognize a player even if he is covered with muck and slime. At least he will make a fairly accurate guess as to who it should be. He will be guided by the shift in his position, the manner in which he took the ball and by those peculiar quirks in football practice that only the specialist can sense.

The Notre Dame-Navy game of 1937 was played in a blinding snowstorm. Bill Stern, the announcer, could hardly see the other side of the field and all the yard lines were covered up. The listeners are not interested in alibis. The announcers must be frank and see their reasons for not doing a good job.

Often just an ankle strap, an extra wide piece of adhesive, a soiled helmet, the physique of the player, or a torn shirt helps in the identification. Ted Husing has developed a novel electric light annunciator. It is an electric device which locates each of the twenty-two players on a dial lighted up by a touch of the finger. The announcer watches the offensive line and the defensive backfield. His assistant looks through a powerful field glass mounted on a swivel. The lens is always on the ball controlled by a mere twist of the head. The moment the ball is put into play, the assistant presses the appropriate button. The dial box then lights up, and instantly furnishes the announcer with the name. In effect, the assistant furnishes the names, while the announcer is busy watching the plays.

Three hours is a severe trial upon the eyesight, the voice and the brain co-ordination of any microphone speaker, especially a sports announcer. The best announcers become inaccurate as the hours pass. They even become subject to a slight aphasia and give the wrong names to the teams. The broadcasting booth, to make the work harder, is usually located on the far rim of the arena.

Correct pronunciation of the players is important. A sports announcer who mispronounced the name of Alex Wojciechowicz, the Fordham All American center, got ten thousand letters from irate fans.

The name of the player and action looms important in broadcasting. General reports are not sufficient. It is not enough to broadcast: "Alabama gains seven yards through tackle . . . California ran the left end for five yards . . . Ala-

bama completed a fourteen yard pass . . ." The telephone of the broadcasting station will be ringing with complaints. The fan wants to know not only "whatswhat" but "whodunit."

Not every football game has its high dramatic lights. The announcer's prayer is that things do not become too humdrum. Three long hours of monotonous calling of plays, the repetitious chant of "they're again in a huddle," "they're just coming out of a huddle," "now they're lining up," may suddenly be broken by drama or comedy.

A last-minute touchdown of Notre Dame, a Fordham-NYU brawl on the field, a riot of Princeton students on the Yale bowl—these are historic instances. Routine chatter suddenly swings into dramatic tonalities. The pace becomes swift and the descriptive touch more vivid. Luck may be kind to the announcer and provide him with plenty of excitement and diversions. But he must be equal to the occasion with diction and voice.

A Final I.Q. Test for the Football Broadcaster

1. Do you know the game from A to Z?
2. Have you a system to adequately prepare yourself for your broadcast?
3. Can you translate rapid action into words and talk with "punch" for at least two hours?
4. Do you know every play by name and number?
5. Do you know the history of each player?
6. Are you provided with a fund of human interest stories and football lore that can enchant the fan?
7. Do you use the huddles, the quarters and time taken out to talk glibly and entertainingly?
8. Can you pronounce each name correctly?
9. Have you developed a system for the quick identification of the players?

10. Does your speech indicate you have a "one-track" vocabulary, or is your diction varied?

11. Have you reliable observers who can tell when the coach has switched all the numbers of the players so that nobody will know who is playing in a brilliant attempt to confuse the opposition.

12. Are you improving on your graphic style by running moving pictures of the game, while you make a running commentary for later analysis. Run the film slowly at first and gradually increase the tempo.

The Smack of the Bat Heard 'Round the World

Baseball is truly a national sport. Its stars are public heroes. Now thanks to radio, the smack of the bat can be heard 'round the world.

In the days when Matthewson pitched, the scores were eagerly watched as they were chalked up on bulletin boards at the half-inning intervals. Radio with its immediate reporting, made it possible for legions of listeners to follow the national game, play by play, in the comfort of their own homes. Baseball fought the intruder, Radio, with stubborn resistance. It was feared that broadcasting would sound the deathknell of the grandstand. Instead, radio repeated its old miracle. Fans stormed the gates of the stadium. Gate receipts mounted. Interest in the game took on a revival and expansion. All this, of course, refers to the World Series and to the one all-star midseason game which is broadcast over the networks. Games in the regular schedule have never approached their wide audience. The World Series is considered the prize commercial program of the year. Henry Ford was persuaded to sponsor the 1937 series at a cost of twenty-five thousand dollars. The Gillette Razor took over in 1938 and 1939.

The ban on broadcasting is entirely lifted. Owners of the

major league clubs were opposed for the most part to broadcasting games at home, but did not object to a play-by-play account when the teams are playing in other cities. Until 1938, the Yankees, the Giants and the Dodgers had an inter-club agreement which strictly prohibited any microphone in the ball parks except for the openings games and the World Series.

Radio's Toughest Sports Job

The World Series went on the air for the first time in 1926. Here was a chance to prove to the skeptics what radio could do in the ways of baseball reporting. The sports writer selected for the job failed dismally. Listeners complained that he mumbled and desecrated the English tongue. It was Graham McNamee who was called to the rescue in the second game of the Series. His precise and emphatic speech at once established baseball on radio, and made him famous as America's outstanding baseball commentator.

Why do baseball announcers complain that baseball is difficult to broadcast? The game seems so easy to follow when one sits in the grandstand. But the spectator fails to notice the pauses in the game. These pauses are especially trying for the broadcaster. The good announcer fills these spaces with shrewd commentary, both factual and philosophical, that keeps the action moving. He culls a wealth of observations from the scene.

Baseball is not always a fascinating game to watch, nor does it always provide sensational moments for the stay-at-home. It has its day of dull exhibition when players are inert and the doldrums seem to settle over the ball park. But once let the fates be kind, and a hurricane of human energy and ingenuity will be set into action.

The baseball fan is erudite. He knows all the "dope." Baseball fans "eat up statistics." The averages are com-

puted to show the real power of the player at the plate. Yesterday's baseball here and today's successor live in the fan's experience. He knows the background of the players, where they came from before they arrived on "big time." He is familiar with the achievements of batter and pitcher. He knows coach and umpire. Millions who do not go to the game feed on the publicity in the newspapers.

The listener's familiarity with his baseball family makes the announcer's task both more easy and more difficult. More easy, because the listener needs only the merest suggestion to visualize the action; more difficult, because the announcer must be possessed of a dramatic sense that never errs.

"Covering the series is radio's toughest sports job," says Ted Husing, "because you're talking to the world's largest expert audience. They'll call you on every error you make, so you've got to be right and be right the first time."

Shall the Color Story Be Scripted?

Some degree of formalism has been put into the "color" story before the game by announcers who read their scripts. During the series of 1936, Gabriel Heatter and Boake Carter were assigned by CBS to talk about the crowd and things in general before the game began. Both were supplied with typewritten scripts.

The microphone has an uncanny way of revealing such practice. Listeners are more readily affected by colloquial speech than by the interlacing of colorful words which may not be on the tip of the tongue in moments of excitement. Many a listener suspects that the sidelights were written only a few minutes prior to the broadcast. The true test for the broadcaster lies in his spontaneity, his rapid-fire description. It is a gift.

Gabriel Heatter justifies the use of prepared copy on sev-

eral grounds. "I have a lot of sidelights," he said, "about the players and the game. Maybe I won't use more than a line or two of it or maybe I'll use it for the whole fifteen minutes before the game starts. We don't go on the air until both teams have finished practicing, all the preliminaries finished. All we have to watch are the ground keepers smoothing out the infield. In case nothing happens, fifteen minutes is a long time to fill and you're glad to have a script to fall back on, whether you use it or not."

The easiest assignment for a color announcer is the opening game of the World Series in Washington. Here the announcer can swing into a dramatic pace when the president arrives on the field. The color announcer in the opening game between the Washington Senators and the Philadelphia Athletics in 1938 was paced too slow. On paper, the words are descriptive enough:

"We are looking at the presidential box now. He will come along in a moment. A host of camera men are standing by. They have a man sitting in for the president. All the photographers are getting their focus. A host of cameramen are standing by. Looks as if things are going to happen around here. Look at the bleachers out there. Umbrellas are up. Hope the Senators come through in fine style here. Depends on four or five pitchers. Then there are the Athletics. Several new faces. Rookies. Means that Connie Mack is trying out some new material. An aeroplane is hovering overhead. The secret service men are moving closer. A sign the president is coming. Here he comes. The car is moving down the first base line. There he is now . . . entering his box flanked by his military aides and his son, Jimmy. This is his sixth game . . . there he stands now with his famous smile . . . shedding the cares of State. Listen to that music . . . the United States Army band is in parade formation . . . marching ahead . . . followed by both teams . . . in single file . . . for the flag raising. . . . The crowd roars as the presi-

dent winds up for the benefit of the photographers . . . there goes the ball . . . it barely clears the heads of the battery of newspapermen in front of the box. . . . Play ball!"

"Baseball broadcasting," says Ted Husing, "is a 'soft' job compared to football. Why? Because there is less strained excitement and the voice is not so strained. Any play in football can become a scoring play. Not so in baseball?"

A special play—and the aspect for the spectator changes; he rejoices; he jeers; he becomes a howling critic. At such a time the announcer finds escape from humdrum recital. His task is to convey this new stir to the listener by properly feeding the imagination.

The fans with unbridled hero worship expected Babe Ruth to perform. During his Big League lifetime, the Babe hit seven hundred and twenty-three home runs. He hit more than fifty home runs a season four times. No player has ever approached such a life time record.

The listener expects performance just as does the spectator, but not every game can be heralded as a Babe Ruth classic. Hence, be not too hard on the commentator who must report a game that offers little in the way of tight situations or skills that make the fans exult.

The pitcher winds up and lets go! "Strike!" you cry. You call the play for every ball pitched. Suddenly there is a sharp crack. The ball is hurled into the green and tan surface of the infield. The ball batter speeds hell-bent for first base. Your speech quickens as you report these movements. You follow the runner down to the first base and keep your eye on the ball. You are to report on the swift cooperation of infielder and first baseman. The infielder has swooped down on the ball and made a throw.

The capable broadcaster can make dramatic situations tense for the listener. Consider the fan who sits at his dial. He waits on the announcer's every word. The summarizing will clinch the situation as it is at the moment. Two strikes

and three balls; bases full; second half of ninth inning; score tied; partisans in the stands are letting out a long-drawn out and derisive "Booooo!" The batter does a little thinking. The pitcher staves a sizzler over the plate. Perhaps it is another King of Swat whose lifted bat consigns that ball beyond the flagpole in center field!

Baseball is endlessly intriguing, full of individual duels and unexpected situations. Ordinarily the players and fans pay little attention to the complete lack of hits until five innings have passed. The game is full of surprises. The commentator is forced on the alert. It is these dramatic changes that saves football on the air from a dry-as-dust cataloguing of balls and strikes.

Every play has a direct bearing on the outcome of the game. A stolen base, a hit or an error; a double play; miraculous throws to the home plate from the outfield or to a base—movements performed with an amazing accuracy, swiftness, rhythm and timing—such is baseball!

Styles in Baseball Broadcasting

The baseball czar, Judge Keneshaw Mountain Landis once reserved the right to select the men who do the announcing, and even laid down rules as to their manner of delivery. He insisted on a correct play-by-play account, untouched by dramatics in voice nor colored by personal views.

Some commentators develop a personal style that fans enjoy. Out of the wealth of his experience as a world Series broadcaster, Graham McNamee offers his individual philosophy of reporting: "I have developed the detailed style of reporting. I try to pack my broadcast with as many facts and incidents as possible to fill out the picture. If a pitcher stops and dusts his glove at a crucial moment or digs his cleat into the ground, that's drama and the fans ought to have it.

"The things in the series that have given me the biggest

kicks are passing moments, the brilliant flashes, which are often forgotten afterwards, a stolen base, a big batter fanned, an incredible put out, a feat performed by a player with all the odds against him. The unexpected and unpredictable which is always happening in the Series.”

The World Series of 1937 showed a tendency to calmer reporting. Baseball announcers used to pulsate in a voice of breathless excitement on every play. Announcers who rely on sensationally strained voice pitches cannot reach first base with their listeners. Such artificial dither grows monotonous and provides no balance for the ears. Only when genuine excitement sweeps the field, should the voice rise to emotional intensities.

Many announcers suffer from over-enthusiasm in exaggerating plays. An infield pop is magnified into a home run. Or an ordinary assist and put-out is voiced screamingly as if it were an event by itself.

Another school of announcers dampen the brilliancy of every play by dull reporting and monotonous intonation.

This is the era of the impartial announcer. The tendency to be over indulgent to the home-town fan must be checked. The first rule of sportsmanship is to give both sides an even break in reporting.

With the exception of Tom Manning, who has been before the baseball microphone since 1923, NBC announcers confine themselves to straight, factual accounts of the game. There is always the danger that factual reporting may become dull and colorless. Even straight reporting can be enhanced by a lively conversational tone. The commentator should be very fast, on the top of every play. The calling of plays calls for a certain crispness and dispatch. There is such a thing as a monotonous drone making a game deader than it is by calling the plays with hollow indifference. Try saying “Str-i-ke Three!” as if it *meant* something.

While the fan resents the flagrant highbrow, it is expected

that the announcer use good diction. Ted Husing at times becomes too erudite. Bill Slater has a more polished and suave approach. It is all right for Connie Mack to refer to his team as AthEletics, and no one would holler about the extra syllable. The commentators who supply a liberal use of "dese, doze and dems," are fast disappearing.

Two new announcers came on the scene in 1939. Experienced on local stations both Red Barbour and Arch McDonald established themselves with fans on the networks in the New York area.

Red Barbour was put under contract to General Mills which spends close to one million dollars sponsoring minor league broadcasts over ninety stations from Albany to San Diego.

Barbour was born thirty-two years ago in Mississippi and raised in Florida. His first broadcasts were for the Brooklyn Dodgers (WOR). His speech is tinged with soft southern cadences that at once catch the listener. He uses idioms peculiar to himself. "The boys are tearing up the pea patch" means "teamwork is tops." "F.O.B." implies "the bases are loaded." Barbour's idiomatic salary is reputed to be twenty-five thousand dollars per year.

Another newcomer to the New York area is thirty-seven-year-old Arch McDonald from Arkansas who reported the home games of the World Champion Yankees and the Giants over WABC for Wheaties, Mobiloil, and Ivory Soap. Arch was once a refrigerator salesman in Chattanooga, but seeing the baseball games interfered with business. He attracted a huge following as the "Ambassador of Sports," at Washington's WJSV. He avoids the hackneyed idiom of the average announcer. With Arch, a pitcher is a pitcher and not a twirler; a catcher catches, and he does not do the "receiving chore." The lingo he uses is his own fresh from the dugout. Announcing a double play for instance, Arch is likely to re-

port laconically, "Two dead birds." His fans know an easy play as a "can of corn," and a slow ball as "the set of dishes." A pitcher easy for a particular batter to hit is that batter's "cousin." A hard hitter "lays the wood to it," and base runners are "ducks on the pond."

The 'Tween Innings Announcer

Baseball reporting on the air was once considered strictly a one-man job. Today the commentator is joined by at least one "newspaper story" announcer who gives general descriptions before and after the game. The "observer" attached to the announcer does not actually observe and report the play as in football. His function is to keep track of statistical detail—the number of times at the bat, putouts, assists, and the like.

The arrangement of announcers varies. Two plans are in use. Two announcers may cooperate in the manner of a fight broadcast. The one may be called the "play-by-play" announcer, the other the "between-innings" announcer. The "between innings" announcer summarizes the preceding inning, makes observations missed by his partner and manages to squeeze in the "commercials."

In the second plan, two announcers are assigned to the baseball park. Both act as "play-by-play" commentators at the end of the fifth or sixth inning, the first announcer retires and gives way to the second. This relay arrangement allows for new blood at a time when the first announcer may begin to sag. A fresh voice has the tonic effect of reviving the listener. The play-by-play announcing is continuous.

There is drama wrapped around that rawhide ball. The announcer must follow its every movement. The fan is self-trained in the process of visualization. All he needs is a verbal lift. The listener needs those factual aids that enable him to picturize the speed of the ball, the peculiar

quality of its delivery, where it passes, and what happens to it on the way to the catcher's mitt.

The merest details take on importance as the game progresses. The pitched ball that strikes the batter may change the course of empire. A catch that is fumbled may spell woe. A sprained ankle may prove calamitous. A left-handed pitcher in the box, or a left-handed batter at the plate presents special problems. The stance at the plate is important. Joe di Maggio had a flat footed stance; Red Sox Manager Joe Cronin, a wide open stance.

The listener is on the alert for these details to complete his judgment of events. The announcer therefore gives swift summaries of the performance of each player as he steps to the bat. In this way, the listener gets the sweep of the game backwards and forwards.

As a rule, left handed batters have great success against right-handed pitchers because the ball curves in toward them. Conversely right handed batters have better success against left handed pitchers.

Experienced announcers can usually tell what kind of ball is coming by the way the ball leaves the hand of a pitcher; whether it is going to be a curve or fast ball. But do not anticipate the umpire. You might get fooled. An umpire is called upon to make from one hundred and seventy-five to three hundred decisions a game—decisions that must be spontaneous, accurate, firm.

The way to the baseball microphone is paved with the best intentions. The only training school for baseball announcers is a microphone and the play on the diamond. The fact a man is a writer on sports or an ardent fan may give powerful assurance of success, but the test lies in actual oral performance.

How can the aspiring baseball announcer get the practice? The problem is not an easy one. From the standpoint of continuity in reporting, it is simple enough to make quick

notes of the action while it is going on. The next step would be to speak before a recording machine and translate the action into an authentic aural scene for the listener. Now you have your words engraven on the disc. Play it over, study your oral sense of baseball drama. Get some audience reaction in your own parlor. Try it on your dog—anything—to persuade your own sensibilities that you'd make a capable broadcaster equal to the best of them. At the Polo Grounds and the Yankee Stadium, the announcers sit in a little booth partitioned off at one end of the press box.

The between-innings announcer adds those spicy little items that are of themselves interesting and outstanding; the sensational catches, the arguments, injuries, behavior and reactions of the crowds and the teams. Time out and change of pitchers represents invaluable minutes in which the announcers can catch up and always add a spicy paragraph or two. Baseball runs on leisurely enough to give the announcer time to take in all details of a play. Trivial things loom important. Who picked the play? Why was an outfielder shifted? Was the last curve slow or fast? The announcer must be on the alert.

World Series announcers are under severe tension. They sit at their microphones with the air of grim earnestness and none of the gaiety of a spectator at a ball game. They must be keen to catch the plays accurately. A radio editor explains this tension thus: "A fan can be wrong about what he sees but not the announcer."

The King of Sports

Throughout the ages, racing has held the undisputed title of king of sports. Once the populace surged into the arena to see the chariots sweep around the course for the entertainment of the Caesars. Now millions, far and wide, tune in for the racing thrill that is denied them as actual spectators. A

vicarious thrill it is, but it is nonetheless this thrill which commentators must convey. Horse racing, indeed, offers for the listener a concentrated excitement greater than that derived from any other sport. When men and women have money invested on a horse, no artificial stimulus to their imagination is required.

Statisticians agree that the public's loss at the sixty thousand handbooks exceeds one and a half billion dollars per year, with an additional loss covered by a three hundred million dollar loss at pari-mutuel tracks.

The very briefness of a horse race makes it ideal for radio broadcasting. A baseball game lasts two hours, a boxing match an hour, a football game two and a half hours; but a horse race rarely takes more than two minutes in the actual running. Including picturesque details of the setting, the entire sequence of the race, course and finish can be encompassed within the space of fifteen minutes.

The racing commentator, during important races like the Derby, is put on his mettle more than the commentator in any other field of sports. This is because he is dealing with an audience sophisticated in racing lore. Thousands have been studying racing forms for months in anticipation of the race. From expert newspaper reports, they know all about the horses, the jockeys, the owners, the past performances, and a host of minor details. One slip, and the announcer is immediately raked over the coals by the fans. "As accurate as a camera" is the way Bryan Fields describes those eyes of his which follow the horses. He has called the right horses in every camera finish. And that is a severe test for an announcer.

I Hear Them Calling

A high degree of specialization is required in the broadcasting of racing events. In 1928 Graham McNamee tried his skill at several races for NBC. When the important Bel-

mont Races came up, Graham was advised that he had better get some expert help for the event. When he asked an executive on whom he could rely, he was told that Bryan Field, who was standing by was "as good as any." Thus Field was inducted as a commentator of horse racing.

Bryan Field already had acquired his knowledge of horses as racing reporter for the New York *Times*. He had seen more than eighteen thousand races and could write with facility about every phase of the sport. He became master of the difficult art of "calling" which is essential for the turf writer.

"Calling" is placing the horses as they pass the various distance poles in a race, making known the relative position of the entrants one to the other. Without this gift for "placing," no one can perform a successful job of broadcasting.

"It is an instinctive combination of three items which makes a true 'caller'," explained Field. "You must know the silks, the mannerisms of each jockey, and the color, size and mannerisms of each horse. You eventually get so that the hunch of a jockey, the shape of a horse's head, its gait, enable you to identify immediately horse and jockey. Even if it comes up mud, as we say at the track, you still can call 'em, despite the fact that their silks may be one gray smear of mud rather than any particular color."

Bryan Field has a rival in Clem McCarthy, who knows his horses by their fetlocks. Clem's first big race on the Radio was the Kentucky Derby in which he announced Blue Larkspur's victory. In 1931 he was sent to England to broadcast the Grand National Steeplechase, but the British did not use his talents.

While not as intensely dramatic as McCarthy, Field holds the exciting pace in voice. The listener enjoys a human and refreshing touch at times. There came a moment in the Kentucky Derby when in trying to recall the position of the

seven horses, Field momentarily forgot the California entry, Riskilus, in last place. He rattled off the six leaders and then trying to recall Riskilus, he said, "In last place is . . . is . . . what the hell is that other horse?"

The usually steady Clem McCarthy succumbed to the excitement of the Seabiscuit-War Admiral race in 1938. For the last half he just kept yelling excitedly, "They're neck and neck," forgetting to mention where the horses were until just before the finish line.

A classic event like the Santa Anita Sweepstakes or the Kentucky Derby requires at least three announcers, for a full, rounded commentary. The "opening announcer" generally has the task of weaving the commercials into his introductory announcement. The "color" announcer seizes upon any aspect of the scene which will give a vivid picture to the listeners. The "technical" announcer calls the horses and follows the dramatic movement of the race. All their efforts are deftly co-ordinated to give a full picture of the race—historical background of the race and the entries, weather and conditions of the track, betting odds, entry list or scratches, the order of post positions, interview with jockeys, owners, celebrities, and the details that comprise the dynamics of the event. To know how and when to integrate all these elements is a flexible art.

The Kentucky Derby of 1937 displayed Clem McCarthy at his best. He filled the requirements of dramatic suspense, sharp eyesight, and a ready vocabulary spoken with appropriate gusto.

The "opening announcer" draws the curtain for the listeners: "This is Lyon Van reporting to you at the top of the booth at Louisville, Kentucky . . . today's broadcast comes to you through the courtesy of Raleigh . . . Kool Cigarette . . . the winner must have extra stamina to win that quarter mile . . . it takes extra stamina . . . just what Raleigh gives

you . . . but right now here is Charlie Lyons who will tell you what is going on below."

The bugle blares to the call of "Boots and Saddles." The parade out of the paddock starts. Satin-coated horses mounted by jockeys in multi-colored silks are moving ahead. The band strikes up "My Old Kentucky Home," and southern chivalry will be displaying itself at its best.

The "color" announcer surveys the scene for the listener: "There are eighty thousand in the grand stands, thirty to forty in the fields . . . the weather is perfect . . . this year all is well . . . the sunshine's bright in Kentucky's home to-night . . . the track is in excellent condition . . . but I'll leave the technical description to Clem McCarthy . . . they're all here . . . Jack Dempsey . . . Governor Landon . . . let's get right down into the paddock and see what Clem will say."

And here is where listeners are stirred by the throaty staccato of Clem McCarthy's "Thank you . . . thank you . . . here we are on the grandstand . . . now you can hear the bugle down there . . . they're calling them out . . ."

Things do not always turn out smoothly. Often there is a delay at the post. High spirited thoroughbreds remain fractious even under the most powerful coaxing of the jockeys. Minutes of anxiety pass—eight minutes in the 1937 Kentucky Derby, which Clem broadcast. These minutes pulse with excitement. The horses are nervous, the crowd in the stands is nervous, and so should be the listeners. A skilled broadcaster knows how to convey this impression by descriptive touches and phrases that quicken the senses and mirror the cavorting of the horses.

"Yes, they are behaving nobly . . . there they are . . . and War Admiral is just coming up . . . and there is Melodist . . . and just now Sunset Trail 2d broke out . . . Merry Maker is taking a can . . . and Sunset Trail is a little bit fractious . . . Reaping Reward never looked better . . . he's not a big fellow . . . but he's a beautiful brown . . . Military

has not yet taken his position . . . Pompoon is finally walking to his stall . . . War Admiral is turning around in his stall . . . as well behaved as War Admiral can be . . . they'll be away in just a second . . . and it looks like an instant . . . War Admiral has just walked out of his stall . . . Bernard F. is cutting up just a little bit . . . this War Admiral is moving back through the gate . . . no, no, no . . . still fractious . . . War Admiral is delaying the start . . . walking in and out of the barrier . . . Heel Fly is at it again . . . I don't see why those horses don't get killed . . . back into your stall . . . War Admiral is rocking in and out . . . ah, ah, Heel Fly is upset . . . I wouldn't be surprised if Gray Gold wouldn't turn a somersault . . . no, Heel Fly backed out again . . . if the horses don't get set they'll have a hard time . . . War Admiral . . . get steady . . . stand still . . . watch that Heel Fly . . . I can't see starter Hamilton . . . he's hiding . . . now Pompoon has taken to a little cutting up . . . no change in any of the artists . . . War Admiral is a favorite . . . then Reaping Reward . . . **THEY'RE OFF!**"

A tense two minutes ensues. Clem must keep a verbal pace with the horses neck to neck. "They are fighting on the lead . . . the horses round the course . . . War Admiral is setting the pace . . . Melodist is in fourth place . . . Heel Fly is driving hard . . . Melodist is up there in fourth place at the quarter mile . . . and Pompoon is slipping . . . Fairy Hill is second by a length . . . and now War Admiral leads . . . it's going to be a photographic finish . . . an eyebrow finish . . . it's very close . . . it's War Admiral . . ."

The microphone is then turned over to the "color" announcer. This is a breathing spell to provide a moment to get the official decision disclosed by the photographs as well as the official time. The assistant announcer "colors" the changing scenes at the paddock. His voice and manner by way of contrast must be relatively calm, after the hectic report of the race.

Nice judgment is required as to the exact moment when the microphone is to be handed over to the "color" announcer. All this is a matter of timing and evaluation of the complete picture of the race to be presented.

At the Santa Anita races of 1937, Clem had as his color announcer Ken Carpenter. Toward the end of the broadcast, Clem clinches his recital with a rapid summary. "But let's get Ken Carpenter in here," Clem is saying. "How about the rest of the picture?" The two commentators then enter into racy dialogue. This is a device to relieve the monotony of straight discourse. Significant details and highlights are disclosed, and the order of the winners repeated. "The gross was one hundred and thirty-six thousand dollars. The winner took ninety thousand seven hundred dollars. It cost each winner eleven thousand dollars," says Clem briskly as he leaves the sign-off to Carpenter. "We've had a tremendous day here at Santa Anita."

Microphone Control

In practice, the supervising engineer makes a preliminary survey of the track. He selects the best available vantage point for the commentator and his assistants. The commentator must have a clear view of the track, and the broadcasting apparatus is placed where least interference is encountered.

The next step is the placement of lines between track and master control which includes one private talk line and radio lines for airing the program. These lines are free from all telephone communication and are run into the broadcast booth. The master control in the studio is then checked and the commentator awaits the signal to start.

The timing of such a broadcast is almost perfect. With a wave of the hand, the control engineer directs the man at the microphone to start his patter. The bugle may be calling

the horses to the post as the speaker begins his description of the parade.

Veterans of race track broadcasting seldom experience any mike fright. Bryan Field admits laboring under a tension only when the horses are put into the respective stalls. Horses at the post require the most concentrated watching. It is this strain on the senses that makes racetrack reporting a difficult art, no matter how trained the expert.

The broadcaster talks freely into a specially equipped microphone which he wears on his chest. Both hands are free to permit him to observe the progress of the race through binoculars. Once the horses are off the commentator swings into the second phase of his work. Calling the leaders in a race is not sufficient. The place, the style and manner of running, the duels for leadership in the home stretch—all these are details of the picture which are filled in with masterful verbal strokes.

Few experts are able to combine extensive knowledge with an ability to talk fast, naturally and colorfully. Rhetorical devices are useful. Clem indulges in apostrophe, addressing the horses familiarly: "Steady there! War Admiral, steady. Steady, old boy."

The commentator presents the pattern of the race to the listener first as an artist close to the color, life and rhythm of the streaming pack of animals; next he is the factual reporter conveying the swift progressive stages in the victory of a horse.

Shall it Be British in Sports Broadcasting?

Styles in broadcasting find reflection in national temperament. In the field of sports, American and British broadcasting stand out in the same strong contrast as does the mode of speech and general characteristics of the people.

Unrestraint is unbecoming to the British sense of stability.

What is regarded by Americans as stodgy and slow satisfies the British tradition and poise. The British are altogether upset by American Sports broadcasters who aim to pour a volley of words into the microphone.

Americans are inclined to ridicule British sports broadcasting as slow and stodgy. The British do not believe that the rapid attack of words must go on whether anything is happening or not. Most British sports announcers merely instance in their recital that national characteristic of the British microphone, "Reserve."

The booming vocal method of our American sports announcers which began with the advent of Graham McNamee, to the British ear represents an emotional imbalance in description. R. C. Lyle, who described the turf events of the British Broadcasting Corporation, speaks in a leisurely conversational and unimpassioned manner. In presenting a word picture of the running of the English Derby from the track at Epsom Downs, Mr. Lyle said, "There is nothing to worry about at the moment." His description of the track was typically British: "The course is about a mile and a half although we are not concerned with such details over here. I say 'about a mile.' It might be a hundred yards more or less. I doubt if anyone has ever taken the trouble to measure it or if anyone ever will."

Let us be fair to the British announcers. Very often American announcers get into a dither of excitement, and the listener later discovers that much has happened. English announcers by their very calmness, make the sports combat a matter for judicial appraisal. It takes much longer for a British announcer to make up his mind what has happened. He fills in time with general impressionistic terms. He is not chiefly concerned with a blow-by-blow treatment. His literary graces never leave him, on the theory that broad description presents a better picture to the listener. The heavyweight fight between Max Baer of California and

Tommy Farr, the Welshman, in May 1937, reached American listeners by short wave. The broadcast was a striking example of the divergent method of American and British sports announcing. For purposes of record, here are choice passages heard by American listeners from Harringay Arena in London:

"Baer comes into the ring but he doesn't shake hands with himself." "They are just playing ping pong now." And when Baer seemed angry: "Baer is rawther exercised just now." "Now they're hugging each other in the center." "Baer is flicking his nose and well he might." At the finish came this morsel, "Farr is bleeding very nicely."

Or these: "Baer is standing up like a lighthouse. The scene shifts and Baer is back in his corner. It would really appear that Farr was out to strangle him. Baer is winking at him in gentle reproof. He is a real comedian, this Baer.

"Baer is grinning, although it is difficult to tell what he is grinning about, as Farr definitely has the edge. The American seems to be doing most of the leading with his nose. Farr's keen as mustard, full of initiative and courage. Baer's eye is closing, his face is bleeding . . . There were four beautiful punches by Farr, flicker, flicker, flicker . . . Baer's got his back to me like a great barn door . . . now he's turned around . . . Baer is so handsome and rather truculent but looks the least bit pensive . . . you can hear the roar of the crowd, like an ocean wave, every time Farr hits him."

Finally the announcer, with a casualness that no one but an Englishman can understand, announced Farr the winner, in some such words, "Every Englishman must be proud of him for it was an exhibition of pure English boxing."

An American listener satirically declared that he opined the fight was merely a game of tag for very few punches were called. The broadcaster sounded as if he were anxious to get away for his cup of tea.

The dignity of British sports broadcasting is in the hands

of the BBC, which does not trust itself to "that shocking American accent." Britannia's air waves were represented at the Louis-Schmeling fight of 1938 by a special British commentator. During the 1937 Olympic ice hockey games at Garmisch-Partenkirchen, the British assigned Robert Bowman, a young Canadian whose virtues seemed unknown to them at the time, although he had been an announcer for eighteen months. He had all the gusto and mounting verbal climaxes of the American announcer, piling on such phrases as "Here we are folks, huddled right down in the clear, brisk, cold waiting for . . . oh, boy, what a shot! what a shot! . . . I wish you could have seen it, folks."

That was the last of Robert Bowman. A flood of letters complaining about the American accent poured into Broadcasting House in London. Bowman was gently put off the air, and the order went forth that thereafter announcers were to maintain the official BBC manner of sports portrayal—free from emotional sway, impersonal, contained.

Our sports broadcasts have nevertheless won praise from a section of the British public. Collie Knox, radio editor of the *London Daily Mail*, grew enthusiastic about the airing of the Kentucky Derby by Clem McCarthy, and in a special article he said: "The broadcast of the Kentucky Derby depressed me. It depressed me because it was so perfectly done. The commentators had pep, humor and knowledge. They made the race live. Now ask me why we cannot get such broadcasters over here. Or rather why we don't. It must be some form of national repression."

British fight announcers have much more latitude than is the American practice. During the progress of the fight, they freely voice their opinions as to who is winning and they may also criticize the mode of fighting. American announcers express no opinions—that being the duty of appointed referees and judges.

DOES RADIO RULE POLITICS?

DISCOVERY of powerful value of the microphone for political speakers was not made until the Democratic Convention of 1932. The instrument had found a master in Franklin D. Roosevelt. Roosevelt, a new and friendly voice, tinged with the sincerity of colloquial phrases that captured the ears of the nation, was swept into public office and earned the soubriquet of "Radio President."

The G.O.P. Convention in 1924 was a mild affair compared with the prolonged session which nominated Governor Cox at Madison Square Garden. It was the era of the goose-necked horns when radio was in its squeaking infancy. Then came the period of Al Smith's showmanship before the "pie-plate" as he dubbed the microphone.

The Smith voice was that of a fighter, explosive, harsh, yet not enough to be exceedingly disagreeable. His raspy quality was modified by a great sense of humor. The chuckle lurked behind the sentences and foretold the approach of a good-natured or humorous point. The "happy-warrior" voice was confident, aggressive, and chuck full of unpolished words hitherto unheard of in rad-dio.

Only a few were privileged to listen to the proceedings of a presidential convention. On his 1923 tour into the West, Harding spoke through the "enunciator" as the microphone was then called. The "new-fangled telephone" crippled his style of oratory and politicians advised him to throw it aside. But amplified oratory came to stay. Through headphone, the unseen audience listened to President Wilson, but by that time improved transmission enabled them to hear the voice of Coolidge as well. Today the ears of the nation

can instantly catch the proceedings of a presidential convention.

Less than twenty stations were linked when Coolidge was named for office but Coolidge was far from being "Silent Cal" before the microphone. By 1936 the proceedings of the convention which nominated Governor Landon of Kansas were carried from Maine to Honolulu through the use of over two hundred transmitters. During six and a half years in the White House Mr. Coolidge engaged in thirty-seven broadcasts.

Herbert Hoover faced the microphone ninety-five times during his four years of incumbency. His voice was typical of the engineer. The microphone betrayed deliberate effort. But the importance of what a president says insures a large listening audience, no matter what the quality of his radio delivery. In that respect he has an advantage over his opponent. The timbre of the Hoover voice was a trifle heavy. The broadcasters called it "the voice of a man who does not like to talk." His manner of monotoned speaking showed great positiveness, even stubbornness. President Roosevelt exceeded the record established by any of his predecessors in office.

It was predicted that radio would bring about a complete change in vocal technique for political speakers. The hope is far too sanguine. Human nature is not easily transformed by a mechanical device like the microphone. The instincts for unbridled expression and for flamboyant oratory are deep in the human conscience.

Alfred Landon himself admitted some two years later reflectively in the *New York Times* that the G.O.P. furnished him with a voice instructor to spruce up his radio delivery. "But I had little time," he complained "in the unremitting pressure upon me for practice. There was some concern about my radio delivery in comparison with Franklin Roosevelt's. The White House is primarily an executive office not

a broadcasting station. There are different accents in different sections of the country. Mine was a western accent, that of the environment in which I was reared. Mr. Roosevelt's ability appeared one night when I heard him say 'war' with the New York accent which made it 'waw' to western ears, and then change to 'War-r' with a sturdy 'r' the next time he used the word."

Listeners noticed that Landon's voice was inclined to fade during a broadcast. This was because he had a habit of swaying from side to side, which took him out of range of the microphone. A special stand was built for him in order to enable him to keep a steady position in relation to the mike. He regarded his speaking problem seriously, and had his speeches recorded in rehearsal before going on the air so that he could check them for imperfections.

In common with many political speakers Governor Landon's main difficulty was his lack of precision and articulation. He did not sound clear and reached the ear as a monotonous jumble. He put the emphasis on the wrong words, phrased poorly, and lost the rhythm of speech which indicates the man who speaks, knows and believes what he is saying. A speech correctionist would recommend that he have records made of his own speeches, and this would enable him to pick the flaws in his own style. He would notice that he speaks with the back of his tongue in his jaws giving a rasping manner to the pronunciation of "r."

In 1936 the G.O.P. innerguard hoped they could find a candidate who would vie with Roosevelt as a speaker. They accepted Governor Landon, whose homely appeal, it was hoped, would make up for his lack of diction, but Landon suffered severely by comparison, and his stumbling and inept phrasing did him scant justice. No use of minimizing the effects of voice on the electorate. After Landon's weak and unimaginative speech of acceptance at Topeka, the polls showed his steady decline.

"His jerkiness, lack of variety and very long phrasing all indicate self-consciousness. Landon sounds as if he is just reading strings of words. If it is stage fright, Mr. Landon should get over it. After all, he is running for president of the United States. His faults could be eliminated by training.

"The speech of the Socialist candidate, Norman Thomas, is not bad, but it is a little tense and unsteady. Sometimes his emotions seem to get the upper hand. I should think he would have a sore throat after talking a while.

"Earl Browder, the communist candidate, has one thing in common with his fellow-Kansan, Governor Landon, if nothing else. That is the mid-western nasality which is not confined to Kansas. Frequently, Mr. Browder sounds like a pedagogue trying to make everything very clear to his class of little children by speaking in simple words of one syllable. He should give his audience credit for somewhat higher intelligence. It detracts from his effectiveness."

Radio established Huey Long as a voice of great authority. In his own state he had already captured the three functions of government. The North had been misled into believing his voice that of a clown. It simply missed his power and talent of mass appeal. Raymond Gram Swing regarded him as a forerunner of American fascism. Some regarded the Kingfish the best political radio speaker, better than President Roosevelt. "Give him time on the air," said the publicist "and let him have a campaign in each state, and he can sweep the country. He is one of the most persuasive men living."

His enemies called him the "Mouth of the Mississippi." Few politicians had a tongue so barbed and ready with invective, shrieking adjectives, roaring like a bull. On occasion, over his own state station WDSU he used the microphone three hours at a time. His special gift was ad libbing, falling back into his own after tearing up his prepared script.

An assassin's bullet laid him low and checked the dema-

gogue. His style was simple and direct in the vernacular of the uneducated man. With a vulgar touch, he was *par excellence* a "man of the people." Lest any late listener might be in doubt as to his identity he had the habit of repeating at frequent intervals: "This is Huey Long speaking." "This is Huey Long reading to you from the Bible." And then he would go on preaching his "Share the Wealth Doctrine." Huey Long intended to use Radio to build up a nation wide political machine.

The microphone has at least brought about some changes from old time practices. In the older days, the candidate would journey around the country, making as many as twenty speeches a day in tank towns. The speech usually was the same for each locality. The big speeches were reserved for the big cities. Today candidates make fewer speeches and save them for important occasions. Sometimes the talk delivered before a local audience is not designed for local conception but is framed rather for radio listeners.

Radio has reduced the oratory of the convention to almost negligent importance. The convention orator at one time lent powerful influence to nomination of candidates. The Democratic Convention of 1896 was a classic example of what sheer oratory can accomplish. The "Thou shalt not crucify us on a cross of gold" speech lifted William Jennings Bryan into the candidacy.

In many respects the nominating conventions of 1940 did not differ widely from those in the past. History records the uproar and the demonstration of the delegates who nominated Lincoln in 1860. Radio has increased the tendency towards stage celebration. Convention oratory is designed for radio consumption since most of the talking has already been privately finished in smoke-filled conference rooms.

The public is becoming aware that any convention demonstration is about ten per cent spontaneous, ninety per cent forced, with the addition of the big pipe organ that alter-

nates with the band and fills the convention hall with its cacophonies. Daylight sessions are dull. The galleries are empty. Night sessions are all pepped up and the gallery is jammed. To many listeners the Convention Hall seemed to be a vacuum filled with words.

President Harding was the first chief executive to take radio along on a train trip. That was in 1923. The microphone always irked President Harding. He had to abandon his habit of walking up and down the platform, and somehow he lost personal contact when he ignored the visible audience for the sake of that imponderable unseen audience.

Radio is responsible for the decline and prolongation of convention oratory. Such a sentiment was uttered in his dying moments by Godfrey G. Gloom, that aged Jeffersonian creation of Elmer Davis who was struck by an automobile after leaving the Convention Hall. "As for the radio, its demoralizing effect on convention oratory is well known. If it had taken the roaring out of oratory it could well be commended, but it has merely taken out the spontaneity and left all the roars in, with the sole qualification that the roarer has to take the proper stance so that he can roar into the microphone."

The microphone has its limitations in presenting the true feeling and atmosphere that surrounds the speaker. The speech may be nothing more than a wild bellow in the hall. Over the microphone it becomes detached from the other sounds of which the voice is properly a part.

The Fireside Chat

There are some who say that Franklin D. Roosevelt won his spurs before the microphone at the right time in history. His voice came with soothing power at a time when the air was filled with voices whose raucous prophecies did not match their political wisdom.

It was by his fireside chats that the President established himself as one of the finest political speakers of modern times. The term, "fireside chat," was coined by the newspapers and adapted by the broadcasting stations. The term conveniently describes that type of address in which the president takes the people into his confidence and discusses the vital problems of the country. While it carries with it the implication that the speech is casual and impromptu, the president's words have had the deepest thought and planning. The term caught the public's fancy, and it is probably here to stay. The chats are looked upon by the public as important news events. The president it is assumed has something important to say else he would not go on the air.

The words of salutation of other presidents had always been, "My Countrymen," or "Fellow Citizens." President Roosevelt salutes his audience as "My Friends," and the intonation of these two words became to American ears a standard phrase for imitation. No. 1 Fireside Chat was the talk on the banking moratorium, of March 12, 1933, eight days after assuming office. The scene was the Oval Room of the White House.

The president talks to the people in language easily understood. He tells them what he is trying to do. He urges them to be calm. Families are listening in, nearly two-thirds of the seventeen million radio homes in the United States. His friendly and agreeable tonality frees their minds from suspicion, makes them open-minded and makes them anxious to listen.

Hitler would never consent to speak into a microphone in the quiet of the studio. He feeds on the plaudits and the "Heils!" of the mob before his eyes. Before the microphone in public places, Hitler never loses his theatrical gesture. He impounds the air with his fists as well as his voice.

One critic said of Roosevelt that during his fireside chats

you get the feeling that he is talking and toasting marshmallows at the same time. The president sometimes speaks with warmth and passion and deep sincerity. His overgenial tones of the fireside chat change to tones of invective. There are occasional lapses into frankness that are uncommon in formal addresses. On one occasion, President Roosevelt interrupted himself to ask, "Where's that glass of water? It is a very hot evening in Washington, my friends." He welds argument with the strong blows of the crusader. Franklin D. Roosevelt has not lost any of his old mastery. Perhaps he is better than ever. His acceptance speech at Franklin Field displayed him at his best. His words were tinged with earnestness and zeal. He was letting himself go before the crowds as his heart felt. "This generation of America has a rendezvous with destiny!" he cried out.

The man seemed transfused with new spirit. This was earnest oratory relieved from all tricks of voice. It was grim and determinate but missed none of that gift of communication which is peculiarly the president's own:

"Governments can err—presidents do make mistakes—but the immortal Dante tells us divine justice weighs the sins of the cold-blooded and the sins of the warm-hearted in different scales.

"In the days to come when the almost perfect state has been established, there will be, I suppose, some sort of inferno for all who gave any sort of aid and comfort to the perpetuation of the old order, even through modification. But I hope that in that region, there may range a proletarian Gungha Din to give a swig to the lad who did not altogether let Groton get him."

Like a showman Roosevelt knows the value of timing, and all the devices of the public speaker. During prolonged applause, he will often begin to talk while the demonstration is at its height, then pause for additional applause and repeat the phrase that was drowned by applause.

He avoids the blunder of many speakers in turning away from a microphone when addressing a visible audience. Even before the mike he gestures freely with a characteristic manner of using his jaw and his right hand. He puts extraordinary emphasis on words, lifts a little particle like "now" with compelling effect. "Now" may usher in vital proposals for the listener.

General Hugh S. Johnson was not much impressed with Roosevelt's radio voice. He said: "It is a clear tenor with a fine Harvard accent, but not nearly so pleasing as ninety-nine out of a hundred radio announcers' voices. Furthermore, there are millions of the masculine persuasion, especially in the wide-open spaces, who don't like musical male voices in the upper register and who favor Harvard accents still less. Even Bing Crosby's crooning gives them faint fits of nausea".

Summing up the virtues of Roosevelt's speech personality. In the first place his articulation is precise, his speech free from provincialisms representative of the North Atlantic section of the United States. His use of pitch or melody is varied. It corresponds to the meaning he wishes to convey. He also shows an aptitude for marked variations in loudness for emphasis. He knows how to prolong the accented syllables of important words and to subordinate unimportant ideas. All these factors are related to rhythm. Roosevelt's use of vocal prolongation makes his speech agreeable.

Advice to the Politician

1. Restore to the convention a background which is stimulating. Revive its original purpose which was to offer to the delegates of the states an opportunity for debate.

2. Practice restraint. The speaker who was accustomed to rant and rely on hokum must chain his impulses. Hokum is an old vaudeville term and means a sure fire hit. Perhaps

this will impose a tremendous task on the speaker. It will not be easy for him to pipe down, nor can he easily discover for himself by listening to his own record just how the most appalling blasts of his own voice make him his own enemy.

3. The political speaker is far safer if he builds up a bulwark of facts and proof in simple language rather than ornate phraseology, big words, and a sentence structure too involved. He will have to work harder on his material to build up common-sense appeal rather than rely upon the richness or the vigor of his voice. There was blunt strength in Al Smith's use of slang: "It was 'duck soup' for them." "They had it in the ash can." Alfred Smith at his best is very persuasive. His power lay in the ability to use the common man's language more vividly than any other American politician. He has extraordinary good sense and salty humor.

Raymond Clapper, observer on the scene with the Scripps-Howard newspapers during the two conventions of 1936, found that there was not a single new thought generated during the entire period: "All the stagnant, weary words that had fallen from the lips of men throughout the ages were gathered and hurled at the convention." Listeners get the notion that the speaker expects to lift them off their feet. Climactic sentences catapult one upon the other and brave words explode like the unceasing firing of a 77 millimeter gun.

4. Select key speakers who can intelligently use their voices. The key-noter ought to be able to pronounce words of more than two syllables without hesitation.

Another important problem is the limit there is to human endurance. How long can listeners stand speeches? An hour's talk is disruptive to the spirit. Fifteen minutes seems to be ideal. Governor Stassen delivered his keynote speech in 1936 in one hour, nine minutes and ten seconds. Speaker Bankhead, the Democratic keynoter, spoke forty-eight minutes,

and Senator Barkley, the Democratic permanent chairman consumed one hour, eight minutes, fifty seconds of radio time in addition to a wild twenty-minute demonstration which he set off during his speech. Ye gods, does it amaze you? Fifty-seven speeches were made by the orators seconding the nomination of F. D. R. and this talkathon represented every state in the union.

The answer to such unbridled passion in the air?

5. Cut down the speeches to a maximum of fifteen minutes for each speaker if the speech is to be aired. "Streamline" the Convention and reduce the key-note speeches and favorite song ballyhoo to a minimum. Ruth Bryan Owen made a signal seconding speech for Roosevelt at Philadelphia in contrast to the rest because she did it in some thirty-five seconds. That gift for brevity is a lovely thing in a woman and in a diplomat. Indeed, it has seemed to me that public women far excel the men in making speeches short and snappy. "The ideal convention speech which broadcasters hold up as a perfect specimen of good broadcasting is the one made by Frank Murphy, then Governor General of the Philippines, who said 'Mr. Chairman, the Philippine Islands gratefully second the nomination of Franklin Delano Roosevelt.' That brief declaration brought a thunderous round of applause; it mirrored the delegates' approval of short speeches."

At the Republican Convention, the seconding speeches were limited to three minutes. As soon as the exuberant speaker went beyond the allotted time, the audience yelled at him to stop. The listener at home can cut the speaker off summarily by a turn of the dial.

The New "Pause Interpreter"

The Convention Hall has now become the theater of the American political show. The speaker's dais is not the only

place from which speeches are broadcast. Several innovations in broadcasting were introduced during the conventions of 1936. The first of these was the use of a micro-wave transmitter no larger than a cigar box. Announcers walked through the crowd and the words of the speaker, wherever he may be, or whatever the carrying power of his voice, could be flashed with a master-control panel for relay to the networks. Thus it was, according to one critic, that announcers scouted around to discover minor politicians of all degrees and shove the microphone against their whiskers inviting them to bray.

There was also brought into being a new species of announcing known as the "pause interpreter." Very aptly he was called by this name. In previous conventions long pauses or breaks in the proceedings left the radio audience completely ignorant of what was going on and thus destroyed the sense of continuity. The "pause interpreter" was vested with wide duties which tested his ability to describe the scene, to interpret events, to interview political celebrities and present a well-rounded picture of the demonstrations. NBC assigned over one hundred of their best announcers and political experts, including William Hard, Lowell Thomas and Edwin C. Hill.

Useless Advice—The Politician

Caesar Saerchinger, who in 1931 was the first to persuade George Bernard Shaw to broadcast to America, quotes an interview he had with the Irish sage.

"The microphone is the most wonderful telltale in the world. If you speak insincerely to a political audience, the more insincere you are, the more hopelessly you are away from the facts of life, the more they are delighted. But if you try that on the microphone, it gives you away instantly.

You hear the political ranter—you hear that his platitudes mean nothing, and that he does not believe them.”

How then shall the speaker achieve that sincerity which has become associated with effective microphone speech? Here the criticism of a good voice teacher can be of use to him. The speaker can be made to realize that if he uses restraint the listener will get the feeling that he is going to be presented with fact and argument rather than with platitudes and dogmatic bellowing.

Heywood Broun recommended, “I hate to pass up local talent, but if there is such a thing as a school in which our political speakers could go to learn ease and diction I would certainly place Leslie Howard at the head of the institution.”

Even Herbert Hoover was not loath to employ Professor Richard Borden of New York University as personal speech professor. Soon after Herbert Hoover left the White House his microphone technique began to improve. He is said to have called afternoon rehearsal sessions before appearing on the air and elaborate preparations for his radio speech that would establish a good precedent for the politician. His fumbling and uncertain delivery used to give his admirers the jitters. Mr. Hoover seems to have been wrapped at birth in a cobweb of awkwardness.

In the quiet of the home there is opportunity to reflect, to measure things undisturbed by the clamor of the crowd, the blare of bands, mass demonstrations, and the circus adjuncts of the meeting hall. The listener is inclined to accept bombast and exploded phrases as mere entertainment. He can sit back and laugh or tune off. He would as lief be listening to Rudy Vallee. A section of the listening public sent strong protests to the broadcasting companies complaining that their favorite program had been cancelled to make way for talk.

Conceive of the deluge of phrases that the G.O.P. convention slung over the air: “We need a man to steer the

ship of state who has the wisdom of Solomon . . ." "The dynastic danger of a third-term president . . ." "Brutalitarianism abroad . . ." "Alien ideologies cannot take root, and Trojan Horses no pasturage . . ." "The battle we must wage to win back the democracy from the kidnappers in Washington."

Gilbert Chesterton reminds the politician that the word Microphone is the Greek for the "little noise" and it is really true that it is not very suitable to the "Big Noise." A wireless official recently whispered to me the awful secret that he did not think any of our chief platform politicians, could really broadcast at all. And that is because they are in their very nature, the Big Noises."

One of the worst offenders is Senator Arthur Vandenberg of Michigan whose huge bellowings branded with hokum were accepted as vaudeville by large numbers of listeners. Such a speaker should be made to practice restraint by preparing for his dramatic punches with periods of quieter tone. The effect of even a brief pause will make words significant. Single ideas will stand out with clarity if they are accented, but if this accent is too liberally distributed, true emphasis is destroyed.

This form of intonation pattern might be called the political intonation. Such intonations result from habitual inflections, whether it be up, down, or circumflex. The colloquial and natural rhythms of speaking are destroyed by a false melody that represents speaking at its worst. Sometimes it is a kind of vocal eruption. It rises to great pitch and swings into grandiose inflections. A rhythm pattern of intonation which goes up all the time or down all the time falls into a mechanical sway which is like repeating "The Music Goes Round and Round."

But politicians can never learn. So immersed are they on the traditions of the bellowing school of oratory, that not even this marvelous carrying device of the microphone can soften their tone or allay their wild and impassioned vocalizations.

The Future of the Radorator

Aldous Huxley paints an appalling picture of the future orator. Why are some speakers fascinatingly persuasive, while others, who have just as much or even more to say, either send their audiences to sleep or arouse in them an active hostility. The English philosopher believes that any political party or religious sect that discovers the answer to this question, and that acts upon its knowledge, will find itself on the road to sure success.

"Most voices," he says, "are emotionally neutral; some are definitely antipathetic to the average listener; and a very few are almost magically fascinating. Certain men and women are gifted with the power of making noises so intrinsically charming that crowds will follow them as eagerly as the children followed the Pied Piper.

"Of our great star orators, the one whose success I can least understand is Hitler. His tone is that of an angry drill sergeant, and the harsh sound of his voice is, to my ears at least, most unattractive. To his great German audiences, however, he seems to be irresistible. Wherein does the orator's secret reside? To answer this question one would have to make records of the voices of the most successful speakers of the age and subject the sounds they produce to a detailed analysis. This analysis would show what sort of noises (measured in terms of pitch, volume and timbre) are most attractive when emitted in conjunction with words bearing a particular kind of emotional content. In the light of this knowledge, would-be orators would be tested for their chances of success and perhaps corrected of their faults."

Much will depend upon the stuff the politician is saying. His first task is to get a good ghost. Herbert Hoover, after his departure from the White House, changed in his radio manner. He became chatty and even humorous at times, frequently pausing for laughs or applause. This change was

attributed to Ben S. Allen, his publicity counselor, who is said to ghost for the ex-president.

Postmaster General Farley always had his speeches written for him by Eddie Rodden.

Politics and Propaganda

Radio remains in constant dread that the microphone will be turned over to political propagandists who indulge in prejudice and passion. The American system permits every licensed broadcasting station to concede a certain quantity of time to civic discussion groups. The station is presumed to act in the public interest, and does not take upon itself the decision of what the public shall think. The danger arises in the use of the microphone by flamboyant and unprincipled speakers. Owen D. Young goes as far as to suggest that while oratorical license may be excused if it is confined to the natural range of the human voice, such license may have no place upon the sounding board of the nation.

It is evident that if there were no regulatory measures, politicians would be at the mercy of broadcasters. Who shall have time on the air? And to whom shall it be denied? Raymond Gram Swing admits that the sale of radio time is a thorny problem. "The principle that radio companies may derive revenue from selling political time is fundamentally repugnant to democracy, for it limits the radio political interests which have money to pay for the time, and that at once makes ability to pay the test of time."

Freedom of speech on the air does not possess the same meaning as freedom of speech in general nor that of freedom of the press. Certain checks and balances on behalf of the public interest must be exercised. Every restriction imposed by the networks has been immediately challenged as an

infringement upon the rights of free speech. The procedure established by the networks includes these rights:

No station license is required to permit the use of its facilities by any legally qualified candidate for public office but if any licensee shall permit any such candidate to use its facilities, it shall afford equal opportunities to all other such candidates for that office to use such facilities, provided that such license shall have no power of censorship over the material broadcast by any such candidate.

The rule also requires the rates, if any, charged to candidates for the same office shall be uniform and not be rebated by any means, directly or indirectly.

No licensee shall make any discrimination in charges, practices, regulations, facilities, or services for or in connection with service rendered pursuant to these rules or make or give any preference to any candidate of public office or subject any such candidate to any prejudice or disadvantage.

No licensee shall make any contract or other agreement which shall have the effect of permitting any legally qualified candidate for any public office to broadcast to the *exclusion of other legally qualified candidates of the same public office.*

The Forum of the Air

In ancient Rome the forum was the center of the corporate and public life of the city. The word originally referred to an open space left vacant in front of any edifice. In time the forum became the normal place of assembly for the people.

The most typically American forum for political education was the old New England town meeting. The town halls of America for over one hundred and fifty years were the centers for public discussion and political action. Even today in many small towns the town meeting flourishes as an

active institution in local political life. Now customs have changed! Now the speaker faces the microphone on the rostrum of a broadcasting room with a limited audience of about nine hundred present, but his forum covers vast spaces, and by extension his audience is likewise vast.

The best organized forum is America's Town Meeting of the Air. The techniques developed by George V. Denny, Jr., Director of the League for Political Education, have made levels debate as effective as a dance orchestra.

Over fifteen years before turning to the microphone, the League had been conducting public forums. These were in the nature of daily lectures, debates and joint discussions in "Town Hall," the building owned by the League in the heart of New York. All sides of important controversial subjects were discussed from the platform by eminent authorities. As an adaptation of the old New England idea, the audience was asked to participate in the discussion.

Denny was the first to see the possibilities of the forum as a radio feature. The forum of Town Hall could become an important educational asset. He argued that the American people needed a balanced appraisal on the pressing economic, social and political questions of the day. By matching the wits of the best minds on these problems, a certain broad and liberal viewpoint could be brought to listeners everywhere.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt attests to the importance of the Forum. In an address to the National Education Association recently he said prophetically: "It is of great importance to the future of our democracy that ways and means be devised to engage the maximum number of young people and adults in a continuous, fearless and free discussion and study of public affairs. This should be the natural post-graduate program of all citizens, whether they leave the fulltime school early or late."

John W. Studebaker, United States Commissioner of

Education, summarizes the trend of Forums as a means of developing more intelligent citizenship. They provide excellent machinery for the practice of democracy. A discussion, exchange of ideas, the matching of minds on a basis of truth for a reduction to the minimum of wasteful friction, misunderstanding and intolerance.

Like every new program, the first broadcasts of the American Forum of the Air were to be regarded trial affairs. The network was dubious. Only six were put on the air by NBC in 1935. Today these programs are broadcast weekly, have an enormous vogue. The programs lend prestige to the network that had the courage to inaugurate them. NBC has consistently refused the offer of sponsors to take over the programs on the ground that the forum has nothing to sell except the judgment of opinion and truth. The network pays the speakers one hundred dollars each, foots the incidental expenses and expends in all some fifty thousand dollars a year.

Hear Ye! Hear Ye!!

The question of forums aroused considerable discussion when President Franklin D. Roosevelt allocated funds for the establishment of forums under the direction of the Bureau of Education. It was at that time that Dr. Studebaker laid down the principles which should guide the conduct of such programs. These principles are worth study because they have been successfully adapted to radio forums. "Those who are in charge of the program will seek to obtain the services of men who are authorities in their respective fields, and yet are capable of speaking effectively to a crowd of typical Americans, and of encouraging and participating in general discussion.

"The business of the forum is to promote information and thinking so that American voters will learn about the problems they face, and get facts making for wiser decisions

concerning these. The forum leaders will doubtless have opinions, but they will be men and women who have come to these opinions by a searching study of the material with which they deal. They will present the material, not their opinions. We shall have no interest in promoting opinions, except the opinions men and women in the audiences will form for themselves after a full and fair discussion. And the speaker will doubtless give his opinion. But he will give it in a way to indicate that another opinion is possible, and that each of his hearers has a right to his own. Soon the audience will acquire the wish to know the facts on both sides.

“However, at certain meetings a speaker will be permitted to present a definite point of view, but with a ‘panel’ of various citizens, some of opposing views, who will sit on the platform with him, ask questions and make comments designed to bring out any aspects of his subject which he has neglected.”

America’s Town Meeting of the Air has established its formula for broadcasting which today is the model of its kind. The general principles of the teacher-leader of a discussion group follow:

1. Subject is controversial in nature. The chairman will insist on clear definition and agreement as to terms used. He will never fasten on the speakers his own point of view.
2. No speaker takes the microphone for more than fifteen minutes.
3. Speakers are two or more representative men in their own special fields. A more immediate interest in their own personalities is evoked if they are well known.
4. Speaker is not permitted to make unsupported statements. The audience is trained to distinguish between fact and opinion and also to verify facts, not to argue about them.
5. The aim of the Forum is to escape from the old method

of debate at the conclusion of which it was decided which side won. The aim is centered on provoking thought rather than settling issues. The aim of the Chairman is to bring out as many points of view as possible and to draw the greatest number of speakers into the discussion.

6. Regardless of the prominence of the speaker, no exceptions are made to the prescribed Town Meeting formula. Speakers are given the microphone on an equal basis: each must leave himself open to the questions of the audience.

7. Twenty-five minutes are allowed for questions from the audience and summary by the Chairman.

8. In order to prevent awkward silences, a few stooges are always planted in the audience.

The chairman has no easy task when the "Question Period" arrives. Here the element of suspense captures an audience. Any question may be fired at the people. And how will he answer? Heckling often sends shivers up the spinal column of the conservative officials of the networks. Often the questions are worded incoherently, and must be plainly restated by the director. Likewise the chairman must guard against statements which are abusive, libelous, unrelated to the subject, and those cranks who somehow manage to become part of every audience. "Anything might happen," reports Denny. Someone called a speaker a liar; a drunk managed to formulate a highly intelligent question; a mentally unbalanced individual fulminated against the railroad-ing of men and women to the insane wards.

What is the psychology that underlies the acceptance of such a program by the public? This is revealed by Mr. and Mrs. Harry A. Overstreet in their recently published book, *Town Meeting Comes to Town*. In the first place, it won for the second time the award of the Women's National Radio Committee. The average listener wants to be a participant. Listeners are privileged to ask questions of the speakers. Secondly, because the speakers differ in their points

of view, the forum takes on the nature of a struggle, and audiences enjoy the matching of wits. Here is a large body of listeners who approach the subject with an open mind and who relish being instructed by the process. Lastly, the program though serious in its nature is not without its entertainment features. To a large body of listeners it is "terribly amusing."

George V. Denny, Jr., the director, was once an actor. His diction is that of a man of culture, and his voice carries an air of authority without being dictatorial. It catches the ear of the listener with agreeableness. Denny has never lost his sense of the theater. He carries himself with the instincts of the showman. He knows that the forum would degenerate into a series of stodgy speeches without audience participation. The program is a deft and perfect example of education in the guise of entertainment.

The question period is most vital to listeners. It is a kind of excitement they crave. A long distance reflector microphone developed originally for out door events is focused on speakers in any part of the hall. Heckling to the listener is the highest kind of excitement and entertainment. It is never permitted to verge on mud slinging but approximates the real thing. To provoke the audience into the proper heckling mode, Town Hall opens an hour before the program during which time the topic of the evening is discussed from the floor. It is the duty of the chairman to keep the debate on a spirited yet peaceful level.

To many listeners the speakers, with their prepared speeches, are not the real show of the program. These programs would grow in public acclaim if it were possible for Mr. and Mrs. John Q. Public to have a bigger part in them. To extend the question period would be to destroy the values of the panel presentations. Some equation must be struck in the matter of distribution of time. That is problem enough for the director.

Most important is the selection of the subject. This cannot be a hit or miss affair. In the days before '76, Harvard students tested their dialectics on such problems as "Does a shadow move?" or "Do physicians pray for the welfare of their people?" Popular subjects were discovered by surveys conducted among the audience actually seated in Town Hall, New York. The public press offers pertinent and timely topics. America's Town Meeting was responsible for breaking down the barriers on many of radio's topics. In its first radio season in 1935, a representative of each of the four parties—Republican, Democrat, Socialist and Communist—was invited to present his views. This was the first time in radio history that a Communist was invited to speak over the networks about his party's ideals. A general censorship or taboo is not exercised by the network, but NBC reserves the right to approve the subject selected by the League.

There is a Latin adage which runs, in rather free translation, "The man who argues with himself picks a sap as his adversary." No normal person likes to be a sap. This is the reason why public discussion groups have been established in every part of America. America's Town Meeting of the Air has stimulated the growth of listening groups interested in a review of important current problems. These groups meet in schools, CCC meetings, YMCA auditoriums and other centers where a radio is available. Provocative discussion follows the presentation of the Town Hall programs, and thus by extension these meetings develop into localized discussion centers. There are some five hundred of these groups, the membership in each ranging from twelve to three hundred and fifty.

A new three-year contract between NBC and Town Hall, Inc., calls for an extension of the programs up to 1941 and expands their scope. In the past, Town Meeting speakers have discussed primarily political and economic problems;

in the future, their discussions also will include questions of social and cultural significance covering the fields of science, literature, and art.

Conversation and Interview Programs

Round-table discussions in which two, three, or four people participate are generally used in presenting controversial material and are almost always extemporized. If read they sound unnatural. The round-table is to the conversation program what drama is to entertainment. Both should contain conflict in the sense of presenting opposing ideas), and unless there is a real difference of opinion one could not unqualifiedly recommend the dialogue form. An agreement by all sounds anemic, staged and artificial.

The round-table should create the illusion of living-room conversation. The participants should seem to be talking to one another as if no microphone were present. Long speeches or arguments should be banned. Speakers should call one another by name until established. Voices should be as different as possible. A chairman, or someone in charge, to prevent heckling and to move the discussion along, is necessary. So, too, a rather carefully prepared opening and closing. If the participants in a planned round-table get "cold feet" and insist on manuscripts—unless they are very good actors and read well, it would be well to modify the form and make it "Questions and Answers" with an interrogator reading the questions, the participant reading the answers, and not attempt to give the illusion of spontaneous conversation.

The Interview is one of the most effective and yet often most carelessly done forms for presenting information on the air. The effective interviewer can direct the path of an inexperienced speaker so that he covers the material desired. It can be prepared quickly and made to sound

entirely natural. It breaks up what would perhaps otherwise be dull and dreary talk. Emphasis can be placed on ideas that might otherwise be lost in a maze of words. In the hands of an adroit interviewer it is possible to hold one phase of the subject only as long as interest is sustained and then switch to another phase. Such pacing widens, avoids tiresome detail and objectifies the time to be used for different points.

The difficulty of the interview form lies in the fact that few adequately prepare for it. Actually, the interviewer ought to represent the audience and ask questions that they would ask given the opportunity. In his hands, it succeeds or fails. If the subject has nothing to offer, the program should not be attempted. The most popular question, should come first. Questions by the interviewer should be varied with statements so as to avoid the effect of merely rotating questions and answers.

Smiling Microphones

CBS has devised an informal conversational debate that comes under the Forum. The president of CBS provides his private dining room with full platter and a battery of mikes. The mikes are hidden under smilax. If the butler had not been eager to remove the coffee cups, the guests rattled them, none would have been conscious of an extra mural existence. The mikes are opened and the diners carry on their gossip and all the world hears. Deems Taylor was there and Rockwell Kent and Orson Welles. There were some good stories before they went on the air. After a certain time they acted like adults. We musn't tell certain stories because youngsters are about.

There is still a need for a good conversational program even though one was formulated by CBS. It was NBC which inaugurated the cross-table chatter of nine well-known per-

sons in the literary field grouped around a table in a private home. For no particular reason they were limited to the topic "Is Bridge Destroying the Art of Conversation?"

But the faint success of the first experiment should not prevent NBC from making another attempt. Considering the large audiences gathered by individual commentators, it would seem logical that several speakers with the ability to talk interestingly on a general subject could provide a half hour that would be even more entertaining and provocative. Everything would depend on the talkers themselves and the general appeal of their topic plus a certain amount of direction to keep the theme moving in a straight line.

In England, all controversial matter was at first excluded from the air. Later the lid was off. This freedom on the air is ascribed to George Bernard Shaw's influence. GBS is called "radio satirist No. 1 of England." He debunked every hero and every dogma, from Adam to Eve. It was Shaw who told his fellow countrymen on the air to stop gassing about freedom because they didn't know what it was, never having had any.

GBS is "too sharp, too smart" for the average listener. Pugnacious. Defiant, with a smile. Somewhat of a bully. Defying dogma and preaching his own. Matching his wit with wisdom. In voice, very simple and natural. Colloquial. Informal. Something of that intimacy and simplicity which marks a man who is sure of himself without the necessity of shouting from the housetops. A benignity blessed with stability in voice, almost paradoxical. The only speech made to an American audience from a London studio began, "Hello, you boobs, you dear old boobs."

Women Take to the Air

Women have won success in every sphere of radio except that of announcing. They have forged ahead in spite of the

indifference of studio officials. They have demonstrated by their special talents that they have a right to exercise their voice personalities. And some day they may break from the microphone as regular announcers.

It is to be admitted that there are special programs in which the talents of women do not find appropriate demonstration. In many respects women can never achieve the same listener-reaction as men. Nevertheless women remain indispensable as participants in the majority of radio productions. As sales ladies on the air they fit into many programs where a man's appeal would be inept. In the realm of song, the musical review, the drama, the interview and in that wide variety of programs where chatter—both sensible and nonsensical—are required, women are at their best.

Their high pitched voices enhance the element of surprise in comedy. From the very outset, prejudice against women as announcers was based on two important discoveries: First, that it is the male and not the female who has the dominant selling voice: second, that the male is better equipped with judgment and tact under the exacting conditions of the studio.

The general belief in the trade is that women who do the bulk of the buying are not interested in women's voices. The preference goes to men, many of whom suffer from some horrible and vulgar voice mannerisms. All this reduces the woman's radio problem to that of expressive voice personality and appropriate speech.

In these days without benefit of television all the glamour of femininity which derives from dress and physical charm is reduced to the vanishing point before the microphone. To the listener the woman is but a synthesist vocal effect which creates in the listener her stage presence. Hence women are put to the severest test in order to impress public imagination.

Both men and women react more readily to women's

voices. Many women engaged in commercial ballyhoo are mere copywriters. Their patronizing inflections remind one of the teacher talking to her children. Radio audiences resent a manner in voice that is too intimate on short acquaintance. The other extreme is a flattening down of delivery into colorless and monotonous patterns.

The judgment of the great listening public seems at this stage to be definitely against women as announcers. "More than a good five cent cigar, this country needs a good radio woman announcer," one male fan expressed himself. In July, 1926, five thousand listeners were asked their preference for men or women announcers. The vote was one hundred to one in favor of the men. In the 1933 Literary Digest poll not a single vote was cast in favor of women announcers.

In Europe women were rejected as announcers on such sentimental grounds that listeners are too much interested in their voices and too little in what they have to say. In England, after an experiment, women announcers did not seem to meet with public favor and so were reduced to a negligible few.

The Italian Broadcasting monopoly IAR showed no disposition to restrict announcing to men. They placed a woman in charge of the English and French news in special events broadcasts. She was none other than Miss Lisa Sergio. It must be remembered that her mother before her marriage was Margaret Fitzgerald of Baltimore. In 1938 Miss Sergio came to America as the guest announcer of NBC. She left a very fine impression as to what women should do as announcers.

No woman has ever achieved fame like Milton J. Cross or James Wallington. It is always the male voice that articulates the familiar words, "This is the National Broadcasting Company" and the like. It is generally believed that women suffer from an insurmountable handicap in their speaking voices. From the physical standpoint their usual

speaking voice is not sonorous, deep and vibrating when transmitted over the air. It often takes on a thin unpleasant quality. Even if a woman's natural voice is attractive and musical, it may not register effectively over the microphone. The voices of men and women do not create the same psychological effect. On the air it is an exception to hear a woman's voice which has an attractive smooth quality. The chatter-box often indulges in staccato effects which impinge themselves on the ears of both men and women like so many rattling dishpans. The high pitches of women lend a shrieking invitation to irritation.

If women are to succeed on the air as announcers, they should cultivate the lively tones of conversation that reach the listener with sincere appeal. The voice that is the true measure of a woman's personality will be free from affectation and mechanical inflections that often make her utterances soulless and empty.

Women seem to have difficulty in restraining their enthusiasm and often fail when the occasion calls for dignity and reserve. Men from the very start were regarded as better fitted for the average assignment for announcers and it is quite uncommon today to have any woman sent out to cover sports, opera, conventions and public meetings.

It is the exception and the selection that proves the rule. Women can creditably fill any field of announcing if the competence were selected by the station and sponsor.

Take the case of a lady baseball announcer. The average listener would say, "No, she can't do it." Yet *Broadcasting* reported in 1937 the success of Mrs. Johnson, the wife of Harry Johnson, sports announcer of KFAB, Lincoln. Mrs. Harry Johnson succeeded in winning the title of the "First Lady Baseball Announcer." It so happened that when Harry turned the microphone over to her for one inning during a game between Brooklyn and St. Louis, the fans were so pleased with the lady's performance that they called, wired,

and wrote for more. KFAB's baseball sponsor, General Mills, approved the feminine angle and authorized a repeat broadcast.

The Few Who Achieve

Radio has not always been injudicious in its choice of women announcers. On occasion they have selected types who have become ornaments to the profession. Among these are Rosalind Green, Geraldine Farrar, and perhaps with milder acceptance, Elsie Janis.

Rosalind Green who announced for Mrs. Roosevelt was awarded a prize for Radio's Most Perfect Voice in 1926. Some radio critics like to call Rosalind Green the "Queen of the Air." Her success comes from the use of her warm contralto voice which has an extraordinary range and flexibility. Her fame became established in the role of Mary Lou in the Show Boat series. The speaking voice of Mary Lou was entrusted to her through the appearances of five consecutive singing Mary Lous. As the sea captain's romantic daughter her voice endeared itself to the hearts of listeners. She is versatile, serving as news commentator. She has played on the air three thousand times in every role from a Shakespearean tragedienne to the newly born child. Her announcing is free from affectation, silly tonalities, and nervous inflectional touches.

After ten years of absence from prima donna success at the Metropolitan, Geraldine Farrar appeared in a new role—that of opera commentator or narrator. Listeners who have a memory of her say that she was even more effective than Milton J. Cross in the same capacity. She preferred to be called a "raconteuse." Her notion of the opera commentator was not to lecture or instruct, nor to delve into the technicalities of music. She avoided the stereotyped or the academic. She discussed music and singers in an inimitable friendly way that made listeners regard her as a friend.

Sharp criticism was beyond the scope of Geraldine Farrar. As a "raconteuse" she drew largely upon her personal experiences. In *Faust*, for instance, she told of the many Marguerites she had sung in many lands, and she added to her impression by singing her version of the better known melodies. For some reason or other, Geraldine Farrar faded out after the first season of broadcasting.

The engagement of Elsie Janis as announcer for NBC was heralded as an innovation. Her career, however, was short-lived. She never did reach meteoric heights. Although a brilliant actress with a superb voice, it was not the type of voice that registered through a microphone. It was even a strange voice for a woman—a cross between a bass and a soprano. Her vocal chords vacillated—one moment high and one moment low. She found something about the excitement of war in announcing. Her manner was fresh and buoyant but smacked of the training that came from her career as a Broadway musical star. She became one of the passing show of women announcers whose voices the networks cut off prematurely.

She had a serious view of her work, and *Radio Guide* records an interview with her: "I've observed an excellent pencil caricature of womanhood. There are women taxicab drivers, women airplane pilots and women in practically every other field of endeavor you can mention. So why not a woman radio announcer?"

Elsie Janis, although a brilliant actress with a superb voice, had a brief career as announcer. Claudine McDonald of NBC missed the recognition that her talents deserved.

Classifying the Types

Women fall into special groups as radio performers. Let us briefly classify. One thinks first of the comedian. In this field women are inimitable. They are the props of radio

comedy. The unfailing source of a laugh, the embodiment of the comic spirit. The shining examples of a Gracie Allen, Fannie Brice, Mary Livingstone, Beatrice Lillie and Portland Hoffa.

Next comes the field of the drama which radio has been slow to take unto itself. Within the radio roster are included the distinguished stars who have been recruited from the famous stage or the movies. One might mention Helen Hayes and Helen Menken.

The third group embraces the glamorous torch singers of the air. They are the female heir'ophants of Tin Pan Alley which gives them plaintive love-sick songs to warble with deep-throated emotionalism. Some of them are beautiful, according to Hollywood standards. From their legion can be mentioned the names of Dorothy Lamour, Alice Faye and Gertrude Niessen. Time has marched on since Libby Holman used to sing her blues around here, but Miss Holman hasn't. Her blues are the same, sung with the husky, throaty, tremulous contralto that used to be so effective before the boys discovered swing.

The fourth group is the friendly or homey type of performer among whom Kate Smith is the leading example. Few achieve in this highly stylized field. Some owe their success to their unique appeal to all classes of listeners. They touch the common core of life with advice relating to the home, personal ambitions and the like. Their power lies in a sort of hypnotic motherly spell they hold over listeners. They seem to fill an aching void with a friendly and sympathetic voice. Kate Smith adds to her prestige by her humanitarianism. In 1937 during the Mississippi-Ohio river flood she made two appeals for the American Red Cross and herself received over four hundred thousand letters. The unequalled power of a friendly or homey type is described as "pulling power" measured in terms of tops of cans and labels.

The mention of Kate Smith always revives the question "Who is the first lady in radio?" The title should really be inherited or passed on from one woman to another as soon as she leaves the field. Two present contestants for this title are the late Vaughn de Leith and Kate Smith. Miss De Leith's contention was based on the historical fact that she had appeared on the World Power program with Dr. Lee De Forest in December, 1919; that since that time she had made many appearances including those on local stations in 1920, on the Wrigley show in 1926-27, on Firestone Tire for nineteen months in 1929 and 1930, worked on the air for Dodge, RCA, Battle Creek foods. Kate Smith allows that her rival was the first lady of radio in the sense that she was the pioneer but not in point of popularity polls. The matter reached the courts in a non-conclusive legal battle between the two ladies.

Radio created a special field in which women could shine as the home-makers. The home-makers represent a large group of broadcasters who hold a rendezvous with the woman in the kitchen. Women learn while they are busy with their chores. They lend a willing ear to injunctions on cooking, care of children, dish-washing, paperhanging, home furnishing, gardening, etiquette, antiques. Women who broadcast in this sphere have an encyclopedic range. Food is important news. More than seven million have to be fed every day in New York and in every metropolitan city as well as in the suburbs women are on the alert to enlarge culinary skill.

Women have been enlisted to broadcast the truths and the untruths about fashion and beauty. This type of program will probably go on forever, since the feminine instinct for aids to beauty and adornment is ageless.

Drawn mainly from the journalistic field, the most distinguished among women commentators is Dorothy Thompson. Others who have met with popular acceptance are

Katherine Craven, Adela Rogers St. John, and Martha Deane. Sponsored in 1938 Dorothy Thompson brought to the air those special gifts in voice without which her wise observation on the world scene may not have been met with the same acceptance as her newspaper writings. Her voice is fairly resonant and she has an easy colloquial manner which marks the trained speaker. Never concerned with microphone technique, she is what is called a "natural."

Women who aspire to become news commentators must know how to write. There is practically no place in radio for the woman who is merely a news gatherer. Her voice must measure to her achievement in editorial interpretation. Dorothy Thompson's success on the air is born of that same training which has made H. V. Kaltenborn America's outstanding news commentator. Air journalism for women is an ideal profession if they have the proper background. Miss Thompson has watched five revolutions. She has lived here and abroad. She was expelled from Germany for broadcasting that Adolph Hitler would never become dictator. Before going on the air she accomplished something new for a woman—a column in the New York *Herald Tribune's* "On the Record."

Dorothy Thompson believes that air journalism demands a thoroughly disciplined mind, an analytical gift, and a knowledge of history and economics. Like H. V. Kaltenborn, she has a passion for facts and travel, and can draw on her experiences in the vital centers of Europe. She avoids those romantic twists the average woman commentator would be guilty of.

The emotionalized radio news reporter is found in Kathryn Craven who sees "News Through a Woman's Eyes" for CBS. She is known as the Flying Commentator and holds the distinction of being the first woman news commentator to talk from coast to coast. A Texas girl, she came to radio by way of the stage. Now she keeps five or six secretaries

busy all day in garnering those news events that can be interpreted in terms of sympathy, comedy and drama. With a woman's intuition Miss Craven seeks to go beyond the facts on the front page. Always she has a psychological view, exposing the feelings and reactions of men and women under the strain and stress of extraordinary situations. Her particular method is to focus on a special situation—the murderer about to be executed, the notorious shop-lifter, the survivor of flood and misery, the congressional lobbyist, the war-torn cripple, the bum who finds a haven in the flop house.

This type of journalism has the danger of becoming too gushy and overly sentimental. Miss Craven escapes this error. It is a program which promises to give a woman's point of view and the commentator must live up to the promise.

Radio recruited Adela St. Johns from the newspaper and magazine field. She was brought up in court room drama—the daughter of Earl Rogers, the criminal lawyer of the West who defended Clarence Darrow in a jury bribery case. In speech she has a compressed and highly dramatic style. Before the microphone she conveys something of that fervor which belongs to the scene she is depicting.

Probably the most "folksy" program on the air is that of Mary Margaret McBride, radio chatterbox. Five times a week, as Martha Deane, for station WOR, Newark, the Missouri farm girl rambles along in an Ozark accent. Mostly without a script and letting unfinished sentences dangle in midair, she gossips about everything from cheesecake to the color of an Arctic explorer's beard. Her twangy patter is aimed at housewives who snap on the radio switch as they iron shirts, dust the furniture and darn socks. And how they love it! They deluge her with one thousand eight hundred letters a week and shower her with bizarre gifts every year for her birthday.

Miss McBride is a large, gray-haired woman of the

motherly type who came to New York thirteen years ago after a varied newspaper experience in the Midwest. She made a reputation as a magazine writer, edited a woman's page for a syndicate, and finally stepped into a household hints spot on WOR. "And I hold nothing back, goodness knows," she says. "They love, too, little yarns of curiosities, things to tell their husbands over the dinner table at night, origins of expressions or customs. Animal stories are good—except stories about snakes, they can't endure those. Descriptions of beautiful homes and gardens they like especially."

The "folksy commentator" is in a class all by herself. One need but mention Martha Deane as an example of the world's eternal chatterbox. She has no special gifts in voice, but beguiles the listener with a casual stream of conversation, speaking like friend, confidante, and good neighbor.

Martha Deane has never lost her mid-western phraseology and inflection. She can describe and sell everything from Russian sable coats to baby dolls. Her gushiness is supreme. She can extol the beauties of broccoli, ice cream, and special foods with a syrupy manner that sticks. Heard over CBS as Mary Margaret McBride, she is reputed to draw more fan mail than any other woman on the air. In 1938, she paid an income tax close to eighty-one thousand dollars. As a newspaper woman, Martha Deane was widely known before she began broadcasting. A long experience in interviewing stands her in good stead.

One of the most adventurous sides of broadcasting, according to Miss Deane, is the appearance of guests on the program. For this reason the art of interviewing should be cultivated to the highest degree. She is supreme in the art and engages her microphone guests as though chatting together over a tea table.

"Men interviewers are more detached than women, I have discovered," says Miss Deane. "They probe into the matter of how you did it, anxious to try and analyze your success

in terms of their own preconceived notion of the answer. Incredulous, that any woman could make a success in radio just by her own efforts, they are all pretty well convinced that there must be some man behind the scenes who gave you your start and still protects you from the raps."

Your Opportunities, Ladies

By degrees women have stormed every department of radio and risen to high executive office. Women indeed have found places in executive posts where men have feared to tread.

Bertha Brainard, who drove an ambulance during the war, entered radio by way of publicity writing. She climbed up the ladder of radio in 1922 when she sallied into the old station at Aeolian Hall and told the harried WJZ manager that his programs were trashy. She offered to show him how they could be improved. Step by step from script writer she served in varied positions. Today she is commercial program manager for NBC and is reputed to be the most highly paid woman in the business.

A woman that won place as the Girl of the Month in the March, 1938, issue of *Good Housekeeping* is described by Alice Boothe as "a real power behind the microphone who flies continually and phones people all over the world." Her name is Helen J. Sioussat, Assistant Director of Talks of CBS. She is one of those unseen personalities whose executive skill brings the great men in the news before the microphone.

The peculiar needs of children's programs have developed a type of department manager skilled in child psychology. Nila Mack, head of the Children's Department of CBS, devotes her talents to the creation and direction of children's programs and does it in a way to lend distinction to the station. She won her first spurs in radio at station WBBZ,

her home town, Ponca City, Oklahoma. After stage experience with Nazimova, she acted in the movies for six years. From strenuous announcing and script writing, CBS enlisted her as producer and director. Miss Mack offers sage advice to aspirants who want to deal with children's programs: "Now women who can write good brisk copy about feminine things are always needed in radio work. Stage and musical experience are valuable too. Perhaps my own success with my programs is due to my stage experience and my ability to treat children as my equals."

The critical faculty plays a large part in obtaining promotion in radio. A woman's wise and shrewd analysis of a woman's program is always bound to meet with respect. The director of daytime programs at NBC is Margaret Cuthbert. Her entry into radio was due to her critical analysis of the network's women's programs which she undertook to improve. She is said to be a perfect diplomat in making the great personalities of the world feel at ease before the microphone.

Radio offers a challenge to women in the matter of jobs. In a recent interview in *Radio Stars* Miss Cuthbert lent an encouraging word: "I really think broadcasting has marvelous opportunities for women in important jobs behind the scenes. And I think those opportunities are equal to men's. They begin with such routine jobs as hostesses, filing clerks, statisticians, stenographers and so forth. A good many jobs like that have been the entering wedges for women in radio. I should say that executive ability, a sense of time, drama and news are almost essential. And aspirants certainly should have versatility, originality, resourcefulness, and tact.

"Women who have been successful in executive fields in radio seem to emphasize the importance of common sense as an asset. Any broad background of culture and experi-

ence is valuable. Bertha Brainard emphasizes real writing ability as the great asset—"in fact it is the greatest," she says. "I always recommend that a woman with ability in that direction get in touch with her local station, present her ideas and get her training in its continuity department. It's by far the best way!"

Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt

The wife of the President has won her radio spurs by her own right. Her manner is informal as she chats and comments on current news. She receives three thousand five hundred dollars fee which she has continued to contribute to charity. She is still the best non-professional on the air and her success is due to her voice which saturates with friendliness and springs from a sincere love for the people she is talking to.

The voice instructor of Mrs. Roosevelt is Mrs. Von Hess, who trains the New York Telephone Company operators in the Manhattan area. The formula for good radio announcing, according to Mrs. Von Hess, is simple, and women can master it as well as the male. It is merely a matter of learning "practicability of speech, devoid of verbosity and affectation." But Mrs. Von Hess warns that unnatural accents, English or otherwise, have no place in broadcasting. Furthermore, she explains that with proper training a mediocre voice can be made to sound more agreeable than an untrained voice of excellent timbre.

"The female voice with its wider range and resultant superior modulation is capable of greater depth of expression, making the male voice appear comparatively dispassionate," said Mrs. Von Hess in an interview. "This is a distinct and natural advantage the male voice is physically unable to enjoy. For these reasons women are the likely candidates for the positions of announcers because radio,

like the telephone, enhances the attributes as well as it accentuates the defects of the human voice in reproduction."

Mrs. Von Hess, in an interview with Sally MacDougall, of the Scripps-Howard papers, revealed that "Mrs. Roosevelt works mainly on breath control to get a deeper tone than the one she has been using, also to get a more balanced tone. When the diaphragm has been brought under control with what I call the wide breath, there will be no danger of the voice going off on a tangent toward the end of sentences—a fault that the President's wife shares with many a man and woman."

Primarily, then, Mrs. Roosevelt's voice goes off on a tangent and cracks on high pitches. Mrs. Roosevelt likewise shows a tendency to laugh and talk at the same time. "Laugh when you laugh," admonishes Mrs. Von Hess, "but the Creator never yet made a person that could laugh and talk at the same time and do it becomingly."

Faulty high pitches of the average feminine voice come from a lack of breath or diaphragmatic control. Mrs. Von Hess recommends a cure for this high pitch tendency. "Put on an imaginary rubber belt. Every breath you draw should stretch the belt at the sides. That opens the lower lungs, which in most Americans never get any exercise at all. This wide, deep breathing takes the tension away from the throat, so that at the finish of a sentence the deep tone is sustained."

Radio has produced very few leaders among the women. There are some exceptions. The present-day picture of women in radio furnishes a more distinct pattern for the listener than for the performer. Few women leaders in this field are reliable and intelligent.

But if Mrs. Roosevelt takes her radio job in her stride, you can't say the same for the President or the Department of State. Her script must always go back to the President and the officials of the State Department for a thorough reading, particularly when it contains some reference to

either of them. Often it is changed. Mrs. Roosevelt, as far as anyone knows, never protests against changes, but they do amuse her. She has indicated to the people on the program that sometimes Washington is a little overfussy. "There isn't anything I say over the air that could possibly harm anyone," she said one night, "but my Washington advisers must see my work. Men are so much more squeamish than women about this sort of thing!"

Even after they have seen and approved of her scripts, the President and officials of the State Department listen in to her broadcasts—probably because they know, as many a radio performer has found to his cost, that things which look innocent enough in the reading often take on an entirely new meaning when they're heard on the air.

"Mrs. Roosevelt is one of the most charming women in the world," said Fannie Hurst admiringly, "but her radio voice does not equal her personality; it fails to reveal one-eighth of her magnetism.

"President Roosevelt's voice is the finest exponent of radio today. I think he has done more to dignify broadcasting than anyone else. His speeches, with that intimate touch, have set an unheard of precedent, and given all candidates good cause to worry about their voices.

"It's a funny thing, this radio, it plays tricks! Women's voices on the air sound as if they were selling gelatine at an exposition. To my mind the only good feminine radio voice is that of Martha Deane. But I honestly think that the queer tricks radio plays with voices are caused by the microphone itself. It is nothing we broadcasters can control."

If women who speak on the radio would keep a standby pianist sounding A flat softly as they talked they could soon disprove the contention that "women make poor announcers," according to Vida Ravenscroft Sutton, director of WJZ's Magic of Speech program.

"Most women become nervous and flustered when they

face a mike," Miss Sutton observes. "Their throats are constricted and the voice becomes high and unpleasant. Having the pianist sound a pleasant pitch serves as a reminder to keep the voice low and comparatively level."

The time has come for women to realize their responsibilities to radio. They have the means through educational activities to equip themselves to accept the challenge of radio, to put an end to the prejudices and to surpass the male in advantages for public service. There are exceptions. There is the cultured voice of Lisa Sergio, internationally known for her splendid English and French diction. First she appeared for NBC and now produces WXQR's "Column of the Air," five days a week.

A Dayton, Ohio, survey, made by a questionnaire being mailed to every twenty-sixth telephone user, showed women's features coming eleventh in preference. Whatever the reason is, news reports are reported as being four hundred per cent more popular. Drama and comedy both are listed as being three hundred per cent more popular, and music, both classical and popular, likewise arouses three times as much interest. Even political speeches are sometimes interesting.

Of course, in America, the problem of pleasing some listeners is different from that in England. The British system of broadcasting places program authority in the hands of the wireless officials themselves, and there are no commercial programs to worry about. But in this country, before many of the objectionable programs can be ruled off the air, the network owners must sell, in many cases, the sponsors of commercial shows the idea that the broadcasts are objectionable.

One of the most difficult things in the world is convincing a sponsor that his programs are faulty—if they happen to be selling his product at a merry pace.

Television Next!

Television will probably catch up with this book so that revised editions of it will have to give better than a post-script to this subject. Meanwhile, many women are anticipating some part in television advertising. It is believed that the first use of this new medium will be in the more extended *demonstration* of products; especially foods, home equipment, cars, and cosmetics. There are three ways in which you might participate:

1. Visually, as commentator or demonstrator.
2. By coming in as a voice, off-stage, delivering the commercial.
3. By writing the commercials and stepping into the visual area when you deliver them.

To be a visual part of a demonstrating program, you'll be required to combine the mental alertness and glib tongue of any radio announcer with the streamlined figure and photogenic face of a Hollywood star. You needn't be a beauty; but you must be trim and pleasing in appearance, with the proverbial face that "photographs well."

The International Council of Women at its last session at Edinburg (July, 1938) took full cognizance of the importance of radio in the lives of women. Through its radio committee headed by Dr. Marie Castellani who was responsible for women broadcasting from Rome to foreign countries, a resolution was carried which urged that in each country suitably qualified women should take an active interest in broadcasting both through their organizations and by studio participation, and recommended that listeners should be induced to form groups for sending criticism and suggestions to the proper authorities.

Dr. Castellani pleaded for promotion of international broadcasting of a meeting sponsored each year by different

countries and addressed by women of influence in international affairs.

"American women," she says, "evidently haven't the courage of their British cousins, and they ought to know of the incident in London recently, which was snowed under in the news by the Edward-Wally romance. Some five thousand London housewives descended on the wireless programme chiefs and demanded relief from endless cooking lessons, household hints and patronizing talks on how to raise children. The women explained that they were sufficiently chained to the kitchen without being constantly reminded of it; that they knew what their husbands wanted to eat, and had no time to stop sweeping to jot down recipes. What they really wanted was music, dramas, love stories and travelogues to lift them mentally out of their drudgery."

Then it was pointed out that recipes broadcast over the radio could be taken just as well from cookery books. When read over the air, such recipes might cause any number of mistakes, with the result that some horrid dish would be cooked. Many a husband has made a wry face at the soup and, on asking what made it taste so queerly, been told that "it was the static."

A further complaint that the women had to offer against cookery talks was that these were sometimes condescending, or as they put it, "sniffy." If a woman is so sensitive about being high-hatted over the radio, it was taken to mean that she resents her position in relation to the speaker.

Jazz and political discussions, they said, were preferable to dull and stupid household suggestions.

In America, a group of surveys launched by the Columbia Broadcasting System also proved, even more sharply, that women are bored by talks about pots and pans. Possibly this is so because American women have more labor-saving gadgets and machines than the British, and so find house-keeping less of a problem needing outside advice.

SHALL CENSORSHIP RULE?

FEDERAL censorship lifts the sword of Damocles over the stations through the land. A nation-wide Gallup poll in 1938 indicates that the majority of listeners are opposed to censorship. Listeners have been made to envisage a system that would control and blue pencil dance programs, Charlie McCarthy and bed-time stories. Censorship of the press would increase the dictatorial power of radio, free speech would be throttled and censorship used as political expedient for the party in power to choke off the opposition.

Those who favor close supervision of Radio by the Government smile at those fears and ask us to turn to the systems of control in other democracies like France, England, and Sweden. Central control, they cried, will provide the nation with better programs and eliminate misleading advertising.

Radio censorship is nothing new. A typical example of its operation: In 1926 Station WEAJ barred a speech by Norman Thomas, sponsored by the United Parents Association. A rival station, WMCA, in order to prove that freedom of the air was not a myth, gallantly invited Mr. Thomas to use its facilities. However, on the very morning of the proposed broadcast, WMCA withdrew the invitation without any explanation.

The first regulatory law of 1927, specifically prohibited the Commission from exercising any censorship over programs. "Nothing in this act," the law reads, "shall be understood or construed to give the Commission the power of censorship over the radio communications or signals transmitted by any radio station, and no regulation or condition shall be promulgated or fixed by the Commission which

shall interfere with the right of free speech by means of radio communication."

"No person within the jurisdiction of the United States shall utter any obscene, indecent or profane language by means of radio communication."

Both of these provisions have been reincorporated in the Act of 1934. Few will not admit that the FCC maintains a definite control over broadcasting stations through the periodic review of the station's application for renewal of license. Although the law permits licenses up to three years, the Commission has resisted all pleas from the broadcasting industry to extend the license period beyond a year. This annual renewal provides a powerful check on stations. David Sarnoff, the head of RKO, in a broadcast discussion on censorship, April 20, 1938, frankly admitted: "Fear of disapproval can blue-pencil a dozen programs for every one that an official censor might object to. While practically nobody advocates a pre-program blue-pencil in the hands of government, few realize that post-program discipline by the government can be a form of censorship that is all the more severe because it is undefined."

The stations that have been kicked off the air are surprisingly few in number. In Iowa, Norman Baker was denied renewal for KNT due to his exploration of the "cancer cure." The Rev. Bob Shuler in California, a Methodist, lost out for bitter attacks on those he considered "moral enemies." In Kansas, J. R. Brinkley was silenced for advertising his "goat gland" hospital prescribing for patients he had never seen. The Brinkley and Shuler cases, on appeal to the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, met with the decision that the commission's ruling was not the application of censorship but "the application of the regulatory power of Congress in a field within the scope of its legislative authority." (Trinity Methodist Church, South, v. Federal Radio Commission 62 F. (2) 851.)

Private and Invisible Censorship

Under the American system, radio stations are licensed by the government. They become private properties and within the limits of the general law are privileged to make their own conditions regarding programs and may deny the use of their facilities to anyone.

The power of denial has resulted in private censorship which varies in its regulatory control. Each station has its own distinct plan of operation. The system of private censorship is evidenced in several ways:

1. Refusal to sell time or to fulfil contracts to broadcast.
2. Required revision of the written copy. The general practice is for the station to demand a copy of the speech within a reasonable time before going on the air. Many a speaker who refused to revise or blue pencil his remarks has summarily been denied the right to the microphone.
3. Drowning out the speaker or cutting him off in the middle of his talk. Explanations may take this turn: (a) the speaker's remarks offended the man at the controls; (b) complaints kept pouring in over the telephone; (c) the speaker introduced something quite different from the copy submitted in advance; (d) the station acted to save itself as well as the speaker from possible suit for slander; (e) the broadcast might bring down the ire of the FCC, resulting in a refusal to renew its license.

Cleaning House

Private censorship by the networks operates through departments politely called "Continuity Acceptance" (NBC) and "Continuity Editing" (CBS).

The purpose of such departments is to see that programs live up to standards of "quality, good taste and integrity." In actual practice when such bureaus attempt to *set* stand-

ards of equality, good taste and integrity, the station becomes a law unto itself.

Douglas Gilbert in a feature article in the *New York World-Telegram* of January 8, 1939, refers to the job of censor of continuity as "the Number One headache job of America." At NBC every script for broadcasting passes for approval through the hands of Janette MacRorie, ex-newspaperwoman, press agent, and copy-writer in advertising agencies. If a manuscript includes material regarded as a violation of good taste, suggestions are made for changes and editing by the heads of the program and production department. If the speeches are of an inflammatory nature they reserve the attention of a higher executive who consults with legal counsel before deciding on broadcasting.

Certain restrictions, everyone will agree, are in the public interest. The networks deny the microphone to those who would speak disparagingly of the Deity, or reflect venomously upon any group or race, or to those who make references to sex perversion. Often the networks have interpreted the Mores with absurd narrowness.

On one occasion CBS deleted from a series of economic talks the following: "Thomas Robert Malthus, arguing against his father, made some startling remarks about human nature, and especially the strength of the sex impulse which led people to marry as soon as they were able." The explanation thereof: "We are not permitted to mention sex over the radio."

References have strong reaction on the moral sensibilities of listeners. The words "wop," "polack," "kike," are offensive. Sectional jibes as between one state and another are taboo, except for certain types of inoffensive comedy. Florida climate must not be over-glorified at the expense of California, nor is a Southerner to be referred to as lazy. Other bans follow the precautions of common sense. In expounding detective serials NBC follows the behest of

the Department of Justice and omits all description of practical methods of cracking a safe or dynamiting a bridge. The technique of using burglar tools is not a part of educational broadcasting.

A program when finally evolved may be without any sign of internal censorship. The sponsored program is subject to every variety of change and deletion. Walter O'Keefe takes a satirical fling at the growing body of censors. Says the humorist: "When a script is written for representation on the radio today, there is a veritable horde of termites who get busy with blue pencil and shears. The radio network is one group. The advertising agency another. The client, his sales manager, his Aunt Minnie and grandchildren are another. If you were to band them all together there would be enough people present to watch a street parade go by."

Sounding the Alarm

Attempts at indirect and ex-post factor censorship by the FCC have always awakened national protest. Let us consider a few recent cases.

The first case which brought on its censorship aftermath was the Adam and Eve skit on the Charlie McCarthy program in 1937. We have already mentioned that the FCC first demanded a copy of the script and a recording of the broadcasting. Chairman McNinch reprimanded the National Broadcasting Company for permitting the program to go over its network. He added the ominous threat that the program would be taken into consideration when each of the NBC stations involved applied for license renewals. Since many of these stations were merely affiliates of the network, they had no opportunity to pass upon the program in advance.

The second case originated from the complaint of a couple in the Northwest who, on the night of July 28, 1937, heard

profanity uttered over WTCN, Minneapolis, as part of the broadcast of Eugene O'Neill's "Beyond the Horizon." This station, and the affiliates of NBC which carried the program, was set for a hearing in the matter of license renewal. Immediately there arose public protest against the Commission's threat to censor the work of a literary artist. The press came to the rescue of the Pulitzer prize winner of 1920, and the Commission squirming under ridicule quickly reversed itself by granting all the stations license renewals without hearings.

In the "Beyond the Horizon" case, the testimony of John F. Royal, vice president of NBC, in charge of programs, is revealing. During cross examination by FCC counsel Royal explained that the language complained of as profane was voiced by a pious father who is shocked at his son's shortcomings. "You can go to hell for that" is not a profane utterance, but an admonition.

The third case is the Orson Welles' dramatization of H. G. Wells' "The War of the Worlds." As Raymond Moley puts it: "The slip of the 'Martian invasion' provoked the FCC to insert its 'inquisitorial proboscis' even further into the radio business." The danger of governmental interference, Moley would have us believe, "is as fearsome to intelligent people as the thought of a real invasion from Mars could possibly be." Commissioner McNinch while admitting that the commission had no censorship authority, called officials of the three major networks to Washington for an informal conference. As a result, it was suggested that to prevent undue public alarm and panic, the broadcasters use great care in the use of the terms "bulletin" and "flash" in radio fictional dramatization.

The anti-semitic crusade of Father Charles E. Coughlin has further intensified the drive for government censorship. During 1939 several efforts were made to push bills for Congress to create an FCC Censorship Board.

Look, in its edition of February 14, 1938, assembled the more prominent cases of censorship. It has been estimated that more than one-half of the censorship cases arise not from outside protest but from inside fears that grip station executives.

General Hugh Johnson was in 1937 denied the right to read his prepared talk on syphilis. The subject itself awoke as much furor as the Mae West burlesque of Adam and Eve.

However, NBC did voluntary penance for throwing the General off the air by permitting Dr. Morris Fishbein, editor of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, to discuss the topic General Johnson could not mention. "It is our feeling," read the telegram of invitation to Dr. Fishbein, "that only persons, who, like yourself are authoritative on the subject and who are experienced in speaking on it are qualified to present the material in terms which the general listener can accept." CBS, early in 1938, without question opened the microphone to General Pershing, Dr. Ray Lyman Wilbur, and Dr. Thomas Parran, all semi-official spokesmen for National Social Hygiene Day.

Another emergency arose from the order of the Commission operated May 23, 1939, which required that international stations must "reflect the culture of this country" and "promote a national good will, understanding, and cooperation." The measure was vehemently attacked in Congress by Representative McLeod of Michigan as a usurpation of the powers of the FCC whose only duty was "to prevent confusion in the air" by allocation of wave-lengths as a guard against indecency or libel. Even the National Council on Freedom From Censorship of the American Civil Liberties Union protested that the order was so worded that it smacked of censorship and interference of the right of free speech. It asked the Commission to reconsider, to withdraw its action so that the radio industry and the public might be consulted before it became operative. The NAB through

its president, Neville Miller, warned that if international broadcasting was to be continued as private enterprise the FCC should not tie the stations down to the commission's concept of American culture. If the FCC had such authority in demanding the international field it must have equal authority over domestic broadcasting and the way was open for the FCC to meddle with all forms of cultural entertainment on the air.

The public is on the *qui vive* against those who would determine with absolutism what is "good" broadcasting.

Senator Vandenburg, in the midst of a tirade against President Franklin D. Roosevelt, was cut off when he attempted to use a transcribed disc of the President's voice. Norman Thomas, leader of the Socialist Party, was often summarily cut off the air by operation of the station's censorship. In spite of the law which grants political candidates equal right to buy time, Earle Browder was banned by Station WIRE.

During 1936, Alexander Woollcott bitterly complained about being throttled by his commercial sponsor, "Cream of Wheat" over the CBS chain: "It would be unfair to both myself and my sponsor to continue under censorship." Woollcott had a loose and appreciative audience and was considered valuable.

"I replied that mine was a kind of oral column, presenting me as a citizen leaning over the fence and talking freely with his neighbors. If the broadcasts had any audience it was because my obliging neighbor enjoyed listening to me report my likes and dislikes on books, plays, pictures and events of the day.

"I also said I could not in self-respect guarantee to keep silent about Hitler, Mussolini or any other bully, jingo or lyncher. It would be unfair both to myself and my sponsor to try and continue under censorship, for the fact that taboos

existed would lessen my own interests in the broadcasts and make them deteriorate in short order."

And Walter Winchell frankly admitted on one occasion: "I cannot finish this editorial because NBC has deleted it." General Smedley Butler was distinguished for his profuse use of strong language. He ironically agreed that he would use only two "hells" and three "damns" every ten minutes he was on the air. "I can't talk soldier's language over these deodorizers," he said, "so prepare yourself for seventeen minutes of tripe and bedtime stories."

Many groups protest against tampering with the musical classics. Maxine Sullivan rose to popular acclaim in spite of the ban of several stations which censored her "swinging" of "Loch Lomond." And the Commission was obliged to rule that stations could swing Bach to their hearts' content.

Equal Opportunity for All

Is there such a thing as freedom of the air? The answer is "No." Any man may hire a hall or stand on a soap box to have his say, or he may break out in a printed pamphlet. If he seeks the microphone to air his views, he may be up against a stone wall. If his subject is controversial, the networks will not sell him time. The very nature of the commercial system militates against him. He will be told that Radio is a business and that commercial commitments have priority. He must be satisfied with the explanation that the stations use "wise discretion" in selecting speakers.

Stations are too ready to defend their attitudes on the ground that the matter is too controversial, engenders race conflict, concerns a subject too indelicate to broach over the air, or involves an attack on some special class or interest.

The American Civil Liberties Union in 1936 published a brochure by Minna F. Kassner and Lucien Zacharaoff, *Radio is Censored*, in which seventy of such cases have been

analyzed. The authors contend that the chief danger lies in the fact that broadcasting has become "a tremendous monopoly of public entertainment, opinion and education. Under such conditions the problem of censorship is magnified a thousand fold."

The fact that broadcasts by Consumers Research and other similar organizations are violently opposed by advertisers is convincing proof that profit and not public welfare is of paramount concern with the vast majority of advertisers. Sponsors, in most instances, are unwilling to have their products subjected to scientific criticism or to have their claims and advertising "blurb" tested by facts. They depend, for the most part, upon the uncritical attitude of the majority of listeners.

Private censorship becomes a deadly enemy to free expression when stations use their power of censorship fearful lest they lose caste with the public as "radical." A station thinks things over twice before lending its wave length to speakers who propose social legislation which the big interests and the various pressure groups oppose. The most baneful influence of private censorship is found in all those self-restraints which operate through misjudgment of what constitutes propriety and extreme caution in surrendering the microphone to anyone who upholds an unpopular cause.

Stations are particularly anxious to put the soft pedal on labor conditions and monopolistic control of industry. Many vital questions affecting the social welfare are thwarted. A strict ban blots out talks on birth control, lynching, pacifism, communism and sex matters.

Under the two specific provisions which bar objectionable language and grant the right of political candidates to equal time on the air, many are the inconsistencies and evasions which are possible. It is becoming more difficult for stations to violate the political provision with impunity.

Things have not changed much since 1931 when Vita

Lauter and Joseph H. Friend wrote in the *Forum*: "Clearly, anything which does not suit the taste or doctrines of the broadcaster may be outlawed as indecent, obscene, or profane, whether it be a sober discussion of the sociological implications of contraception, burlesque skit, a defense of agnosticism, or an oration in praise of beer and wine."

During the 1939 chain-monopoly inquiry before the FCC, Lenox R. Lohr then president of NBC, warned that if individuals or groups could compel the stations to give them time, the result would be a virtual destruction of the American system of broadcasting. The air would be cluttered with oratory and the public would become thoroughly disgusted. He insisted that the network executives must have freedom to determine who is to have speaking opportunities.

NBC proclaims its policy to give conflicting factions equal chance to discuss vital issues. Theoretically time is not sold for such purposes because of the inequality that would result when opposing groups lack equal financial backing. The use of the "wise discretion" of the networks usually coincides with freedom for the conservatives and the gagging of radicals and liberals. Selectivity of this kind sharpens the sword of propaganda for the favored interests.

The broadcasting of false information and deceptive argument intended to distort public opinion. Pressure groups select values in the news that fit their own ends, exaggerate or stragulate facts, misinterpret, and carry on a campaign whose effect on public opinion may be worse than if the information were to be entirely withheld.

Stations have permitted irresponsible news commentators to have free sway on commercial programs even though they filled the air with falsehood and distorted viewpoint for the benefit of the sponsor.

Under our democratic system counter-broadcasts are necessary to maintain balance in appeal. The whole concept of freedom in broadcasting is based on fair play, which gives

both sides an even break, permitting the listener to judge for himself.

Eternal vigilance is the price of free radio speech. Woe to the country if its radio is captured by the administration in power to the exclusion of its critics.

Radio cannot alter human nature, cannot be expected to. It can do its share to combat the inherent prejudices, ignorance, and self interest of humanity.

Totalitarian states go to extremes in maintaining and preserving the national unity of public opinion. Radio censorship is used for the purpose of: (1) suppressing the news; (2) misrepresenting the news; (3) spreading untruths. The people think as the ruling interests want them to think, largely because information on which to make judgments has been suppressed.

This situation is envisaged by Edward P. Cheyney in his summary of the censorship study for the *Annals*:

“The extent to which the broadcasting companies will allow the expression of views which they thought directly opposed to their interests as capitalistic organizations, has not yet been seriously tested. If the ownership of the great networks should come into the hands of men of special interest or narrow or fanatical views, the owners could perhaps even under the present law restrain their property from being used for any other purpose than they do not approve. A radio network owned or controlled by a Hearst or a Huey Long might offer little opportunity for the expression of views different from their own.”

The Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, in its 1936 survey, “Broadcasting and the Public,” recommends: A prime requirement, of course, is that the building of codes shall be a process in which every agency capable of representing a valid social concern shall participate. On the side of the industry, this means owners of stations and networks, management, labor, and the commercial spon-

sors. On behalf of the community it means the schools, the churches, the libraries, and voluntary cultural associations of all types that can represent a "consumer interest." No such cooperation was evidenced. The NAB is a Town unto itself.

1. The evaluation of broadcasting as a community service. Some attempt at cooperation has already been set up at the behest of the broadcasters. They have placed leading educators on their payrolls and have entered into conferences with professionals and organized groups.

2. A continual interchange of opinion between official, intelligent and public-spirited representatives of such groups and the broadcasters themselves.

While fundamental changes in programs have been suggested by such committees, little or nothing can be done about releasing the peak hours to programs of high cultural standards that bring no revenue. Such peak hours are held sacred for the sponsor to air programs that often pander to the lowest common denominator of taste, and similar patterns emerge simultaneously from scores of stations.

3. The rights of the community to the best service that can be provided under the naturally limited channels for a more expansive definition of the term "public interest" to include the social obligations of the broadcaster program and criteria beyond that of the requirements of decency. No complete formal statement of regard to the control of the "public interest" has ever been made.

4. Self-regulation of commercial broadcasting under an industry code co-operatively formulated. In July 1936, the National Association of Broadcasters adapted such a code.

No such cooperation was evidenced. The NAB was a law unto itself.

5. Commercial sponsors who in the guise of entertainment present propaganda anti-social in purpose. Educational groups can do much to curb their influence.

6. Many suggestions have been made for the creation of a

research bureau set up by the federal commission to make an annual survey of the public taste and outline a series of programs. In this wise the government would have some voice in entertainment matters and provide a bureau for the listener to register his interests as well as complaints.

In 1938 a bill sponsored by Chairman McNinch provided for a new "research department" to receive a "listener response to radio programs." Against such a provision of implied regulation and censorship General Hugh S. Johnson broke out in strong protest and passed the buck to the public: "Radio programs are a commodity of commerce. If the public does not buy them, they die. If the public approves, they go, like Charlie McCarthy. It doesn't require any federal commission to decide what the public likes in radio any more than one is needed to decide what the public likes in bran flakes, rupture trusses, or automobiles. There is no test of what the public wants to compare with this public reaction."

The sponsors have very carefully examined the mental age of the listeners, but the listeners have not made many inquiries about the mental age of the sponsors. The public usually apathetic can be best served by spokesmen who have at heart the public interest.

7. Through the American Civil Liberties Union a bill presented in Congress provided that each station set aside regular periods at "desirable parts of the day and evening for uncensored discussions on a non-profit basis of public, social, political and economic problems and for educational purposes," and that stations presenting a controversial subject, broadcast at least one opposing point of view, the station, but not the speakers to be released from liability for libel in such cases.

8. Raymond Gram Swing suggests that the two systems, NBC and CBS pool their resources in cooperation with the government. The government would thus enter the sphere

of broadcasting, directing and financing programs of the two networks. An alternative is the operation of broadcasting service by a mixed commission under a government chairman.

9. Raymond Gram Swing also suggests that there are programs which the broadcasting companies cannot profitably supply which the government has a duty to supply. This supplemental service could be made available free of charge to commercial stations. He suggests the use of twelve large powerful long-wave stations, enough to cover the country, to provide the programs not supplied by the commercial stations.

THE SINS OF THE SPONSOR

PITY the poor sponsor! Always he is under attack. Minority groups are on the watch for his sins of omission and commission. How can one get an impartial perspective on the deeds of the sponsor? For one thing, imagine an inhabitant of Mars making the sudden discovery of the American wave lengths.

There he is, sitting up in that other planet tuned in on a jargon of commercial programs which, let us assume, Martian sense enables him to instantly translate. "America," he would say, "is a funny kind of world." He could only think of Americans eating extraordinary varieties of package foods, purchasing multifarious drugs, suffering from chronic constipation, fearing their own unbearable body odors, smoking cigarettes inordinately, borrowing money on household goods, perpetually chewing gum, struggling to get rid of pustulate complexions, and suffering from a wide variety of physical, mental and moral complaints which can be alleviated by a Product produced by an omnipotent Person known as the Sponsor.

The late Heywood Broun recommended such brief and honest announcement as follows: "The cigarette is not made of the finest tobacco which can be grown. We have no special process of preparation which is peculiar to ourselves. We merely say here is the XYZ—not necessarily the best, but a good cigarette for the money. We hope you like it." And having said that much, the sponsor might graciously step aside and leave the evening to his orchestra or comedians or his tenors.

The common tendency is to enlist the services of movie

stars who gush about this or that product and what it does for them. Listeners are becoming suspicious of such endorsements. The obvious hollow and insincere praise strikes the ear as carefully studied parrot-stuff.

Dinty Doyle interprets the listener's reaction in this fashion: "Suppose Miss McGimple does wash her socks in so-and-so's soap, it won't make her a better radio actress. And when she boasts about the Mud she uses, that loses strength because we know we never see her without that Panchromatic 29 makeup, and any Mud couldn't make her beautiful anyway."

The efforts of Jack Benny and others to kid the products may bring about an agreeable reaction, but when a man distinguished in the arts is forced from his role as entertainer and educator to the role of pitchman, the sensitive listener resents the imposition. Clifton Fadiman has expressed his dislike for Boake Carter who mixed newscasting with the virtues of Philco Radio. "A serious, reputable man suddenly being shoved into a personality which because it is not his own, is vulgar."

Commercial advertising likewise suffers from the number of commercial announcements and their inordinate length and dullness. Deems Taylor looks with hope on the esthetic and persuasive possibilities of commercial announcing. He has devised an ideal opening announcement which will be phrased like this. "Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. This is Howard Clancy speaking. I am introducing a program of radio entertainment sponsored by the manufacturers of Houndstooth. We hope you'll try Houndstooth some time, and we hope you'll like our program. Our opening number tonight is the overture to Smetana's opera, 'The Bartered Bride,' conducted by Sigmund Romberg."

If the stark truth can be faced it can be said that the reason why the commercial patter in Irene Rich's dramatic show occupies one third to one half of the fifteen minute

period is that the blurbs sell so much more grapejuice. One critic coarsely remarks after listening to the patter, "I needed smelling salts."

Give the sponsor his due. The sponsor who wants to restrain his message to conform to best taste is faced with the lesson of experience. He knows that many programs which carry the most hammering and insistent advertising have proved to be the best money-getters.

Radio advertising fattens on the credulity of men and women. Their imagination is stirred by bizarre claims. Young and old are intrigued. Extraordinary promises are held out for skin lotions, face powders, tooth paste, hair tonics, laxatives and a thousand and one products, each of which is exploited as an absolute necessity for a happy and complete life.

The sponsor holds the amazing power to sell people things they do not want, and at the same time making them think they are having a favor bestowed upon them.

The reaction of the listener to such high-pressure seductions has been compared with the way in which most people approach a fortune teller or the reader of horoscopes. "They don't really believe it," says Roy S. Durstine, "but they aren't quite willing to disbelieve it."

Social urges of society are often exploited with the commercial theme song. Every element in personal ambition is vaulted to the skies—fortune, success, power, and every solution to the problem of the human soul is held forth. A. L. Alexander's Goodwill Court unearthed the most pathetic and hopeless cases of misery to entice profits for the networks and advertisers.

Sponsors are the copy-cats of the radio industry. A successful program finds scores of similar patterns. Entertainment features are cast in one mould. Radio at its best is slow to invent entertainment peculiarly suited for broadcasting. The sponsor finds it far easier to turn to the true

and tried. He searches out methods and material of the legitimate stage, musical revue, the comic strip, newspaper features, and Tin Pan Alley. It is easy for the sponsor to take refuge in the plea, "That's what the people want."

Sponsors are accused of being too humble in the presence of well-known names. Mediocre talents are often glorified. Many sponsors take their cue from the movies and so parallel all the inanities of Hollywood, in both production and talent.

Sponsor's interference in the production of programs is the stock jest of radio. One of them has been known to command his orchestra leader to quicken or slow down tempo, and Heywood Broun called attention to an excellent master of ceremonies who lost his job because the sister-in-law of a sponsor felt that he wasn't suave enough.

Sponsors are blamed for the lack of balance in programing as an essential part of radio showmanship. Balance calls for the placement in programs in such spot positions as will afford listeners the maximum of variety and relief. Showmanship calls for the principles of billing familiar in the theater. Important acts are put in the most advantageous spot, short acts are followed by longer ones and similar acts are separated one from the other. Radio which still boasts of its showmanship is still at the mercy of the sponsors. A law unto themselves, sponsors pay for time, and are permitted to select choice hours, and as a result there is a mad rush for position and billing.

The listener must take his fare and at such times and in whatever quality and quantity the station decrees. Jazz bands sizzle in succession, and the station defies every element of variety and balance. The station itself passes the buck for this condition. Too much opposition and he will turn to a rival station if not given the favorite spot selected by him. It is an idle dream to think that radio needs a Will Hays or a Judge Landis who, as a super-program director, will main-

tain an agreeable ratio in the types of commercial programs and maintain an artistic balance and variety. Neither the sponsor nor the station would be amenable to such administrative supervision and strong-arm methods.

History of Blurbs

Techniques of air advertising are in constant flux and have undergone important changes. Some months after the inception of the sponsored program, the commercial announcement wormed its way gently into the program.

The first commercial announcement was the ultimate in abbreviation. The sponsor was satisfied with a single sentence: "The Happiness Stores have engaged the facilities of Station WEAFF." Direct selling was not aimed at.

In the period about 1926, sponsors began to encroach on their programs with more decisive methods. There are signs of the coming practice of frequently interrupting the program with a slogan. The listener was urged to send in fan mail. There was a strong scramble to secure listener response with the use of contests during the years 1931 and 1932.

It was as easy as pie. Experiments proved that money could be made by making for good will expressed in terms of purchasing. This was similar to the direct sales message used in newspapers and magazines. Advertising agencies took the most familiar rosy route.

The modern period, between the years 1932-38, struggles for new forms of expression, and skilfully adapts tricks of advertising logic in dialogue, comedy and drama.

Every sponsor is still groping for the perfect method of oral appeal. Before such a simple and infallible method is discovered it may be that the American system of advertising has disappeared from the scene.

By trial-and-error the sponsors have worked out about the same general style. Everything in air salesmanship

methods has been borrowed from newspaper practice and from psychology. The natural program by its very nature harmoniously blends with the nature of the product. The best examples of these programs as a type are Death Valley Days, the dramatic presentation for the 20 Mule Team Borax Company. *Time* magazine in the "March of Time" program has an extraordinary correlation.

Types of Ballyhoo Announcers

First comes the unctious announcer. This is an unctious pleading in dulcet tones, soft, insinuating and powerfully appealing to women. No woman would be able to accomplish the same results by the power of voice. The art of ballyhoo here goes pianissimo, instead of commanding, it waxes.

Second, there's the type of radio salesman who goes off in a perfect frenzy of anxiety. Here the tone of the voice takes on the manner of a street barker who would pull you in to buy. His only object is to make you feel that you are missing something and must *buy now*.

Ordinarily you would laugh in the face of a salesman whose rhythmic voice over the counter in the store poetizes the sales points. What would happen to a salesman who began shouting to you or who brought his fists down on the table to emphasize every argument.

An intrusion on the rights of the listener. An example of such intrusion is the news commentator who is ordered to take over the role of announcer and read the commercial in a serious and pompous tone as if it were part of the news. The listener is caught off guard. This kind of forceful feeding through the eardrums makes the listener inimical. Boake Carter and Edwin C. Hill have been among the worst offenders in this respect.

Another intrusion is the injection of commercials at

crucial moments in radio drama. A tense climax is reached. There is a fanfare of music. You gasp for breath wondering what will happen, when suddenly the announcer blazes forth on the virtues of his product.

The obtrusion of advertising on the De Mille program shatters the illusions of a large percentage of listeners. These De Mille Hollywood programs rate high in all the telephone surveys and the sponsor has a tremendous audience. The show is genuinely enjoyable until the curtain drops. This is the signal for the deus ex machine to fling a hurricane of Lux soapflakes throughout the land, and at the same time discourse on its virtues.

There are no secrets about the basic methods used. The more prominent means used today are:

1. Dramatization. Rinso sales dramatization, wherein a couple quarrel over the washing of dishes with the husband standing on his lord-and-master rights of non-cooperation with the after-meal debris, was the sort of radio advertising that makes people smile indulgently. Its absurdity is not, however, necessarily askew with the aims of advertising. Even the smilers got the idea—use Rinso and you don't have to dry the dishes. Cutting one process in the dish laundering problem.

2. Dialogue between the announcer and other characters. This is "foreign" stuff to one who does not know the characters or their physical characteristics which are being exploited for comedy effects. A fat man or a man with a wig becomes the target for witticisms, and when his physical presence is envisaged the wit becomes sharper.

3. Ridicule and ribbing of the "commercials."

4. The enlistment of guest performers as part of the sales program.

5. Shame tactics—threats of withdrawal of the program if the listener does not make purchases of the advertised product.

6. Mention of price. Until 1932 mention of price was forbidden by the networks.

Type of Salesman

This is the good-fellow type. He slaps you on the back and calls you by your first name or hails you as a long-lost brother. This kind of familiarity over the air gives the sensitive listener the feeling of the cheapness of the sponsor and repels rather than attracts.

Then there is the air salesman who under-talks. This type is a rarity, and is mainly confined to comedians who razz the product of their sponsors.

Your opening sentence often opens or closes the door to a sale.

Sales plugs are the curse of radio. Under the command of the sponsor, the sales announcers sound like robots reciting flights of rhetoric. Some of this stuff may read well in print but it sounds terrible on the air.

In general complaints launched against commercial ballyhoo may be grouped: (1) boastful and fraudulent; (2) too lengthy; (3) repetitious; (4) spoken by disagreeable voices; (5) offensive in plan and scope.

Some people have sales resistance for very good reasons. It was the custom of Lilas Butterworth and Parks Johnson to hand out a tube of shaving cream at the end of each Vox Pop interview. They soon developed the habit of rushing away from the recipient to the next one. There was a reason. One mad night a man turned down the gift, saying, "I use an electric razor."

Minority groups hold out little hope that the sponsors will voluntarily conform to the canons of good taste in commercial announcements. It is ironically predicted that commercial radio will have seen its demise long before perfection in the art of ballyhoo is achieved.

But surely even the most severe critic of air advertising will admit that there are guiding principles that will soften complaints, and make air salesmanship at least partially

endurable. The following tests for acceptable announcements are offered:

1. Is it free from fraud or misrepresentation?
2. Does it present worth-while information regarding the product that is in itself interesting and appealing?
3. Is it spoken in a manner that is agreeable to the ear?
4. Does it possess that personal touch which is equal to the personal solicitation of a salesman who calls on you?
5. Is the sales proposition so well clarified that the listener instantly understands and his interest captured?
6. Does the sales message answer to all the requirements of good taste? Test the appeal of such a prospect to listeners: "You don't know it, but your teeth may be falling out! You may be on the verge of hoof and mouth disease. You have millions of bacteria crawling over your face at this minute."

The protests of the clergy have not prevented the sponsors from using church music to advertise the merits of their products. In the summer of 1936, Ivory's claim to be ninety-nine and forty-four hundredths per cent pure was being sung to the accompaniment of hymns and amens. In the Easter season of 1937 Adam Hats sponsored a broadcast of the Passion Play to do justice to their headgear.

7. Does it smack of propaganda?

Some sponsors, Henry Ford, in 1936-7 followed the lead of and combined little "talks" with symphonies. W. J. Cameron, mouthpiece of the Ford Sunday Evening Hour, opens his six minute discourse by saying there will be no commercials. The talk is actually an attack on the mistakes of Franklin D. Roosevelt, no direct trouble Ford is having with the CIO and labor troubles. And so Cameron is sandwiched in between Wagner and Debussy for "the spiritual refreshment of the listeners."

8. Is the commercial part of the program integrated in spirit and tone and approach with the rest of the program?

9. Is it designed to injure a competitor?
10. Is it repeated *ad nauseum*?

On a recent Energine program the product was mentioned thirty-two times in thirty minutes of broadcast, and in addition, the listeners being considered stupid, had the name spelled out twice.

As a radio plot for its insecticidal soap, one company regularly broadcasts an electrical transcription of a moth eating into a woolen suit with the sound of its chewing amplified ten million times. This is the kind of a plug which has a scientific basis and mixes a bit of entertainment, education and advertising.

Should the sponsor hit upon an original idea, like "Community Sings," the program might be developed into a valuable property if it is worked with some compelling merchandising stunt that catches the public quickly.

As to big names, Hill Blackett, president of Blackett-Sample-Hummert, Inc., Chicago, has the last word as the head of an agency which placed over eight million dollars on the networks in one year: "If you buy a big name in radio, part of your publicity goes with that name. By that I mean that if you pay five thousand dollars for the name, you will get a certain amount of publicity with it. It gets an audience for your program. You will get that much more free publicity. If you buy a bigger name, you will get that much more publicity. So that when you pay a great big price for a name, say ten thousand dollars, you pay five thousand dollars for ability and five thousand dollars for the publicity, and you get to build an audience on that. Then you could rely upon the publicity you got through the newspapers."

Problems of the Rate Card

The primary factor that determines the value of a station's rate card is the size of its potential listening audience. Spe-

cial hours of the day, however, are more valuable. At two o'clock in the morning more than three-fourths of the community are asleep. From eight to ten p.m. are considered the most valuable hours of the day. Other factors are the time of the week and presence of competing programs that come at the same hour. Much depends on the program that precedes or follows. The theory is that a listener will not take the trouble to change his dial when some highly popular broadcast precedes. The prestige of a station also affects the rate card.

The station salesman will try to convince his prospective sponsor of the estimated coverage of his station, its reception in the various parts of the country and its general repute with the listener. He will laud the station for the results that he has already obtained for other sponsors. He will avail himself of the statistics furnished by his company that breaks the listening into groups according to income, program interests and the specific time of day when they tune in to his station.

Day Time Serials

Foods and cosmetic articles that are bought cheaply by the housewife for the household are best exploited in the daytime. In a general way, whenever the product is to be used by every member of the family, maximum circulation is obtained at night time.

Daytime programs are concerned mainly with the story element and not with the exploitation of big names. The actors in many instances remain unmentioned. The ingenious succession of episodes, the mixture of comedy with pathos and sentiment pull at the heart strings and unloosen the purse. Carleton E. Morse, author and producer of "One Man's Family" hit upon a formula which he calls "an appeal to the audience in a mob psychology fashion." The programs he recommends "should incorporate a large cast, a

cast of people who are not temperamental artists, just human beings. Secondly, the program, as already established, should contain no instances that would sound or could be interpreted as being out of the ordinary, that could be anything but human interest. The show should blend, should tug at the heart strings of every mother and father in the country. In brief, 'One Man's Family' would sell Tender Leaf Tea because it would be subdued and respectable and would command the undivided interest of every one who listened."

The commercials are subtly interwoven with the program itself. In "One Man's Family," the show is halted with a fade-in of the organ, which is followed by a short announcement, and then the family is "seen" again. Woven into this little drama within a drama are the commercials for Tender Leaf Tea of Standard Brands. One week Jack builds up a rhyme of Tender Leaf Tea and the next week Clifford has added another stanza, which all the family delights in repeating. Or else testimonials are very artfully subtended when Mrs. Barbour gives a tea on the patio. Listeners are cajoled, coaxed and interested into purchasing a product because they feel a kinship with each member of the radio family. In short, Carleton E. Morse advises "find out what the public wants, give it to them, and your radio program will be a success." This seems a very simple formula.

It was the sponsors who provided the spur for the creation of the networks. Advertisers whose products took on quickened sales after being exploited over local stations sought within a span of a few years wider markets. In theory, stations are authorized under the law to render a public service. The government does not hand over a franchise for the benefit of advertisers. It is not the function of stations to be mere selling agencies located in convenient centers. Stations soon found that were they to practice sheer altruism in providing programs they would soon become bankrupt. Some attempt was made at cooperation in the beginning among the

manufacturers of radio equipment with the request for contributions of money, but this met with small response.

The first commercial broadcast whet the appetite of the stations. For a fixed sum the advertiser gained the right to make a brief announcement. It was all so intriguing in the beginning and the formula quite simple. Time was money. Advertisers began a march on the strongholds of radio. The stations received them with open arms and rescued them from the fate of bankruptcy. Stations did not at the outset question what advertisers said on the air. It was not until 1934 that the FCC took steps to keep broadcasting from unlawful advertising. The public trust had been betrayed. Many a station had been maintaining itself by spreading false, misleading and fraudulent advertising. The purge continues. The FCC has no authority to censor advertising. It can issue edicts as to what the advertiser may not say. A "Cease" and "Desist" order issued against any advertiser by the Commission takes such a program off the air.

The conflict against "Ballyhoo" on the air is sharply drawn. A large class would pluck out advertising by the very roots, others would accept a compromise. That compromise lies in restraining the tenor of advertising and keeping it within the bounds of good taste, balance and unobtrusiveness. Millions, however, do not complain. Answers cannot regard this apathy to the general public as disapproval. The public buys the product but the sophisticate remains unhappy and irrestive under the whip of over-commercialism. An intelligent minority strongly organized is more powerful than large numbers are inarticulate. Already critical groups under wise leadership have bestirred broadcasters to a new sense of duty. From time to time the opinions of the minority are sought by the FCC and its voice is heard in varied legislative hearings and educational conferences. The general feeling is that the minority will eter-

nally have to be vigilant of good taste in programs and advertising.

Some claim that an over zealotry on the part of the minority may legislate advertisers out of existence and thus deprive stations of the revenue to carry on. The whole institution of broadcasting would then revert to the government. It is this fear of a bureaucracy controlled by radio that compels broadcasters to more strictly consider their programs on the basis of both public interest, convenience and necessity.

Radio offers a competitive sphere for performing artists of the highest rank. Only a financially strong sponsor can command these artists who under any other system than the commercial might not be available. The cost is borne by those who buy the product and it may amount to the tiniest fraction of a cent when spread over combined national sales.

The Over Commercialized Programs

Sponsors have discovered that the cheap program weighted down with insistent sales talk, often pays far better than the so-called high class program. The sponsor is not engaged in the educational uplift. If he can accomplish good as a by-product and still sell his own he is satisfied. The sponsor however can be brought in line with the prophesy that abuse of his right to create programs will mean the handwriting on the wall, the end of the commercial system. . . . He can be shown that programs with appropriate commercial restraint will in the long run insure for him a larger audience that not only listens but buys.

The Box-top Fusillade

Sponsors were quick to take advantage of the Yankee craze of "something for nothing." The boom started in the early days has gone on with astonishing vigor year by year.

Radio became the hand-maiden of merchandising tie-ins. Marion Davies not only heralded the ear of big names but provided inspiration for the box-top fusillade of the radio century. On the *Mineralva* program she extolled the virtue of a mud-pack beautifier and promised an autographed photograph to those who wrote in. This was in 1923. Over fifteen thousand of her votaries, a large number for those days, besought the likeness of the screen star.

Goodrich Rubber Company, in 1923 offered a crossword puzzle booklet. More than two hundred thousand listeners sent in for the booklet and the Akron Post Office groaned under the new burden. Goodrich changed its offer and told listeners to call on the forty thousand Goodrich dealers over the country. In this way three million crossword booklets went into the hands of listeners. The air is filled with "box-top" and "label" requests; hundreds of thousands of entries are submitted; pages of publicity are given contests and winners. Alton Cook tells the story about Fred Allen who, on one of his programs, "slipped in a line jovially inviting listeners to tear off the tops of their radios and send them in. Sure enough, seven tops of radios arrived during the next few days, each one from a radio listener who liked the idea of writing a witty letter. At another time, long ago, when Roy Atwell was on the Allen program, an offer was made to exchange some of Atwell's used razor blades for manhole covers. Jocular listeners rose to their opportunity. Manhole covers, on which transportation costs are terrific, arrived."

Everyone will remember the little fireman's hat which Ed Wynn wore when he posed for publicity pictures. That was the little hat which Texaco filling stations offered to give away to anyone asking for it. As a result of the Fire Chief's broadcasting over three million hats were requested by gasoline buying radio listeners.

In a single brief campaign Pepsodent sold two million

tubes of tooth paste through the efforts of Amos 'n' Andy. In an announcement before and after the sketch, Pepsodent offered to give any listener who sent in two carton covers in which Pepsodent was packed a free bottle of mouthwash. The announcement was continued for limited time, or until one million bottles of mouth wash had been requested. These requests were accompanied by carton tops representing five hundred thousand dollars worth of toothpaste.

"The Singing Lady" of the Kellogg program offered to send a songbook to all those listeners who mailed tops from the Kellogg product packages. About fourteen thousand people a day took advantage of the offer. It is conservatively estimated that this was responsible for nearly one hundred thousand sales of Kellogg's products every week.

The Carnation Milk Company put on a contest for a slogan during a weekly half-hour over thirty-seven NBC stations. The contest lasted thirteen weeks. Over six hundred and fifty thousand slogans were received, most of them written on labels taken from the cans.

Types of Offers and Contests

Figures vary from year to year, but it would be safe to state that about seventy per cent of sponsored programs have offers and contests attached to them. With the vogue of contests on the air, Nick Kenny suggests that it won't be long before a sponsor gives himself away, and that is precisely what some of these advertising plugs do—give themselves away. They make the judicious laugh.

Cash prizes appear to be the most popular form of contest. The agency must be ingenious in determining the kind of offer most attractive to the general listener, and consistent with its product. Among such offers may be listed limerick and jingle contests, automobile prize contests, free contests requiring no evidence of purchase, suggested-name contests,

amateur contests, slogan contests, vacation trips, booklet offers, novelties, cook books and recipes, product offers (samples or gifts), household article offers, and in a special group, offers of personal and household articles, photographs of radio artists, road maps and special edition newspapers.

Careful research indicates that all kinds of people participate in contests. All classes of society are represented: the rich, the poor, the professional, the amateur; boy, girl; professor, husband, wife. The requirements for eligibility are varied. Some sponsors require part of a package from their products as proof of purchase. Some ask parts of two packages; others for three boxtops or wrappers. Radio listeners were required to send money ranging from one cent to three dollars and seventy-five cents to conform with the requirements of sixty-eight offers, on thirty-two different NBC programs, in 1935.

Sponsors are sometimes loath to reveal their contest and offer figures. If complete tables were prepared, they would make an astonishing array of statistics. They would reveal that eight hundred thousand children became members of an Orphan Annie Secret Society by submitting the seal from a can of Ovaltine to the Wander Company; that a General Motors Symphony stirred up three million people to send for "We Drivers" booklets; that seven million five hundred thousand metal initial-tags were given away by Sun Oil Company to all radio listeners applying at a Sun station and paying ten cents.

One of the most noteworthy examples of the program promotional contest was the Lucky Strike Sweepstakes held in connection with the American Tobacco Company's "Your Hit Parade." Featuring the fifteen most popular songs of each week, as determined by an elaborate system of checks, the program added the sweepstakes idea, awarding a carton of Luckies to each listener who designated, in correct order, the three most popular songs of the following week. The

contest was designed from the outset to be so simple that there would be many winners. Thus it proved dramatically effective as both a program promotion enterprise and a product sampling instrument. Winners in a single week reached as high a figure as 331,746, entries as high as 6,664,761. During the 48 weeks of the Sweepstakes, there were 64,665,786 entries in all, and more than 277,736,200 Lucky Strikes were given to winning contestants.

A Network is Born

Commercial advertising as such would not develop without chains.

Sponsors who sought larger fields to conquer were faced with a serious problem. If they wanted programs presented in New York to reach listeners in distant localities, they had to repeat the broadcast on local stations far from the cities. It was difficult to duplicate the entertainment features, and to secure the talent which had established itself to the listening public. Ford McClelland's solution to the problem was the system of the first multiple station hookup. This multiple station hook-up with WEAF combined WGY Schenectady, KDKA Pittsburgh, KYW Chicago, and WDAF Kansas City. The networks soon embraced twenty-five stations spread over New England, part of the south and as far west as Kansas City.

In September 1926, the National Broadcasting Company was organized by the General Electric Company, the Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Company and the Radio Corporation of America with WEAF as the key station. The first two companies manufactured radio equipment, and the third was engaged in marketing these products. Soon afterwards, Station WJZ owned by the Radio Corporation of America was taken over by NBC on a management basis. NBC was therefore enabled to offer alternative

national programs on a double network known as the Blue Network and the Red Network.

A group of capitalists seized the opportunity to establish another chain. In September 1927, after two years of preliminary organization the Columbia Broadcasting System was launched with the broadcast of Deems Taylor's opera, "The King's Henchman."

The number of stations affiliated with the networks is in constant flux, but steadily increases. Stations in strategic centers have either been bought outright by the mother station, or joined by contract.

The networks are firmly denying that broadcasting has become an established monopoly. The rapid growth of the third coast-to-coast network has increased the alarm. The Mutual Broadcasting System was organized in the autumn of 1934. Three powerful stations, WGN in Chicago, WOR in New York, WXYZ of Detroit and WLW in Cincinnati found themselves without national network affiliations. The Big Four organized The Mutual Broadcasting System, and were freed from the rigid contractual agreements governing the two rival networks. All expenses, profits were to be equally apportioned and equally shared.

The struggles of the first programs are a matter of history. Experiments with live talent succeeded those with voice and phonograph records. The Westinghouse bank enlisted to broadcast in a tent on one of the taller buildings of the plant. When the tent blew away, it was placed indoors. Soon it was discovered that a room did not interfere with fidelity of resonance if the room were properly draped. And with burlap for the covering of walls and ceiling came forth the first concept of the acoustically perfect studio of today.

Only a small group was privileged to hear the first broadcast. These were the amateurs who had built their own receiving sets. The novelty was widely heralded as an amaz-

ing development. The family gathered round the crystal detectors and took turns at the headphones.

Westinghouse continued to be swamped by letters and telephone for more music and favorite selections. It was this insistent demand that led to the erection of broadcasting stations and the building of radio sets. The race for licenses was on.

Among the first on the starting line was the Westinghouse properties, WBZ at Springfield, and WJZ at Newark, New Jersey. In New York The American Telephone and Telegraph Company took hold with Station WEAf. Radio stations began to spring up like mushrooms.

But who was to pay for this service? The A. T. & T. was the first to appeal for voluntary contributions from listeners. Radio dealers and manufacturers were asked to contribute a small percentage of their annual profits to defray the costs of entertainment. The Radio Corporation of America, operating Station WJZ, also sought help to defray the annual charge of one hundred thousand dollars. The plans fell through because of the meager response. Only eight thousand dollars was collected, and ignominiously returned.

It fell to George Ford McClelland to devise the scheme of sponsored advertising to save the day. In 1922 at the age of twenty eight, the American Telephone and Telegraph Company made him General Manager of the Station WEAf. He found a lusty infant on his hands. Around him were other infant stations. McClelland reasoned that it would be wise to open the facilities of WEAf to individuals who wanted to broadcast without the necessity of building their own stations.

Women and Daytime

Daylight listening is associated with strictly feminine audiences. The noble army of homemakers make up the majority of daytime audiences. These women do the largest

portions of the marketing in the United States. They buy food, household equipment, home medicines, clothes, cosmetics and, in addition, play an important part in the selection of higher priced family investments such as automobiles, refrigerators, radios, and other articles in the luxury class.

Sponsors claim that they can create an appetite for almost any food product via the home economics program on the air. Elma Hackett, director of the Home Science Institute of KSFO (San Francisco) boasts that "women may not have thought of buying a can of beans today until a home economist tells her of Blank's Fine Baked Beans, the simplicity of their service, the excellent meal plans that can be built around the product, and down she dashes to you (the grocer) and demands Blank's Beans."

The daytime dramatic program is a phenomenon in radio broadcasting. Statistics prove that the daytime serial is almost a sure-fire sales creator. It is almost a perfect device for tying up with premiums.

The five-day-a-week serial is an economical way to reach the radio audience. It has several advantages. First there are no high priced stars to pay. Secondly, it gains in force by repetition of advertising. It is aimed at women who listen regularly. It is not at all concerned with the male audience, which it alienates anyway by its mushiness and sentimentality. Thirty-five per cent of the daytime audience is composed of men, surveys indicate. If to this number is added the many thousands of women to whom daytime serials are repugnant or who only occasionally listen in you have that class known as the morning step-children of radio.

The First Commercial Programs

In the early years of broadcasting between 1920 and 1927, few agencies gave radio serious consideration. Station man-

agers and their assistants put on commercial programs. The early sponsors were content to let the stations organize the entire production. Many of the basic types of program such as the dramatic sketches, serials, variety shows were originated by the pioneer stations.

Gradually the sponsor turned to his regular advertising agency for help. The agency began to study the new medium. National advertisers begrudgingly gave radio a place in their advertising budgets. Already experienced in the preparation of material for magazines, billboards and newspapers, the agency experimented with new techniques. Many agencies were forced to give radio proper recognition or lose accounts.

Advertising companies hastily organized radio departments. This was the experimental period when radio directors were selected from broadcasters, account executives, producers, actors, students of dramatic schools, dramatic critics, authors, publicity men, and talent scouts. Few of them had any actual radio experience. Many were the blunders made in the early days. A new class of socialists in music drama, continuity writing and program direction soon came into being. Soon the responsibility for the commercial program began to shift from the station to the sponsors.

The sponsor assumed the right to create and produce radio entertainment. The advertising agency not only demanded that right but looked for merchandising assistance from the station. In many instances the agency was forced to produce its own program because the station or the network was not able to supply the sponsor with suitable talent or ideas.

Commercial advertising divided programs into two classes, sponsored and sustaining. The sustaining program is put on the air on the initiative of a broadcasting station and at its own expense. It fills in a period of unsold time to build up

prestige of the station or with the ultimate view of selling a program.

A new name was fastened on programs originated by advertisers who bought time from the station. The term "sponsored programs" is appropriate. For the word "sponsor" is derived from the Latin and means surety,—one who buys himself to answer for another. The decision for accepting, revising a commercial program rests with the advertiser who pays the bill. When the agency prepares a commercial program final responsibility rests with the advertiser with some administrative control exercised by the station.

Building the Commercial Program

The commercial program starts with an idea. This idea dominates the basic planning of the entertainment. Radio ideas are cherished and guarded. A fresh and original concept that captures the imagination of listeners may capture millions of dollars.

Sponsor and the agency in conference determine how much money is to be appropriated to radio advertising out of the advertising budget. In many instances the amount of money to be spent in broadcasting as well as the pay of the entertainment is left entirely to the agency whose experience and judgment is followed. It has been estimated that ninety per cent of the commercial programs are prepared by the advertising agencies or by independent program builders whom the agencies consult. In direct contrast, almost one hundred per cent of the sustaining programs are created by the program department of the broadcasting station.

Stations are always on the alert for program ideas that can be sold to prospective advertisers. The networks maintain artists' bureaus to furnish talent. A preliminary client is made by a program board. If the idea is approved, it is

whipped into shape by a divisional program supervisor. The idea evolves as a unit production. The coordinating departments in the networks vary.

But the Sales Department has one function: to persuade the client or agency that the suggested program will have wide-spread appeal. It would be necessary to show the agency or the client how the program sounds on the air. This is the reason for audition. If the program is sold, it is put into shape by the agency subject to the whims of the sponsor. Only administrative control is retained by the station.

The agency itself may create the programs as an entirely original offering. The ideas are thrashed out upon the radio roundtable of the agency. Often it is just a mere guess as to what will reach the tops in popularity. But once the idea is decided upon, the board of strategy is called into consultation. Writers, continuity editors, artist bureaus, stars, musical assistants, producers, agency executives,—all these have a hand in criticizing, cutting and rebuilding the program to suit the needs of the client.

The problems of the agency became manifold. It made a study of the scope or coverage of the various stations, the habits and buying power of people in different parts of the country, the eternal feminine appeal, the comparative results of daylight and evening broadcasting,—in short it examined every aspect and bought time for sponsors after scrupulous analysis.

Today the agency is still struggling with that unknown formula of perfect radio entertainment, and "showmanship" in advertising. A few of the major problems of the agency will be considered.

Problem 1. The agency first determines whether or not radio should be used in preference to other media. Products that have a small or retail value can be sold over the air. It takes more than the spoken word to sell high-priced

luxury articles. The colors of an oriental rug can more effectively strike home by way of the eye rather than the ear.

Problem 2. Shall it be spot advertising? Spot advertising means the use of local facilities not linked by wire. It is used when the geography of the advertiser's market does not parallel the networks' or when the networks afford greater coverage than needed.

Problem 3. Shall we buy big name talent or build a show with less expensive talent? The problem is sometimes conflicting. Much depends on whether the campaign is a thirteen, twenty-six or fifty-two week campaign. If the program is to go on the air for only thirteen weeks, the sponsor aims to get as big an audience as possible for the very first show. The sponsor must get the biggest name attraction, such as Jack Benny.

The advantages of spot advertising may be thus summarized: (1) Spot advertising allows for extreme flexibility. The sales appeal can be easily adapted to fit local conditions. (2) Reaches an audience at the best time in each community. (3) Stations can be selected to cover the markets desired, so that advertising can be correlated with distribution of any product. (4) Allows for intensive coverage of a particular market to boost slipping sales or the needs of aggressive competition. (5) Tests the selling power of an experimental program in introducing a new product. (6) Stimulates dealer distribution. (7) Affords an opportunity to select a preferred station in any territory.

Important studies have been made to determine the relative nature of printed and aural advertising. Psychologists agree that the eye focuses on the printed page because of something immediately stimulating and attractive. The special appeal may be the large type, the meaning, the printed words, the page of a magazine. The eye may take in only the glaring headlines of an advertisement and ignore the small type, if interest is not sustained. But the ear

does not shut out the bellowing noises of the announcer so easily. The advertising message if skilfully inserted within the text of the program is received in full. The listener's defense is to dial off. What radio fans listen in just to hear commercials? Printed advertising has a way of competing for our interest. But the ear is not so selective, because sounds reach us with completeness. The listener cannot conveniently shut out the on-coming commercial. The process of turning off the dial offers more resistance than the turning of the magazine.

Deftness in language and expression is necessary to build up the commercials. Lawrence Holcombe, continuity editor of NBC's Central Division in Chicago, claims that "the problem of the script writer is to picture the use of the premium so vividly that the listener will see it just as clearly in her imagination as she pictures the characters.

Other Special Problems

Competitive factors are carefully examined before contracting for time. Direct competition of similar products at the same time is avoided. It is more difficult to capture audience interest when the spot on another station has already firmly established itself as a superior program. Programs that precede and follow a spot must be carefully evaluated, since they contribute to audience spread. If the preceding show is brilliant, the new program will generally ride along on the crest of the listener's mood. A dialer's patience is measured by the entertainment as he sees it. A program that follows Fred Allen or Major Bowes, must not make the listener too strongly aware of an anti-climax. Hence the agency selects his spot cautiously.

Cost-per-Listener Plan. The Cost-per-Listener Plan is based on the use of more than one station in a market. Advertising agencies are now adopting this formula. The

agencies argued that it was no more unreasonable to buy time on more than one station in the city than it was to buy space in more than one newspaper. In applying this principle to radio, a method seemed simple. With the Crossley rating of a program, the agency is able to estimate about how many listeners will be gained with the addition of each new station in exactly the same way as the gain in readers is estimated when an additional newspaper is added to an advertising schedule. Ford, Ivory, Lifebuoy, Hydrox and Bulova are a few of the familiar sponsors that have spread their campaigns or announcements on two or more stations in a city at the same time, so that few owners of radio sets could avoid hearing at least one of their sales messages daily. Bulova is omniaural, and for years Plymouth used announcements on some five hundred stations, often using every station in a city, to advertise a contest which would get people into their dealers' showrooms.

Measuring Costs. Mr. Durstine declares: "We have a formula for measuring the cost of radio programs which is extremely interesting when it is applied to all media. We take the cost of time plus the known or estimated talent cost. This gives us a total cost of the program. We know the number of radio families in the primary listening areas of the stations used. We have at hand plenty of coincidental surveys which show us the number of radio sets tuned in on any given program. Then we can divide the number of radio sets tuned in to a program by the total cost of that program and arrive at the cost per thousand radio sets tuned in.

"We find, for instance, that a program featuring one of the best known names on the air goes into the homes of this country at a cost of two dollars and forty-five cents per thousand radio sets tuned in. Both the time cost and talent cost are enormous. We find another program with no big name and a very economical talent cost which goes into more than

a million homes at the same cost per thousand sets tuned in as the big, well-known program. Remember that figure—two dollars and forty-five cents per thousand.

“For outdoor advertising, the cost per thousand net audited circulation in the lowest cost, big-center areas is eight dollars and seventy-five cents. And every passerby doesn’t stop and look. The cost per thousand circulation for a one thousand line newspaper advertisement is one dollar and seventy-five cents in cities of five hundred thousand and more. In cities of one hundred thousand to two hundred and fifty thousand, it rises to two dollars and forty-three cents and in towns under two thousand five hundred to sixteen dollars and forty-two cents.

“Since both of those figures are below the cost quota for radio, someone may ask why we ever use anything but newspapers. But remember with radio we are talking about cost per thousand sets *tuned in*, while research men tell us that no more than ten or fifteen per cent of a newspaper’s readers ever read the inside pages.

“The cost of a page in magazine per thousand circulation may roughly be estimated in mass periodicals at two dollars and sixty-one cents per thousand. Disregarding completely whether a thousand people who receive a magazine or newspaper or who walk by a billboard are as apt to get an advertising message as those who have voluntarily tuned in a program, the economy of radio indicates that the advertisers who are buying it so extensively are doing so not entirely because they are stage-struck or fascinated by show business.”

Fraud on the Air

Fraudulent misrepresentation of products has been the custom through the centuries. The wily merchant of the market place used the alchemy of the spoken word to make gold out of brass. All the tricks of the persuasive art were

used to make the buyer believe that the substitute was the real thing.

The new thing about fraud in commerce, is the new medium of advertising, the air. From the very outset of the commercial program, sponsors became the purveyors of cure-alls, mysterious health foods, kidney remedies, hair dyes, ache, pain and weight reducers, beautifiers, and patent nostrums dangerous to health. The radio announcer became the super-salesman of spurious wares.

The weapon of the charlatan is *palaver*. He fills the imagination with seductive words. True, the radio listener is not compelled to believe everything he hears. But the average listener has no scientific background for distinguishing between true and false. He does not check with his physician to determine the truth of the promised miracle. The historic background for radio ballyhoo is admirably traced in a work recently issued by the Yale University Press, Grete de Francesco's "The Power of the Charlatan."

Stations made little or no attempt to seek out the truth of advertising claims. Some stations excluded the advertising of cure-alls, hard liquor, depilatories, deodorants, and beer. Sideshow programs began to clutter up the air. This category included astrologers, fortune tellers, faith healers and medical charlatans.

In other media of advertising the government had put its staying hand on the malefactors. There were available the agencies of the Food and Drug Administration, the Post Office Department and the Federal Trade Commission. Private agencies like the American Medical Association and the National Better Business Bureau nobly entered the lists on behalf of the consumer.

The Food and Drug Administration had at its command several enforcement weapons. It could prosecute the advertiser criminally, put an embargo on interstate shipments of the product, or under an order of the courts for "multiple

seizure," seize the products all over the country. Experience showed that it was easy to get away with exaggerated claims, on the air. The fines for criminal exaggeration were no deterrents,—the average fine being a mere pittance of sixty-five dollars.

The Federal Trade Commission was originally empowered in 1914 to be the watch-dog of unfair competition between business concerns. Unfair competition included false advertising. When radio became a medium for advertising, the Federal Trade Commission by an extension of its powers assumed added jurisdiction over commercial announcements. A complete survey of commercial copy on the air made in 1934 sounded the alarm. False and misleading claims had made fortunes for sponsors. The Federal Trade Commission could not effectively bring about reforms because the statutes provided penalties that were inadequate and modes of procedure were long drawn out. The right of the advertiser to file a "stipulation" with the Commission to "cease and desist" somewhat softened their exaggerated claims but did not eradicate the practice.

Many manufacturers have been willing to stipulate to the Commission without resorting to any hearings or court appeals,—that they willingly would cease and desist their fraudulent claims. Some of the most important sponsors under this pressure have modified their claims or shifted to a new set of false claims.

Stipulations that crowd the files of the Federal Trade Commission are powerful evidences of the sponsors' change of conscience under pressure of the law. It is no guarantee that the listener will not be fooled or injured some more, nor that he will have recourse for damages for having been taken in.

Teeth in the Law

Years of agitation brought about the passage of the Wheeler-Lee Act which broadened the powers of the FTC. New and biting teeth were put into the Act. Effective May, 1938, the FTC was empowered to deal with false and misleading advertising of foods, drugs, cosmetics, and therapeutic devices. The exploitation of such products has grown steadily until today one third of the gross income of radio or about thirty-five million dollars comes from such accounts both network and spot.

The extent to which radio advertising will be affected by the new law will depend upon its administration. The FTC is given broad discretion as to what constitutes false and misleading advertising, but the measure itself defines false advertising as that which is misleading in any material respect. The FTC, therefore, becomes one of the most powerful federal agencies.

Five forms of corrective action against offenders are provided for under the new set: (1) Order to cease and desist; (2) Civil penalty of not more than five thousand dollars for each violation of a cease and desist order which shall have become final; (3) Injunction pendente lite; (4) Contempt proceedings for disobedience to court decree affirming cease and desist order; (5) Criminal penalties of fines as high as ten thousand dollars or imprisonment up to one year, or both.

What right has the individual listener in the matter of false claims on the air? John Doe may file a complaint with the FTC, or the FTC may proceed on its own initiative. The Commission informs the respondent that his advertising is false or misleading or conveys false impressions by concealing the truth. The sponsor is afforded a hearing. The FTC may then issue a "cease and desist order." No station

will ever permit a continued use of commercial ballyhoo which has been condemned by the FTC.

The "cease and desist" orders become final following a court decree or at the end of sixty days in cases where no appeal is taken during this time. The civil penalty for a violation of this "cease and desist" order after it is made final is subject to a fine of five thousand dollars for *each* violation. This applies to any article of commerce in addition to foods, drugs, devices or cosmetics.

If the product is one which is regarded as injurious the sponsor can be enjoined by a temporary injunction obtainable from the United States District Court. This is designed within the interest of the public.

The Criminal Courts can also be invoked. The Attorney General can file an "information" against the sponsor charging him with a criminal offense.

Criminal action may lie in two familiar frauds of the sponsor. (1) When the false or misleading advertisement is with reference to a food, drug, device or cosmetic which may be injurious to health; (2) When the commercial announcement is made with the intent to defraud or mislead regardless if it is or is not injurious to health. Offenders may be fined up to ten thousand dollars or imprisoned up to a year; or may receive both fine and imprisonment. Subsequent offenses may be fined by double penalties.

From the total mess of fraudulent advertising on the air the sponsor has not always kept his hands clean. Broadcasting is a costly business and the station owners have leaned backwards in the matter of accepting spurious accounts.

The Supreme Court has ruled that there is no duty resting upon the citizen to suspect the honesty of those with whom he transacts business. The rights and privileges of a listener have been emphasized in recent cases brought by the FCT and numerous decisions. In a recent case brought by the FTC, the Supreme Court ruled that: "Laws are made

to protect the trusting as well as the suspicious. The best element of business has long since decided that honesty should govern competitive enterprises, and that the rule of *caveat emptor* should not be relied upon to reward fraud and deception" (301 U. S. 674, November, 1937).

The most obvious frauds on the air remain undetected by the average listener. He is not trained to analyze the claims of the sponsor. The public, however, is getting wiser day by day. Ballyhoo on the air often is regarded as sheer comedy. Extravagant claims have furnished the theme for burlesque programs on the air. The efforts of bodies like the Consumers' Union to educate the listener to the truth in advertising is a forerunner of organized efforts to educate the public.

A radio broadcast licensee is not liable criminally for renting time to the sponsor whose pronouncements are fraudulent. The most powerful weapon of control lies in the refusal of the renewal of a licensee by the FCC on the ground that the station does not operate in the public interest, convenience, and necessity. A station that confers its privilege to crooks of the air who mulct the pockets of the American public should expect no mercy when applying for renewal of its time.

When a radio announcer, glorifies the claims of a cleansing cream "that will neutralize the acid accumulations of the skin" the unsuspecting listener takes it for granted that acid is emerging through his pores. The truth is that "acid accumulation of the skin" is one of those frequent hallucinations of the sponsor unknown to medical science.

Peter Morell in his book, *Poisons, Potions and Profits*, has cited scores of cases where palpable fraud had been practiced on the air.

Listerine claims that it kills two hundred million bacteria in fifteen minutes. Who is there to prove it? The American Medical Association asserts that Listerine is a proprietary

name for a substance which has little bacteriological merit.

There are certain health hazards in the use of beauty preparations, but women are ready to listen to the seductive claims of the sponsors. Helena Rubenstein was enjoined from airing her toilet preparations with these virtues: Feeds and nourishes the skin and lips, prevents crow's feet and wrinkles, and contains hormones of living sparks of life." Fancy the woman past thirty who puts her trust in such seductive claims.

The *American Druggist* proudly claims that women spend more money for beautifiers than for foods. They buy sixty million lipsticks, eighty-eight million boxes of face powder, and over a billion and a half cakes of toilet soap.

WHAT HO! TELEVISION

TELEVISION may supplement but will never supplant radio. Television is making it rough for the broadcasters. The British Broadcasting Company recently auditioned more than six hundred men for the job of television announcer, but they all flopped when it came to the screen test. So the job was given to Leslie Mitchell, staff announcer for BBC since 1934.

Orrin E. Dunlap, Jr., reporting on the telecast of the New York World's Fair, said: "It is observed that the announcer alongside the camera has less talking to do than the regular radio voices. Pictures tell the story. The teleannouncer's task is confined to calling attention to incidents or objects which may be overlooked by the casual observer, or he may merely identify people or groups. For example, while the radio announcer is describing the band to the sound audience, the teleannouncer has only to say, 'The Seventh Regiment Band of the National Guard.' The picture and music do the rest."

The sight of anyone drawing archness and whimsicality from a typewritten page might be alienating. Television would be a decided handicap on the commentators. The public likes to believe that these bright fellows just make it up as they go along. But the chief sufferer from television and its revealing eye would be the master of ceremonies. Surely nobody wants to know that those sly and impromptu wisecracks are read from little slips of paper.

Yet one warning I will make. Most of those who pine for television are thinking of the new things which can be done and are denied at the present time to drama. All right, Mr.

Production Man, but how are you going to like it when instead of bringing a couple of cocoanut shells up to the studio, you have to send around to the livery stable for six white horses.

The cost of television receiving sets varies from three hundred and fifty dollars to five thousand dollars, prohibitive to the radio and general public. One may examine the progress of television, or lack of it, in Great Britain as a case in point. Television was introduced to the public in Britain in August, 1936. The first year of television showed actual sale of approximately one thousand three hundred and fifty receivers. Television activities had to be confined to within a fifty-mile circle of London, though that area holds about a third of the population of Great Britain. More than three million radio sets are owned in the same area.

Manufacturers in this country will not definitely step into the television field until production of television receivers allow a price within reach of the general public. In America, the radio industry last year sold approximately eight million receivers. It is geared to make that many and more every year. It would be several years before television could ever reach such a stage of development.

Educational Television

An educational role for television is being found by the London telecasters in geography and exploration. Television's main contribution in this field is that the audience is enabled to see the travelers as they relate their adventures.

Radio cameras eliminate attempts at intricate or subtle presentation. Calling attention to a recent telecast featuring a map-maker, an explorer, a journalist, an artist and a jungle adventurer, the critic observed: "We saw just the head of

each man as he spoke, and between them the finger of the commentator moving across a slowly revolving globe."

The new medium is ideal for music lessons, because the close-ups of hands on all musical instruments can be televised to perfection, also the relation of the fingers to printed music.

Other subjects listed as "naturals" for teaching by television are bridge, golf, fencing, setting-up exercises, dancing and tennis. In teaching languages the printed word can be shown as it is pronounced and the lip action revealed.

"Students can see and hear by television," said a representative of the NBC, "and that is all that is needed in wholesale education. We can fill the entire eight by ten inch screen with a penny so the observer can read the date on the cent. Television permits great magnification helpful in education, we do it by reversing the normal action of the lenses."

Television Drama

The effect of the televised drama upon the viewer has been intimately studied. His eyes catch the performance of an action, and not the photograph of an action, as in the movies. The speech that he hears actually emits from the mouth of the actor. Hence, in the true sense, radio drama is an actuality broadcast. Televised dramatic broadcasts were first made in England sometime in 1936. The first attempts were in the form of excerpts from plays. Television is a long way off from being ready to transfer a Broadway hit from the stage to the screen of the viewer.

Ashley Dukes, in 1938 (*Theatre Arts Monthly*), calls attention to the English broadcast of "Journey's End" which amazed most of the theater folks who saw it. There was something inherent in the play which made it a "natural" for television. In this play Ashley Dukes found that "the union of the visible and spoken play with sound effects

borrowed from radio drama was more convincing, in some ways, than anything accomplished by the stage. But it will be remembered that this is a play of static quality, most of the action passing in two or three wooden chairs around a table, and itself engendered by the impact of the urgent outside action of war upon the characters' minds. These are basic conditions of good television drama, and it is not astonishing that sound effects controlled by the director's panel should be more convincing than stage explosions of shells."

The experiments with Shakespearean drama have only been moderately successful in England. Many believe that radio drama without visual aids gives more of the flavor of the classics to many characterizations. Ashley Dukes regards a "Comedy of Errors" as the ideal Shakespearean subject for television, but hopes that the soliloquies of a Hamlet and an Iago may be ours for the seeing as well as for the hearing.

It has been determined that scenes of physical repose and spiritual movement are peculiarly suited to televised drama. The magic of the spoken word must not be underestimated in these productions. The danger lies that without the substance of imagination televised drama may become a mechanical plaything hardly worthy of an art form.

A peep into the television studio will hardly display the strain under which a television actor is obliged to work. They must learn new cues, and there is no re-shooting of a televised scene, no prompting. They must be made up especially and expertly, depending on the lighting to be employed. They face a battery of floodlights which are described as "monsters of illuminative machinery on noiseless wheels." Their gestures and physical movements must be held within bounds, for the perspective of the television camera is a matter of inches. Such constriction is unknown in the movies or on the spoken stage.

In the United States television drama was ushered in with

"Susan and God" in June, 1938. David Sarnoff, president of RCA, hailed television's promise as the "fulfilment of Shakespeare's pronouncement that 'all the world's a stage.'"

The action was crowded into twenty-two minutes. A printed synopsis flashed on the television screen and then followed the pictures. The scene was a bedroom, and here were Gertrude Lawrence and Paul McGrath and Nancy Coleman playing their distinctive roles.

Orrin E. Dunlap, Jr., summarizes the reactions of the viewer: "Uncannily the radio lenses have a way of presenting people and plays with greater intimacy than either the stage or the films. It is difficult to believe this at first, but suddenly the observer forcefully realizes it. He seems close and alone with the actors, almost as if in his own living room; while the spaciousness of a theatre, the audience and the commercial plus professional aspects are missing. Photographically, every action was clear, except in minor instances, and the mike delivered the voice to perfection."

Miss Lawrence looked quite tired. The intense heat beat down unmercifully from the powerful lenses. Such lights are necessary to give brilliancy and sharpness to the pictures.

It is indicated that the stage will not release its plays to television until the show has had its complete run. The order of production will be the stage first, films next and last television.

Cecil B. De Mille, in an interview for the *New York Times*, becomes the prophet for television drama. "Aside from the technical difficulties that the television pioneers face, the chief problem will be one of finance," he said. "For instance, in order to televise one of 'the Radio Theatre' broadcasts the cost would be at least trebled, for there would be the consideration of lighting, costuming and multiple rehearsals, with which we now have no concern. And the show, it must be remembered, would evaporate into thin air in a flash just as in broadcasting. Then the actor's prob-

lem of memorizing fifty pages for a single show would mean no end of preparation; the actors would not be able to dovetail motion-picture work with telecasting, as is now possible for them to do before the 'mike' in reading from a script. It would be impossible for an actor to make a film and appear in a television show at the same time."

The average cost of a motion picture spectacle is three thousand dollars a minute. So television won't turn out shows on its studio stages to compete with feature movies. Even if the production charge was cut to three hundred dollars a minute it would be too great a financial load.

The English producer Van Gielgud said prophetically: "But even if the television menace carries within the seams of doom for the broadcast play, it appears likely that nothing will become that transitory form of dramatic art so much as its last phase—while the feature program may well survive to uphold its tattered banner long after the mere broadcasting of plays has become no more than a queer segment of theatrical history."

Inasmuch as television dramas are condensed to the space of fifteen minutes there is no time available for a character to leave the scene to change costume. The work of rehearsal is more difficult. A televised play today requires from ten to fifteen hours of rehearsal. Actors with experience take more easily to televised roles than do radio actors or those with motion picture backgrounds.

Make-up is a problem. The cameras are more panchromatic than film cameras. They record texture of skin, hair and cloth more faithfully, and actors do not need so heavy a make-up. But they are also more sensitive to contrasts in local color, and paint their subjects "warts and all." Circles under the eyes and further chins under the first chin are so accurately reproduced that the work of the make-up department becomes of primary importance. At one time it tried to simplify by putting the performers into gray cloths, but

the performers got so depressed that the experiment was dropped. The A.P. reports this London want ad:

“Wanted—A beautiful young woman, with boundless personality, rich golden voice, excellent figure, charming smile, extraordinary memory, and ‘photogenic’ features. To such a woman will go the honor of being the first television announcer in England.”

First tests at the British Broadcasting Company’s new television station at Alexandra Palace are expected shortly. As to the woman chosen, “her face,” it has been announced, “must photograph perfectly.” She must have a good memory, for she will not be able to read announcements. And she must meet with the approval of her own sex as well as men.

When the BBC first began to televise they imagined that people would be so overwhelmed by the miracle that almost anything would do for programs. So they produced “shows” starring champion birds, beasts and fishes, still life, jugglers and the like. The programs were all bits and pieces, five minutes of this, five minutes of that. There was no idea of presenting an hour or an hour and a half of continuous drama. One day the viewers were shown how to repair a broken window. Fifteen minutes later the act shifts. “Billiards” is next on the bill, with finalists in the United Kingdom championship performing the first television demonstration of billiards. The ivory balls roll across the wave lengths for ten minutes, and then follows the newsreel for ten minutes. A ballet company then dances into view, and the London television planners say that the ballet has already proved to be “an immediate success.” The last ten minutes of the hour show are devoted to the monocled “Western Brothers,” who qualify for television because of their antics and satire. This may give way the next day to “Architecture,” an illustrated broadcast by a noted architect, who with the aid of models and films discusses town planning.

The British Broadcasting Corporation is conducting a symposium among tele-viewers to determine the type of entertainment preferred and the quality of reception.

"The BBC has not learned much," reports the *London Observer*, "except that it is going to be just as difficult to please the whole body of viewers all the time as it has been to please all listeners with any single program item.

"The best items, as a rule, are the illustrated lectures, short plays, excerpts from plays, dancing and juggling turns. There seems to be a wealth of suitable material and any fears that programs would suffer from 'sameness' have long ago disappeared."

Television and Women

The eye is most pleased with the aesthetics of the physical form. Television will make beauty and charm concomitant to vocal graces. The magic of the voice alone will not touch the heart of the listeners. Good looks before the microphone will loom as important as good looks in an Earl Carroll chorus. An applicant for television honors will find herself scrutinized not alone by the iconoscope but the microphone as well even to the very gates of Hollywood. Lip stick, mascara, and the accessories of My Lady's dressing table can never supply that synthetic touch or that warm resonant quality of the voice that woos the listener.

Heywood Broun, in a fit of hilarity shortly before his death, penned this prophecy: "The chief sufferer from television will be the Master of Ceremonies. Surely nobody wants to know that those sly and impromptu cracks are read from little slips of paper. That would give away hilarious moments when the radio listener is moved to believe that the cut-up has suddenly sprung something so excruciating, that all his fellow performers are in stitches and the show cannot go on."

Some prophets have anticipated an unlimited offering of motion pictures. Hollywood produces approximately three hundred movies per year at a cost of three hundred million dollars. If all three hundred of those were telecast at the rate of ten hours per day, the supply would be exhausted in thirty days.

Football and Television

Pick-ups of football games were said to be less likely to be satisfactory, especially those extending into the late afternoon of the late season of this sport, when even those in the stands must strain their eyes to follow the plays. As reported by Orrin E. Dunlap, Jr., the method in televising sports is not simple:

“With the camera on a dolly at the forty yard line, the coach himself has nothing on the televiewer. Both are on the sidelines. When the players gallop directly in front of the camera the televiewer feels that he is plunging right through the line or sliding out of bounds with the ball runner.

“Football by television invites audience participation. The spectator at the gridiron does not have intimacy with the players; he knows the game is separate from him because he is sandwiched in the crowd; the gladiators are out on the field. By television the contest is in the living room; the spectator is edged up close. His eye is right in the game. The quarterback is heard calling the signals.

“At the kick-off the camera is focused on the ball in the center of the field. Then the ‘eye’ swings to the team about to kick and follows the players as they rush down the field to attack. Or if the teams are in formation for a line play, the ‘eye’ watches them, sees the ball snapped back, and the play or the punt is followed. After the touchdown the lens is trained on the player standing back for the kick, and from his toe to the goal posts the camera traces the pigskin’s arc.

"In football as in baseball and other sports telecasts the announcer is a vital link with the audience. It is noticed that the announcer at the gridiron is following a new technique. He is calm and factual about his speech.

"The trained observer at the microphone alongside the camera is needed to name the substitutions, to explain delays in the game, to point out trick plays and to announce the yardline placement of the ball. He tells the number of downs, the yards gained and the yards to go. He names the player kicking off, the runner, the tackler and the hero who makes the play. Without the announcer football by television would be a flat, silent picture, except for cheers, the band and clamor of the crowd.

"Typical of the announcer's comment, which justifies his presence at the televised game, are such expressions as follow: 'The ball is on the eight yard line, second down, two yards to go. Armstrong carries the ball on a straight buck and picks up a yard on the play.'

"Or he may say something like this: 'Urlson carrying around his own right end is thrown for a three yard loss. The ball is on the eight yard line. . . . Denny is back to kick. He kicks high in the air. It's out of bounds on the thirty-four yard line.'

"Such information makes the telecast as interesting as a broadcast, plus the picture. The listener sees more of the plays. He need no longer sit at the radio depending upon his imagination to visualize the scene on a mental make-believe gridiron. Television takes him to the sidelines, right up to the white lines that run over the grass."

Television and Baseball

Baseball is regarded as ideal for televising. Comparative studies have been made regarding the light available for the transmission of outdoor scenes, such as baseball, football,

and prize fights. Results of this study are presented in a report from the Institute of Radio Engineers at its New York convention in 1937.

"It is believed that present television pick-up equipment is sufficiently responsive to light to be generally successful for baseball, which is played in the brightest months of the year and usually in fair weather," said the engineers. "Other events, such as parades and races, usually offer no great difficulty with illumination."

At Baker Field, between Princeton and Columbia University, the players looked like so many bounding four-limbed insects. The ball could never be seen in flight. The camera range is fifty feet and when focused on the pitcher, the batter is out of view. Without the voice of Bill Stern, the televiewer would have had difficulty in knowing what was happening. The television camera was first focused on the ball game, the prize fight, the six day bike race, the track meet. According to C. W. Farriar, MBC director of television, program policies will give greater emphasis to outdoor events.

It was an encounter between Princeton and Columbia that furnished the first telecast in the United States.

The first baseball telecast in the United States pictured the encounter between Princeton and Columbia. Burke Crotty, television program director in charge of mobile broadcasts, found that with the use of only one camera he was greatly hampered in following the action. The ideal telecast will provide the viewer with the sight of everything a newsreel can cover. This means that the game must be covered from a variety of angles. At Baker Field, Crotty set up a camera at the left of the home plate in an attempt to follow the complete action from this spot. The camera was first trained on the pitcher as he wound up. Then it was focused on the home plate to catch the batter in action. When the batter connected with the ball, it went on its

merry way completely out of range of the camera. Occasionally, the viewer was able to follow the sphere when it was a grounder to the infield.

When the camera attempted to change its focus as the player rounded the bases, the result appeared as a series of little dots. The players became distinguishable only in close-up shots of the home plate. The batter, the catcher, and the umpire alone were singled out.

Televiewing a baseball game is no substitute for being actually present. Four or five cameras will have to be used eventually for suitable reception and since each camera costs five thousand dollars the investment will have to be heavy.

Prize Fights and Television

Prize fights seem to be pre-eminently meant for telecasting. The action confined to the roped arena can be closely followed by one camera.

An experimental three round bout staged in an NBC studio found Max Baer as referee and Bill Stern as the announcer. Bill Stern said quite significantly, "Obviously now, ladies and gentlemen, I must alter my broadcast descriptions to conform with the new art. I can no longer describe the blows—you'll see them seconds before I could ever formulate the proper phraseology. My announcing now must veer to a new technique, perhaps that of interpreting the boxing styles of each contender. One boxer, you will see, fights upright and upstanding, in what might be called the Jack Dempsey technique; the other crouches, much as does Henry Armstrong."

Baer, from time to time, got into the range of the television camera, blotting out some of the blows. The close-up focus finds the referee in the way sometimes. The viewer will miss some strategic blows.

Orrin E. Dunlap, Jr., says rather shrewdly: "To see a

prize fight telecast is ten thousand times more interesting than listening sightless to a broadcast announcer. Also seeing by radio is far more exciting than watching a belated and cut news reel of such warfare."

The Nova-Baer bloody bout in June, 1939, furnished the theme for the first televised fistic encounter in America.

The iconoscope version of the fight made the glib talk of the announcer a mere supplement to the impressions received instantly by the eye. Sam Taub who was at the microphone kept to the routine of describing blow-by-blow the action as if to a sightless audience. Such reporting when the iconoscope is focused on the fighters must be exceedingly swift. Theoretically, the voice and the picture should synchronize perfectly.

The arena, covered with floodlights, is a "natural" scene for the camera to cover. The two contestants and the referee can be kept within range and the dynamics of battle furnish vivid drama. The scenario was unpredictable and furnished the viewer with thrills quite as stimulating as if he had a front-row seat.

The announcer will be obliged to vary his verbal method in description. When the action talks for itself, he will have to keep silent or provide interpretations on strategic blows, styles of boxing, unusual happenings in the ring, physical conditions of the fighters. He should later revise material, statistics, histories and personalities.

Tennevision is the word Londoners coined as a result of the Wimbledon tennis matches viewed by television.

Describing the sight on the telescreen as "an amazing scientific miracle," Douglas Walters writing in *The London Daily Herald* said: "I have followed the ball when it has been hit into the farthest court—a distance of well over one hundred feet from the cameras. I have seen players stop to adjust an eyeshade or a shoe lace."

My most interesting moments in England this summer

were not on the Centre Court, but in an office on the Embankment in London. Here I saw for the first time a sporting event actually taking place many miles away. Imagine a large radio console with an aperture about a foot square, an opaque substance which lightens up as you darken the room. Suddenly you see the court. Then a close-up of the players. There is Parker returning the ball, so plain you can see the stripe on his shorts, and the lines on the court where the turf was freshly mowed the night before. With this vivid picture the commentary seems unnecessary and even redundant. It is some few seconds before the speaker can describe the point, and already you have seen the ball in play.

The greatest trouble to be coped with in broadcasting boat races is the amount of noise going on all round. A continual hubbub from the shore mingles with the sound of the motor launch—hooting and cheering from the vessels and a capful of wind thrown in for good measure.

February 13, 1938

Television program producers in London recently turned the cameras on the second act of "Tristan and Isolde," presented as a masque with a double cast of invisible singers and eyeworthy actors.

The dual cast idea was resorted to in an effort to gain musical advantages without stilted acting and heavyweight heroines. Nevertheless, *The Listener*, journal of the British Broadcasting Corporation, reports Tristan was not a success on the air pictorially; the music was good.

It has always been argued that television will do much for opera by radio. To the pleasure of the ear how much did the visual part of Tristan add to the delight of the eye? "Not, to be honest, very much," according to the London observers.

What are the actors to do with their mouths? Are they to keep them shut, deliberately putting aside any attempt to make us forget that it is not the visible forms which are producing such delightful sounds; or are they to imitate the actions of a singer with their silent lips?

To the motion picture audience, the sight of a bandleader conducting his orchestra offers dull entertainment.

Sir Adrain Boult on May 29, 1938, guest conductor over NBC, said: "After all it is music that counts. Televising of a full symphony concert would be an impossible and thankless experiment. It might be all right for the first five minutes of a concert to show the entrance of the musicians and the first few movements, and then go blind."

Television Ballyhoo

Conceive the faces of men and women smoking cigarettes, the packages and trademarks being conspicuous, smacking their lips over a drink of whiskey or ginger ale, extolling the virtues of a face cream, all to the accompaniment of advertising patter. Will the masses like it? Will we reconcile ourselves to visual advertising as well as to the advertising personalities that now come out of the loud-speaker? Advertisers will demonstrate their products and will help finance television performances in the same way that they do broadcasting.

And so television will enable the inhabitants of the earth who do not have the opportunity to travel to see how their fellow-men live on the other side of the globe. They will learn to enjoy their music, drama, and national scenes. Suspicion will be obliterated. No one will see the other nations walking up-side down.

Television and Advertising

The time may come when sponsors may realize the value of indirect advertising by means of backdrops and scenery. The sales plug may be confined to a single sentence at the beginning of the show and a concluding line or two at the end. But this is only a dream.

The FCC laid down bars against commercial oration of television plants, but a limited amount of commercialism is looked forward to, in order to encourage experiments. Sarnoff looked upon the new medium as affording new challenges to the advertising ingenuity and stimulus to advertising talent. "Broadcasting the actual likeness of a product, the visual demonstration of its uses, the added effectiveness of sight to sound in carrying messages to the human mind,—these are only a few of the obvious applications of television to merchandising."

Who will pay for television remains a big riddle. If the public will not tolerate advertising on the motion picture screen, how can television accomplish it by advertising sponsorship? Furthermore, television in the United States is classed and licensed as experimental, and until the Federal Communications Commission lifts the ban, advertising cannot be attempted on the waves of sight.

Television and News

Some optimists envisage a television newspaper that operates twenty-four hours a day, an endless belt of pictures. Advertisements will be neatly sandwiched between the items. Think of what television will do for the garment trade publicity. Instead of a sketch of a fashion, a charming girl will appear and pirouette to make the best showing of the advertiser's wares. Furniture will be displayed in gracious

living rooms, and Lux will demonstrate how the housewife can chase dirt.

And so instead of printing presses, newsboys, model delivery systems and vast composing rooms, there will be a small studio serving as news room. Cameras will be set up, films, bulletins. On a nearby tall building connected by a radio beam, a small transmitter will send out the news at no cost to the televiewer or reader.

Television broadcasts of the coronation covered an area of seven thousand five hundred square miles, and according to reports from London was seen by fifty thousand spectators. The result was described as "a notable triumph." The telephoto cameras at Hyde Park Corner were linked by coaxial cable with the image transmitter at Alexandra Palace, from the aerial of which the sound-pictures were broadcast.

Showmen are watching every move of the BBC pioneers in this form of entertainment, and a survey of a few typical telecasts may give the American radio audience some idea of the views it will pluck from space in the not too distant future.

WHAT DOES THE PUBLIC WANT?

IN the early days of radio, listeners did not care much whether programs were good or bad. The receiving set was an extraordinary novelty. When stations multiplied, competition reared its head and it became evident that those stations which would hold out would be the ones which gave the public what it wanted. Thus arose the problem, "What Does the Public Want?"

Radio has created an audience, and in creating it it has also created its obligation to that audience.

Big broadcasters are in a position to initiate high program standards. The slightest public clamor regarding a program causes the network's attention. Legislative and Reform Agencies constantly threaten their large investments. For this reason they should give the most careful thought to the critical judgment. Even the indignant telephone call should receive its due respect as a barometer of the changing radio taste.

On the occasion of the fifteenth birthday of WOR on February 22, 1937, this was expressed by the WOR statement which read, "We are just passing a birthday by behaving in the usual manner. After all, the listener is the thing." The second deduction is absolutely correct. The first was purely sentimental because WOR started with the power of two hundred and fifty watts and if it behaved in the usual manner of 1922 it would have been booted off the air.

Richard Sheridan Ames puts the matter very concretely in his article, "The Art of Pleasing Everybody." "Experience has shown," says he, "that if Toscanini and the Brahms

'Requiem' have been promised and subsequently are not put on, three or four disappointed people may take the trouble to ask what is the matter. But if tonsillitis keeps Jack Benny from his rendezvous with the 'mike,' the telephone switchboard will have St. Vitus's dance for hours."

Serious efforts have been made to build up a personality that might be acclaimed as the average listener. Elaborate surveys are undertaken each year at a cost of over a million dollars annually to determine the likes and dislikes of the listener, his income, his social status, his susceptibility to radio advertising. Who knows but upon the determination of such a character rests the future of broadcasting?

Measuring the Audience

Serious attempts have been made to measure the relative size of the radio audience. The Crossley report is recognized in the trade as the most authoritative of all systems tried out to determine the range and interest of the radio fans.

In 1927, the Frank Semans Advertising Agency decided to find out something about the reception of the Davis Baking Powder Program and engaged Crossley Business Research, Inc., to check in fifty cities and towns to see whether their program came through on schedule. This was Crossley's first radio survey, as they had been previously engaged in market research exclusively. The new company was formed to handle radio accounts under the direction of Archibald M. Crossley, former Director of Research for the *Literary Digest*.

An analysis of broadcasting follow these trends: Some sixty investigators make six hundred thousand phone calls a year in thirty-eight major cities having at least two network outlets. These calls are allocated to allow for minimum various income levels, population groupings. New York gets a larger proportion of calls than Denver, and more people in low level income classes are approached.

The CAB ratings are determined on the following principles of testing. The questions asked of listeners:

1. Is the radio in use? If radios were in use at what time? To what programs? Tuned to what stations?

2. Telephone calls are made four times a day. At twelve five a. m. covering programs up to noon; at five five covering programs from noon to five p. m. at eight five covering the three hours from last report, and at nine five a. m. covering programs from eight p. m. to midnight of the same day.

3. When the fan gives any description which identifies a program, the program is entered as having been heard.

4. The number of radio set owners telephoned in each city is accredited one hundred per cent. If twenty set owners reported, the program would have rating of twenty per cent. Only programs on networks of eight or more stations are rated, but the size of the network does not affect the rating. A program produced more than once a week is combined with its others in a weekly average.

5. Reports are issued every two weeks. Individual subscribers are charged from four hundred and eighty dollars to three thousand dollars a year for the service.

Criticism is sometimes made that the sample tested is not large enough. With twenty-eight million radios, about eleven million telephones, a telephone survey must miss half the listeners. A rural and semi-rural check is necessary as a balance. Statistics show that there is an inherent weakness in the memory of some thirty-one per cent of the listeners.

A survey among college students revealed tastes surprisingly the same as that of the general public. The survey was conducted in 1937 amongst three thousand three hundred and seventy-six students by *Variety*, the New York University magazine. The favorite comedians were Jack Benny and Fred Allen; the favorite actors, Don Ameche and Edward Robinson; the favorite actresses, Helen Hayes and

Claudette Colbert; the favorite singers, Bing Crosby and Kenny Baker; the favorite announcers, Harry von Zell and Martin Block.

As expressed by the Women's National Radio Committee, "an overabundance of sentimental wash, low comedy and pure nonsense, loud jazz." Another comparison in listening tastes is furnished by the survey among twenty thousand six hundred listeners conducted in 1937 by the cooperative Analysis of Broadcasting to determine the listening habits of city and rural listeners. Jack Benny was the favorite in both groups. The first five programs favored by rural listeners were: Major Bowes (Amateur Hour), Lowell Thomas, Lum 'n Abner, WABC Radio Theatre, and Eddie Cantor. The city listeners voted for, in order: The Radio Theatre, Eddie Cantor, Major Bowes' Amateur Hour, Vallee Vanities and Fred Allen's Town Hall. Lum 'n' Abner outranked those perennial rural favorites, Amos 'n' Andy.

Somebody asked WOR's Answer Man Program, "Does a radio program have weight?" This was a tempting morsel for wit, but the matter was referred to the engineering department of the station, which replied, "If it is expressed as weight, a quarter-hour program on a fifty kilowatt station would weigh approximately 1/1000th of a millionth pound." No one has similarly weighed the effect of a program on a human mind.

Chico Marx once asked the question, "If people can dial on their radios to get any program they want why can't there be some way for a comedian to dial and get any audience he wants?"

Dr. Neville Monroe Hopkins, devised a device system which he called radio voting. Each radio receiver is provided with at least one simple pushbutton marked "present," "yes," "no." The announcer asks those tuned in to press the appropriate button. A totalizer at the power house will

record the increased electrical current, and the figure flashed to the stations at once.

Fan Mail

Another index to popular taste is fan mail, which has the one virtue of being spontaneous. Nearly three million listeners send the networks letters regarding programs. The validity of mail depends upon the degree to which letter writers represent those listeners who do not write, in respect to economic status, location and tastes. The majority of letters are generally secured through some sort of "bait" such as free offers, contests, and special appeals.

Many fan clubs are feverishly interested in the activities of such an idol as Kate Smith or Guy Lombardo, sometimes going so far as to circularize members, advising "Buy — Cereal. It will help our favorite."

The Crossley report is the only survey taken seriously by the radio industry. It is interpreted this way: one point means eight hundred thousand listeners. If a program is given ten points it means eight million "tuner-inners." Serious music seldom rises to ten.

The Crossley survey began in 1930 when Amos 'n' Andy were the greatest radio figures.

Tests

1. Validity—does it test what it proposes to test.
2. Reliability—two makes.
3. Scored easily and quickly.
4. Scores have no educational significance. Domestic, cure, economic, leisure, health.
5. No prognostic value for success in college. Equal to mere guess.
6. Readings related to Alstralt verbal intelligence.
7. True—False—Avoid long ambiguous statement. Do not suggest answers. Include number of true and false statements. Clear—accurate.
8. Complete answer—Give

a good idea. Not too many blanks. 9. Multiple choice—If you study you'll know the right one.

Dealer Reactions

Dealer reports of their own and customer reactions must be carefully considered when taken as program checks. These opinions are often haphazard, untypical, and not founded on complete understanding of aims and tactics. One company broadcasted a symphony series as an institutional campaign. Yet when a few salesmen brought in scattered reports that a handful of dealers didn't like the program and would rather have Rudy Vallee, Bing Crosby, or Eddie Cantor, the sponsors, deeply concerned, briefly considered changing or dropping the program. It had been designed, through appeal to a solid, higher-income audience, to bring the company institutional prestige, yet the personal prejudices of a small minority of dealers momentarily threatened its existence.

Can surveys of major trading areas represent the entire country? How about the vast rural and small-town market? (The CAB admits that its findings may not be true of other than its specified areas.) Analyzed in their proper light, in conjunction with other checks on the program, they can give assurance that it is doing its job well or they can indicate that a change in program time, talent, stations, advertising appeal, or general policy may be wise.

The Woman's National Radio Committee has set its critical faculties to appraise radio from the woman's standpoint. It represents the far-flung women's clubs of America.

Radio has been on the search for that mysterious "Mr. X," the elusive "Average American Listener." With the help of David Freedman, NBC located Mr. X as living in Troy, Ohio, and publicized the Average Town as of native white population of ninety-two per cent, with an average

intelligence three per cent above normal. It has average population of fourteen thousand, a typical payroll town. He is a man of thirty-eight, a family of four, two children, and wife, earns an average income of fifty dollars weekly, and owns a radio. He prefers Amos 'n' Andy above all programs, likes good drama, and two of the six current comics of the air; listens to symphony music occasionally, buys less than twenty per cent of the products advertised on the air, never listens to political talks except during major campaigns, does not like women speakers, is tolerant to women singers, has a set routine in tuning in, and occasionally relinquishes this right to his wife and children.

In 1938 a radio "Middletown" was sought by Princeton University's radio project to provide the perfect community in a rural setting representing various social groups with which to study the psychological effects, the cultural and social effects of broadcasting.

By testing commercial programs, the director of this project, Dr. Paul Lazarsfeld, and Dr. Frank Stanton hope to develop a panel method by which broadcasters can maintain contact with representative groups of listeners. It will avail itself of interviews, autobiographies, psycho-analysis, and the tradition of experimental psychology to test the influence of broadcasting.

How does radio contribute to the urbanization of the rural centers? How do news commentators influence newspaper reading. Do religious services on the air stimulate church attendance?

The *Literary Digest* undertook a weekly survey, tabulating some seventeen thousand replies, answering the questions, Do you Like? Do you Dislike? Two hundred and five thousand individual votes were received.

APPENDIX

SUPPLEMENT

THE NAB CODE

The Code Adopted at the 17th Annual Convention of the National Association of Broadcasters, July 11, 1939, Hotel Ambassador, Atlantic City, N. J.

TIME for the presentation of controversial issues shall not be sold, except for political broadcasts. There are three fundamental reasons for this refusal to sell time for public discussion, and, in its stead, providing time for it without charge. First, it is a public duty of broadcasters to bring such discussion to the radio audience regardless of the willingness of others to pay for it. Second, should time be sold for the discussion of controversial issues, it would have to be sold, in fairness, to all with the ability and desire to buy at any given time. Consequently, all possibility of regulating the amount of discussion on the air in proportion to other elements of properly balanced programming or of allotting the available periods with due regard to listener interest in the topics to be discussed would be surrendered. Third, and by far the most important, should time be sold for the discussion of controversial public issues and for the propagation of the views of individuals or groups, a powerful public forum would inevitably gravitate almost wholly into the hands of those with the greater means to buy it.

The political broadcasts excepted above are any broadcasts in connection with a political campaign in behalf of or against the candidacy of a legally qualified candidate for nomination or election to public office, or in behalf of or against a public proposal which is subject to ballot. This

exception is made because at certain times the contending parties want to use and are entitled to use more time than broadcasters could possibly afford to give away.

Nothing in the prohibition against selling time for the presentation of controversial public issues shall be interpreted as barring sponsorship of the public forum type of program when such a program is regularly presented as a series of fair-sided discussions of public issues and when control of the fairness of the program rests wholly with the broadcasting station or network.

Educational Broadcasting

While all radio programs possess some educative values, broadcasters nevertheless desire to be of assistance in helping toward more specific educational efforts, and will continue to use their time and facilities to that end and, in cooperation with appropriate groups, will continue their search for improving applications of radio as an educational adjunct.

News

News shall be presented with fairness and accuracy and the broadcasting station or network shall satisfy itself that the arrangements made for obtaining news insure this result. Since the number of broadcasting channels is limited, news broadcasts shall not be editorial. This means that news shall not be selected for the purpose of furthering or hindering either side of any controversial public issue nor shall it be colored by the opinions or desires of the station or network management, the editor or others engaged in its preparation or the person actually delivering it over the air, or, in the case of sponsored news broadcasts, the advertiser.

The fundamental purpose of news dissemination in a

democracy is to enable people to know what is happening and to understand the meaning of events so that they may form their own conclusions and, therefore, nothing in the foregoing shall be understood as preventing news broadcasters from analyzing and elucidating news so long as such analysis and elucidation are free of bias.

News commentators as well as all other newscasters shall be governed by these provisions.

Religious Broadcasts

Radio, which reaches men of all creeds and races simultaneously, may not be used to convey attacks upon another's race or religion. Rather it should be the purpose of the religious broadcast to promote the spiritual harmony and understanding of mankind and to administer broadly to the varied religious needs of the community.

Commercial Programs and Length of Commercial Copy

Acceptance of programs and announcements shall be limited to products and services offered by individuals and firms engaged in legitimate commerce; whose products, services, radio advertising, testimonials and other statements, comply with pertinent legal requirements, fair trade practices and acceptable standards of good taste.

Brief handling of commercial copy is recommended procedure at all times.

Member stations shall hold the length of commercial copy, including that devoted to contests and offers, to the following number of minutes and seconds:

DAYTIME

Fifteen-minute programs.....	3:15
Thirty-minute programs.....	4:30
Sixty-minute programs.....	9:00

NIGHTTIME

Fifteen-minute programs.....	2:30
Thirty-minute programs.....	3:00
Sixty-minute programs.....	6:00

Exceptions:

The above limitations do not apply to participation programs, announcement programs, "musical clocks," shoppers' guides and local programs falling within these general classifications.

Because of the varying economic and social conditions throughout the United States, members of the NAB shall have the right to present to the NAB for special ruling local situations which in the opinion of the member may justify exceptions to the above prescribed limitations.

The Code Committee met in Washington, October 2 and 3, at the call of its chairman Mr. Edgar Bill, of station WMBD, Peoria, Illinois. In conformity with the text and the spirit of the Code, it issued and authorized the following statements, released from NAB Headquarters on the dates named:

At the conclusion of the first meeting of the Code Compliance Committee here of the National Association of Broadcasters, Edgar Bill, Chairman, of Radio Station WMBD, Peoria, Illinois, this afternoon (Oct. 3) released the following statement from the Committee:

"While the Committee realizes that the American people through the delegation of the radio franchise have placed upon the broadcaster final responsibility to accept or to reject program matter in 'the public interest, convenience and necessity,' it nevertheless recognizes that NAB member stations in the seventeenth Annual Convention, July last, shared their program and operating experiences in the adoption of a new Code so that a more uniform and higher level

of public service might result throughout the length and breadth of American radio.

“The Committee has taken these into consideration in its deliberations, which have chiefly centered around problems involving the Religious and Public Controversial sections of the new Code.

“In approaching the Public Controversial section of the Code, which bars the sale of time for such discussions, but which provides that such discussions be placed on the air without cost, the Committee emphasizes the underlying principles involved.

“There is a limitation to the number of radio channels now available for broadcasting in this country.

“There is also a limit as to the number of hours available per day for broadcasting. Newspapers may add any number of extra pages to accommodate their overflow news and advertising columns. No comparable opportunity exists in the daily schedule of a radio station, which must adhere to the hands of the clock.

“In the absence of any self-imposed policy to the contrary, it is conceivable that some individuals or groups with financial means to do so could buy all the available time necessary to monopolize, dominate or control the discussion of public issues through the radio medium, precluding a fair opportunity for an opposition without financial resources to present its case to the radio audience.

“Such a situation would pervert the function of American radio as a forum of democracy, and would irreparably shatter the confidence of the public in the American system of broadcasting.

“In order to assure the American people for all time that such an intolerable misuse of radio facilities cannot happen, the Code states that ‘Time for the presentation of controversial issues shall not be sold.’

"The Code does not bar anyone or any group from using radio. It simply denies the right to buy time, for the reasons stated."*

"Representative spokesmen of groups in the field of public controversial issues have a perfect right to request time on the air, from a network or station, in accord with the public interest therein as outlined in the Code. 'Broadcasters shall use their best efforts to allot such time free of charge, with fairness to all elements in a given controversy.'

"The handling of public controversial issues by radio stations is a matter of principle and not one of personalities."

Determination of a Public Controversial Issue

"The Code Compliance Committee realizes that whether a matter is a public controversial subject or not is one sometimes difficult to determine, particularly in national and statewide affairs.

"The Committee feels, therefore, that its duty and function is that of rendering advisory opinions, and of recommending procedures through which a sincere and uniform understanding of, and compliance with the Code, may be achieved.

"Toward such ends, the Committee holds as self-evident that no determination as to the character or classification of a proposed program or radio address can be established until an advance script has been examined by the station management.

"The Committee recommends, therefore, that

- (a) Since discussions of controversial public issues have been eliminated from paid commercial broadcasts, adequate time for the presentation of controversial public issues shall continue to be provided free of

* Political broadcasts, as defined, are excepted because "at certain times the contending parties want to use and are entitled to use more time than broadcasters could possibly afford to give away."

charge by each station or network, in accordance with the public interest therein.

- (b) All such scripts shall be required in advance, for examination in light of the Code.
- (c) Under no circumstances will compensation be accepted by the station or network for time consumed by the spokesman of a controversial public issue, unless
- (d) The spokesmen appear on a public forum type of broadcast regularly presented, in conformity with the Code, as 'a series of fair-sided discussions of public issues and when control of the fairness of the program rests wholly with the broadcasting station or network.'

"Without an advance script, no one can determine the complexion of any proposed broadcast.

"This does not mean, of course, that those who wish to discuss matters of public controversy are barred from the air.

"Far from it!

"Through the new Code, representative spokesmen of groups will be given free time to present their viewpoints, in accord with the public interest, program balance and availability of time.

"The Committee recognizes that all such representative spokesmen of public opinion groupings may broadcast their opinions during time provided free for this purpose, or may take a political position on paid radio time during a political campaign, or may espouse or oppose a 'public proposal subject to ballot.' The Code adequately covers these provisions."

Neutrality—Method of Maintaining of Which Is a "Public Controversial Issue" Within the Meaning of the Code

"The question of America's neutrality has raised an interesting point in which the Committee and the individual broadcaster are concerned in the application of the Code.

"Following careful survey of the members of the Com-

mittee drawn from different sections of the country, and of the issue itself as resolved yesterday in Congress, the Committee feels that while all Americans desire to stay out of war and to preserve neutrality, the methods of achieving and maintaining same are matters automatically falling within the sphere of 'public controversial issues,' and as such should be presented on free time and not paid time.

Definition of a Public Proposal Subject to Ballot

"In response to inquiries from member stations, the Committee defines a 'public proposal subject to ballot' as one where the proposal itself appears on the ballot to be cast by the individual citizen.

"Matters pending before a legislative body are not regarded as 'public proposals subject to ballot.' "

The NAB Religious Code

"The Committee calls attention to the religious section of the Code which reads:

" 'Radio, which reaches men of all creeds and races simultaneously, may not be used to convey attacks upon another's race or religion. Rather it should be the purpose of the religious broadcast to promote the spiritual harmony and understanding of mankind and to administer broadly to the varied religious needs of the community.' "

Townsend Plan on Free Time

Sponsored broadcasts on paid time in behalf of the Townsend Plan, at times other than during a political campaign, would constitute a discussion of a public controversial issue and therefore would be unacceptable under the terms of the new NAB Code, the Code Compliance Committee of the National Association of Broadcasters found today (Oct. 10).

The Code bars the sale of time for discussions of public controversial issues, but provides that time shall be allotted for such purposes free of charge, and "with fairness to all elements in a given controversy."

The Committee's action was in response to an inquiry from a member station which had been approached by agents seeking to purchase radio facilities for the "Townsend plan Broadcasts."

The agent sought to purchase radio time in fifteen-minute units, not earlier than 6:30 p. m., stating that the series of programs would start about October 15.

It was stated that various Senators, Congressmen, Dr. Francis E. Townsend and others would speak on the period. The agent declared that an endeavor would be made through the sponsored radio programs, "to establish new clubs, solicit members and sell our book."

In making public its finding, the Committee pointed out that during political campaigns, adherents of the Townsend Plan may buy time "in behalf of or in opposition to qualified candidates for public office," as provided by the law, or may buy time "in behalf of or in opposition to a public proposal subject to ballot" as further provided by the new NAB Code.

Meanwhile, it was pointed out that representative spokesmen of groups will be given free time to present their viewpoints, in accord with the public interest, program balance and availability of time.

The Committee emphasized again that the Code does not deny the right of free speech to anyone. It simply denies the opportunity to buy time and to monopolize the limited radio time and facilities available, for one-sided discussions of a public question.

Integrity of Radio News

The National Association of Broadcasters this afternoon (Oct. 19) made public an exchange of letters between Neville Miller, president of the Association, and Theodore Streibert, vice president of the Mutual Broadcasting System, concerning the sponsored broadcasts of Elliott Roosevelt on the Mutual network.

On October 7, Mr. Roosevelt publicly stated that he would violate the NAB Code and would express personal opinions on public controversial matters on his commercially sponsored news commentator's program.

After making inquiry, Mr. Miller on October 13 sent the following letter to Mr. Streibert:

"Dear Mr. Streibert: In his sponsored broadcast over the Mutual Broadcasting System on October 7th, Elliott Roosevelt publicly announced that on his broadcast of that evening he would express a personal and editorial opinion about a public controversial issue and that he realized such expression of personal opinion by a news commentator on commercial time was in violation of the NAB Code. I am of the opinion that Elliott Roosevelt in his broadcast did violate the Code, and I am therefore bringing the matter to your immediate attention. I shall appreciate a reply at your earliest convenience. With kindest regards, I am sincerely yours, Neville Miller."

Today, Mr. Miller received the following reply from Mr. Streibert:

"Dear Mr. Miller: With reference to your letter of October 13th, we held a discussion with Elliott Roosevelt yesterday and reached an agreement which was wholly satisfactory. He will eliminate from all his commercially sponsored broadcasts any expression of personal editorial opinion about public controversial issues. Sincerely yours, T. W. Streibert."

Press dispatches from Boston this afternoon, however, stated that Mr. Roosevelt had announced the resignation of the broadcasting stations he operates in Texas from the NAB, because of the "imposition of a ruling barring expressions of personal opinions on public controversial issues on commercially sponsored programs," declaring that this is "censorship in its worst form."

In commenting upon the situation, Mr. Miller said, "We regret that Mr. Roosevelt has seen fit to disregard the Code voluntarily set up by his fellow broadcasters and resign from the Association.

"His statement charging censorship indicates that perhaps he is not fully conversant with the Code and the vital problems of public policy underlying it. There can be no charge of censorship or of the curtailment of free speech when all spokesmen are given an equal footing at the radio rostrum, free of charge.

"This provision of the Code not only insures the widest possible use of radio for public discussions, but it insures as well an impartial and fair opportunity to all spokesmen and groups to use its limited facilities and to be subject to debate and challenge should such develop. This is the democratic way of doing things.

"It is significant to observe that those who are objecting to the Code and who want to continue to buy time for discussions of public controversies, have refused to accept free time offered on programs where another viewpoint may be fully presented.

"Rather than barring them from the air, as has been charged, the Code recognizes their right to speak, but provides that those holding other views shall not be deprived of the right to present those views under similar conditions.

"The point raised in Mr. Roosevelt's October 7 broadcast, however, involves the propriety of injecting personal opinions on a news commentator's broadcast.

“The press of this country has always recognized the necessity of preserving the integrity of its news columns. Personal opinions are reserved for the editorial page. The integrity of radio news is of parallel importance.

“If Mr. Roosevelt wishes to express personal opinions about public controversial matters on the air, there is nothing to prevent him from doing so on the time freely given for the purpose. But, under this Code, no personal opinions can be presented under the guise of news on any news broadcasts, whether sponsored or unsponsored.

“The NAB Code is based upon principles, not personalities. The provisions of the Code shall continue to be administered fairly and impersonally.”